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Abrasive Teachers and Principal Response; a Mixed-Methods Exploration of Administrative Decisions Regarding Teachers Who Bully Students

James Clayton Weller
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ABSTRACT

ABRASIVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPAL RESPONSE: A MIXED-METHODS EXPLORATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS REGARDING TEACHERS WHO BULLY STUDENTS

by

James Clayton Weller

Chair: Erich Baumgartner
Title: ABRASIVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPAL RESPONSE: A MIXED-METHODS EXPLORATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS REGARDING TEACHERS WHO BULLY STUDENTS

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Problem and Purpose

The American K-12 school principal is responsible for providing a learning environment that is physically and emotionally safe. An abrasive teacher who displays bullying behaviors towards students is a threat to that environment, impeding student academic progress and decreasing student perceptions of safety. Principals intervene, with risk to themselves.

This study sought to understand principal intervention by: (a) estimating the prevalence of abrasive teachers, (b) asking how principals identify abrasive teachers, (c) classifying situational elements that enhance or inhibit the principal’s motivation to intervene, (d) exploring the interventions principals used, (e) examining the effects those
interventions had on the schools, and (f) searching for patterns in interventions that might be helpful to theorists and practitioners.

Method

A fully integrated, mixed-methods design was used in collecting and interpreting data from 515 surveys and 21 semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The volunteer sample was composed of K-12 principals from California public and private schools. Findings were based on the perceptions of the principals. Principal perception was used due to the principal’s legal and moral responsibility for the school, its students, and its teachers, and due to his/her access to all school stakeholders.

Results

The study found that four out of five (81.6%) of the schools represented in the study currently have—or in the past 3 years have had—an average of 2.9 abrasive teachers. The teachers were disproportionately distributed across grade levels, subject areas, sex of the teachers, years of teaching experience, and race.

The study identified five types of teacher maltreatment of students: verbal, professional, physical, non-verbal, and social. The study found that student symptoms could be grouped under the headings of emotional states, psychosomatic manifestations, fight responses, flight responses, and asking for help. The study also categorized the various theories principals hold to explain why a teacher would use abrasive behaviors.

Nearly half of the reported interventions resulted in improved teacher performance as perceived by the principal. Nearly a quarter resulted in the teacher leaving the classroom, and a little more than a quarter resulted in no change or in the
worsening of the situation. Local teacher unions sometimes worked cooperatively with
the principal who was striving for the professional improvement or removal of a teacher.
More often, unions impeded the principal’s role of safeguarding the learning environment
for each student. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, additional textual analyses
were conducted, and 14 additional hypotheses and 18 sub-hypotheses were tested.

Conclusions and Recommendations

From the findings it was concluded: (a) abrasive teachers were present in a large
majority of schools, (b) anxious principals were less likely to use interventions that
required action with tangible outcomes, (c) schools need a systemic approach to dealing
with aggression on all levels within the school community, and (d) principals and unions
should develop ways to maintain teacher protections without sabotaging student learning.

Implications for practice include six recommendations for school stakeholders,
three themes that should be included in professional development for principals, and 12
pieces of advice that veteran principals wished to give to rookie principals. The study
ends with six specific recommendations for further research.
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A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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I have run marathons, climbed mountains, and lived in other lands, but nothing has required as much focus and steady exertion as has been required by this dissertation. Thank you, Ginger, for your love, support, and cheerleading all along the way.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Context of the Problem

All schools have *undiscussables* . . . issues that would be a social embarrassment, not just to individuals but to the school as a whole. These problems can take many forms and are very difficult to manage. . . . Teachers who bully children or administrators or parents who bully teachers exists everywhere and is an universal undiscussable.

— S. Twemlow and F. Sacco

Principals of K-12 schools are the shapers of school culture (Robbins & Alvy, 2004). They are expected to be not only instructional leaders, but also leaders who model their own continued pursuit of learning (Reeves, 2006). The concept of the *learning organization*, as promoted by Peter Senge (1990), has come to full bloom in today’s *professional learning communities* where learning is seen as continuous and inclusive of both the children and the adults associated with the school. Teachers and principals are expected to make a study of their own work and to use objective assessments, group collaboration, and personal reflection to continually improve their practice (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002). “The leadership role of the principal is a pivotal aspect of efforts to build a learning community” (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003, p. 23).

Although the principal is responsible for providing an inclusive and progressive learning community, within the classroom the teacher plays the key role in maintaining a physically and psychologically safe environment conducive to learning. According to Given (2002, as cited in Robbins & Alvy, 2004),
Unless teachers establish a classroom climate conducive to emotional safety and personal relevancy to students, children will not learn effectively and may reject education altogether. Teachers who nurture the emotional system serve as mentors for students by demonstrating sincere enthusiasm for their subject; by helping students discover a passion for learning; by guiding them toward reasonable personal goals; and by supporting them in their effort to become whatever they are capable of becoming. (p. 207, italics supplied)

Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) would agree. In concluding their sociological study of the nature of bullying, they asserted, “The concept of a secure learning environment at school should include the aspect of feeling secure socially” (p. 343). Towards that end, many schools currently have anti-bullying programs and policies in place. Yet, it is known that anti-bullying programs rise and fall on the long-term commitment of the principal and teachers (Eslea et al., 2004).

Unfortunately, teachers do not always behave as guardians for their students. Sometimes the teacher behaves as a bully. A few studies have begun to examine teacher-to-student bullying in higher education (Chapell et al., 2004; Nelson & Lambert, 2001; Twale & De Luca, 2008; Wilkin, 2010). A few other studies of teacher bullying focus on special education (Whitted & Dupper, 2008) and junior high and high school (Childers, 2009; Khoury-Kassabri, 2009; McEvoy, 2005), and others have focused on teacher-to-student bullying in elementary general education (Piekarska, 2000; Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, & Brethour Jr, 2006; Zerillo, 2010).

Though a review of the literature failed to discover research on the principal’s role in teacher bullying intervention, Namie and Namie (2011), perhaps the best-known researchers of workplace bullying, are emphatic: “Preparation [for dealing with bullying] begins at the top. . . . The board, C-suite team, and senior leadership must unequivocally want to eradicate bullying” (p. 79). Laura Crawshaw (2007), a workplace bullying
interventionist, agrees that upper management must act. Addressing managers, the business world’s counterpart to school principals, she wrote:

It’s your responsibility to manage both the performance and the conduct of your employees. Performance is what they do; conduct is how they do it—how they interact with others to fulfill their performance objectives. . . . Turning a blind eye to workplace abrasion is unacceptable and unethical; it’s our duty from a moral standpoint (as a leader of people) . . . to provide an interpersonally acceptable working environment. If you fail to do this, you will be perceived as weak and, worse, as tacitly condoning the abrasive behavior. . . . But worst of all, you will be responsible for perpetuating workplace suffering, suffering that harms the lives of your employees and their families. (Crawshaw, 2007, pp. 123-124, emphasis in the original)

Despite the abrasive teacher’s position at the intersection of school and workplace bullying concerns, and despite what is believed in both camps—that systemic solutions must begin with leadership—virtually no attention has been given to the principals’ role in intervention when the teacher is the bully. With increasing anti-bullying legislation and with public concern for student well-being, the principal’s role in dealing with teachers who bully students will likely come under examination. This study attempts to begin that work before increased legislation and more stringent reporting requirements (Christie, 2014; Rundquist, 2012) make a difficult topic even harder to study.

**Statement of the Problem**

Since the principal is responsible for providing a physically and emotionally safe learning environment for all, he or she is expected to intervene in the face of threats to that environment. An abrasive teacher who employs bullying behaviors towards students is one such threat. Teachers who bully students have been found to impede student academic progress, decrease student perceptions of safety, and lower the student’s sense of worth (McEvoy, 2005; Piekarska, 2000). However, the abrasive teacher is also a
member of the learning community the principal is to lead.

The principal’s key role in maintaining a positive learning environment may at times require the remediation or removal of an abrasive teacher. Yet the literature seems to be silent on how principals determine that an intervention is needed, what situational elements drive them toward or away from intervening, which interventions seem to work best for each member of the learning community, and whether any interventions protect the student(s) while improving the teacher.

**Statement of the Purpose**

This study sought to understand the phenomenon of teacher-to-student bullying and principal intervention from the perspective of K-12 school principals in the State of California. The study looked specifically at the prevalence of abrasive teachers, how principals identify them, how principals reach a decision about intervening, what interventions principals have used, what the perceived results were, and whether there are any patterns running through the phenomenon that may be helpful to theorists and practitioners.

**Basic Research Questions and Design**

In order to explore the phenomenon of principal intervention when teachers bully students, six questions were asked:

1. How prevalent are abrasive teachers in the work experience of K-12 school principals?

2. How do principals determine that a teacher is using abrasive behaviors on students?
3. What is involved in the principal’s decision-making process regarding intervention?

4. How have principals intervened?

5. What were the perceived outcomes of the principals’ interventions?

6. In the process of abrasive teacher intervention are there identifiable patterns between the elements of threat, anxiety, response, and outcome (TARO) that would suggest a dynamic of intervention?

Due to the complexity of the study, I created a graphic organizer to show how pattern testing was related to the four central research questions (see Figure 1).

![TARO Research Model](image)

*Figure 1.* The threat-anxiety-response-outcome (TARO) research model. The numbered rectangles and ovals each represent a research question. The curved arrows show which relationships were tested.

**Methods**

This study used a fully-integrated, mixed-methods design as described by Tashakkori and Newman (2010). It consisted of two stages: data collection and analysis.
based on an anonymous 31-question, web-based survey; then further exploration of themes and patterns during a series of semi-structured depth interviews as described by Wengraf (2004). One interview was conducted face-to-face, the other 20 were by telephone.

The stage 1 sample was composed of K-12 principals in both public and private schools in the State of California. Participation was voluntary. A total of 334 principals (response rate of 3.1%) completed the survey, though 515 principals provided enough data to be included in some analyses (a response rate of 4.8%). The 21 voluntary interview participants who comprised the stage 2 sample had also completed the survey.

**Definitions**

*Abrasive teacher:* Any employee entrusted with the educating of students whose maltreatment of a student is, in the principal’s judgment, sufficient to disrupt student learning or to lower student perceptions of safety.

*Demotivating element:* Anything present in the situation that decreased the principal’s willingness to intervene.

*Effectiveness (or Effect) of intervention:* The outcome as reported by the principal. Principals chose from six options: (a) situation is still too volatile to judge the effectiveness of the intervention, (b) things got worse (teacher is more abrasive in the classroom, or has become more hostile towards me), (c) made no difference (teacher is no less abrasive), (d) teacher’s performance is not perfect, but it is better, (e) problem is solved, teacher is gone, or (f) problem is solved, teacher is doing well.

*Intervention types:* The principal’s characterizations of his/her efforts to change the teacher’s behavior. Principals chose from the following: (a) supportive, relieving
pressure from the teacher, (b) *instructive*, providing training, counseling, coaching with a clear objective, (c) *cautionary*, setting limits and giving warnings, (d) *restrictive*, setting limits and using negative reinforcement, such as suspension, and (e) *punitive*, removing the teacher.

*Level of anxiety:* The principal’s state of emotional escalation. Principals chose one of three levels: *concerned but fairly calm, anxious, or extremely anxious or angry.*

*Modes of discovery:* The ways in which the principal became aware of the teacher’s use of bullying behavior. Principals chose from: (a) report by colleague, (b) report by student, (c) report by parent, (d) principal observation, or (e) the abrasive teacher’s self-report.

*Motivating element:* Anything present in the situation that increased the principal’s willingness to intervene.

*Principal:* Anyone who is assigned to oversee the work of any number of teachers at the building level.

*Principal attributes:* Selected information drawn from principal demographics and the principal’s personal history with bullying. Principal attributes included: *sex; age; race/ethnicity* using federal classifications—American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White (“Revisions to the Standards,” OMB, 1997) —*time in principalship,* number of years the principal reports having served as a principal; *supervision load,* the number of teachers the principal supervises; and *history of being bullied,* the principal’s recalled childhood experiences of being a bully’s target. History was reported by the principals in terms of *frequency, intensity,* and *type.*
Product: A report created to answer any research question for which no hypothesis was written. Products included reports of frequencies, percentages, categorized lists, and discovered themes. Hypotheses guided the testing of quantitative data; the listing of products clarified the other types of information sought by the study.

Stakeholder satisfaction: The post-intervention level of satisfaction for each of six parties. They were: (a) the targeted student(s), (b) the family(ies) of targeted student(s), (c) the abrasive teacher, (d) the rest of the faculty, (e) the principal, and (f) the broader school community. The principal provided his/her perception of each stakeholder’s level of satisfaction by using a 5-point Likert Scale where 1 is very dissatisfied, 3 is neutral, and 5 is very satisfied.

Delimitations

1. This study was conducted only in the State of California. Comparisons between California teachers and the rest of the teachers in the United States were not made.

2. This study was based on principal perceptions. The principal holds the leading role of responsibility for the school: its pupils, its personnel, and its programs. The principal also has access to all school stakeholders. No effort was made to test those perceptions against the perceptions of teachers, superintendents, et cetera. This allowed for broader data collection since the principal was free to fill out the survey based solely on his/her own appraisals. This decision most likely increased the response rate, and it fit with the nature of the study which was to understand principal intervention from the eyes of the principal.
Significance of the Study

Gaining a better understanding of how principals become aware of a teacher’s use of abrasive behaviors, how principals decide to intervene, what interventions the principals have used, the results of those interventions, and whether there seem to be patterns among the threat-anxiety-response-outcome (TARO) elements of intervention should be useful to: (a) researchers wishing to pursue or add to this body of knowledge, (b) principals seeking to better understand the challenges they face in dealing with abrasive teachers and the intervention strategies that have worked for others, (c) those who support principals in their roles as guardians of the learning environment such as consultants and coaches, superintendents, and school boards, (d) those who benefit from the principals’ efforts, such as, abrasive teachers, the rest of the faculty, students, parents, and the broader community, and (e) union leaders who may wish to engage administrators in conversations about how to protect teachers while keeping student well-being paramount.

Summary of Introduction

This fully-integrated mixed-methods study is exploratory in nature, opening up a topic for which little research could be found. The results were based on the analysis of data collected through an anonymous survey and semi-structured interviews with K-12 principals. The analyses help to establish: (a) the prevalence of abrasive teachers in the work experience of principals, (b) the ways in which principals identify abrasive teachers, (c) the situational elements that increase or decrease the principals’ willingness to intervene, (d) the interventions principals have tried, (e) the apparent outcomes of those interventions, and (f) patterns that may be present in intervention scenarios.
This study begins to build a knowledge base for understanding principal intervention with abrasive teachers and what might increase intervention effectiveness aimed at improving the learning environment for students and teachers. The findings are informative to principals, those who support them, those who study them, those who work with them, and those who benefit from their efforts.

In Chapter 2 the literature on abrasive teachers will be reviewed along with literature suggesting impediments to principal intervention. Chapter 3 will describe the sample, the methods that were used in collecting and analyzing the data, and the research questions along with their related hypotheses or the expected products of textual analysis. The results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses will be presented in Chapter 4, and discussed in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To establish criteria for the selection of literature I first considered what would need to be known about abrasive teachers and the phenomenon of principal intervention. The desired knowledge was mirrored in the research questions, so I sought literature that could be helpful in: (a) defining and conceptualizing the term *abrasive teacher*, (b) identifying the bullying behaviors of abrasive teachers, (c) understanding which students are targeted, (d) finding a model for understanding why teachers would choose to maltreat students, (e) comprehending the tangible effects of maltreatment, (f) establishing some estimate of prevalence, (g) certifying that it is the principal’s responsibility to intervene, (h) understanding what impedes intervention, and (i) identifying an effective intervention model, whether from the field of education or elsewhere.

The resulting review of the literature is composed of two major sections: what is known about abrasive teachers and what is known about principal response. Section one will conceptualize the abrasive teacher and explore what behaviors they use, who they target, three models for understanding their behavior, and the effects of bullying on targets. It will close by examining research on prevalence. Section two will present the need for principal intervention, the impediments to intervention, and one potential model for effective intervention.
**Abrasive Teachers**

Classroom climate, particularly as it relates to positive teacher-to-student relationships, is important to the academic progress of students (Childers, 2009; Robbins & Alvy, 2004) and is associated with lower levels of bullying (Yoneyama & Rigby, 2006). The school, and particularly the classroom teacher, has “an increasingly defined responsibility in relation to child protection” (Baginsky, 2000, p. 74). The teacher’s protection of a child is not only direct (how that teacher chooses to treat the child) it is also indirect (how that teacher treats the child’s peers). Aronson (2000) contends that even the teacher’s instructional strategies will increase or decrease student alienation and hostility, which may go on to manifest in peer victimization. “The concept of a secure learning environment at school should include the aspect of feeling secure socially” (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008, p. 343). It is reasonable to conclude that both the teacher’s attitude and behavior help to regulate the students’ perceptions of safety and thereby impact the effectiveness of the learning environment.

At times some teachers become a source of threat to students by abusing their power, introducing “a street culture of ‘might is right’. In the end children will do what they have to to get by, but fear impairs the capacity to learn” (Twemlow et al., 2006, p. 188). Since the principal’s leadership role “is a pivotal aspect of efforts to build a learning community” (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003), and since teachers and principals are expected to make a study of their own work in order to continually improve their practice (Eaker et al., 2002), it is therefore crucial that principals intervene when a teacher’s behavior threatens to undo a school culture of respect for people and of love for learning.
Conceptualizing the Abrasive Teacher

Though the term *abrasive* has previously been used in the literature to identify *managers* who interrupt workflow with their use of intimidation and humiliation (Crawshaw, 2007), the use of the term to describe *teachers* required developing a definition. It also required situating the concept of *abrasive teacher* relative to other concepts, such as, the negative *abusive, incompetent, or marginal teacher*, and the more positive *demanding* or *unconventional teacher*. This section will deal with both the definition and the concept.

Towards a Definition of Abrasive

The term *abrasive* is closely related to the term *bully*, though not identical. A study of definitions is helpful in clarifying the use of the two words. *Bully* is frequently used in the current educational world. Dan Olweus, a pioneer of research on bully/victim problems, defines bullying in school thus:

A student is bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on part of one or more students. Negative actions can include physical contact, words, making faces or dirty gestures, and intentional exclusion from a group. An additional criterion of bullying is an imbalance in strength, i.e., the student who is exposed to negative actions has difficulty in defending himself or herself. (Olweus, 1995, p. 197)

Bullying research has expanded to include workplace bullying, which has been 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. (Namie & Namie, 2011, p. 13)

Most definitions of bullying include three characteristics: (a) repetitiveness, (b)
physical or psychological harm to the target, and (c) a power imbalance which favors the bully. Some researchers include the factor of intentionality in their definitions (Olweus, 1993); however, Ruth Sylvester (2010) contends that teachers may either knowingly or unintentionally bully students. “Teachers may justify their behavior as motivational, an appropriate part of the instruction, an appropriate disciplinary response, or good classroom management” (p. 44). In working with abrasive executives, Laura Crawshaw (2007) has repeatedly found abrasive managers to be unaware of the suffering they cause in the workplace. Intentionality is frequently and easily denied by the abrasive person. Therefore, to help her clients understand the suffering they have created in the workplace, Crawshaw helps them focus on the level of threat perceived by their employees, not on the level of threat they intended to convey. Intentionality, she notes, becomes a tangential issue when intervening with an abrasive individual in the workplace.

Twemlow et al. (2006) defined bully teacher as “one who uses his or her powers to punish, manipulate, or disparage a student beyond what would be a reasonable disciplinary procedure” (p. 191). Sherry Baker Childers focused on the behavior of bully teachers and defined student maltreatment as “the physical or psychological treatment of a student by a teacher that is abusive and/or neglectful and which negatively impacts the student” (Childers, 2009, p. 2).

*Addressing Teacher Bullies: A Practical Guide for Educators* (Daniels, 2011) is a professional development presentation distributed by Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. The presentation lists four traits of teacher bullies: (a) they are strong-willed, (b) they have a high need for a sense of control, (c) they are resistant to change, and (d) they lack empathy for others (Daniels, 2011).
Laura Crawshaw (2007), who has worked for 30 years helping abrasive executives become more empathic and pro-social, says she avoids using the word *bully*. She explains that it “implies that those individuals *want* to hurt others, that they intentionally set out to do harm.” Instead she has found that they “don’t intend to harm— their intent is to motivate. And if they do cause harm, more often than not they’re blind to the fact that they’ve wounded others” (p. 21). She also feels that using the word *bully* is unprofessional, commenting that the authors of “bully-battling books behaved like bullies themselves, indulging in derogatory, disrespectful descriptors of abrasive bosses.” The word *abrasive* “describe[s] behavioral styles without demonizing or denigrating. . . . It is descriptive without being disrespectful” (p. 21).

Taking the point even further, social anthropologist Janice Harper (2011) wrote:

Calling a person a “bully” may be effective in bringing an aggressive individual down to size, but that very quality is what makes the label so problematic. The use of any derogatory label to describe a person is dehumanizing and promotes stereotypes. When we dehumanize a person with a label, we make it easier to attack them. (para. 3)

Moving away from the *bully* label, Crawshaw (2007) focuses on behaviors and defines *abrasive* as “any aggressive interpersonal behavior that causes emotional distress in coworkers sufficient to disrupt organizational functioning” (p. 26). Following Crawshaw’s lead, *abrasive teacher* is defined as “a teacher whose maltreatment of a student is, in the principal’s judgment, sufficient to disrupt student learning or to lower student perception of safety.”

The few studies that ask teachers about their aggressive behavior (Chapell et al., 2004; Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005) ask if the teachers have *bullied* a peer or a student rather than if they *are* bullies. It may be easier for people to admit to *acting* like bullies
than to describe themselves as being bullies. Therefore, within this study behaviors may be described as *bullying behaviors*, but people will be described as *abrasive*.

**Positioning Abrasive Relative to Abusive and Incompetent**

Crawshaw (2007) would be quick to point out that abrasive people are not merely irritating; they “inflict . . . lasting wounds” (p. 24). She would use abrasive and abusive synonymously. However, school administrators are mandated reporters of any form of child abuse (“Child Abuse Reporting,” 2014). Citing White and Flynt (2002), McEachern, Aluede, and Kenny (2008) state, “The use of physical and emotional punishment is typically not tolerated, and teachers can pay serious disciplinary actions and legal sanctions if they are found to be abusive” (p. 5). Therefore, principals may be more open to discussing teachers in their schools that are abrasive rather than abusive.

Abrasive teachers may go unreported in the school setting because of the type of abuse they use. Citing Kemp (1998), Childers (2009) states that “when only psychological abuse is used (as opposed to physical abuse) it is difficult to deal with the intangible aspect of this abuse” (p. 1). Intangible aspects are hard to document, which means that a principal may find it difficult to justify intervention for the abrasive teacher or to build a case for the abrasive teacher’s termination.

An abrasive teacher may be technically competent and yet interpersonally *incompetent*. Crawshaw (2007) clarifies the distinction by contrasting *conduct* and *performance*.

*Conduct* refers to *interpersonal competence*: the degree to which one interacts effectively with coworkers. *Performance*, in contrast, refers to *technical competence*: one’s ability to execute the technical aspects of work. Conduct and performance
aren’t necessarily linked—a person can be technically brilliant and interpersonally dim. (p. 23)

The term *marginal teacher* has been widely used in education, but few writers offer precise definitions. In her 2010 study, Kelly Causey differentiated *marginal* from *incompetent* as follows:

Marginal teacher: A marginal teacher is one who struggles for whatever reason (social, emotional, lack of preparedness, classroom management, interpersonal skills, etc.) to be an effective teacher, but who is willing and able to make adjustments and changes and work, with support, to improve.

Incompetent teacher: An incompetent teacher is one who is unable to effectively manage a classroom or deliver instruction, and who is unwilling or unable to improve even given the appropriate support, coaching, and guidance. (Causey, 2010, p. 9)

For Causey the main distinction between *marginal* and *incompetent* is the teacher’s willingness and ability to improve. When willingness and ability are both considered, one can only wait for time and outcomes to show whether the teacher did improve. Therefore, an abrasive teacher could be termed marginal or incompetent based on outcomes not yet known.

The key issue is to recognize that the abrasive teacher’s negative interpersonal behaviors are a matter of poor conduct. American K-12 schools value teacher conduct along with teacher performance. The need for a teacher to maintain highly positive interpersonal conduct may seem obvious given his or her fiduciary role in managing other people’s children. Citing Sternberg and Williams (2002), McEachern et al. (2008) state: “In the United States, teachers are expected to treat students equally and create a fair classroom environment for all students regardless of their culture, race, gender, or other group differences” (p. 5). Abrasive teachers often fail to treat students equally, choosing instead to favor some students and to intimidate, humiliate, or neglect other
students based on traits the teacher finds undesirable. Therefore, *abrasive teacher* is a conduct-related subset of *marginal teacher*.

**Contrasting Abrasive and Demanding**

Although students need a caring environment to thrive, they also need a challenging one to progress academically. The Effective Schools research of the 1990s led to several statements of the correlates of effective schools. Common to the various lists was high expectations for the academic success of each child (Lezotte & Pepperl, 1999; Reynolds, Sammons, Stoll, Barber, & Hillman, 1996). Rigorous studies can cause stress for students, and a demanding teacher can be both feared and loved by his or her students. Some educators and parents may fear that a call for teachers to “be nice” might be a call to lower standards or to be permissive.

This point was well articulated in an email of protest I received from one high-school principal during data collection. He wrote that two of his faculty have been complained about as being abrasive, but that by graduation they are among the best loved precisely because they were a bit abrasive “in just the right way.” He maintained that “abrasives are precisely what is used in any polishing. Hence, abrasion can be a good quality. I want my students to shine like a well-polished gem.” He cautioned against using the term *abrasive* to describe a true bully of a teacher. Doing so, he felt, would unfairly label thousands of good, demanding teachers and allow the real bullies to go unidentified (see Appendix A for the full text).

It is important to distinguish between the demanding teacher and the abrasive teacher. Philip Zimbardo (2008) uses the word *dispositional* to describe things coming from an individual’s nature and *situational* to describe things the individual might do
based on a particular time and place. An abrasive teacher may tend to see a student’s mistakes, misbehaviors, and shortcomings as being dispositional—part of who they are—and therefore, mostly uncorrectable and hopeless. A demanding teacher is more likely to see student mistakes, misbehaviors, and shortcomings as situational—as belonging to this precise event or time—and therefore, correctable.

Though both teachers may address the specific misdeed, the abrasive teacher will be more likely to attack the student with personal barbs as noted by McEachern et al. (2008) who highlighted several teacher behaviors that are not necessary for academic rigor or classroom control, but are indicative of emotional abuse:

Classroom discipline is different from emotional abuse. . . . [Discipline] should focus on student behavior and not on a student’s character (Charles, 1999), personality, race, ethnicity disabling condition, or sexual orientation. Discipline should not involve name-calling or labeling students, making demeaning or sarcastic remarks about them, and denying their feelings. (p. 5)

McEachern et al. (2008) would further describe abrasive teachers as “those who fail to communicate an interest in or caring and affection for students” (p. 5). Demanding teachers, though sometimes feared for the high expectations they hold, are also loved for the fact that they are strongly supportive of each student. Demanding teachers believe students can and will succeed.

**Contrasting Abrasive and Unconventional**

Two recent examples illustrate how an offensive act does not necessarily indicate an abrasive teacher. In Idaho, a fourth-grade teacher engaged her students in setting the reward and penalty for meeting, or failing to meet, a personal reading goal. The class voted that those who met the goal could draw on the faces of those who did not (Reed,
2012). Some parents were outraged, and headlines declared it to be a bullying incident. As the story gained wider publication over the following days a nasty twist was added when some reports stated erroneously that this was punishment for “flunking.” While this may have caused embarrassment and shame for the nine students who did not meet their goals, the community refused to condemn the teacher. Her love for her students and her engagement with them in classroom decision-making caused one parent to comment that she hoped the teacher would stay for a long time.

In Arizona, a high-school principal in his first year made headlines when he offered a choice to two underclassmen who had been in a fistfight. They could be suspended or hold hands during the lunch hour. They chose holding hands for an hour (“Westwood High School Students in Arizona,” 2012). Students taunted the students, and the principal was criticized for creating a bully climate. The story gathered its own spin as the Huffington Post erroneously headlined that the youth had been forced to hold hands. The community rallied behind the principal, placing a sign near the school that read, “[Our] neighborhood supports [the principal].” despite the district administration’s censure of the principal’s action. Here again, the principal’s energy, engagement, and goodwill towards the students and the staff prevented the community from seeing the principal as a threat. Students even rallied in his support and held hands at school while some wore orange shirts saying “Keep Calm & Hold Hands” (Cruz, 2012).

Bullying Behaviors of Teachers

Teacher maltreatment of students has been described with simple lists of anti-social behaviors and with attempts to categorize such behaviors. This section will review both, as well as a newer cluster of behaviors called subtle abuse.
Specific Behaviors

Almon Shumba (2002) examined data from the emotional abuse cases involving teacher maltreatment of students in Zimbabwe. Shumba identified the forms of emotional abuse being used on primary students as being: the constant belittling of student(s), the absence of a positive emotional atmosphere, verbal abuse, shouting, scolding, the use of vulgar language, humiliation and negative labeling of students (e.g., stupid, ugly, foolish), and terrorizing students. In Shumba’s study, 300 primary teachers and 150 primary teacher trainees were asked to identify who seemed most likely to use such tactics. Interestingly, the majority of respondents stated that female teachers were more likely to use these behaviors than were male teachers, though the teacher trainees saw men as slightly more likely (52%) to use vulgar language toward students.

Similar to Shumba’s (2002) findings are those of Katherine R. Wentzel (1997), whose longitudinal study of middle-school student motivation identified the following teacher behaviors as uncaring: exhibiting disinterest in knowing or teaching students; having poor classroom management skills; ignoring students when the students were in distress; and yelling, screaming, embarrassing, insulting, and picking on students during class or in front of others.

Citing Krugman and Krugman (1984), McEachern et al. (2008) noted abusive behaviors that included: screaming at students until they cried, making degrading comments and labeling students as stupid and dumb, threatening students, and using homework as punishment.

Childers (2009) found that teacher maltreatment of students was often performed in front of other students or teachers, abusive teachers treated students inequitably, and
abusive teachers lacked positive two-way communication with students.

**Categories of Abusive Behavior**

Wayne C. Nesbit (1991) questioned veteran teachers, special-needs support staff, students who were in teacher-preparatory training, and high-school students. He asked them to list specific teacher behaviors that were emotionally abusive, and found that the behaviors could be classified under six broad categories as follows: (a) demeaning, (b) discriminating, prejudicial, and biased, (c) dominating and controlling, (d) destabilizing and intimidating, (e) distancing and emotionally non-supportive, and (f) diverse; that is, manifestations of attitudes that have a negative impact on the classroom climate.

Paul and Smith (2000) identified six areas common to teaching where teacher misuse of power typically occurs: (a) discipline and student relationships, (b) student evaluation, (c) student grouping, (d) classroom or school procedures and rules, (e) instructional practices, and (f) physical plant or resources.

A professional development slideshow, *Addressing Teacher Bullies: A Practical Guide for Educators* produced by Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, provides professional development on the topic of teacher bullying. Using categories identified by Les Parsons (2005) the presentation lists four categories of teacher bullying behaviors along with six examples in each category: (a) verbal: name-calling, taunting, cultural slurs, teasing, stereotyping, and belittling; (b) physical: hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing objects, pushing, and pinching; (c) professional: denying access to resources, facilities, or programs; misrepresenting a student’s ability or behavior, penalizing students academically for behavioral problems, refusing to provide remediation, punishing the same student repeatedly for unspecified reasons, and
enforcing illogical consequences, and (d) psychological: intimidating, mocking and use of sarcasm, screaming, excluding, ostracizing (including encouraging other students to bully the target), and humiliating (Daniels, 2011).

One category, professional maltreatment, sets this list apart from the forms of abuse used by students who bully students. The teacher, standing in a much more powerful position than a student’s peers, has greater ability to harm the student’s future and undermine the student’s sense of self-efficacy. However, a teacher’s professional maltreatment of students may be just as difficult for the principal to detect and confirm as verbal, physical, or psychological maltreatment.

In a mixed-methods study of 189 teachers, Christine Zerillo (2010) found that her respondents tended to categorize teacher bullying of students by the outcome to the student. Thus, the categories of physical, verbal, and relational bullying were absorbed into two new categories: denial of access and belittling. Denial of access includes actions that prohibited a student from participating in activities or rejection of a student's request. Belittling refers to actions or words that humiliate a student. Denial of access as a form of bullying has also been identified by other writers (Paul & Smith, 2000).

**Subtle Abuse**

Abusive behaviors can be difficult for observers to detect even though the targets of those behaviors fully understand them and regularly suffer because of them. This was highlighted by the Finnish researchers Päivi Hamarus and Pauli Kaikkonen (2008). The researchers found that despite many years of research and bullying prevention programs, bullying is not decreasing. In an effort to better understand the phenomenon of bullying, they asked 85 students (ages 13-15) in lower secondary schools in Finland to write essays
about their experience of bullying. The students were peer-support students (peer counselors) attending a weekend retreat. The exercise was repeated a year later, and the researchers interviewed 10 students who admitted to having bullied others. The researchers then evaluated the data from the social and cultural viewpoint. They found that bullying serves to identify (even create) and enforce group norms while strengthening the bully’s (bullies’) position with the group. This bears a resemblance to the power the teacher legitimately wields in directing the classroom. Bullying persists because it is tied to a common dynamic of social life and leadership.

Another finding from Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) of particular relevance to the current study is that much of the bullying—the humiliation, punishment, and invalidation of the target—happens in short communicative incidents that carry full meaning for the target and the bystanders, but can remain undetected by the teacher (p. 333). They note the two prongs of this dynamic: (a) these events are brief, and (b) they can be interpreted in more than one way.

A principal may field student and parent complaints about a mean teacher, and yet remember many visits to the classroom where the teacher appeared to behave appropriately. If student bullies, according to Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008), can effectively control their peer group through small interactive events undetected by the teacher, it is possible that abrasive teachers may also dominate their students through the use of brief and subtle behaviors which are difficult for the principal to detect.

In terms of acts with multiple interpretations, any glance, any gesture, any short phrase can become invested with meaning through repeated coupling with an unpleasant event. In the same way that Pavlov’s dogs (Harre, 2009) were conditioned, a conditioned
student may inwardly cringe upon seeing or hearing a familiar expression even if the presence of the principal prevents or delays the expected invalidation from the teacher which would normally follow. Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) state that the bully establishes brief, often non-verbal rituals for silencing the target, for example, sighs or eye rolling when the student begins to speak. They also establish subjugation rituals, isolation rituals, and even disgust rituals (p. 340). It is possible that a teacher who uses bullying behaviors in the classroom may also establish such rituals.

Nesbit and Philpott (2002) asked 318 undergraduate students to list teacher behaviors that were subtly abusive. The researchers used the resulting 384 responses to identify seven broad categories. The categories reveal a mix of arenas and methods an abrasive teacher may use to invalidate a student. They are: (a) body language, (b) discrimination, (c) grading practices, (d) time utilization, (e) treatment of exceptional students, (f) verbal interactions including questioning techniques, and (g) other random behaviors.

Students Targeted by Teachers

Three groups of students seem to be overrepresented as targets of teacher maltreatment: bully/victims, the academically slow, and the very bright. In a study of 16,604 students in Grades 7-11 in 324 schools across Israel, Mona Khoury-Kassabri (2009) found that bully-victims reported significantly more staff maltreatment than did other students. Supporting the idea that some teachers bully due to frustration, the researcher stated, “Bully-victims present multiple challenges for school staff and they are in need for special attention. . . . It is essential to support teachers to help them cope effectively with difficult situations without resorting to aggression” (p. 914).
The behaviorally challenging student is not the only one to experience teacher aggression. Those needing the most help academically are also targeted. In a study of 50 alternative education students, Whitted and Dupper (2008) found that 86% reported physical maltreatment and 88% reported psychological maltreatment by teachers or other adults during their school career. Teachers may also feel frustrated by students for whom the teacher’s instruction seems to have limited effect. “In the inclusive classroom, children with special needs are especially vulnerable to both blatant and subtle emotional abuse” (Nesbit & Philpott, 2002, p. 32).

A third group that experiences teacher aggression are the very bright students:

Envy of smarter students seems surprising but has been widely recognized in the early literature on education as part of a social condition called ressentiment, derived from Nietzsche’s (1956) term reflecting a general envy and anger, especially of others who seem smarter than oneself. Whereas Nietzsche saw it as a pervasive societal phenomenon, educators such as Nordstrom et al. (1968) see it as a significant problem in US classrooms. (Twemlow et al., 2006, p. 195)

Models Explaining Teacher Bullies

Some researchers have identified situational factors that teachers believe drive them to become aggressive. Situational factors include greater diversity in classrooms, larger class sizes, lack of administrative support, presence of special-needs students, and behaviorally challenged students (Childers, 2009; Nesbit & Philpott, 2002; Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005). Such factors warrant study and action since systemic pressures can propel people to initiate hurtful actions (Twemlow & Sacco, 2013; Zimbardo, 2008).

Research has been conducted to understand what is going on in the minds (and even the bodies) of those who bully or are bullied (Gini, 2006; Meland, Rydning, Lobben, Breidablik, & Ekeland, 2010). In attempting to understand why students bully
students, Gianluca Gini (2006) reviewed the literature and found two conflicting models. One describes the bully as a cold manipulative individual who leads gangs to achieve personal goals, and the other describes the bully as a child lacking in social skills. Gini found that a dynamic different from the two models may be at work within the aggressive child. Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), Gini (2006) used psychometrics to ascertain that aggressive children as a group are no better or worse than others at “theory of mind” tasks that would predict social genius or “oafishness.” Gini also found that bullies did no worse than others in picking up on the moral implications contained in stories.

Gini (2006) identified a statistically significant positive correlation between moral disengagement and bullies, the bullies’ assistants, and the bullies’ reinforcers. Conversely, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between moral disengagement and children who defended the victims, and again, between moral disengagement and those who were never around when the incidents occurred. The children acting aggressively or supporting aggression were better at justifying their immoral acts. The ones least able to excuse their immoral actions were the ones who ultimately defend the victims or who are always somewhere else when the action happens. The victims scored more neutrally in terms of moral disengagement. One reviewer of this article asked if the bully-victim group might have presented differently, but Gini responded that the bully-victim group was too small for meaningful separate analysis.

The Gini (2006) study serves to illustrate that multiple, and sometimes conflicting, models may be present concurrently in the literature. The quest to
understand the minds and motives of teachers who act aggressively towards their students can be seen in three models.

**Model 1: Abrasive Teachers Are Sadistic Bullies or Bully-Victims**

An early model is found in the work of Stuart A. Twemlow et al. (2006), who used factor analysis to identify two types of abrasive teachers most easily described as the *sadistic bully* and the *bully-victim*. With respect to the source of those labels, Twemlow et al. reference an earlier clinical study (Twemlow, 2000) that focuses on children who bully other children. That study describes the *sadistic bully* as a child with stable self-esteem and little anxiety who bullies with pleasure. On the other hand, the *bully-victim* is a child who provokes bullying, and then acts in a victimized way after being attacked. The researchers found that the teachers in their 2006 study “observe a type of bullying teacher who is more a bully type (the sadistic bully teacher) and a type of bullying teacher who is more like a victim (the bully-victim teacher)” (Twemlow et al., 2006, p. 195).

The 2006 (Twemlow et al.) study acknowledges parallels between the teachers’ observations of teacher bullies (some were more like bullies and some were more like victims) and the two types of bullies (sadistic bullies and bully-victims) identified in the 2000 (Twemlow) study. A study by Childers (2009) also found that the abrasive teachers reported by student participants could be classified according to the two types identified by Twemlow et al. (2006).

How many teachers could be classified as sadistic bullies? Neither Twemlow et
al. (2006) nor Childers (2009) offer an estimate of prevalence. However, Twemlow et al. (2006) state:

There is no doubt that there are some teachers who are not suited for teaching because of a sadistic tendency, but these are a tiny minority of those who devote themselves to the education of children. The bully-victim type of teacher is more likely to be amenable to retraining than the sadistic bully teacher, if there is validity in comparing these types of bullying behaviors with those in children. (p. 195, italics supplied)

By contrast, the bully-victim teachers would comprise the huge majority of those who were classed as abrasive.

The concept of bully-victim has received additional study, and the estimates of prevalence of this type of bully among children have indicated that it is not a large group. In an Italian study bully-victims represented only 6.8% of the total bully and victim groups (Gini, 2006, p. 531). Australian researcher Ken Rigby (2010) set the number at 15%. In two studies using Olweus data collected from 19,154 students in Grades 4-10, Solberg, Olweus, and Endresen (2007) found that the prevalence of bully-victims was not only low, it also declined as grade level increased. The overlap of bully-victims with the total victim group was fairly small (10-20%) in all grades. In primary grades, bully-victims constituted about 30-50% of the total bully group; however, in higher grades these proportions were considerably lower. Since the incidence of bully-victims drops off as a function of age, one might wonder why bully-victims would be so strongly represented in the teaching force.

Twemlow et al. (2006) found that “teachers who experienced bullying themselves when young are more likely to both bully students and experience bullying by students both in classrooms and outside the classroom” (p. 187). A bullied child, once grown up, will bully others.
There are some differences in situations in which the bullying inflicts social pain. Nordgren, Banas, and MacDonald (2011) found that people generally underestimate the severity of social pain (ostracism, shame, etc.). Their misjudgment of social pain is only corrected after they have experienced social pain for themselves. In other words, a socially bullied child, once grown up, will be more empathic with those who are socially bullied.

**Model 2: Abrasive Teachers Are Exhausted**

Emotional labor (Grandey, 2000; Näring, Briët, & Brouwers, 2006) is another concept which may offer insight into why adults behave badly with children. Emotional labor can be described by the example of a plumber who has prided himself on always solving the problem but now finds himself working for a plumbing service that promises “excellent service with a smile.” The phrase, “with a smile,” has actual weight. It means that customers can complain that the plumber doesn’t feel friendly to them. They want their drains fixed and they want to feel happier during or after his visit. Providing that happiness factor, even on days when he is blue, is what is called emotional labor. It is the social, emotional side of the work, and it is real. On some days, it can take willful, concerted effort.

Mark A. Stebnicki (2007) uses a related term, *empathy fatigue*, to describe the condition of counselors who have become impaired in their ability to effectively serve clients. According to Stebnicki, a counselor may relive his or her own experiences of trauma or grief as he or she connects empathically with the story of a client. Continued exercise of empathic response can lead to empathy fatigue, at which point the counselor
experiences burnout, and his or her effectiveness becomes impaired.

Bridget Cooper (2004), in reporting on her doctoral thesis findings, states:

Despite an overwhelming desire to support, care for and relate deeply to pupils, teachers were continually constrained by the conditions in which they worked. Time was stolen from them by the nature of the current education system; the fragmented and rigid curriculum; the time poor nature of their working conditions; the bureaucracy of modern education and the large numbers of pupils and low frequency of contact. The moral model available for students becomes degraded and [student] needs remained unmet. (p. 12)

Further elaborating on the problem Cooper (2004) writes, “As teachers became more conscious of making connections [emotionally with students] to facilitate learning, empathy became a tool” (p. 17). Cooper labeled this functional empathy which may feel disingenuous to students.

Cooper (2004) further identifies a type of functional empathy she terms stereotypic empathy, which is found particularly at the secondary level. A secondary teacher typically has insufficient time to deeply connect with the individual student. Therefore, the teacher relates to the whole class by creating a group model or stereotype. Though the teacher may “love my class,” this kind of functional empathy contributes to student alienation.

Though necessary for managing and engaging classes, the group model negates the feelings of the individual, and teachers cannot model a personal and caring approach. More time is spent on articulating and enforcing rules and managing classes. Teachers cannot understand students or attach to them strongly enough to engender or promote mutual respect. Students can be alienated, neglected, ignored and undervalued. This weakens the moral climate. The size of the class and pressure of the curriculum leads to teacher domination. The teacher models telling not listening and [necessarily] shows disinterest in individuals for much of the time. Students compete for the one adult resource and are obliged to ignore the needs and feelings of peers in their attempts to have their own needs met. (Cooper, 2004, p. 21)

Students aren’t the only ones who suffer: “Empathic teachers exhaust themselves finding pockets of profound empathy for needy children in corridors and in the entrances
and exits to lessons, but it is never enough. Student teachers blame themselves for their failure to meet individual needs” (Cooper, 2004, p. 20).

Though secondary teachers interact with higher numbers of students on a daily basis, elementary teachers are no strangers to exhaustion. Exhaustion is a normal part of the elementary teacher’s work condition (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011a, 2011b; Tsouloupas, Carson, Matthews, Grawitch, & Barber, 2010). McDaniel-Hine and Willower (1988) studied the sheer level of interaction, activity, and interruption experienced by veteran teachers in Grades 2-4 and compared their findings with studies of teacher busyness in sixth grade and high school. “Our elementary teachers had more than twice as many in-class exchanges as their counterparts in the secondary study” (p. 277). “Our most salient finding is the extent to which elementary teachers’ work is varied, choppy, and fast paced” (p. 279). The researchers found that when they combined all activities and exchanges, the elementary teachers were averaging a change of activity every 37 seconds. That does not factor in the 81 daily interruptions. The daily round of caring for the hurts, frustrations, anger, squabbles, and loneliness of a classroom full of young individuals can be akin to the parent bird arriving at the nest with one grasshopper only to be greeted by the open, yammering mouths of many chicks. For the empathically responsive teacher, a single, normal day can result in deep weariness. It may be possible that a caring teacher can become empathically fatigued and respond as though he or she did not care for the students’ emotional well-being.

**Model 3: Abrasive Teachers Are Responding to Threat**

A third model is suggested in the work of Laura Crawshaw (Crawshaw, 2005,
2007, 2010) who offers executive coaching to abrasive leaders. Combining several of Sigmund Freud’s concepts, Crawshaw (2007) believes that people respond to perceived threat by becoming anxious and choosing a defensive strategy, most typically fight or flight. She calls this chain of threat-anxiety-defense the *TAD Dynamic* (see Figure 2). Crawshaw has identified the TAD Dynamic underlying the difficulties surrounding abrasive leaders, presenting both in the abrasive leader and in the beleaguered employees. It can cause significant suffering in the workplace.

![Figure 2. TAD Dynamic chart.](image-url)
The TAD dynamic begins when an employee perceives a threat. Abrasive leaders often miss this point and argue that they did not intend a threat. Threat produces anxiety as the employee fears losing his/her job or their credibility and quickly chooses a defense to protect self. The employee’s defensive behavior may be perceived as a threat by the leader who then responds with aggressive behavior. The cycle of anxiety and reaction can rapidly escalate.

An abrasive leader may not think that he or she is reacting to anxiety; often the leader’s first recognized emotion is anger. To help the leader understand the origin of the anger, Crawshaw (2007) asks a short series of “why” questions. Soon it is apparent that the employee who has angered the leader is performing in a way that may call the leader’s competence into question. For instance, if the employee is not producing adequately, people may think the leader is ineffectual in motivating her. Or if the employee is producing poor quality work, people may think the leader was unable to adequately train or supervise the poor performer. A self-image of competence is extremely important to the leader, so his/her display of anger is a good indicator that the leader is feeling threatened.

The concept that threat incites aggression is reflected in some studies in the field of education. In a Canadian study involving 389 undergraduate students and pre-service teachers who had observed or experienced abuse by teachers, Glynn W. B. Sharpe (2011) observed that “teachers who are experiencing stress due to a lack of administrative support and are not feeling competent or satisfied may be at risk to abuse. Supports should be implemented to reduce the stressors that could result in abuse” (p. 173). Sharpe recommended that teachers be supported and trained to manage stress in such a way as to
lower their incidence of acting abusively.

Twemlow et al. (2006) found that teachers who were most likely to bully students were also most likely to (a) remember having been bullied as children, (b) perceive threat from current students in and out of class, and (c) see other teachers as being bullies. In other words, abrasive teachers' memories and perceptions reflect more anxiety than do typical teachers. They wrote:

We see bullying as an attitudinal characteristic derived from coercive power dynamics established in childhood, in family and in school environments, leading individuals with experience of such power dynamics to be more likely to be trapped in bully-victim dynamics with changing victim and bully roles and more alert to bullying of others around them. (p. 195)

Also supporting the idea of teacher aggression as response to threat, Khoury-Kassabri (2009) found that teachers with poor classroom management skills tend to rely on aggression in their efforts to direct the students. She recommended that additional training in the skills of classroom management be used to decrease teacher reliance on aggression.

In her coaching practice, Crawshaw (2010) helps abrasive leaders see that many of their employees’ dysfunctions come from the employees’ efforts to defend themselves in threatening situations. Whereas the leader typically uses a fight strategy of defense, such as threatening, blaming, belittling, and coercing; the employee, due to a position of less power, typically uses a flight strategy of defense such as reduced work output, learned helplessness, or absenteeism.

Abrasive teachers have been found to use fight strategies similar to those of abrasive executives: threatening, belittling, screaming, and labeling (McEachern et al., 2008; Shumba, 2002; Wentzel, 1997). Targeted students have also been found to use
flight strategies similar to victimized employees: depression, disengagement, truancy (absenteeism), self-destructive behaviors (e.g., smoking, cutting, and suicidal ideation), and self-silencing (Childers, 2009; Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008; Piekarska, 2000; Twemlow et al., 2006).

The TAD Dynamic also helps to explain why teachers bully students who are behaviorally challenging (Khoury-Kassabri, 2009), students who are slow learners (Nesbit & Philpott, 2002; Whitted & Dupper, 2008), and students who are especially bright (Twemlow et al., 2006). Any student who needs management, remediation, or enrichment that is beyond the teacher’s customary repertoire will likely pose a threat to a teacher who feels insecure regarding his or her abilities. Perhaps the same can be said of the impact on principals when a teacher needs assistance or puts up resistance that the principal is poorly equipped to address.

Effects of Bullying on Students

Despite growing public concern over bullying, not all people are convinced that bullying is anything more than one of the unavoidable annoyances of childhood. However, a number of studies list the significant detrimental effects of peer-to-peer bullying.

When Students Bully Students

Peer-to-peer bullying has adverse effects on student academic achievement (Delfabbro et al., 2006; Ma, Phelps, Lerner, & Lerner, 2009). Bullying also lowers the target’s self-esteem (Delfabbro et al., 2006), increases anti-social behaviors and delinquency (Bender & Lösel, 2011), increases student emotional health and
psychosomatic complaints (Meland et al., 2010), increases at-risk behaviors (Delfabbro et al., 2006), and self-destructive behaviors, especially in girls who are targets of indirect bullying (Olafsen & Viemerö, 2000). Being bullied is associated with trauma and post-traumatic disorders (Penning, Bhagwanjee, & Govender, 2010). Garrett (2003, as cited in Childers, 2009) wrote:

Students who are maltreated can suffer physically and emotionally. Physical side effects suffered by victims include frequent illnesses such as flu and glandular infections, joint and muscle pain that lingers even after medical treatment, constant fatigue, migraine headaches, insomnia, nightmares, irritable bowel syndrome, skin problems, poor concentration, panic attacks, and heart palpitations. Emotional repercussions that can emerge are chronic stress and anxiety, the tendency to withdraw socially, loss of self-esteem and confidence, feelings of isolation and depression, fear to travel alone, mistrust of others, and academic decline. (p. 32)

In contrast to the opinion that bullying is a part of growing up and may even build character in the victims, every one of the United States, except Montana, has enacted anti-bullying laws in their state education codes and elsewhere (State Laws and Policies, n.d.).

Bullied students are not the only victims. While a study spanning seven countries and involving 48,000 children stated that “no social disadvantages were found to be associated with bully status” (Eslea et al., 2004, p. 78), an analysis of data from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, a national longitudinal study, found that being a bully predicted lower grades, and it was more detrimental for girls than for boys (Ma et al., 2009). Additionally, Bender and Lösel (2011) found that being a bully is a strong predictor of anti-social outcomes, but being a victim is not. A Swedish study found that bullying in early adolescence strongly predicted later criminality (Olweus, 2011), and Rigby (2010) writes that letting a child remain in the bully role unchecked contributes to their development as an aggressive adult.
While intervention against bullying is particularly important to reduce the suffering of the victims, it is also highly desirable to counteract these tendencies for the sake of the aggressive student, as bullies are much more likely than other students to expand their antisocial behaviors. Research shows that reducing aggressive, antisocial behavior may also reduce substance use and abuse. (“Olweus Bullying Prevention Program,” 2005)

**When Teachers Bully Students**

The literature contains information on the effects of teacher-to-student bullying. A study of 271, 13- to 14-year-old students in Poland found that the most frequent stressors in the lives of students were teachers’ abusive behaviors in classroom teaching and assessment (Piekarska, 2000). Professional development materials on the topic of teacher-to-student bullying present the following negative effects for student victims of teacher bullying: Loneliness and disengagement; confusion, anger, and fear; stress, fatigue, and anxiety; depression and suicidal ideation; panic attacks, sleeplessness, and headaches; more colds and viruses; loss of appetite and stomach issues; truancy and poor academic performance (Daniels, 2011). Furthermore, Twemlow and Fonagy (2005) state that teachers who bully students contribute to the etiology of behavioral problems in students. McEvoy (2005) also found that there are serious academic and social consequences for students when they are bullied by teachers, and that policies regarding this problem are non-existent or ineffective. Finally, Childers (2009) has found that students of abrasive teachers either emulated the teacher and victimized the targeted student, or they united in support of the student. The findings indicate that teachers’ abrasiveness creates division among students and encourages aggression in some students. This domino effect is seen in other professions as well. Doctors who bully their interns jeopardize the interns’ patients. “Trainees should not be subjected to behaviors that weaken their self-confidence and professional self-esteem,” the researchers have
noted (Paice & Smith, 2009). It not only follows logically, but as Childers also indicated, teachers who bully students jeopardize those students’ playmates.

**Further Negative Effects for Targets**

There may be additional negative effects that have not been fully studied in the school bullying literature. In Philip Zimbardo’s well-publicized 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment (Zimbardo, 2008), college students volunteered to be guards or prisoners. The student prisoners were physically and psychologically bullied by their guards. Within just 6 days the bullied student prisoners presented symptoms of emotional and psychological impairment.

Zimbardo (2008) observed three specific behaviors among the student prisoners which may find parallels among bullied K-12 students. The first was that the prisoners became focused on their own immediate needs and did not connect personally with each other, even when they had time to do so. Thus, they failed to engage in human contact that might have strengthened them emotionally and psychologically. Second, the prisoners “began to adopt and accept the negative images that the guards had developed toward them. Half of all reported private interactions between the prisoners could be classified as non-supportive and non-cooperative. . . . [Eighty-five] percent of the time they were uncomplimentary and deprecating” (p. 205). And third, Zimbardo observed prisoners who began to identify with the aggressors. This phenomenon has also been observed by psychologist Bruno Bettelheim in the Nazi concentration camps. In this condition a victim psychologically becomes one with the aggressors. Citing J. Frankel (2002) Zimbardo (2008) wrote, “This self-delusion prevents realistic appraisals of one’s situation, inhibits effective action, coping strategies, or rebellion, and does not permit
empathy for one’s fellow sufferers” (p. 205). Perhaps this explains why Childers (2009) found that while some students of abrasive teachers united in support of the target, others emulated the teacher and victimized the targeted student.

The Stanford Prison Experiment created a 24-hour-a-day altered reality for the student subjects. It may be argued that the experience of K-12 students is not as intense; they are permitted to leave school and spend time with family. However, the three maladaptive behaviors noted by Zimbardo (2008) have also been noted by researchers and educators who observe bullied students. Those three are: (a) targets become focused on their own needs and may fail to connect with peers or other potential supports (Daniels, 2011), (b) targets may adopt the negative self-image as it is provided by the abrasive teacher (Paice & Smith, 2009), and (c) instead of finding solidarity among the ranks of the bullied, targets sometimes treat their potential companions as harshly as the teacher does (Childers, 2009).

**Non-intervention as a Type of Bullying**

Resilience in children is receiving increasing amounts of attention in the literature. Through in-depth, unstructured interviews with 14 adults who had survived significant emotional abuse as children, Celia Doyle found that several environmental factors were important in having helped the children cope with the abuse. The majority reported support by other family members, and some reported that teachers had been helpful. But in no case was the non-abusive parent seen as supportive (Doyle, 2001).

A factor analysis indicates that students perceive non-intervening teachers to be part of the problem:

The final factor analysis consisted of a two-factor solution. The two factors that
emerged were based on severity of behaviors. The first factor represented particularly severe bullying behaviors, while the second factor signified behaviors considered to be mild to moderate bullying by teachers. Interestingly, bystanding behaviors by teachers loaded on the first factor, which indicate these types of behaviors were considered to be severe bullying. (Davies, 2011, p. iii)

This finding supported earlier work of Stuart Twemlow (Twemlow et al., 2006), who has studied teachers who bully students and the effect that this bullying had on the students. He writes:

Although the drama of the bully-victim interaction derives from overt violence of a verbal, ostracizing and physical nature, frequently what perpetuates power struggles in the school system is the bystanding observer (Twemlow, 2000; Twemlow et al., 2004). That is, the role of those teachers, students, support staff and parents who do nothing, ignore, or perhaps even enjoy the pain of those who are responding to the bullying.

In one example, a boy in the 8th grade was called every racial slur in the book while classmates stood by and laughed. After trying to enlist the help of a teacher, he commented, “People were laughing and it made me feel bad, but what really bothered me was when I told the teacher, he just said, ‘Yeah, yeah’.” Teachers who ignore such racial slurs or pass them off with a “whatever,” as one student reported, are perceived by students as directly supporting the power struggles and bullying. (Twemlow et al., 2006, p. 188)

The problem of non-interveners is felt not just by children, but also by adult professionals. In a study of the damage done by an abrasive university dean, Wilkin (2010) found that the dean’s abuse caused pain and discouragement for college professors, but being ignored or placated by higher administration caused bitterness and despair.

Prevalence

Because studies dealing with the prevalence of teachers who bully students are not numerous, this section will first look at what is known about student-to-student bullying and then move on to the few studies of teacher-to-student bullying. It will end
with a comparison of the prevalence of the two types of bullying.

**Prevalence of Student Bullies**

Disagreement on prevalence also exists in the literature on student-to-student bullying. In a study of 150,000 Norwegian and Swedish students, Grades 1-9, bullying affected 15% of the respondents. About 7% were bullies and 9% were targets (Olweus, 1995, p. 197). In a later Swedish study, Olweus (2003) has reported 25% of the students saying they were targets. A British study reported that 557 out of 1,820 students (30.6%) had been bullied (Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt, & Lemme, 2006). A 2003 study reported that “the prevalence of bullying ranges from 11.3% in Finland to 49.8% in Ireland. The only United States study of elementary students found that 19% were bullied” (Dake, Price, & Telljohann, 2003, p. 173).

The Virginia Youth Violence Project (2014), maintained by the Curry School of Education at University of Virginia, reports that their survey of 402 students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 in a suburban middle school in central Virginia revealed that “nearly half of all middle school students reported being bullied in the past month. About 15% of these students reported being bullied at least once a week” (“Middle School Bullying,” 2012).

More recently, Brown University has published a report stating, “It has been estimated that up to three-quarters of young adolescents experience some type of bullying and as many as one-third report more extreme experiences of coercion or inappropriate touching (“The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program,” 2005).

According to the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, a publication of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Massachusetts Youth Health Survey reported that in middle school 7.5% of the students were bullies and
26.8% were targets. In high school the numbers were 8.4% bullies and 15.6% targets (“Bullying Among Middle School and High School Students,” 2011).

**Prevalence of Teacher Bullies**

Estimates of the prevalence of teacher bullies also range widely, and some reports make vague statements regarding prevalence. For instance, Allen McEvoy (2005), after interviewing 236 respondents about their experiences in high school, calls the problem of teacher-to-student bullying “pervasive.” A study of staff maltreatment of students in Grades 4-6 indicated that almost a third of the students reported being emotionally maltreated by a staff member and more than one-fifth reported physical maltreatment (Benbenishty, Zeira, Astor, & Khoury-Kassabri, 2002). The conclusion of a similar study of students in Grades 7-11 states:

> The overall prevalence rates of staff maltreatment should be considered high and unacceptable. Although rates of physical and sexual maltreatment were lower than emotional maltreatment, they were still high and are worthy of greater attention. Both cultural beliefs and low family socioeconomic status increase vulnerability to staff maltreatment. (Benbenishty, Zeira, & Astor, 2002, p. 781)

Eliezer Yariv (2004) interviewed 40 Israeli principals who identified more than 7% of their staff members as *challenging*. Most of the challenging staff were veteran teachers who manifested either insensitive attitudes towards pupils or had low motivation. Though the study cast a broader net than the current study, it was cited here to provide a low end of the range of estimates on prevalence of abrasive teachers.

Twemlow et al. (2006) found that while 45% of the 116 elementary teacher participants reported having bullied a student, almost three-fourths of them (70%) believed that frequent bullying occurs. However, the participants believed the bully teachers comprised only 18% of the teaching force. When asked if they knew of a
teacher-to-student bullying incident within the last year, only 32.5% answered affirmatively. The researchers cited Terry (1998) who reported that 50% of high-school teachers used bullying behaviors.

In another study asking 332 young adults to reflect on their high-school experience, over half of the sample reported that a teacher had bullied them at least once (Davies, 2011). Childers (2009) found that approximately 70% of her student participants (N = 101) reported at least one incident of teacher-to-student maltreatment.

A study of special education students found that 86% of the students reported one or more incidents involving mistreatment by a teacher. Twice as many students reported mistreatment by an adult as their “worst school experience,” compared to students who reported mistreatment by another student. “Students are being bullied by teachers to a surprising degree and in a wide range of destructive and harmful ways” (Whitted & Dupper, 2008, p. 329).

So, estimates range from 25% to 86% of students being bullied by teachers, while perhaps 7% to 18% of the teachers bully students. This indicates a prevalence of teacher-to-student bullying that is higher than for student-to-student bullying.

The WBI-Zogby 2007 survey estimates workplace bullying—taking place between adults—at 13% of U.S. employees currently being bullied, and 24% having been bullied in the past (Harris, 2011). The same survey 3 years later reported 35% of workers have experienced bullying firsthand (“Results of the 2010 WBI U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey,” 2010).

**Comparison of Prevalence Estimates**

We have reviewed ranges of estimated bullying prevalence for: students who
bully students, students who are bullied by students, teachers who bully students, and students who are bullied by teachers. These ranges are presented in Table 1. Based on the percentages, teacher bullying of students is a large problem, and the lack of similarity in estimates of prevalence indicates a need for this study to also address the question.

Table 1

*Percentage Ranges for Bullies and Their Victims*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>What percentage of them are bullying students?</th>
<th>What percentage of students have been bullied by them?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>7.0 – 8.5</td>
<td>15.0 – 75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>7.7 – 18.0&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>25.0&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; – 86.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>According to Terry (1998) the high estimate is 50% in high school.
<sup>b</sup>Benbenishty, Zeira, and Astor (2002) write that nearly a quarter of the Grade 7-11 students suffered emotional abuse from teachers, 18.7% suffered physical abuse, and 8.2% sexual abuse. The possible overlap between groups was not clear.

Despite difficulties in reaching a consistent estimate of the prevalence of teacher abrasiveness, it is generally accepted that some teachers do maltreat students. Recent media reports have documented cases of teacher physical or verbal aggression aimed at students, particularly special needs. Julio Artuz, a high-school-age special-needs student in New Jersey, is visible on a cell phone video being verbally assaulted by his teacher (NBCNews10, 2011). A Texas kindergarten teacher told her 20 students to line up and hit a boy who had reportedly been bullying others (“Texas Teacher Removed,” 2012). And a 10-year-old Kansas City boy with autism was bullied by his teacher (Vaughn & Townsend, 2012).
Principal Intervention

A search of the literature produced three kinds of information relative to principal intervention: (a) principal intervention is needed, (b) problems that might impede intervention, and (c) one intervention that may be applicable.

Need for Intervention

Principals of K-12 schools are the shapers of school culture (Robbins & Alvy, 2004) and are charged with supervising teachers. Twemlow et al. (2006) speak to the issue of school culture and the necessity of principal intervention when a teacher becomes abrasive with students.

When a teacher is a bully and is having a negative effect on the environment, the entire work environment for the majority of the teachers is made needlessly hostile, and vulnerable children suffer significant trauma, even with attendant learning and psychiatric problems. Non-bullying teachers are often forced into an avoidant, bystanding role for fear of retaliation from unions, colleagues and conflicting loyalties.

Our work suggests that new approaches are needed to identify and respond to teacher bullying in schools. Since coercive power struggles spread through a school quickly, administrators, teachers and other labor groups need to work cooperatively to address this issue in a nonpunitive fashion that offers teachers the help they need to stop bullying, since punishment and labor action have failed to resolve the root of pathological power dynamics in the school. Psychiatrists with a psychodynamic orientation have much to offer in resolution of these problems. (p. 196)

Twemlow et al. (2006) found that principals in parts of the United States were aware of teachers who bullied students, yet they had found no clear way to assess the teacher or deal with the problem. Their solution was to avoid placing certain vulnerable students with such teachers.

Kathleen Page (2012) presented a model that emphasized the administrator’s key role in making school safety and anti-bullying a priority, but also in modeling respectful
behavior and valuing and supporting staff and students (p. 171).

Australian researcher Ken Rigby (2006) wrote that the lessons learned in school on managing relationships may have a telling effect on how leaders manage the relationships between nations:

We are clearly not in a position to correlate changes in levels of school bullying with changes in the policies and actions of nations. Yet a hypothesized connection is not implausible. . . . How one behaves in a world of friends and enemies is part of the “true education of schools” as perceptively noted by the Australian poet, Les Murray (1996). Our leaders went to school. What did they learn? What is expected of them by a population of millions that also went to school? The more democratic the regime, the more the leaders must follow. It has been suggested that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. Could it be that world peace could be won in the classrooms and playgrounds where children learn not to bully? (p. 183)

If the answer to Rigby’s question is “yes,” then the attitudes and goals manifested in the principal’s intervention are as important as the principal’s choice to intervene.

Impediments to Intervention

Research on teacher bullying continues on a global scale. A brief list of countries where studies have been done outside the United States includes, but certainly is not limited to: Australia (Delfabbro et al., 2006; Yoneyama & Rigby, 2006), Canada (Bickmore, 2011), Israel (Benbenishty, Zeira, & Astor, 2002; Khoury-Kassabri, 2009), Finland (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008; Olafsen & Viemerö, 2000), Great Britain (Rivers & Smith, 1994; Solberg et al., 2007), Norway (Amundsen & Ravndal, 2010; Roland & Galloway, 2004; Solberg & Olweus, 2003), Poland (Piekarska, 2000), South Africa (Penning et al., 2010), Sweden (Frisén, Holmqvist, & Oscarsson, 2008; Olweus, 2011), and Zimbabwe (Shumba, 2002). Additionally, one metastudy of friendship and loneliness among bullies and victims examined data from 48,000 students from the countries of China, England, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Portugal, and Spain (Eslea et al., 2004).
From the literature, potential impediments to principal intervention can be identified. They include: (a) continued diversity in operational definitions of bullying, (b) varying cultural norms, (c) the intangibleness of some types of abuse, and individual’s sensitivity to bullying, (d) the conflicting roles of the principal as disciplinarian and learning leader, (e) fear that humanizing teacher-to-student interactions will accelerate academic decline, (f) awareness that there are some benefits to bullying, (g) the teacher’s skill at obfuscating the problem, and (h) the stress of disciplining, and possibly terminating, a teacher.

**Misaligned Operational Definitions**

Broad agreement on a basic definition of bullying may hide deeper discrepancies in working definitions, as evidenced in several studies. While Hellams (2008) found no statistically significant differences in definitions of bullying between teachers and principals, Naylor et al. (2006) found a variety of differences in definitions of bullying as they compared teachers and various groups of students. Of particular interest, they found that teachers had a more comprehensive definition of bullying which included social exclusion, power imbalance, and the intent to harm or intimidate, even though 25% of the teachers did not identify many behaviors used in social bullying.

A study of 138 teachers found that teachers perceived bullying by social exclusion as less serious than physical or verbal bullying. The teachers had less empathy toward the victims of social exclusion, were less likely to intervene in cases of bullying by social exclusion, and used less aggressive methods of intervention with social exclusion than with verbal and physical bullying (Kinan, 2010). This finding was consistent with an earlier study by Hazler, Miller, Carney, and Green (2001). One may conclude that if
teachers are less likely to see social exclusion as being painful and disruptive to learning, they may underestimate the impact of their own abrasiveness.

Similar studies showing discrepancies among principals’ working definitions were not found. However, the discrepancies in teacher definitions and the potential for teachers to underestimate the impact of their own abrasiveness will make communication between principal and teacher more difficult.

**Cultural Diversity**

Beyond the relatively simple problem of definitions, each school community, as well as specific populations within each school community, holds cultural norms which vary from other communities. Therefore, one community may find a behavior to be abusive while another community may find that same behavior to be acceptable. For instance, within the Chinese culture in Hong Kong with its high value placed on filial order and respect, O’Brian and Lau (1995) have observed, “The severe beating of children is more often seen as excessive punishment rather than abuse” (p. 43). Emotional abuse would be no less difficult to define. O’Brian and Lau state that “shaming and physical punishment are accepted without question, and even considered necessary. . . . Scolding, beating or shaming are often done in the presence of others and sometimes deliberately in public as a warning to would-be offenders” (p. 40).

Similarly in a Zimbabwean study (Shumba, 2001), in a sample of 246 teachers who abused children, 212 had sexually abused children, 33 physically abused them, and only one was disciplined for emotionally abusing children. That teacher had forced students to move on hot cement surfaces without shoes, causing the children’s feet and legs to blister. Shumba suggested that the low number of emotional abuse reports may
stem from the fact that “victims of emotional abuse who grow up in this kind of culture are likely to treat such behaviours as normal” (p. 84).

By contrast, a Canadian “Scale of Subtle Emotional Abuse” (Nesbit & Philpott, 2002) identifies as emotionally abusive, teacher behaviors such as: lack of voice animation, eye rolling, and “undermin[ing] student self-confidence by assigning a numerical mark rather than a letter grade” on creative writing assignments. Such diverse views of what does or doesn’t constitute emotional abuse complicate the identification of abrasive teachers.

The “Squishiness” of Intangible Abuse

One of the main impediments to effective principal intervention with abrasive teachers is the unsettling ambiguity that surrounds less tangible forms of abuse such as emotional and psychological abuse.

Emotional abuse has historical roots as deep as those of physical abuse, but physical abuse has been dealt with in a much more deliberate fashion. In all probability, the elusive nature of emotional abuse has helped to shield it from attention. Emotional abuse is as insidious as it is destructive. As Ramirez (1999) points out, “We can easily grasp the concepts and consequences of physical and sexual abuse because they involve the laying of one person’s hands on another. But emotional child abuse is, for some, a gelatinous issue: so squishy it's hard to get a handle on, so broad you're not sure it is really there” (p. E6). (Nesbit & Philpott, 2002, p. 32)

Variations in Practitioner Sensitivity

Cohn and Canter (2002, as cited in Kinan, 2010) reported that 25% of teachers see nothing wrong with bullying or putdowns, and consequently intervene in only 4% of bullying incidents. This echoes the 25% of teachers whom Naylor et al. (2006) found who did not identify behaviors of social exclusion as bullying.

Nordgren et al. (2011) found that people who have experienced social pain are
less likely to underestimate the damage it can do. Accordingly, it would seem that
principals and teachers who were themselves ostracized or humiliated as children should,
when watching a child receive similar treatment, be more sympathetic than those who
were not ostracized. Other research may also support this concept. A study of 20
teachers’ experiences of childhood bullying found that their history of having been
bullied, when coupled with Olweus Bullying Prevention Program training, made them
more sensitive to the bullying that was happening among their students. They wanted to
break the cycle (Lay, 2010). On the other hand, some research does not support these
findings. Twemlow et al. (2006) reported that principals and teachers who had been
bullied as children were more tolerant of bullying in their schools.

In further exploring this concept, this study seeks to test principal experience of
childhood bullying against principal intervention decisions.

Conflicting Roles: Disciplinarian and
Leader of the Learning Community

The principal is traditionally seen as the school’s chief disciplinarian. However,
the principal is also tasked with leading a learning community where students, teachers,
support staff, families, and even the community are expected to continually evolve as
they experiment, discover, and innovate (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Leon & Davis, 2009;
Lujan & Day, 2009; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2006; Roberts
& Pruitt, 2003; Schmoker, 2006).

This conflict in expectations of the principal is seen in models of anti-bullying in
schools. Australian bullying researcher Ken Rigby (2010) analyzed current anti-bullying
or anti-violence programs and identified six main approaches. Two of the approaches
identified by Rigby were labeled *traditional discipline* and *restorative justice*. They are based on the principal-as-disciplinarian paradigm. Rigby identified four more approaches that align with the principal-as-leader-of-learning paradigm: *strengthening the victim, mediation, the support group method, and the method of shared concern.*

**Fear of Academic Mediocrity**

The fact that highly abrasive teachers operate in classrooms finds not only defense, but even encouragement in some literature. Writing for the respected *Chronicles of Higher Education*, Thomas H. Benton (2009), pen name for an associate professor of English, refers to TV reality show “Hell’s Kitchen” to illustrate his idea that “the most powerful and effective student-teacher relationships can have something in common with sadomasochism” (p. 39). Though writing to an audience of college and university educators, he characterizes K-12 education as producing what he refers to as “snowflakes”—students who believe they are unique and precious and the teacher works for them. In his article, titled “Hell’s Classroom,” Benton shows his frustration with narcissistic students by stating: “The snowflake has become so ubiquitous in academic life that there is even a blog [site now closed] dedicated primarily to smacking them down, if only in anonymous fantasies, like letters to the Penthouse Forum” (p. 40).

It is not uncommon to hear K-12 teachers and principals talk about mollycoddled children and the helicopter parents who cripple them. Benton believes some rough treatment will help such young people appreciate the seriousness of the subject matter and the need for higher quality work. He may speak for many educators when he writes:

> Hell’s Kitchen may not correspond precisely to the classroom, but Chef Ramsay's approach—judiciously modified—might encourage some of us to take that leap of faith toward a style of teaching that demands excellence and that our students,
beneath the surface, actually want more than inflated praise, permissiveness, and mediocrity. (Benton, 2009, p. 41)

Teachers who are abusive in the content or delivery of their messages to students add to student malady rather than mastery. Furthermore, it is not the students who need a challenge who are targeted by such teachers. A large Israeli study of 13,262 students in Grades 7-11 found that bully-victim boys reported the lowest levels of teacher support, lowest appraisals of personal safety, and highest levels of missed school because of fear (Berkowitz & Benbenishty, 2012). It is doubtful that this picture would improve if their teachers were just harsh enough.

**Benefits of Bullying**

Bullying from students and from teachers may continue because of the benefits it provides the teacher. Some teachers may champion bully behaviors in the service of rigor. But there is another benefit to bullying that was brought to light in a Finnish study by Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008). The study found that bullying serves to create and enforce group norms. An aspiring student bully finds ways to exercise his/her power even in the presence of the teacher. For example, in the middle of a class a student may interrupt the teacher with, “What page are we supposed to read?” And the bully may snap back, “Page 167, Moron, if you’d just listen.” While the teacher may give the bully “the look” for using the word “moron,” it’s lighter than a slap on the wrist. The bully has become more powerful by attacking someone in the teacher’s presence and with little fallout, and the teacher has felt affirmed that most students heard the instruction and that peer pressure has helped keep the class on track.
Teachers’ Skill at Avoiding the Accusation of Abrasiveness

One of the main findings by Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) is that bullying occurs in brief communicative bursts that are best understood by the victim and often undetected by the teacher. Similarly, teacher bullying may be fine-tuned to the sensitivities of the student and go undetected by the principal, even when taking place in the principal’s presence. If the principal does become aware of the teacher’s abrasive behaviors and chooses to challenge the teacher on his/her handling of students, the teacher may use other tactics of dodging the accusation.

Teachers may justify their behavior as motivational, an appropriate part of the instruction, an appropriate disciplinary response, or good classroom management. Teachers who use sarcasm as insults, as in the case of the English teacher, most likely think they are amusing. The very students who are bullied may even promote this false identification when they chuckle with the bully and class in order to save face. (Sylvester, 2010, p. 44)

Additionally the use of the term bully may make it even easier for the teacher to dodge the accusation, since bully, by definition, signifies intent to harm. Aggressive teachers have dodged the label by asking if others really believe they intended to harm the student (Nelson & Lambert, 2001). The question is intended to elicit denial, and thus avert the use of the label of bullying.

Difficulty and Stress of Teacher Discipline or Removal

Lawrence Heiser (2001) conducted a phenomenological study of the impact of teacher termination on the level of stress in elementary principals, finding that the principals experienced high levels of stress in the process of terminating teachers.

However, the principals also reported that a major amount of stress came from continuing
to work with teachers who were less than effective. The excessive amount of time needed for working with such teachers reduced the time available for work with other staff and parents and even had a negative effect on the principals’ family life.

The complexity of intervention may also increase the principal’s stress. Kelly Causey (2010) studied the principal’s challenges in working with marginal teachers. She found that “while the focus on the effectiveness and importance of instructional leadership continues to increase, it is not clear exactly how principals and administrators should proceed with dealing with marginal teachers” (p. 6). Blacklock (2002) wrote:

While much of the literature on effective instructional leadership urges principals to confront teacher incompetence, the process is far from easy. Principals must weigh a number of factors—the emotional cost of confrontation, the investment in time, the possible impact on staff morale, opposition by the teachers’ union, and the difficulty in ‘winning.’ (as cited in Causey, 2010, pp. 6-7)

Causey also found that if intervention fails, the principal is left with the more difficult and time-consuming prospect of teacher termination. Causey quoted court documents from Childers v. Independent School District (1982) to show the courts held that

the dismissal of teachers and non-renewal of their teaching contracts is sometimes a complex, difficult process, with serious implications. Because of the fact that under statutory procedures, the dismissal or non-renewal of a teacher requires a long and time consuming effort, school administrators and Boards of Education are often reluctant to institute such procedures against teachers who ought to be dismissed. As a result, the students suffer from the quality of their education. (Causey, 2010, p. 7)

A Business Coaching Approach to Intervention

Laura Crawshaw (2010) has coached abrasive leaders for more than 20 years. Her method includes the following steps: (a) enlisting the abrasive leader in coaching by ensuring a confidential process and by refocusing the leader on finding ways to resolve
the employees’ negative perceptions, (b) inviting the leader to join in action research in order to discover: the employees’ negative perceptions that are threatening the leader’s career survival, the source of those negative perceptions, and the means for eliminating them; (c) collecting and analyzing perception data so the leader can plan modified behaviors with the goal of changing employee perceptions, (d) giving the leader time to implement the plan, (e) providing a second round of employee feedback so the leader can assess progress, and (f) repeating the action research cycle as the leader refines behaviors.

Crawshaw (2010) describes the initial state of her abrasive leader clients as the *blind pejorative state*, because the leaders are unaware of why employees are non-cooperative and are likely to characterize them as being stupid, lazy, or rebellious. Through the coaching process Crawshaw improves her clients’ empathic accuracy by giving them a conceptual framework, the TAD Dynamic (see related section).

**Summary of Literature Review**

This review of the literature identified a definition of *abrasive teacher*. It compared and contrasted abrasive teachers with those who are abusive, rigorous, or unconventional. It explored abrasive teachers’ behaviors, the students they target, the effects of their behavior on the targeted students, and estimates of their prevalence. It also identified the TAD Dynamic as a psychological model. The TAD Dynamic suggests that teachers use abrasive behaviors as a response to threats perceived by the teacher.

The review of the literature supported the need for principal intervention and identified possible impediments to intervention. Also reviewed was a business coaching model of intervention that may address several of the significant impediments.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design, the choice of principal perspective as a basis for the study, the participants and how they were protected by anonymity or confidentiality, how the data were collected, the survey instruments, the research questions and hypotheses, the underlying assumptions of the study, and the limitations of the study.

Research Design

This study consisted of two stages of inquiry. In the first stage a 31-question, web-based, anonymous survey was used through the month of June 2013 to collect both quantitative and qualitative data by means of closed questions with limited options and open-ended questions with space for written response. Inferences drawn from both quantitative and qualitative data analysis helped refine the questions that were used in stage two, which consisted of a series of semi-structured, depth interviews (Wengraf, 2004) that were conducted by phone through the months of July, August, and September of 2013.

The study is best described as using a fully-integrated mixed-methods design. According to Tashakkori and Newman (2010) there are four basic types of mixed-methods studies: parallel, sequential, conversion, and fully-integrated. The design of this
research contained elements of all four types. The study employed some simultaneous and separate investigations of quantitative and qualitative elements as in the parallel design. It also used data conversion to translate some qualitative data into forms useable for quantitative analysis. The study had a sequential element in that there were two distinct stages to the research. However, the research design is still best described as *fully-integrated* (A. Tashakkori & Newman, 2010) due to iterative processes between qualitative and quantitative questions in stage one and due to the use of quantitative inferences while refining the interview questions for stage two.

The study was approved by the Andrews University Institutional Review Board on April 30, 2013. Their letter of approval is available in Appendix B.

**Use of Principal Perspective**

Both the survey and the interviews focused on principal perspective as data were collected. This choice of focus was made for several reasons. First, as was noted in Chapter 1 the principal is responsible for shaping school culture (Robbins & Alvy, 2004), providing a learning community which is safe and progressive for all (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003), and providing policy and practice that curb aggression in the workplace (Crawshaw, 2007; Namie & Namie, 2011). Understandably, the principal will be central in deciding when to intervene, how to intervene, and how effective the intervention was.

Second, the principal occupies a role that places him/her at the heart of all school improvement efforts. After reviewing 35 years of research on school effectiveness Robert J. Marzano (2003) created a model of factors affecting student achievement. In Chapter 2 of his book he alluded to the fact that he would omit leadership from the model. In his final chapter he stated the reason for the omission: “The strongest reason for separating
leadership from the model of factors is that it influences virtually every aspect of the model presented in this book” (p. 172). In his follow-up book zeroing in on the principal’s critical roles in the school community, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of 69 school leadership studies to identify 21 specific school principal responsibilities that had a positive correlation (mean $r = .25$) with student academic achievement. Five of them—culture, monitoring/evaluation, outreach, relationships, and situational awareness—highlighted the principal’s central role in communicating, directing, and overseeing the entire school program. Marzano et al. described three specific behaviors and characteristics associated with situational awareness alone: “Accurately predicting what could go wrong from day to day, being aware of informal groups and relationships among the staff, being aware of issues in the school that have not surfaced but could create discord” (p. 60). All of these vital behaviors emanate from the principal’s perspective. Therefore, the principal’s perspective is vital to a study of this nature.

Third, focusing data collection on the principals’ perspectives allowed a wider dissemination of the survey instrument than would have been possible if other opinions and artifacts had been collected. Wider dissemination seemed appropriate to an exploratory study seeking baseline data on principals’ views of abrasive teacher behaviors, student symptoms, and intervention decisions and outcomes.

**Description of Sample and Participants**

The participants in this study were California private and public school K-12 principals. A subset of that group also granted interviews. Principals volunteered and were not remunerated for participation. All who made a request by separate email were
promised a copy of the executive summary of the study.

Email addresses for K-12 principals were obtained through the State of California Department of Education’s publicly-accessible website: www.cde.ca.gov/ds/dd/. Initial filtering for principals who supervised at least two teachers produced 11,599 addressable principals. Invitations were sent to all. A total of 781 emails bounced, leaving 10,818 possibly delivered. That number was used to calculate rate of response, though the actual number was certainly less due to the filters used by email services. Appendix C provides a more detailed description of the distribution process.

A power analysis calculated the need for 200 survey respondents. However 515 California K-12 principals responded by providing enough data to be included in some tests. Of those respondents 334 went on to thoroughly complete the survey, and 21 respondents granted interviews. All names of interview participants have been changed and situational details modified to maintain confidentiality for the participants. Appendix D contains a brief description of each principal and his/her setting.

White women were more likely to complete the survey than were men or people of other race/ethnicity. Specifically, the sample was comprised of 221 (66.4%) women and 112 (33.6%) men. Compared to the state population of principals, women were overrepresented by 19 (9.0%) and men were underrepresented by 18 (14.0%). Response by race/ethnicity is more easily viewed in Table 2.

The sample mean age was 51.74 years (mode = 55) with a range of 31 to 80 years of age. The principals averaged 11.23 years of experience (mode = 8) with a range of 1 to 45 years’ experience. The principals’ supervision load averaged 31.68 teachers (mode = 25) with a range of 2 to 500 teachers supervised.
Table 2

*Sample Race/Ethnicity (valid n = 329) Compared to Population (N = 22,191)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Expected&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Representation&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian / Alaska Native</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>+ 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>- 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black / African American</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>- 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>- 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>- 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White / Caucasian</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>214.0</td>
<td>+ 19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Expected frequencies reflect a sample strictly proportional to state demographics.

<sup>b</sup>Percentages are comparing the frequencies with the expected frequencies.

**Participant Anonymity and Confidentiality**

The web-based survey was conducted in a way that principals’ responses were not traceable to them, their schools, or their districts. Any write-in comments that contained potentially identifying details, such as people’s names, place names, or events reported by news media, were anonymized before inclusion in this report. Since I had no direct contact with survey participants, their decision to fill out the questionnaire was interpreted as implied consent for their data to be included in the study. This was clearly stated in the preamble to the survey.

The principals who volunteered for interview provided me with their contact information, so total anonymity was not possible. Therefore, I protected confidentiality in five ways: (a) each interviewee filled out the Informed Consent Form which declared their rights and protections (see Appendix E), (b) the principals’ willingness to interview was not shared with their employer or any member of their school community, (c) the stories they shared were anonymized before they were included in the dissertation, (d) all recordings, original transcripts, and field notes were held in a locked file, and (e) they
were scheduled to be destroyed 1 year after completion of the study. Anonymized transcripts will be retained for further study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Due to the complex nature of this broad-ranging, exploratory study, this section will present the two stages of the study: survey and interview. It will begin by explaining the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the first stage.

Stage One: Quantitative Analysis

In the first stage, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected by means of an anonymous, 31-question, web-based survey. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 18 (PASW 18) and Microsoft Excel 2007. A variety of tests were used to fit the types of variables being tested: means test, cross-tabulation, bivariate correlation, \( \chi^2 \) goodness-of-fit, logistic regression, and multiple linear regression (MLR). MLR was used to analyze the variance in the ability to predict from one variable to another. It was also used to find covariance of some variables while testing the research hypotheses. MLR was chosen due to its flexibility. Using MLR, I was able to create models specific to a research hypothesis (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2002; McNeil, Newman, & Fraas, 2011; McNeil, Newman, & Kelly, 1996). Protocols specific to each hypothesis are listed in the “Hypotheses” subsection below.

The \( F \) test was used in testing the statistical significance of relationships proposed in the hypotheses. The \( F \) test was chosen because it is very robust (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2002; Newman, Newman, Brown, & McNeely, 2005). The assumptions of random selection of participants and normal distribution of variables can be violated without
doing serious harm to the procedure.

Two-tailed tests of significance were used to test the relationships of those variables where the direction of the correlation was uncertain. One-tailed tests were used where the direction of the correlation was quite certain based on previous research and experience. One-tailed tests were also used where the consequences of missing an effect in the untested direction were negligible and in no way irresponsible or unethical (“When Is a One-Tailed Test Appropriate?” 2013).

Goodness-of-fit tests were run in several places where principal responses were compared across breakouts such as sex, race, time in the principalship, et cetera. Goodness-of-fit tests are a good way to determine whether the deviations in number of principal responses from what would be expected by the proportions in each category (sex, race, etc.) are large enough to lead to a conclusion that the responses weren’t random (Howell, 2010).

The standard for testing significance was set at a level of .050. This is typical for studies in the social sciences, and the consequences of a Type I error—rejection of a null hypothesis which is true—are not so serious as to demand a more stringent level of confidence (Hinkle et al., 2002; Newman et al., 2005). Several tests of multiple analysis could have invoked the use of Bonferroni’s conservative estimates. However, I have chosen to note those tests while continuing to use an alpha level of .050. The use of Bonferroni’s conservative estimates and other similar corrections—for example, Fisher’s least significance differences test, Tukey’s HSD test, Newman-Keuls test, and others (Newman, Fraas, & Laux, 2000)—to control for Type I error buildup, will produce an increase in Type II errors—failure to reject a null hypothesis when it should be rejected.
Since this study was exploratory and looked for what may be present in the phenomenon under study, at this stage in the analysis I decided not to increase the likelihood of a Type II error caused by using such corrections.

A power analysis (Cohen, 1988; McNeil et al., 1996) indicated that given the study’s number of variables for each hypothesis, an $N$ of 200 would render a power of 0.80 or better for small effect sizes ($f^2$) and 0.95 or better for medium effect sizes ($f^2$) at an alpha level of .050.

Stage One: Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data collected in the survey of stage one were open coded in NVivo version 10 according to themes suggested by the literature or by my experience. For instance, the principals’ descriptions of abrasive teacher behaviors were initially coded according to four categories suggested by Parsons (2005), but as coding progressed, modifications were found to be necessary. Alternately, the principals’ written responses to “What student behaviors are symptomatic of being bullied by a teacher?” were initially coded by themes arising from the data. Then, during secondary coding it was discovered that student responses to teacher abrasiveness could be assembled under headings of fight, flight, or reaching out. These headings were compatible with the TAD Dynamic (Crawshaw, 2010).

However, to understand less well-known phenomena, such as what theories of mind are held by the principals to explain abrasive behavior, cluster coding was used. Cluster coding is described by Marshall and Rossman (2011) as a form of analysis in which “the researcher creates diagrams of relationships—outlines according to what is most overarching. He is doing conceptual or situational mapping, playing with
construction pictures of how the data fit together” (p. 215). Marshall and Rossman stress that this is a *playing* work because it should be seen as drafting and experimentation. Yet they assert that it can lead to preliminary sketches that help inform later analysis.

Stage Two: Qualitative Analysis

Inferences drawn from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses of stage one were used to refine the questions used in the interviews of stage two. I used the semi-structured *depth interview* method as described by Tom Wengraf (2004). Such interviews allow the researcher to pursue the reasons behind the answers (Newman & McNeil, 1998) and to provide *thick description* which is “an effort aimed at interpretation, at getting below the surface to that most enigmatic aspect of the human condition: the construction of meaning” (Eisner, 1998, p. 15).

During stage two I attempted to comprehend the world of the respondents and grasp the texture of each situation reported. I had intended to conduct two similar sets of interviews and then analyze them sequentially (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The first set of interviews was to continue until categories had been saturated; likely 6-12 interviews. This range is indicated by the work of Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) who operationalized the concept of saturation and made evidence-based recommendations regarding non-probabilistic sample sizes for interviews. They found that saturation occurred within the first 12 interviews, although basic elements for meta-themes were present as early as six interviews.

The results of the first round of interviews were to have been set aside and a second, similar set of interviews conducted and analyzed afresh. The results of the two sets of interviews were to have been compared in order to test the reliability of the
findings. However, I found that the qualitative analysis of the survey data provided ample inferences with which to compare the interview data. Therefore, the 21 interviews were treated as one set and used to illuminate the survey data.

In developing the recommendations for rookie principals, I followed a method described by Creswell (2007, p. 159) as “a simplified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method discussed by Moustakas (1994).” In this phenomenological analysis the following steps are taken:

1. The researcher begins with a full description of his or her own experience of the phenomenon. This is an attempt to set aside the researcher’s personal experience in order to focus on the experiences of the participants.

2. The researcher identifies significant statements of how individuals are experiencing the phenomenon, treats each statement as having equal worth, and develops a list of non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements.

3. The researcher takes the statements from this list and groups them into larger units of information called *meaning units* or *themes*.

4. The researcher uses verbatim examples to prepare a *textural description* which shows what the participants experienced with the phenomenon; what happened.

5. The researcher writes a *structural description* of how the experience happened. This includes the context and setting in which the phenomenon occurred.

6. Finally, the researcher writes a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions. “This passage is the essence of the experience and represents the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study. It is typically a long paragraph that tells the reader ‘what’ the participants experienced with
the phenomenon and ‘how’ they experienced it” (Creswell, 2007, p. 159).

The Instruments

This section will present the development and testing of the survey which was unique to this study. It will also briefly present the interview process. Due to the qualitative methods used, I will end with a description of myself as a research instrument.

Web-based Survey

The *Abrasive Teacher and Principal Response* survey was developed for this study according to the 13 principles set forth by Johnson and Turner (2003, p. 303). Next expert-judge content validity (Ridenour & Newman, 2008, p. 44) was sought through recruiting a panel of five content experts. This was an effort to increase the validity of the instrument. Each expert rated each item on the survey for how well it reflected what was being tested. Their evaluations are shown in Appendix F.

Finally, the survey was pilot-tested by four principals whose work spanned Grades K-12. After their feedback a few clarifying revisions were made along with one substantive change to the reporting window. In my desire to have a 3-year window for one of the tests of prevalence, I had written the first question in a way that would have eliminated any principals who had supervised abrasive teachers but not in the last 3 years. By minor rewording of the first four questions I was able to allow those principals to share their experiences (see list of revisions in Appendix G).

In launching the survey I had the assistance of John P. Anthony, a research consultant with Iain Anthony Research Group. He used a survey web application called Checkbox, so I developed the survey in that environment. A facsimile of the
questionnaire is printed in Appendix H. Since the questionnaire made use of branching logic, principals who had never supervised an abrasive teacher were able to complete the survey in an average time of 3.1 minutes. Principals who had supervised an abrasive teacher took an average time of 25.6 minutes to fill out the questionnaire.

The online survey instrument had two weaknesses: First, the matrix for collecting abrasive teacher information used Adobe Flash Player to provide drop-down selection boxes. A few principals’ Flash Player software was either missing or out of date so they could not see the options. This resulted in some lost data, but several of the principals with outdated Flash players provided the teacher information by using the write-in boxes.

Second, some questions provided a list of optional answers with “Other” as a final option and provided both a checkbox (before the word other) and a write-in box after the word other. If the principal checked “Other” Checkbox forced him/her to enter text. The reverse was not true. If the principal entered a textual response and did not check “Other” Checkbox allowed him/her to advance to the next screen, but did not save the textual part of the principal’s response. Despite my added warning about the problem in the instructions to each affected question, some write-in responses may have been lost. A principal could encounter up to five such questions over the span of the survey.

One other notable design decision was made. One content expert suggested that I eliminate the multiple-option questions to avoid biasing the principals’ responses or allowing the principals not to think deeply about the question as would be required by an open-ended question. I was concerned that with the length of the survey, principals might not spend the time necessary to fully engage their memories on each of the many questions. I felt that while providing options might bias the respondent, it might also
prime the principals’ memories and encourage richer write-in additions. Furthermore, based on my own experience and my conversations with other principals I had created fairly comprehensive lists of options.

In pilot one of the principals’ comments was “Could you get rid of the open-ended questions, and provide only multiple choice?” They reasoned that busy principals would get bogged down with the write-in boxes and abort the survey. Therefore, I left the questionnaire with some multiple-option questions and some open-ended questions.

The result was that principals did seem to be satisfied with marking the options since relatively few added their own thoughts on the five questions of that type. I believe that requiring more write-ins would have lowered the completion rate, since some principals complained of the length, as it was. However, future studies could narrow their focus and collect richer, narrative responses.

Semi-structured Depth Interviews

The questions used in the semi-structured depth interviews are found in Appendix I. The 21 interviews took from 27 to 88 minutes to conduct. The interviews, with one exception, were conducted by phone rather than in person. The average time spent was 49.9 minutes which was longer than the 45 minutes I had projected, yet participants were engaged and offered to be available if follow-up questions were needed. They did later provide additional input to specific clarifying questions via email.

The Researcher as Instrument

In his textbook on designing and conducting qualitative research interviews, Wengraf (2004) states:
When you come to study and plan interviewing, bear fully in mind all the knowledge derived from your discipline . . . about face-to-face interaction and about the specificity of the society and the setting and the types of people involved, especially yourself.

The interviews that you do or that you study are not asocial, ahistorical, events. You do not leave behind your anxieties, your hopes, your blindspots, your prejudices, your class, race or gender, your location in global social structure, your age and historical positions, your emotions, your past and your sense of possible futures. . . . Nor do you do so when you sit down to analyse the material you have produced. (pp. 4-5)

Creswell (2007), citing the Moustakas (1990) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, recommends that

the researcher begins with a full description of his or her own experience of the phenomenon. This is an attempt to set aside the researcher’s personal experiences (which cannot be done entirely) so that the focus can be directed to the participants in the study. (p. 157)

In synthesizing these two statements it might be said that researchers do not approach their topics free of the very things that led them to choose those topics. By clearly describing his/her own experience of the phenomenon, the researcher may get free to focus on the experiences of the participants, which differ from his/her own experience.

Therefore, in this section I will describe some events that shaped how I see things. Those events will include my professional, as well as my childhood, experiences with abrasive teachers. I will also mention the influence of Laura Crawshaw’s work (2007).

In writing candidly, I trust in a truth demonstrated repeatedly by my college sociology professor: That which is most personal is most universal. I have seen the statement attributed to Carl G. Jung, Carl Rogers, and even Henri J.M. Nouwen. I believe that the personal turmoil I relate here will find resonance in the hearts of other principals. This section will help the reader comprehend my approach to this topic.
My Professional Experience With Abrasive Teachers

The veteran teacher sidled up to me in the bookstore between sessions of my first teachers convention. I was in my early 20s and just entering the profession. In pointed but hushed, conspiratorial tones he told me of his favorite ways of intimidating students; driving fear into their hearts even when they weren’t misbehaving. With the studied relish of a boy placing a firecracker in a frog’s mouth, he said, “Just walk up quietly while they’re studying and slam your ruler down on their desk just missing their hand. They’ll jump! Then,” and here his face broke into a delighted smile, “just say, ‘Thought I was going to hit you, didn’t you?’”

I was annoyed. He was robbing me of my shopping time. More than that I was offended that he would think I was so naïve as to take his joke seriously. I was brought up as a student in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) school system, and now I was entering it as a newly-minted teacher, steeped in its philosophy which includes the humane and respectful treatment of all students as children of God. “Love, the basis of creation and redemption, is the basis of true education” (White, 1903, p. 16). These words reveal the heart of the philosophy and they are applied even to the discipline of students. “To direct the child’s development without hindering it by undue control should be the study of both parent and teacher. Too much management is as bad as too little” (p. 288). And again, “The wise educator, in dealing with his pupils, will seek to encourage confidence and to strengthen the sense of honor. . . . Suspicion demoralizes, producing the very evils it seeks to prevent” (pp. 289-290). Imagine my alarm when I realized he was sincerely sharing some of his favorite tricks of the trade.

Over the intervening years, as a K-12 principal, I have seen many teachers who do
very well with students and only a few who do not. Despite their relatively small numbers, the ones who do not do well have a negative impact on students and on school morale. I’ve seen families walk away from a school because their child’s teacher was emotionally or professionally abusive. Students, families, and colleagues suffer under the icy attitude or withering wit of the abrasive teacher. But abrasive teachers also suffer, sometimes from the retaliation of students and the students’ families, and sometimes from their own inner frustration, anxiety, or conscience. They seldom show enthusiasm for the work of serving children and their families. I believe that abrasive teachers are caught in a cycle of suffering. They cause it, and they experience it.

For example, one abrasive veteran teacher with whom I worked was well-known and respected by the school community. Many of her students were the children of her former students. Parents viewed her classroom as a kind of boot camp they had survived many years ago, and now they looked back with pride that they had been tough enough to survive Miss Sugiyama (a pseudonym). Ironically they also had stories to tell about the subtle ways they had gotten even with her. They thought their stories were hilarious, and they shared them in their children’s hearing. It was a toxic setup for training children for passive-aggressive rebellion.

Miss Sugiyama held high standards, and her students had to work hard. That was good. However, her anger towards the students and her brittle responses were not necessary for maintaining the standards. The unhealthiness of Miss Sugiyama’s classroom was marked by a higher incidence of vandalism, theft, bullying among the classmates, and even frustrated meltdowns by the teacher herself.

For several years I believed that professional development could sweeten a
teacher and bring greater peace to the classroom. I have yet to see that kind of success. Instead, it has been my experience that when teachers return from a seminar or workshop, those who do well with children bring back new skills that they use to everyone’s benefit. The abrasive teachers seem to pick up vocabulary and practices that further alienate and demoralize the students. For example, one teacher returning from Love and Logic training (Cline & Fay, 1990) looked for ways she could show more respect and give more support to the students as they practiced managing their own problems. The delicate balance between teacher guidance and student growth in autonomy became a science for her. However, after the same training, a teacher who seemed chronically annoyed by his students immediately quit the little interest he had in their troubles and abdicated his role as guide and final arbiter. Instead, he met student requests for help with sarcastic responses, misusing the snappy catch phrases he’d learned at the seminar. The humane teacher had gained insight into using students’ daily troubles as opportunities for them to grow in problem-solving and self-management. The abrasive teacher had merely off-loaded his responsibility onto the students’ shoulders. Parents with students in the humane teacher’s classroom valued Love and Logic, while parents with students in the other room had no respect for it.

Clearly, it was not the Love and Logic program, nor the presenter’s skill that made the difference. The teachers themselves had brought something of their own to the workshop, and when they walked away, that piece of them was more powerful—for good or for ill. So, I began looking for that thing, that piece, they had brought to the workshop and had not changed; that attitude more potent than the skills they acquired. At the same time I struggled with managing the abrasive teacher.
During my 25 years as principal on both the elementary and high-school level, I have encountered a large majority of excellent teachers, a handful who struggled with content knowledge or instruction, and only five whom I would call abrasive. However, the abrasive ones fill my memory because of the difficulty and self-doubt I experienced in dealing with them. First, I would have to determine whether the teacher was appropriately demanding or truly abrasive. Next I would have to discern whether or not the abrasive teacher’s behavior was impeding learning and/or causing unnecessary stress, fear, and anger in the students. Then there was the hard task of opening the abrasive teacher’s eyes to the damage they were doing and either enlisting their cooperation in changing the behaviors, or documenting what tangible evidence could be found in preparation for replacing them. Either way, it was a long emotional roller-coaster ride every time. And, sadly, sometimes I caved, avoiding taking action but living with the self-disrespect and sense of incompetence that avoiding a problem can bring.

A physically abusive teacher will have a short professional life, but an abrasive teacher may avoid detection for a longer time. An abrasive teacher has a formidable arsenal: sarcasm, insinuation, casting doubt on the student’s worth, coercion, intimidation, withholding of privileges available to others, and even the recruitment of other students against the targeted student. None of these leave physical marks, so the abrasive teacher’s behaviors can continue for some time undetected or uncorrected. This kind of teacher behavior is hard to document and would often leave me in personal turmoil. On a good day I would be tempted to think the problem was solved; I would even hope I’d been wrong about the teacher. On a particularly bad day, I would fear that my work with them was progressing too slowly, that the students were being harmed, that
the school was liable for lawsuit, and that I was incompetent for having let the situation come to this point.

In one instance after confronting an abrasive teacher I quickly found myself on the receiving end of her rage as she gathered her colleague-allies against me. This kind of conflict is easy to fall into when dealing with an abrasive teacher. Since the damage he or she does is hard to see, the abrasive teacher may quickly deny or justify what has been done and claim the principal is on a vendetta. Yet the suffering they cause, though not marked by physical scrapes and bruises, is no less real. Students develop psychosomatic symptoms: headaches, stomach aches, generalized anxiety, and depression (Meland et al., 2010). They lose interest in their studies. They develop listless or defiant attitudes. They begin to act out or tune out. And in the worst of symptoms, I have seen them sometimes adopt the teacher’s low appraisal of them and begin to despise themselves.

Despite all of this wreckage, I have found that abrasive teachers are often blind to the damage they are doing, paralleling the blindness that has been noted in abrasive managers (Crawshaw, 2010). They are quick to justify their actions, claiming that they hold high expectations and that “everyone else is mollycoddling the kids.” They blame parents for interfering, they blame students for any lapse in the teacher’s self-control; and they blame principals for being suspicious, non-supportive, and accusatory.

I found working with abrasive teachers to be emotionally exhausting. They are often hypertensive and tend to misuse system-wide disciplinary procedures. One teacher used the school’s demerit system to remove 50 points (four letter grades) from one boy over a span of 3 hours. I asked for the rationale, and the teacher replied that the boy had worn a hat to class (-5 points) and though he removed it upon the teacher’s request, it was
after some unhappiness (-10 points for failing to comply immediately). Next period the teacher looked down into the courtyard and saw the same student wearing the same hat headed for another class (-15 points for repeated offense) and a little later, he saw the same boy outside again wearing the same hat (-20 points for insubordination). I said taking a student from a citizenship grade of A to F after talking to them only once was a bit drastic. The teacher acquiesced, but said he really favored expelling the boy.

The boy obviously should have come to school already in compliance with school standards. Yet the repeated overreaction from this teacher bated students who were looking for a cause. This man was a great teacher when it came to his content knowledge and instruction. Conduct was another matter, and his own health showed the ill effect of hypertension. Understandably, his colleagues were in turmoil due to his outbursts. They respected him as a capable teacher, but they winced at his angry tirades against students with whom they themselves had little difficulty. They wished he would change, or that the principal would somehow solve the problem without doing any damage to the teacher. Morale suffered, mine included.

When I found a professional coaching system that promised to improve the quality of my decisions, I signed up. My coach met with me for an hour each week for almost 4 months. I found it to be personally helpful, and I hoped I could use it to assist some of my teachers. It felt like it was getting closer to that potent personal perspective that flavored everything else. I talked to our school counselor about the prospect of hosting the training. I was both delighted and chagrined when she commented on how much more humane I had become in my treatment of my faculty. Me? Abrasive? But here she was complimenting me on my growth in empathy. While I had been worrying
that I was going too easy on some, they had been feeling the weight of my unresolved tensions, irritability, and frustrated comments. I had misread how others saw me.

I was enchanted and began developing a theory about the congruent life in which self-care and other-care work together, especially in the high-stakes interactions which are so frequent in education. I ran the idea past a friend of mine who was superintendent of public schools. He listened well and understood my intent. I asked him, “Bill, if I could deliver that kind of help to your teachers who struggle with humane conduct, what would it be worth to you? His reply was discouraging.

“All my professional development dollars go to anything that can raise reading and math scores,” he said. “That’s it. I won’t spend one dollar to create nifty people.”

Bill is an intelligent, focused professional. However, the concepts in *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) would challenge that kind of thinking. And certainly that thought should be challenged in K-12 schools where young people are learning not only subject-area content, but also the way society works. I believe that a teacher must be strong in presenting the assigned content, but also in modeling pro-social behaviors.

After mulling it over, I chose to approach the problem from the angle that *does* touch school budgets, even without our planning or consent. Rather than providing an optional program designed to elevate all teachers, I decided to focus on the inescapable challenge of direct intervention with abrasive teachers specifically. It’s a human resource issue involving great cost to a school. Abrasive teachers can drive families from our schools. Abrasive teachers are lightning rods for lawsuits. They lower staff morale. The time and monetary cost of firing and replacing an abrasive teacher can be crippling to the principal and the school. But in all cases, the heaviest burden is borne by a captive
audience, the students. Children may not even be able to lay blame at the right door, and they are likely to carry into adulthood the crippling attitudes and poor modeling of the abrasive teacher. Principals have a fiduciary responsibility to keep that from happening.

My Childhood Experiences With Abrasive Teachers

Once I began to tell people I was studying abrasive teachers and how principals respond to them, they would ask me if I had been abused by a teacher when I was young. My immediate answer was “No.” I have no nightmares, no seething anger. I’m not on a crusade. But then I remembered Mrs. Swinyard (not her real name).

My very first teacher was a no-nonsense person. She had rules for everything. After lunch we were required to slump forward on our desks and rest our heads on our crossed arms while she read a story to the class. One day as we waited with our heads down, she walked to the back of the room to fetch her story-time book. I looked over at my friend Marty across the aisle. We smiled, then giggled. I whispered something to him, not hearing the teacher approaching from behind.

Suddenly a sting of pain shot down my left arm as her pencil lead penetrated my shoulder and broke off as it hit bone. The shock of the puncture was quickly replaced by my shame of having done something so awful that the teacher would be left with no choice but to punish me that painfully. I prayed she wouldn’t tell my mom and dad who taught at the same school. She didn’t, but my mother discovered the swollen and festering wound sometime later as I was sitting in the bathtub with my younger brother. Mom demanded that I tell her what happened, so I made a full confession of my sin, and I saw her jaw muscles working as she walked out of the room. I cringed thinking that she
would come back with the rubber sandal. I was ashamed all over again, and waited. When she returned, she was no happier, but all she brought was her nursing supplies to open, clean, and dress the wound. Nothing more was said.

Years later, I discovered that her first emotion had been anger towards my teacher, then the distress of not knowing what to do. My teacher was the principal’s wife, and my own parents had just been hired. In 1962 the phrase *child abuse* was rarely used in the school setting. Teachers had a nearly free hand when it came to disciplinary tactics. I learned much later that my older brother had been more seriously and frequently hurt by his teacher, but these things were not discussed.

Still, I look back on those occurrences with mild detachment, not with a crusader’s hostility. The teachers should not have handled students that way, but I was too young at the time to feel indignant. As a child, I had no sense that I deserved anything better. All I felt was shame. I was certain that the adult was only doing what had to be done, and I was a bad kid. I still can’t feel outrage towards the teacher. A more subtle and long-term emotion is driving my interest in this study.

A residual emotion began to develop as my next 2 years did not go well. I was a reluctant learner; adults called me slow. In third grade I had frequent stomach aches and eye strain, so on a doctor’s advice my parents took me out of school and sent me far away to live with my grandparents for a while. Back home the next year I repeated third grade as my classmates moved ahead.

For 6 years I remained frustrated with school and did not do well. My parents were convinced by my primary teachers that I was not smart enough to make it in high school. So they discussed sending me to a trade school, though I didn’t know it at the
time. For 6 years I was surrounded by all the adult responses that are given to a child who is “sweet, but not that bright.” Finally, I ended up in my mother’s classroom, and I can remember the day when she broke the silence of our 25-mile, morning commute with the pronouncement, “You know, Jim, you’re no dummy. From now on I’m going to expect a lot more work out of you.” Her statement was shocking, thrilling, and depressing all at the same time, but it wasn’t until college that I began to prove her right.

Today, I can smell low expectations a mile away. I know how it feels to have people give up on you without even knowing you; to expect little from you, and to give you little of their attention, effort, or encouragement. That memory is ever-present and visceral in me. Ironically, that memory is aroused every time I see the plight of abrasive teachers stuck in their cycle of aggression and frustration. And what of the principals who must make the lonely decisions? I certainly want the emotional abuse of students to stop, and I also want the teachers and principals to have the support they need to create healthier classrooms.

The Influence of Crawshaw’s TAD Dynamic

As I began my doctoral studies I found a dissertation titled *Coaching Abrasive Executives: Exploring the Use of Empathy in Constructing Less Destructive Interpersonal Management Strategies* (Crawshaw, 2005). The dissertation was a post-mortem on Crawshaw’s successful career of doing what I was hoping could be done. In it Crawshaw developed a simple model which is now called the TAD Dynamic (Crawshaw, 2007). That dynamic and her coaching model have been reviewed in Chapter 2.

Crawshaw’s method of working with abrasive managers found immediate
resonance with the values by which I had been raised. Crawshaw maintains respect for abrasive managers, refusing to label them as bullies and continuing to believe that they are capable of more empathic response to their subordinates and peers (Crawshaw, 2010). It allowed me to see the abrasive teacher (and myself in my aggressive moments) not as villain or victim, but as a person who is capable of choosing a better response than the classic *fight or flight* with which we are too familiar.

Since Crawshaw’s coaching model (2010) has helped organize my thinking, I am interested in adapting her work to the unique challenges faced by K-12 principals who supervise abrasive teachers. My study will begin to identify those challenges.

In summary, I bring to this research project my 36 years of experience and study in the field of teaching and educational leadership. I believe in maintaining a strong positive regard for each person, especially when he or she is in conflict or trouble. I have been curious as to why some teachers are abrasive and why inservice training does not seem to help. I am aware that abrasive teachers cause much suffering and are often suffering themselves. I am also aware that I myself can become abrasive when I am exhausted, frustrated, or overwhelmed. And I am aware that principals also suffer in deciding when and how to intervene, and they face the storm and stress of following through with correctives. I have seen Crawshaw’s TAD Dynamic (2007) as a useful model for understanding abrasive behavior and the drivers behind it. In these ways I have become equipped for this study and my approach, my bias, has been shaped.

**Research Questions, Hypotheses, and Products**

In order to explore the phenomenon of principal response to abrasive teachers, this study was built on six main research questions and 34 sub-questions. This section
will list all 40 questions along with accompanying hypotheses. However, it is not common to write hypotheses for questions which will be answered with descriptive statistics (Jimmy Kijai, personal communication, March 13, 2014), nor is it appropriate to state hypotheses for the qualitative portions of the study (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). Therefore this section will present a mix of the hypotheses used in analyzing the quantitative data along with the products which will result from exploring descriptive statistics and analyzing qualitative data. Products may include reports of frequencies, percentages, categorized lists, and discovered themes. Both hypotheses (H_a 2d, for instance) and products (Product 3a, as an example) are numbered according to the corresponding research sub-questions. This combination should produce a more complete picture of the goals of the study than a listing of hypotheses alone.

Prevalence (RQ 1)

Research Question 1 (RQ 1): How prevalent are abrasive teachers in the work experience of K-12 school principals? The following three sub-questions will bring greater clarity. RQ 1a: What percentage of principals report having supervised an abrasive teacher within the last 3 years? RQ 1b: What is the percentage of abrasive teachers within the total sample of teachers represented by the responding principals? RQ 1c: Is the use of abrasive behavior more prevalent within certain groups of teachers based on selected attributes? The five selected teacher attributes are: (a) grade level taught, (b) subject area taught, (c) years of teaching experience, (d) sex of the teacher, and (e) teacher’s race/ethnicity.

Product 1a: The percentage of principals who report having worked with abrasive teachers in the last 3 years will be calculated and reported. Product 1b: The percentage of
principal-reported abrasive teachers within the total number of teachers who are
supervised by the responding principals will be calculated and reported. $H_a$ 1c.1 through
$H_a$ 1c.5: Abrasive teachers will be reported more frequently in some groups of teachers
than will others. These tests were conducted using $\chi^2$ goodness-of-fit.

Identification (RQ 2)

Research Question 2: How do principals determine that a teacher is using abrasive
behaviors on students? The following four sub-questions will be used. RQ 2a: How does
the teacher’s use of abrasive behaviors come to the principal’s attention? That is, what
are the modes of discovery? RQ 2b: What teacher behaviors do principals view as
abrasive? RQ 2c: What student behaviors do principals perceive to be symptomatic of
teacher-to-student bullying? RQ 2d: What, from the principal’s perspective, causes a
teacher to use abrasive behaviors? That is, what Theory of Mind helps the principal make
sense of the teacher’s use of abrasive behaviors? “Theory of Mind is the branch of
cognitive science that investigates how we ascribe mental states to other persons and how
we use the states to explain and predict the actions of those other persons” (Marraffa,
2011).

Product 2a: A frequency distribution of the modes of discovery reported by
principals. Product 2b: Categorized lists of teacher behaviors that principals see as being
abrasive. Product 2c: Categorized lists of student behaviors principals see as symptomatic
of teacher abrasiveness. Product 2d: Themes found in principals’ Theories of Mind which
they use to make sense of why teachers use abrasive behaviors on students.
Decision-making (RQ 3)

Research Question 3: What is involved in the principal’s decision-making process regarding intervention? RQ 3a: What elements of a principal’s situation increased his/her motivation to intervene? RQ 3b: What elements of a principal’s situation decreased his/her motivation to intervene? RQ 3c: What was the principal’s level of anxiety prior to his or her decision to intervene? RQ 3d: Of the principals who reported having supervised an abrasive teacher, what percentage reported having chosen to intervene? RQ 3e: What reasons did principals give for their decision to intervene? RQ 3f: What reasons did principals give for their decision not to intervene? RQ 3g: Did selected principal attributes predict the principal’s decision to intervene? Principal attributes to be considered are: sex, age, race/ethnicity, years of service as a principal, number of teachers supervised, and whether the principal was bullied as a child. RQ 3h: Did selected principal attributes predict the principal’s choice of intervention type? RQ 3i: Did selected principal attributes predict the principal’s choice of number of intervention types? RQ 3j: Did the mode of discovery predict whether or not the principal would intervene? RQ 3k: Did the mode of discovery predict the principal’s choice of intervention type? RQ 3l: Did the mode of discovery predict the principal’s use of a greater number of types of intervention? RQ 3m: Did the presence of a teacher union predict the principal’s decision to intervene? RQ 3n: Did the presence of a teacher union predict the principal’s choice of intervention type? RQ 3o: Did the presence of a teacher union predict the number of intervention types a principal will use?

Product 3a: Frequencies for situational elements that increased the principals’ willingness to intervene. Product 3b: Frequencies for situational elements that decreased
the principals’ willingness to intervene. Principals identified factors that increased or decreased their willingness to intervene. This was done through the use of multiple-option questions with a place for write-in response. Cataloging the principals’ choices and write-in responses, and providing a frequency distribution for those responses, helped to create a clearer picture of the driving and restraining forces that pressurize the principal’s decision-making process. Product 3c: A frequency distribution of the principals’ self-reported anxiety levels at the time of choosing to intervene. Hₐ 3d: Of the principals who report having worked with abrasive teachers in the last 3 years, less than 100% will have chosen to intervene. Descriptive statistics will be used to arrive at the percentage. Product 3e: A frequency distribution of the reasons principals give for initiating intervention. Product 3f: A frequency distribution of the reasons principals give for not initiating intervention.

Hₐ 3g.1 through Hₐ 3g.8: The principal’s decision to intervene will be predicted by eight attributes of the principal. The attributes are: age, years in the principalship, supervision load, sex, race/ethnicity, and the frequency, intensity, and type of bullying he or she experienced as a student. These hypotheses are non-directional. Logistic regression will be used to test the relationships among principal attributes and the principal’s decision to intervene.

It should be noted that Hₐ 3g.6 through Hₐ 3g.8, which tested the relationship between principal history of being bullied as a child and the decision to intervene, were non-directional, because the literature supported opposing hypotheses. Principals who were bullied as children might be less likely to intervene as suggested by a previous study (Twemlow et al., 2006) that found that teachers who were bullied as children were more
likely to bully their students than teachers who had never suffered bullying. This would suggest that bullied principals would also be more prone to bullying. However, a more recent study (Nordgren et al., 2011) suggests that there are empathy gaps in people who have not experienced the pain of social exclusion, a form of bullying. These gaps cause a teacher to be less likely to perceive social bullying as a problem. Therefore, a principal who has experienced social exclusion will be more likely to recognize that form of abuse and presumably more likely to intervene.

H₃ 3h.1 through H₃ 3h.8: The principal’s choice of intervention type will be predicted by eight attributes of the principal. Multiple linear regressions were used to test the eight attributes (enumerated for H₃ 3g) for their ability to predict which of five types of interventions a principal will choose. The five types of intervention were: supportive, instructive, cautionary, restrictive, and punitive.

H₃ 3i: The number of intervention types used by the principal will be predicted by the eight attributes of the principal (enumerated for H₃ 3g.) Linear regression was used to test the relationship between the modes of discovery and the principals’ choice of intervention type (Cohen et al., 2002; McNeil et al., 2011; McNeil et al., 1996).

H₃ 3j: The principal’s decision to intervene will be predicted by the mode of discovery. Logistic regression was used to test the following five modes of discovery: report from a colleague, report from a student, report from a parent/guardian, observation by the principal, and self-report by the abrasive teacher. These hypotheses will be non-directional and one-tailed.

H₃ 3k: The principal’s choice of intervention type will be predicted by the mode of discovery. A series of logistic regressions was used to test the five modes of discovery
which were enumerated for $H_a$ 3j.

$H_a$ 3l: The number of types of intervention chosen by the principal will be predicted by the mode of discovery. Linear regression was used to test the relationship between the modes of discovery and the number of types of intervention used by the principal (Cohen et al., 2002; McNeil et al., 2011; McNeil et al., 1996).

$H_a$ 3m: The principal’s decision to intervene will be predicted by the presence of a teacher union. Cross-tabulations were used to test whether the principal’s decision to intervene is predicted by the presence of a teacher union.

$H_a$ 3n: The principal’s choice of intervention type will be predicted by the presence of a teacher union. A series of cross-tabulations was used to test the relationship between the presence of a teacher union and the principal’s choice of intervention type.

$H_a$ 3o: The number of intervention types used by the principal will be predicted by the presence of a teacher union. This was tested with both an independent samples $t$ test and a means test.

**Intervention (RQ 4)**

Research Question 4: How have principals intervened? RQ 4a: What *types* of intervention did principals most frequently use? RQ 4b: How did principals work to end the teacher’s use of abrasive behavior?

Product 4a: Frequencies will be reported for the principals’ use for five types of intervention: supportive, instructive, cautionary, restrictive, and punitive. Product 4b: Principals’ attempts at intervention will be described and then analyzed to identify themes within their approaches to intervention.

Initially I planned to collect a single descriptor for each principal’s type of
intervention, and then to use that descriptor as a single, continuous variable. I expected each principal to mark the one type of intervention that best described his/her efforts at addressing the teacher’s abrasive behavior. However, the principals who piloted the survey felt that it would be more realistic to allow the marking of multiple types of intervention. Making that change in survey design created six new variables. The first was a continuous variable of how many types of intervention the principal used, and the next five were dichotomous variables, one for each intervention type. This change made it possible to test a variable’s relationship to not only the individual types of intervention, but also to the use of multiple types of intervention. It became important while testing the relationships between intervention type and intervention outcomes.

Outcome (RQ 5)

Research Question 5: What were the outcomes of the principals’ interventions?

RQ 5a: From the principal’s perspective, what was the effectiveness of the intervention as judged by the degree to which the abrasive teacher’s behavior improved, or by the replacement of the teacher? RQ 5b: In the principal’s opinion, after the intervention, what was the level of satisfaction among each of six school stakeholders: the targeted student(s), the family(ies) of the targeted student(s), the abrasive teacher, the rest of the faculty, the principal him/herself, and the broader school community? The “broader school community” includes news media, social media, and “the talk around town.” RQ 5c: Did perceived intervention effects correlate to perceived satisfaction among school stakeholders? RQ 5d: Did the presence of a teacher union predict the effectiveness of intervention? RQ 5e: Did the presence of a teacher union predict the principals’
perceptions of school stakeholders’ level of satisfaction with the outcomes of the intervention?

Product 5a: Frequencies will be reported for the intervention effects as perceived by the principals. Each principal will choose one of seven effects for the intervention he or she shared. The seven effects were: *it’s too early to tell, things got worse, nothing changed, the teacher is doing better, the teacher was removed, and the teacher is doing well.*

Measuring effect seemed easy at first. Principals marked the outcome for the intervention scenario they had reported. No problems arose in data collection, but they did in testing. *Effect* was designed to be a continuous variable, and it was coded as: 0 = *too early to tell*, 1 = *things got worse*, 2 = *nothing changed*, 3 = *teacher is doing better*, 4 = *teacher is doing well*, and 5 = *teacher was removed*. I had planned to exclude *too early to tell* responses from testing, since the outcome was still evolving. The next four responses were organized along a continuum, but the fifth option, *teacher was removed*, was simply put at the end of the list. Where it fit on the continuum was debatable. It had been placed in the final position to keep it from interrupting options 1 through 4 which were clearly in order of desirability. However, placed as it was in the final position, *teacher was removed* tested as though it was the most desirable outcome.

For purposes of recoding the variable, I queried the 21 interviewed principals asking if they would see the teacher’s removal as more or less desirable than teacher improvement. All but three principals responded. One presented a case for seeing it either way, but the rest were fairly definite in where they would place teacher removal. They all agreed on one thing: *teacher is doing well* was the most desirable outcome. However,
eight principals saw removing the teacher as being superior to having the teacher improve. The remaining nine principals saw teacher improvement as more desirable than teacher termination.

Though various rationales were shared, there were two predominant thoughts. First, the principals who favored teacher removal stated that the students need outstanding teachers who inspire, motivate, and educate them. As Betty said, “Every child deserves a wonderful teacher. Period.” These principals also mentioned the time-draining challenge of coaxing small improvements from a reluctant teacher.

The other principals agreed with the need for excellent teachers, but they placed greater value on teacher improvement for one main reason. Vera said:

You know, I moved the problem, but I didn’t solve it. And that’s maybe the best I could do for my school, but it’s not satisfying to me, individually, as a person. . . . It’s just moving the problem to a new place.

After seeing that the removal of the teacher accounted for higher satisfaction throughout the school community, and understanding that it does make possible an immediate improvement in classroom climate, I chose to agree with the eight principals who focused solely on improvement in the classroom. I moved teacher was removed to the fourth position. The resulting continuous variable, effect, was now arranged as: 1 = things got worse, 2 = nothing changed, 3 = teacher is doing better, 4 = teacher was removed, and 5 = teacher is doing well. This variable was used in regressions. Next, I recoded that variable into five dichotomous variables for the purpose of running cross-tabulations and correlations. In this way it was possible to see how each specific effect related to intervention types, intervention tactics, principal’s level of empathy, and even satisfaction scores.
Product 5b: A means test will compare the average satisfaction level school stakeholder to the five intervention effects. Each principal indicated on a 5-point scale his/her perception of the satisfaction level of each of the six stakeholders after the intervention was complete. The six stakeholders were: the targeted student(s), the family(ies) of the targeted student(s), the abrasive teacher, the rest of the faculty, the principal, and the broader community. The intervention effects were also reported from the principal’s perspective. The perceived effects were: (a) things got worse, (b) nothing changed, (c) teacher is doing better, (d) teacher was removed, or (e) teacher is doing well.

Hₐ 5c: Perceived stakeholder satisfaction scores will be positively correlated with the effect of the intervention as perceived by the principal. A bivariate correlation was used to test this hypothesis.

Hₐ 5d: The presence of a teacher union will predict the perceived intervention effect. Linear regression analysis and cross-tabulations were used to test this hypothesis.

Hₐ 5e: The presence of a teacher union will predict the perceived stakeholder satisfaction. Linear regression analysis and bivariate correlation were used to test this hypothesis.

Patterns (RQ 6)

Research Question 6: In the process of abrasive teacher intervention are there identifiable patterns between the elements of threat, anxiety, response, and outcome (TARO) that would suggest a dynamic of intervention? This question required the testing of three relationships: (a) the relationship between the principal’s perception of threat and his/her level of anxiety, (b) the relationship between the principal’s level of anxiety and his/her choice of response (intervention), and (c) the relationship between the principal’s
response and the outcomes of that intervention. The three tests were guided by five sub-questions. For clarity’s sake the sub-questions and hypotheses are grouped together according to which relationship they are testing.

The decision to look for a pattern by testing these relationships was based on Laura Crawshaw’s (2007) Threat-Anxiety-Defense (TAD) Dynamic. I was curious to know if the principal’s response to threat would be visible in their work with abrasive teachers. Crawshaw’s model and her coaching system (2010) were reviewed in Chapter 2, but it is important here to explain how her model will be applied to the testing for patterns in this study.

The K-12 principal is in a highly visible and regulated position. Unlike many teachers, the principal is not protected by tenure. He or she often remains an at will employee on a 1-year contract. An impulsive move can cost the principal his/her job. Accordingly, the principal is likely to deliberate over disciplinary interventions with teachers and may be less likely to act by impulse than less-regulated managers in other industries. Therefore defense was changed to response. Additionally, this study looked at the outcomes of a principal’s response, so outcome was added in order to test whether the principal’s early choices, perhaps modified by anxiety, would be traceable into intervention outcomes. Therefore, TARO (Threat, Anxiety, Response, Outcome) was developed as a framework.

**Threat Related to Anxiety**

RQ 6a: Did the mode of discovery predict the principal’s level of anxiety? Hₐ 6a: Mode of discovery will predict the principal’s level of anxiety at the time of deciding to intervene. This hypothesis assumed that the principal would find reports from some
people to be more anxiety producing than reports from others. Linear regression was used to test the predictive capacity of five modes of discovery: reported by a colleague, reported by the targeted student, reported by the targeted student’s parents, observed by the principal, or self-reported by the abrasive teacher.

RQ 6b: Did the number of modes of discovery predict the principal’s level of anxiety? Hₐ 6b: A higher number of modes of discovery will predict higher principal anxiety. This directional hypothesis was chosen due to the assumption that if the teacher’s abrasiveness were more widely known, the principal would sense greater exposure and feel more anxious. Linear regression was used to test this hypothesis.

To understand how the principal’s perception of threat affects his/her level of anxiety, it was necessary to identify a source of threat for the principal. I chose to look at the mode of discovery, that is, the way in which the principal became aware that the teacher was using abrasive behaviors against students. Looking to the mode of discovery, we can test not only how the principal became aware, but also the number of ways he or she was made aware.

**Anxiety Related to Response**

RQ 6c: Did the principal’s level of anxiety at the time of choosing to intervene predict his/her choice of intervention type? Hₐ 6c: Principal anxiety level will be correlated with the type of intervention chosen. Bivariate correlation and cross-tabulation were used to test the relationship between the principal’s level of anxiety and choice of intervention types (Howell, 2010, pp. 141-151).
Response Related to Outcome

RQ 6d: Did the type of intervention the principal used predict the perceived effectiveness of the intervention? Hₐ 6d: The type of intervention used by a principal will predict the principal’s effectiveness in ending or reducing the teacher’s abrasive behaviors in the classroom. Linear regression was used to test the capacity of five types of intervention—supportive, instructive, cautionary, restrictive, and punitive—for predicting the effect of the outcome.

RQ 6e: Did intervention type predict the principal’s perception of stakeholder satisfaction? Hₐ 6e: The type of intervention used by a principal will predict the principal’s perception of the level of satisfaction within the school community, such that types supportive and instructive will increase average satisfaction; and types cautionary, restrictive, and punitive will lower average satisfaction. Linear regression was used to test the five dichotomously coded intervention type variables for their capacity for predicting the principal’s perception of stakeholder satisfaction.

Assumptions

Five assumptions were inherent in this study: (a) a hostile classroom environment impedes learning, (b) some teachers create classroom environments that are hostile for some or all of their students, (c) principals should intervene when teacher behaviors impede learning, (d) interventions are seldom easy, and they pose risks for the principal, and (e) each person in the situation should be treated respectfully, regardless of the responses they choose. It was further assumed that principals cared enough about the topic and their profession to share candidly from their experience.
Limitations

The study is not generalizable due to design limitations, such as its limited sample size, the use of volunteer participants, and the lack of experimental design. The study may be further compromised by human limitations, such as the researcher’s skill at capturing the essence of the principals’ experiences, the principals’ ability to focus and deeply reflect during the survey or interviews, the principals’ willingness to be transparent considering the sensitivity of the topic, and the knowledge that principals, like all humans, tend to present their experience in ways that enhance self-image (Krueger, 1998). In an attempt to ameliorate this threat to validity, discursive analysis (Wengraf, 2004) will be applied to topics that affect self-image. Sensitive areas which would be prone to principals’ self-enhancing reporting will be noted, but no external verification of the principals’ claims will be sought. (The methodological decision to base the study on principal perspectives has been presented under the heading Use of Principal Perspective above.)

Summary of Methodology

This two-stage, fully-integrated, mixed-methods study explored California K-12 school principal response to abrasive teachers. During the first stage 515 principals, both public and private, provided quantitative and qualitative data via a 31-question web-based survey. From those analyses inferences were drawn, themes were identified and categories were developed. During the second stage, 21 semi-structured depth interviews were conducted and compared against the findings of stage one.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Participant anonymity was ensured during stage one by the use of anonymous, web-based surveying. During stage two
confidentiality was maintained through the anonymization of data and through the secure storage and planned, final destruction of recordings and original transcripts.

The study sought to understand the prevalence of abrasive teachers, how principals identify them, how principals make decisions regarding intervention, what interventions they use, how effective the interventions were from the principals’ perspectives, and patterns that may exist throughout the process.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore K-12 school principals’ experience with teachers who use abrasive behaviors when working with students. Six research questions were asked. The findings from each of the six questions will be presented in the six sections following this introduction. Since, Chapter 4 presents a wide variety of information and a substantial number of findings, only the tests whose results are statistically significant will be tabled.

Prevalence of Abrasive Teachers (RQ 1)

Research Question 1 (RQ 1): How prevalent are abrasive teachers in the work experience of K-12 school principals? This question contained three sub-questions. RQ 1a: What percentage of principals report having supervised an abrasive teacher within the last 3 years? RQ 1b: What is the percentage of abrasive teachers within the total sample of teachers represented by the responding principals? and RQ 1c: Is the use of abrasive behaviors more prevalent within certain groups of teachers based on selected attributes? Each question will be addressed under its own subheading. The parenthetical RQ number at the end of each subsection title identifies the research sub-question that is being addressed.
Percentage of Principals Supervising Abrasive Teachers (RQ 1a)

RQ 1a: What percentage of principals report having supervised an abrasive teacher within the last 3 years?

Result: The first question on the survey was answered by 515 principals. The question asked, “Are you (or have you ever been) the principal, headmaster, or supervisor of an abrasive teacher?” Within that group 454 (88.2%) said they had supervised an abrasive teacher at some time during their administrative careers, and 61 principals (11.8%) said they had never supervised an abrasive teacher.

Of the 515 principals who answered the first question, 343 principals went on to provide information on their most recent 3 years of practice. In that narrower time frame, 280 principals (81.6%) reported having supervised an abrasive teacher, and 63 principals (18.4%) said they had not.

Percentage of Teachers Who Use Abrasive Behaviors (RQ 1b)

RQ 1b: What is the percentage of abrasive teachers within the total sample of teachers represented by the responding principals? Arriving at a plausible current percentage of abrasive teachers required some screening of the data. The 280 principals who reported having supervised abrasive teachers in the last 3 years, provided demographic information for 864 abrasive teachers. Descriptive statistics for the number of abrasive teachers reported by each of the 280 principals are as follows: minimum number of abrasive teachers reported by one principal = 1, maximum reported by one principal = 52, mean = 3.1, median = 2, mode = 2. However, the high report of 52 was three times higher than the next highest principal’s report of 17. The principal reporting 52 abrasive teachers indicated that he or she had supervised a total of 106 teachers during
that same 3 years. Due to the large disparity between this report and all other reports this report was suppressed from calculations of the percentage of abrasive teachers.

Result 1: When the report of 52 abrasive teachers is excluded, then 279 principals supervised 812 abrasive teachers, and the descriptives become: minimum = 1, maximum = 17, mean = 2.9, median = 2, mode = 2. The principals who supervised abrasive teachers averaged almost three abrasive teachers each.

In order to calculate the prevalence of abrasive teachers across the whole field of teachers represented by the responding principals, 30 additional responses were suppressed for a variety of reasons (see Appendix J for a full description of the process). In brief, the 30 principals’ response patterns made it look like they had misunderstood the questions regarding the number of abrasive teachers they supervised in the last 3 years (which was question 2) as opposed to the total number of teachers they supervised in the last 3 years (which was question 3). As a group these 30 principals reported 97 abrasive teachers and only 92 total teachers. This again points to a misunderstanding of the question, so their numbers were suppressed.

Result 2: Suppressing the data from 31 principals it was found that the remaining 312 principals (63 of whom had supervised no abrasive teachers) as a group had supervised 15,563 teachers. Of those teachers, 715 (4.6%) were judged by their principals to be abrasive.

Prevalence Within Specific Teacher Attributes (RQ 1c)

RQ 1c: The final sub-question on prevalence asked, “Is the use of abrasive behavior more prevalent within certain groups of teachers based on selected attributes?” Five teacher attributes were tested: (a) grade level taught, (b) subject area taught, (c)
teacher’s sex, (d) teacher’s years of experience, and (e) teacher’s race or ethnicity. In other words, “Will there be proportionately more abrasive teachers at certain grade levels or in certain subject areas? And will teachers of a certain sex, level of experience, or race be more prone to using abrasive behaviors?”

It would have been an overwhelming task for the 343 survey respondents to provide these five data for all 15,563 teachers represented by the principals in the study. Instead, state teacher demographic data from the school year 2011-2012 (posted by the state on April 5, 2013) were used for testing goodness-of-fit. The data are available at www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/df/filesassign.asp. Calculations of $\chi^2$ goodness-of-fit were made in Microsoft Excel 2007 for the following five research hypotheses.

$H_a 1c.1$: The numbers of abrasive teachers will not be distributed across grade levels proportionately to the state distribution of teachers across those same grade levels. To match survey data to state categories the following adjustments were made: In the state population of teachers 1,375 were designated as teaching all Grades K-8. That number was distributed proportionately across grade levels. In the sample 17 teachers were designated K-12. That small number was also distributed proportionately across Grades K-12. In the sample six teachers were designated as Gr. 1-4. They were distributed proportionately across Grades 1-2 and 3-4. Additionally, the sample contained 23 teachers were designated as Gr. 5-8. They were distributed proportionately across Grades 5-6 and 7-8.

Result: A $\chi^2$ goodness-of-fit test calculated the following values: $\chi^2 = 48.86$, $\chi^2_{(cv)} = 11.07$, ES = 0.11. This shows that the research hypothesis may be retained due to the chi-square value being larger than the critical value. The grade range with the largest
overrepresentation was Grades 5-6 where abrasive teachers were 40.1% more prevalent than expected. Grades 3-4 showed 27.2% more abrasive teachers than expected, and principals reported 7.3% more abrasive teachers in Grades 7-8 than a proportionate distribution would suggest. The grade ranges where abrasive teachers were underrepresented were kindergarten through Grade 2 and Grades 9-12 (see Table 3).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Abrasive Teachers in Sample</th>
<th>Teachers in California</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>% of Expected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18,930</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>61.4*a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr 1-2</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>38,382</td>
<td>142.1</td>
<td>88.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr 3-4</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>33,353</td>
<td>123.5</td>
<td>127.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr 5-6</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>31,435</td>
<td>116.4</td>
<td>140.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr 7-8</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>35,251</td>
<td>130.5</td>
<td>107.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr 9-12</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>71,471</td>
<td>264.6</td>
<td>82.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>847</strong></td>
<td><strong>228,822</strong></td>
<td><strong>847.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aPercentages under 100 show underrepresentation.

Ha 1c.2: The numbers of abrasive teachers will not be distributed across subject area assignments proportionately to the state distribution of teachers across those same subject areas. In preparing the data for analysis, some subject areas, such as humanities (221 teachers) and special designated subjects (399 teachers) were listed by the state, but not by the principals in the current study. Those subject areas along with their numbers of teachers were excluded from the population totals. Computer education teachers and business education teachers were combined on the survey, so state populations in those two subjects were also combined.

Result: A chi-square goodness-of-fit test calculated the following values: $\chi^2 =$
36.78, $\chi^2_{(cv)} = 21.03$, ES = 0.06. Here again the research hypothesis must be retained due to the chi-square value being larger than the critical value. Abrasive teachers did show up more frequently than expected in some subject areas (see Table 4).

Table 4

**Goodness-of-fit Calculations for Abrasive Teacher Representation by Subject Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Abrasive Teachers in Sample</th>
<th>Teachers in California</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>% of Expected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4,198</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>43.2&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/Computer Ed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,282</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>235.6&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/Drama</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>24,993</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5,621</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Ed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3,018</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE/Health/Dance</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11,347</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3,117</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>145.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>18,813</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>117.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>15,326</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>102.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15,567</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>93.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Ed Classroom</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>138,523</td>
<td>458.7</td>
<td>107.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Ed</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15,464</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>838</strong></td>
<td><strong>253,070</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Percentages under 100 show underrepresentation.

<sup>b</sup>Shows overrepresentation of 135.6%, since 100% indicates that the number matched the expected number.

H<sub>4</sub>1c.3: The numbers of abrasive teachers in each of three categories of experience (1-3 years, 4-10 years, 11 and more years) will not fit the California state distribution of teachers across those same categories of experience.

Result: A chi-square goodness-of-fit test calculated the following values: $\chi^2 = 81.74$, $\chi^2_{(cv)} = 5.99$, ES = 0.24. Here again the research hypothesis may be retained due to the chi-square value being larger than the critical value. Abrasive teachers show up
27.9% more often than expected in the 11+ years-of-experience range (see Table 5).

Table 5

**Goodness-of-fit Calculations for Abrasive Teacher Representation by Years in Profession**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Profession</th>
<th>Abrasive Teachers in Sample</th>
<th>Teachers in California</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>% of Expected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>31,372</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>69.8^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-10 years</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>91,398</td>
<td>225.4</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+ years</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>174,020</td>
<td>429.2</td>
<td>127.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>296,790</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^aPercentages under 100 show underrepresentation.

H₁: The numbers of abrasive teachers will not be split between the sexes proportionately to the state teacher population’s split between the sexes.

Result: A chi-square goodness-of-fit test calculated the following values: \( \chi^2 = 26.39 \), \( \chi^2_{(cv)} = 3.84 \), ES = 0.18. The research hypothesis was retained due to the chi-square value being larger than the critical value. Male abrasive teachers were 29.0% more prevalent than expected (see Table 6).

Table 6

**Goodness-of-fit Calculations for Abrasive Teacher Representation by Sex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Abrasive Teachers in Sample</th>
<th>Teachers in California</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>% of Expected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>214,254</td>
<td>589.8</td>
<td>88.8^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>82,536</td>
<td>227.2</td>
<td>129.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>296,790</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^aPercentages under 100 show underrepresentation.
H₄₁c.5: The numbers of abrasive teachers will not be distributed across categories of race and ethnicity proportionately to the state distribution of teachers across those same categories. The following adjustments were made to the state category totals in order to match survey categories which had been based on the U.S. Census categories. Filipino (N = 4,181, 1.41% of the state population of teachers) was added to Asian. Both Two or More Races (N = 2,202, 0.74% of the population) and No Response (N = 10,466, 3.53% of population) were dropped due to the impossibility of assigning them to a single category.

Result: A chi-square goodness-of-fit test calculated the following values: $\chi^2 = 50.18$, $\chi^2_{(cv)} = 11.07$, $ES = 0.25$. The research hypothesis may be retained due to the chi-square value being larger than the critical value. The effect size is approaching medium (see Table 7).

### Table 7

**Goodness-of-fit Calculations for Abrasive Teacher Representation by Race/Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Abrasive Teachers in Sample</th>
<th>Teachers in California</th>
<th>Expected % of</th>
<th>% of Expected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,605</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>42.6(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18,989</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>11,672</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>128.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>51,823</td>
<td>151.6</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>207.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>199,044</td>
<td>582.2</td>
<td>112.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>284,122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Percentages under 100 show underrepresentation.
Summary of Prevalence of Abrasive Teachers

Of the 343 principals who completed the survey, 280 principals (81.6%) said they had worked with an abrasive teacher in the last 3 years. After suppressing one report that was an anomaly, it was found that the 279 principals had supervised 812 abrasive teachers resulting in an average of 2.9 abrasive teachers per principal. After suppressing 30 problematic records, the prevalence of abrasive teachers was calculated to be 4.6%.

Next, chi-square goodness-of-fit tests found abrasive teachers to be overrepresented in Grades 5-6 (40.1% higher count than expected), Grades 3-4 (27.2% higher than expected), and Grades 7-8 (7.3% higher). In all other grade ranges (K-2 and 9-12) abrasive teachers were underrepresented.

Abrasive teachers were more prevalent than would be expected in business education (136% higher than expected), music (45.3% higher), and math (17.2%). They were less prevalent than expected in social studies (6.9% lower than expected). General education classroom teachers were overrepresented, being 107% higher than expected.

Regarding time in the profession, it is the veteran group of teachers (with 11 or more years of experience) that were overrepresented (27.9% higher than expected).

Male teachers are overrepresented in this sample by 29.0%, though given the smaller proportion of male teachers (293 men to 524 women), principals will likely find it easier to recall female abrasive teachers.

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific islanders were overrepresented by 207%, but their frequency was only 6. Other overrepresented races were Black or African American (128.9%) and White or Caucasian (112.2%).
Identification (RQ 2)

Research Question 2 (RQ 2): How do principals determine that a teacher is using abrasive behaviors on students? The answer to this question can be pursued by asking four sub-questions: RQ 2a, How does the teacher’s use of abrasive behaviors come to the principal’s attention? That is, what are the modes of discovery? RQ 2b, What teacher behaviors do principals view as abrasive? RQ 2c, What student behaviors do principals perceive to be symptomatic of teacher-to-student bullying? RQ 2d, What, from the principals’ perspectives, causes a teacher to use abrasive behaviors? That is, what Theory of Mind helps the principal make sense of the teacher’s use of abrasive behaviors?

The principals’ responses to each of the questions will be examined in the following four subsections. The parenthetical RQ number at the end of each subsection title identifies the research sub-question that is being addressed.

Modes of Discovery (RQ 2a)

RQ 2a: How does the teacher’s use of abrasive behaviors come to the principal’s attention?

Result: A total of 288 principals provided 790 responses. Most indicated that several modes of discovery had been present (Mean = 2.8 modes of discovery per principal). Table 8 shows the frequencies for each mode of discovery. Figure 3 renders a clearer view of the disparities in frequency. The most commonly present mode of discovery was a report from a parent or guardian (N=231). Principals were also likely to discover the problem through their own observations (N=199) or through student reports (N=188). The abrasive teacher’s colleagues also brought the problem to the principal’s attention in 148 cases. Abrasive teachers self-reported 19 times.
Table 8

*Frequencies of Modes of Discovery (N = 790) as Reported by 288 Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Discovery</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Responses</th>
<th>% of Principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A parent/guardian reported it.</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I observed it myself.</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>69.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student reported it.</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A colleague reported it.</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The abrasive teacher self-reported.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (write-ins)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Due to rounding percentages do not equal 100.

Figure 3. Frequencies of six modes of discovery reported by principals ranked in descending order.

Eight principals marked *Other* and wrote in additional details. Three of the write-ins helped to clarify the principals’ selections of items in the provided list of options. Five write-ins identified additional modes of discovery. They were: past administrator reports, posts on Facebook, district employees who were working in the teacher’s room, a video
tape, and an anonymous report. If any of these miscellaneous modes of discovery had been on the original list of options they may have been selected by more principals.

A sampling of written-in comments will add some depth to the picture:

First, you begin to hear things second or third hand from students not directly involved in the abrasive practices. Second, you begin to have questions from parents, sometimes those whose children were involved, but many times from families not directly involved. (Respondent #1544)

Parent concerns, things students say, the teacher’s unbending attitude, the way the teacher speaks about students, parents, observations of teachers yelling or demeaning students. (Respondent #1267i)

When I hear students complain that teachers don’t like them, treat them unfairly, or embarrass them I become concerned. When these reports come from multiple sources, this increases my concern, along with reports from parents. When I observe a classroom atmosphere that is not positive, where students are quiet and passive, this adds to my concern. When I observe classroom management that is heavy on negative feedback (scolding students, nagging), I become concerned, knowing that teachers and students tend to be on their best behavior when I am observing. When the teachers behave like bullies with other staff members, this increases my concern. (Respondent #1205)

Principals also reported looking to the teacher’s use of abrasive behaviors against adults as a way to verify what may have started as a single complaint. Though this fact was not written as a response to the question on modes of discovery, it did show up in 25 written comments. The ability to predict aspects of the principal’s intervention based on the mode of discovery will be presented in a later section.

Abrasive Teacher Behaviors (RQ2b)

RQ 2b: What teacher behaviors do principals view as abrasive? The survey participants were asked: “What things do you see, hear, or feel that cause you to believe a teacher is being abrasive?” No options were provided. Instead, principals wrote their own lists or sentences to describe behaviors they felt were abrasive. The following sample of
three principals’ comments provides a brief overview from the principals’ perspectives.

Teacher is inconsistent in how he or she responds to students—shows favoritism to some and is “mean” and unforgiving to others. One teacher called some students names like “freakshow” and idiot. Some students get a “friendly reminder” for forgetting homework while [the teacher’s response to] others [is to] call their parents in front of their classmates and have [the student] sit on the bench at recess. One particular student is singled out regularly (as observed by administrator and by students). He is called names and the teacher says things like, “Don’t raise your hand. I don’t want to hear from you for the rest of the day.” The same student is made to sit by himself facing a wall on a daily basis. The teacher has low expectations for this student. He claims the student has “no capacity for learning anything.” The teacher literally puts his face in this student’s face and yells at him. The teacher told another student, “You are not the center of the universe, the world does not revolve around you, get over yourself.” Grading for report cards has been subjective with lower grades for students he does not care for even when they are excellent students.

(Respondent #1361)

I have supervised this teacher for one year, although she has taught at the site for 30. Her assistants reported to me that she had singled out a student with mental retardation (an eligibility of Intellectual Delay-Severe under IDEA law) who she did not want in her classroom. The student is docile, although can be stubborn at times. She had made many comments about her weight in front of her, denied her lunch, and took away the 15-year-old-student’s prized possession, her purse, to punish her for non-compliant behavior. Predictably, the student became upset with her and grabbed the teacher’s shirt, crying loudly for her purse. The paraprofessionals in the room calmed the student down and asked her to release the teacher’s shirt, at which point, inexplicably, the teacher started kicking the student’s shins. The student collapsed and began crying inconsolably. The student posed no threat according to both assistants. I did not know about any of the bullying comments until the assistants reported this incident, unfortunately. [County law enforcement agencies] investigated and the District is housing the teacher (thank God), while the investigation unfolds.

(Respondent #1573i)

Verbally demeaning comments. For example, one teacher referred to two girls as lesbians in front of their peers. Both had a history of hospitalization for self-injury. Another teacher would call students stupid. Threatening comments. For example, one teacher told a student that if he was 18 the teacher would beat him up. Negative tone. Many of these teachers use a domineering tone that alienates students. These teachers often resort to yelling. Physical contact. Some teachers use physical force to “steer” or “push” kids into compliance. Oddly, these were all female teachers to male students. (Respondent #a1048)

Result: The 288 principals’ comments were separated into 715 discrete descriptors which were coded in NVivo to create five categories of abrasive behavior (see
The five categories of abrasive behavior were: verbal, professional, physical, non-verbal, and social. Each will be examined in the following five subsections.

Table 9

Frequencies of Principal Comments on Types of Abrasive Behaviors (N = 715) Collected From 288 Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Abrasive Behavior</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10

Frequencies of Principal Comments Within Subtypes of Verbally Abrasive Behaviors (N = 362)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbally Abrasive Behaviors</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Put-downs, Profanity, Condescension</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yelling, Screaming</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaming, Humiliating</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcasm</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone of voice</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Due to rounding percentages do not total 100.
Putdowns and profanity

Putdowns, name-calling, sexual and racial innuendo, and profanity aimed at students were reported by 136 principals.

Principals in this study repeatedly described teachers’ abrasive speech as being inappropriate, loud, demeaning, harsh, condescending, rude, mocking, profane, belittling, and hostile. They included descriptions such as, “[The teachers] joke about a student’s intelligence or their ability to learn.” “[The teacher said] ‘I can have you suspended faster than you can turn off your hearing aids’ to a 6th-grade [hard of hearing] student.” One principal reported that he/she had heard inappropriate or rude nicknames and comments such as “stop being the village idiot.” Another wrote, “Using subtle putdowns that students cannot identify but clearly leave them feeling uneasy, criticized, and demoralized.” Other principals wrote, “They put them down in front of others,” and “Teacher is loud and belittles students in front of their peers.” One principal wrote, “Teacher telling students that they were stupid, would amount to nothing, and [would] live out in the street.” Principals also wrote that teachers made comments about the part of town the students live in, about their ethnicity, their family and their lack of hope for more advanced study: “I had your brother / sister and you’re no better. Does anyone in your family have a high school diploma?” “Students were told they were horrible and unskilled.” “[They] put down students’ clothing, hair, etc. [saying] ‘Your momma should buy better clothes for you.’” One principal wrote, “One [teacher] used to answer the phone ‘Johnson’s mule barn’ and if you know that one the next statement is ‘Which ass do you want to speak to?’”

Some principals offered a string of direct quotes from abrasive teachers: “Get out
of my room.” “You’re a POW (piece of work).” “You have no home training.” “You’re an idiot.” “You must have a bad family since you don’t get your homework done.” “I can’t wait until I can hurt you.” “No, not ‘Fuck me…’ ‘fuck you…’ Fuck you!” “You stupid asshole!” “Stand in the back of the class.” “Shut your frickin’ mouth!” “Why don’t you do your damn homework?” and “You can’t fix stupid.” “Just leave the room. . . . I don’t care where you go, but don’t be here.”

Yelling and screaming

Yelling, shouting, and screaming were specifically named in 90 additional reports. Excerpts of some reports are: “Both teachers were extremely loud with their students. One could hear the yelling from outside of the building.” “Out and out yelling in the face of a kid.” “Screaming at students in the hallway.” “Teacher yelling at student so loud that one could hear through a closed door.” “Yells at children at the top of her lungs.” “Constantly yelling.”

Shaming and humiliating

Principals wrote 75 comments about teachers’ intentional use of shaming and humiliation. They frequently mentioned the public nature of the teachers’ harsh criticism. One principal wrote: “The teacher corrected student in front of the entire class. The teacher was advised that student was fragile and to use a 1:1 approach with administration present. The teacher subsequently humiliated the student in front of the class.” Another principal observed a visibly upset teacher outside the building addressing several students, calling them by name and saying, “You are nothing but a little brat and we do not [accept] any little brats in this class.” He also stated, “You obviously have
never been taught before.” And he asked, "You are crying, now? Do you need me to get some diapers?” One principal wrote of a teacher who used the school’s jog-a-thon as an opportunity to place a label on one student which read, “Lazy in Spanish.” Another teacher posted poor test scores for others to see. Another stated that certain students “must have gotten into a private high school because of race rather than ability.” Some teachers required students to do embarrassing acts: “She had them stand near the Staff Lounge. When anyone asked why they were there, the students were directed to describe their inappropriate behavior.”

Sarcasm

Sarcasm was specifically named 47 times. One principal wrote that the teacher “makes mean comments, laden with sarcasm and ‘packaged’ as joking: ‘I thought you finished kindergarten.’ ‘Did you parents do that for you?’” Another principal listed “disingenuous praise.” One principal offered this personal view on sarcasm, why teachers bring it to the classroom and why it needs to be unlearned:

I feel adults think they are teasing in a way to connect with students. Adults sometimes forget that each student is different and depends on her/his family of origin’s dynamics. I grew up in a sarcastic household and had to unlearn that behavior when I went into teaching and even more importantly, when I went into administration. Sarcasm hurts and I work constantly with my teachers to avoid using it and to apologize when it does happen. (Respondent #1319)

Tone of voice

Fourteen principals mentioned “tone of voice” as a tool of abrasion. The student understands the teacher’s message by intonation rather than denotation.
**Professional Abrasiveness**

Professional abuse means taking advantage of the student’s trust, exploiting their vulnerability, failing to act in their best interest, and failing to keep professional boundaries (“Professional Abuse,” 2010). Of the 715 descriptors of abrasive behaviors, principals wrote 183 that can be classified as professional abuse. They can be further subdivided into two smaller categories: abuse of power and misrepresentation of students.

**Abuse of power**

Principals wrote 150 comments dealing with the teacher’s abuse of power. These can be loosely clumped around seven themes (see Table 11).

**Table 11**

*Frequencies of Principal Comments Within Subtypes of Professionally Abrasive Behaviors (Abuse of Power) (N = 150)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professionally Abrasive Behaviors (Abuse of Power)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excessive Discipline—Unclear Expectations</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic, Inflexible Style, Power Struggles</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluding Student from Activities</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocking Academic Progress</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignoring or Discrediting Students Who Request Help</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denying Use of Facilities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unethical Communication</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Due to rounding percentages do not total 100.

**Excessive discipline**

Most frequently principals wrote about excessive, inconsistent, or unfair discipline. They used words like overly punitive, demeaning punishment, overly strict, over-reaction, disproportionate number of disciplinary referrals, excessive discipline for
minor infractions. Examples of specific comments are: “Overzealous in pursuing students who don’t follow the rules fast enough.” “These teachers tend to want discipline to be punitive and not as a means of influencing negative behaviors in order to get a more positive outcome.” “Targeting some students while others get away with the same behavior.” “Inconsistent expectations followed by unreasonable immediate demands.” “They can’t tolerate them for any little thing. Ex: getting out of seat without permission earns the student a referral.” “First Grader is told, ‘You must sit on the bench during recess, because you wore the wrong clothes to school.’ The little girl was wearing white jeans instead of blue jeans.” “Bench a child for weeks at a time for small behavior problems. Will bring kids to the office to be suspended for days on an infraction that should be benched.” “Yelling at the class for the poor behavior of a few.” “Hands out punishment without listening to students.” “She would also write more behavior referrals for Latino males than other races.” “Personal attacks within a classroom for minor infractions such as no pencil.” “Punitive consequences are used that discourage the student to the point of giving up. The teachers seem pleased that they are ‘preparing the [student] for upper grades.’”

**Autocratic style.** Principals also wrote about the teacher’s autocratic, inflexible style which leads to power struggles with students. They used words such as: confrontational, arbitrary, bossy, overbearing, unreasonable responses and expectations, inflexible, rigidity, secretive, no connections to students, harsh and unfair comments and practices. Specific statements included: “using authority rather than establishing relationships,” “needs to seek revenge,” “demanding that others agree, places rules over principles,” “uses her power as a professional to manipulate student,” “work must be
perfect, word-for-word from the book,” “wants same expectations for all,” “expects them to do the work with little guidance and support,” “creating a feeling of retribution, demands to know which parents are complaining,” “he has a very strong personality and students are afraid of him.” “[The teacher says], ‘I teach, it is their responsibility to learn.’” “Continually getting into power struggles with students and refuses to listen or to see their side of things.” “Making students stare into teacher’s eyes,” “engaged in verbal warfare with students,” “makes students beg for a grade,” “argumentative with students over trivial or [merely] perceived differences.”

**Excluding student from activities.** Exclusion from the expected class activities formed another cluster of comments: The majority of comments were about sending students out of the classroom for protracted periods of time: “Students sent to sit in the hallway outside of class for long periods of time causing them to miss lesson content.” But principals also noticed that some teachers “look for reasons to exclude certain students from class activities” and allow “no participation in ‘fun’ activities,” “habitually taking away recess” or “having them miss all their recesses.”

**Blocking academic progress.** Principals viewed blocking a student’s academic progress as being an abrasive behavior. They saw this happening in several forms: “Grading extremely hard so students aren’t able to succeed.” “[The teacher has stated] that Special Ed students and English Language Learners were lazy and [has] consistently failed 40% of the class.” “Students reported that the teachers were not teaching but off task.” “[Being] ineffective in their instruction.” “She is unwilling to take the time to differentiate for the students in question. She refuses to file SST referrals because she
doesn’t want to ‘waste’ her time on kids who ‘don’t care.’” “Grades being used as a threat.” “Telling a class that they ‘don’t give A’s to students’.”

**Ignoring or discrediting students who request help.** Closely related to blocking academic progress, principals also saw ignoring student requests for help or consideration as being an act of abrasion on the part of the teacher. “Refusing to assist student, not answering student’s question.” “Dismissing student ideas, not allowing students to explain or defend their work, actions, etc.” “Blasts students when the students ask for additional help that will inconvenience the teacher.” “The class is very structured, but many of our low readers and ELLs can’t function in his class because they say they feel ignored. He has made comments of like, ‘Learn English if you want to get credit for my class.’”

**Denying use of facilities.** Principals also reported teachers denying access to facilities and programs: “Locking students in the classroom when they requested to leave.” “Refusing to let students use the restroom, resulting in students wetting their pants. This happened twice this year.” A teacher who “had made many comments about [a student’s] weight in front of her, denied her lunch.”

**Unethical communication.** Principals also saw a teacher’s lack of confidentiality or lack of judgment in communication as an indicator of potential trouble. Their written comments included: “It is important to one of these teachers to be liked by the kids more than the regular ed teachers. I KNOW she would tell them false information about other classroom teachers and the principal.” “Used strange, inappropriate ‘stories’ to try to make connections with students. These stories, included alcohol, ‘goth’ proms, streaking,
“Referring to parent conversations in front of the classroom, reporting to students that ‘the admin is out to get me’, referring to students by number rather than name.” “Discusses student discipline in front of other students.” “Teacher over-sharing personal affairs.” “[Teacher expresses] boredom, fatigue and . . . job dissatisfaction.”

Misrepresentation of students

Principals wrote 61 comments dealing with the teachers’ malicious misrepresentation of students and/or their abilities. Their comments can be grouped into three subcategories: false reports about student, disempowerment, and unfair grading (see Table 12).

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professionally Abrasive Behaviors (Misrepresentation of Student)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>False Reports About Student</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disempowerment</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfair Grading</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Due to rounding percentages do not total 100.

**False reports about student.** The largest number of principal comments about misrepresentation of students involved the teacher’s blaming, complaining, and outright “telling lies about the student.” A number of the reported incidents could fit the legal definition of defamation. Principals wrote that the abrasive teacher may complain to colleagues and parents portraying the targeted student(s) as hopeless, perhaps lowering
the expectations of the learning community. Teachers place blame on the students for ignorance or lack of progress, labeling kids as unteachable. They blame students for the teacher’s failure in classroom management and instruction. And they write demoralizing reports and make numerous negative calls to the student’s home. Some examples of principals’ descriptions are: “Talking poorly about students to other staff members beyond the typical adult ruminating over the job.” “Teachers describe students as ‘brain damaged’.” “They make hateful comments about student contact, derogatory comments when speaking about the student(s).” “Blames student for not knowing content. Teacher places lack of progress on children publicly, blaming students for failure to master content, labeling them unteachable.” “Teachers blame students in parent conferences.” “Telling parents their child need[s] special education or a special day class.” “If students don’t understand, he always believes it is because they aren’t paying attention or trying hard enough. In his mind, this is ‘high expectations’.” “Blaming students for teacher’s inability to plan or follow through.” “Classroom mismanagement that results in students being targeted and blamed for the teacher’s lack of skills.”

“[The teachers] put ill intention on actions of others, whether it be peers, students, or supervisors.” “Characterizing students’ behaviors as violent and defiant when the teacher does not take into consideration the specific needs of students and expect[s] them to comply in classroom environments that are rigid on the one hand and not organized to support student learning [on the other hand].”

“[This teacher] lies about students which creates a lot of anger towards him.” “The teacher made false statements and reports in regards to students.” “The teacher lied about the behavior of the student.” “When she doesn’t like a student she will threaten him
and get his/her other teachers to complain to administration about him so he can get
kicked out.” “Teachers claim they are being bullied by students.” “They bully others and are unaware of it, or [they] blame the kids.”

**Disempowerment.** Another type of behavior that principals saw as abrasive was giving the student discouraging and inaccurate feedback on his/her academic prospects. For example: “Telling a student he had done well in prior years because he had been in classes of low performing students.” “Written comments on student work that make reference to the student’s intelligence.” “Telling students they were not smart enough to be in their class.” “Telling students they will never be anything.” “She will tell them they are headed for a horrible future, like to jail, or will end up having babies early on, or will end up a problem for society.”

**Unfair grading.** Another way to misrepresent students is through the unfair issuing of grades. In a legal sense, defaming someone in written form constitutes libel. Principals report: “Grading for report cards has been subjective with lower grades for students he does not care for (even when they are excellent students).” A student was given a lower mark on a performance because she chose not to take the music elective in the next semester.” “Teachers withholding information from students and making them ‘figure it out’ for themselves and then relishing in giving them bad grades.” “Disproportionate number of F’s for the AA [African American] and Hispanic student.” “One graded Hispanic Latinos down on assignments. This was evident when a Latina copied a white girl’s essay and received a lower grade on it. When confronted the teacher did not defend the lower grading, she simply said, ‘now it’s a zero for cheating.’”
Physical Abrasiveness

The third category of abrasive behaviors involves physical intimidation, rough handling, destroying or taking student property, and throwing things (see Table 13). Principals wrote 82 related comments.

Table 13

*Frequencies of Principal Comments Within Subtypes of Physically Abrasive Behaviors (N = 82)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physically Abrasive Behaviors</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Intimidation</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grabbing, Shoving, Pulling Student</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destroying Student Property</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throwing Things</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Physical intimidation

While physical contact between teachers and students is often appropriate, the behaviors described by the principals were done in the context of an aggressive, threatening demeanor. Principals described behaviors often accompanied by words, but relying heavily on uncomfortable physical contact, invasion of personal space, and use of symbolic weapons. According to the principals, teachers have backed students into corners, slammed doors, slammed books or other objects onto desks, yelled inches from the student’s face. Sample comments include: “Pounding a small bat on a counter to get students’ attention. [Saying,] ‘Shut up or I will shoot you.’ Berating students, stating loudly for all to hear, ‘Is it okay if I kill them now?’” “When students bring work for her to check, she will slam the book or paper down and tell them ‘This is wrong!’ in a loud voice.” “Aggressive physical contact with the student.” “Nagging, constant threats of
punishment.” “[Making] inappropriate comments: ‘[I’ll] rip your arm off and beat you with the bloody stump.’” “[Making] threatening comments. For example, one teacher told a student that if he was 18 the teacher would beat him up.”

Principals also report teachers blaming the student for the teacher’s loss of control, and threatening the student so that the teacher may continue his/her abrasive behavior unreported: “Teacher shaking a chair so hard, causing the child to fall off the chair. Teacher telling him, ‘See what you made me do?’” “Threatening students from sharing their concerns with their parents or administration.”

Rough handling

Principals wrote 24 comments about teachers’ rough handling of students. The comments named things such as: grabbing students to pull them close while yelling at them, grabbing at their arms, clothing, or hair; grabbing students to forcibly reposition them, grabbing student heads or chins to force their attention to a book, the teacher’s face, etc.; teachers rapping students on the head to get their attention, tapping them on the head with a rolled up paper, shaking students, pushing, grabbing a student’s hand in anger, and repeatedly kicking an older mentally-delayed student in the shins. One principal reported working with a teacher who was being investigated for “an alleged picking up of a student and holding him against the wall for a brief time.”

Two principals wrote that teachers had allowed other students to hit, fight, or bully students in their classrooms.

Destroying/taking student property

Principals made nine references to teachers tearing up papers in front of students,
throwing student work in the trash, breaking students’ pencils, kicking students’ belongings away from them in a teasing manner, arbitrarily confiscating property valued by the student as a means of retaliation, and even cutting a student’s hair.

Throwing things

Throwing things across the room or at students “to get their attention” is also a frequently reported teacher act of aggression: “Throwing objects in the room to get the students attention.” “Throwing pencil cases on the floor.” “Teacher throwing erasers at English learner for not responding quickly to a question.” “One teacher threw a tissue box at a child because they were tired of disruptions and that child asked for a tissue.” “[Teacher] dumped student desk.”

Non-verbal Abrasiveness

Principals wrote 47 comments describing teachers’ non-verbal communication. Their comments could be categorized: as creating a negative classroom climate and use of negative facial or body expressions (see Table 14).

Table 14

*Frequencies of Comments Within Subtypes of Non-verbally Abrasive Behaviors (N = 47)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-verbally Abrasive Behaviors</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative Classroom Climate</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Face/Body Expression</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describing non-verbal forms of communication, principals listed: “red-in-the-face,” “scowling,” “mean faces,” “glaring,” “eye rolling,” “perpetually grumpy,”
“negative body language,” “snapping,” “flipping off a student who couldn’t find their pencil,” “nonverbal expressions that communicate ‘That is stupid,’” “sneers at students who cry.” Principals added general impressions of routinely abrasive teachers: hostile, negative, inflexible, unapproachable, domineering, alienating, psychologically manipulative, confrontational, disrespectful of students; lack of smiling.

Principals used the following words to describe the feeling tone created in the classroom of a teacher who regularly uses abrasive behavior: heavy, oppressive, students may be quiet and passive, poor feeling tone, sense of impending retribution.

One principal highlighted the potential threat to student health and safety that can be created by a teacher’s disregard for students: “[The teacher was] continuing to eat peanuts when disciplining a student who has a peanut allergy and not noticing she was having difficulty breathing.”

**Social Abrasiveness**

Principals wrote 41 comments dealing with the teacher’s misuse of social power in the classroom (see Table 15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socially Abrasive Behaviors</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singling a Student Out for Favor or Disfavor</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostracizing Separating Student from Others</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting Other Students to Ridicule Target</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the reports had to do with the teacher singling out a student either
for unfair favor or disfavor. Principals used terms like scapegoating, singling out, open
contempt, inequitable decisions, gender bias, race bias, ostracizing, separating,
segregating, and isolating. Some of the mentioned practices were: teacher singling out
students who are outside the norm, segregating students with disabilities, teacher showing
open dislike for a student, constantly ignoring a student who asks for help, consistently
giving demerits to targeted students while ignoring the same behaviors in favored
students, withholding praise or friendliness from targeted students, “nit-picking” the work
of targeted students, turning student’s desk towards the wall, making a child face the
corner, moving them to the back of the room, setup of classroom with the intention of
regular, ongoing isolation of targeted students; public comments about what the teacher
finds unworthy in the targeted student.

One principal wrote that the abrasive teacher had “pet” students who would
“cover up” for the teacher if he/she were absent from the classroom. Another wrote
encyclopedically:

Some students get a “friendly reminder” for forgetting homework while [the teacher
will] call [other students’] parents in front of their classmates and have [them] sit on
the bench at recess. One particular student is singled out regularly (as observed by
administrator and by students). He is called names, and the teacher says things like,
“Don’t raise your hand. I don’t want to hear from you for the rest of the day.” The
same student is made to sit by himself facing a wall on a daily basis. The teacher has
low expectations for this student. He claims the student has “no capacity for learning
anything.” The teacher literally puts his face in this student’s face and yells at him.
(Respondent #1361i)

Predictably, abrasive teachers may also recruit the derision of other students
against the targeted student(s). Principals wrote that sarcasm and teacher comments about
things which are embarrassing to the target have been used for such a purpose: “Sarcasm
such that other students laugh at the student to whom the sarcasm is directed.” “Makes
comments to classmates that are embarrassing or borderline.”

“Kidding” with students—giving them nicknames that set them up for ridicule from other students, i.e. calling a female student Raggedy Ann because she colored her hair. Also stating during a viewing of the move, “Sandlot” that the overweight boy in the movie reminded him of [name withheld] who was present in the class. (Respondent #1319)

Summary of Abrasive Teacher Behaviors

Five categories of abrasive behavior were identified in the comments from 288 principals. The five categories were: verbal, professional, physical, non-verbal, and social.

Student Symptoms of Teacher Abrasiveness (RQ 2c)

RQ 2c: What student behaviors do principals perceive to be symptomatic of teacher-to-student bullying?

On the survey, principals were asked to: “List student behaviors you believe are symptomatic of that student’s being bullied by a teacher.” The principals wrote responses which were then separated into discrete descriptors which were then coded to identify themes.

Result: Of the 288 principals who responded to the question, 45 provided information on what student behaviors attracted teacher abrasiveness and could not be used in answering this question. The 243 principals who described symptoms offered 871 specific descriptors of student symptoms of teacher abuse. The descriptors were analyzed and it became clear that the principals had provided two types of descriptor. The first type described the affect of the students, the second described the behavior of the students. Further analysis suggested two themes within the affective descriptors—emotional state
and psychosomatic symptoms—and four themes within the behavioral descriptors—acting out, shutting down, avoiding, and reaching out (see Table 16).

Table 16

Frequencies of 243 Principals’ Comments on Types of Student Symptoms of Being Bullied by a Teacher (N = 871)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Symptom</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional State</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosomatic Ailments</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Out</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shutting Down</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching Out</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Affective Symptoms

One hundred twelve of the descriptors addressed the emotional state of the child or his/her psychosomatic symptoms (see Table 17). Descriptors of emotional state and psychosomatic symptoms will be presented in the following two sections.

Table 17

Frequencies of Principal Comments on Student Affect (N = 112)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective Symptom Subcategory</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional State</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosomatic Ailments</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emotional state

Listed were such things as: timidity, shyness, unhappiness, feeling upset or stressed, nervousness, fear, anxiety, frustration, anger, hostility, resentment, and crying. The most frequently mentioned feeling was dread which was manifested as “fear of coming to school,” “school anxiety,” “fear of having her work ridiculed,” and “wanting to avoid the teacher or class.”

Psychosomatic ailments

Principals provided 27 descriptors of psychosomatic symptoms, such as: stomach aches, headaches, bed/pants wetting, nightmares, loss of sleep, diarrhea, nail biting, pulling out hair, feeling sick, body ailments, loss of appetite, sore throat, hunger, and drug use.

Behavioral Symptoms

The remaining 759 descriptors were focused on behaviors which could be split into four broad categories: acting out, shutting down, avoidance, and reaching out. Before examining each category, a few principal comments will help create a context.

Defiant to withdrawn Students will either act out to be removed from the class or shut down and refuse to do anything. Students being bullied by an adult sometimes lash out at other students s/he deem less powerful than her/him. The adult “kids” a student but other students may take the “kidding” to extremes as they now feel they have permission to do so by the adult’s actions. Many middle school students run with the “kidding” and have a hard time stopping. (Respondent #1319)

Two extremes—acting out or shutting down defiance, arguing, cutting class, not paying attention and not doing the teacher’s work shutting down and fearful, not coming to school. (Respondent #1463)

Fear, lack of performance, acting put behaviors. Our school’s State Healthy Kids survey has 88% of our respondents feeling safe at our school so this one teacher’s behavior really stuck out in contrast to what our students normally experience. They
shared concerns with me as well as parents who know what our school stands for. (Respondent #1777)

Acting out

Well over one third of the principals’ written descriptors dealt with students’ acting out behaviors. Principal comments indicated that the behaviors might change as the year progresses. “These students often ‘act out’ or give the opposite behavior from what the teacher is yelling about.” “In this case, the boys bonded together and rebelled to an even greater extent than they had in the past. Their behaviors became more entrenched.”

Most of the acting out behaviors represented various levels of resistance to the teacher. They can be separated into three levels of resistance: passive resistance (low), provoking (moderate), and defiance (high). Two additional forms of acting out were not necessarily aimed at the teacher. They were: vandalism and aggression (see Table 18).

Table 18

Frequencies of Principal Comments on Acting Out Behaviors (N = 317)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acting Out Subcategory</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low—Passive Resistance</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate—Distracting, Goading, Arguing</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High—Defiance, Rebellion</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Aggression on Others</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Due to rounding percentages do not total 100.

Passive resistance. Principals reported student use of “passive aggressive” behavior. In this low level of resistance, students slow down, fail to pay attention to the
teacher’s requests and instruction, and do not complete their assignments or finish their homework. Students fail to dress out for P.E. They don’t learn the material the teacher is presenting. They may not take the class seriously or quit following the classroom procedures. They do as little as possible, and they use body language to communicate non-compliance.

However, the entire class may not react to teacher aggression in this way. Principals frequently described student symptoms as being composed of two prongs: “Quiet and withdrawn on one hand; Brazen, bold, attention-seeking on the other.” And “Some students quit trying when they feel that their chances of success are limited. [While other] students react with defiance [against] a teacher’s attempts to manipulate or control them.”

Shutting down behaviors may work in a nonproductive way for the students and the teacher. As one principal wrote, “Low engagement was not a concern of the teacher. Students had heads down on the desk. I observed boys constructing things just under the desk lids with things in their desk. There was non-verbal communication amongst students.”

**Provoking: distracting, goading, arguing.** The majority of student symptoms of maltreatment which were described by the principals defined a moderate level of student resistance directed at the teacher. Common themes were: “acting out” whether in the classroom or at recess, arguing—especially contesting fairness of teacher requests, talking back, refusal to complete assignments, unwillingness to conform to the teacher’s wishes and requests, infraction of many rules such as those governing use of cell phones, iPods, and gum; antagonizing the teacher, exploiting teacher “hot buttons,” consistently
being off task, outbursts of abnormal behavior, student impulsivity, walking around in the classroom, throwing things, yelling, use of sarcasm, rude and disrespectful behavior, oppositional body language, and eye rolling. This list of student behaviors contains many of the items previously listed as abrasive behaviors used by the teacher. In such an environment the pressure can escalate. To quote one principal, The students “act out and in general exacerbate an already tense situation.”

Students bullied by a teacher would often skip class, walk out during class without permission, shut down or attempt to be invisible in class so that they were not singled out for attention/humiliation. Some would argue with the teacher, and almost all would justify their behaviors based on the bullying activity of the teacher. (Respondent #1175)

Younger students, without the sophistication of the older ones, were described in this way: “Some ‘melted down’ into behaviors of crying, yelling, hitting each other or the adults in the room.”

**Defiance.** Principals also provided descriptors of symptomatic behavior indicating a high level of student resistance. They wrote words such as: defiant, belligerent, rebellious, retaliatory, mocking the teacher, expressing extreme anger, brash or bragging behavior, combative, fighting back, explosive, shouting, and the use of profanity. Principals wrote: “Definitely acting out, trying to get back at the teacher by insulting them back, refusing to work or apply themselves.”

Students rebelling back and [being] willing to get sent to the office to make a statement. Other students stay silent if they have goals and are interested in good grades. (Respondent #1628)

Acute resistance on part of students. Lack of respect met with lack of respect. Students began to rebel at not learning subject and engineered their being removed from class. These were some of our best students, by the way. Students often gave me written reports about their not learning and the bully techniques of the teachers. (Respondent #1237)
Writing in regard to younger students, one principal stated,

The child does not want to participate in class. The child has been “be-littled” before the others and refuses to do any work or knocks over the desk or chair on purpose. The child—the fact that he/she is a child—is not even considered. (Respondent #1590)

**Vandalism.** In the view of some principals, vandalism is an *acting out* behavior chosen by some targets of teacher abrasiveness. The principals listed the destruction of books, pencils, and other items in the classroom, along with graffiti on desks, pencils stuck in the ceiling, and the ruining of classroom furniture. One principal also listed stealing from the teacher. No mention was made of vandalism in bathrooms or outdoor areas, nor vandalism directed only at the teacher’s property.

**Aggression.** Principals wrote 40 descriptors of teacher-bullied students reacting with aggression of one form or another. The most frequently mentioned target of student aggression was other students; however, angry students may also lash out at their parents, objects, or the abrasive teacher.

Students who target other students may do so with a range of intensities, from “insulting other students” or “irritating one another in the classroom” to “mistreatment of other students,” “hitting other students” or even outright “violence in class.” Principals wrote that fighting and other forms of aggression may be observed “in the classroom” as well as “on the playground” or “during non-structured time,” by venting their rage, or they may be currying the teacher’s favor by joining in the attack on a classmate who has been targeted by the teacher. Some students become tattletales.

One principal suggested a different explanation. The principal wrote that a student may act “overly aggressive with other students in order [to secure a] desired behavior.
from [the other] students.” Such behaviors, similar to those used by the abrasive teacher, might suggest that the teacher’s daily modeling has become mirrored in the aggressive student. Another principal wrote that a student symptom of being bullied is “sarcastic teasing of others, probably mimicking teacher behavior.” Yet another principal pointed out that when a “student bullies others, the teacher responds with bullying” thereby reinforcing the abuse of power and creating an escalating cycle of aggression.

Students show an awareness of the classroom pecking order. They assert their own position in it by means of “talking back to students; rolling their eyes; saying ‘whatever’ or ‘I don’t have to listen to you.’” Students may also attack things, such as hitting a wall or vandalizing property (already discussed). Or they may display their rage with no immediate target, such as in staging “tantrums.” One principal summarized such hostile responses to classmates, property, or life in general as “misplaced aggression.”

A principal described student aggression aimed at the teacher as “giving [back to] the teacher what the child is receiving.” The range of student options for fighting back against the teacher is so broad that it is covered in a number of earlier sections.

Shutting down

*Shutting down* was one of the most common phrases used by principals, but it seemed to describe three different conditions for the student (see Table 19). The first is an act of passive resistance against the teacher and was presented as a low-level form of acting out. The remaining two will be presented in the next two subsections. They are shutting down emotionally and shutting down academically. These are self-defeating behaviors. As one principal wrote:

Some students . . . will become fearful and withdraw in class; some will no longer
participate in discussions or respond verbally to questions. Most do not tell anyone about the bullying behavior (even their parents). Their withdrawal continues into subsequent grades unless it is discovered and dealt with. (Respondent #1213)

**Shutting down emotionally.** Principals saw the student’s “shutting down” as a major symptom of teacher aggression. At times the student simply shows a flat affect. They “think no one cares.” “They give up or pretend they don’t care.” “They show a lack of interest in school work and activities.” They show “reluctance to participate, reluctance to engage.” “They become introverted and not wanting to participate,” “unwilling to try or take risks.” They “call themselves stupid.” They may be “socially outcast” and have “poor relationships with peers,” “always quiet.” One principal wrote that they may begin having “difficulties with peers when they are labeled as the ‘bad’ child.” The most common descriptor used by principals for a student who is symptomatic in this way was some form of the word “withdrawn” followed closely by some form of the word “depressed.”

**Table 19**

*Frequencies of Principal Comments on Shutting Down Behaviors (N = 246)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shutting Down Subcategory</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academically</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Shutting down academically.** Principals offered 147 descriptors of a student’s shutting down academically. The most common word used was *lack*: “lack of interest in class or learning,” “lack of motivation to complete most tasks,” “lack of participation in
class,” “lack of performance,” “lack of progress,” and “lack of success in school.”

A principal explained why he or she viewed this as symptomatic of teacher maltreatment. “It causes students to ‘shut down’ in that learning takes a back seat to protecting oneself at all cost.” Another principal wrote that they “don’t see the use of trying as it is never good enough. Homework is undone or incomplete, because the student no longer cares.” Consequently, “academic progress is decreased,” “grades . . . don’t support standardized testing results,” and the falling grades may result in the “failing of a class,” “failing the course.”

Avoiding

Will not talk about the teacher out of fear of retaliation, constantly asking for a transfer to another class, dramatic performance drop or loss of desire to do school work, refuses to go to school. Leaves the class and refuses to return, constant complaint about the teacher, crying at home, upset stomach, frequent visits to nurse during that class. (Respondent #1695)

Principals made 136 references to avoidance behaviors which they felt were symptomatic of teacher abrasiveness on students. The behaviors may be categorized as: transfer requests, skipping class, claiming illness, getting kicked out, going absent without leave (AWOL), defecting in place, and dishonesty (see Table 20). Each will be examined in its own subsection below.

Transfer requests. Students ask to be removed from a class and transferred into one they think will be more livable. Parents may make the request on the student’s behalf. If the school is unwilling or unable to grant the transfer, the parents or student may find relief on their own. One principal wrote, “Parent moved child to another school specifically because of the teacher.” Another wrote of students “trying alternate ways of taking the course.” A university vice president of academics, though not a part of the
study, commented that one professor who was feared by students cost the university thousands of dollars as students bought the course he taught from other universities.

Table 20

Frequencies of Principal Comments on Avoiding Behaviors (N = 136)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoiding Subcategory</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transfers/Requests</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent, Tardy</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claiming Illness</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Kicked Out</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going AWOL</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defecting in Place</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishonesty</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Skipping class.** Principals frequently referred to poor attendance as being symptomatic of teacher abrasiveness. To avoid the class, students may not come to school or may come for the day, but refuse to enter that classroom. Some students have hidden, some have waited in the bathroom until redirected by an adult, others are routinely tardy.

**Claiming illness.** Similar to the need to use a restroom, feeling sick is a hard thing for an administrator to verify. Based on the principals’ many comments about illness, avoidant students make good use of this uncertainty. Coupling the ease of feigning illness with the reality of psychosomatic illness caused by a student’s teacher-related stress, principals report frequent absence from a class or from school as symptomatic of a student who is being maltreated.

One principal with an abrasive P.E. teacher reported, “PE students start getting
sick at the beginning of the period, or getting notes from home, or forget their clothes, or decide they are not feeling well that particular period.” Principals report “chronic visits to the nurse’s office” as symptomatic.

**Getting kicked out.** “Some” students began to rebel at learning the subject and engineered their removal from class. “These were some of our best students, by the way,” one principal shared. Another wrote that the students begin “exhibiting behaviors that they know will push a teacher’s buttons with the intent to get kicked out (i.e., cursing out loud, walking around the class, etc.).” Another principal stated that the students were “doing anything to get kicked out of class. Sometimes seven or eight students in one period.”

**Going AWOL.** Principals also reported students just “walking out of the classroom,” students who would “walk out during class without permission,” and who would “refus[e] to go back to the class because they [believed] the teacher hates them.” One principal wrote that “one student ran away from school.”

**Defecting in place.** Perhaps more often, judging by frequency of principal comments, targeted students will simply check out without taking their bodies with them. Though this is a kind of shutting down it differs from shutting down as a type of withdrawal or depression in that it lasts only as long as the class does, and it does not begin to define the student. It also differs from shutting down as a form of passive resistance in that the student is merely avoiding a class by putting his/her mind elsewhere. Students may “shut down or attempt to be invisible in class so that they [are] not singled out for attention/humiliation,” one principal explained. Another principal
mentioned “behaviors that appear to help students disengage from the classroom.” Other principals provided descriptors of that kind of disengaging behavior: falling asleep, daydreaming, tuning out, off-task behaviors, appearing to be lazy, and wasting time.

**Dishonesty.** Principals identified a final avoidance strategy which they felt was symptomatic of a student’s efforts to cope with an abrasive teacher: dishonesty. Only five comments were made, and the principals did not elaborate on how dishonesty might help the child. However “cheating” and “lying to parents about assignments missed, homework” might seem desirable to a student who has shut down, and now has to face a test or a growing back-work list.

One of the five principals gave a different slant on student dishonesty by writing about students: “Telling parents things that aren’t true, causing more problems between parents and teacher.” In this case student dishonesty might be an act of aggression rather than avoidance.

**Reaching out**

Principals wrote 60 comments describing behaviors that could be seen as reaching out. Those comments contained two main themes: complaining and announcing dread of school (see Table 21).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaching Out Subcategory</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complaining</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcing Dread of School</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Complaining. Principals named complaint as being a symptom of teacher maltreatment. The majority saw it as a positive behavior though three saw it as potentially negative. One principal listed being “whiney” as a sign that something is not right for the child. Another principal stated his views on the larger context of anti-bullying efforts and the impact he feels it has had on enabling students to lodge false accusations against teachers. He wrote, “In the new environment where students have been well informed [about bullying and their rights], we see false reports against teachers, we see legitimate reports against teachers, and we see a general war between teachers and students.” Another principal who shared the concern of false reports against teachers wrote about students “telling parents things that aren’t true, causing more problems between parents and teacher.”

However, most principals portrayed student complaints more positively. In light of the student symptoms listed earlier by principals, particularly the ones regarding students shutting down or acting out, a student’s complaining and announcing his/her dread of school may be a healthy sign; a sign that the student still hopes for help towards a solution that does not require oppositional or self-defeating behaviors from the student.

The large majority of principals saw student complaints as a clear indicator of the student’s discomfort in the classroom. This would seem to be intuitive. Yet the principals’ comments added these insights: Students typically complain to parents, principals, and other teachers they feel they can trust. Some students “go through other adults [rather] than directly to the teacher” when needing something from the abrasive teacher. The parents may complain to the principal on the student’s behalf. But on the other hand, some students are “unwilling to talk about it,” “fearful to talk to
administrators” about it, and may not tell even their parents about the teacher.

Considering the fourth point, direct complaints may be a good thing.

One principal wrote, “Students often gave me written reports about their not learning and the bully techniques of the teachers.” Another wrote that the student “apologized for their own behavior and explains why the teacher is unfair and unfit to teach, pleads with me to fire the teacher because they are not learning anything in class and the teacher hates to teach.” Although students sometimes use impassioned speech, the “hates to teach” comment will be corroborated by principal reports under “Principal Theories for Why Teachers Use Abrasive Behaviors.”

**Announcing dread of school.** A clear subset of student complaining is the simple statement, “I don’t want to go to school.” One principal wrote that the students “don’t want to come to school; [they] liked school but now they cry when they have to come in the morning.” Principals offered reasons of “fear” “school anxiety” and “no desire to come.” Principals generally reported that the student will share his/her dread with a parent or guardian. Once the student has arrived on campus, the question of school attendance has for the most part been settled. Therefore, the principal is more likely to hear, “I don’t want to go to that class,” and find students exhibiting the behaviors enumerated in the section on “Avoidance.”

**Summary of Student Symptoms**

Principals described symptoms they saw in students who were being maltreated by teachers. Those symptoms could be affective or behavioral. The most common affects were fear and anger with attending psychosomatic ailments. The most common behaviors
were acting out (resisting the teacher with varying levels of intensity) and shutting down either emotionally or academically. Principals also saw maltreated students using a variety of avoidance behaviors and reaching out for help, mostly by complaining and telling parents they hated school or a particular class.

Principals’ responses read intact generally showed a broad awareness of the variety of symptoms that may manifest in students. Some responses touched on most of the categories. For example one principal wrote:

1. School-related anxiety (not wanting to come to school out of fear) 2. Psychosomatic symptoms such as stomach or bathroom issues. 3. Lack of performance in terms of classwork. 4. Increased office referrals for aggressive behavior towards peers or defiant behavior towards other adults. 5. Increased parent complaints about the teacher’s actions. (Respondent #1400)

One principal suggested reasons for the students’ misbehavior:

Acting out because they are avoiding tasks that they are unable to do— Teacher does not know ability levels (reading levels etc.) nor is the teacher interested in learning. Consequence: Students rebel and act out to avoid being put on the spot because they are not . . . able to do the required tasks and assignments. The students are misdiagnosed as [having] behavior issues rather than skills issues. (Respondent #1780)

Principal Theory of Mind Regarding Teacher Abrasiveness (RQ 2d)

RQ 2d: “What, from the principal’s perspective, causes a teacher to use abrasive behaviors?” In an effort to understand how principals make sense of a teacher’s decision to use abrasive behaviors, the survey asked, “Why do you think a teacher would use bullying behaviors on a student?”

Result: The 298 principals who shared their thoughts on why a teacher would use abrasive behaviors provided 559 specific comments. After initial coding 36 types of response were identified. It was clear that principals saw teacher desire for control in the
classroom as a major reason for the use of abrasive behaviors, reporting it more than twice as often as the next reason.

The 36 early types were further grouped into seven broad themes (see Table 22). The seven themes are: (a) teacher has a high need for control, (b) teacher is unaware/unskilled, (c) teacher is emotionally reactive, (d) teacher is fundamentally flawed, (e) teacher is not suited to teaching, (f) teacher is experiencing external stressors, and (g) teacher holds flawed beliefs. Each theme will be examined in the following subsections. Figure 4 shows more graphically the smooth gradation of the responses, but also the large disparity between high need for control and flawed beliefs.

Table 22

*Frequencies of 298 Principals’ Reasons That Teachers Use Abrasive Behaviors (N = 559)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Abrasive Behavior</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Need for Control</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware/Unskilled</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally Reactive</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personally Flawed</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Suited to Teaching</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Stressors</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flawed Beliefs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**High Need for Control**

The principals provided 131 comments indicating the teacher’s high need for control. Two themes seemed to be: (a) to change the student, and (b) to gratify the teacher. Each theme contained its own subthemes (see Table 23).
Figure 4. Frequency of 288 principals’ explanations of why teachers use abrasive behaviors.

Table 23

Frequencies of Principals’ Comments on Teachers High Need for Control (N = 131)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Need for Control Subtheme</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To Gratify the Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loves Being Dominant</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Entitlement</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to Be Seen as in Control</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Change the Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Gain Compliance</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fears Losing Control</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Motivate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinks Tough Is Best</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Found That It Works</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To gratify the teacher

Some principals hold a theory that sees the abrasive teacher as enjoying dominance. One principal wrote, “They are hung up on having power, and they can’t let this go. They always have to be right.” Another wrote, “This particular teacher enjoyed
the feeling of power that came from intimidating others.”

Some principals wrote that teachers have a sense of entitlement: “Feeling that they are better than or above the level of the students.” “Teacher believes that he/she is the ultimate authoritarian and children should automatically submit to that authority.” However, this did not mean that the abrasive teachers rendered respect to the authorities above them as they expected from the students below them. One principal wrote:

I think most of these teachers believe they are ‘disciplining’ a child into complying with their orders; ironically these same teachers have a hard time complying with a principal’s directive; they tend to be the type that question or argue too much, and tend to do it in a loud or forceful tone that makes all involved uncomfortable. (Respondent #1462)

Some principals, without elaborating, simply theorized that the teacher wants to be seen as being in control. Together, these three theories of mind present a picture of teachers for whom the exercise of power is a gratifying end in itself.

To change the student

Some principals theorized that teachers become aggressive in an effort either to motivate students or to gain their compliance: “I believe the teachers who do this think they can change the student’s behavior by treating them this way.” “I think that she thinks that she is teaching them and that by talking in this manner she will get results.” While not all principals shared their personal opinions regarding the efficacy of this approach to motivation, a few were quite direct: “I think she thinks that is will motivate students to do better, but what it really does is bruise them so deeply, they have a horrible year with very little learning and even less self-esteem.”

Some principals believed that teachers who feared a lack of control would overcompensate by trying to control too harshly: “Possibly because teacher is feeling out
of control and relying on position (i.e. being a person in authority) rather than developing effective management skills.”

Principals also believed that some teachers see themselves as *tough disciplinarians*, believing that abrasive treatment built character in the students: “They feel like treating students this way will teach students resilience and responsibility.”

“They perceive that they are running a ‘tight ship’ and that a strict classroom environment is conducive to effective instruction. They do not perceive their behaviors as bullying.” “The teacher want[s] to seem ‘tough,’ or think[s] this is like ‘tough love.’”

And a few principals believed that teachers use abrasive behaviors simply because those behaviors do get results: “When a teacher yells at a student to stop, it usually works--reinforcing to the teacher. . . . The tactics are effective at controlling others.”

When viewed together, attempting to gain compliance, fear of losing control, attempting to motivate, and using abrasiveness because it gets results, present a picture that would be consistent with Crawshaw’s (2007) finding that abrasive leaders are responding to threat. The teacher’s need to maintain control is not being contested. The principals were focused on those teachers who strive for control in ways that damage students. With the teacher’s heightened anxiety about losing control, the classroom feels like it is on the verge of chaos.

**Unaware/Unskilled**

Some principals held the idea that the teacher lacks awareness or essential skills. Their 114 comments along this theme can be further broken down into 10 subthemes (see Table 24). The 10 subthemes will be described in the following subsections.
Lack of management skills

Principals who believed teacher abrasiveness is due to a lack of skill or awareness were three times more likely to name *lack of classroom management skills* than any other set of skills. The principals mentioned problems with organization, not enough management *tools* in the teacher’s repertoire, and, specifically, not knowing how to deal with students who were out of the norm. As one wrote: “They have a particularly difficult student and don’t know how to get that child to stop the behaviors interfering with learning.”

Table 24

*Frequencies of Principals’ Comments on Teachers Being Unaware or Unskilled (N = 114)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unaware/Unskilled Subtheme</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Management Skills</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind to the Problem</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Understanding</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Instructional Skills</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Gotten Away With It</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Skills (general)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inexperienced</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of the School Culture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Professionalism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Modeling From Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, there again seemed to be a difference in how the principals described this lack. Some used language implying teacher unwillingness: “Lacks skills and desire to plan properly and to teach and use routines. Would rather yell than employ individualized strategies.” “She does not want to deal proactively with these students. Doesn’t know
another way to get control of this student.” “They lack the self-discipline to develop better classroom management strategies.”

Other principals used language that implied teacher effort to cope: “The teacher was frustrated with several children’s behavioral challenges and was not skilled at managing these behaviors.” “Insecurity in her teaching and classroom management abilities.” “They are overwhelmed and undertrained for certain behavior.” “Adopting ways they have seen [other teachers] act.”

One principal painted a colorful picture: “One was a free spirit, artistic type who never mastered classroom management for large class sizes and panicked when she was late for schoolwide events.”

Blind to the problem

Fifteen principals wrote that they believe that some teachers use abrasive behaviors because they are blind; blind to what they are doing or blind to the impact it has on others. These could be referred to as: intrapersonal blindness, interpersonal blindness, and job-role blindness. Regarding intrapersonal blindness, principals wrote that some teachers are “out of touch with themselves and do not notice their behavior.” They have a “general unawareness of their affect and attitude.” “I don’t think they really think these behaviors are considered ‘bullying.’ I think this is how they respond when they are frustrated.” Regarding interpersonal blindness principals wrote, “They don’t think about the impact of what they say.” “The teacher may not be aware of how much damage s/he is doing and [the fact] that negativity does not get results toward student success.” “They do not recognize it as bullying and see it as necessary discipline to get work done.” “She did not perceive herself as being a bully or using bullying behaviors,
she perceives others as being too sensitive.”

Regarding job-role blindness: “Unfortunately, I believe that there are many teachers who do not see their role as one of influencing or impacting the social-emotional aspect of the child. They simply want to focus on the academic piece of instruction.”

Lack of understanding

Some principals theorized generally that the teachers just “don’t know better.” Others state a more specific lack of understanding, such as: “lack of understanding of child development,” “misunderstanding about the source of the [student] behavior” “lack of understanding of generational differences” or of poverty or other cultures, or not knowing how to enlist students in a new subject.

“They don’t understand that everyone doesn’t love their subject or excel at it, and conclude that the student is just being defiant. They want to ‘break’ that defiance.” “They do not have a true understanding that children do not think like adults nor have the same world experiences.”

I believe they do not understand poverty. Most teachers are from middle class and the "new" students are from poverty. [Male] teachers do not understand cultural norms of the [African American] and Hispanic student. They take everything personally and it is not personal. (Respondent #a1743)

Lack of instructional skill

Twelve principals theorized that a teacher’s lack of instructional skill could cause them to resort to using abrasive behaviors. “The male English teacher didn’t appear to know his subject that well and focused on discipline and how students were not behaving themselves rather than attempting to engage students in meaningful learning of the subject matter.” “I think teachers use bullying behavior because they are inadequate at
teaching and they are VERY aware of their inadequacies. They bully to cover up how bad they are.” “Poor pedagogical skills, believes the curriculum is interesting enough to hold student interest and respect.”

As previously quoted, one principal pointed out the connection between the teacher’s weak pedagogy and the students’ challenging behavior:

Teacher does not know ability levels (reading levels etc.) nor is the teacher interested in learning. Consequence: Students rebel and act out to avoid being put on the spot because they are not . . . able to do the required tasks and assignments. The students are misdiagnosed as [having] behavior issues rather than skills issues. (Respondent #1780)

One principal noted that a teacher weak in pedagogy may mistakenly believe he or she is actually strong in instructional strategies. This can lead to defensiveness when suggestions for improving instruction are offered:

I am not completely sure. I suspected that it might be rooted in his own confidence and ability to give the proper assistance to these students to learn the material. What came across was a level of arrogance. He believed that to slow down the pace for the bottom half of the class would come at the expense of the higher students. Training and workshops on differentiation strategies didn’t help. (Respondent #1697)

Has gone uncorrected

Ten principals expressed the opinion that some teachers use abrasive behaviors simply because “the issue has never been addressed appropriately.” This seemed to take two prongs: (a) “teacher has gotten away with the behavior at other schools,” or (b) the teacher has a “belief that it won’t be addressed or stopped (or reported).” In other words, the teacher feels fairly confident that they can continue with impunity. The teacher “believes student will be too intimidated to tell parents/administration.” Apparently this belief is founded as a principal observed, “Parents are often fearful to talk to teacher about these behaviors out of fear of retaliation.”
Lacking in skills generally

Eight principals made general comments about a lack of skills. It was not possible to determine which kind of skills: classroom management, instructional, or social.

Inexperienced

Five principals wrote that inexperience or immaturity can cause a teacher to use abrasive behaviors: “In my experience, it has primarily been new teachers who did not have the experience or tools to deal with a class on their own. When they became overwhelmed, they resorted to anything that would seem to work to control the class or student.” While abrasive behavior is more prevalent among the veteran teachers, principals in interview also mentioned young teachers who acted abrasively with students: “One of the young teachers might have worked out, but since he was coming up for tenure, I couldn’t take the risk. I had to fire him.”

Part of the school culture

Three principals felt that some teachers use abrasive behaviors because those behaviors have been tolerated by school staff and administration and by the district in the past. “The teacher see[s] other teachers that bully so it becomes socially acceptable.”

Lack of professionalism

Three principals suggested that a lack, or temporary loss, of professionalism might be attributed to any of four things: “inexperience,” “too much experience,” “no professional morals,” or “others are taken to their ‘break point’ and lose control/professionalism.”
Following a poor role model

Two principals stated a belief that a poor role model had been the source of a teacher’s abrasiveness. In both cases, they indicated that the poor role modeling occurred more likely at home than within the profession.

**Emotionally Reactive**

Principals wrote 104 comments theorizing that emotional reactivity is a cause of some teacher abrasiveness. The comments may be grouped into the following subthemes: (a) reactions born of frustration or lack of patience, (b) reactions are due to insecurity, (c) reactions are aimed at retaliation, and (d) reactions are focused on eliminating the student (see Table 25).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotionally Reactive Subtheme</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear, Insecurity</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliation</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Patience</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Remove a Student</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Due to rounding, percentages do not total 100.

Frustration/Lack of patience

Almost half \((n = 43)\) of the principals’ comments focused on the abrasive teacher’s level of frustration or his/her lack of patience. They saw frustration coming from four main areas: the teacher’s personal life, the job in general, issues of class
performance (especially when the teacher’s expectations are unrealistically high), or individual students’ behavior or lack of motivation (especially when the teacher’s efforts make no change in the student).

Principals who made comments about teacher frustration level seemed to be empathic to the teacher’s plight or even to display their own frustrations with situations they themselves found frustrating: “The majority (97% to be exact) of our students are English Learners!”

The students are usually kids that don’t turn in their work, participate in class, can often disrupt the learning experience. The student might have attention issues, learning disabilities or emotional issues. The students require more time and attention. Dealing with difficult parents. (Respondent #1678)

They are frustrated with the failure of our society to provide what we need to get the job done. This is the foundation of every issue we deal with. For example, the positive behavioral support intervention system is a good idea. It requires counselors, psychiatric social workers and psychologists. There simply are not enough people to pull the system off well, and without suspensions and other disciplinary measures available, teachers have mountains of abuse heaped on them and they react by bullying. I am told daily to "go fuck myself," "fuck off fat boy," "fuck you," and "you’re the fucking principal and don’t fucking talk to us." This behavior becomes unbearable for those of us who grew up solving issues like this with our fists. I am not condoning it. This is the reality we live with. (Respondent #1543)

Insecurity

One third of the principals’ comments ($n = 34$) revealed their belief that insecurity was the emotion that caused teachers to react with abrasive behavior. They used words such as: insecurity, anxiety, fear, feels threatened, and becomes defensive. They shared a variety of reasons for the insecurity and anxiety: “A teacher may feel challenged or intimidated by the student.” “Feels threatened by students.” “INSECURITY about themselves” (capitals in the original). “Fear of exposure for lack of classroom control.” “Insecurity of one’s own teaching effectiveness.” “So that their work and effort are not
questioned.” “Teacher feels inadequate and/or has a lack of confidence.” “Insecure and
lacks ability to create a positive climate in the classroom.”

The longer comments continued the same theme: “The teacher feels inadequate
and not confident about own skills to develop relationships with adults and students, feels
incapable or unable to engage students in the class.” “Teacher very hard on herself; thus
when my middle school students speak up which they are encouraged to do at our school,
she saw them as being disrespectful.” “They are insecure and I have seen more of this
lately since I have finally been able to hire some super star younger teachers.”

Retaliation

Principals also theorized that retaliation was a motivator for some teachers. They
wrote: “The teacher felt the student’s misbehavior justified his use of humiliation.”
“Feels justified when students are less than cooperative.” “In most cases the student has a
history of misbehavior in the classroom and the teacher makes it personal to get back at
the student.” “They often blame the students’ misbehavior which forces them to act this
way. These teachers are also the first to claim that the students were threatening them.”
“She was emphatic that the students were bullying her.”

Retaliation, though aimed at the student, is not always in response to what that
particular student has done: “A student seeming to remind a teacher of someone from the
teacher’s past (a negative memory).” “The student reminds the teacher of someone who
may have bullied them when they were younger.”

Sometimes students are used as targets when the teacher is angry with other
adults: “She is unhappy with her teaching assignment and taking it out on students.”
“Anger at being held accountable by administration . . . anger at having been reassigned.”
“Resentment toward others including administration, colleagues, and students”; “parent complaints.”

Remove a student

Only four principals said that a teacher may use abrasive behaviors for the express purpose of removing a student from the classroom or the school. While this might look like the ultimate retaliation, the specific principal comments indicated that this motive deserved its own category: “My teachers are under a lot of pressure to produce high performance results. If they perceive a child is not capable or less capable, I think that the teacher will often use strategies to push the student out.” “It appears to be to have the child removed permanently from the classroom when the child begins to act out even more. If that is accomplished, the teacher finds another student to pick on.” “Only likes high academic achieving students.”

Personally Flawed

Seventy-seven principals provided comments expressing the belief that some teachers use abrasive behaviors because they are fundamentally flawed. The problem resides in the teacher. “They’re just that way” was echoed by 12 principals. The 77 comments can be grouped into seven categories. Principals who believed that abrasive teachers were fundamentally flawed wrote about the teachers’: mental or emotional issues, low self-esteem/self-efficacy, inherent nature, lack of social skills, laziness, inflexibility, or sadism (see Table 26).
Table 26

*Frequencies of Principals’ Comments on Teachers Being Personally Flawed (N = 77)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personally Flawed Subtheme</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental / Emotional Issues</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Self Esteem/Efficacy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inherent Nature</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Social Skills</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laziness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflexibility</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Due to rounding, percentages do not total 100. These percentages are relative to this subtheme, only.

Mental or emotional issues

Principals provided 29 comments indicating their belief that teachers may be abrasive due to mental or emotional issues beyond the scope of the school’s ability to manage. Principal responses in this category carried a wide range of tones, but were more likely to carry a pejorative or fatalistic tone than in other themes. “Their own needs are their priority,” “one was an old maid; grumpy the other was a military type of guy,” “Also one male teacher in particular is very Asperger’s himself.” “Teacher cannot control his emotions.” “Emotionally disabled.” “This teacher was not emotionally well.” “Suffers from depression.” “Teachers who have not done enough emotional work themselves seem to be at more risk for this type of behavior.” “Mood disorder led to personal emotional outbursts”; “mental health issues (all three of mine are in therapy and two are on meds for anxiety and depression).” “Personal disappointment in life; caught up in the moment and not thinking; is stuck in their own growth and development.”

She is aware that she has a problem with anger and communication. She knows that sometimes she reacts inappropriately towards others because of other emotional
issues with which she is dealing. (Respondent #1621)

The four teachers that I had the experiences were angry all of the time at themselves and the world. Two were bi-polar and we were not allowed to discuss it, They do not belong near children. Their self-esteem was low, low performance as teachers. It is incredible that they were not written up before and moved through the system. Till I was able to write them up and start the long process of dismissal. (Respondent #1547a)

Low self-esteem/self-efficacy

Principals repeatedly expressed a theory that the probable causes of the teacher’s use of abrasive behaviors could be found in the teacher’s low self-esteem, low self-confidence, low sense of self-efficacy in the classroom, low sense of self-worth, external locus of control, feeling of helplessness, and feeling of inadequacy. One principal wrote: “I believe teachers use bullying behaviors for the same reasons students do; they have low self-esteem.”

Inherent nature

Some principals summed up their beliefs about why a teacher would use abrasive behavior in a few words indicating, “That’s just the way they are.” They wrote comments such as: “This teacher is a bully with everyone: other teachers, parents.” “Teacher is a difficult person everywhere.” “Angry by nature.” “Just don’t have kind personalities.” “Bully type personality.” “Because there are just mean to the bone.” “Just unhappy people.” “Does not know how to be a human being that is decent to adults or students.”

Principals occasionally theorized more positively about the teacher’s inherent nature with comments such as: “Some teachers are naturally louder and more volatile, and it shows in the classroom.”
Lack of social skills

Six principals theorized that a lack of a variety of social skills accounted for some teachers' abrasiveness: “Lack of cultural competency” (italics supplied). “Takes things personally. Has turned into students teasing him. Does not know how to talk to the kids.” “Poor people skills.” “Lack of relational capacity.” “Has personal problems at home—dysfunctional relationships with entire staff and family.” “Inability to interact with students in an adult manner.”

Laziness

Four principals felt that laziness accounted for the teacher’s choice of abrasive behaviors: “They are lazy teachers and do not plan well for engaging classrooms,” “it is easier than taking the time to learn about the student,” “lacks skills and desire to plan properly and to teach and use routines. Would rather yell than employ individualized strategies.”

Inflexibility

Three principals mentioned the teacher having little flexibility in accepting different behavior outside of their expected norms: “wanting all the kids to fit a certain mold,” “inflexible when dealing with kids who lack academic requirements (not able to effectively respond when learning isn’t happening).”

Sadism

Two principals theorized that some teachers are abrasive because they enjoy hurting students or others: “Perhaps some teachers enjoy ripping into students and emotionally abusing them.” “I think they are mean or have no empathy for others. I
believe they derive satisfaction from hurting others.” So although sadism, per se, was not mentioned by principals but it was implied. As a theory of mind it accounted for 2.6% of the flawed individual theories, but was held by only 0.67% of the responding principals.

**Not Suited to Teaching**

The 70 principals who explained teacher abrasiveness by saying the teacher was not suited to teaching, pointed to four different problems: (a) the teacher dislikes students, (b) the teacher doesn’t like the job, (c) the teacher is outdated, possessing skills better suited to a bygone era, or (d) the teacher is burned out (see Table 27).

**External Stressors**

Forty-two principals believe that a teacher may choose abrasive behaviors if he or she is under stress from things outside the school environment. These external stressors may be found in the teacher’s health or family life, or they may be in the teacher’s past (see Table 28).

**Flawed Beliefs**

Twenty-one principals theorized that the teacher’s belief system was a source of their feeling justified in using abrasive behaviors. According to the principals’ comments, the teachers may: have thoughts that are racist or elitist, hold other personal beliefs they feel give them a right to correct students in areas which should remain the students’ prerogative, think they are being funny or fitting in with the students, and may hold unreasonable expectations for the students, either expecting far more than they can deliver, or having no hope that the students can reach minimal standards (see Table 29).
Table 27

*Frequencies of Comments on Teachers Not Being Suited to Teaching (N = 70)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Suited to Teaching Subtheme</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dislikes Students</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t Like Job, Wrong Job, Time to Quit</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdated</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burned Out</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28

*Frequencies of Principals’ Comments on Teachers Reacting to External Stressors (N = 42)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Stressors Subtheme</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stress Outside School</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Being Abused/Bullied</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29

*Frequencies of Principals’ Comments on Teachers Holding Flawed Beliefs (N = 21)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flawed Beliefs Subtheme</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racism or Elitism</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Beliefs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trying to Be Funny or Cool</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Expectation of Students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic Expectations of Students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Due to rounding, percentages do not total 100.

**Summary of Principals’ Theories of Mind**

Principals held a wide range of theories as to why some teachers use abrasive behaviors. Seven broad themes emerged: (a) teacher has a high need for control, (b)
teacher is unaware/unskilled, (c) teacher is emotionally reactive, (d) teacher is fundamentally flawed, (e) teacher is not suited to teaching, (f) teacher is experiencing external stressors, and (g) teacher holds flawed beliefs.

Summary of Identification

This section has examined four things that were present as the principals identified the abrasive teacher: (a) the mode of discovery, how the problem becomes aware that a teacher is using abrasive behaviors against students, (b) abrasive teacher behaviors, what the principals believe constitutes abrasive teacher behavior, (c) student symptoms, what the principals believed are telltale signs of abuse visible in student affect or behavior, and (d) theory of mind, what theories principals hold for why the teacher uses abrasive behaviors. Each of these four topics has been explored, and they will now be summarized in the following paragraphs.

1. Mode of discovery. The most common way for a principal to learn about the teacher’s use of abrasive behaviors is through reports from the students’ families \( (n = 231) \). The next most common way is for the principal to observe the behavior him/herself \( (n = 199) \). Students also report the problem \( (n = 188) \), as do the abrasive teacher’s colleagues \( (n = 148) \). The abrasive teacher is also known to self-report \( (n = 19) \).

2. Teacher abrasive behaviors. Principals in this study provided 715 descriptors of teacher abrasive behaviors which can be arranged within broad themes: verbal \( (n = 362) \), professional \( (n = 211) \), physical \( (n = 82) \), non-verbal \( (n = 47) \), and social \( (n = 41) \).

3. Student symptoms. Principals provided 871 descriptors of student affect or behavior that they felt were symptomatic of maltreatment by a teacher. The principals’ comments on student affect contained 85 descriptors of student emotional states. They
included: timidity, shyness, unhappiness, feeling upset or stressed, nervousness, fear, anxiety, frustration, anger, hostility, resentment, and crying. The 27 descriptors of psychosomatic ailments included: stomach aches, headaches, bed/pants wetting, nightmares, loss of sleep, diarrhea, nail biting, pulling out hair, feeling sick, body ailments, loss of appetite, sore throat, hunger, and drug use.

The other 759 descriptors identified student symptomatic behaviors which could be classified under four themes: acting out \((n = 317)\), shutting down \((n = 246)\), avoiding \((n = 135)\), and reaching out \((n = 60)\).

4. Principals’ Theories of Mind. Principals’ theories on why teachers would choose to use abrasive behaviors can be grouped under seven broad themes: (a) teacher has a high need for control, (b) teacher is unaware/unskilled, (c) teacher is emotionally reactive, (d) teacher is fundamentally flawed, (e) teacher is not suited to teaching, (f) teacher is experiencing external stressors, and (g) teacher holds flawed beliefs.

Decision-making (RQ 3)

Research Question 3 (RQ 3): What is involved in the principal’s decision-making process regarding intervention? Once a principal has determined that a teacher is using abrasive behaviors, he or she faces two major decisions: whether or not to intervene, and what intervention to use. To better understand those decisions this study examined six things: (a) elements present in the principal’s situation that are perceived by the principal to influence his/her decisions, (b) the level of anxiety experienced by the principal, (c) the number of principals who did or did not intervene and how they explained their decisions, (d) the principal’s own attributes of demographics and his/her personal history with bullying, (e) the way in which the principal came to know there was a problem (the
mode of discovery), and (f) the influence of a teacher union, if one was present. These six sub-questions will be addressed in the following subsections. The parenthetical RQ number at the end of each subsection title identifies the research sub-question that is being addressed.

Situational Elements

To understand some of the pressures a principal faces when deciding whether or not to intervene, the survey asked the principals to identify the situational elements that increased or decreased their motivation to intervene. The results will be presented in the subsections below. Later in the survey, the principals were asked to identify what elements, they felt, propelled them into action. Those results will be presented in a later section.

Motivating Elements (RQ 3a)

RQ 3a: What elements of a principal’s situation increased his/her motivation to intervene? To find out, the surveyed principals were given a list of 11 elements that might increase a principal’s desire or ability to intervene with a teacher who is abrasive to students. They were instructed to mark all elements that had increased their motivation to intervene. They were also asked to write in any other motivator that they could recall.

Result: On the survey 288 principals gave 1,014 responses. Marking the 11 elements accounted for 991 (98%) of the responses. The other 23 responses were write-ins. Three write-ins were irrelevant to the question. Six of the write-ins amplified an item that was already checked. For example, the checked item “I had clear convictions regarding teacher behaviors that are unacceptable” was enhanced by written comments,
such as: “Teacher-to-student bullying is one of my ‘you crossed the line’ behaviors. Adult to student respect is one of my values as a leader.” “My own passion for fair and decent treatment of people,” and “[I have] a deep philosophical belief that students should be treated with dignity.”

Fourteen more write-ins identified three additional motivating elements. The following three paragraphs will present those elements along with the principals’ specific comments.

Need to protect

Seven principals wrote about the need to protect not only the students and their right to learn, but also the school, the abrasive teacher, and the principal. “The students were losing out on their education, and suffering from low self-esteem.” “I was concerned about the reduction of productive learning time for students.” “I protect my students.” “Students were referred to the office on numerous occasions for minor offenses. I had to stop the yelling.” “Their behavior impacted students, reflected poorly on the [abrasive] teacher and the school.” “Parent threatened physical harm to the teacher.” And “I’m not losing my credential over her conduct!”

Believability of reports

Four principals commented in ways that showed that the credibility of the reports had increased their motivation to intervene. Credibility came through several means: “Speaking with other staff, [I] discovered that this had been happening even prior to my arrival to the school.” “After interviewing 16 students from his class, and they all reported the same things, I became very concerned.” “My own children had this teacher
in the past.” “Many parents requested moves from the teacher’s class and there was a feeling of negative gossip by staff and parents.”

Part of the job

Three principals simply stated that it’s simply part of the job: “I’m here to help.” “Where we see a need to act and we can act, we do act.” And, “At first incident, I needed to clarify and make her aware of her behavior.”

Table 30 shows the frequencies for 14 motivating elements (11 original, 3 new).

Table 30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements That Increased Principal Motivation to Intervene (N = 1,005)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivating Element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student or adult reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear convictions on teacher behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s lack of response to gentler coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong support from Supt./board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal was trained for intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear policies for intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident of support from union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family threatened suit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive teacher requested help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to protect a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believability of reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News media coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of the job</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aElement identified by write-in comments.

The top three elements that increased principal motivation to intervene accounted for almost 70% of the responses and were chosen by almost two-thirds of the principals.
Reports of abrasive behavior, the principal's clear personal convictions, and the failure of the teacher to heed gentler warnings and suggestions were strong motivators to intervention. The next four elements accounted for nearly one quarter of the responses and dealt with issues of support, training, and policy. They were marked by one-quarter to one-eighth of the principals. It is important to note that confidence in the support of the teacher union was cited by a little more than one out of 10 principals as a motivating element. However, Figure 5 graphically portrays the dramatic gap between the top three elements and the remaining 11 elements.

![Frequencies of Motivating Elements](image)

Figure 5. Motivating elements showing a substantial gap between elements three and four. Starred items were added by the principals.

Demotivating Elements (RQ 3b)

RQ 3b: What elements of a principal’s situation decreased the principal’s
motivation to intervene? To find out, surveyed principals were given a list of 11 elements that might *decrease* a principal’s desire or ability to intervene with a teacher who is abrasive to students. They were instructed to mark all elements that had decreased their motivation to intervene. They were also asked to *write in* any other motivator that they could recall.

Result: On the survey, 288 principals provided 685 responses. Marking the 11 elements accounted for 667 (97%) of the responses. The additional 18 responses were write-ins. Six write-ins identified three additional inhibiting elements. Three more write-ins amplified an item that was already checked, and nine principals’ write-ins took issue with the question. They found the idea of decreased motivation to be out of the question. They made comments such as: “I had no problem with motivation to intervene.” “It did not decrease my motivation.” “I did intervene and I disciplined the teachers—three of them!” “I have no problem confronting these teachers. I have high expectations for my faculty and I will not allow this behavior in my school.” “I did intervene.” “I did intervene.” “I did intervene.”

Table 31 shows the frequencies for 14 inhibiting elements (11 original, 3 new). The top three elements that decreased principal motivation to intervene accounted for nearly half of the responses. *Expected hostile response from teacher, new to principalship or school,* and *expected a fight with the union* were strong inhibitors to intervention. The strongest of all is the principal’s expectation of hostility from the teacher. Figure 6 graphically portrays the dramatic gap between the first element and the remaining 13 elements.
Summary of Elements

More than two-thirds of the principals reported three elements which increased their motivation towards intervention: (a) the fact that the problem had been reported, (b) the principal’s own convictions on how teachers should behave, and (c) the fact that the teacher had not responded to earlier, gentler warnings or suggestions. Those three elements suggest that the principals used a three-point base for decision-making: the principal had convictions about appropriate teacher-to-student interactions, the principal had received reports of teacher behaviors that violated those ideals, and the teacher had not corrected his/her behaviors after earlier counsel. The next four elements accounted

Table 31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inhibiting Elements</th>
<th>n of Comments</th>
<th>% of Comments</th>
<th>% of Principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expected hostile response from teacher</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>54.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New to principalship or school</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected a fight with the union</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No clear policies or procedures for intervention</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No training for this type of intervention</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher too well connected in community</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure of support from superintendent or board</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believed the situation was temporary</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger community was not yet aware</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure of support from school community</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal friendship with teacher</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for teacher’s growth(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believed teacher wouldn’t change(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty of removal(^a)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Element identified by write-in comments.
**Figure 6.** Demotivating elements showing a large gap between elements one and two. Starred items were added by the principals.

for nearly one quarter of the responses and dealt with issues of support, training, and policy. They were marked by one-quarter to one-eighth of the principals. Confidence in the support of the union was cited by a little more than one out of 10 principals.

The top demotivating element was the principal’s expectation of a hostile response from the teacher. It was marked by over half of the principals. The next two inhibitors were being new to the school or the principalship and expecting a fight with the teacher union. These three accounted for nearly half of the responses. Concerns about lack of training, or absence of policy accounted for almost a third (29%) of the responses. More than one-sixth of the responses (17%) focused on the teacher, ranging from concerns about the teacher’s connections in the community to the principal’s friendship with the teacher.

Though the presence or absence of policy, training, and support affected principal
motivation to intervene, principals were more focused on matters of personal conviction and on their interactions with the abrasive teacher and those who reported them.

Principal’s Level of Anxiety

On the survey, principals were asked: “What was your emotional state just prior to your decision to intervene? (Indicate your emotional response to this situation, not to life in general at that time.)” Each respondent marked one of three options: concerned but fairly calm, anxious, or extremely anxious or angry. Responses added insight into how they experienced and, in some cases, managed the stress of intervention. This section will examine the principals’ reported levels of anxiety and their explanations for being at each level. It will also present an unexpected glimpse into the wide variety of principal affects.

Principal Anxiety (RQ 3c)

RQ 3c: What was the principal’s level of anxiety prior to his or her decision to intervene? Table 32 shows that nearly 40% of the principals reported having been anxious or extremely anxious. Figure 7 provides a more graphic view of the relative sizes of the pools of principal anxiety.

Table 32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional State</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concerned but fairly calm</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely anxious or angry</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After reporting their level of anxiety, principals were asked, “What caused you to feel that way?” and a text box was provided for them to write in. All principals wrote some explanation for their emotional state at the time of intervention. Some listed stressors that made them more anxious and some listed personal convictions, experience, or relationships that helped reduce stress as they moved toward intervention. It seemed that principals who reported higher levels of anxiety wrote to explain why their level was high, while principals reporting low levels of anxiety explained why their levels were not high. Figure 8 shows the similarities and differences across the three levels of anxiety.

Reading down each column in Figure 8 provides a hint of how life felt for principals at that level of anxiety. Then, reading across the rows helps to identify trends. For instance, fear of non-support drops from 23% to 10% to only 1% of the comments as you move from extremely anxious to anxious to concerned, whereas fear of conflict stays at the top of all three lists. Courage of conviction rises as you move from anxious to concerned.
Figure 8. Multiple-table comparison of stressors and stress reducers across three levels of anxiety as reported by the principals. \( N \) will not equal the sum of \( n \) in any table since some principals shared more than one discrete comment. Dark shading identifies stressors that were common to all three anxiety levels. Light shading identifies the stressors and stress reducers that were common to only two groups of principals. Unshaded stressors or stress reducers are unique to the group of principals that reported them.

Some things to note are that stress reducers accounted for 84% of the comments by concerned but fairly calm principals, but no stress reducers were reported by extremely anxious principals. Courage of conviction was the strongest stress reducer. Are principals of strong conviction immune from becoming extremely anxious, or do principals with more difficult teachers experience higher levels of stress regardless of their personal levels of conviction? This study did not foresee that question.

Principal Affect

Beyond the identifiable stressors and stress reducers, the principals’ voices were many and varied. They wove a rich tapestry illustrating the challenges facing principals who are deciding to intervene. However, as the principals gave reasons for their high or low levels of anxiety, they also revealed their unique approaches to confrontation.

Though presenting all individual comments is beyond the limits of this paper, a limited
sampling will be presented to demonstrate the wide variety of principal affects. This will add depth to our understanding of the principal’s role. It will paint a vivid picture of the principal as juggler of child welfare, administrative duties, idealistic expectations, political realities, and social pressures. It will also demonstrate that principals are as unique and varied as the teachers they supervise.

The following short sampling of 25 voices out of 275 (9%) is loosely grouped by the affect of each principal’s coping style. The sampling does not include all the affects that were present, nor have I arranged the list in anything other than a random order. I have also not developed a label for each affect.

Affect 1

Who really looks forward to a potential unpleasant confrontation?? I certainly don’t. Confrontation is not my forte but as I get older I find I am gaining confidence in my ability to confront in a professional and nonthreatening manner. (Respondent #1422)

Conflict is never fun and when children’s lives and love of learning are being threatened it isn’t something to take lightly. Anytime someone is at a place in their life where they treat children unkindly it is something that I take to heart. These are the sleepless nights, wanting to figure out how to turn around the behavior and make it a win/win for everyone. (Respondent #1211a)

I knew she was a good teacher, but her behavior needed to be brought to her attention even though she had experienced a great loss, she could not continue to take it out on the students. (Respondent #1142)

Affect 2

I was angry at the teacher for bullying a student even after promoting anti-bullying messages on campus. I was very calm when I spoke to him, but became frustrated when he said the student was lying. It was his word against the student’s. (Respondent #1730a)

I was a brand-new principal and this was my first dealing with an abrasive teacher.
Also I was angry that prior action had not been taken by previous administrators. (Respondent #1419a)

I was livid that any child on my site could have been treated with such contempt and hostility. The teacher caused the child’s tantrum, knew what her response would be, and then physically abused her, I believe all in an attempt to somehow have the child removed from her room. Disgusting behavior. (Respondent #1573a)

Affect 3

I was pretty sure she would deny everything and act like the victim in the situation. I was pretty sure the superintendent would not come down hard on the situation. (Respondent #1457a)

Knowing I’d get a defensive, angry response, feeling like I had few tools to change the behavior and knowing that I’d have to keep working with someone who was angry about intervention, having the intervention portrayed as “principal not supporting teachers over parents,” one of these individuals is a teacher leader on campus, all file grievances when crossed (and have with each principal who has been here). (Respondent #1786)

Affect 4

Abrasive teacher is married to the local teacher’s union president. This teacher is tenured and has been with the district for close to 20 years. Two previous principals had not intervened even though the problems have been consistent for her entire employ with the district. (Respondent #1771a)

This teacher is a bully with adults sometimes, too. He is the union president and, more importantly, politically astute. Over many years, he has built support with certain parents and community leaders. Also, it’s a conservative community and many parents support what they see as a strict, old-fashioned teaching style. (Respondent #1444)

The teacher is a veteran teacher in the community who is very involved in the union. The teacher had demonstrated similar behaviors prior to my employment in the district. For example, the students created a petition to have her disciplined, and nothing happened at any level. The community is very small, and gossip is horrible. Nothing can be done confidentially. And, after describing the incidents involving this teacher to the superintendent I was told I could counsel her, but not discipline, even though the behavior was habitual, and I had multiple documented incidents from a variety of sources. (Respondent #1163)
Affect 5

I had my staff relations person that guided me throughout the writing process, I was able to give her an UNSAT act and a 5-day suspension, it has taken me 6 years to get to this point. She did receive a Below Standard on her evaluation, it took 46 conferences/memo. Meeting with her and the UNION. I know that she is not a good person and really hurts students emotionally. (Respondent #1547a)

I knew that with the union, termination would be next to impossible, but I was hoping that I would make it uncomfortable enough for her to leave. (Respondent #1440)

Affect 6

Concern over teacher’s reaction and/or union pushback; equally concerned about my own integrity should I choose not to intervene. (Respondent #1553)

I knew that if I did not intervene, other students would become victims of this teacher. Also, our school district had made it very clear that not reporting such behaviors would lead to the administrator’s loss of credential and position. (Respondent #1213a)

Affect 7

Difficult conversations cause my stomach to flutter. I use breathing techniques to calm, ground, and center myself. So that I can speak to the teacher with an open heart while being clear, direct and firm. I approach the situation with the assumption that the teacher has integrity and will do the right thing when my concern is explained. There are times that I need to become more directive in order to get the teacher to remedy the situation. (Respondent #1319)

I tend to remain calm in situations. If I over-react then I will tend to make mistakes. I have found that making quick and severe decisions often times will have [cause] negative reactions. Taking your time and thinking through it will often times correct the issue long term. (Respondent #1223)

When dealing with these types of behaviors, it is extremely important to stick to the facts and keep the emotion out of the discussion. This is not always easy, especially when teachers have clearly crossed the line in terms of appropriate behaviors toward their students. (Respondent #1077)

Affect 8

I knew that I was doing the right thing, the training I had with holding difficult
conversations was extremely helpful. Our superintendent says, “We need the right people on the bus” and I knew I did not want to ride with the teacher unless there was change. (Humor usually helps me through the tough decisions I make.) (Respondent #1629)

Because when it comes to our students, I knew I was doing the right thing, especially when our educational philosophy is about mutual respect and connecting with students is one of the tenets of this philosophy. (Respondent #1777)

I had the best of intentions for both teacher and students and other staff. I had a good relationship with the teacher and believed that person to be a good person with others. (Respondent #1537)

I have experience dealing with these types of teachers. I know how to make my point without escalating the situation. I am confident that I can handle whatever comes at me. It is what it is. (Respondent #1119a)

Affect 9

Becoming angry and anxious, is not my way. I know that that would not help the situation. I try to be calm and matter of fact. (Respondent #1217)

God has gifted me to remain calm in stressful situations. (Respondent #1715)

I don’t mind confrontation. I am good at having those “difficult conversations.” (Respondent #1378a)

Summary of Anxiety

When surveyed principals were asked, “What was your emotional state just prior to your decision to intervene?” more than three-fifths (61.1%) of the 275 principals reported a fairly low level of anxiety, choosing the option concerned but fairly calm. Another 31.6% chose anxious and 7.3% chose extremely anxious or angry.

Fear of conflict, and the resulting confusion that can arise, remained at the top of the list of stressors for all three anxiety levels. One quarter of the 275 principals mentioned personal convictions as something that helped them take action regardless of their emotional discomfort. And the least anxious principals made 159 comments (84%)
which described stress reducers, while only 3% of the anxious principals did so.

Beneath these overarching descriptives, the individual principals are as diverse as the teachers they supervise. Nine clusters of quotations suggested the wide range of affect the principals bring to their work.

Deciding to Intervene

An earlier section presented findings on the situational elements that adjusted the principals’ motivation to intervene. This section will present the reasons principals gave for choosing to intervene or for choosing not to intervene. The section will begin by reporting the percentage of principals who chose to intervene.

Frequency of Intervention (RQ 3d)

RQ 3d: Of the principals who reported having supervised an abrasive teacher, what percentage reported having chosen to intervene?

Result: Of the 288 principals who reported in the survey that they had supervised an abrasive teacher, five did not answer the question asking whether or not they had intervened. Of the 283 remaining principals, 278 (98.2%) reported that they had intervened.

Reasons for Intervening (RQ 3e)

RQ 3e: What reasons did principals give for their decision to intervene? Though principals had been asked what elements enhanced their motivation to intervene, it was important to learn what reasons they found to be sufficient to cause them to take action. This was examined both in the survey and during the interviews. The results from both will be presented in the next two subsections.
On the survey, eight reasons for intervening were provided, and principals were encouraged to mark each reason that applied to them. They were also instructed to write in any other reasons they believed had caused them to intervene. The 288 principals provided 822 responses. Marking the eight reasons accounted for 793 (96.5%) of the responses.

Result: The two most-marked reasons were: “The teacher’s behavior was simply unacceptable,” and “The student’s need for a respectful learning environment comes first.” In fact, that combination was marked by 252 principals (91.6%), and 116 principals (42.2%) marked only those two reasons for intervening.

An additional 29 responses came as write-ins. Three write-ins were irrelevant to the question. Fifteen of the write-ins amplified various items that were already checked (e.g. “[The teacher’s behavior] did not fit the mission of our school on any level” and “No child should be hurt. Educators are mandated reporters”). Eleven comments indicated five new reasons, which will be given in the five following paragraphs along with the specific comments from principals (see Table 33).

Survey write-in reasons to intervene

I had strong support from others. Five principals indicated that they felt strongly supported by those around them, even if they bought that support in the form of legal counsel. Principals wrote: “[I had] very strong backing from the district and school Board.” “Other staff members were begging for me to intervene. They were tired of both her treatment of students and of staff members. However due to the fact that she is the union site rep those same staff members call on her for union issues for which she behaves in an abusive way to administration.” “I sought legal advice.” “I received
support and the intervention was a collaboration with Special Ed coordinator, director and HR.” And one principal offered a terse, “Change in superintendent, more support.”

Table 33

*Reasons Given by Principals to Explain Why They Intervened (N = 804)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>n of Comments</th>
<th>% of Comments</th>
<th>% of Principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s behavior was simply unacceptable.</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>97.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ need for respectful learning environment comes first.</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt confident that there would be a good outcome.</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was becoming public knowledge.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school had clear policies/procedures for intervention.</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had been trained in intervention.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The abrasive teacher asked for help.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had strong support from others.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The parents hired an attorney and threatened lawsuit.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was parent unhappiness.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s just part of the job.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prompt teacher to leave.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher behavior was a cry for help.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reason identified by write-in comments.*

**There was parent unhappiness.** Two principals said it was the distress of the parents that prompted them to intervene. “The parent was distraught, and felt disempowered.” “Parents complained.”

**It’s just part of the job.** “I was hired to do a job, this came with the job.” “As the site Principal, it is my responsibility to advocate for all students, especially one who had no one to speak up on his behalf.”
To prompt the teacher to leave. “It would help the teacher to decide that another school might be a better opportunity for her to grow and thrive.”

Teacher behavior was a cry for help. “I felt that the teacher was crying out for help and simply did not know how to proceed.”

Figure 9 reveals three clearly separated clusters of response. The top cluster contains only two reasons—the unacceptability of the teachers’ behavior and the students’ need for a respectful learning environment—which account for two-thirds (66.6%) of the principal responses. In other words, those two reasons were given more than twice as often as all other reasons combined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequencies of Reasons Prompting Decisions to Intervene</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s behavior was simply unacceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student need for respectful learning environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt confident that there would be a good outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was becoming public knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our school had clear policies/procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had been trained in intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong support from others *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The abrasive teacher asked for help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents hired attorney/threatened lawsuit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s part of the job *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent unhappiness *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher behavior was a cry for help *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To prompt teacher to leave *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Starred reasons came from principal write-ins.

Figure 9. Principals’ stated reasons for deciding to intervene. Starred reasons came from principal write-ins.

Reasons collected in interviews

During the interviews principals shared the following insights on what brings
them to the decision to intervene:

**Disrespect of students.** Fred and Raymond were clear that respect for students was a non-negotiable. Fred said:

Anything that comes to my attention that is any way disrespectful, even at the low level of being sarcastic, I might intervene. But sarcasm, anything belittling, any mention of confidential information (maybe a teacher blurts out something about a kid that the other kids don’t know); anything that comes to my attention that is belittling of a student I will intervene.

Raymond also stated:

If they’re being disrespectful [of students], then I step in immediately. If I feel that it might be going on, then I try to be more observant. When I feel like they’re being abrasive or disrespectful, I just go ahead and step in. I try to stop it before it gets out of hand.

**Seeing defeat in students.** Ivan looks for the body language of defeat:

Usually, what I watch for is when the teacher is trying to get a certain result from a student and the student is defeated. They’re just emotionally defeated; like they don’t care anymore. [This teacher] doesn’t see stuff like that. Or if a parent calls or something, but if I see a student has become defeated, discouraged, that’s clearly not the result that the teacher wants. She just doesn’t read the students or parents well.

**Multiple reasons.** Principals also said that multiple factors may tip the scales for them. Some of those factors are: complaints, patterns of complaint, dramatic offenses, harm to students or parents, and the teacher’s own negative comments about the student.

Juan said:

When the student comes to me and they complain about the teacher, I listen to their side of the story. Regardless of whether it’s compelling or not I investigate. And when I’m starting to see the same types of referrals and same types of complaints from other students as well—parents, too, for that matter—when I see a pattern, or there’s an offense that’s pretty dramatic, I address it right away with the teacher.

Mirtha added:
Well, I think any time there is anything that I feel is harming a student, absolutely [I’ll intervene.] Like I said, there’s certain parent complaints that I get where I’m like, ‘Okay, document, and wait and see.’ But when there’s a clear pattern and I get the same complaint from three different families, that’s when I follow up. If I followed up with all [complaints] I wouldn’t do anything else. I guess I pick my battles but anything that’s harmful to the child or anything of a serious nature I’m not afraid or intimidated to confront the teachers. My job is doing what’s best for the kids. Sometimes it’s super difficult but that’s what I do.

Santiago agreed: “If their behavior is affecting students or parents, it’s pretty much a non-negotiable. It’s not negotiable if it’s hurting kids. That’s it. I’m going to get involved.”

I asked Mirtha how she determined if there was really a problem with the teacher’s behavior or if she was dealing with a difficult parent. She said,

I think it goes back to the student. If I’m concerned about what’s happening with that student’s behavior, if it’s affecting that child emotionally, I’m more apt to follow up on that. But if the parent just didn’t know the specifics of a project that the kid was doing for science, that is something else. Then, I’ll listen to them and follow up with an email or something.

Tari, speaking from the elementary school setting, described how she could sometimes wait a bit to determine how valid a report was. She said,

When you see how poorly the kid’s feeling. And, you know, even when little, sometimes other kids will tell you about it, so at first you kind of go, “OK, well, let’s watch it,” and then you see that most of the problems were not real problems, just making mountains out of mole hills. So I think if you notice a pattern after a couple weeks then you might want to start saying something and delving into it. And of course, there’s getting the parent involved and setting up meetings.

Jordana looks at the level of student distress, triangulation of reports from non-related sources, and the teacher’s willingness to talk negatively about the student:

Probably if a student comes to me in confidence and I see that the student is really under distress or if I have a situation where I have several parents who are not chummy, unrelated people who are making a similar complaint, then I know something’s gone awry. I would say those would be trigger points. Or if the teacher makes comments in my presence or in my range of hearing that are really negative about a particular student, sometimes that will get my antennae up.
**Political factors.** Some things may enhance, not so much the principal’s *will* to respond, but his/her *ability* to respond. Arvella spoke about a hotline to the board:

> I had some complaints that actually went all the way to the school board. We had a school board member’s son at my school, so some things kind of trickled up quickly which got us on the radar. And in this case it was very helpful, because now we were getting all the support that we needed to address it. Everybody all the way up was seeing what kind of a problem this person was for students.

June said that her ability to intervene was greatly enhanced by a change of policy at the district level:

> Whenever a parent complained to me or I saw something, like one of my kindergarten teachers grabbing [a student] by the arm and roughly yanking them. I would say something to them and conference with them. But what really triggered this [ability to respond rapidly] was a new superintendent that made us liable if we didn’t report every type of abuse.

**Reasons for Not Intervening (RQ 3f)**

**RQ 3f:** What reasons did principals give for their decision *not* to intervene?

Surveyed principals were invited to identify the reasons they chose *not* to intervene. A checklist of 11 items was provided with space to add other reasons. Unfortunately, of the 289 principals who reported working with abrasive teachers, only five reported choosing not to intervene. Of those five, one marked nothing and the remaining four marked a total of 12 responses to the instruction: “List the reasons you chose not to intervene.” None of the non-intervening principals added a written response. Table 34 presents frequencies and percentages of the four principals’ responses.

*Lack of policy* and *lack of training* were the most frequent reasons given by non-intervening principals. However, several response options were provided by the survey but *not* marked by any principal. They were: (a) I have more urgent issues to deal with, (b) the teacher is in a fragile position right now and I’m sure the situation will change on
Table 34

*Reasons Given by Principals to Explain Why They Did Not Intervene*  \( (N = 12) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>( n )</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of policy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of training</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a serious enough</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient proof</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wouldn’t prevail in grievance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Termination would hurt school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

its own, (c) the teacher is too well connected in this community, (d) I don’t think I could count on the people that would need to support me, and (e) the teacher union would be too difficult to deal with.

Due to the low number of surveyed non-intervening principals, I asked the interviewees if they had ever decided *not* to intervene or to delay intervention. While only five surveyed principals reported not intervening, many interviewed principals could remember times they had not intervened or they had chosen to delay intervention.

**Political realities**

Sometimes reality trumps the idealism a principal wishes to live by. Patrick, remembering a former school he led, responded to the question of whether he had ever chosen not to intervene by reflecting and then saying,

A few times, sad to say, I have not and probably should have. I knew that I was just the principal, and I wondered whether or not my superintendent would get back to [the teacher] and would be supportive of me. I wondered if the board would support me going down the road with that teacher, even with the evidence I had coming in. In the district where was there were relationships already established. There were board members that had been in relationships with those teachers longer than I’d been there. So, sometimes I’ve had to think about things that I’m going to do, and whether or not the board would stand behind me in my decision-making process.
I asked Patrick, “You’re saying that at those times your focus was pretty much on the probability of whether you could prevail in that situation, and you were looking more to superintendent and board, correct?

Patrick replied, “Correct, rather than really truly, uh, standing up for the child.”

I asked him how he felt about that now, and he responded,

You know, it’s a, it’s a, [pause] you [pause] feel bad and you think about it. Especially when [pause, then with resolve] You know, you work at the pleasure of the board, and you need to put food on the table, and do those things, pay the bills, and it sucks to say that, but sometimes it’s kind of where things end up, unfortunately.

Requests not to intervene

Other principals gave several reasons for delaying an intervention. Fred, speaking from the high-school level, mentioned that fear of retaliation is one reason students and parents sometimes ask him not to intervene:

A reason I might not intervene would be that I feel the student has asked me not to. In some cases the student has worked it out in their mind how to handle it themselves. There’s a lot of fear of retaliation so I have parents saying, “Please don’t include the teacher in this conference.” As much as I tell them retaliation won’t happen, they still insist. So many times I am asked not to intervene. That’s one reason I wouldn’t.

Santiago said that a teacher reporting another teacher may ask him not to intervene:

Sometimes teachers tell me another teacher is out of line with them. And so I ask them, “Do you want me to call this person in and make sure they understand what is expected of them?” And they’ve said, “Nope, I’ll have that conversation with them.” So yes, that’s what I usually do in the collaborative model, when it’s involving colleagues, but not students or parents.

Glenn honors requests not to intervene, but only for a time. He wants to check back and make sure that non-intervention is working out okay for the one who reported:

After that [a request for non-intervention] has occurred I’ll give the person some breathing room, and then I go back to them, and I ask them how it’s going. I ask
them the approach that they took and if they need any assistance from me. I never take it at face value. The other thing to take into consideration is sometimes I have to tell them “What you’re telling me, I can’t let go. We have to work out the deal with this. This is one that I can’t do what you’re asking me to do. I have to take action.” That’s a little more difficult, but they understand. But I do the best that I can in protecting them.

Knowledge of the student

Juan has chosen not to intervene because of what he knew about the student:

I’m sure there have been [cases where I did not intervene] and those would be cases where I know the student and I know their history and maybe I didn’t feel the complaint was serious enough to have the conversation with the teacher. The student may have said “This is what the teacher said or did or didn’t do to me.” And then I felt “Based on you and your behavior, that was probably appropriate,” and I let it go.

Fear of losing students or parent confidence

It is possible for a principal to avoid intervention if to do so might jeopardize enrollment. Ursala, speaking from her experience as a tuition-based private school principal, said,

I wouldn’t reprimand a teacher or try to step in between the teacher and the student in the classroom in front of other students. I don’t want to weaken the authority of the teachers or make it look like we don’t think our teachers are good. . . . I also don’t want students to go around talking about, “The principal got mad at the teacher today.” I know we don’t always know what we’re doing, but I don’t want the parents to be worried about that or nervous, starting little rumors and stuff like that.

I asked Ursala to say more about her concern for the parents, since her students are boarding students and their parents live far away. She said,

Right. There are very few, maybe two or three students who have parents actually here. So the parents have been less involved. Oh, but then there’s [pause] almost all these kids have agents that move them around and find schools for them. So that’s another layer of people. It’s probably the agents that we’re most concerned about, because they could quit sending us students.”
Delay pending investigation

When asked if she had ever decided not to intervene, Jordana was emphatic,

I always intervene. . . . The only thing that would cause me to delay is if I wasn’t able to fully investigate. If I haven’t talked to the child or if I couldn’t speak with the teacher, okay. I feel that everybody has a right to be heard before I make a decision. So that would be the only mitigating factor.

I asked Jordana if she would ever delay intervention because a teacher was under a lot of stress in her personal life; had a plate that was already overflowing. She replied,

No. Sadly, no. As much as I do for people going through a difficult time, I do these for the kids. I really like my teachers, but if they’re doing some kind of damage to a child they have to talk about it, even if I like them, and all. They’re all lovely people, you know. Sometimes we make an error, and part of being an administrator [is intervention.] It’s a big part of the job.

Similarly, when asked if she had ever chosen not to intervene, June said, “No. I had to think, but no. Always; in writing or a gentle warning.” But like Jordana, June quickly added that she will delay intervention in order to do an internal investigation. “If I hear something from a parent or a child I have a protocol that I follow. There are times that I delay, but if I hear about it in the morning I spend the whole day trying to investigate.”

Let the problem unfold

When asked if she had ever decided not to intervene, Tari thought for a moment:

Mmm, yeah. I mean, I’ll be honest. There are times when you want to let the situation unfold, like someone will come in, “Oh, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah’s happening, blah, blah, blah,” and you walk by the classroom and if it’s calm at that point, then you go, “Well, you know, this is hearsay. We’ll just keep monitoring the situation,” and then [if it recurs] it builds a better case in the long run. So, a lot of times when it’s just hearsay, I don’t. Sometimes I’ll go into a classroom and monitor it, but if I don’t see it with my own eyes, and it’s been reported second-hand, sometimes I’ll not intervene.

Tari added that you don’t want to be intervening all the time. You want your
interventions to be productive and effective.

It’s like with a kid, if you’re yelling at it all the time after a while they just start tuning you out. So you need to choose the situation. . . . Unless, of course, there’s a dire situation. Then you have to act immediately.

Fred said that waiting has helped him avoid trouble: “Sometimes I’ll wait a little bit and see what develops and then a week later I realize I didn’t have to intervene and that it solved itself. Because again, overkill on my part could backfire.”

**Summary of Deciding to Intervene**

During the survey stage of this study, 98.2% of the principals who reported supervising an abrasive teacher also reported that they had chosen to intervene. They identified two main reasons for intervening: the teacher’s behavior was unacceptable and the students need a respectful learning environment.

During the interview stage, principals provided additional thoughts. Their reasons to intervene included wanting to protect the child from harm, disrespect, and a sense of defeat. They also voiced practical concerns such as whether they were receiving similar reports from multiple non-related sources, and the level of interest shown by the board and superintendent.

Principals may choose not to intervene, or to delay intervention for many reasons. Lack of support from superintendent or board has inhibited principal intervention, as has the fear of intervention’s effect on school credibility or enrollment. More often principals suspended intervention when the person reporting made a direct request for the principal not to intervene. The request was made for several reasons: The one reporting may feel it is their duty to confront the teacher, or they may already have an idea of how they will manage the problem. Alternately, the reporter may fear retaliation if the teacher were to
learn where the complaint came from.

Principals also spoke of taking the reporter’s credibility and age into account. And finally, principals may suspend their response until the situation becomes clearer or they have had time to make an adequate investigation. Some principals implied that delaying intervention while waiting for more clarity might help them avoid appearing reactionary.

Principal Attributes

The principal brings many attributes to any decision he or she makes. This section will look at eight principal attributes drawn from the principals’ demographics and personal history with bullying to see if any of the attributes are related to principal choices in intervention.

Principal Decision to Intervene (RQ 3g)

RQ 3g: Did selected principal attributes predict the principal’s decision to intervene?

H₃₉: The principal’s decision to intervene will be predicted by eight attributes of the principal. Attributes tested were the principal’s age, years in the principalship, supervision load, sex, race/ethnicity, and the frequency, intensity, and type of bullying he or she had experienced as a student.

Result: Of the 289 principals who reported supervising abrasive teachers, only five reported not intervening. Logistic regression showed no statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated \( \chi^2 = 8.07, p = .921 \). So, the research hypothesis was rejected. It could not be demonstrated that principal attributes had an effect on a principal’s decision to intervene.
Additional tests were conducted. A test of means did show dissimilarities in five principal attributes when comparing principals who did intervene with those who did not. Intervening principals appeared to be more experienced than non-intervening principals and have a heavier supervision load. The intervening principals had experienced bullying that was more frequent and intense when they were children than had the non-intervening principals. Conversely, non-intervening principals were more likely to have *never* been bullied than intervening principals (see Table 35).

### Table 35

*Differences in Means for Selected Principal Attributes by Decision to Intervene*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Yrs. Experience</th>
<th>Supervision Load</th>
<th>History of Being Bullied as a Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Mean)</td>
<td>(Mean)</td>
<td>Frequency&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervening</td>
<td>11.13</td>
<td>37.20</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 272 to 278)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-intervening</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td>30.96</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N = 5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> On a scale of 0 to 2 (0 = *little/none*, 1 = *infrequent*, 2 = *frequent*).

<sup>2</sup> On a scale of 0 to 2 (0 = *little/none*, 1 = *moderate*, 2 = *severe*).

Three tests—linear regression, crosstabs, and bivariate correlations—all failed to detect any relationship between *types* of bullying the principal experienced as a student and the principal’s decision to intervene. Types of childhood bullying tested were: none, verbal, social, and physical.

**Choice of Intervention Type (RQ 3h)**

RQ 3h: Did selected principal attributes predict the principal’s choice of *types* of intervention?
H₃ 3h: The principal’s choice of types of interventions will be predicted by eight attributes of the principal. Attributes tested were: age, years in the principalship, supervision load, sex, race/ethnicity, and the frequency, intensity, and type of bullying he or she had experienced as a student.

The hypothesis was tested using a series of logistic regressions since each intervention type was coded as a dichotomous variable. The intervention types were: supportive, instructive, cautionary, restrictive, and punitive. The results of the tests will be presented per intervention type.

1. *Supportive interventions*. Supportive intervention was defined as *relieving pressure from the teacher*. RQ 3h.1: Do selected principal attributes predict the principal’s choice of supportive interventions? H₃ 3h.1: The principal’s decision to use supportive interventions will be predicted by eight attributes of the principal.

Result: Logistic regression showed no statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated \( \chi^2 = 12.00, p = .340 \). Therefore, the research hypothesis was rejected regarding supportive interventions. The principal’s use of supportive interventions was not predicted by the eight principal attributes. Pseudo \( R^2 \)’s are as follows: .484 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .044 (Cox & Snell), .059 (Nagelkerke). Oddly, the regression model showed a gain in predictive capacity from 59.5% to 63.2% even though the table of coefficients offered no explanation for the increase in the model’s predictive capacity.

2. *Instructive interventions*. Instructive intervention was defined as *providing training, counseling, or coaching with a clear objective*. RQ 3h.2: Do selected principal attributes predict the principal’s choice of instructive interventions? H₃ 3h.2: The
principal’s decision to use instructive interventions will be predicted by eight attributes of the principal.

Result: Logistic regression showed no statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated $\chi^2 = 3.96, p = .499$. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. The principal’s use of instructive interventions was not predicted by the eight principal attributes. Pseudo $R^2$s are as follows: .920 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .015 (Cox & Snell), .021 (Nagelkerke).

3. Cautionary interventions. Cautionary intervention was defined as setting limits and giving warnings. RQ 3h.3: Do selected principal attributes predict the principal’s choice of cautionary interventions? $H_a$ 3h.3: The principal’s decision to use cautionary interventions will be predicted by eight attributes of the principal.

Result: Logistic regression showed a statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated $\chi^2 = 24.94, p = .026$. The research hypothesis was retained. Pseudo $R^2$s are as follows: .264 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .089 (Cox & Snell), .119 (Nagelkerke).

However, there was a gain of nearly four percentage points in the predictive capacity of the model, increasing from 58.4% to 62.1%, and three variables were found to have predictive capacity: supervision load ($B = 0.02, OR = 1.02, p = .010$), frequency of childhood bullying ($B = 1.41, OR = 4.11, p = .022$), and the principal’s having been physically bullied in his/her childhood ($B = 1.03, OR = 2.79, p = .013$). In other words, the principals who were most likely to use cautionary interventions had higher teacher-supervision loads, and had been more frequently bullied as a child. They also had experienced more physical bullying as children (see Table 36).
4. **Restrictive interventions.** Restrictive intervention was defined as *setting limits and using negative consequences, such as suspension.* RQ 3h.4: Do selected principal attributes predict the principal’s choice of restrictive interventions? H$a$ 3h.4: The principal’s decision to use restrictive interventions will be predicted by eight attributes of the principal.

Result: Logistic regression showed a statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated $\chi^2 = 26.44$, $p = .034$. Therefore, the research hypothesis was retained. The principal’s use of a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Attributes</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>Wald Statistic</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>.347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision Load</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>-21.11</td>
<td>28252.22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-21.11</td>
<td>28252.22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black / African American</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic / Latino</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>.237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White /Caucasian</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Childhood Bullying</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity of Childhood Bullying</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined (Freq &amp; Intens)</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Been Bullied</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied Verbally</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied Socially</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied Physically</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $\alpha = .0031$. All bullying variables describe bullying the principal received as a student. $OR$ = odds ratio. All $p$ values are for a 1-tailed test.
restrictive type of intervention was predicted by his/her teacher-supervision load \((B = 0.01, \ OR = 1.01, \ p = .044)\) (see Table 37). The regression model showed a gain in predictive capacity of less than a point increasing from 82.9\% to 83.3\%. Pseudo \(R^2\)s are as follows: .074 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .094 (Cox & Snell), .156 (Nagelkerke).

5. **Punitive interventions**. Punitive intervention was defined as removing the teacher. RQ 3h.5: Do selected principal attributes predict the principal’s choice of punitive interventions? \(H_a\ 3h.5:\) The principal’s decision to use punitive interventions will be predicted by eight attributes of the principal.

Table 37

*Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis of Principal Attribute Variables Predicting Principal Use of Restrictive Interventions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Attributes</th>
<th>(B)</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>(OR)</th>
<th>(Wald) Statistic</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>.557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision Load</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>.420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-18.19</td>
<td>25416.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black / African American</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic / Latino</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White /Caucasian</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>.552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Childhood Bullying</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity of Childhood Bullying</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined (Freq &amp; Intens)</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Been Bullied</td>
<td>19.84</td>
<td>7278.52</td>
<td>4.13E+08</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied Verbally</td>
<td>19.61</td>
<td>7278.52</td>
<td>3.29E+08</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied Socially</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>.395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied Physically</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>.625</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set \(\alpha = .0031\). All bullying variables describe bullying the principal received as a student. \(OR =\) odds ratio. All \(p\) values are for a 2-tailed test.*
Result: Logistic regression showed no statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated $\chi^2 = 16.43, p = .350$. Therefore the hypothesis was rejected. The principal’s use of punitive interventions was not predicted by the eight principal attributes. Pseudo $R^2$'s are as follows: .731 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .059 (Cox & Snell), .102 Nagelkerke. However, supervision load did account for a statistically significant, though small, portion of the unique variance ($B = 0.02, OR = 1.02, p = .003$). This means that principals with a higher teacher-supervision load are more likely to use punitive interventions, that is, to remove a teacher who uses abrasive behaviors.

**Number of Intervention Types Used (RQ 3i)**

RQ 3i: Did selected principal attributes predict the principal’s use of a greater number of types of intervention? Hₐ 3i: The number of intervention types used by the principal will be predicted by eight attributes of the principal. The principal attributes being examined were: age, years in the principalship, supervision load, sex, race/ethnicity, and the frequency, intensity, and type of bullying he or she had experienced as a student.

Result: Linear regression showed that these variables did significantly predict the total number of intervention types used by a principal ($R^2 = .09, F_{12,256} = 2.03, p = .011$), so the research hypothesis was retained. The number of intervention types used by the principal was predicted by eight attributes of the principal. The principal’s supervision load accounted for a significant proportion of the unique variance ($B = .01, t = 2.76, p = .003$) (see Table 38).
Table 38

Regression Analysis Summary for Principal Attributes Predicting Number of Interventions Used by Principal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision Load</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>.236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>.433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Childhood Bullying</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity of Childhood Bullying</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined (Freq &amp; Intens)</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-1.54</td>
<td>.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Been Bullied</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied Verbally</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied Socially</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied Physically</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $\alpha = .0041$. All bullying variables describe bullying the principal received as a student. $OR = \text{odds ratio}$. All $p$ values are for a 1-tailed test.

Summary of Principal Attributes

Due to the small number of non-intervening principals, it was not possible to determine whether certain attributes predisposed a principal for intervention. However, the numbers generated suggest that it may be true that intervening principals are more experienced than non-intervening principals (11.1 years compared to 9.5) and have a higher supervision load (37.2 teachers compared to 31.0). They may also have experienced more bullying when they were students than did the non-intervening principals.

Regarding the influence of principal attributes on the principal’s choice of interventions, cautionary types of intervention were positively predicted by the principal’s supervision load ($B = 0.02, OR = 1.02, p = .010$), frequency of childhood
bullying ($B = 1.41, OR = 4.11, p = .022$), and the principal’s having been physically bullied in his/her childhood ($B = 1.03, OR = 2.79, p = .013$).

The principal’s teacher-supervision load also predicted the use of restrictive interventions ($B = 0.01, OR = 1.01, p = .044$) and punitive interventions ($B = 0.02, OR = 1.02, p = .003$). Furthermore, principals who supervised more teachers tended to use more types of intervention ($B = .01, t = 2.76, p = .003$).

Mode of Discovery

A principal may discover a teacher’s use of abrasive behavior in a variety of ways. Five modes of discovery that were tested in this study were: report from a colleague, report from a student, report from a parent/guardian, observation by the principal, and self-report by the abrasive teacher. Is the principal more greatly influenced by one mode over another?

**Principal Decision to Intervene (RQ 3j)**

RQ 3j: Did the mode of discovery predict the principal’s likelihood of intervening? $H_a 3j$: The principal’s decision to intervene will be predicted by the mode of discovery. Modes tested were: report from a colleague, report from a student, report from a parent/guardian, observation by the principal, and self-report by the abrasive teacher.

Result: Logistic regression showed no statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated $\chi^2 = 6.27, p = .141$. Therefore, the research hypothesis was rejected. The principal’s decision to intervene was *not* predicted by the mode of discovery. Pseudo $R^2$s are as follows: .549 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .022 (Cox & Snell), .135 (Nagelkerke). However, one mode of
discovery, reported by a colleague, was significant as a predictor of the principal’s use of instructive types of intervention ($B = 2.27$, $OR = 9.63$, $p = .018$). This indicates that the principals were over nine times more likely to intervene if a family reported the teacher’s abrasiveness.

**Choice of Intervention Type (RQ 3k)**

RQ 3k: Did the mode of discovery predict the principal’s choice of intervention type? $H_a$ 3k: The principal’s choice of intervention type will be predicted by the mode of discovery. Five modes of discovery were tested: reports by colleagues, reports by the targeted student(s), reports by the parent(s) of the targeted student(s), observations made by the principal, or a self-report by the abrasive teacher.

A principal was free to mark as many or as few modes of discovery as were present. Hence each mode was reported as a dichotomous variable, 0 if it was not present, and 1 if it was. A series of logistic regressions was used to test whether the presence of any mode could predict the principal’s choice of intervention type. The five types of intervention were: supportive, instructive, cautionary, restrictive, and punitive. The results of the tests will be presented per intervention type.

1. **Supportive interventions.** RQ 3k.1: Does the mode of discovery predict the principal’s choice of supportive types of intervention? $H_a$ 3k.1: The principal’s choice of supportive types of intervention will be predicted by the mode of discovery.

Result: Logistic regression showed no statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated $\chi^2 = 5.73$, $p = .167$. Therefore, the research hypothesis was rejected. The principal’s use of supportive interventions was not predicted by the mode of discovery. Pseudo $R^2$'s are as
follows: .284 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .020 (Cox & Snell), .028 (Nagelkerke). However, one mode of discovery, *reported by a colleague*, was significant as a predictor of the principal’s use of instructive types of intervention ($B = 0.56, OR=1.75, p=.015$).

2. *Instructive interventions.* RQ 3k.2: Does the mode of discovery predict the principal’s choice of instructive types of intervention? $H_a$ 3k.2: The principal’s choice of instructive types of intervention will be predicted by the mode of discovery.

Result: Logistic regression showed no statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated $\chi^2 = 3.77, p = .292$. Therefore, the research hypothesis was rejected. The principal’s use of instructive interventions was *not* predicted by the mode of discovery. Pseudo $R^2$s are as follows: .600 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .014 (Cox & Snell), .019 (Nagelkerke).

3. *Cautionary interventions.* RQ 3k.3: Does the mode of discovery predict the principal’s choice of cautionary types of intervention? $H_a$ 3k.3: The principal’s choice of cautionary types of intervention will be predicted by the mode of discovery.

Result: Logistic regression showed no statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated $\chi^2 = 4.55, p = .237$. Therefore, the research hypothesis was rejected. The principal’s use of cautionary interventions was *not* predicted by the mode of discovery. Pseudo $R^2$s are as follows: .883 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .016 (Cox & Snell), .022 (Nagelkerke). However, one mode of discovery, *reported by a student*, was significant as a predictor of the principal’s use of cautionary types of intervention ($B = 0.56, OR = 1.74, p = .025$).

4. *Restrictive interventions.* RQ 3k.4: Does the mode of discovery predict the principal’s choice of restrictive types of intervention? $H_a$ 3k.4: The principal’s choice of
restrictive types of intervention will be predicted by the mode of discovery.

Result: Logistic regression showed some statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated $\chi^2 = 15.06, p = .005$. Therefore, the research hypothesis was retained. The principal’s use of restrictive interventions was predicted by the mode of discovery. Pseudo $R^2$’s are as follows: .542 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .035 (Cox & Snell), .088 (Nagelkerke). Two modes of discovery reached statistical significance as predictors of the principal’s use of restrictive interventions: reported by a colleague ($B = 0.07, OR = 1.95, p = .028$), and reported by a student ($B = 1.08, OR = 2.94, p = .010$) (see Table 39).

Table 39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Discovery</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$OR$</th>
<th>Wald Statistic</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague Reported</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Reported</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Reported</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>.430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Observed</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Self-Reported</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>.289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $\alpha = .010$. OR = odds ratio. All $p$ values are for a 1-tailed test.

5. Punitive interventions. RQ 3k.5: Does the mode of discovery predict the principal’s choice of punitive types of intervention? $H_a$ 3k.5: The principal’s choice of punitive types of intervention will be predicted by the mode of discovery.

Result: Logistic regression showed no statistically significant predictive capacity in the regression equation. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients calculated $\chi^2 =$
2.76, \( p = .367 \). Therefore, the research hypothesis was rejected. The principal’s use of punitive interventions was not predicted by the mode of discovery. Pseudo \( R^2 \)s are as follows: .910 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .010 (Cox & Snell), .017 (Nagelkerke).

**Number of Intervention Types Used (RQ 3l)**

RQ 3l: Did the mode of discovery predict the principal’s use of a greater number of types of intervention? Hₐ 3l: The number of types of intervention chosen by the principal will be predicted by the mode of discovery. The modes of discovery being examined were: reported by a colleague, reported by the targeted student, reported by the targeted student’s parents, observed by the principal, or self-reported by the abrasive teacher.

Result: Linear regression showed that these variables did significantly predict the total number of intervention types used by a principal (\( R^2 = .04, F_{5,271} = 2.28, p = .024 \)), so the research hypothesis was retained. The number of types of intervention used by a principal was predicted by the mode of discovery. Two modes of discovery, *reported by a colleague* and *reported by a student*, accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance in the regression equation (see Table 40).

**Summary of Mode of Discovery**

The way in which a principal learns that a teacher is using abrasive behaviors seems to have some effect on the intervention he or she will use. Logistic regression found that mode of discovery predicted the principal’s use of restrictive interventions (\( \chi^2 = 15.06, p = .010 \)). Being reported by a student accounted for a significant portion of the variance (\( B = 0.56, OR = 2.94, p = .020 \)). The abrasive teacher’s being reported by a
colleague came close to achieving statistical significance as a predictor ($B = 0.67$, $OR = 1.95$, $p = .056$) but accounted for little of the variance.

Table 40

*Regression Analysis Summary for Mode of Discovery Predicting Number of Interventions Used by Principal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague Reported</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Reported</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Reported</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.84</td>
<td>.202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Observed</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Self-Reported</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>.276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $\alpha = .010$. $OR =$ odds ratio. All $p$ values are for a 1-tailed test.

In considering how many types of interventions the principals chose, logistic regression showed that mode of discovery did predict number of types chosen ($R^2 = .04$, $F_{5,271} = 2.28$, $p = .047$). It also found that being reported by a colleague accounted for a significant portion of the variance ($B = 0.27$, $p = .043$).

**Presence of a Teacher Union**

Teacher unions seek to protect or improve quality of life for teachers. To understand if those protections hampered principal intervention with abrasive teachers, the principals were asked if their teachers were unionized. Their answers made it possible to test whether or not principal decisions regarding intervention could be predicted based on the presence of a teacher union. This section will present the resultant findings.
Principal Decision to Intervene (RQ 3m)

RQ 3m: Did the presence of a teacher union predict the principal’s decision to intervene? Hₐ 3m: The principal’s decision to intervene will be predicted by the presence of a teacher union.

Result: Cross-tabulations showed no statistically significant difference between principals of unionized teachers and principals whose teachers were not unionized regarding the decision to intervene.

Choice of Intervention Type (RQ 3n)

Two questions were asked about the effect of unionized teachers on the principal’s choice of interventions. First, did the presence of a teacher union predict the types of intervention a principal would use? Second, did the presence of a teacher union predict the number of intervention types a principal would use? These questions will be examined in this and the following subsection.

RQ 3n: Did the presence of a teacher union predict the principal’s choice of intervention type? Hₐ 3n: The principal’s choice of intervention type will be predicted by the presence of a teacher union. Since there were five types of intervention—supportive, instructive, cautionary, restrictive, and punitive—five separate cross-tabulations were run. The results of all five tests along with their accompanying χ² tests have been combined into one table to facilitate comparisons (see Table 41). A brief interpretation would include:

1. **Supportive interventions.** Principals in schools where the teachers were unionized were four times more likely to use supportive types of interventions than were principals of non-unionized teachers.
Table 41

Cross-tabulations Analyzing Effect of Teacher Unions on Principal Choice of Intervention Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>Unionized?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive?</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>122 57%</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>128.9</td>
<td>168 57%</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>92 43%</td>
<td></td>
<td>.060</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>111 43%</td>
<td></td>
<td>.060</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructive?</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>56 26%</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>83 43%</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>158 74%</td>
<td></td>
<td>.021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>150.3</td>
<td>196 74%</td>
<td></td>
<td>.021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautionary?</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>89 42%</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>.384</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>120 42%</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>.385</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>125 58%</td>
<td></td>
<td>.394</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>159 58%</td>
<td></td>
<td>.394</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive?</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>174 83%</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.232</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>177.2</td>
<td>231 83%</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>40 19%</td>
<td></td>
<td>.265</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>48 19%</td>
<td></td>
<td>.265</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive?</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>189 88%</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>236 88%</td>
<td>8.81</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>25 12%</td>
<td></td>
<td>.003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43 12%</td>
<td></td>
<td>.003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percentages are figured on the n of the appropriate union or non-union sample; non-unionized n = 65, unionized n = 214. Some percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. The Totals block has been omitted. Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set \( \alpha = .025 \). In all tests \( N = 279 \), and \( df = 1 \). All p values (including Fisher’s) are for 2-tailed tests.

\(^a\)The first number in the Observed cells shows frequency.

\(^b\)Boldface is provided to emphasize the pattern of intervention according to union status. Only statistically significant overrepresentations are noted.
2. *Instructive interventions*. Principals in schools where the teachers are unionized were five times more likely to use instructive types of interventions than were principals of non-unionized teachers.

3. *Cautionary interventions*. Principals in schools where the teachers are unionized were no more likely to use cautionary types of interventions than were principals of non-unionized teachers.

4. *Restrictive interventions*. Principals in schools where the teachers are unionized were no more likely to use restrictive types of interventions than were principals of non-unionized teachers.

5. *Punitive interventions*. Principals in schools where the teachers are unionized were almost nine times *less* likely to use punitive types of interventions than were principals of non-unionized teachers.

**Number of Intervention Types Used (RQ 3o)**

RQ 3o: Did the presence of a teacher union predict the number of intervention types a principal would use? Hₐ 3o: The number of intervention types used by the principal will be predicted by the presence of a teacher union. This research hypothesis is based on the assumption that with greater controls over the removal of teachers, principals in unionized schools will tend to use the full spectrum of interventions as part of their case building towards teacher removal, should that action be needed.

The types of intervention tested were: supportive, instructive, cautionary, restrictive, and punitive. A one-tailed independent samples *t* test found that there was a significant difference between the number of types of intervention used by principals of
unionized and non-unionized teachers. Principals of unionized teachers reported using an average of 2.06 types of interventions while their counterparts reported using an average of 1.80 types of intervention. This was statistically significant with a $t_{277} = -1.68$ and $p = .047$.

A means test ($F_{1,277} = 2.83$, $p = .047$) also showed that principals of schools where the teachers were unionized used an average of 0.26 more types of intervention than did principals of schools where the teachers were not unionized (see Table 42).

**Summary of Presence of a Teacher Union**

In looking at types of intervention, three cross-tabulations produced statistically significant chi-square tests: Principals of unionized schools were four times more likely than their non-union counterparts to use supportive types of intervention ($\chi^2 = 3.94$, $OR = 4.05$, $p = .047$). They were five times more likely to use instructive types of intervention ($\chi^2 = 5.64$, $OR = 5.41$, $p = .018$), but almost one-ninth as likely to use punitive interventions which involved the removal of a teacher ($\chi^2 = 9.80$, $OR = 8.81$, $p = .002$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Were the teacher unionized?</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A one-tailed, independent sample $t$ test showed a statistically significant difference ($t_{277} = -1.68$, $p = .047$) between principals of unionized schools and those
whose teachers were not unionized when it came to number of types of intervention the principal used. And a means test \( F_{1, 277} = 2.83, p = .047 \) showed that principals of unionized schools reported using an average of 2.06 types of intervention while principals of schools where the teachers were not unionized reported using an average of 1.80 types of intervention. The interviewed principals shared many thoughts on the impact of the unions, which will be shared in a later section.

Summary of Decision-making

The principals in this study reported three main elements that motivated them to intervene: (a) the fact that the problem has been reported, (b) their personal convictions that the abrasive behavior was unacceptable, and (c) the abrasive teacher’s failure to heed earlier, gentler warnings and suggestions. These three elements accounted for 70% of the principals’ responses. Lesser motivating elements were the amount of support the principal expected from the superintendent, school board, and teacher union; the training the principal had received, and the presence of clear policies regarding intervention.

Similarly, surveyed principals reported two main reasons for initiating intervention: (a) the unacceptability of the teachers’ behavior, and (b) the students’ need for a respectful learning environment. These two reasons accounted for two-thirds of the principals’ responses and were marked by 91.6% of the principals. To a far lesser degree, principals reported their confidence in a good outcome, the fact that the problem was becoming public knowledge, the presence of clear policies regarding intervention, and the principal’s having received training in intervention.

Interviewed principals added detail by reporting that what propelled them into intervening was the desire to protect students from harm, disrespect, and a sense of
defeat. They also said that similar reports from a variety of sources and the likelihood of support from superintendent or board make it easier to choose to intervene.

According to the survey, the top demotivating element was the principals’ expectation of a hostile response from the teacher. It was marked by over half of the principals. The next two inhibitors were being new to the school or the principalship and expecting a fight with the teacher union. These three accounted for nearly half of the responses. Concerns about the lack of clear policies, lack of training, or lack of support accounted for almost a third (29%) of the responses. More than one-sixth of the responses (18%) focused on the teacher, ranging from concerns about the teacher’s connections in the community to the principal’s friendship with the teacher.

Again, interviewed principals added significant details. Principals may choose not to intervene when the report is not clear or compelling. In those cases, they were likely to document the report and to take a *wait and see* approach, often increasing visits to the teacher’s classes. Principals reported not intervening when reporter asked them not to, if the incident did not demand a clear response from the principal, and if the reporter had a plan for how to deal with it, if the reporter feared retaliation. Principals have also uncomfortably reported not intervening when the teacher seemed to have unbeatable political connections or when they feared damaging the school’s reputation or enrollment.

Principals reported their emotional state at the time of deciding to intervene, and 38.9% rated themselves as anxious or extremely anxious. *Fear of conflict* was the most frequently reported stressor for principals at all anxiety levels. Even so, 98.2% of the principals chose to intervene. Additionally, 25.5% of the principals mentioned acting on personal conviction as enhancing their motivation to intervene.
A test of means indicated that the intervening principals had more administrative experience and supervise a larger number of teachers than do non-intervening principals. Intervening principals also had a personal history of having been bullied when they were students a little more frequently and intensely than their non-intervening counterparts. However, both groups averaged low frequency and intensity.

Logistic regressions found that the principals’ supervision loads could predict their use of cautionary, restrictive, and punitive types of intervention. The Beta weights were $B = 0.20$, $B = 0.01$, $B = 0.02$, respectively. Additionally, principals with higher supervision loads tended to use more types of intervention.

Regarding the way in which the principals discovered the teacher’s abrasive behaviors, logistic regression showed that restrictive interventions were predicted by mode of discovery ($\chi^2 = 15.06, p = .010$) with reported by a student accounting for a significant portion of the variance ($B = 1.08, OR = 2.94, p = .020$). The abrasive teacher’s being reported by a colleague came close to achieving statistical significance as a predictor ($B = 0.67, OR = 1.95, p = .056$).

In considering how many types of interventions the principals chose, linear regression showed that mode of discovery did predict number of types chosen ($R^2 = .04, F_{5,271} = 2.28, p = .024$) 4% of the time. It also found that being reported by a colleague ($B = 0.27, p = .022$) and being reported by a student ($B = 0.29, p = .026$) accounted for a significant proportion of the variance.

And finally, due to the small number of non-intervening principals it was not possible to test the influence of a teacher union on the principals’ decisions to intervene. However, the presence of a teacher union did attain significance in tests of the principals’
choices of intervention type, and in tests of number of interventions used. Principals of unionized schools were four times more likely than their counterparts to use supportive types of intervention discovery ($\chi^2 = 3.94$, $OR = 4.05$, $p = .047$). They were five times more likely to use instructive types of intervention ($\chi^2 = 5.64$, $OR = 5.41$, $p = .018$), but only one-ninth as likely to use punitive interventions which involve the removal of a teacher ($\chi^2 = 9.80$, $OR = 8.81$, $p = .002$). Additionally, principals of unionized teachers reported using an average of 2.06 types of intervention while principals of non-unionized teachers reported using an average of 1.80 types ($F_{1,277} = 2.83$, $p = .047$).

**Intervention (RQ4)**

Research Question 4 (RQ4): How have principals intervened? The previous section examined the principals’ reasons for choosing types of intervention. This section will briefly present how frequently each of the five types of intervention was used, and consider differences in principals’ choices when viewed by sex of principal or by the presence of a teacher union. The parenthetical RQ number at the end of each subsection title identifies the research sub-question that is being addressed.

**Types of Intervention (RQ 4a)**

RQ 4a: What types of intervention did principals most frequently use? On the survey, principals were instructed to think of one intervention they had conducted and then mark any of five intervention types they had used. Principals could mark more than one type. Table 43 shows the frequencies for their choices of type.
Table 43

_Frequencies for Principal Choices of Intervention Type (N = 275)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of Principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructive</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>71.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautionary</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Note._ Percentages do not total to 100 due to principals’ use of multiple intervention types.

Nearly two-thirds of the principals (71.3%) reported having used instructive interventions. Two fifths (40.4%) used supportive types of intervention. Well over half of the principals (57.8%) reported using cautionary types of intervention. And more than one quarter (26.5%) of the principals used one or both of the two most disciplinary approaches: restrictive and punitive interventions (26.5% is not obtainable from Table 43). The given percentages for _restrictive_ and _punitive_ cannot be combined since some principals used both types.

Before examining principal choices of intervention by sex or by presence of a teacher union, a cross-tabulation calculated that there is a trend towards more female principals being employed in unionized schools while non-unionized schools tend to employ more male principals. However, the cross-tabulation results did not attain statistical significance (_p_ = .133).

Is there a difference between men’s and women’s choices of intervention type? Due to the differences in number of female principals compared to male principals, frequencies were standardized by using percentages.
Result: The two sexes tracked fairly close to each other and they follow a curve similar to the one suggested by the column graph in Figure 10. Men tended to use slightly more intervention types \((M = 2.14)\) compared with women \((M = 1.97)\), but the difference was not statistically significant \((F_{1,272} = 1.65, p = .201)\).

![Use of Intervention Types per Sex of Principal](image)

*Figure 10.* Percentages of principals who used each intervention type, comparing principals by sex. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage. Percentages for instructive interventions were: women 71.8%, men 71.7%.

Is there a difference in choice of intervention types depending on whether a teacher union is present? Due to the nature of the variables—*union* was a single dichotomous variable whereas *intervention type* was a collection of five separate variables—*union* was placed as the dependent variable in a logistic regression with the five types of intervention as predictor variables.

Result: Logistic regression showed that the interventions chosen by the principals did predict the presence of a teacher union. The Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients
calculated $\chi^2 = 21.14, p = .001$. Pseudo $R^2$'s are as follows: .893 (Hosmer & Lemeshow), .073 (Cox & Snell), .110 (Nagelkerke) (see Table 44).

Table 44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Used</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$OR$</th>
<th>Wald Statistic</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructive</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautionary</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>.408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td>-1.30</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>10.88</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $\alpha = .010$. Test conducted as a 2-tailed test.

Frequencies for principal choice of intervention type were also compared. Graphing the percentages gave a more readable comparison (see Figure 11).

Principals of unionized teachers were more likely than their counterparts in non-unionized schools to use interventions that were supportive, instructive, and restrictive; but much less likely to use punitive interventions which involve the removal of a teacher. Principals of unionized teachers also tended to use more intervention types ($M = 2.06$) compared with principals whose teachers were not unionized ($M = 1.80$), and the difference was statistically significant ($F_{1,277} = 2.83, p = .047$).

Principals’ Experiences in Intervention (RQ 4b)

RQ 4b: How did principals work to end the teacher’s use of abrasive behavior? To explore the phenomenon of intervention, I listened to their stories. Three intact, but
condensed narratives will be shared. Next will be presented the way principals prepared for intervening and the actions that comprised their interventions.

![Bar chart](image.png)

*Figure 11.* Percentages of principals who used each intervention type, comparing principals of unionized schools with principals of non-unionized schools. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

**Narratives of Intervention**

Each principal’s intervention experience is unique. Variables in the situation, the abrasive teacher, the students, and the principal all help to shape the possible outcomes. Before looking at the themes in intervention which arose from the interviews, I have chosen to present three narratives based on greatly varied outcomes. They will help to paint a picture of the risks and opportunities inherent in the principal’s world. In the protection of confidentiality, all names and some details have been changed.

**Betty**

Betty arrived at the junior high school equipped with nearly 20 years of
educational experience and stellar evaluations. She was hired as one of two assistant principals. Her principal was also new that year. The school was in a quiet state of unrest. Ten years earlier district lines had been redrawn bringing a large number of Hispanic students, many of whom were English language learners. Teachers could no longer find success with the new students by using the same methods that had worked with the former demographic.

Then the nationwide recession hit, the tax base eroded, and revenue dwindled. Programs and personnel were cut. The teachers were unhappy with the change of demographics, frustrated with the reduced financial support, and not in the mood to rally under the new principal who was a Latino. At the end of 2 years he transferred to another school, sensing that he would never be able to do his best work in the current setting. The teacher union pushed to secure six out of seven seats on the district’s school board.

Betty was encouraged by the district to apply for the principal opening. She did, and she was hired. Her fellow assistant principal, Felicia, stayed on as assistant principal and Betty’s old position was eliminated—another staff reduction. Betty knew that the teachers viewed her as an outsider, part of the chain of bad luck that had hit them. “Let me tell you, there was nobody doing a happy dance when they found out I was getting this position . . . but I went into it with my eyes open.”

One of Betty’s concerns was a P.E. department that had showed indifference to administrative directives as well as to student needs. For example, they repeatedly ignored requests from the clerics of the Muslim community on behalf of their youth during Ramadan. With high temperatures outside, the students were required to run laps. The Muslim students who wanted to observe Ramadan would not be able to rehydrate
after the run. Despite visits and entreaties from the elders, the P.E. teachers made no alternative available to the youth of that faith.

“I can’t begin to tell you how shady it was,” Betty said, as she recounted a P.E. fundraiser where students were given higher grades if they sold more merchandise. And there were numerous reports of teachers making snide comments about students’ appearance during calisthenics, and punitive actions against students for minor dress code violations. She also mentioned that the P.E. teacher admitted to sexually harassing other adults in the school. “I really didn’t think that would warrant him moving, because in this district the union is so strong we can’t move any teacher off site without getting the backing of the school board and we were told that particular time ‘That’s not going to happen.’”

“It was the perfect storm. It truly was; the perfect storm,” said Betty, “... definitely one of those things that you had to dig in and lean into the wind and do what’s right based on your core values. If they demanded to have a student suspended for wearing an Obama T-shirt and you didn’t go along with it, you’d meet with massive passive resistance [from the teachers]. . . . But I think where they were really critical was [against] my assistant principal because she related very well with [the students’] families. And when we were working with twelve-, thirteen-, and fourteen-year-olds that were being treated unfairly and crying, she took it very hard. It was starting to really grate on her. As an assistant principal so much of her duty was discipline. She was in the thick of it. She would tell me what [the families] were saying in the community: ‘This has been going on for years,’ and they felt very powerless.

Betty tried to bring the situation around. She followed the progressive discipline
procedures and timelines, followed contractual agreements, and kept ongoing
communication with her superiors regarding the incidents. She communicated and
worked with the union president, and she formed a site communication leadership board
to advise and build group support.

However, efforts to work with the department came to an abrupt end on the day a
student came to the office for help with an injury suffered in dodge ball. The district had
banned dodge ball, and the P.E. teachers had been told to discontinue its use. Assistant
principal Felicia went into the gym to stop the game. According to Felicia, one teacher
crossed the gym and whispered in her ear, “Get out of my gym you filthy slut, bitch.” She
responded, “No, Mr. Walters I intend to stay right here, and I’m asking you to stop this
game, please.”

Students did not hear the P.E. teacher’s conversation with the assistant principal
though they did report seeing some behaviors that were unusual to the P.E. teacher.
Felicia reported that he shoved her, and after talking to Human Resources she chose to
place him under citizen’s arrest. The district attorney felt there was insufficient evidence
for a trial, and the charges were dropped.

“Boy, then it all came out,” Betty exclaimed. “Teachers began wearing bracelets
that said ‘Stop the bullying’ in show of solidarity with the P.E. teacher.” The local
newspaper began covering the discontent.

Soon, both Betty and Felicia were notified that the board had voted not to rehire
them. With no protections for administrators, they had no recourse. Betty reports that her
boss, an associate superintendent, became frustrated over the ordeal and resigned.

Betty recalled, “The superintendent of HR told me, ‘Betty this is the hardest thing
I’ve ever had to do. And I don’t want to do this. And I have no other recourse.’ And I said ‘That’s okay, I get it. But I’m not [pause] you didn’t see her after she left that gym.’ And I said, ‘You know she had every right to stand up for what she believed in. And I’ve let you guys know through numerous different letters and conferences and meetings with union representatives that these individuals were way beyond what is appropriate and what is legal. You’re right. I am done. I don’t belong here. This is ridiculous.”

Betty brightens as she recalls a later board meeting. “And what came to a movie-ending crescendo was that parents for the first time felt empowered to show up to the board meeting. Many, many parents were present; I didn’t call them; I wasn’t involved. But they definitely showed up, and they definitely let the board know that they had made a huge mistake in the parents’ opinion, and they needed to investigate further, because the P.E. teacher had mistreated them and their children numerous times. And the board listened and was courteous and I think they were extremely surprised at the amount of support. It didn’t really change a thing but, I’m not going to lie to you, it made me feel great! At least I know who I served, and it was the kids and the families. And that was good.”

Betty was hired as a principal for the next school year in another district. Felicia has not been rehired and is seeking redress through the courts.

June

June is principal at a K-5 school. She talked about a second-grade teacher in her late 30s who had been doing things such as taking her finger and flicking it against the students’ heads, grabbing them by the back of the neck and yanking their head around, sending the student outside unsupervised, or taking a ruler and rapping it on the student’s
head. June described it as “a lot of physical things, small things but physical, and going on for three or four years, and I just found out! It was pretty pervasive and no one had ever reported it until last year. A lot of emotional abuse. Very demeaning. [The second-graders] felt afraid.”

When June confronted the teacher, she was shocked that June even brought it up. June remembers, “I don’t think she’d ever thought about it. When I first confronted her she said, ‘Oh, it only happened the one time,’ or ‘I didn’t do it long enough to hurt him.’

June said the teacher also had a very good relationship with the parents. She spoke Spanish, and she was willing to let the parents come back and talk to her after class. She was very involved in their lives. “I think that’s where she got her power,” said June, “feeling like she was a second parent to these kids.”

“In hindsight,” June continued, “after piecing it together, I think the kids felt powerless, because they knew she was friends with their parents, and they felt no one would believe them. . . . The kids said to me ‘Who would believe us? My mom had her over for dinner.’ So, they kicked it aside. It was horrible. . . . And the one she abused the most, he said, ‘Yeah, but I deserved it.’ He believed that he deserved it! They really do numbers on these kids’ minds.”

June described the teacher’s targets as being “mostly the boys with chronic misbehavior, kids with ADD, constantly off task. But two of the victims were very quiet, well-behaved girls.”

The teacher was immediately removed and she spent a year in the reassignment center. Other principals also reported that their districts have similar detention centers. Teachers who may not be suitable for working with children check into the room each
day to sit. They continue on salary as they await reassignment or less favorable administrative decisions. The center goes by various pet names which depict the principals’ shared belief that most of the teachers do time but then bounce right back into service.

When June asked for the teacher to be removed, the teacher fought the request and the district sent in outside investigators. June was shocked to learn that older students still had physical symptoms at the sight of the teacher, 3 years after they were in her room.

June heard a rumor that the teacher (who was now in the reassignment center) was soon to be returned to her classroom. She checked with the district who reassured her that they were working towards the teacher’s permanent dismissal.

I asked June why she was able to take such quick and strong action when some principals struggled to enlist support for teacher discipline of any kind. June responded that she had always worked with teachers any time she saw the teacher handling a student roughly, but what made her move quickly for this teacher’s removal was new district policy. A new superintendent had put principals on notice. She had told them, “If you fail to report any type of child abuse, if you fail to act, fail to document, fail to report incidents to the district, you will be held personally liable. Your jobs and your credentials are at risk.”

Nora

Nora came into her first K-8 principalship with 16 years of teaching behind her. The district recognized that it was a difficult school. The previous two principals had not survived long. There had been a history of principals acting autonomously, and some of
the teachers were well practiced in resistance. She was told early on to be sure to talk *with* the teachers and not *at* them.

“The first year I was in a situation where I needed to encourage a teacher to resign,” Nora stated. “Then I didn’t hire a beloved second-grade-teacher applicant, so I got on the bad side of a few teachers. I started a principal advisory committee to see if we could troubleshoot, but it devolved into problem solving around storage issues and purchases, things like that.”

“In my second year we got a handful of some humdinger children all at once. They’d knock things off tables and would leave the room and swear at the teachers. Basically system wide we didn’t have a way to move those kids or support the teachers very quickly. We needed some additional support and the powers that be didn’t want to hire right off the bat.” A several-month delay in getting the needed support further soured a critical group of teachers.

As part of the school’s program improvement process, an external reviewer visited and concluded that the school had several strengths, “but the number one weakness was that the teachers by and large did not take responsibility for instruction,” remembers Nora. “The teachers did not believe that.” As part of the program improvement a new teacher was brought on board. Nora described him as “really hard on kids and really a lone ranger kind of person.” He was soon in the camp of the disgruntled teachers.

A new superintendent asked for a second external review 10 months after the first one. He made it clear that he wanted to see 3s and 4s on a 4-point scale. The reviewer came, and gave them 3s and 4s, but said that nothing had really changed: people were
Nora tried to address the abrasive behaviors of the teachers towards students. “I had one teacher holding a student up against the wall yelling in his face, and I talked to that teacher about this. I talked to everybody who needed to know—the child care provider who was waiting to pick [the student] up and the parent—but [for others] that is confidential. So unless he told his colleagues it was never something that colleagues knew was going on.”

Nora noticed that four of the teachers who were abrasive to their students were also abrasive to their colleagues. Though Nora had the cooperation of the majority of teachers and good rapport with many families, the critical core of teachers disagreed with her on the management of students. They didn’t see their behaviors as harmful. Four of them began to recruit others in a campaign to show that the principal was biased and managed problems poorly. They claimed that Nora didn’t communicate well. Nora believed they had simply chosen to take her communications poorly. “Those are the ones that bully others, but I have never used the word bullying with any of these people; I’ve tried to address the problem by describing it and asking them to consider how we could respond differently.”

One of the abrasive teachers was also having serious trouble with instructional strategies. Nora worked closely with him, at times having to enlist assistance from another teacher or administrator to work on the evaluation process.

She continued to talk to the teachers about their management style with children. She wrote letters of reprimand. Parents who had approached the teachers had met with the same resistance. The disgruntled teachers wanted Nora to back them up and defend
them to the parents, but Nora felt that she could not do that. “The teachers were looking for my support for a particular style of working with the kids, but it was not working for the kids or their families.”

Nora had formal conversations in her office with one of the teachers “at least five times a year for a couple of years trying to get a handle on it. The other one, I had a number of conversations with her, especially about posting on Facebook, maybe three different times.” Nora remembered conversations with several other teachers in the group, also over a span of years.

The group kept agitating. Nora felt they were unhappy about everything. They created a Survey Monkey survey to collect stories of how Nora had failed in leadership, and later an anonymous letter was sent to the school board about her.

In reflection, Nora volunteered, “Yeah it was pretty painful. It was time for a change. We were in program improvement for four years. . . . I grew weary, because I felt ‘This group of people has talent. They have skill, all of them, and they need to be able to shine.’ For whatever reason, my being there kept the group of people stoked up. So it was time. The students and the teachers at that school needed to be able to succeed. I tried and couldn’t make a difference.”

Nora resigned. “I’m going to look for a job somewhere else. I’ll be teaching this next year, and thinking.”

I asked Nora how she was processing events of the past year. She answered, “I do chew on this. I don’t want to be a doormat and say [that what they did] was okay behavior, yet I don’t want to contribute to any lack of harmony in my district. While I was outside [just before the interview] chomping away at some bushes out there, I was
thinking about this whole thing. ‘So if they’re bringing negativity to the table, and I’m bringing negativity, the result is going to be negativity. Somebody’s got to bring positiveness and cooperativeness.’ Maybe it is me. Yet, these teachers, in particular, have used words to describe me as gullible. They said they could pretty much say and do what they wanted to do. So I don’t think I was too tough.”

Nora confided that as she reflects on the experience, there is limited opportunity to get helpful counsel: “I actually don’t get a chance to talk to too many people who have been through it. I know when I have talked to my colleagues (my inside group who know what I’ve been going through) they’ve basically been saying, ‘Stop trying to look at what you did wrong, because it wasn’t all about you.’ But you know, it is a [personal] crisis of some sort, a crisis of confidence [pause] and my competence. That’s how I support myself.”

Preparing to Intervene

Moving beyond the three narratives we’ll consider themes that became apparent in the interviews. Filling out the survey, principals had indicated that fear of a hostile response from the teacher was the most common inhibitor to intervention. Yet, 98.2% of the principals did intervene. Principals also shared how they pushed past the demotivating elements in order to take action.

Putting the students first

Surveyed principals (96.7% of them) had indicated that the students’ need for a respectful learning environment comes first. This theme was mirrored in the interviews. Carol explained, “We have to put the students first, because ultimately they need to be
happy and achieving in school and finish school and not become discouraged and drop out.” Many interviewed principals repeated that thought, phrasing it in one form or another.

Dealing with stress before dealing with the teacher

Some principals directly addressed the work of pushing through the anxiety and stress that can accompany confrontation. Carol gets courage from the thought that avoiding the confrontation is, after all, not really an option. She noted, “I think it will come back to bite me later if I don’t [address it]. And it saves me from getting a lot of parent complaints later on, which is worse.”

Focusing on the far side of the confrontation to gain personal resolve was also mentioned by Denise:

My stress is driving me more before I do it [confront the teacher] than after. Afterwards there might be some human resources implications. Or there could be a union meeting that needs to be called, because of the way I’ve handled it. So, there could be headaches afterwards, but the anxiety and angst is generally stronger before it happens. So once you have that conversation . . . it’s easier to deal with.

Raymond detailed his stress management behaviors: “When my stress is high I ride my motorcycle, I exercise, I try to get away from the job as much as possible during that time, you know, try to focus, try to spend more time with my wife.” Raymond mentioned that his wife has a clear understanding of the dynamics and stressors involved in educational work and is an excellent confidante. He feels that if he fails to manage his own stress, the teacher will hear the wrong message. What he wants them to hear is that he is working to help them become a better teacher. “If I’m stressed and I’m not portraying [my hope for them], then that’s not a good thing.”
Carol added to Raymond’s concern for the teacher by clarifying her priority:

My concern [is] for the student and also for the teacher. First for the student, but I always want to be supportive of my teachers. I don’t want to seem like I’m not supportive of them, but not at the cost of hurting students.

Using a model for comparison

To determine when to intervene, Carol uses a simple model based on the classrooms where her children have found success. She explained,

So I first think, “Would I want my own child in that classroom?” And it may seem kind of selfish, but I have three children, and I think of the classrooms that they were most successful in. And I think of how those teachers behaved and I look at the behavior of the current teacher and I try to determine whether the students in that class are successful or not successful because of the behavior of the teacher.

Investigation as preparation

Interviewed principals also mentioned the benefit of investigation and doing your homework as a way to make confrontation easier. Jordana explained several facets of investigation which included shuttle diplomacy:

Honestly, the first thing I do is talk to the teacher about the situation, because often the parent or the child has not talked to the teacher. They tend to fear some sort of retaliation, and they don’t go to the teacher. Or the parent has gone to the teacher, and they feel threatened by the teacher. So, I usually step in and talk to the teacher about the situation. . . . You may have one family having a difficult time and everybody else loves this teacher so you kind of investigate and be discerning and try to get to the root of the problem and try to deal with it directly. [It’s] the same way I deal with bullying on campus between students, you can’t ignore it. You have to confront it, and you have to deal with it.

Jordana claimed there are advantages to spending adequate time on investigation despite its downsides:

I think we’ve all made the knee jerk reactions and regretted it. So I am a bit more discerning and investigate things more thoroughly. Sometimes that creates frustration and anger in the parent that wants immediate action, but I have to make sure that I deal with it as fairly as I can.
Juan believes that adequately preparing helps him avoid looking aggressive to the teacher:

I’ve always made sure I do my homework ahead of time so that I have, at the very least, some sort of documentation (the student, the parent, or multiple sources) so that the teacher walks away knowing that I’m not picking on him. If there’s something I need to address with that teacher, I always make it a point to act in a professional way so I don’t become the bully.

Greater preparation when the stakes are high

Principals often mentioned that when they were facing particularly difficult interventions, they put extra effort into preparing. The extra effort generally paid off, but it did have a downside. The extra effort might take any of three forms. First, they increased prep time and asked for help. As the risk goes up, so does Opal’s prep time. She has learned from experience to spend whatever time is needed to be thoroughly prepared for the intervention. She also enlists coaches to help her think and talk through the intervention.

Second, they crossed all their t’s. One of Arvella’s biggest challenges was a teacher who entered the profession after retiring from a law practice. She confided, the difficult thing, I think, for all of us is that he is a retired attorney so we are going very slowly and carefully every step of the way to cross our t’s and dot our i’s, so that we’re very, very solid, which we should do no matter what. But it makes it extra antagonistic the way he approaches the situation.

Third, they tried to be brief and businesslike. Juan reflected for a moment on how his high-stakes interventions differed from the rest. He related that the teacher who elevated Juan’s level of anxiety was a social studies teacher who had gotten himself “in trouble quite a bit, but he was also the union rep so he knew how to navigate those waters.” Juan shared, “I chose my words very carefully, I did not do as much talking. I
was afraid that he would find something somewhere and twist those words around and use them in his favor against me.” So, Juan delivered the same message to the teacher that he would have in any other case, but the approach was very different: “I was a lot more relaxed with the less abrasive teacher than I was with this one. With him I was very, very businesslike without any small talk or chit chat. I kept my words very brief.”

A downside was that high anxiety and more careful preparation generally killed humor, and its absence dampened the outcome. Patrick shared that when his anxiety level is high it changes the way he confronts. With a good relationship and lower anxiety he uses humor “to lighten it a little bit because nobody likes to be reprimanded. Nobody likes those types of things, and when you have low anxiety you can handle that. When it’s high anxiety it’s a lot more business-like.”

The kind of relationship he has with the teacher also figures in. Patrick explained, We have situations where things go awry, and we can shut the door, and we have a good relationship, so we can speak honestly, and it will be taken care of, and we move on. Sometimes it goes really bad and you end up in the formal processes and the write-up stage and most definitely you try to put all of that together. . . . I think when you don’t know how it’s going to go or how they will react you kind of slow your words down and stop to think. You carefully choose each word that comes out of your mouth. It’s less personable and you try not to be somebody that’s attacking. Generally they’re not just abrasive behind doors, they’ll be abrasive in faculty meetings, out in public. And they make it very difficult and have no problem sharing what’s going on with you to everybody else.

He concluded by saying that you’re more likely to get the change you seek when anxiety is low and relationships are strong. But when anxiety is high and relationship is low, “You’re going to get into a procedural thing; very formalized even to the point where your direction is formalized to that individual.”
Garnering support

Before confronting the teacher, some principals mentioned contacting other key players, such as the superintendent, board chair, director of human resources, and the union representative or president. Glenn described this approach:

Having worked in the public school system, I had to work with unions and personnel law officers. What I would generally do if I had a bad situation with a teacher, really rough, I would circle the wagons so to speak by going and talking to the union representative, by talking to the personnel office, by talking to the people I needed to talk to. Then I’d go to [the abrasive teacher] and say what I needed to say. Then I’d say, ‘By the way, I talked to this person and this person and this person,’’ and basically what that would do is knock the legs out from underneath them because they had nowhere to go. I didn’t want multiple battles, I wanted one. So if you tell someone you did all your homework and this is where you are, it takes a bit of the fight out of them.

Yet, Patrick pointed out that contacting others in the system may backfire if they are more loyal to the teacher than to the principal. And Betty found that gaining her superintendent’s sympathy was not sufficient to override a union-dominated school board.

Fainthearted interveners

Principals bring a variety of visceral responses to their work. Some shared that their teachers saw them to be gullible, pushovers, easily influenced by the ones they are leading. Ursala shared candidly her effort to rein in an abrasive teacher without offending him. She continues to keep an open ear to the teacher and he often fills it with information counter to what she believes is happening. After some conferences with him she was confused about what had actually happened. She confided,

Some of the man’s behaviors are a little more offensive, so I’ve tried to sort of set some policies that don’t single him out, but when something comes up, I can say, “Here’s a way to solve it, so that we don’t get students embarrassed and angry.” So I’ve kind of done that in a more general way.
Ursala said one of her abrasive teachers is harder to deal with partly because he’s closer to her age and has more experience. Furthermore, she highlighted the paralyzing problem of confusion:

I tend to get kind of confused, when I’m dealing with him; like, “I thought you were picking on somebody, but the way you explained it, it doesn’t sound like you were,” you know. I sometimes get confused by the multiple tellings from various points of view.

Tari was quite open about her affective state when facing confrontations:

Oh, gosh, I die! No, your gut’s wrenching and I’m going, “Oh, am I dying?” you know? So yeah, I get very anxious. But it’s not reflected in my discussion with the person. I just, I tend to internalize it a lot.

Tari shared that when the stakes are very high and she is extremely anxious, her challenge is keeping my own temper in check and not feeding into their anger and not starting to yell and scream at them. You know, just maintaining a calm demeanor and not having the situation escalate into where people are standing outside my door listening in, and saying, “Ooooo.” Just maintaining my professionalism.

But just like the other principals, Tari described her response to high anxiety as being greater preparation. On the day of the confrontation she is in “a flurry of anxiety all day.” Most of her day is spent in reviewing documentation and in emotional preparation.

Everything else seems to kind of slip by the wayside in anticipation of the discussion. With the low anxiety confrontation you can handle it first thing in the morning, a matter of five minutes, you know. “I’ll check in with you. Keep me posted.” Those [teachers] tend to also be the ones where you have a good working relationship and they really want to improve.

Opal believes that coaching can help a reluctant principal. Reflecting on how anxiety level changes her approach to intervention Opal shared,

Well I’m doing an intervention with a teacher because I’m so [pause] I’m kind of a pushover. I rely almost totally on goodwill. I’m very, very relational, so when I am in a tough conversation with a teacher I’ll get coaching. I have good friends and sometimes colleagues that I lay the problem out and I, I almost script it out. Almost.
One time, when I was letting a teacher go, I *did* script a conversation because it’s so difficult for me, you know the really, really tough conversations are very hard for me.

Opal realizes that it is not this way for all administrators. She remembered a superintendent with whom she once worked:

I had a boss once when my head custodian had done something really egregious. My superintendent was, “I can’t wait!” He was just all psyched up. I loved this superintendent. Great guy, but when he had a good reprimand coming up it was just like juice for his fire. . . . I know there are people out there that got into administration because that’s what gets them up in the morning, those tough conversations that move things forward. Not me! “No, thank you!”

Opal is honest about the mental and emotional cost to her when she has to leave her preferred style of interaction. She realizes that she can confront when it’s needed, but it takes a large amount of preparation time:

I am the opposite. It can drain me like a bathtub, so I’ve got to get support and coaching, and I have to really establish my intention. Then I have the conversation. They always go well, but I think it’s because I’m prepared and I’m not *as* anxious, but I’m still *very* anxious, because I just really rely on positive relations.

Opal was very clear that as her anxiety goes up, so does her time spent in preparation. She can spend over 10 hours preparing for a 20-40-minute confrontation. She realizes this need and has learned to forestall confrontations until she can be adequately prepared:

My effectiveness is in conversation, but my least effective conversations are confrontational ones that I haven’t prepared for. Now I’m good at saying “It’s not the best time to talk about this.” That’s taken me a lot of years of my career to learn to say, “Not now.” I just know I’m not good on the fly in a tough conversation.

**Intervening**

Principals shared their wisdom on intervening. Four themes emerged. Principals asserted that taking action was essential. So was acting in a professional manner. They felt it was important for the principal to know how much time he or she would allow for
the teacher to demonstrate improvement. The principals also pointed out that professional
development and coaching did not always cause the teacher to improve. Those themes
will be explored in this section.

Be sure to act

Tari has been principal for 7 years, and works in a K-5 public school that serves
about 400 students with less than 30 teachers. She has removed six teachers during her
years, but has had perhaps 80 less formal interventions. She is quick to step in if she sees
a problem. She believes that the rest of the faculty is quietly appreciative when she acts to
keep the school a good place for children.

Tari remembered the details of one intervention, noting that direct and swift
response on Tari’s part may have helped the teacher be more circumspect:

She was a special education teacher and she had kind of a rough group, but she also
wasn’t the most effective teacher. At one point after an assembly, one of the children
was acting up, and he was running into the bathroom. She didn’t want him to run into
the bathroom, so she kind of pushed him. There were witnesses to it. One of the
 moms of the child’s friend came in and made a statement. I had kids making
statements, too. The teacher was not 100% stable, at least she wasn’t at the time. And
so, working with our district office, we wrote it up, and gave her a three-day
suspension. I think it was effective in that it kind of woke her up. And she felt bad
about it, and she knew she’d made a mistake. At the end of the year she wrote a
whole letter explaining it, which technically I didn’t have to read, and I didn’t. I just
put it into her file, and that was that. She was just a lot more receptive after the
incident, so that was good. She watched herself.

Tari explained that the rest of the faculty noticed there was a change in the
teacher’s behavior, and they were glad for that. She also mentioned that she had gotten
rid of teachers in the past, so her warnings were taken seriously. Tari believes that taking
action adds to a principal’s credibility:

I think most of the teachers that are doing the right thing appreciate you for taking
action rather than just going, “Oh. Oh well.” You know, sometimes you have to go,
“Oh well,“ because you know that no matter what you do it’s not going to get any better. But on the other hand, you know when they see that things do happen, it just makes you much more credible.

**Acting professionally**

Several principals talked about the need to be professional during intervention. They shared a variety of strategies that helped them maintain professionalism. The first one is suspending personal preferences. Jordana, a principal of an independent school, has had to suspend not only her own preferences, but her knowledge of the school owner’s preferences. Jordana has received complaints about one of the teachers who is favored by the owner of the school. Jordana confides,

You know, I have to be really gentle about how I approach a teacher. I think that makes a huge difference. Regardless of my personal feelings—we all like some teachers better than others—I put them aside and just focus on the problem. That usually helps me deal with it professionally and with kindness and compassion. I always try to put myself into the other person’s situation, and ask “How would I want to be dealt with?” It would be very difficult for the owner to let the teacher go, because of the relationship there. And I’m aware of that, but at the same time I can’t just ignore the problem, because that’s not helping that teacher.

I asked Jordana, “Is that something you’d be willing to lose your job over?” With no hesitation Jordana answered,

I’ve lost my job over weirder things. You have to act in an ethical matter, and I think the owner of the school understands that I have the school’s best interest at heart. I’m a compassionate person and I think she would understand if it came to something like that.

The second strategy for maintaining professionalism is being matter-of-fact and non-personal. Juan, the principal who said he didn’t want to come across as being a bully, described what *acting professionally* means to him:

The first thing I do is that I do not come across as aggressive. I simply state the purpose of the meeting. I show them what I have in terms of why we’re meeting, and I listen to them. I let them speak. At the end there’s a game plan, and we’ll make
those improvements. I do check back and make it a point to be in the classroom, obviously. If it’s a lot worse, I have to document the person by a letter write-up depending on what the offense was. Fortunately, I’ve never been in a situation with the police involved. But if I had to go that direction I would do it in a professional manner. I’ve written up many teachers about their behavior, but I’ve never done it in a way where I’m bullying them, or with an axe to grind.

A third strategy Raymond calls having hard conversations. Raymond has been trained in *Having Hard Conversations* (Abrams, 2009) and credits that training with making his confrontations easier to conduct. Raymond explains,

I was always kind of afraid that she’d blow up on me, and I didn’t want that kind of confrontation. So, how to put the words so that she would understand exactly what I wanted to happen? That’s where my training in *Having Hard Conversations* really helped me with two things: Number one, knowing now that the situation was not going to go away unless I dealt with it; and then number two, letting her know that I was not trying to discipline her or evaluate her in any way. I was trying to make her life easier, so that she could work better with the students and the other staff. And I tried to be real clear with specific ways and things that she could work on to help her improve.

Raymond said that part of the training stresses specificity:

You have to be very specific: “On this specific day, I saw you do this specific action and that is unacceptable at our school. It’s an agreed upon protocol that we will not behave that way, or treat children that way, or other staff members that way.” So when you start getting specific, saying the day, the time, the incident, exactly what happened, there’s really not much she can do to deny it, because it’s pretty clear.

A fourth strategy is to maintain both policy and relationship. Patrick felt that the principal must tend both school policy and interpersonal connections. Policy cannot be ignored, but relationship helps temper the teacher’s reaction to any correction. Raymond noted,

Sometimes rules are broken which are contractual, and those are instances where you have to the follow the book regardless of the relationship. If they have violated something that is articulated in the contract, something that is in the policy that dictates a certain response [from the principal] then in those situations you’ve got to do it. You don’t get a choice. But how you handle that person determines how well it goes over in the end.
Meeting with a third party is another strategy for maintaining professionalism.

Glenn believes this is advisable when the confrontation could be adversarial:

I try to look at as many different options and approaches as I can use. One of the things that I do if I have an abrasive teacher (a teacher that I would refer to as “out of control,” whether abrasive or nuts) would be to confront them in the presence of a third party. And the reason I do that is because the person can’t leave the meeting and tell the story separate from what actually occurred.

Time limits

Fred expressed that time limits are important, but can be flexible. He believes that 2 years is not an unreasonable amount of time to work with a teacher. “But it wouldn’t be two years if the stuff they were doing was so egregious that it needed more immediate intervention,” Fred was quick to add.

The two years I’ve spent [with this teacher] is because there’s been small growth, and they had not gone too far across the line. He’s gone far enough that I needed to do something, but he hasn’t really pushed it so far that I feel like I’ve got to fire him.

Glenn agreed, saying, “There comes a point when it doesn’t matter whether the teacher can’t or won’t. It’s just time to ‘Get outa Dodge.’”

Sometimes training and coaching fail

Arvella points out that she has provided a lot of support to one abrasive science teacher who is very willing to try new things. Even though he gets angry he will try new strategies. However, her abrasive history teacher is unwilling. Arvella remarks, “He’s actually working on his master’s right now. He’s getting all the current strategies. We’ll have long conversations about it, but it hasn’t changed his classroom practice.”

Arvella knows his study is not for the acquisition of better practices. “It’s very clear that he’s doing it for the pay raise, and apparently he’s annoying everyone in his
university classes, as well. It's very much a part of his personality. But he’s getting support. He’s getting training. He’s getting coaching one on one, and it’s just not changing his practice.”

Arvella is considering changing her strategy by putting the teacher on the PAR (Peer Assistance and Review) program and having a one-on-one coach that is not confidential. She describes it as a “letting me know what is going on and helping with this process of documentation” type of coaching. “Ultimately,” she says, it will result in “making it very uncomfortable for him, because he’s being monitored every step of the way.”

Additional Strategies

Principals also shared strategies they had used outside the specific intervention in order to increase the chance of success. Three such strategies were: (a) trying to understand the cause, (b) using parents as leverage, and (c) providing early intervention to increase self-efficacy in younger teachers.

Trying to understand the cause

Mirtha feels she has done well in building rapport with her teachers and she does not want to jeopardize that by becoming highly directive. However, she has had to confront two of the teachers so often that she is afraid she will lose her connection with them. This causes her to muse, “Thinking about that for the upcoming year, I’d like to know, ‘What is the root of this? Why are you so resistant?’ With the one teacher I have good solid evidence that her instruction is not effective.” She feels that understanding the source of the problem would help her fine-tune her efforts, providing help right where it’s
needed.

Using parents as leverage

Principals also mentioned the need to empower parents. Latino parents, especially when their personal history with formal schooling is limited, are more likely to send children to school without realizing that the school is there to serve them. They don’t understand that they can ask for a conversation about their child’s well-being. Betty saw this awareness was increasing among her Latino families as she was terminated. Some teachers find parent questions to be threatening, yet some parents feel timid about speaking to a person who has more education than they.

Santiago is aware of this and works hard to help parents see that they are part of the school. He wants them to know that if they hear a disturbing report from their child, they have the right to raise the question. He believes that parents who are more involved with their child’s well-being can help leverage a situation and push the school to improve classroom climate. He values this and describes how he reaches out to the families:

We continue to empower the parents by calling them proactively and saying, “Hey listen, your child came in and reported the following. I want you to know that that’s not tolerated here, and we understand this, and we are working on it. Please call me if your son or daughter reports that something else inappropriate happens in the classroom.”

Providing early intervention to increase self-efficacy in younger teachers

Principals also mentioned the slim window that is available for either helping younger teachers or protecting the profession. With only 2 years needed for reaching tenure, the principals in Raymond’s district have agreed to either remediate or terminate young teachers before they can reach tenure. Vera also ties to intervene with the new
teachers, and believes intervention can increase their self-efficacy:

I found that if you could catch those teachers early and really work on their sense of ability to reach all students and offer differentiation and provide support, that you could sometimes get them to a place where some of that [abrasive behavior] would die down. And sometimes you only had to point the behaviors out to them, and they could learn replacement behaviors while they were developing their own sense of self.

Summary of Intervention

Principals reported using instructive interventions most frequently (71.3%) followed by cautionary (57.8%) and supportive (40.4%). The use of negative consequences was lower with 17.5% of the principals reporting that they used restrictive types of intervention, and 15.6% reporting having removed a teacher. This doesn’t mean 15.6% of the abrasive teachers in the sample were removed, but it does mean that in the 275 interventions that principals chose to report, 43 of the abrasive teachers were removed from the classroom either by the principal’s choice or their own.

Principals of teachers who are unionized used substantially more interventions than principals whose teachers are not unionized. That trend was consistent through the first four types of intervention, showing that an average of 9% more of the principals of unionized teachers used supportive, instructive, cautionary and restrictive interventions than did principals of non-unionized teachers. However, there was a markedly different picture in the use of punitive interventions where use by principals of non-unionized teachers was 20% higher within their group than among their unionized counterparts.

This disparity was not seen when comparisons were made on the basis of the principals’ sex. Men generally reported using only slightly more interventions than did women.
Interview participants shared their experiences of intervention. Three narratives were reproduced: (a) Betty, who was fired along with her assistant principal after attempting to direct a belligerent teacher, (b) June who removed a teacher from the classroom despite protest, and (c) Nora who resigned in frustration, ending a failed multi-year effort to change the behaviors of a core of resistant teachers.

In coding the comments of all principals, emerging topics were clustered around three themes: (a) preparing to intervene, (b) intervening, and (c) additional strategies that have been used outside direct intervention. Each will be summarized in the following paragraphs.

**Preparing to intervene.** One or more principals referred to the following practices as ways to prepare for intervention: (a) keeping a focus on the needs of the student, (b) dealing with personal anxiety level before opening the conversation with the abrasive teachers, (c) evaluating the current situation by comparing it to a well-run classroom, (d) investigating the situation and the potential courses of action, (e) increasing preparation time when the stakes are high (especially focused on gathering first-hand accounts and becoming familiar with the necessary protocols), (f) garnering support from those who may be needed, and (g) the use of informal coaching and role-playing/rehearsing especially if conflict is personally difficult.

**Intervening.** One or more principals shared the following pieces of experiential knowledge regarding intervention: (a) be sure to act, (b) act in a professional manner, (c) have a sense of time limits for teacher improvement, and (d) understand that training and coaching don’t always help the teacher quit being abrasive.

**Additional strategies.** A few additional thoughts were offered on how to increase
the likelihood of change by using strategies outside direct intervention. They were: (a) understanding the deeper needs that are driving the abrasiveness, (b) empowering parents to speak up when the classroom is not working for their child, and (c) solving the problem before the teacher attains tenure, either by developing or removing new teachers.

**Outcome (RQ5)**

Research Question 5 (RQ5): What were the outcomes of the principals’ interventions? On the survey, principals were asked to select one of five outcomes of their intervention: (a) things got worse, (b) it made no difference, (c) teacher is doing better, (d) teacher is gone, and (e) teacher is doing well. They were also allowed to opt out by declaring that it was still too early to tell. This section will present the outcomes by looking at: the principals’ perceptions of intervention effect, their perception of school stakeholder satisfaction, the correlations between effect and satisfaction, the impact of the presence of a teacher union on intervention effect and stakeholder satisfaction, the principals’ stories of outcome, and their thoughts on working with teacher unions. The parenthetical RQ number at the end of each subsection title identifies the research sub-question that is being addressed.

**Principal Perception of Intervention Effect (RQ 5a)**

RQ 5a: From the principal’s perspective, what was the effectiveness of the intervention as judged by the degree to which the abrasive teacher’s behavior improved, or by the replacement of the teacher? One way to test this question is by looking at the frequency of principal reports of the five intervention effects (see Table 45). The first
item on the list describes an outcome that is pending. Those responses were not used in further testing.

Table 45

Frequencies for Effects of Intervention (N =275)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Intervention</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too Early to Tell</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things Got Worse</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Difference</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Improved</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Is Doing Well</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Is Gone</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Due to rounding, percentages do not total 100.

Looking at the frequencies, principal interventions met with no improvement about a fourth of the time (26.9%), and the situation did improve nearly three out of four times (73.1%). However, nearly a third of those times improvement was made by removing the teacher. Looking at it another way, a teacher was removed or chose to leave almost as often as things didn’t improve, so nearly half of the interventions resulted in no improvement or in stressful and labor-intensive removals. As Opal, one of the interviewed principals, remarked,

Every principal who knows anything knows that if you’re going to fire a tenured teacher you need to have nothing else to do for a school year at least. Nothing else to do. And who’s got that at this job? It’s a full-time job without that.

Figure 12 provides a quick visual representation of the intervention outcomes as perceived by the principals in this study.
Principal Perception of Stakeholder Satisfaction (RQ 5b)

RQ 5b: In the principal’s opinion after the intervention, what was the level of satisfaction among each of six school stakeholders: the targeted student(s), the family(ies) of the targeted student(s), the abrasive teacher, the rest of the faculty, the principal him/herself, and the broader school community? The “broader school community” includes news media, social media, and “the talk around town.”

Result: A means test calculated the various average levels of satisfaction (see Table 46). Looking at the totals of means for each column, it is clear that the abrasive teacher is generally perceived by the principal to be the least satisfied stakeholder.

Perceived Effect Correlated With Perceived Satisfaction (RQ 5c)

RQ 5c: Did perceived intervention effects correlate to perceived satisfaction among school stakeholders?  \( H_a \) 5c: Perceived stakeholder satisfaction scores will be positively correlated with the effect of the intervention as perceived by the principal.
Table 46

Stakeholders Mean Satisfaction Scores by Effect of Intervention as Perceived by Principals (N = 275)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect of Intervention</th>
<th>Targeted Student(s)</th>
<th>Family(ies) of Targeted Student(s)</th>
<th>Abrasive Teacher</th>
<th>Rest of the Faculty</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Broader Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Things Got Worse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 2.55</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 1.44</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing Changed</td>
<td>M 2.89</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 44</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 1.15</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Is Doing Better</td>
<td>M 3.54</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 114</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.72</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Is Gone</td>
<td>M 4.29</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 56</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.76</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Is Doing Well</td>
<td>M 4.2</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.63</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>M 3.57</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 235</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 1.00</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Result: A bivariate correlation showed a strong positive correlation between perceived effect of intervention and perceived stakeholder satisfaction (see Table 47). This is visible in the two negative effects—things got worse and nothing changed—which were negatively correlated with satisfaction. When a teacher leaves or begins doing well the effect on the classroom is positive. These effects were positively correlated with satisfaction. Therefore, the research hypothesis was retained.

Principals perceived clear patterns in satisfaction based on effect. When the situation worsened or stayed the same, every stakeholder was perceived to be dissatisfied.
Table 47

*Bivariate Correlations Between Stakeholder Satisfaction and the Effect of Intervention as Perceived by the Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Scores</th>
<th>Things Got Worse</th>
<th>Nothing Changed</th>
<th>Teacher Is Doing Better</th>
<th>Teacher Is Gone</th>
<th>Teacher Is Doing Well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average of All Stakeholders</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
<td>-.39**</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Student(s)</td>
<td>-.21**</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family(ies) of Targeted Student(s)</td>
<td>-.18**</td>
<td>-.34**</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td>.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive Teacher</td>
<td>-.17**</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>-.34**</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the Faculty</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>-.34**</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $\alpha = .0071$.

*p < .050. **p < .010.

When the teacher was removed or chose to leave, everyone was perceived to be satisfied except the abrasive teacher. When the teacher began doing well, all were perceived to be satisfied. However, in the middle column of the table—*teacher is doing better*—only the abrasive teacher was perceived to be satisfied with a consistency that reached statistical significance. And principals, as a group, reported their own level of satisfaction as being higher when the teacher was removed or chose to leave than when the teacher improved.

Teacher Union and Perceived Effect of Intervention (RQ 5d)

RQ 5d: Did the presence of a teacher union predict the perceived effectiveness of intervention? $H_a$ 5d: The presence of a teacher union will predict the perceived effect of intervention. This hypothesis was selected due to conflicting ideas about teacher unions. The popular press carries editorials about the unions making school improvement very
difficult by protecting marginal teachers. However, some principals with whom I had
talked prior to the study, saw the union as an ally when working to upgrade teacher
professionalism. Therefore, the hypothesis was non-directional.

Result: Linear regression showed that the presence of a teacher union does predict
lower scores ($R^2 = 0.10$, $F_{1,261} = 28.78$, $p < .001$), and the table of coefficients shows $B = -0.67, p < .001$. This means that the presence of a teacher union negatively predicts the
perceived effect of outcome. Therefore, the research hypothesis was retained.

A two-tailed cross-tabulation calculated Pearson’s $\chi^2 = 36.36$, $OR = 34.44$, $p < .001$
(see Table 48). If one used Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup $\alpha$
would equal .010.

Table 48

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Effect of Intervention</th>
<th>Were the teachers unionized?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things Got Worse</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2$^a$ 3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing Changed</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Is Doing Better</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Is Gone</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Is Doing Well</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Percentages are figured on the $n$ of the appropriate union/non-union sample.

$^a$The first number in the *Observed* cells shows frequency.

$^b$Boldface is provided to emphasize the pattern of effect according to union status.
Another way to view the differences between perceived effects in union vs. non-union schools is by comparing frequencies of perceived effects. Figure 13 presents that comparison and uses percentages rather than counts.

The contrast between the effect of intervention as perceived by the principals is striking. Principals of unionized teachers more often reported the situation getting worse, not changing, or the teacher doing better. Principals of non-unionized teachers more often reported the teacher leaving the classroom or doing well as a teacher.

![Perceptions of Intervention Effect per Union Status](image)

*Figure 13. Percentage of interventions that ended in each of five perceived outcomes compared by presence of a teacher union.*

While the presence of a teacher union appeared to make a noticeable difference in the intervention effects as perceived by the principals, the contrast in responses, when compared by sex of the principal, was much smaller (see Figure 14).
Teacher Union and Perceived Stakeholder Satisfaction (RQ 5e)

RQ 5e: Did the presence of a teacher union predict the principals’ perceptions of school stakeholders’ level of satisfaction with the outcomes of the intervention? Measures of both stakeholder satisfaction and effect of intervention were based on principal perspective.

Hₐ 5e: The presence of a teacher union will predict the perceived levels of satisfaction among the school’s stakeholders. This hypothesis was non-directional.

Result: Linear regression showed that the presence of a teacher union does predict lower principal perception of satisfaction scores ($R^2 = 0.03$, $F_{1, 271} = 8.39$, $p = .004$), and the table of coefficients shows $B = -0.32$, $p < .004$. This means that the presence of a teacher union predicted lower average satisfaction among the school’s stakeholders. Therefore, the research hypothesis was retained.

A bivariate correlation comparing presence of a teacher union with the

Figure 14. Percentage of interventions that ended in each of five perceived effects and compared by sex of principal.
satisfaction scores of six stakeholders showed significant negative correlations in all
cases except the abrasive teacher (see Table 49). The correlations also show that the
principals perceive little similarity between the abrasive teacher’s level of satisfaction
and the other stakeholders’ levels of satisfaction.

Table 49

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Presence of Teacher Union and Level of Satisfaction for Six Stakeholders*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Presence of Teacher union</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Satisfaction for:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Targeted Student(s)</td>
<td>-.17**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Family(ies) of Targeted Student(s)</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>.81**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Abrasive Teacher</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rest of the Faculty</td>
<td>-.18**</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Principal</td>
<td>-.21**</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.58**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Broader Community</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.59**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $\alpha = .0041$. *$p < .050$. **$p < .010$.*

A series of means tests was run in order to better understand the differences
between the principal’s perceptions of stakeholder satisfaction in schools where teachers
were unionized compared to schools where the teachers were not unionized. All but one
of the means tests of union versus non-union satisfaction scores attained statistical
significance in a two-tailed test at $p < .010$. The one exception was the means test
comparing the scores of abrasive teachers ($p = .066$). The principals of non-unionized
teachers perceived higher levels of satisfaction throughout the school’s stakeholders,
except for abrasive teachers. Figure 15 presents the data more graphically.
Figure 15. Mean perceived satisfaction scores of six school stakeholders comparing principals’ ratings from unionized schools to ratings from non-unionized schools.

The means tests were rerun comparing sex of principal (see Figure 16). Sex of the principal made less difference in the reporting of satisfaction scores than did the presence

Figure 16. Mean perceived satisfaction scores of six school stakeholders comparing perceptions of female and male principals.
of a teacher union. The sex comparison of mean satisfaction scores attained statistical significance in a two-tailed test for three stakeholders: abrasive teacher \((p = .012)\), faculty \((p = .019)\), principal \((p = .004)\). Not statistically significant: student, family, and community.

Principals’ Experiences of Outcomes

After the survey stage ended, 21 principals were interviewed. They fleshed out some of the themes already suggested in the survey data, and they shared their perspectives on teacher reactions, life after the intervention, and the advice they would give to rookie principals.

Teacher Reactions

Principals reflected on the reaction of abrasive teachers when they were confronted. The teachers’ reactions were not always predictable. Principals experienced everything from apathy to compliance, and from escalated hostility to despair. Raymond observed,

Most generally . . . people need someone to show them what they’re doing, because they don’t see it. And then when it’s pointed out, they really don’t need any help making a change, because they realize what they need to do to manage the class without being abrasive. See, I spend a lot of time with my teachers, working on classroom management, . . . so it’s already been pre-coached; if I could put it that way.

Raymond’s experience fits the findings of Crawshaw (2010): “To put it bluntly, these individuals were clueless, they were profoundly lacking in psychological insight into the impact of their behavior” (p. 62).

Contrarily, Glenn said he experienced hostility from a reprimanded teacher until the teacher realized Glenn was not going to change his expectations. Only then did the
teacher begin to modify her behavior to match the school’s culture.

Arvella related a similar memory. She had reprimanded a teacher who was accustomed to the previous principal’s verbal approach. The intervention started well enough,

but the moment I said I was going to be documenting it and putting a copy in his file, he exploded and started attacking me, not physically but definitely verbally, and I had a witness, I had the assistant principal with me, because we knew it was going to be that kind of a meeting. It got to be such a strong verbal attack. That was the biggest nightmare meeting. After that I was prepared. I did my homework, and I was ready every step of the way. That was the one that really took me by surprise.

At times a principal may find him/herself dealing with sharply contrasting reactions from two teachers concurrently. However, it is not always possible to predict the final result based on the teachers’ initial reactions. Juan recounted how one teacher needed little correction, but the other presented much higher risk of blow up. With the first teacher the behavior was corrected and the principal’s relationship with the teacher was soon normalized. With the higher-risk teacher, the outcome was different.

“Ironically,” Juan mused, “I [got] a higher level of respect from him, the more abrasive teacher.” Juan felt he may have earned the more volatile teacher’s respect “by having the courage to match him and put him in check. Maybe other administrators didn’t do that, but he was more conversational with me [after the intervention].”

However, Patrick asserted he is still paying for intervening. It’s been a year and a half, and the teacher has not changed, nor forgotten. With the protection of tenure, backed by the unions, teachers can remain unresponsive for a long time. Like Patrick, Santiago also remembered with increasing agitation a teacher who showed indifference to the principal’s requests for a change of behavior:

He saved his career, but it was the union protecting him to the hilt. I mean, we had to
have a meeting with the assistant superintendent of HR, the union president, and they
got to yelling and screaming at everybody. It was bad. He was going to be suspended
from work, but the union fought it off successfully. And the guy? Nothing happened.
But I mean, he was written up, but nothing happened. Letters of reprimand, I mean,
he [pause] the guy’s file was four inches thick, man! And he was going, “Oh yeah,
write me up. Who cares? Everybody else has.”

Principals have also encountered unexpected responses. One surveyed principal
wrote about a teacher who was rude and disrespectful to students and parents. The
principal witnessed her ignoring bullying behavior in her classroom, then referring to the
bullied student as “that little fucker” as she talked with another student. The principal
called her into the office and presented the facts of what he had observed along with
concerns from a parent phone call the day before. She yelled at the principal calling him a
“faggot.” Staff outside the closed door heard the language. He placed her on paid leave
for the following day. When the superintendent became involved, she refused to meet
with the principal:

The superintendent told her she did not have that right and that she would meet or
would be placed on further suspension. She was also advised to bring in her union
representative but refused. She came in and denied she had done anything wrong,
including yelling at me. When it was pointed out that the secretaries heard her yell at
me through the door, including calling me a “faggot,” she simply quit. She wrote out
“I quit! - Jane Doe” and walked out the door, never seen again. (Respondent #1632)

Tari also related an unexpected teacher reaction. It was during her first
intervention, and the teacher was not defensive, but despairing:

He’d come in my office and he’d be sobbing, just crying. This was like his third
school. He kept being moved around, so I said, “You know, you can’t go back.” So I
got him into Kaiser to get some help. Then I said, “I think what you need to do is be a
substitute teacher so that you get more grounded. You don’t have the responsibility of
the classroom, you may pick up some techniques, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.”
And he goes, “You’re absolutely right.” And he never even signed up for substitute
teaching, but it was just like, he’d been doing it for nine years and every moment was
like a hell for him and rather than get out of it, people kept pushing him out.

I asked Tari, “Where do you think the sobbing was coming from?” She thought
for a moment and replied,

I don’t know. It was freaky. I think he was in such anguish and felt like such a failure because he was a totally ineffective teacher. He couldn’t control the class. People ran roughshod over him and he couldn’t communicate a lesson. It was a disaster. So I’d call him in and we’d talk and he’d start crying. . . . But I felt really good about helping him leave the profession because it would have torn him up after a while, more so than it already did.

Tari felt good about helping the teacher leave a profession, but not just because he was in such pain. She had a darker foreboding:

He had the potential for becoming truly abusive, because he felt powerless. You know, these were fourth-grade boys who were not petite and they’re basically really nice kids, but when they smell blood they’ll go after it. The whole potential was there for disaster.

The reason interventions unfold so differently may reside in varied human nature. Henk believes it “really just depends on the teacher.” Carol explained that the more hostile responses may be “because when they’re brought into a room, and they think their job is on the line, they get defensive.” Fred broadens that thought to indicate that the rest of the faculty may also be responding to a sense of threat:

If you touch the wrong nerve with the teaching force, they get together as a group, and it becomes negative. It’s when you touch the wrong nerve. There are other things that they don’t get involved with. But there’s a certain type of nerve.

Fred believes that issues surrounding student behavior can be that nerve. “So if you’re criticizing a teacher for being too tough, and [the rest of the faculty] want to back the teacher, you can end up with a fight on your hands.”

Though some teachers welcome help out of the profession, as was noted by Tari, and some are quickly compliant, as shared by Raymond and Juan, many teachers respond with defensiveness, hostility or passive aggression. This reflects the TAD Dynamic (Crawshaw, 2010) since the abrasive teachers, and even the rest of the faculty, were
responding to threat as expressed by Carol and Fred.

**Life After Intervening**

Interventions cause ripples that go beyond the abrasive teachers’ reactions. Also affected is the rest of the school community, particularly the greater faculty and even the principals themselves. Principals shared that though the faculty may take the side of the abrasive teacher, they may also be *relieved* when the principal confronts the teacher.

Raymond remembered the rest of the faculty as being very satisfied with the intervention he described:

> The other teachers were relieved, because parents would come to them and complain about the [abrasive] teacher, and their students in the classroom did the same. And [the other teachers] always felt like they were having to defend her. And occasionally she would bite their heads off in the lounge, or staff meetings or whatever. So when her behavior improved, I think everybody felt a little happier.

Nora also pointed out that a good number of the abrasive teachers she has worked with were abrasive to colleagues as well as to their students. This agrees with the quantitative data already reviewed that showed increased satisfaction from the rest of the faculty when the abrasive teacher was disciplined.

But beyond the teacher and the rest of the faculty, there was an impact on the principals themselves. Again, the effects were varied. Some principals saw improvement even though it might not have been as much as they had hoped for. Some principals were frustrated at being unable to effect the needed change. June felt relieved to be able to bring in a more competent teacher. Nora resigned, feeling frustrated and defeated. And Betty and her assistant principal were fired. A principal who intervenes is taking a calculated risk.
Advice for Rookies

Eight principals reflected on the things they had learned in their past interventions with abrasive teachers. They stated their learnings in the form of advice to colleagues who might be facing their first intervention. To preserve the tenor of each principal’s advice, a synopsis of each participant’s wisdom is presented in the eight subsections below. Each subsection has been labeled according to the speaker. In Chapter 5, the eight collections have been coded and grouped into common themes in order to provide a synthesis of their ideas.

Arvella

Arvella suggested role-playing, even practicing in front of a mirror. Without having done that, she became stumped. “I took my think time and used silence and got through it, but there were a few directions that that conversation went that I had not expected. I had not dealt with someone so difficult.” Looking back, she wishes she had sat down with an HR administrator or the one who handles the district’s uniform complaints process. She feels they could have helped her anticipate some of the twists and turns of the conversation, and she would have been prepared to handle them more smoothly.

Carol

Carol advised that the principal work to establish a good relationship with the problematic teacher. “Bring them in. Find out what’s going on in their lives. See if there’s any way you can help.” However, she also said, “Tell them in a kind way what you are seeing. Be open with them, but also be encouraging.” She advised setting goals with
them, sending them to training, having them observe other teachers, and watching to see if the teacher changes. If not, then ask a third person to be present as you talk with them again. Provide peer advising or mentoring, and if needed, an action plan. After many steps, and despite the focus on relationship building, Carol is clear: “I definitely wouldn’t keep a toxic teacher.”

Denise

Denise advised getting as much firsthand knowledge as possible. “Watch for signs of abrasive behavior, such as, belittling comments to or about students and even colleagues and parents or repeated complaints from students.” Denise positions herself to gather personal observations. “Sometimes I’ll visit the classroom next door and hang out for a while, and if it’s a yeller or a screamer, I hear it.”

Denise would also tell principals to follow through on all concerns.

When students or parents bring you concerns, follow up every time. Bring it to the teacher’s attention and tell them it needs to stop. Begin with the lowest level to correct the problem and proceed on up. Start with conversation, “A parent called me (or emailed) to say this. What’s your take?” Always. Don’t wait until it gets big, address it.

Fred

Fred would coach principals to get a definite statement from whoever reports the problem. This gives the principal facts which can be taken to the teacher: “Look, this has been brought to my attention. I have some concerns. Please respond.” Fred says,

Talk in a brainstorming kind of way, “Is this the approach you’re wanting? Are you accomplishing anything?” Start off that way, and eventually get around to the values you are trying to put forth and that “this is not the way we’re going to do it here. I understand what you’re trying to do, but we’ve got to use a different approach.”
Glenn

Glenn, who currently leads a church-sponsored school and has spent years as a public school principal, advised that the principal make frequent, random visits to the classroom, even twice in one period, at times. Glenn uses a form on which he gives the teacher feedback about the visit. If he sees a concern, that too goes on the form and he later asks for a response.

Glenn also advised asking students academically focused questions during the visit—“What are you doing today? What is the teacher expecting of you today?”—to get a feel for the classroom climate from the students’ point of view.

If the teacher becomes rattled by the frequent visits and asks why, Glenn says, Well I’m hearing rumors that there are some problems and the best thing for me to do is to come in here and see what’s going on. Then if I see things that validate those rumors we’ll have a conversation about it.

Nora

Nora said the principal needs to develop the right verbiage before talking to the teacher. The verbiage would include articulation of the school’s mission, and questions of how to provide that for the students. “Keep bringing it back to that question. ‘Don’t we want a rich environment in which students feel safe? So how do we produce that?’ It’s important to listen, and it’s important to be clear.”

Nora would also advise, “You can’t let it go. It won’t go away on its own. If you’re suspecting there’s an issue you need to bring it up. Get a conversation going around it. Just be careful how you word that conversation.” Nora said it was most helpful to her to have that conversation in advance with a person who was helping her think through the problem. This helped her become clear on the thoughts and words to express.
She believes in not talking *at* teachers, but talking *with* teachers. “I would tell rookie principals, ‘That synergy that you’re expecting in the classroom, that needs to be there between you and the teachers, as well.’”

Finally, Nora advises that the principal fully understand the steps that will be needed if the problem moves beyond the conversation stage. She said this is where the work gets hard, but even so, she maintains that throughout the process, “you have to assume that the teachers have the best intentions and they *want* to be successful with the kids.”

Patrick

Patrick, who is currently both a principal and superintendent, said he would talk with the rookie principal about what was going on, what they thought of the behavior, etc. Then, he would help the principal clarify the issue and be prepared to lead the abrasive teacher through a series of questions that would bring them to see the problem. Patrick feels the principal will do best if he or she is well prepared, even rehearsed, with the questions that will need to be asked.

Raymond

Raymond would point the new principal towards the protocols for dealing with teacher discipline. He suggested that the principal call the director of human resources and say, “This is the situation. What would you like me to do?” Because if it goes to a hearing or anything, it’s going to go through HR anyway, so at least everybody’s informed on what’s going on and what you’re trying to do. I don’t think anybody’s going to get on you for trying to do the right thing.

However, Raymond doesn’t leave it there. Underneath the rookie principal’s
knowledge of protocol, Raymond wants to find a heart for the teacher:

I go back to my own personal philosophy, even for young principals, you know, this is really a servant position and we’re not out to get people, we’re out to make them better teachers. Through this kind of discipline, through this kind of training, we’re really hoping to make them better people.

Principals’ Experiences in Working With Unions

While principals shared a variety of thoughts on working with unions, there did seem to be a loose consensus. Most principals intoned the unions serve a valid purpose, but the unions can also be a tremendous hindrance to protecting students. Particularly paralyzing are the union-backed tenure system and the restrictive teacher contracts. Principals shared personal stories of interactions with local union officers which ranged from helpful and encouraging to frustrating and infuriating. I have arranged the presentation of those thoughts in an order that seemed to represent the overall tone of the comments.

The Union Hinders Progress

Mirtha was very willing to interview, and she energetically described her feelings when she first received the invitation to fill out the survey:

When I got your survey I was at a point where, “I’m going to answer this.” I knew some people probably wouldn’t because they’d be scared of offering their opinion. I think it’s important and a great topic of interest and as an administrator there are things that are super difficult about our job and things that we can’t change. So when I read it I said, “I’m totally going to respond to this.” I have these frustrations right now and dealing with these [abrasive teachers] and feeling like my hands are tied in so many ways.

When asked what was tying her hands, Mirtha was clear in stating her belief that the union has been a constant hindrance to her visions for a quality school.

I was so into the union, when I was a teacher. They needed a union rep, and even
though I was a first-year teacher I did it. . . . But now on the flipside the only thing I see the union do is protect incompetent people. In my opinion, I don’t see 95% of my staff needing the union for anything besides negotiating the terms of their salary. The only time I deal with them is when someone is incompetent with their job. . . . When I have incompetent people in the classroom, whether it’s instructional issues or being negative with kids, and nobody can be fired unless they do something criminal [pause] That’s frustrating. . . . I’m seeing things in the contracts that leave me feeling really sad about the future of education, and frustrated on my end, too.

Mirtha thought into the future and underscored her point: “If I ever went back into the classroom I couldn’t be in the union. I used to travel around with them, because I thought it was about kids and teachers and about making us better, and it’s just not.”

Mirtha confessed she trusted the unions to protect her employment when she was a teacher, but now that she’s a principal with no protective body watching over her, she realizes she probably didn’t need them as a teacher, either.

Patrick amplified Mirtha’s sentiment. “I’ve never been in a situation where I felt that the union was a good thing or a help in changing behavior. I’ve found that they protect and harbor people that otherwise shouldn’t be there.” As a teacher Patrick belonged to a union, but he had never felt the need of it. “I’ve always been one that felt ‘You come to work and do your job and do it well and you don’t have anything to worry about.’ That’s been the way I’ve always operated since I got my [teaching] credential.”

Henk declared he has “nothing but respect for my fellow administrators in my district. Everyone has the same ideal. They believe in the same manner of working with teachers.” He thinks the union could learn a new role, but he doubts that will happen. “I know the union focus is on the teachers. It’s not on the student. And I think that’s the number one problem there, the focus is on the right of the teacher [to the neglect of the student].”

Henk continued,
A lot of the teachers that are abrasive are highly involved in the union. So they would frequently resort to the contract to debate anything they could. . . . On my school campus I have the union president and he seems to grieve everything because he feels that it’s his job and he’s fighting the good fight. He’s also a very ineffective teacher, and part of [his grieving everything] is trying to increase his position of power, I guess.

Opal remembered a particularly difficult union officer early in her administrative career:

He was not a reflective educator at all. He was union president and he was mean and racist, and I knew it, and I didn’t know what to do about it. Partly because I was new, and I had two schools. . . . He was very powerful, and the superintendent didn’t want me to mess with him. . . . All I did is I started spending time in his classroom, and I think it helped, but I didn’t do anything directly, and I felt horrible.

June understands the need for protecting teachers. She concedes there may be principals who would be out to get teachers, but she summed up her concern with, “My question is, who’s protecting the kids?”

The Principal’s Ability to Fire a Teacher Increases Teacher Responsiveness

Fred was the principal of a unionized public high school, but now leads a charter school that has no union. He made the following comparison:

We have more authority over hiring. Two things come with that: I can make the change when I need to, and (especially) my ideas are taken more seriously. In the district environment where they’re union-protected, they don’t have to listen to me. Their contract says nothing about protecting students or my value philosophy. They could just brush it off. The difference is enormous.

But Fred was quick to point to a problem separate from the union.

The real key is tenure, if the charter school becomes union, and in the negotiations they don’t put tenure into the contract, then you’re in the same situation I’m in now, which is the director has authority. That’s the key thing: How guaranteed the [teacher’s] job is.

Fred reflected on his role as principal, both how he should behave and the authority he
should have: “I would like to think that the perception of me would be positive and supportive but with enough authority and knowledge that there’s going to be standards.”

**Tenure and Unions Go Hand-in-hand**

After hearing Fred’s comment pinpointing the tenure system, I began to ask later interviewees where they saw the bigger challenge. Opal echoed Fred’s comment: “I don’t blame unions. I wish we had different tenure laws and different evaluation laws. I wish it wasn’t so hard for a person to understand that they’re in the wrong profession.” Opal feels she needs the authority to say, “If you want to be here, you need to change your tone,” but she recognizes that such a statement “has no teeth, and they know it.”

Patrick was not so strong in stating his opposition to tenure, rather he felt the 2-year tenure process is too quick. He believes it is hard to judge how a teacher is going to develop given only 2 years to observe him/her. Patrick had read in one teacher’s file that the teacher had punched a student in the mouth and gotten “a five-day paid vacation.” He criticizes the contracts as “not having a whole lot of things in place to remove difficult teachers who have done really bad things.”

June, however, still contends that the union is a bigger problem than tenure: “That’s because in my district tenure is decided by the union. Tenure is *because of* the union. Union came *first*; tenure came *second.*”

Opal held a similar opinion: “The truth is the tenure laws are supported by the unions. . . . They’re like the front and the back of the same hand. I don’t think tenure would exist the way it does without powerful teacher unions.”

Juan agreed with June and Opal and concluded, “I’d probably do away with both. I think they go hand-in-hand. I can’t see one being effective without the other.”
It’s the Laws, Not the Union

Even though Opal believes unions perpetuate tenure, she still believes the unions have a valid role to fill: “I held every job in the union. When I knew I was done in the classroom, I knew I was going to become a union leader, a legal advocate, or an administrator.”

Opal then attempted to separate the officers of the union from the laws they have promoted: “The union gets in our way, but it’s the union as a rule, not as individuals. It’s the contract and the laws.”

As Opal continued to share she became more animated, hinting at the powerlessness she feels in the face of restrictive contracts and laws:

I mean the fact that I couldn’t fire this teacher [pause] I could fire her if she was making change at Macy’s, but I couldn’t touch her [as a teacher], and it didn’t matter how many parents came to me. . . . She never went to the union. She didn’t need to, because the laws protect her. She was tenured. Every principal who knows anything knows that if you’re going to fire a tenured teacher you need to have nothing else to do for a school year at least. Nothing else to do! And who’s got that at this job? It’s a full-time job without that.

Nora, the principal who resigned because she could not effect change in a resistant core of abrasive teachers, agreed. She confided that in her frustrating case, the local union was not blocking her. The teachers didn’t cooperate with her, because they had the protection of contracts. So they did not ask for union support.

A Need for the Unions

However Nora’s relationship to the union had some complexity. While she believed there is a need for union influence at the higher levels (“I absolutely believe there is a place for a union, I think the powers that be would make poorer decisions for workers if there wasn’t a voice”), and while she recognized that negotiated contracts had
provided all the enablement the resistant teachers needed, she did have a problem with
the local union in a personal and frustrating way. The president of the union taught in her
school. He joined her core of problematic teachers. Though they had never appealed to
the union for help, he used his status to give credibility to their criticisms of her. When he
designed and deployed a Survey Monkey survey to collect stories of discontent with her
leadership,

he signed it as president of the union, and made it look like the union was coming
after the administration. So I really think that there are a lot of mistakes that the
teacher union makes in creating an us/them attitude, because really we’ve all got to be
working towards the same thing.

Nora believes the “bottom line is to make sure the kids have a high-quality
education.” She sees the union as working to ensure a decent salary for teachers and some
protections against teacher overload. She feels they are doing their job there, but “there’s
a balance between the things kids need and the things that are needed by the people who
are providing for the kids.” In Nora’s case that balance was not achieved.

Raymond believes the union is needed for the protection of teachers, “because it
would keep an administrator who may not like you, for whatever reason, from claiming
things that you’re really not doing.”

Opal also believes protection is needed, even protection from principals, but she
asserted that the current system is way out of balance:

I think we’re shamefully over-protected. And I put myself in the teachers’ ranks
there, and we ought to stand on our own. On the other hand there are some creepy
principals out there that don’t like outspoken people, and they would be unfair. So
there’s certainly cause for some protection, but I think teachers are over-protected.

Opal has had good experiences with her local union officers, but feels that the
higher levels of union influence are creating the over-protection. She personally knows
the union president in her area:

We talked every day when I was at his school, and I had both union presidents at my school, and it was very collegial. If there were issues they’d come to me and we’d talk about it. I’m not talking about that level of the union. I’m talking about the union as a power base in the state and the nation. It over-protects a profession that should be watching out for kids. I think most of the [union] members if you got down to that question would probably agree, because high-quality teachers don’t need that much protection.

The Human Side of Local Unions

Just like Opal, Ivan also has a collegial and informal relationship with the union representative at his school.

Regarding the second teacher, the one that will backstab other teachers, I’ve had conversations with the union rep but it’s not officially a “union rep discussion,” it’s just a discussion with that teacher because she happens to know the abrasive teacher pretty well, and she wants to keep up. It was more because we’ve worked together for a long time I was talking to her for “Hey, beware. This is what’s going on,” as opposed to “This is a union issue. I need to keep you informed.”

Arvella pointed out that much hangs on the attitude of the local union officers.

“Our union relationships have been very positive, although things have changed a little bit under recent leadership. So, it’s been a little less overtly positive, maybe a little neutral or stoic.”

Santiago also believes the local union personnel make a huge difference in how effective the principal can be. With an escalating level of frustration, Santiago contrasted two working relationships, one good, and one bad:

It really hinges on the union representative that comes, or is involved. I’ve had union representatives flat out let the teacher know, “Look what you’re doing! You cannot do this. This is bad for the profession.” So, that union rep, basically, he reprimanded her. On the other hand I also have a union president defending the male [abrasive teacher], defending every stupid thing the guy has done. And I understand that’s his job. His job is to defend, come hell or high water or how wrong the teacher is, he’s there to defend. So now [he’s] getting into splitting hairs, “What did you actually put on that memo? What did you actually write on his letter of reprimand? You said that
was written on a Monday, so that only applies to Mondays.” What in the world is this all about?!

Tari also has seen both sides of working with the union. For her, there has been an improvement, and the union representative was instrumental in helping Tari remove an abrasive teacher from the classroom:

I did not have a good working relationship with the union to begin with, but ultimately I ended up with a good one. Earlier they certainly were a roadblock, and I know they can be, but they can also be good to work with. One teacher despised me, and she kept running to the union after every little reprimand. So, after a while the union rep got very tired of her complaints, because she wasn’t a dumb woman. She knew that this woman needed to be out of the classroom. So, with [the union rep’s] help, we were able to convince her that it was time to go. She retired two years early.

Managing to Lead in the Current System

Regardless of whether the union helps or hinders the principal’s efforts to improve classrooms, the interviewed principals offered a few suggestions for working within the current system.

Let the union know you support teachers

Santiago believes the principal can help close the gap between administration and the union by letting the union know the principal is working to support the teachers. He said that by empowering the students and parents to speak up, negative behavior by adults in the classroom gets reported. “Kids don’t put up with it, and the parents have already been empowered by the principal, so everybody’s on the lookout for the behavior.” Since, Santiago doesn’t worry that an event will go unreported, he is free to assure the union he is “supportive of the teachers in terms of helping them become, not just aware of, but better at handling their own problems, so that they are effective teachers in the classroom.”
Follow a tested protocol, and the union may support you

Raymond explained that inexperienced principals often get into trouble by not following established guidelines for dealing with difficult teachers, and he advised following a tested protocol:

You know, I have to say, if there are no guidelines, and you don’t have the experience working with staff, that’s how you get in trouble with the union. You’ve crossed the line or said something to the teacher that was maybe inappropriate on your part as an administrator. But really, Having Hard Conversations training was good because the protocol is set up. If you follow the protocol, there’s really no fear of the union coming back at you, because all you were doing was helping the person change behaviors that were not acceptable.

Raymond also pointed out how establishing a relationship with the union officials helps keep trust at a workable level:

I’ve been a principal for over twenty years in my district, and so I’ve gotten to know the union presidents very well. A lot of times I will call the union president and tell them, “Hey, I’m going to talk to this teacher about this issue,” and most of the time, they’ve kind of heard about it, too.

Raymond recounted an intervention where the president was quite sympathetic because the teacher would attend union meetings and “throw fits.” The president’s response to Raymond’s announcement of planned intervention was, “If there’s anything I can do to help, let me know.”

They can’t grieve the evaluation, just the process

Henk agreed with the importance of being clear on process, and pointed out that the principal has a higher level of power in the evaluation process if it is followed correctly. Henk described one tenured teacher at his school who is “probably the worst teacher on campus . . . and he’s the union president.” There is not much Henk can do to
change the teacher’s behavior, because his evaluations come only once in 5 years. Henk believes this abrasive teacher may retire before his next evaluation.

But if he is evaluated again, unless things turn around, he’s going to be in for a wakeup call. With the contract you can’t grieve the evaluation you just grieve the process. So as long as I make sure the process is followed, there’s nothing he can grieve.

Get them out before you can’t

In another demonstration of understanding and using the system as it currently is, Raymond mentioned an agreement reached by the principals in his district. They got together and decided, “If a person is abrasive, or they cannot manage a classroom, or they’re just a poor teacher, we get rid of them before they get tenure.”

Raymond admitted there are abrasive teachers in the district who already have tenure. In this case he believes he and his colleagues are still opening the conversations, and they are couching them in terms of, “I just want you to be the best teacher in the world, and my job is to help you accomplish that.” In fact, Raymond concludes it really doesn’t matter if the abrasive teacher has tenure or not. In some way, Raymond will be telling them, “I’m trying to be supportive of you and you’ve got to give me something to support.”

**Needing to Start the Conversation**

Betty, the principal who was fired, along with her vice principal, by a union-dominated school board, concluded that she does not fault the concept of a teacher union, but she thinks it is time to find solutions that work better for the profession and for the students:

I’m not blaming the unions I think they have a place, what we all want is to be treated
fairly, and they have a role to fulfill to make sure teachers are treated professionally and fairly. I have no problem with that. But, I think we need to regroup and rethink “How can we treat each other fairly and be compensated fairly and have a fair working condition that also serves our kids.” I think we need to start those conversations again.”

Patrick might suggest that conversations start with a look at contract demands on the teacher. He observed that he has never seen a bargaining contract that sets guidelines for how teachers are to treat students—nothing that mentions fairness, kindness, or dignity.

Summary of Outcome

Principals reported in half (49.5%) of the cases their interventions resulted in what they believed was an improvement in teacher performance. Nearly one quarter (23.6%) of the principals reported the abrasive teacher left the classroom. In over one quarter (27.0%) of the cases things have not improved yet. Principals perceived all school stakeholders were dissatisfied when the situation did not change or it became worse after intervention. Conversely, all stakeholders showed more satisfaction when the situation improved. When the teacher was removed, principals perceived satisfaction in all stakeholders except for the abrasive teacher. And from the principals’ perceptions, the abrasive teacher was the only stakeholder whose level of satisfaction was positively and statistically significantly correlated with the teacher doing better.

During the interview stage principals discussed the outcomes of intervention they had observed. Topics that emerged were clustered around the themes of: teacher reactions, life after intervening, and intervention strategies in the form of advice for rookies. Each will be summarized in the following paragraphs.

*Teacher reactions*. Principals shared the wide range of reactions teachers have
during or following an intervention. Reactions may be widely varied. Some teachers have responded with indifference: “Go ahead. Write me up. Everyone else has.” Some have responded in an explosive outburst, while others may more quietly be hostile for an extended period of time. However, some teachers are also appropriately responsive and work to acquire better management tools. In one case the teacher was removed from the classroom despite protest, and two cases were reported in which the teachers saw leaving the profession as a good option.

*Life after intervening*. Principals shared the impact of the intervention on the rest of the faculty and themselves. When an abrasive teacher was removed or when their behavior improved, principals reported that fellow teachers were relieved. Principals believed the teachers were relieved because they, too, had been targets of the abrasive teacher, or they had found themselves needing to defend or explain the teacher’s behaviors to students and parents.

The principals themselves experienced varying personal effects from the intervention. Some were satisfied with the improvement in the classroom. Some were frustrated that little or no change happened. One principal resigned, and one was fired.

*Advice to rookie principals*. Eight principals related their experiential knowledge in the language of advice to a principal who faces his/her first intervention with an abrasive teacher. In this chapter the advice was presented as intact, synopses of each principal’s comments. In Chapter 5 a synthesis of the comments will provide an overview of principal thought on intervention.

Comparing outcomes of intervention according to whether the principals’ teachers were unionized resulted in two findings. The first was that principals in unionized schools
were more likely to report the situation not improving or the teacher doing better, while principals in non-unionized schools were more likely to report the teacher doing well or being removed.

The second finding was that principals of unionized teachers reported lower perceptions of satisfaction across all stakeholders than did the principals of non-unionized teachers, with one exception: abrasive teachers were perceived to be more satisfied in unionized schools than in non-unionized ones.

Comparing outcomes by the sex of the principal indicated female principals were more likely to perceive lower satisfaction across all stakeholders than male principals were. And women were more likely to perceive no improvement than were the men.

Interviewed principals expressed a range of attitudes towards working with a teacher union. Most principals believed the unions hinder their effectiveness in improving teacher conduct. However, some reported good support from their local union officials and pointed instead to the problem of tenure and teacher contracts. Others encountered difficulty with local union representatives and presidents while acknowledging the need for some level of protection for teachers.

TARO Patterns (RQ 6)

Research Question 6 (RQ 6): In the process of abrasive teacher intervention are there identifiable patterns between the elements of threat, anxiety, response, and outcome (TARO) that would suggest a dynamic of intervention? This question required the testing of three relationships: (a) the relationship between the principal’s perception of threat and his/her level of anxiety, (b) the relationship between the principal’s level of anxiety and his/her choice of response (intervention), and (c) the relationship between the principal’s
response and the outcomes of that intervention. The three tests were guided by five sub-questions. For clarity’s sake the sub-questions and hypotheses are grouped together according to which relationship they are testing. The parenthetical RQ number at the end of each subsection title identifies the research sub-question that is being addressed.

Threat Related to Anxiety

The way in which a principal becomes aware that a teacher is using abrasive behaviors is called the mode of discovery. Since discovery marks the beginning of the process which leads toward intervention, mode of discovery was chosen as a potential source of threat to the principal.

Testing mode of discovery as a potential threat was done in two ways. First, each of the five modes was tested as a predictor of principal anxiety level. Second, the number of modes was tested as a predictor of principal anxiety level. The next two subsections will present the predictive value of the various modes of discovery and the number of modes on the principal’s level of anxiety.

Mode of Discovery and Principal Anxiety
(RQ 6a)

RQ 6a: Did the mode of discovery predict the principal’s level of anxiety?

Hₐ 6a: The mode of discovery will predict the principal’s level of anxiety at the time of deciding to intervene. The modes of discovery that were examined were: reported by a colleague, reported by the targeted student, reported by the targeted student’s parents, observed by the principal, or self-reported by the abrasive teacher.

Result: Linear regression showed that the mode of discovery did not significantly predict the principal’s level of anxiety ($R^2 = .03$, $F_{5, 268} = 1.50$, $p = .190$), so the research
hypothesis was rejected. However, reported by a colleague approached statistical significance ($B = -0.15, p = .053$) in accounting for unique variance.

**Number of Modes and Principal Anxiety (RQ 6b)**

RQ 6b: Did the *number of modes* of discovery predict the principal’s level of anxiety?

$H_a$ 6b: A higher number of modes of discovery will predict higher principal anxiety. A directional hypothesis was chosen due to the assumption that if the teacher’s abrasiveness were more widely known the principal would sense greater exposure and feel more anxious.

Result: Linear regression ($R^2 = .01, F_{1, 272} = 2.90, p = .045$) showed that a greater number of modes of discovery predicted not a higher, but a *lower* level of principal anxiety ($B = -0.06, p = .045$). Therefore, the research hypothesis was rejected. A greater number of modes of discovery *lowered* the principals’ levels of anxiety. This finding was also supported by a one-tailed bivariate correlation which showed a similar negative relationship which was also statistically significant (Pearson’s $r = -.10, p = .045$).

**Anxiety Related to Response (RQ 6c)**

RQ 6c: Did the principal’s level of anxiety at the time of choosing to intervene predict his/her choice of intervention type?

$H_a$ 6c: Principal anxiety level will be correlated with the type of intervention chosen, such lower anxiety levels will be associated with assisting (supportive and instructive) types of intervention, and that higher anxiety levels will be associated with disciplinary (cautionary, restrictive, and punitive) types of intervention.
Result: A bivariate correlation found statistically significant correlations between principal level of anxiety and four of the five intervention types as shown in Table 50. The research hypothesis was retained. The principal’s level of anxiety did predict his/her choice of intervention.

Table 50

*Intercorrelations for Level of Anxiety and Five Types of Intervention*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Level of Anxiety</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Supportive</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Instructive</td>
<td>-.17**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cautionary</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Restrictive</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Punitive</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set \( \alpha = .0083 \). *p < .050. **p < .010.

A principal reporting a higher level of anxiety is somewhat less likely to report having used a supportive or instructive type of intervention, and slightly more likely to report having used a cautionary type of intervention. This was as expected. However, an unexpected result was the negative correlation between principal anxiety and the use of restrictive types of intervention.

Additionally, three statistically significant intercorrelations were found between independent variables. Principals who used supportive types of intervention also tended to use instructive types. Principals who used cautionary types of intervention also tended to use restrictive types. And principals who used restrictive types of intervention also tended to use punitive types. In other words, principals tended towards one end of the
intervention spectrum or the other.

Viewing the data in cross-tabulation shows how each anxiety level performed (see Table 51). The assisting interventions (supportive and instructive) were used less by principals who report higher anxiety, while two of the three disciplinary interventions (cautionary and punitive) were used more by principals who report higher anxiety. Restrictive interventions do not fit that pattern, being used less by more anxious principals.

Table 51

Cross-Tabulation of Intervention Types by Principal’s Anxiety Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Intervention</th>
<th>Emotional state prior to decision to intervene</th>
<th>Chi-Square Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerned but fairly calm</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>76&lt;sup&gt;a,b&lt;/sup&gt; 21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructive</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>129&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; 36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>119.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautionary</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>87 24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>36&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; 10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>28 7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>Note.</sup> Percentages are figured on the n for each sub-group. A dotted line divides assisting interventions from disciplinary ones. Intervention variables were coded as 0 = didn’t use this type, and 1 = did use this type. All 0 rows have been omitted. Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $\alpha = .010$. In all tests, $N = 275$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2_{cv} = 5.99$, $p$ is for 1-tailed tests.

<sup>a</sup>The first number in the Observed cells shows frequency.

<sup>b</sup>Boldface identifies counts that are more than 2 higher than expected.

<sup>c</sup>Total is for number of responses given by each anxiety-level sub-group.

Viewed another way, concerned but fairly calm principals used—more than
predicted—all types of intervention except cautionary; while anxious principals—more than expected—used cautionary interventions. Highly anxious principals used cautionary interventions and punitive interventions.

This was an unexpected finding. It suggests that low-anxiety principals may have been more likely to use interventions that required action with visible and tangible results, while more anxious principals tended towards delivering cautionary messages, that is, warnings. This would be consistent with the further clarification that was provided by the cross-tabulation, namely, that extremely anxious or angry principals were twice as likely as expected to use punitive interventions. This burst of visible, tangible action on the part of the principal may have come from those who were angry. It was not possible to separate extremely anxious and angry in the data.

Response Related to Outcome

Did the principal’s response to an abrasive teacher predict the outcome? Principal response was measured in terms of which intervention type the principal used. Favorable outcome was measured in terms of: (a) perceived effect (From the principal’s point of view, what effect did the intervention have in reducing abrasiveness in the classroom?), and (b) perceived satisfaction (From the principal’s perspective, what was the average level of satisfaction throughout the school community?).

Intervention Type and Perceived Effect
(RQ 6d)

RQ 6d: Did the type of intervention the principal used predict the perceived effectiveness of the intervention?

Hₐ 6d: The type of intervention used by a principal will predict the perceived
effect of the intervention, such that types supportive and instructive will predict improvement in the teacher; and types cautionary, restrictive, and punitive will predict things getting worse or the teacher being removed or choosing to leave. To test this hypothesis, six variables were used. The first five were dichotomously coded variables corresponding to the five types of intervention: supportive, instructive, cautionary, restrictive, and punitive. The sixth variable, labeled effect, was continuous and contained the five types of outcomes: things got worse, nothing changed, teacher is doing better, teacher is gone, and teacher is doing well.

Result: A linear regression using effect as the dependent variable, and the five dichotomous intervention type variables as predictors, calculated these values ($R^2 = 0.13$, $F_{5, 257} = 7.47$, $p < .001$). The research hypothesis was supported. Intervention type did predict effect. Cautionary and punitive interventions achieved statistical significance in accounting for unique variance (see Table 52).

Table 52

Regression Analysis Summary for Intervention Type Predicting Perceived Effect of Intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$β$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.57</td>
<td>.284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructive</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautionary</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-1.82</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>.243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $α = .010$. All $p$ values are for a 1-tailed test.
To gain another perspective on the relationships between type of intervention and specific perceived effects, a bivariate correlation was run (see Table 53).

### Table 53

**Bivariate Correlation of Intervention Type With Perceived Effect of Intervention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Things Got Worse</th>
<th>Nothing Changed</th>
<th>Teacher Is Doing Better</th>
<th>Teacher Is Gone</th>
<th>Teacher Is Doing Well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
<td>-0.18**</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructive</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.12*</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautionary</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.12*</td>
<td>-0.31**</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $\alpha = .010$.  

* $p < .050$. ** $p < .010$.

Five relationships attained statistical significance. Supportive types of intervention were positively correlated with the teacher doing better but negatively correlated with the teacher being removed from or choosing to leave the classroom. And instructive types of intervention were negatively correlated with removing the teacher. Punitive types of intervention were positively correlated with removing the teacher from the classroom, but negatively correlated with the situation not changing and negatively correlated with the teacher doing better.

In other words, when supportive interventions were present it was more likely that the teacher improved and less likely that the teacher was removed or chose to leave. With instructive interventions present it was less likely that the teacher was removed or chose to leave. And when punitive interventions were present it was more likely that the
situation changed and that the teacher was removed or chose to leave, but less likely that the teacher improved.

**Intervention Type and Perceived Satisfaction (RQ 6e)**

RQ 6e: Did intervention type predict the principal’s perception of stakeholder satisfaction?

H₀ 6e: The type of intervention used by a principal will predict the principal’s perception of the level of satisfaction within the school community, such that types *supportive* and *instructive* will predict higher average satisfaction; and types *cautionary*, *restrictive*, and *punitive* will predict lower average satisfaction.

On the survey, principals were asked to rate the level of satisfaction of each of six school stakeholders: the targeted student(s), the family(ies) of the targeted student(s), the abrasive teacher, the rest of the faculty, the principal, and the broader community. Principals used a 5-point scale: 1 = *very dissatisfied*, 2 = *dissatisfied*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *satisfied*, 5 = *very satisfied*. Principals could also mark “I don’t know” which was coded in SPSS as *system missing* and not included in testing. All ratings were based on the principals’ perceptions of the satisfaction level of each stakeholder. Each principal’s six ratings were then averaged to create one ratio variable called *average satisfaction*.

Result: Linear regression was used to test the predictive capacity of the five dichotomously coded intervention types on the dependent variable *average satisfaction*. The regression calculated these values: $R^2 = .05$, $F_{5,267} = 2.50$, $p = .016$ which supported the research hypothesis. Punitive and cautionary types of intervention achieved statistical significance in accounting for unique variance in principal perceptions of average
stakeholder satisfaction with the intervention outcomes (see Table 54).

Table 54

*Regression Analysis Summary for Intervention Type Predicting Average Satisfaction Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>.291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructive</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>.490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautionary</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-1.97</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>.239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $\alpha = .010$.

To gain a clearer picture of the relationships between intervention types and principal perceptions of stakeholder satisfaction, a one-tailed Pearson’s correlation was run, this time using the satisfaction ratings for each stakeholder rather than the average satisfaction variable (see Table 55).

Table 55

*Correlations Between Intervention Type and Stakeholder Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Intervention</th>
<th>Targeted Student(s)</th>
<th>Family(ies) of Target(s)</th>
<th>Abrasive Teacher</th>
<th>Rest of the Faculty</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructive</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautionary</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.16**</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td>0.26**</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>-0.33**</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Bonferroni’s conservative estimate for Type I error buildup would set $\alpha = .010$.  
*p < .050. **p < .010.*
First, reading the bottom row of the table, it is clear that principals were most agreed in their perceptions that punitive interventions had the greatest positive impact on satisfaction. The principals perceived that satisfaction increased in all of the school’s stakeholders (except the abrasive teacher) when the teacher was removed or chose to leave the classroom. Three of those correlations attained statistical significance. The principals perceived the abrasive teacher to be dissatisfied when removed from the classroom whether by their own choice or the principal’s.

Second, the middle column of the table shows that principals perceived the abrasive teacher’s level of satisfaction to be higher when the principal offered support or instruction, and lower when the principal cautioned, restricted, or punished the abrasive teacher. Three of the correlations attained statistical significance.

Disaggregated data show that teachers are not always dissatisfied when they leave the classroom (see Table 56). Note that under three quarters of the teachers who left or were removed (72.3%) were perceived to be dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Table 56

*Principal Perception of Satisfaction Scores for Teachers Who Left or Were Removed From the Classroom (N = 65)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abrasive Teacher Satisfaction Score</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(“I don’t know.”)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Due to rounding, percentages may not total to 100.
Summary of Patterns

This section looked for patterns in the process of abrasive teacher intervention to see if there were identifiable patterns between the elements of threat and anxiety, anxiety and response, and response and outcome that would suggest a dynamic of intervention. Principals with a low level of anxiety tended to use interventions which were correlated with tangible and visible results, and higher levels of stakeholder satisfaction as perceived by the principals.

Threat Predicts Anxiety

Linear regression analysis failed to show statistically significant predictive capacity in a regression equation using modes of discovery to predict principal anxiety levels ($R^2 = .03$, $F_{5, 268} = 1.50$, $p = .190$), but did indicate that a colleague reporting the problem to the principal predicts lower principal anxiety ($B = -0.15$, $p = .053$).

However, linear regression using the number of modes of discovery as the predictor variable and principal anxiety as the dependent variable did attain statistical significance ($R^2 = .011$, $F_{1, 272} = 2.90$, $p = .045$), and again pointed to a negative relationship ($B = -0.06$, $p = .045$). This indicates that a principal’s anxiety level is decreased when a colleague reports the problem or when several modes of discovery are present.

Anxiety Predicts Response

Principals who reported low anxiety at the time of choosing their intervention tended to use interventions that included action with tangible and visible results. They used these interventions more than expected as calculated by cross-tabulation: supportive,
12.1% more often than expected (Pearson $\chi^2 = 5.91, p = .026$); *instructive*, 7.8% more often than expected (Pearson $\chi^2 = 8.32, p = .008$); *restrictive*, 22.9% more often than expected (Pearson $\chi^2 = 4.98, p = .042$); and *punitive*, 6.5% more often than expected (Pearson $\chi^2 = 5.11, p = .039$).

Principals who reported higher levels of anxiety tended to use *cautionary* intervention more than expected as calculated by cross-tabulation: *anxious* = 15.3% more often than expected, *extremely anxious or angry* = 20.1% more often than expected (Pearson $\chi^2 = 6.52, p = .019$). However, the principals who rated themselves as *extremely anxious or angry* also used *punitive* interventions 93.5% more often than expected (Pearson $\chi^2 = 5.11, p = .039$). This will be discussed in Chapter 5.

**Response Predicts Outcome**

Intervention type was found to predict both the perceived effect of the intervention and the perceived level of stakeholder satisfaction with the intervention.

**Intervention type and perceived effect**

A linear regression analysis using intervention type to predict the perceived effect of intervention calculated $R^2 = 0.13, F_{5, 257} = 7.47, p < .001$. It found that both cautionary ($B = -0.20, p = .035$) and punitive ($B = 0.81, p < .001$) types of intervention achieved statistical significance in the regression equation. Furthermore, bivariate correlation showed that supportive interventions were positively correlated with principal perceptions of the teacher doing better (Pearson’s $r = 0.13, p < .050$), but negatively correlated with the teacher being removed or choosing to leave (Pearson’s $r = -0.18, p < .010$). Instructive interventions showed a similar negative correlation to teacher removal.
or departure (Pearson’s $r = -0.12, p < .050$). Punitive interventions were negatively correlated with principal perception of a lack of change after intervention (Pearson’s $r = -0.12, p < .050$) and also negatively correlated with principal perception of the teacher doing better (Pearson’s $r = -0.31, p < .010$), but positively correlated with the teacher being removed or choosing to leave (Pearson’s $r = 0.52, p < .010$). All measures of effect were based on principal perception.

Intervention type and satisfaction

A linear regression analysis used the averages of six stakeholder satisfaction scores to predict perceived effect of intervention ($R^2 = .05, F_{5, 267} = 2.50, p = .016$). The table of coefficients showed that both cautionary ($B = -0.18, p = .025$) and punitive ($B = 0.34, p = .004$) types of intervention achieved statistical significance in the regression equation. A bivariate correlation showed the following relationships: Supportive interventions were positively correlated with principal perception of abrasive teacher satisfaction (Pearson’s $r = 0.20, p < .010$). Cautionary interventions were negatively correlated with perceptions of abrasive teacher satisfaction (Pearson’s $r = -0.12, p < .050$). Restrictive interventions were positively correlated with principal perception of satisfaction in the families of targeted students (Pearson’s $r = 0.14, p < .050$). And punitive interventions were positively correlated with principal perception of satisfaction among the following stakeholders: targeted student’s satisfaction (Pearson’s $r = 0.26, p < .010$), families of targeted students (Pearson’s $r = 0.25, p < .010$), and the principal (Pearson’s $r = 0.28, p < .010$), but negatively correlated with abrasive teacher satisfaction (Pearson’s $r = -0.33, p < .010$). All scores of satisfaction were from the perspective of the principal.
CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This section will review the nature of the study: the problem it addressed, its framework and methodology, and the study’s limitations. It will conclude with an indication of the participants’ level of interest by presenting unsolicited comments offered by survey participants.

Problem, Purpose, and Significance

The American K-12 school principal is responsible for providing a physically and emotionally safe learning environment for all (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). Principals are expected to intervene in the face of threats to that environment. An abrasive teacher who uses bullying behaviors on students is one such threat. Teachers who bully students have been found to impede student academic progress and decrease student perceptions of safety (McEvoy, 2005; Piekarska, 2000).

This study sought to: (a) determine how prevalent abrasive teachers were in the K-12 schools of the State of California, (b) understand how principals came to the conclusion that a teacher was bullying students, (c) classify the principal-reported factors that enhanced or inhibited the principal’s willingness to intervene, (d) explore the interventions principals have used, (e) understand the principals’ perceptions of what
effects those interventions had on their schools, and (f) search for patterns in principal response that may be helpful to theorists and practitioners.

The findings are relevant to: (a) researchers wishing to add to this body of knowledge, (b) principals seeking to better understand the challenges they face in dealing with abrasive teachers, (c) those who support principals in their roles as guardians of the learning environment, such as consultants and executive coaches, superintendents, and school boards; (d) those who benefit from the principals’ work, such as abrasive teachers and their colleagues, targeted students and their families, and (e) union leaders who may be willing to reimage their role in supporting teachers as professionals.

Research Framework

The study attempted to capture a wide-angle view of the phenomenon of principal intervention with teachers who maltreat students. It worked first to establish an estimate of the prevalence of abrasive teachers in the teaching force. Then it moved to an examination of four phases in the intervention process: identifying the problem, deciding what to do, implementing the decision, and observing the outcomes. After describing each phase, the study then tested for patterns among the four phases of intervention. Specifically, it adapted the work of Laura Crawshaw (2007) to create a four-part model called the TARO Research Model. TARO is an acronym for threat, anxiety, response, and outcome; four components corresponding to the four stages of intervention. The three relationships that exist between adjacent components were tested: (a) Is threat correlated with principal anxiety? (b) Is principal anxiety correlated with principal response? (c) Is principal response correlated with outcomes?

My theoretical constructs came from the work of four researchers: (a) Philip
Zimbardo (2008) who found that human behavior is substantially influenced by situational factors, and we are all capable of worse behaviors than we imagine, (b) Albert Bandura (1986) who theorized eight moral disengagements that allow a person to suspend their normal internal controls in order to do what seems needed in the moment, (c) Stuart Twemlow and Frank Sacco (2013) who have called for a systems approach to dealing with aggression, and (d) Laura Crawshaw (2007) who developed the threat-anxiety-defense model (*TAD Dynamic*) which explains abrasive behavior as a person’s response to threat.

Twemlow and Sacco (2013) have called for fellow researchers to address bullying “as a universal dysfunctional social process, in which the bullies and the victims are symptoms, not causes of that dysfunction” (p. 73).

Pivotal to this study is the perspective of Crawshaw (2010) who wrote: “Abrasive leadership behavior is understood to be a defense against perceived threats to the leader’s competence. . . . [Leaders can learn to] monitor and manage the anxiety that drives them to trample on coworker emotions in their crusade for competence” (p. 74). In the classroom, the teacher is the leader. I believe he or she can learn to manage personal anxiety and avoid maltreating the learners entrusted to his/her care.

**Methodology**

This study used a fully integrated mixed-methods design as described by Tashakkori and Newman (2010). It consisted of two stages: (a) data collection and analysis based on an anonymous, 31-question, web-based survey, and (b) further exploration of themes during 21 semi-structured depth interviews as described by Wengraf (2004).
The convenience sample of K-12 principals was drawn from public and private schools across the State of California. Participation was voluntary. A power analysis calculated a need for 200 respondents, but 515 principals (4.8% of the state population of principals) provided useful data, and 334 principals (3.1%) filled the survey completely. Interviews were then conducted with 21 volunteering principals.

The study focused on principal perceptions due to the principal’s pivotal role in the leadership of the school community (Marzano et al., 2005). The principal has access to each school stakeholder, and is responsible for the supervision, development, and discipline of teachers. The rationale for focusing on principal perception was presented in more detail in Chapter 3.

Limitations

1. A response rate of 3.1% (4.8% if incomplete surveys are counted) prohibits generalizing the findings of this study to all public and private K-12 schools in the State of California.

2. The use of a convenience sample made up of volunteer participants also prohibits generalizability, because the study’s topic may have attracted principals who have faced the risks of dealing with abrasive teachers. This would inflate estimates of prevalence. On the other hand, principals comfortable with teacher use of abrasive behaviors may have chosen not to respond to the survey. This would lower estimates of prevalence, if there were abrasive teachers on faculty.

3. At least one principal provided a composite view of interventions rather than reporting one discreet intervention. At least one other principal rated the abrasive teacher’s general level of satisfaction rather than his/her satisfaction specific to the
intervention. These errors were identified during the interview process. How many principals answered in these ways is unknown, and there is evidence that other principals clearly understood and marked accordingly. Still, if principals’ understanding of the directions on the two questions (regarding intervention and outcome) was broadly inconsistent, it might have affected statistical tests using the variables intervention type and stakeholder satisfaction.

4. On the survey one question asked principals to self-rate their level of anxiety as: (a) concerned but fairly calm, (b) anxious, or (c) extremely anxious or angry. The word angry was included in the description of the top level of anxiety. This was done to cue in principals who respond to anxiety by becoming angry rather than fearful, thereby helping them to rate themselves appropriately. In retrospect, using the word angry may have somewhat obfuscated the emotional state of the 20 principals (7.3% of the respondents) who marked the highest anxiety level. Making anger its own category would have been clearer and might have strengthened some tests of relationships involving the anxiety variable.

5. The principal’s declaration of the intervention types he or she used was subjective and potentially imprecise since “instructive” to one may mean “I labored with them, provided professional development, and coaching; and closely monitored the situation.” To another it might mean “I instructed the teacher to stop, and suggested a couple classroom management tactics.”

6. Judgments of both intervention effectiveness and stakeholder satisfaction were from the principal’s point of view. All tests using those variables must be understood as reflecting the principal’s beliefs and not necessarily the way others would have evaluated
the outcomes or their own levels of satisfaction. I have tried to keep that clear in each related area.

Participant Enthusiasm

It was clear the study resonated with many principals. In an optional general comments box at the end of the long questionnaire, 11.7% of the respondents offered unsolicited encouragement and indications of the sensitive nature of the topic. The following are a brief sample of their sentiments.

Thank you for inviting me to participate. At first, I hesitated to be honest, but then decided if I can do ANYTHING to help my colleagues with these difficult situations then I should. With the constrictions of unions and contracts, it is a tragedy that more cannot be done to help improve or remove those who are abrasive to students.

These topics are highly inflammatory and extremely sensitive. . . . I trust your confidentiality. If you can assure my complete anonymity, I might be willing to speak more about this important issue.

I am very pleased there will be research on this topic, as it is the first year I have had to intervene with an abrasive teacher that really didn't see their behaviors as inappropriate or unjustified.

This is a very interesting topic of study. I hope it leads to more respectful teaching practices and stronger awareness of bullying teachers and the negative impact their behavior has on students. Good luck in your research.

Results and Discussion for Six Research Questions

The findings of the study will be presented in condensed form and discussed in this section. The findings will be organized under headings which correspond to the six research questions.

Prevalence

Research Question 1: How prevalent are abrasive teachers in the work experience of K-12 school principals? Prevalence was examined from the perspectives of general
prevalence (that is, how many principals supervised abrasive teachers, and how many teachers in the field are abrasive) and prevalence within specific teacher attributes.

**General Prevalence**

The study found that more than four out of five (81.6%) of 343 principals reported having supervised an abrasive teacher within the last 3 years. The principals who had supervised abrasive teachers averaged almost three (2.9) abrasive teachers each. Based on demographic data provided by the principals, 4.6% of the teachers in the schools represented by the sample were judged to be abrasive.

Given the voluntary nature of the sample and the response rate (4.8% of the state population of principals), it is not possible to generalize that 81.6% of California K-12 principals have supervised an abrasive teacher within the last 3 years. Still, it is clear that principals do face the challenge of working with abrasive teachers.

An abrasive teacher prevalence of 4.6% is markedly lower than the range found in the literature: 7% (Yariv, 2004) to 18% (Twemlow et al., 2006). This may be due to the definition of abrasive teacher that was used in the current study. This study did not ask principals to identify teachers who used specific aggressive behaviors, nor did it ask them a general question such as, “How many teachers, do you think, bully students?” Instead, this study asked principals to count only the teachers whose emotional or psychological maltreatment of a student was sufficient, from the principal’s point of view, to disrupt student learning or to lower student perceptions of safety. That focus on significant harm to the student would have eliminated from the count any teachers who were academically demanding of students, but not judged by their supervising principal to be harmful. It also would have eliminated many teachers who were accused of bullying, yet the principal
had not reached the same conclusion. It also would have eliminated teachers who were merely irritating or lacking in social skill. Focusing on significant harm to the student may have produced the lower estimate of prevalence compared to earlier studies.

**Prevalence Within Teacher Attributes**

In practice, principals were most likely to encounter abrasive teachers who were White, female, general education teachers in self-contained classrooms, because of the predominance of that demographic in the teacher population. However, $\chi^2$ goodness-of-fit analyses of the 847 abrasive teachers reported by the principals showed that abrasive teachers are *not* evenly distributed across five teacher attributes: grade level, subject area, sex, years of experience, or race/ethnicity.

To clarify the following reports, please note: goodness-of-fit and cross-tabulation results will name a percentage *more* than the expected counts rather than a percentage *of* the expected counts. If 10 were expected and 20 were found, it could be reported that “200% of the expected number were found.” Instead in these reports that scenario would be reported as “100% more than the number expected were found.” In these reports, a perfect fit would be reported as “0% more than expected.”

Grade levels contained disproportionate numbers of abrasive teachers ($\chi^2 = 48.86$, $\chi^2_{(cv)} = 11.07$, ES = 0.11). Grades 5-6 contained 40% more abrasive teachers than expected, Grades 3-4 showed 27% more, and Grades 7-8 had 7% more abrasive teachers than a proportionate distribution would suggest. Abrasive teachers were *underrepresented* in kindergarten through Grade 2 and in Grades 9-12.

Subject areas contained disproportionate numbers of abrasive teachers ($\chi^2 = 36.78$, $\chi^2_{(cv)} = 21.03$, ES = 0.06). In business education (including computer education) abrasive
teachers were more than twice as numerous as expected (136% more prevalent.) Abrasive
teachers were more prevalent than expected in three other subject areas: music (45%),
math (17%), and science (2%). Social studies teachers were 6.9% underrepresented.

Veteran teachers, those with 11 or more years of teaching experience, were more
prone to using abrasive behaviors ($\chi^2 = 81.74$, $\chi^2_{(cv)} = 5.99$, ES = 0.24). They were 52%
more prevalent than a proportionate distribution would predict.

Male teachers were more likely to use abrasive behaviors ($\chi^2 = 26.39$, $\chi^2_{(cv)} = 3.84$,
ES = 0.18). They were 29% more prevalent than would be predicted by the state
proportion of male teachers.

Race and ethnic categories contained disproportionate numbers of abrasive
teachers compared to the state distributions ($\chi^2 = 50.18$, $\chi^2_{(cv)} = 11.07$, ES = 0.25). Native
Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander was 107% overrepresented—more than twice as
prevalent as would be expected. Black or African American was overrepresented by 29%
and White or Caucasian was overrepresented by 12%. Underrepresented were Alaska
Native or Native American, Asian, and Hispanic.

Discussion of Prevalence Within Teacher
Attributes

The interviewed principals generally expressed beliefs that abrasive teachers are
typically White women with 11 or more years teaching experience, though notable
examples of abrasive male teachers were shared. Principals also talked most frequently
about abrasive behaviors in their math, English, science, and social studies teachers, not
business education. Discrepancies between principal perceptions and statistical
calculations can be explained by the disparity in teacher sub-populations. For example,
surveyed principals reported 10 abrasive business education/computer science teachers compared to a state population of 1,282 business education/computer science teachers (www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/df/filesassign.asp). They reported 48 abrasive social studies teachers (state population: 15,567). The 48 abrasive social studies teachers would have been problematic for more principals than the 10 business education/computer science teachers and, therefore, remembered and described more frequently even though they constituted a much smaller fraction of their subject-area population than did the business education teachers. This same phenomenon accounts for the unexpected overrepresentations in sex and race.

Since teachers with 11 years or more experience are overrepresented and are the largest segment of the population, principals’ perceptions matched the calculations regarding abrasive veteran teachers. They were frequently mentioned by the principals as being their abrasive teachers.

If prevalence were viewed not by proportionate representation but only by frequency and percentage of the whole group, then a list of the most commonly observed abrasive teachers within each category would be: grade level, 5-6 \( (n = 163, 19.2\%) \), type of classroom, general education self-contained \( (n = 491, 58.6\%) \), subject area, math \( (n = 73, 8.7\%) \), level of experience, 11 or more years \( (n = 549, 75.0\%) \), sex, female \( (n = 524, 64.1\%) \), race, White \( (n = 654, 78.7\%) \).

Principals, both on the survey and in the interviews, presented various theories to explain why the veteran teachers were abrasive. Some principals stated that the older teachers were burned out. Other principals believed that the mainstream culture has moved on, leaving the abrasive older teacher clinging to methods of student management.
that are no longer acceptable. Several principals theorized that years-in-the-profession was coincidental. The real cause, they felt, was that the person settled for teaching when other career plans failed, that is, the teachers felt they could use their content knowledge in teaching subject areas, but working with young people had never been their desire. If one of those teachers is then reassigned to teach outside of their area of interest, they are doubly frustrated. None of these theories were tested in this study.

After looking at the numbers, it is good to remember the bigger picture. For example, despite veteran teachers comprising 75% of the sample of abrasive teachers, nearly 95% of all veteran teachers manage their students without being identified as abrasive.

Identification

Research Question 2: How do principals determine that a teacher is using abrasive behaviors on students? To understand the process of identification four areas were explored: modes of discovery, teacher behaviors principals viewed as abrasive, student behaviors principals viewed as symptomatic of teacher abrasiveness, and theories of mind that principals used to explain teacher use of abrasive behaviors.

Modes of Discovery

The 288 principals who had identified an abrasive teacher most commonly learned of the problem through a report from a parent or guardian \( (n = 231, 80.2\%) \). Principals also discovered the problem through their own observations \( (n = 199, 69.1\%) \) or through student reports \( (n = 188, 65.3\%) \). The abrasive teacher’s colleagues brought
the problem to the principal’s attention \((n = 148, 51.4\%)\), and the abrasive teachers also self-reported \((n = 19, 6.6\%)\).

Multiple modes of discovery were almost always present with principals naming an average of nearly three \((2.8)\) modes each. In addition to the listed modes, principals also interpreted the teacher’s use of abrasive behaviors against colleagues, administration, and parents as further evidence that the initial reports were valid.

**Abrasive Teacher Behaviors**

The 288 principals provided 715 descriptors of abrasive behavior. Principal perspectives on what constitutes abrasive behavior provide an operationalized definition of *abrasive* as it is understood by principals. The abrasive behaviors reported by the principals in this study were highly similar to abusive behaviors reported by teachers and students in earlier studies (Childers, 2009; Daniels, 2011; McEachern et al., 2008; Nesbit, 1991; Paul & Smith, 2000; Shumba, 2002; Wentzel, 1997; Zerillo, 2010). Since principals list behaviors that are similar to those listed by teachers and students, identification and intervention should be easier than if students, teachers, and principals focused on different teacher behaviors as being abrasive.

Analysis of the many descriptors was aided by the list of four themes published by Les Parsons (2005) which were: verbal, physical, professional, and psychological. However, the themes that arose from principal comments in this study differed from Parson’s list in three ways. First, the principals listed significant numbers of abrasive behaviors that were best described as non-verbal. Second, the principals’ comments also pointed to the teachers’ use of social means for silencing students or driving them away. This was consistent with current research on types of bullying used in peer bullying.
(Duy, 2013; Yen et al., 2013). And finally, psychological abuse seemed inherent to most of the other types of abuse, so it did not become a separate category.

Therefore, the number of themes generated by this study were five. Listed in descending order according to the number of descriptors supporting each theme, they are: verbal \((n = 362)\), professional \((n = 211)\), physical \((n = 82)\), non-verbal \((n = 47)\), and social \((n = 41)\).

**Student Symptoms of Teacher Abrasiveness**

The 243 principals who described student symptoms of teacher-to-student bullying provided 871 descriptors. The principals’ descriptors were similar to those noted by researchers of student-to-student bullying (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008; Bender & Lösel, 2011; Delfabbro et al., 2006; Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008; Olweus, 2011). The principals’ descriptors addressed two general types of student symptoms, those that are affective (emotional states and psychosomatic manifestations) and those that are behavioral.

Affective descriptors included emotional states such as: timidity, feeling upset or stressed, nervousness, fear, anxiety, frustration, anger, hostility, resentment, and dread. They also included psychosomatic manifestations, such as: stomach aches, headaches, enuresis (bed- or pants-wetting), nightmares, loss of sleep, diarrhea, nail biting, pulling out hair, crying, loss of appetite or excessive hunger, body ailments, feeling sick, sore throat, and drug use. These psychosomatic symptoms were similar to the ones found by Childers (2009), Meland et al. (2010), and Olafsen and Viemerö (2000).

The behavioral descriptors collected by this study were similar to descriptors
reported in earlier research (Bender & Lösel, 2011; Delfabbro et al., 2006; Ma et al., 2009). Those similar descriptions included lowered academic performance, avoidance of school, and generalized anti-social behavior. However, the principals in this study were more likely than in earlier studies to describe student symptoms that were focused on acting out in resistance to the teacher or on reporting and complaining.

Analysis of the behavioral descriptors resulted in four broad themes: acting out, shutting down either emotionally or academically, avoiding the teacher or school, and reaching out through complaints or announcements of dread. Acting out behaviors included: passive resistance, provoking, defiance, vandalism, and aggression towards classmates.

It should be noted that student responses to teacher aggression follow the expected fight or flight pattern. Acting out is a fight response. Shutting down and avoiding school are flight responses. Reaching out through complaints and announcements of dread is neither fight nor flight; it is the child’s request for adult assistance, even if clumsily or angrily stated. These three types of student response are consistent with the work of Crawshaw (2010). In her work Crawshaw helps her clients identify fight or flight responses, but then she moves them towards thinking past the first reaction in order to choose a more reasoned response. Special attention should be given to children who are reaching out with complaint or announcement rather than with resistance and withdrawal.

It should also be noted that while student symptomatic behavior should be addressed, it is more important and effective to address the cause: the teacher’s abrasive behavior. Additionally, we might be clinically interested in why the child chooses one
response over another, but administratively, the solution is constant; requesting that the abrasive behaviors stop.

**Principal Theory of Mind Regarding Teacher Abrasiveness**

Principals in this study held a wide range of theories of mind, but deconstructed and then classified they defined seven broad themes which are listed here along with the percentage of principal comments that fit each theme: (a) teacher has a high need for control (23.4%), (b) teacher is unaware/unskilled (20.4%), (c) teacher is emotionally reactive (18.6%), (d) teacher is fundamentally flawed (13.8%), (e) teacher is not suited to teaching (12.5%), (f) teacher is experiencing external stressors (7.5%), and (g) teacher holds flawed beliefs (3.8%).

A further finding was that the most widely suggested explanation—the teachers’ high need for control—contained two sub-themes under which several categories could be arranged. The two sub-themes were based on how the teacher used his/her power. The power was used either to: (a) gratify the teacher, or (b) change the student. Further study might reveal that teachers using power for self-gratification may be less amenable to retraining than those who are trying to effect a change in the students.

**Lack of Support for Sadistic Bully Teachers**

An unexpected finding of the study was that when the principals were asked to write out their Theories of Mind, sadism, per se, was not mentioned. Instead it was inferred from these two comments: “Perhaps some teachers enjoy ripping into students and emotionally abusing them,” and “I think they are mean or have no empathy for
others. I believe they derive satisfaction from hurting others.” There were no other comments implying sadism. Classifying these two comments as evidence of sadistic teachers set its frequency at less than 1% (0.67%). This was in contrast to studies where bully teachers were divided into two types: bully-victims, and sadistic bullies (Childers, 2009; Twemlow et al., 2006, p. 195). If principals had been given a checklist of reasons why teachers choose abrasive tactics, and sadistic were on the list, then it might have found higher frequency. However, when interviewed principals were directly asked, “Do you believe some teachers are abrasive because they are sadistic?” only two principals responded affirmatively, but then added qualifiers to show that the teachers found pleasure in getting even, but not in causing pain, per se. This is more consistent with the fight response of the TAD Dynamic (Crawshaw, 2007) than with the Marquis de Sade (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marquis_de_Sade).

Decision-making

Research Question 3: What is involved in the principal’s decision-making process regarding intervention? Influences on decision-making were sought in six areas: situational elements, principals’ levels of anxiety, rationales provided by principals who did or did not intervene, principals’ demographics and their personal histories with bullying, mode of discovery, and presence of a teacher union.

Situational Elements

The principals in this study reported three main elements that increased their motivation to intervene: the fact that the problem had been reported (marked by 94.4% of the principals), the principal’s personal convictions that the abrasive behavior was
unacceptable (marked by 84.7%), and the abrasive teacher’s failure to heed earlier, gentler warnings and suggestions (64.2%). Lesser motivating elements were the amount of support the principal expected from the superintendent, school board or teacher union (38.5); the training the principal had received (24.0%), the presence of clear policies regarding intervention (21.9%), and families who threatened lawsuit (10.8%).

The top demotivating element was the principal’s expectation of a hostile response from the teacher. It was marked by over half (54.9%) of the principals. The next two inhibitors were being new to the school or the principalship (marked by 30.2%) and expecting a fight with the teacher union (marked by 29.2%). Concerns about the lack of clear policies, lack of training, or lack of support, when combined accounted for almost a third (29.0%) of the responses. More than one-sixth of the responses (18%) focused on the teacher, ranging from concerns about the teacher’s connections in the community to the principal’s friendship with the teacher.

Though the presence or absence of policy, training, and support affected principal motivation to intervene, the principals, as a group, were more focused on their responsibility to those who report to them, their own convictions about appropriate teacher behavior, and on their interactions with the abrasive teacher.

**Principal Anxiety**

Well over one third (38.9%) of the principals rated themselves as anxious or extremely anxious at the time they considered intervening, and fear of conflict headed the list of stressors for principals at all three levels of anxiety. Even so, nearly all (98.2%) of the principals chose to intervene. Anxiety did not seem to be a deterrent to intervention. A quarter (25.5%) of the principals mentioned some aspect of acting on personal
conviction as a way to move ahead with intervention despite anxious feelings.

The principal’s self-rating of anxiety level may have been altered in four ways:

1. Principals were directed on the survey to report their level of anxiety “just prior to your decision to intervene.” Then they were asked to write an explanation for their level of anxiety. In the writing it seemed clear that a few principals were considering their anxiety across the broader span of intervention, not just at the moment of decision. Thus their memory of anxiety may include more influences than the ones present as they made their decision to intervene.

2. The principal’s memory of anxiety may have changed over time. A successful outcome might allow the principal to remember the entire process, including anxiety level, more favorably than if the outcome was distressing.

3. A principal’s memory of anxiety may be influenced retroactively by the desirability of the outcome. In this study 49.5% of the principals reported that their interventions had resulted in improvement of the teacher’s performance. A good result may make every aspect of the intervention seem more worthwhile and manageable.

4. The principal may have self-image reasons for reporting a low level of anxiety. In facing this problematic and often tense personnel issue, nearly two-thirds of the principals described themselves as “concerned but fairly calm.” Some principals may not find it appealing to confess higher levels of anxiety. They are, after all, sometimes referred to as “the fearless leader,” and that may be an image worth protecting and promoting. The effect of self-enhancing reporting as an intervening variable in social science research has been noted (Krueger, 1998).
Deciding to Intervene

In this study, 98.2% of the principals who reported supervising an abrasive teacher also reported choosing to intervene. Intervening principals were asked to indicate the reason(s) that caused them to intervene. Most principals chose multiple reasons. Two reasons for intervening were chosen far more than the rest. They were: the teacher’s behavior was simply unacceptable (chosen by 97.8% of the principals), and the students’ need for a respectful learning environment (chosen by 96.7% of the principals). These reasons suggest that principals are focused on quality of life in the classroom and are motivated to act when quality of life is jeopardized. To a much smaller degree, principals decided to act when they were confident of a good outcome (28.4%), the matter was becoming public knowledge (25.5%), the school had clear policies on intervention (19.6%), or the principal had been trained (17.5). All other reasons, individually, gathered less than 2% of the principals’ choices.

The high rate of intervention (98.2%) needs to be understood with at least three caveats: First, the use of a voluntary sample may have screened out non-intervening principals. Child protection is a sensitive subject, so a principal who has chosen not to intervene might be disinclined to volunteer for a survey of this type. Second, since only 4.8% of the state population of principals chose to take the survey, the high intervention rate cannot be generalized to the state population. Third, the high percentage of principals who reported intervening does not mean that 98.2% of the 847 abrasive teachers identified in this sample were confronted. It only means that a high percentage of the responding principals had a story to tell about intervening at some time in their careers. The survey did not ask whether each principal chose to intervene with every teacher,
though in interview that question was generally answered in the affirmative.

**Principal Attributes**

The principals’ demographics and their history of being bullied when they were students had some predictive capacity in regard to intervention decisions. Tested were principal’s age, sex, race, years of administrative experience, supervision load; and the type, intensity, and frequency of the childhood bullying they experienced. A series of logistic regressions found that the principal’s use of cautionary types of intervention could be predicted by the principal’s teacher-supervision load ($B = 0.02, OR = 1.02, p = .010$), frequency of childhood bullying ($B = 1.41, OR = 4.11, p = .022$), and the principal’s having been physically bullied in his/her childhood ($B = 1.03, OR = 2.79, p = .013$).

Considering the unresolved difference between the study that found a higher tolerance towards bullying within educators who were bullied as children (Twemlow et al., 2006) and the study that found people to be more empathic if they had experienced social bullying (Nordgren et al., 2011), the current study may lend a little support to the latter. However, the predictive capacity of the frequency of bullying variable and the physically bullied variable may raise a more important research question: “Do principals who were more frequently or physically bullied as children bring a higher level of anxiety into their work?” This question would be indicated by the finding that the principal’s use of cautionary interventions is associated with a higher level of principal anxiety.

The principal’s teacher-supervision load also predicted the use of restrictive interventions ($B = 0.01, OR = 1.01, p = .044$) and punitive interventions ($B = 0.02, OR = 1.02, p = .003$). Additionally, principals with higher supervision loads tended to use more
types of intervention ($B = .01, t = 2.76, p = .003$).

While one might conclude that a higher supervision load prompts principals to act, there may be other variables driving both supervision load and principal choices in intervention. This study did not look at the amount of administrative support available to principals at various levels of supervision load. Given a fixed rate of abrasive teachers, principals in larger schools would experience a higher frequency of teachers needing intervention. Also principals in larger schools may have more experience, which may translate into higher skills or confidence for intervention.

**Mode of Discovery**

Five modes of discovery (colleague reported it, student reported it, parent/guardian reported it, I observed it myself, and abrasive teacher self-reported) were tested to see if they could predict principal choice of five intervention types (supportive, instructive, cautionary, restrictive, and punitive). Logistic regression analysis found that restrictive interventions were predicted by mode of discovery ($\chi^2 = 15.06, p = .010$) with student reported it accounting for a significant portion of the variance ($B = 1.08, OR = 2.94, p = .020$). Colleague reported it came close to achieving statistical significance as a predictor ($B = 0.67, OR = 1.95, p = .056$).

Linear regression analysis showed that mode of discovery also predicted the number of intervention types the principal chose ($R^2 = .04, F_{5,271} = 2.28, p = .024$) with reported by a colleague ($B = 0.27, p = .022$) and reported by a student ($B = 0.29, p = .026$) accounting for a significant proportion of the unique variance.

Both tests suggest that principals may become more assertive in intervention when the abrasive teacher is reported by their staff and students than when they are
reported by families. Reasons for that were not explored.

**Intervention**

Research Question 4: How have principals intervened? Principals marked which of five types of intervention they used: supportive, instructive, cautionary, restrictive, and punitive. Principals could mark multiple types.

**Frequencies of Intervention Types**

Supportive interventions—where the principal moved students, reassigned teachers, gave release time, lightened teacher assignment, etc.—were used by 40.4% of the principals. Instructive interventions—where the principal offered coaching, professional development, personal counseling, etc.—were used by 71.3% of the principals. Cautionary interventions—where the principal delivered warnings—were used by 57.8%. There was a sharp decline in percentages when it came to the use of tangible negative consequences. Restrictive interventions—where the principal suspended the teacher, limited his/her access to students, etc.—were used by 17.5% of the principals. Punitive interventions—where the principal removed the teacher from the classroom—were used by 15.6% of the principals.

**Intervention Compared by Union Status**

Comparing frequencies for principal choice of intervention type based on whether the principal’s teachers were unionized or not showed a pronounced trend. Principals of unionized teachers compared to their non-unionized counterparts tended to use more intervention types, averaging 2.06 interventions per principal. Principals of non-unionized teachers reported using an average of 1.80 types of intervention. The difference
was statistically significant \((F_{1,277} = 2.83, p = .047)\).

The presence of a teacher union was also related to principal use of specific intervention types. Three cross-tabulations produced statistically significant chi-squares. The tests indicated that: (a) principals of unionized schools were four times more likely than their counterparts to use supportive types of intervention \((\chi^2 = 3.94, OR = 4.05, p = .047)\), (b) principals of unionized schools were five times more likely to use instructive types of intervention \((\chi^2 = 5.64, OR = 5.41, p = .018)\), and (c) principals of unionized schools were only one-ninth as likely to use punitive interventions which involved the removal of a teacher \((\chi^2 = 9.80, OR = 8.81, p = .002)\).

The presence of a teacher union was also related to principal perception of the effectiveness of intervention and to perceived satisfaction of school stakeholders.

Discussion of the union influence will be suspended until the Outcomes section.

Themes From Lived Experiences

Principals in interview shared their experiences of intervention. Topics that emerged were clustered around the themes of: preparing to intervene, intervening, and additional strategies that principals have used.

Preparing to intervene

Principals described actions they took in preparing for the intervention. They: kept their focus on the needs of the student, dealt with their personal anxiety level before opening the conversation with the abrasive teachers, tested their expectations by comparing the abrasive teacher’s classroom to a well-run classroom, investigated the situation by collecting specific, concrete descriptions and first-hand accounts, carefully
considered potential courses of action familiarizing themselves with established protocols, greatly increased preparation time when the stakes were high, garnered support from those who would become involved in formal actions, and used informal coaching and role-playing/rehearsing, especially if the stakes were high or conflict was personally difficult.

Intervening

Principals shared experiential knowledge regarding intervention. They had learned to: be sure to act, act in a professional manner, have a sense of time limits for teacher improvement, and—while providing training and coaching—understand that training and coaching don’t always help the teacher to quit being abrasive.

Additional strategies

A few additional thoughts were offered on issues surrounding intervention. Principals were interested in: understanding the deeper needs that were driving the abrasiveness and empowering parents to speak up when the classroom was not working for their child. Principals also talked of solving the problem before the rookie teacher attained tenure, that is, principals felt they had to improve or remove the teachers before their third year of teaching.

Outcomes

Research Question 5: What were the outcomes of the principals’ interventions? Outcomes were examined in terms of the principal’s perception of the effect of the intervention and the principal’s perception of the satisfaction levels of each of six school stakeholders. Comparisons were made between effect and satisfaction, and marked
differences were noted between schools where the teachers were unionized and those where the teachers were not unionized. Interviews allowed principals to share their thoughts on working with the unions.

**Perceived Effect**

On the survey, principals were asked to select one of five outcomes of their intervention: things got worse, it made no difference, teacher is doing better, teacher was removed, and teacher is doing well. They were also allowed to opt out by declaring that it was still too early to tell.

Principals reported in half (49.5%) of the cases that their interventions resulted in what they believed was an improvement in teacher performance. Nearly one quarter (23.6%) of the principals reported that the abrasive teacher left the classroom, either by the teacher’s choice or the principal’s action. Over one quarter (27.0%) of the cases had not improved yet. Thus, a little more than half of the interventions resulted in no improvement or in stressful and labor-intensive teacher removals.

Interviewed principals were split on whether the situation was improved more by removing the teacher or by the teacher doing better. Some argued that the students deserve great teachers, not teachers that are somewhat improved. Others argued that improving the teacher, while he or she may not become stellar, is still better than passing him/her on to another school without improvement. This brief summation of the discussion is accurate but overly simplified. The discussion was nuanced in terms of how removal was defined—some teachers are removed from the profession, not just the school, and by how doing better is understood—some improvement may be negligible.
while other improvement may lift the formerly abrasive teacher to a level above some non-abrasive colleagues.

Perhaps a principal’s final judgment in this comparison may spring from his/her worldview and how he or she prioritizes gains for the classroom versus gains for the district and urgency for improving classroom climate compared to time required for teacher professional growth. A priority of student vs. teacher was never debated. All principals remained focused on the best interests of the student.

While 23.6% of the interventions ended in the teachers being removed from the classroom by their own choice or by principal action, this removal rate is true only for the 275 interventions the principals chose to report. Principals may have chosen to report interventions that ended dramatically, or interventions in which the principal felt empowered to make a definite change. Therefore, the removal rate cannot be generalized across the 857 abrasive teachers identified in the study, nor across the, presumably, much larger state population of abrasive teachers.

**Perceived Effect Compared by Union Status**

Comparing the perceived effects of intervention according to whether the principals’ teachers were unionized resulted in two findings:

1. Principals whose teachers were unionized were more likely to report the situation getting worse, not improving, or the teacher doing better, while principals whose teachers were not unionized were more likely to report the teacher doing well or being removed.

2. Principals of unionized teachers reported lower perceptions of satisfaction
across all stakeholders with one exception: abrasive teachers were judged to be more satisfied in unionized schools than in non-unionized ones.

In blunt terms, the data suggest that unionized teachers improve more and get fired less. However, cognitive dissonance (Festinger & Carlwright, 1958)—which the study was not designed to detect or test—might also have been at work in the principals’ reporting. According to cognitive dissonance theory, principals faced with a situation that is clearly counter to their ideals would feel a strong urge to take one of two actions: (a) change the situation to conform to their ideals, or (b) change their perceptions to accommodate the situation. It is possible that the principals who found it impossible to terminate or transfer an abrasive teacher may have felt internal pressure to identify even small improvements that would validate their intervention as having had some good effect, even if it did not satisfactorily resolve the problem. This may have been more frequently true for a principal whose teachers were protected by a union.

Reporting a situation as improved when it is unsatisfactorily so—if any principals did so—might provide another reason some principals believed that teacher improvement is not as satisfactory as teacher removal. However, it should be noted that principals of union-protected teachers also reported a higher number of situations not improving and a higher rate of situations getting worse. Further study would be needed to explain why these correlations were present.

**Effect and Satisfaction**

Bivariate correlations comparing the principals’ perceptions of effect with their perceptions of stakeholder satisfaction helped to create a rudimentary picture of how school communities may have responded to the 275 intervention outcomes reported in
this study (see Table 47 in Chapter 4). Principals perceived that all school stakeholders, including the abrasive teacher, were dissatisfied when the situation did not change or became worse. Conversely, principals perceived all stakeholders to be satisfied when the teacher began doing well. This was as expected.

However, from the principals’ perspective, the abrasive teacher was the only stakeholder whose level of satisfaction was positively and statistically-significantly correlated with the teacher doing better. Conversely, when the teacher was removed, the principals perceived significant satisfaction in all stakeholders, except for the abrasive teacher. In fact, even principal satisfaction was more strongly correlated with teacher removal than it was with the teacher doing well.

If the principals’ perceptions are valid, one could infer that (a) the abrasive teacher is grossly out of step with the rest of the school’s stakeholders, and (b) the abrasive teacher does not enjoy much group affirmation when he or she begins doing better.

Though the choice of limiting the study to input from principals was explained in Chapter 3, it must be that in this context, the fact that all appraisals are from the principals’ perspectives adds a layer of psychological variables that were not controlled for in this study.

The correlations presented in Table 47 showed no statistically significant relationship between the principals’ perceptions of the abrasive teacher’s level of satisfaction and his/her doing well. This seemed odd, since the principal did perceive the teacher to be satisfied when doing only better. In order to explore this further, another perspective was sought by plotting the mean scores for each stakeholder across the five
outcomes. The resulting 30-column graph was confusing when rendered in two-dimensional black-and-white, so it was simplified by combining the mean scores for targeted students, their families, the rest of the faculty, and the broader community, since those stakeholders had all trended similarly. This made the principal and abrasive teacher mean scores easier to trace and then compare against the rest of the school community (see Figure 17).

Mean satisfaction scores make it clear that the principals perceived abrasive teacher satisfaction to reach the highest level when the teacher is doing well. So the small number of such teachers may be what prevented this score from finding statistical significance in the correlations. Abrasive teachers do, from the principals’ point of view, find more satisfaction in doing well than in merely doing better.

Going beyond that question, it may be observed that if the principals’ perceptions were accurate, the mean satisfaction scores provide a glimpse into what was happening in the affective response of the stakeholders. The markedly lower levels of abrasive teacher satisfaction across all outcomes are clearly visible.

Also worth note is that the abrasive teacher is nearly as dissatisfied with situations that get worse or situations that don’t improve as is the principal. This could dispel notions that abrasive teachers are content with status quo, and it could encourage principals with the knowledge that abrasive teachers are more satisfied with a change, even though they may resist the process of change. And their dissatisfaction with a poor circumstance might again support Crawshaw’s (2007) theory that abrasive people are reacting to threat.

Finally, it should be noted that though abrasive teacher satisfaction was judged to
Figure 17. Mean satisfaction scores for principal and abrasive teacher compared to the rest of the school community. All scores came from a 5-point Likert Scale with 1 meaning very dissatisfied, 3 meaning neutral, and 5 meaning very satisfied.

be low when they were removed from, or left, the classroom, there were exceptions. Of the 65 teachers who were removed from, or left, the classroom, six (9.2%) were perceived by the principals to be satisfied or very satisfied. This would indicate that some abrasive teachers find relief in leaving the situation, and interviews confirmed two teachers who found satisfaction in leaving the profession.

Several questions arise when analyzing the data from principal perceptions of intervention effect and stakeholder satisfaction:

1. How accurate were the principals’ perceptions of the satisfaction levels of the schools’ stakeholders? This study used principal perception due to ease of data collection and due to the principal’s being in a key position to interface with each of the named stakeholders. Yet, the accuracy of their perceptions is not known.
2. Taking the most-likely-to-be-accurate satisfaction scores, those of the principals themselves, why would teacher removal cause greater satisfaction than the teacher doing well? Could this be an indicator of how stressful confronting and later shepherding the teacher can be, even when the outcome is good? Could the principal be making mental note of the teacher’s current success and still be wary of its permanence? Might the principals have judged unsatisfactory situations to have improved as one means of dealing with cognitive dissonance? Might the principals’ greater satisfaction with a teacher is gone, indicate that even when the teacher is doing well there may be disgruntled families, students, or colleagues who really would have preferred to have the teacher removed, and now the principal lives with the knowledge that he or she has disappointed them even while being glad that the teacher is doing well? The current study was not designed to answer these questions. A qualitative follow-up study might bring clarity.

3. Why are abrasive teachers judged to be less satisfied on average than all other stakeholders? If the principals’ perceptions are accurate, we would want to know: Is the abrasive teacher’s level of dissatisfaction focused mainly on their experience with the students, or is it the result of the teacher’s disposition? If the teacher is dissatisfied with the situation, his/her satisfaction level may be amenable to change after training. If the teacher’s dissatisfaction is dispositional perhaps teacher candidates with similar dispositions could be counseled about what kind of experience they could expect if they were to enter the profession.

4. Why are the rest of the faculty perceived to be satisfied with teacher removal? Considering that 82.0% of the teachers represented in this sample are unionized, two
thoughts may be entertained: (a) in the minds of most teachers the welfare of students may outweigh solidarity, and (b) the principals may be disciplining teachers judiciously.

**Satisfaction by Union Status**

Principal perceptions of satisfaction were used to calculate mean satisfaction scores for all stakeholders of schools where the teachers were unionized as well as for all stakeholders in schools where the teachers were not unionized. The comparison of mean scores attained statistical significance in a two-tailed test for all stakeholders at a \( p < .010 \), except for the abrasive teacher \( (p = .066) \). Principals whose teachers were not unionized perceived an average satisfaction level among stakeholders (excluding the abrasive teachers) that was 0.49 points higher on a 5-point scale than did principals whose teachers were unionized. Conversely, principals of unionized teachers perceived abrasive teacher satisfaction to be 0.30 points higher than did principals of non-unionized teachers.

The findings relative to abrasive teacher satisfaction scores being higher in unionized schools would seem intuitive given the fact that teacher removal lowers abrasive teacher satisfaction scores, and removal is used more frequently in non-unionized schools. The findings also seem intuitive relative to all other stakeholder scores being higher in non-unionized schools given the fact that abrasive teachers typically make life less pleasant for students, parents, colleagues, and principals; and they are more likely to be moved out of the classroom in a non-unionized school. However, it must be kept in mind that all satisfaction scores are from the perspective of the principal, rather than from stakeholder self-ratings. Still, these findings may indicate directions for future study.
From the Interviews

Principals in interview shared accounts of abrasive teacher reactions to intervention and stories of life after the intervention including two cases where principals lost or relinquished their administrative positions. The principals also shared thoughts on working with the unions, and one seemed to speak for the rest when she called for a renewed conversation with the unions.

Teacher reactions

Principals shared the wide range of reactions teachers have during or following an intervention. Some teachers responded with indifference: “Go ahead. Write me up. Everyone else has.” Some responded in an explosive outburst, while others were quietly hostile for an extended period of time. However, principals also shared that some teachers were appropriately responsive, and they worked to acquire better classroom management tools. Two principals reported cases where the teachers saw leaving the profession as a good option.

Life after intervening

Principals shared the impact that intervention had on the rest of the faculty and on themselves. When an abrasive teacher was removed or when their behavior improved, principals reported that fellow teachers were relieved, because they had also been targets of the abrasive teacher, or they had found themselves needing to defend or explain the teacher’s behavior to angry students and parents. The principals also experienced varying emotions from being satisfied with improvement in the classroom, to being frustrated that little or no change happened, to being angry that the abuse was continuing.
and they saw no way to circumvent the teacher’s contract or tenure protections. In the process of trying to effect change, one principal resigned and one was fired.

Working with the unions

Principals in interview expressed a range of attitudes towards working with a teacher union. Most principals felt that the unions hinder their effectiveness in improving teacher conduct. However, some reported good support from their local union officials and pointed instead to the problem of tenure and teacher contracts. All principals agreed that tenure is a hindrance to gaining teacher cooperation. Others who encountered difficulty with local union representatives and presidents still acknowledged the need for protecting teachers in negotiations of salary, benefits, and working conditions. Yet, most agreed that teachers are either overprotected, or the wrong ones are being protected.

Principals shared several thoughts on working within the current system:

1. Make it clear to the union that you are supportive of the teachers and you desire their professional advancement.

2. Be careful to understand and follow the protocols.

3. Be fastidious in your conducting of evaluations, since the teacher can grieve the process, but not the content of your evaluation.

4. Closely supervise new teachers. Work for their improvement, but if that fails, move them out before they reach tenure. In most cases that means before their third year begins.

Need for a renewed conversation

Betty, the principal who was fired by a union-dominated school board, holds no
bitterness towards the union as a concept, but she asserts that it is time to rethink the extent of teacher protection. She believes the question should be, “How can we treat each other fairly and be compensated fairly and have a fair working condition that also serves our kids?”

Patrick observed that he has never seen a bargaining contract that sets guidelines for how teachers are to treat students; nothing that mentions fairness, kindness, or dignity. Perhaps including such a clause in teacher contracts could give the principals a little more leverage with those few teachers who choose to continue using abrasive behaviors and who ironically expose their protectors to founded criticism.

Teacher Improvement and the Influence of the Teacher Union

Remembering the principal’s split role as disciplinarian and learning leader, an interesting observation can be made. Principals of non-unionized teachers may have the dubious luxury of continuing to use a traditional disciplinary approach with their teachers, an approach that produces more noticeable improvements and increases satisfaction for most of the parties involved, but offers fewer intervention efforts.

At the same time, unions may be forcing their teachers’ principals, if somewhat awkwardly, to use more educative interventions. Whether this could be done more intelligently than through blanket protections would depend on whether the union could join a healthy dialogue with school administration on how to protect and support teachers while keeping the students’ academic progress and sense of safety paramount. Crawshaw’s Boss Whispering model (2010) with its use of clear restrictions for the abrasive person, while providing respectful support, might present a hopeful prototype of
Patterns

Research Question 6: In the process of abrasive teacher intervention are there identifiable patterns between the elements of threat, anxiety, response, and outcome (TARO) that would suggest a dynamic of intervention? Three relationships were tested: (a) the relationship between threat (assumed to be present in the mode of discovery) and principal anxiety, (b) the relationship between principal anxiety and principal response (as seen in intervention choices), and (c) the relationship between the principal’s response and the outcomes (as seen in principal perceptions of intervention effect and stakeholder satisfaction).

Threat Predicts Anxiety

A linear regression analysis using the modes of discovery as predictor variables and principal anxiety as the dependent variable did not attain statistical significance ($R^2 = .03, F_{5,268} = 1.50, p = .190$), but its table of coefficients indicated a nearly statistically significant negative relationship between a colleague’s reporting of the teacher’s abrasive behavior and the level of anxiety in the principal ($B = -0.15, p = .053$). A linear regression analysis using the number of modes of discovery as the predictor variable and principal anxiety as the dependent variable did attain statistical significance ($R^2 = .011, F_{1,272} = 2.90, p = .045$), and again pointed to a negative relationship ($B = -0.06, p = .045$). This suggests that the principal’s anxiety level decreased when a colleague reported the problem or when several modes of discovery were present. The principal may feel less anxious when intervening at the request of others than when initiating intervention.
without third-party complaint.

A plausible explanation for this is that the principal faces a daunting task when intervening with an abrasive teacher, so others who share the concern may be seen not as threats, but as potential allies. When confronted by the principal, an abrasive teacher often creates confusion by denying all allegations or by shifting blame to the students or to other factors (Nelson & Lambert, 2001). Additionally, the principal is keenly aware of the impact staff discipline can have on morale and loyalty, and he or she is aware of the political and legal ramifications of threatening a teacher’s employment (Causey, 2010). In the face of weighty and sometimes confusing deliberations, the principal may be relieved to know that someone else is also concerned. The principal may gain confidence in knowing that others also want the teacher’s behavior to change. And in a unionized school, a report to the principal from a union-member colleague could portend that the union might be amenable to the discipline of one of its own.

This raises the question of whether there might be a more potent source of threat for the principal than mode of discovery. That greater source of threat would need to be found and measured. It may be lodged deeper in the personality, culture, or personal history of the principal.

**Anxiety Predicts Response**

The principal’s anxiety level was found to be negatively correlated with assisting types of intervention (supportive and instructive) and positively correlated with cautionary interventions. So principals with higher levels of anxiety were less likely to assist, and more likely to warn the teacher. Unexpectedly the principal’s anxiety level was *negatively* correlated with restrictive interventions. So, low anxiety principals tended
to use supportive, instructive and *restrictive* interventions.

Cross-tabulations were run to see how the disaggregated three anxiety levels performed. The five tests—one for each of the intervention types—achieved statistical significance ranging from $p = .008$ to $p = .042$. It was found that concerned but fairly *calm* principals used, more than predicted, all types of intervention except cautionary, while anxious principals used cautionary interventions more than expected. Highly anxious or angry principals used cautionary and punitive interventions more than expected.

I had expected principals reporting lower levels of anxiety to use supportive and instructive interventions while more anxious principals would more often use cautionary, restrictive, and punitive interventions. The correlations provided some support for this assumption, but the positive correlation between low anxiety and use of restrictive interventions might suggest a different model.

Perhaps low anxiety principals tend more towards action with tangible outcomes while anxious and highly anxious principals gravitate towards the use of cautionary warnings. Cautionary interventions notify the teacher that he or she is in trouble, but no definite action is taken at that time. The principal’s dissatisfaction is made clear to the teacher, and tension is increased, but teacher improvement depends on the teacher’s voluntary response to the principal’s negative message, since no tangible sanctions have been engaged.

However, the *most* anxious principals chose punitive measures at almost twice the expected rate. This sudden similarity to the low-anxiety principals challenges the new model, but it may be due to the way the highest level of anxiety was labeled: *extremely*
anxious or angry. It might have been the presence of anger that caused the highly anxious group to be overrepresented in the use of punitive interventions. If the word angry had not been included in that label, the highly anxious principals may have been found to be overrepresented only in the use of cautionary interventions. However, that distinction cannot be made, given the current data.

Another explanation might be that extreme anxiety can push the principal into definite action, even bypassing restrictive interventions. The highly anxious principal may deliver warnings, and when those aren’t heeded, move right into punitive actions to end the pain or turmoil created by the abrasive teacher.

Assuming either explanation might be the case, it may be worth proposing the new model and testing the validity of the new model which states: Anxiety inhibits the principal’s use of interventions with tangible outcomes. Tangible outcomes would be understood as either positive or negative changes in the teacher’s work situation, caused by the principal, that could then be observed by other stakeholders. Whether spending school resources to provide more support to the abrasive teacher, or taking definite disciplinary action to curtail the teacher’s behavior, the principal would need to commit to a publicly visible course of action. Anxiety may diminish the principal’s resolve for such commitment.

There may be two additional reasons that restrictive types of intervention were associated with lower anxiety in principals. First, principals are not likely to consider suspending or reassigning a teacher unless they have already done significant work in documenting the teacher’s unacceptable behavior. Building a solid rationale with documentation will likely add to the principal’s confidence and reduce anxiety. Second,
the principal is also likely to have conferred with the superintendent, human resources officer, union representative, and perhaps an attorney, prior to choosing a restrictive or punitive type of intervention. Having shared the situation with appropriate professionals, heard their advice, and outlined a plan may also reduce the principal’s anxiety.

**Response Predicts Outcome**

Intervention type was found to predict both the effect of the intervention and the level of stakeholder satisfaction with the intervention as perceived by the principal.

Intervention type predicts perceived effect of intervention

A linear regression analysis using intervention type to predict the principals’ perceptions of the effect of intervention calculated \( R^2 = 0.13, F_{5,257} = 7.47, p < .001 \). It found that both cautionary (\( B = -0.20, p = .035 \)) and punitive (\( B = 0.81, p < .001 \)) types of intervention achieved statistical significance in the regression equation. Furthermore, a bivariate correlation showed that supportive interventions were positively correlated with the teacher doing better (Pearson’s \( r = 0.13, p < .050 \)), but negatively correlated with the teacher being removed (Pearson’s \( r = -0.18, p < .010 \)). Instructive interventions were also negatively correlated with teacher removal (Pearson’s \( r = -0.12, p < .050 \)). Cautionary and restrictive interventions did not achieve statistical significance in tests of correlation with any perceived effect. Punitive interventions were negatively correlated with a lack of change after intervention (Pearson’s \( r = -0.12, p < .050 \)) and also negatively correlated with the teacher doing better (Pearson’s \( r = -0.31, p < .010 \)), but positively correlated with the teacher being removed (Pearson’s \( r = 0.52, p < .010 \)).

It would be tempting to say that teachers tended to improve when they were
supported and not to improve when they were punished, that teachers who were
ultimately removed had received more punishment and less support and instruction, and
that punitive interventions were effective in changing the situation. However, these
results show correlation, not causation. Perhaps the correlations can be explained in other
ways. For instance, principals who supervised teachers who were very resistant to
intervention may not have used (or may not have bothered to report using) supportive
and instructive types of intervention. Similarly, a principal with an amenable teacher may
have used supportive interventions and never needed to advance to punitive ones. If that
were the case, teacher receptivity to intervention might be a better predictor of outcome
than intervention type. This study did not collect the data relative to teacher receptivity.

Intervention type predicts perceived stakeholder satisfaction

A linear regression analysis used the averages of six stakeholder-satisfaction
scores to predict the principals’ perceptions of the effects of intervention ($R^2 = .05, F_{5, 267} = 2.50, p = .016$). The table of coefficients showed that both cautionary ($B = -0.18, p = .025$) and punitive ($B = 0.34, p = .004$) types of intervention achieved statistical
significance in the regression equation. A bivariate correlation showed the following
relationships: Supportive interventions were positively correlated with abrasive teacher
satisfaction (Pearson’s $r = 0.20, p < .010$). Cautionary interventions were negatively
correlated with abrasive teacher satisfaction (Pearson’s $r = -0.16, p < .010$). Restrictive
interventions were positively correlated with satisfaction in the families of targeted
students (Pearson’s $r = 0.14, p < .050$). And punitive interventions were positively
correlated with the principals’ perceptions of satisfaction among three stakeholders:
targeted students (Pearson’s $r = 0.26, p < .010$), families of targeted students (Pearson’s $r = 0.25, p < .010$), and the principal him/herself (Pearson’s $r = 0.28, p < .010$). However, punitive interventions were negatively correlated with abrasive teacher satisfaction (Pearson’s $r = -0.33, p < .010$). Correlations that did not reach statistical significance followed the same pattern as those that did.

In brief, the use of cautionary interventions predicted lower principal perceptions of overall satisfaction scores, while punitive interventions predicted higher principal perceptions of satisfaction scores. The use of supportive interventions was correlated with higher perceived satisfaction only in the abrasive teachers. The use of cautionary or punitive interventions was correlated with greater *dissatisfaction* in the abrasive teacher. Placing restrictions on the abrasive teacher or exacting some kind of punishment (e.g., removal from the classroom) was correlated with greater satisfaction in all stakeholders, except for the abrasive teacher.

All scores of satisfaction were from the perspective of the principal. The principal is the one person with the closest access to all school stakeholders, yet the accuracy of the principal’s perception of satisfaction is dependent on his/her own powers of perception and the transparency of the stakeholders.

Further research using experimental design would be needed to determine any causative relationships. Multiple objective measures of effect and satisfaction would be needed in validating what the principals perceived. Still, based on the regressions, we can say that in this study types of intervention did predict the perceived effects of intervention and the perceived satisfaction levels of school stakeholders.
Summary of Patterns

Support was found for the TARO Dynamic in all three tests:

1. Threat is related to anxiety. When multiple modes of discovery were present, or when the abrasive teacher’s colleague reported the problem, principals’ self-reported levels of anxiety were lower. Presumably, both cases helped support the principal’s decision to intervene.

2. Anxiety is related to response. When the principals’ anxiety levels were low they tended to use interventions that required action and provided tangible results, both positive and negative. When principals were anxious, they tended to give warnings (cautionary types of intervention).

3. Response is related to outcome. When interventions consisted of warnings (cautionary type) they showed a negative capacity for predicting the principals’ perceptions of desirable effects, and they were negatively correlated with perceived stakeholder satisfaction. Supportive interventions were positively correlated with the principals’ perceptions of abrasive teacher improvement and abrasive teacher satisfaction, and negatively correlated with abrasive teacher removal. Instructive interventions were negatively correlated with teacher removal. Restrictive interventions were positively correlated with the principals’ perceptions of satisfaction for the families of targeted students. And punitive interventions were negatively correlated with the principals’ perceptions of abrasive teacher improvement, but they were positively correlated with the situation changing and the teacher being removed. They were also positively correlated with the principals’ perceptions of overall stakeholder satisfaction, but negatively correlated with abrasive teacher satisfaction.
In general terms, principals who assisted abrasive teachers by offering support and instruction, perceived greater improvement in the teacher’s performance and level of satisfaction, but did not perceive increased satisfaction in the other stakeholders. Principals who restricted or punished abrasive teachers perceived increased satisfaction in all stakeholders except the abrasive teacher, and did not perceive teacher performance to improve. And principals who cautioned the abrasive teachers perceived negative outcomes and lower satisfaction in all stakeholders including the abrasive teachers.

Conclusions

Four conclusions that can be drawn from this study are: there is a high prevalence of abrasive teachers in K-12 schools, anxiety may decrease the principal’s use of interventions that require tangible acts, a systemic approach to dealing with aggression in schools is needed, and teacher unions hold both risk and promise for intervening principals.

Abrasive Teachers Are Pervasive

If the results of this study are representative of conditions in the general population, nearly 5% of the K-12 teaching force can be identified by principals as engaged in emotional or psychological maltreatment of students at a level sufficient to disrupt student learning or to lower student perceptions of safety. More than 80% of the principals currently (or within the last 3 years) supervise at least one teacher who maltreats students through the use of abrasive behaviors. And from the literature, more students tell researchers that they have been bullied by teachers than by peers.

Could teacher-to-student bullying actually be higher than student-to-student
bullying as the review of the literature suggests? While the literature presents higher percentages of bully teachers than bully students and higher percentages of students reporting having been bullied by teachers than by other students, there are two problems with such comparisons. First, comparing percentages of teacher bullies to percentages of peer bullies masks actual numbers. There are many more students than teachers. So, in a hypothetical school of 100 teachers and 2,000 students, if 7% of the students were bullies and 10% of the teachers were bullies, the hypothetical school would house 10 bully teachers but 140 bully students. The 140 problematic students would be more frequently encountered even though they would be part of the lower percentage. Second, there are disparities in methods of data collection. Peer-bullying studies tend to ask students how often they have been bullied over the span of a year or a week (Solberg & Olweus, 2003), whereas studies of bullying by teachers tends to ask students if they have ever been bullied by a teacher (Childers, 2009). Other things being equal a larger reporting window will produce larger percentages.

On the other hand, teachers are the gatekeepers of information in their classroom. They are in a position to broadcast which student has just offended or to gloss over their own unacceptable behaviors. Students, parents, colleagues, and administration are far more likely to hear about the students’ misdeeds than the teacher’s. The teacher’s gatekeeper function might skew public perception of transgresses in the classroom.

Additionally, the teacher is legitimately the one in charge of the classroom, and people know that some students will challenge the teacher’s authority, so allowances may be made for the teacher’s assertion of self. Zirkel et al. (2011) concluded that people tend to tolerate higher levels of bullying in those whose jobs they either don’t understand or
don’t want to do. Therefore, school stakeholders may be a bit permissive with the
teacher’s wielding of power, even forms of power that may be excessive and damaging.

While this study established a lower estimate of teacher maltreatment of students
than was found in the literature, the reason for the lower percentage may be significant.
The current study’s lower estimate was based on a definition which focused on damage to
the student rather than on specific behaviors a teacher might occasionally use.

Comparisons aside, if the results of this study are representative of conditions in
the general population, then nearly one in 20 teachers maltreats students to the point of
impeding their academic progress or making them feel unsafe, and more than 80% of the
schools contain at least one such teacher. “Research on teachers who bully students is
rare, but points to the idea that it can only take one teacher to sour a school” (Twemlow
& Sacco, 2013, p. 82).

Anxiety May Lessen Principal Inclination to Act

Principals who reported being concerned but fairly calm also reported choosing a
higher than expected percentage of interventions that involved tangible action, positive or
negative. Tangible action is any principal action that changes the teacher’s work situation
in a way that is visible to other school stakeholders. Low-anxiety principals’ use of
supportive, instructional, restrictive, and punitive interventions were all higher than
expected. They gave cautionary messages, verbal or written warnings not requiring
tangible action, to teachers less often than expected. Conversely, principals who reported
being anxious also reported using cautionary messages more than expected. They
delivered warnings, but used the other four interventions, supportive, instructional,
restrictive, and punitive, less often than expected. Anxiety may diminish a principal’s
resolve for action with tangible outcomes.

Extremely anxious or angry principals used cautionary interventions more than expected, but they also were overrepresented in punitive interventions. Potential reasons for this movement towards tangible action may involve the presence of anger or the increased pain of the situation and was discussed in section, Effect and Satisfaction.

A Systemic Approach to Dealing With Aggression Is Needed

During analysis of the study’s data, there seemed to be a pervasive, though seldom articulated, awareness that unwarranted aggression exists across the school system, and that an effective response would require a similarly system-wide effort. This inference was supported by four broad themes: (a) all stakeholders can be aggressive, (b) fragmentary approaches hindered progress, (c) assistance came from across the system, and (d) many principals desired to assist both teachers and students.

All Stakeholders Can Be Aggressive

Aggression appears to be a systemic problem manifesting in teachers, students, union officials, and principals. Since this study was based on principal perspective, aggression in teachers, students, and union officials was reported by the principals. However, the potential for principals behaving aggressively was seen in some principals’ affects which could be described as aggressive and reactionary. One surveyed principal shared that as a child he was taught to solve problems with his fists. As a student, “any teacher who attempted to bully me bought himself or herself a peck of trouble. My goal was to make sure they knew it was me and could never prove it. . . . Where I can act, I do.” As a principal, he states that if a teacher is willing to do what he asks, he will
support them. If not, and if they are defiant, “a fight will ensue. It might be a mental fight, but it is a fight still.”

The same anonymous principal expressed frustration with the lack of funding for public education which, he felt, incited teacher aggression. Though he expressed concern for both teachers and students who become emotionally escalated—he mentioned providing “cooling-off time” for both—he stated that aggression cannot be decreased:

The issue is that [a school] is a human place fraught with human issues that result from human nature. Human nature is a powerful force that is not going to change much. . . . A human place will always return to being a human place no matter how much a reformer will try to de-humanize it.

Other principals also looked to the broader system, but seemed more open to the possibility that levels of aggression can be decreased. Ellen, one of the interviewed principals, saw the principal and teachers as caught up in the same kind of culture where one mirrors the other. She wondered,

You know, what is fascinating to me is the way a culture kind of trickles down from the principal through the school and on down. I'd be really curious to read some research on the impact of abrasive principals. Or, you know, if teachers become more or less like them, because of that.

That the principal can lead in the bullying has already been documented (Blase & Blase, 2003; de Wet, 2010; Schnall, 2009).

In a similar manner, an abrasive teacher creates a classroom climate which affects every student and often doubles back on the teacher. Surveyed principals wrote that some students mimic the teacher’s aggression or sarcasm as they pursue their own goals of dominance over classmates. Students show an awareness of the classroom pecking order and work to establish their place in it. Sometimes they choose to challenge even the teacher’s position. A principal described student aggression aimed at the teacher as
“giving the teacher what the child is receiving.” Another principal pointed out that when a “student bullies others, the teacher responds with bullying,” thereby reinforcing the abuse of power and creating an escalating cycle of aggression. Systemic problems self-perpetuate.

As a result, principals experienced students acting as aggressively as the teachers, yet, the personal development that principals wanted for students, many also wanted for their teachers. Carol reflected,

So my concern first is with the student, but it’s also for the teacher. Is there a way that we can train the teacher to be the best that they can be, or is it that the teacher is not willing to be molded?

Vera observed that one of the things that holds her back from dealing with a teacher who responds inappropriately may be the same thing that holds the teacher back from dealing with a student who responds inappropriately. It is the fear of not knowing how to help them envision and establish the better behavior. Speaking from the teacher’s point of view she explained,

You know, I don’t want to deal with that reaction from that kid, because I know I’m going to tell them to [do it differently], and they’re not going to know how, and I’m not going to know how to make it clear to them.

Then shifting to speaking for herself, Vera stated directly that the same fear—not knowing how to remediate another’s behavior—can make her hesitant to confront the teacher. But she quickly added, “Perhaps one difference would be that even though that decreases my motivation to do it, I do it anyway.” So, despite feelings of uncertainty Vera will find the will to act, and she expects the teacher to do the same.

Vera continued to switch voices, comparing the teacher’s reactions to her own, and in the process she described a system where similar thoughts and behaviors exist in
the principal as exist in the teacher:

I can tell you what my coping mechanisms are. One of them is, “Get that teacher out of my school! I don’t care where they go. Let somebody else take care of them.” You know, that’s just what our teachers do. “Get that kid out of my class! I don’t care what to do with that kid,” you know, because it is hard work and, as the principal of the school, I don’t always have the time that I would like to have to provide that kind of deep level of support to that teacher. I’d like to be able to do it; I’d like to, particularly if I thought they were receptive to it, which I’m sure is the way a teacher feels about their kids. You know, “I’d like to be able to help him, but this kid doesn’t really want to learn.”

Understanding the similarities among people at various levels, some researchers have already called for a systemic approach to dealing with aggression in schools.

Twemlow and Sacco (2013) proposed that bullying be conceptualized “as a universal dysfunctional social process, in which the bully and the victim are symptoms, not causes of that dysfunction” (p. 73).

Philip Zimbardo (2008), who conducted the 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment, contends that systems create situations that change people. He asserts that any deed that any human being has ever committed, however horrible, is possible for any of us—under the right or wrong situational circumstances. That knowledge does not excuse evil; rather it democratizes it, sharing its blame among ordinary actors rather than declaring it the province only of deviants and despots—of Them but not Us. (p. 211)

Additionally, in this study, some principals’ theories of mind pictured teachers as hopelessly flawed while other principals saw the abrasive teacher as a person who was not coping well in a particular situation. The principals with more hopeful theories of mind tended to focus on the specifics of the situations rather than on characterizations of the teachers.
Fragmentary Approaches Hinder Curbing Aggression

Principals are aware of the larger system within which they work. This was shown in the data that linked an increase in number of modes of discovery with a decrease in principal anxiety. This suggests that when a concern is shared throughout the broader system, principals perceive intervention to be less risky.

However, the broader system tends to focus on correcting only the teacher. Principals perceived pressure in the system to remove the teacher rather than looking for a more comprehensive solution. This was made clear by the positive correlation between the principals’ perceptions of the satisfaction scores of five school stakeholders and teacher removal. Even fellow teacher union members were perceived to be more satisfied when abrasive teachers were removed. Yet, other parts of the system militate against such drastic action. For example, the principals in this study reported that they were demotivated to intervene when they thought of the likely backlash from the abrasive teacher and the teacher union.

The union role of protecting teachers’ interests and quality of life is seen in sharp contrast to quality of life for students when the union considers only the teachers’ point of view. Whether the unions should take that narrow a view is a political point for discussion, but it points, nonetheless, to the need for decision-makers—typically principals—to take a broader view of the problem of aggression in the classroom. Conversely, taking only the student point of view would create an oppositely skewed view of aggression in the classroom. Most principals mentioned that the student’s well-being was their highest priority, but a few added that when a student complaint was made against a teacher, the principal had to factor in the student’s credibility. Faulting only
students or faulting only teachers indicates a factionary perspective and may result in fragmentary efforts towards dealing with aggression.

From my K-12 teaching and administrative experience, a principal who quickly castigates teachers as bullies will just as quickly label students as rebels or sloths as soon as the tone of the discussion changes. Such a polarized, simplistic view of people will tend to wobble between one extreme and the other. Today’s villain will be seen tomorrow by the same principal as the victim. This confuses onlookers and effects little positive change. When the principal holds a more balanced and systemic perspective, other stakeholders may offer their reports with confidence that a fair approach will be taken. A systemic approach—one that acknowledges and addresses the anxieties and frustrations of all stakeholders—holds greater promise for a sustainable reduction in aggressive acts.

**Solutions Come From Various Parts of the System**

If all people are capable of behaving aggressively, then teachers, students, and principals may contribute to escalating or inhibiting aggression. Solutions can come from unexpected sources, not always from the principal. Sometimes teachers solve the problem. With transparency Santiago recalled a time when his anxiety was high and his attitude was contributing to the problem. He confided:

> It was really my attitude that didn’t help the situation. I was maybe a second-year principal, not very wise about myself, and I just had a bad attitude. I went in there with low expectations of my teachers, and therefore my anxiety went up. . . . There was high stakes involved. [The teachers] were fighting me on this item. All three of those teachers that questioned me called the union all ready to get them involved. So now I have this attitude. I’m going in there to kick butt, if you will, and I’m laying the law down, drawing the line in the sand ‘cuz I am not taking any more.

Santiago was ready for war, but what his teachers chose to do averted disaster and
helped the group refocus on the work. Santiago continued,

So I went in there with a terrible attitude, and they were awesome! I don’t know if they were awesome and open to [the new idea], or if they’d seen that I came in with red eyes and steam coming out of the back of my head. I don’t know what it was, but they were great!

Similarly, union presidents and union representatives have helped solve problems of teacher aggression. Principals with good working relationships with the local union have reported that teacher union officials helped them reason with teachers who needed to leave the profession.

Assuming similarities between the thoughts, feelings, and choices of people throughout the system—principals, teachers, and students—the preferences of one group may apply to the others. For instance, Crothers, Kolbert, and Barker (2006) studied student preferences in anti-bullying strategies. Their four main findings may offer some initial guidance to the principal who is designing strategies to curb aggression among teachers.

**Assistance Is Needed for Both Teachers and Students**

Regardless of its source, when aggression happens in the classroom both teachers and students are affected, and principals in this study mentioned looking for solutions that would benefit both. One stated that trying to improve life for the students while “wanting to figure out how to turn around the [teacher’s] behavior and make it a win/win for everyone” was what caused her sleepless nights. The principals expressed concern for quality of life across the district, not just in their own classrooms. Consequently, they debated the merit of removing a teacher from their school if he or she were simply to be moved to a new school. They wanted a good classroom for their students, but they also
cared for the larger system, even though many dreaded repercussions from the teacher and the union if they intervened.

From the variety of responses provided by principals in survey and interview, it seems clear that the most sustainable efforts to curb aggression will deal with not only the behaviors of the one who is acting aggressively, but also with the situations that may be triggering his or her aggression. A systemic approach would recognize that each person in the system is capable of aggression, and that each part of the system may offer opportunities for inhibiting aggression.

**Teacher Unions Hold Risk and Promise**

Principals wrote and spoke about teacher unions relative to the principal’s intervention with an abrasive teacher. Several generalities may be stated: First, the 334 principals who completed the survey offered 71 write-in comments mentioning unions: 27 were neutral, for example, stating that the union representative was present; 9 were positive, for example, noting a good working relationship with the union or celebrating that the union agreed with the principal; and 35 were negative, for example, mentioning ways the union’s presence had sabotaged the process, or that the abrasive teacher was the union president or representative.

Second, when principals spoke in interview about *teacher union* as a concept, they were generally favorable. When they spoke of teacher union on the state or national level, they were split. Some felt that the union served a vital role in protecting fair pay and quality of life for teachers. Some felt the protections were detrimental to the students’ well-being. When the principals spoke of teacher unions at the local level, they were again split. They shared a range of stories including: (a) the union controlled the school
board which fired me for supporting the vice principal’s effort to hold the teacher accountable, (b) the teacher was cooperating until the union got involved, (c) the union representative helpfully restrained the volatile teacher when I talked to her, and (d) the union representative helped me talk the teacher into retiring.

Third, principals were more concerned with the system of tenure and contracts that protect teachers to the detriment of students. One principal expressed a desire for a new conversation with the unions that would continue the protection of teachers, but would keep the students’ well-being paramount. Another principal suggested a teachers’ “professional bar association where such complaints would be brought forth to teams of peers,” because she felt teacher maltreatment of students is a matter of malpractice and should supersede union rules.

**Implications and Recommendations**

Several implications for practice arose from this study. They have been organized in the next subsection by listing general implications for various stakeholders first, then enumerating topics that should be included in principal professional development regarding intervention for abrasive teachers, and finally offering a synthesis of the advice principals give based on their own experience.

The findings of the study also suggest directions for further research. Six recommendations for further study will be presented in the second and final subsection.

**Implications for Practice**

Three types of practical implications arose over the course of this study. Six are relevant to school stakeholders as well as anti-bullying practitioners and researchers.
They will be presented in the first subsection below. The next subsection will address the need for principal professional development on this topic by outlining the curriculum that should be created. The third subsection will present a synthesis of the principals’ experiential knowledge which they offered as advice to rookies.

Implications for Various Stakeholders

1. Principals, superintendents, human resource officers, and school boards should all work to address aggression on any level in the system. They should work to identify it in all its forms since some forms may be camouflaged by the assumptions of the community, and some forms may be tolerated by those who cannot imagine better means to necessary ends.

2. Principals, teachers, and parents should carefully consider student symptoms. Acting out is a fight response. Shutting down and avoiding school are flight responses. Reaching out through complaints and announcements of dread are more potentially effective ways of addressing the problem, but their effectiveness depends on appropriate attentiveness, empathy, and involvement from significant adults. Without adult assistance the student may have to move to less healthy means of coping.

3. Principals should approach abrasive teacher assistance and discipline carefully, according to protocol, with the best interests of the abrasive teacher in mind, and with the knowledge that the rest of the faculty has tended to find relief when the abrasive teacher either quits the behavior or quits working at the school.

4. Principals should move quickly from cautionary interventions if they are ineffectual, knowing that dissatisfaction levels are higher with that type of intervention and that it does not tend towards teacher improvement. If district support and protocols
are in place, restrictive and even punitive interventions will bring better results and higher satisfaction from most stakeholders.

5. Unions and school administration should begin conversations on how to maintain teacher protections while establishing student academic progress and well-being as a priority.

6. Practitioners and researchers would do well to quit using the term bully teacher due to: (a) its disrespectful tone (Crawshaw, 2007) (b) its implication of the teacher’s desire to harm students (Crawshaw, 2007), and (c) the ease with which intelligent abrasive teachers can confuse the issue and deny the label (Nelson & Lambert, 2001).

“As practitioners and researchers, we have a choice: to view abrasive [teachers] as demons immune to change, or to seek to understand and address the phenomenon through objective research” (Crawshaw, 2010, p. 61). Objective and unimpassioned terminology would be more conducive to a systemic approach to the problem.

Need for Principal Professional Development on Abrasiveness

A review of the literature produced one online professional development slide show that addressed teacher bullying (Daniels, 2011). It provides a brief overview of literature on the types of behaviors teacher bullies use and their effect on students. It also offers a six-item list of things that should be present in interventions. The slides are suitable for use with teachers and principals. However, more detailed information is needed by principals who are currently supervising an abrasive teacher.

Topics that should be addressed while training principals would include:

1. Introduction to abrasiveness which should include: (a) prevalence of the
problem, (b) abrasive behaviors used by teachers, (c) the effect of those behaviors on
students, (d) distinguishing between a demanding teacher and an abrasive one, (e) effects
of intervening or not intervening, and (f) theoretical models for understanding the
abrasive teacher.

2. Dealing with the abrasive teacher which should include: (a) challenges of
identifying the abrasive teacher, (b) the most common modes of discovery, (c)
responding to complaints from students, parents, and colleagues, (d) raising awareness
for all teachers especially regarding professional abuse, (e) preparing for intervention by
finding needed information, establishing critical support, and rehearsing the
confrontation, and (f) guidelines for intervention, documentation, and follow-up.

3. Systemic strategies which would include: (a) understanding the dynamics of
aggression in a school system, (b) empowering parents to advocate for their children
appropriately, which would address cultural differences regarding compliance with
authority and varying views on student accountability, (c) managing the abrasive veteran
teacher and those who feel trapped in their jobs, (d) dealing with young, non-tenured
abrasive teachers, (e) identifying abrasive job applicants, and (f) improving relations with
local union officials.

A curriculum dealing with these topics should be developed for use with
principals. Once implemented, validation studies should be conducted.

Principals’ Advice to Rookies

Eight principals offered their experiential knowledge in the form of advice to
colleagues who are facing their first intervention with an abrasive teacher. Synopses of
each individual’s advice are reported in Chapter 4. Synthesizing their advice with the
knowledge shared by other interviewees and survey respondents created an overview of principal thought on intervention which will now be considered.

It is understood that, like all other people, principals possess unique skillsets based on their personal strengths and past experiences. The way one principal behaves in a particular setting may not work for another principal. The specific tactics of one principal may not be compatible with another principal’s overall strategy.

Even so, this simple collection of shared advice may be a helpful starting point for principals considering intervention or for researchers interested in further development of a formal strategy. The principals’ advice speaks to both the attitude and the behavior of the intervening principal.

1. Keep an attitude that is open and respectful towards all stakeholders. “This is really a servant position and we’re not out to get people, we’re out to make them better teachers. Through this kind of discipline, through this kind of training, we’re really hoping to make them better people.”

2. Establish a good relationship with the problematic teacher. “Bring them in, find out what’s going on in their lives, see if there’s any way you can help.” Share your concerns in a kind way that shows openness. “You have to assume that the teachers have the best intentions and that they want to be successful with the kids.” “Don’t talk at teachers, talk with teachers. That synergy that you’re expecting in the classroom, that needs to be there between you and the teachers, as well.”

3. Let the union know that your intention is to support teachers. If you spot a problem, you will work to help the teacher solve it and to grow professionally in the process.
4. Follow through on all concerns, even if it requires waiting a bit. “You can’t let it go. It won’t go away on its own.” “Don't wait until it gets big, address it.” However, develop an ear for which complaints can be documented then given wait-and-see time. Some principals intoned that if they investigated everything immediately, they would get nothing else done. Giving wait-and-see time on the less likely, or less critical, complaints gave them more time to observe the abrasive behavior for themselves, or to see a pattern forming in the complaints of others. Then they were better prepared when they confronted the teacher.

5. Get a definite statement from whoever reports the problem. This gives you third-party details which can be taken to the teacher. Such details help you keep the intervention from feeling as personal—you are sharing a concern someone else has brought to you. However, supporting the third-party details with related observations of your own makes a more compelling presentation.

6. Get as much firsthand knowledge as possible. Watch for signs of abrasive behavior, such as, belittling comments to or about students and even colleagues and parents or repeated complaints from students. Position yourself to gather personal observations. Make frequent, random visits to the classroom, asking students academically focused questions during the visit (“What are you doing today? What is the teacher expecting of you today?”) to get a feel for the classroom climate from the students’ point of view.

7. Become well-versed in the protocols for dealing with teacher discipline. Call the director of human resources and say, “This is the situation. What would you like me to do?” Sit down with an HR administrator or the one who handles the district’s uniform
complaints process in order to anticipate some of the directions the conversation might go. Role-play the conversation, even practice in front of a mirror. Develop the right verbiage before talking to the teacher. The verbiage would include articulation of the school’s mission, and questions of how to provide that for the students. “It’s important to listen, and it’s important to be clear.”

8. Clarify the issue and be prepared to lead the abrasive teacher through a series of questions that will bring them to see the problem.

9. Open the conversation with, “Look, this has been brought to my attention. I have some concerns. Please respond.” Talk in a brainstorming kind of way, “Is this the approach you’re wanting? Are you accomplishing what you intended?” Start off that way, but eventually get around to the values you are trying to put forth and state that “this is not the way we’re going to do it here. I understand what you’re trying to do, but we’ve got to use a different approach.”

10. Use think time and silence, if necessary, to get through the unforeseen objections, personal attacks, and sidetracks—those times when the conversation begins to be unproductive.

11. Set goals or action plans with abrasive teachers. Send them to training. Have them observe other teachers. Provide peer advising or mentoring. Watch to see if they change. If not, then ask a third person to be present as you talk with them again.

12. Keep yourself positioned procedurally for removing the teacher if ultimately the teacher can’t or won’t reach the necessary standards of conduct with children.

Recommendations for Further Research

Six recommendations for further research will be made in this section. However, a
general concern affects them all and will be addressed prior to listing specific recommendations. Gathering data on abrasive teachers, their effects on students, and the outcome of interventions is difficult due to the sensitivity of the subject and the potential involvement of children in the studies. As interest in this topic—and possibly legislation against maltreatment of students—increases, principals may become less willing to be forthright in their responses. Schools and districts may become less open to inclusion in such studies. Finding a district willing to engage in a population study may be very difficult, and it could be argued that a progressive district full of willing principals would be rare and not likely to return results generalizable to the larger population.

A possible solution to this problem would be to survey a small group where trust among the participants is high and to follow the survey with focus groups in order to identify specific themes or to develop components of a theory. If this were repeated a number of times, the results could be used in a research synthesis to draw inferences or build theory. This process is described in a pending article (Newman, Hitchcock, & Newman, 2014). As Newman et al. point out, “aspects of theory may be confirmed if multiple studies replicate findings that a theory might predict (p. 5).

Acknowledging the challenge of collecting data on this topic, the following six recommendations for further research might answer questions emerging from this study:

1. Prevalence. The standard for abrasive behavior in this study was based on my definition of abrasive teacher which was: “a teacher whose maltreatment of a student is, in the principal’s judgment, sufficient to disrupt student learning or to lower student perception of safety.” This study is set apart from others by being based on harm to the student rather than on teacher bullying behaviors; this rendered a lower estimate of
prevalence. Also, the 4.8% response rate from California principals makes the estimate of prevalence non-generalizable to the State of California or the larger nation. A study focused on establishing prevalence is needed. Maintaining a focus on harm to the student and conducting either a population study or using a large random sample would be indicated.

2. *Disaggregating data according to grade-level and sex of targets.* In this study data were collected without the intention of disaggregating data by grade level or sex. However, a study that collects and analyzes data by the grade level and sex of targeted students would be helpful. Such a study could provide more specific information to principals regarding: (a) how modes of discovery may be different for principals of young students compared to older students, (b) how parental involvement may change as a function of their child’s grade level or sex, (c) whether teachers maltreat students differently according to the students’ grade level or sex, and (d) how student symptoms manifest differently according to student grade level or sex.

3. *Teacher need for power and control.* Being charged with keeping order in the classroom, teachers understandably need a level of control over their students. However, the principals in this study indicated an inordinate need for power and control in teachers who use abrasive behaviors. Teacher need for power and control was the most prevalent theory of mind among the principals, and their comments suggested two main motives of the abrasive teachers: (a) to gratify the teacher or (b) to change the student. A qualitative study comparing use of power by teachers who use abrasive measures compared to those who do not could lend much to this field of study. First, there may be a significant difference between teachers who use power because it gratifies them and teachers who
use power for the purpose of changing the student. Understanding this difference could foster more effective and differentiated interventions for abrasive teachers. Second, it has been my experience that many good teachers are afraid of any programs or philosophies that would suggest changing the teacher’s use of power, even power that is coercive or creates fear in the student. Understanding teachers’ resistance to relinquishing coercive forms of control could help principals in planning and initiating professional development on humanizing the classroom. And understanding the differences between abrasive and non-abrasive teachers’ views of control and their use of power could be helpful in the diagnosis and retraining of abrasive teachers.

4. *Same-principal comparisons of intervention.* The current study asked principals to describe one intervention they had conducted. It is possible that principals tended to choose the same types of interventions, for example, the more successful ones or the more dramatic ones. A qualitative study asking principals to freely compare and contrast two or more of their own interventions would provide a richer look at what did and did not work for individual principals. Such a study could aid in developing a grounded theory of effective intervention.

5. *Veteran teachers.* This study validated and quantified a perception of principals that abrasive teachers are disproportionately veteran teachers. A study examining the values, anxieties, and desired student outcomes held by veteran teachers who use abrasive tactics would be helpful to principals or other interventionists. Such a study would be informed by, and contribute to, generational studies. The findings might suggest new approaches to professional development for older teachers. They might also be applicable to younger teachers who display a similar attitude.
6. Principal anxiety and response. The current study, using the TARO Model, indicates that anxiety moderates each stage of the intervention process. Anxiety may work as an inhibitor to the principal’s choice of interventions that involve tangible action, that is, actions that cause change to the teacher’s work situation and are visible to other school stakeholders, and the intervention affects perceived outcomes. This is consistent with my professional experience and with the literature (Crawshaw, 2010). However, limitations in the collection of principal anxiety data (see sections above: Principal Anxiety and Effect and Satisfaction) may have thwarted the identification of an anxiety-influenced dynamic affecting each relationship in the model.

Furthermore, this study did not find the source of greatest anxiety for principals. Therefore, it is recommended that further study be done to examine the four stages of the TARO Model and the relationships between them (see Figure 18).

Future studies’ identification of the sources of anxiety and more precise measurements of the way anxiety changes principal response would greatly contribute to this field of study. A search for the sources of anxiety might point to tangible phenomena.

Figure 18. TARO Model, simplified.
surrounding intervention, such as the level of hostility in those who report the teacher’s behavior, the egregiousness of the teacher’s behavior, or the principal’s concurrent political capital within the school community. Alternately, it might lead to an examination of the values held by the principals; perhaps anything that threatens a closely held value of the principal would be a potent source of anxiety.

The future studies could also explore how principals move through anxiety in order to do what is needed. The principals in this study seemed to find courage in their convictions about the way students should be treated and the way teachers should conduct themselves. Those mechanisms for moving through anxiety to action could be further explicated and would be helpful to practitioners.

A study could also examine the emotional or psychosomatic cost to the principals. One study has already examined such costs in the process of teacher termination (Heiser, 2001), and another considered the stress of dealing with marginal teachers (Causey, 2010).

Another study could examine the specific intervention behaviors of the principal and correlate them with verified responses from school stakeholders. The principal behaviors should include the affective style of the principal along with the specific actions taken, since how the principal acts may be as important as what the principal does.
PROTESTING THE TERM ABRASIVE

The principal who wrote this email protesting the use of the word *abrasive* and questioning the helpfulness of the study articulated a concern that I believe is held by a number of principals. He points out the need for a clearly defined and broadly understood concept that does not include teachers who are appropriately demanding.

Mr. Weller:

I was going to fill out the survey (started actually) but found it did not allow for a real picture to be described as I thought it might. I find it a fascinating and delicate topic of study - I look forward to hearing of your conclusions. Yet, since I found the survey not able to deal with the subtleties of my own experience (surveys are often limited thusly), I wanted to offer this anecdotal piece for your consideration - it is my experience in 20+ years of headmastering.

To point: I have had two teachers which have been thought of and complained about as abrasive teachers. These same two teachers are among the most loved of all by graduation date. Why? Because they were a bit abrasive (not bullies!) in just the right way. A coddled society, afraid of standards and demands recoil at such things, but it is good for them, as abrasives are precisely what is used in any polishing. Hence, abrasion can be a good quality. I want my students to shine like a well-polished gem - this is only accomplished by teachers who demand of their students and get called bad names because of it. When the students come out the other side of this old-fashioned training, they are happier, smarter and much more mature.

I might caution the use of the term "abrasive" to describe a true bully of a teacher. Remember, kids, especially young teens are usually of the opinion that adults are abrasive because the adults are authority (a good thing!) - the children lack perspective, maturity, wisdom(?).

So, to make such a short, wide and accessible bridge from the feeling of abrasiveness to the real and damaging nature of a bully is to corrupt language and lessen the real evil of a bully. For if the thousands of good teachers who are abrasive are labeled bullies, the real bullies will not be identified or dealt with. Bully used to mean something - but given the incredible surge of "bully awareness" out there these days, it is losing its meaning and horror, normal kids' misbehavior (which should be corrected) is now labeled "bullying." Where is the distinction - it is lost for the want of a crusade.

Best wishes on your research,

[Name withheld by researcher]
APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
April 30, 2013

James Weller
Tel: 951-729-5330
Email: JWeller@Andrews.edu

RE: APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
IRB Protocol #: 13-086  Application Type: Original  Dept.: Leadership
Review Category: Expedited  Action Taken: Approved  Advisor: Erich Baumgartner
Title: Abrasive teachers and principal response: A mixed study method of administrative decisions regarding teachers who bully students in American K-12 schools

This letter is to advise you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your IRB application of research involving human subjects entitled: "Abrasive teachers and principal response: A mixed study method of administrative decisions regarding teachers who bully students in American K-12 schools" IRB protocol number 13-086 under Expedited category. This approval is valid until April 30, 2014. If your research is not completed by the end of this period you must apply for an extension at least four weeks prior to the expiration date. We ask that you inform IRB whenever you complete your research. Please reference the protocol number in future correspondence regarding this study.

Any future changes made to the study design and/or consent form require prior approval from the IRB before such changes can be implemented. Please use the attached report form to request for modifications, extension and completion of your study.

While there appears to be no more than minimum risk with your study, should an incidence occur that results in a research-related adverse reaction and/or physical injury, this must be reported immediately in writing to the IRB. Any project-related physical injury must also be reported immediately to the University physician, Dr. Hamel, by calling (269) 471-2222. Please feel free to contact our office if you have questions.

Sincerely

Sarah Kimakwa
Research Integrity & Compliance Officer
IRB Office

Institutional Review Board - 4150 Administration Dr Room 322 - Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355
Tel: (269) 471-6361 Fax: (269) 471-6543 E-mail: rbe@andrews.edu
APPENDIX C

SURVEY DISTRIBUTION, RESPONSE, AND TIME TO COMPLETE

Response Rate

Initially the web-based survey link was emailed to 1,155 principals of public and private schools in the San Bernardino and Riverside Counties of California. The addresses were obtained through the California State Department of Education website. The survey remained active for 34 days, closing on June 30, 2013. Participation was incentivized by a drawing for an Apple iPad Mini and two cash drawings for $100 each. After two weeks, only 31 principals had completed the online, anonymous questionnaire. Therefore, the invitation was sent concurrently to the remaining 10,444 K-12 principals across the State of California. The second invitation was not incentivized and closed 19 days later, also on June 30. Data from the two separate groups were merged after both identical surveys had closed.

Of the 11,599 invitations, 781 bounced. This suggests 10,818 delivered invitations. However, despite using MaxBulk Mailer’s “SpamCheck” feature to increase delivery rate, the researcher was not able to determine how many emails were stopped by spam filters. Therefore, an accurate response percentage from delivered emails is not possible. Still it is known that 167 principals opted out (asked to be removed from the email list,) while 741 principals opened the survey. Of those 741 principals, 515 went on to answer at least the first question: “Are you (or have you ever been) the principal/headmaster/supervisor of an abrasive teacher?” To this, 454 answered “yes” while 61 answered “no.” Nine principals (all responding yes) provided sufficient answers
to be included in some correlations, and 334 principals completed the entire survey. A power analysis had established a need for 200 completed surveys. Of the 334 principals completing the survey, 77 volunteered for interview and 21 of these did grant an interview. Research design had indicated a need for 20 interviews.

The response characteristics of the incentivized group as opposed to the non-incentivized group varied in some interesting ways. The incentivized, two-county group was 23% more likely to open the survey than the non-incentivized all-state group. In other words, if both groups had been given incentives to respond, 534 questionnaires might have been completed. More interestingly members of the incentivized group were 72% more likely to complete the survey than the non-incentivized group members. The incentivized were twice as likely to volunteer for interview, and almost four times more likely to actually follow through by granting the interview.

Conversely, the non-incentivized group was almost three times more likely to abandon the survey before answering the opening question (33% compared to 13% in the incentivized group.) Additionally, 167 of the non-incentivized principals asked not to receive further emails while none of the incentivized principals made that request. A few non-incentivized principals complained strongly of being harassed by emailed invitation and reminders even though they received only four over a 19-day period, whereas none of the incentivized principals opted out or complained of being harassed by emails even though they received eight emails over a 34-day period.

One might conclude that incentivizing the survey helped to increase favorable attention from the principals.
Length of Time Spent Filling Questionnaire

In analyzing principal time spent filling questionnaires, half-minute cut points were used. Principals who completed the survey, but had not worked with abrasive teachers ($n = 48$) spent an average of 3.1 minutes filling out the questionnaire (median = 2.0 minutes, mode = 2.0 minutes.) Principals who completed the survey and had worked with abrasive teachers ($n = 239$) spent an average of 25.6 minutes filling the questionnaire (median=18.5 minutes, mode=15.5). In calculating completion times, 47 outliers were ignored, due to times that were unusually long. Completion times that were ignored included those that were more than 11 minutes for principals who had not worked with an abrasive teacher and completion times that were more than two hours for principals who had worked with abrasive teachers. Several had left their questionnaire open for multiple days. One principal’s timer had run for more than 15 days.
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

The following 21 principals granted interviews ranging from 27 to 88 minutes. Each name has been changed and situational details modified to protect confidentiality. The list is provided to aid the reader in understanding the context of their comments which appear in the body of the dissertation.

1. Arvella is the youngest principal in the study. She is a white 34-year-old with 7 years’ experience as a principal. She supervises 24 unionized high school teachers and has encountered 5 abrasive ones during her career.

2. Betty is a white 51-year-old with 10 years’ experience as a principal. She supervised 60 unionized middle school teachers, and has seen 5 abrasive teachers during her career. She reported extreme anxiety or anger during her work with a belligerent teacher. She lost her employment by the decision of a union-dominated school board, and was soon rehired as principal at another public school.

3. Carol is a white 41-year-old with 7 years’ experience as a principal. She was leading a church-related K-10 school with 320 students and 26 non-unionized teachers when her reported intervention occurred. She has supervised 6 abrasive teachers.

4. Denise is a white 47-year-old with 14 years’ experience as principal. She leads a middle school with 40 unionized teachers. She has supervised 4 abrasive teachers.

5. Ellen is a white 50-year-old with 3 years’ experience as principal. She leads an 80-student private school with grades 5-8. She has never supervised an abrasive teacher, but was bullied by all teachers in her third-grade year. In that year she began what would become a long-term struggle for confidence in writing.

6. Fred is a white 57-year-old with 16 years’ experience as principal. He leads a non-union charter school with 50 teachers and 625 students from grade 6 through 12. He has supervised 3 abrasive teachers.

7. Glenn is a white 69-year-old with 33 years’ experience as principal in both public and private schools. He currently leads a church-related K-12 with 20 non-unionized teachers. During his career he has supervised 9 abrasive teachers.

8. Henk is a white 37-year-old with 5 years’ experience. He had just finished his first year leading a middle school with 21 unionized teachers, and has supervised 9 abrasive teachers over the span of his career.

9. Ivan is a white 53-year-old who had just finished his first year as principal. He leads a K-6 school with 13 teachers. He’d taught with the teachers for a long time before becoming principal.

10. Jordana is a white 55-year-old with 10 years’ experience as principal. She
leads an independent K-8 prep school with 16 unionized teachers. She has worked with 2 abrasive teachers and reported having been anxious in the intervention she described.

11. Juan is a 48-year-old Latino with 10 years’ experience as principal. During the intervention he reported, he was leading a large K-5 with 70 unionized teachers. He has supervised 7 abrasive teachers.

12. June is a white 56-year-old with 6 years’ experience as principal. She leads a 500-student magnet school with 25 unionized teachers. She has supervised 2 abrasive teachers.

13. Mirtha is a white 37-year-old who had just finished her first year as principal at a 425-students K-5. She leads 25 unionized teachers two of which are abrasive. She reported being anxious when deciding to intervene.

14. Nora is a 50-year-old Asian with 12 years’ experience as principal. When I interviewed her, she had just resigned from her position leading a rural 600-student K-8 charter school with 35 unionized teachers. She reported having been anxious as she supervised 6 abrasive teachers.

15. Opal is a white 63-year-old with 25 years’ experience as principal. She leads a 420-student K-5 in an upper middle class predominantly white suburb. She currently supervises 18 teachers, but the 2 abrasive teachers she described were at earlier schools.

16. Patrick is a white 37-year-old with 11 years’ experience as principal. He leads two schools spanning K-8 and containing 430 students and 39 unionized teachers. He has supervised 6 abrasive teachers, and reported being anxious at the time of intervention.

17. Raymond is a white 59-year-old with 30 years’ experience as principal. He leads a high performing K-6 school with 900 students and 33 unionized teachers. He has supervised 3 abrasive teachers.

18. Santiago is a 42-year-old Latino with 10 years’ experience as principal. He leads an 800-student middle school with 44 unionized teachers. He has supervised 6 abrasive teachers.

19. Tari is a white 62-year-old with 12 years’ experience as principal. She leads a 600-student K-5 with 29 unionized teachers. She has supervised 2 abrasive teachers, removing one of them.

20. Ursala is a white 59-year-old with 2 years’ experience as principal. She leads a non-profit, independent high school with 120 students and 10 non-unionized teachers serving mostly foreign students. She has supervised 2 abrasive teachers and has chosen not to intervene.

21. Vera is a white 58-year-old with 3 years’ experience as principal. She leads a 420-student K-6 with an urban clientele. She supervises 25 unionized teachers, two of which are abrasive. She reports having been anxious at the time of intervening.
APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Informed Consent Form

The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to explore how American K-12 principals identify and respond to abrasive teachers.

_____ I have been told that Jim Weller will be conducting interviews with principals who are willing, of free choice to tell about their experiences in working with abrasive teachers. This research will be in partial fulfillment of Mr. Weller’s doctoral degree in Leadership and Administration from the School of Education at Andrews University.

_____ I have been told that the interview requires up to 45 minutes of my time, will be conducted by phone, and will be audio recorded and transcribed in order to stay true to my intent. I may discontinue participation at any time without stating a reason and without penalty or loss to me.

_____ I have been told that my identity in this study will not be disclosed in any published documents and that any details I share that could identify me will be modified to protect confidentiality.

_____ I have been told that there will be no cost to me for participating in this study, and that I will also not be remunerated in any way other than the intangible benefit of knowing I have contributed to a growing body of knowledge which is important to education leadership professionals and researchers.

_____ I have been told that I may request an executive summary of the study. If I request the summary, I will receive it within one year of the study’s completion.

_____ I have been told that I may contact Mr. Weller’s advisor, Dr. Erich Baumgartner, or any impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any complaint that I may have about the study. I may contact Dr. Baumgartner at Andrews University, School of Education, Bell Hall, Suite #173, Berrien Springs, MI 49104, or call (269) 471-3475 for information and assistance.

_____ I have read the contents of this consent form and received from Jim Weller verbal explanations to any questions I had. My questions concerning this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby give voluntary consent to participate in this study. I am fully aware that if I have any additional questions or concerns that I may contact Jim C. Weller by email at wellerj@andrews.edu, or jimcweller@gmail.org, or by phone at (951) 403-7498 or through correspondence to his physical address at: 3176 Vista Terrace, Riverside, CA 92503.

_____ I have been given a copy of this Statement of Informed Consent.

Signature of Participant __________________________ Date __________________________

Witness __________________________ Date __________________________

I have reviewed the contents of this form with the person signing above. I have explained potential risks and benefits of the study.

Signature of Principal Investigator. Jim C. Weller __________________________ Telephone __________________________ Date __________________________
APPENDIX F

EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS AND TABLE OF SPECIFICATIONS TALLY

Five people were chosen to serve on the content expert panel for the development of the survey. Three were chosen for their expertise in the content, and two were chosen for their understanding of this process. The panel’s purpose was to rank and critique survey questions to increase the instrument’s reliability. Each panel member was asked to indicate which questions they felt best measured the variables studied. Questions included in the survey were selected by at least 80% of the panel members. A description of the members is presented followed by the tally of question selection.

Expert Panel Members

Ed Boyatt, Ed.D.

Dr. Boyatt, is a retired Dean of the School of Education at La Sierra University. He has shepherded 52 doctoral students through the process of writing their dissertations. Ed has enjoyed 44 years in secondary and higher education teaching and administration.

Laura A. Crawshaw, Ph.D., BCC

Dr. Crawshaw is founder and director of both the Executive Insight Development Group, Inc. (1994) and the Boss Whispering Institute (2008). With over thirty years of experience as a psychotherapist, corporate officer, and executive coach, researcher, and author, Dr. Crawshaw focuses her research and practice on the reduction of workplace suffering caused by abrasive leaders.
Kelly Nagle Causey, Ed.D.

Dr. Causey has worked in education as a teacher, an assistant principal, a principal, and a curriculum director. Dr. Causey completed her Ed.D. at the University of Georgia, and her 2010 dissertation titled “Principals’ Perspectives of the Issues and Barriers of Working with Marginal Teachers” was the closest match found to the current study. Having been over such a similar road, her insights were helpful.

Stuart W. Twemlow, M.D.

Dr. Twemlow is a retired professor of Psychiatry, Baylor College of Medicine. Stuart’s 2005 article “The Prevalence of Teachers Who Bully Students in Schools with Differing Levels of Behavioral Problems”, coauthored with Peter Fonagy, was the first work on the topic published in the United States. He followed it a year later with “Teachers Who Bully Students: A Hidden Trauma” which was coauthored with Peter Fonagy, Frank C. Sacco, and John R. Brethour Jr. Both works continue to be cited in current studies of abrasive teachers.

Rhonda L. Whitney, Ph.D.

Dr. Whitney is a former teacher and more recently a supervisor of adult personnel. Her 2010 dissertation “An Investigation of the Relationship Between Community Connectedness and Congregational Spiritual Vitality” used the same Expert Panel method for validating the data collection instrument as was used by the current study. Rhonda’s gift for asking insightful, incisive questions became well-known during her post-graduate work. Her experience in education and with the Expert Panel method of survey validation made her a valuable member of this panel.
Summary of Changes

Due to the complexity of the Expert Panel process I will summarize their responses and the changes that I made based on their advisement. After these summarized points I will present the fuller documentation.

Expert Panel General Responses

1. The panel concurred that the four main questions were necessary and adequate to the study. I later split question 4 into its two implied parts—Q4 intervention and Q5 outcome—and added a sixth question to better collect and organize questions on the relationships between questions 2-5: identification, decision-making, intervention, and outcomes. This became the test for a threat-anxiety-response-outcome (TARO) pattern.

2. Similarly, the panel concurred that the sub-questions adequately addressed each of the four research concepts being explored. One panelist raised a question on the method of determining prevalence so made changes (noted below) to fix the problem.

3. In 12 out of 15 cases, the panel agreed that each question adequately addressed one of the four research concepts. In the three cases only three out of five panelists felt the question was adequate. Those three questions were retained on the finished questionnaire since: (a) other questions in their areas were judged unanimously to be well-suited to collect the needed data, and (b) two of the questions collected data critical to tests of relationships which I had not explained to the panelists.

Changes Made to Address Specific Comments

1. I removed a question on school demographics due to the complexity it added and due to the likelihood that the principal would feel less anonymous when providing such details. I retained the part that would have asked for faculty headcount since it was
needed for calculations of prevalence.

2. I clarified in both the questionnaire and the dissertation why abrasive will be used in reference to the person and bullying may at times be used describe behaviors.

3. I added a question to collect principals’ Theories of Mind they use to explain why the teacher uses abrasive behaviors.

4. I changed the phrase desire or ability to simply read motivation.

5. I added two options on the response to the question of demotivating elements so that principals could report either the teacher’s fragile state, or the teacher’s powerful connections.

6. I added an I don’t know option to the rating for each stakeholder’s satisfaction level.

7. I added a teacher is gone option on the response to the question about effect of the intervention.

8. I eliminated the use of teacher-on-student in favor of teacher-to-student.

9. I streamlined and logically organized the questionnaire to make it as quick-flowing as possible.

Documentation for Panelist Response and Changes Made

Instructions for Expert Reviewers, Intro and Table 1

[The following instructions were sent to each expert. I have eliminated any sentences not necessary for understanding how they worked, such as my address and phone numbers in case they had questions. None did. Accompanying these instructions was a description of the study and the definition of abrasive teacher.]

This is the first of two tables. This one is one page long, and it examines the concepts/questions that will guide this study. The other table is eight pages long, and it looks at the items on the questionnaire to determine if they are sufficient for attracting the data I will need to answer the research questions. Please fill out and return both.

The purpose of this first table is to provide a double-check to my selection of research questions. Use this table in two ways: First, look at the “Four Main Research Questions.” Read down that column and answer the question in the box at the bottom. Second, look at the first research question, “RQ1:
Prevalence,” and then look at its “Related Sub-questions.” Ask yourself if those sub questions seem sufficient for pursuing the answer to the main question (RQ1). Write your thoughts in the box at the far right “Response to Sub-questions.” Then do the same for the next research question, “RQ2: Identification,” and so on.

You will see references to school attributes and principal attributes. The attributes are part of the demographic data that will be collected. Evaluating those questions is not part of your work, so I have not included them.

[I provided them with my contact numbers and the various methods they could use for marking up the tables.]

The sub-questions on this page will help you comprehend the main research questions. That knowledge will make it easier for you to fill out the table in Part 2.

I would like responses back by April 19, if possible.

If you have any problems, questions, or ideas too complex to jot down, call or email me (I provided preferred methods of contact for their inquiries.)

[The following is a list of research questions I gave them, followed by their evaluation.]

RQ1: Prevalence. How prevalent are abrasive teachers in the work experience of K-12 school principals?
RQ2: Identification. How do principals become convinced that a teacher is bullying students?
RQ3: Decision-making. How do principals decide whether or not to intervene?
RQ4: Intervention. What interventions have principals tried, and what were the outcomes?

Are the four questions sufficient? [“R” stands for “Reviewer”.]
R1: Yes
R2: Yes
R3: Yes
R4: Yes, maybe too much
R5: Yes

[The next step was for them to judge the adequacy of the sub-questions. I have changed the format from what they saw. They saw this and the previous question in one large table. This format allows for the inclusion of their comments and my responses. My responses are in italics and begin with my initials, “JCW.”.]

Are sub-questions sufficient?
RQ1: Prevalence. How prevalent are abrasive teachers in the work experience of K-12 school principals?
  1a) What percentage of principals report having worked with an abrasive teacher within the last three years?
  1b) What is the percentage of abrasive teachers within the total sample of teachers represented by the responding principals?
  1c) Is a greater prevalence of abrasive teachers within a school correlated with selected attributes of that school?

R1: Yes
R2: Yes. I think my only question here would be if the principals report having worked with an abrasive teacher, does that mean it is just the principal’s opinion, that is reported by students or parents, that it has been documented as part of the evaluation process, what? Is it a “formal” or documented designation of abrasiveness, or can it also be principal opinion? *JCW: All judgments are from the principal’s perspective. Part of the study is to learn how they come to that conclusion (what other sources of verification they find, but their judgment is what drives their later action so whether or not they saw the teacher as abrasive is the hinge everything else turns on.*
R3: Yes
R4: Not sure. 1 c) Does the data you collect identify how many schools a principal has taught in during the last 3 years, how many teachers were in each school represented and how many were abrasive in each
school? How are the selected attributes identified? JCW: I chose to drop correlations to school attributes. They were problematic and simply not essential for this study. I added a request for their total teacher headcount over the last three years, regardless of number of schools they had lead, so that an accurate percentage of abrasive teachers could be found.

R5: Yes. Principals are very touchy about anonymity. To get them to be honest, even if you assure them about anonymity, is like asking about sexual data. It is very hard, for mostly political reasons. JCW: True. I worded the questionnaire as non-threateningly as I could. You will for PR as well as stat reasons need a large subject pool. JCW: I’m doing all I can to get a large N and to assure them of anonymity.

RQ2: Identification. How do principals become convinced that a teacher is bullying students?
   2a) What are the modes of discovery?
   2b) What teacher behaviors do principals view as bullying?
   2c) What student behaviors do principals perceive to be symptomatic of teacher-on-student bullying?

R1: Yes
R2: Yes   I think these questions are sufficient, however, I think I would change the wording from bullying to abrasive so it is consistent throughout the study. You were clear in the definition that here it would be called abrasive, but then switched back to bullying only for this question. Maybe “How do principals become aware that a teacher is abrasive to students?” and “What teacher behaviors do principals view as abrasive to students?” and “What student behaviors do principals perceive to be symptomatic of teacher-on-student abrasiveness?” Just a suggestion for clarity. JCW: I have added language on the questionnaire instructions to help explain that the teacher will be described as “abrasive” to keep the person more clearly in view, and “bullying” may at times be used to describe the behaviors due to its quick evocative power.

R3: Yes
R4: Yes. I think these questions are sufficient, however, I think I would change the wording from bullying to abrasive so it is consistent throughout the study. You were clear in the definition that here it would be called abrasive, but then switched back to bullying only for this question. Maybe “How do principals become aware that a teacher is abrasive to students?” and “What teacher behaviors do principals view as abrasive to students?” and “What student behaviors do principals perceive to be symptomatic of teacher-on-student abrasiveness?” Just a suggestion for clarity. JCW: I have added language on the questionnaire instructions to help explain that the teacher will be described as “abrasive” to keep the person more clearly in view, and “bullying” may at times be used to describe the behaviors due to its quick evocative power.

R5: Yes. Identification is a good question. You contribute here to the complex and undecided topic of what bullying is. You might ask a question on Principals’ Theories about why bullying occurs in teachers. This might illuminate their behavioral responses that you focus on. JCW: Great suggestion! I have added that question and I can’t wait to learn what is in principals’ minds on this point. It seems so obvious, but I missed it. Thanks for pointing it out.

RQ3: Decision-making. How do principals decide whether or not to intervene?
   3a) What factors enhance the principal’s desire or ability to intervene?
   3b) What factors inhibit the principal’s desire or ability to intervene?
   3c) What was the principal’s level of anxiety prior to his or her decision to intervene?
   3d) Of the principals who report having worked with an abrasive teacher in the past three years, what percentage chose to intervene?
   3e) What reasons do principals give for their decision to intervene?
   3f) What reasons do principals give for their decision not to intervene?
   3g) Is the principal’s decision to intervene or the type of intervention chosen correlated with selected principal attributes?
   3h) Is the principal’s decision to intervene or the type of intervention chosen correlated with the mode of discovery?
   3i) Is the principal’s decision to intervene or the type of intervention chosen correlated with his or her level of anxiety?

R1: Yes
R2: Yes   However, I would separate desire and ability. I would think there would be many cases where there is a desire to intervene but possibly an inability, for whatever reason. If I were a principal answering the survey, I would want to be able to convey that I certainly had a desire to intervene even if I were unable to do so. JCW: I changed “desire or ability” to the simple word “motivation.” There are still options on the multiple choice list that will help me understand whether desire or ability was
the bigger issue. Thanks.

R3: Yes. Perhaps you might wish to add “Is the principal’s decision to intervene or the type of intervention chosen correlated with selected abrasive teacher attributes (e.g. principal decides not to intervene because teacher is friends with superintendent, because teacher is experiencing marital problems and principal “doesn’t want to make it worse for him/her”, etc. JCW: I have added options that the principal can mark in 3b in order to test their impact on decision to intervene. I won’t be testing teacher attributes against type of intervention chosen.

R4: Yes
R5: Yes

RQ4: Intervention. What interventions have principals tried, and what were the outcomes?
   4a) What interventions have the principals employed in their attempts to stop teacher-on-student bullying?
   4b) What types of intervention have been employed (on a scale running from supportive to punitive)?
   4c) From the principal’s perception, what was the effectiveness of the intervention as judged by the degree to which the abrasive teacher’s behavior has improved?
   4d) In the principal’s opinion, after the intervention, what was the level of satisfaction among each of six groups: the targeted student(s), the targeted student(s) family(ies), the abrasive teacher, the rest of the faculty, the principal him/herself, and the broader school community?
   4e) Are specific interventions correlated with the desirability of outcomes? Desirability of outcomes will be derived from 4c, the principal’s perception of the effectiveness of the intervention, and from 4d, the principal’s perception of the levels of satisfaction among the stakeholders listed above.
   4f) Is type of intervention correlated with the desirability of outcomes? Desirability of outcomes will be derived from 4c, the principal’s perception of the effectiveness of the intervention, and from 4d, the principal’s perception of the levels of satisfaction among the stakeholders listed above.

R1: Yes
R2: Yes. You use “bullying” here again instead of abrasive. I would try to stick with abrasive in our wording for consistency. In 4d, what if they can’t answer this for all six groups? JCW: I added an “I don’t know column” for cases where the principal doesn’t know the attitudes of all parties. Thanks. In 4c, is the only goal to improve the teacher’s behavior? What if during the intervention process the principal determines that the desired outcome is actually termination of the teacher? JCW: I changed this to separate the two possible outcomes (teacher improvement and teacher removal) both in the sub-question and on the questionnaire. A principal may report either, but they will both be given the same score of “highly effective.” Thanks.

R3: Yes. But I question the use of “teacher-ON-student.” It just brings up the wrong picture. JCW: I changed all instances of “teacher-on-student bullying” to “teacher-to-student bullying” in the research questions and throughout the dissertation. Thanks.

R4: Yes. Seems like 4e and 4f are splitting hairs, but does allow for greater specificity of reporting.
R5: Yes

[One reviewer added this final note:]

Overall: Well thought through questions. You need to make it brief to get a response over 50%. Above 75% is better. JCW: I agree. I have cut out a whole section on school attributes because the statistical value of it was problematic and it could further alarm a nervous principal who might ask, “And why do they need to know so much? Can all this school information reveal where I work?” I also spent days streamlining and logically organizing the questionnaire. [During the pilot, the principals took from 12-19 minutes to fill it out (mean time: 14.5 minutes.) I asked them if it became tiring or frustrating, and they said, ‘No. It kept my interest.’ ‘It was easy because of its organization.’]
On the following pages are 15 questions I have designed for my study of principals’ response to abrasive teachers. Your review of these questions will help me improve the final questionnaire. Though it seems like many pages of work, this review will go fairly quickly. Your expertise will be complemented by the skills and experience of the other panel members. It’s a group effort, so relax. Don’t worry about proofing mechanics or formatting. Don’t worry if transitions from one question to the next seem abrupt. The finished questionnaire will provide transitions and “skip to question ##” instructions.

Please note:
1. The first column contains 15 items from the questionnaire. Do not answer those 15 questions. Instead, read each item carefully, and then answer the questions in the four columns to the right. Each of those columns corresponds to one of my four research questions.
2. For each item you will indicate: a) which concept or concepts you believe it measures, 2) how sufficiently it measures (or collects useful data on) the concept(s), and 3) how the item can be improved, if it is not already sufficient. Those same three questions will be asked about each item relative to all four concepts (see example below).
3. Repeat this process item after item. After three pages you’ll be in the rhythm, so I will somewhat reduce the prompts in the Concepts/Questions columns. This should make it less cluttered and faster for you.
4. You may type right into this form, save it, then attach it to an email back to me. It’s okay if the formatting of the table goes crazy, or you use tiny type. I will fix both when I get it back. If you wish, you may print this out, write on it, and mail it to me: Jim Weller / 3176 Vista Terrace / Riverside, CA 92503.
5. I would like responses back by April 19, if possible. If you have any problems, questions or great ideas call (951) 729-6330 or (951) 403-7498. Email is also fine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item on Questionnaire</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
<th>Identification</th>
<th>Decision-making</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Thinking about the teachers under your supervision, how many abrasive teachers have you identified in the past three years?</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fill in the blanks below to describe the assignment(s) of the abrasive teacher(s) with whom you have worked.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What causes you to determine that a teacher is abrasive?</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. List student behaviors you believe are symptomatic of a student being bullied by a teacher.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How did you become aware that this teacher’s behaviors might be detrimental to a student’s academic progress or perceptions of safety?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Keeping your chosen abrasive teacher in mind, whether or not you intervened, what factors were present and increased your motivation to intervene?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Whether or not you intervened, what factors were present and decreased your motivation to intervene?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Did you intervene?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. If you answered “Yes” to question 10, list the reasons you chose to intervene.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. What was your emotional state just prior to your decision to intervene?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. If you intervened, please describe what you did.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How would you describe the type of intervention you used?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. If you intervened, please indicate the effectiveness of the intervention.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. If you intervened, please mark how satisfied you think each of the following parties was after the intervention.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. List the reasons you have chosen not to intervene.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. On the expert reviewers’ charts the full question plus multi-option responses were provided.
APPENDIX G

PILOT TEST OF SURVEY

[I allowed the four principals, whose combined supervision spanned K-12, to read the same preliminary information to which the respondents to the web-based survey would be limited. I recorded their finish times and asked a few questions. Some discussion developed, and I took note of the critical points which are presented in brief below. At the conclusion of the debriefing, all principals said they wanted the executive summary when it was available. All said they were willing to do the actual survey when it launched. And all kept their pilot document to dispose of privately. I never saw their actual responses.]

Finish times [“P” stands for “Principal.”]
   Average: 14:30 (P1: 12 min, P2: 12 min, P3: 15 min, P4: 19 min)

1. How did it feel for length? Reasonable, or a real drag? P3 said “It was logically organized, so it seemed okay.” The others agreed it was clear, easy to understand.

2. Anything confusing? All responded, “No.”

3. Anything frustrating? All responded, “No.”

4. Anything uncomfortable? Most responded, “No,” but P3 said, “If a principal had an abrasive teacher and didn’t do anything about it, that could be hard to report.”

5. Gained in general discussion:
   - P1: I would have liked some examples on numbers 5 & 6 (AbT behaviors and student symptoms) Others agreed and P2 said “The more complicated it is [I think he meant “the more mentally taxing it is…”] the more principals will shut down and not finish it.”
   - P1: Question 14. “Concern” doesn’t seem like an emotional state, but when I saw the options, I thought, “Well, I can pick one of these.”
   - P4: Bully history: Are questions 28-30 about being bullied by a teacher or by classmates? [I changed the wording to emphasize that I wanted their personal childhood memories of being bullied and I added question. Still, some principals in the sample described bullying they had received as a principal from a teacher.]
   - Minor mechanic corrections pointed out and made.
   - P2: Is 3-year limit needed? If three-year limit were gone I would have had more to share. [This seemed critical since 75% of the principals in the pilot had supervised no abrasive teacher in the last three years. Therefore, I added one question and modified three others to allow all principals to provide demographic information on the abrasive teachers they’d supervised at any time. This broader collection was not used for calculations of prevalence, but it was useful in cross-tabulations looking for under- and overrepresentation in various demographic areas. During the survey, very few principals had not had an abrasive teacher in the last three years.]
   - One principal who had begun his own data collection 10 months earlier said, “It’s like pulling teeth to get principals to fill out a survey.” Another principal mention “Some guy gave away an iPad. What if you did one for the 3rd and 200th respondent? Or they get entered in a drawing?” [I was pretty worried about getting the 200 responses I needed, so I incentivized my first email group invitation.]
SURVEY OF PRINCIPALS

Abrasive Teachers and Principal Response

This survey will collect information about the challenges of working with abrasive teachers. The goal is to understand the problem and to provide some collective wisdom. Your input is valuable even if you have not worked with an abrasive teacher. Your email address is used only to give you access to this survey.

Your responses are completely anonymous.

The survey should take from 7 to 35 minutes to complete, depending on the information you choose to share. Your input is very important, but you may opt out of the survey at any time. Completing the survey will be a contribution to our profession.

If you have any questions, concerns, or problems with the survey, please contact the researcher:
Jim C Weller, at wellerj@andrews.edu.

To begin the survey, please click the "Next" button.

Thank you for participating in this timely study!

Welcome! Please read this crucial definition.

Definition: An abrasive teacher is any teacher whose maltreatment of students is sufficient to disrupt student learning or to lower student perceptions of safety.

Note: "Abrasive" means more than "annoying." Like an abrasive scouring pad, the abrasive teacher's behavior causes emotional pain or injury. For example, an abrasive teacher may threaten, ridicule or humiliate students. He or she may withhold needed services, maliciously withhold privileges, or grade student work unfairly. Abrasive teachers often intend to do their jobs well, but they use bullying behaviors in an effort to silence, control, or motivate students.

Instructions: Keeping the definition of “abrasive teacher” in mind, answer the following question.

1. Are you (or have you ever been) the principal/headmaster/supervisor of an abrasive teacher?
   - Yes
   - No

If principal answered “No” he/she skipped to page 8.
Information About the Abrasive Teacher(s)

**Definition**: An abrasive teacher is any teacher whose maltreatment of students is sufficient to disrupt student learning or to lower student perceptions of safety.

Keeping the definition in mind...
Answer questions 2-3 from your experience over the last three years.
Answer questions 4-7 from your broader experience.

2. Thinking about the teachers UNDER YOUR SUPERVISION, how many ABRASIVE teachers have you identified in the PAST THREE YEARS?
   (Count both full-time and part-time teachers. Report the head count rather than the FTE. Enter a whole number.)

3. How many TOTAL teachers have you supervised in the PAST THREE YEARS?
   (Include abrasive teachers in this count. Count ALL full-time and part-time teachers. Report the head count rather than the FTE. Enter a whole number.)

4. Fill in the blanks below to describe the abrasive teacher(s) who have ever been under your supervision. Do NOT limit this to the last three years.
   (If the teacher's precise grade assignment is not shown, choose the one containing the grade level at which he or she seems most abrasive. Choose the subject that most closely describes their assignment. Use your best guess on Race/Ethnicity. *If the box appears to be blank, mouse-over to see the options.*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abrasive Teacher 1</th>
<th>Grade Level(s) Taught</th>
<th>Subject(s) Taught</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Years in Teaching</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive Teacher 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive Teacher 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive Teacher 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive Teacher 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive Teacher 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive Teacher 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive Teacher 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive Teacher 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive Teacher 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use this box to declare any teaching assignment(s) that were not included in the drop-down menus. You may also add any other clarifications needed.
5. What things do you see, hear, or feel that cause you to believe a teacher is being abrasive?
(Remember that "abrasive" means "maltreatment of students which is sufficient to disrupt student learning or to lower student perceptions of safety.")

6. Why do you think a teacher would use bullying behaviors on a student?

7. List student behaviors you believe are symptomatic of that student's being bullied by a teacher. (These could include "acting out" behaviors and/or "lack of performance" behaviors.)

Information About Decision-making

Note: If you have supervised more than one abrasive teacher, CHOOSE ONLY ONE and keep him or her in mind for the remainder of this survey. If you would like to present ideas about more than one abrasive teacher, consider granting an interview. You will be given that option at the end of the survey.

8. How did you become aware that this teacher's behaviors might be detrimental to a student's academic progress or his/her perception of safety?
(Check all that apply to your process of discovery. If you write in a response, be sure to check the "Other" box, or your write-ins will be lost.)

- A colleague reported it.
- A student reported it.
- A parent/guardian reported it.
- I observed it myself.
- The abrasive teacher self-reported.
- Other (please specify)

9. At the time of this situation, were the teachers in your school unionized?

- Yes
- No
10. Keeping your chosen abrasive teacher in mind (whether or not you intervened)
what factors were present that INCREASED your motivation to intervene?
(Check all that apply, and write in your own reasons if the list is insufficient. If you add your own reasons, be
SURE to check the "Other" box, or your write-ins will be lost.)

- The problem was brought to my attention by a student, teacher, parent, or other adult.
- This situation had been discussed on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- This situation had been reported in the news media.
- A parent/guardian had threatened legal action.
- There were clear policies or procedures for intervention.
- I had been trained in how to deal with abrasive teachers or bullies in general.
- I had strong support from the superintendent or school board.
- I was confident of support from our teacher union; they expect professionalism.
- I had clear convictions regarding teacher behaviors that are unacceptable.
- The abrasive teacher's behavior had not improved after earlier, softer counsel.
- The abrasive teacher had requested help.
- Other (Add your own reasons.)

11. Whether or not you intervened, what factors were present that DECREASED your
motivation to intervene?
(Check all that apply, and write in your own reasons if the list is insufficient. If you add your own reasons, be
SURE to check the "Other" box, or your write-ins will be lost.)

- I expected a hostile response from the teacher.
- The teacher's status/connections within the school or community were forbidding.
- I expected a fight with the teacher union.
- The larger community was not yet aware of the problem.
- There were no clear policies and procedures for the intervention.
- I had not been trained for this type of intervention.
- I was new to the principalship or new to the school.
- I was not certain of support from the superintendent of the school board.
- I was not certain of support from the school community.
- I have a personal friendship with the abrasive teacher.
- I believed that the situation was temporary; the teacher usually did better.
- Other (Add your own reasons.)
Information About Intervention or Non-intervention

Courage! The hard part is almost over. 😊

12. Did you intervene?
- Yes
- No

If principal answered “No” he/she skipped to page 7.

Information About Intervention

The following eight questions will help you describe what happened. Keep it up! Your thoughts are a gift to the profession.

13. List the reasons you chose to intervene.
(Check all that apply, and write in your own reasons if the list is insufficient. If you add your own reasons, be SURE to check the "Other" box, or your write-ins will be lost.)

- The teacher's behavior was simply unacceptable.
- The students' need for a respectful learning environment comes first.
- It was becoming public knowledge.
- The parents hired an attorney and threatened lawsuit.
- Our school had clear policies/procedures for intervention.
- I had been trained in intervention.
- I felt confident that there would be a good outcome.
- The abrasive teacher asked for help.
- Other (Add your own reasons.)

14. What was your emotional state just prior to your decision to intervene?
(Indicate your emotional response to this situation, not to life in general at that time.)

- Concerned but fairly calm
- Anxious
- Extremely anxious or angry

15. Considering your answer to question 14, what caused you to feel that way?


17. How would you describe the type of intervention you used?

- Supportive (relieving pressure from the teacher)
- Instructive (providing training, counseling, coaching with a clear objective)
- Cautionary (setting limits and giving warnings)
- Restrictive (setting limits and using negative reinforcement, such as suspension)
- Punitive (removing teacher)

18. Indicate the effectiveness of the intervention.
(Mark this based on your own perspective.)

- Situation is still too volatile to judge the effectiveness of the intervention.
- Things got worse. Teacher is more abrasive in the classroom, or has become more hostile towards me.
- Made no difference. Teacher is no less abrasive.
- Teacher's performance is not perfect, but it is better.
- Problem is solved. Teacher is doing well.
- Problem is solved. Teacher is gone.

19. Mark how satisfied you think each of the following parties was after the intervention.
(Mark “0” if the party was not aware of the problem or the intervention, or if you are unaware of the party's level of satisfaction. Estimate an average score for groups. For example if the community is divided with half very dissatisfied and half very satisfied, give a score of “3”. “Broader community” includes news media, social media, and/or "the talk around town.")

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Level of Satisfaction</th>
<th>Very High</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Student(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target(s) Family(ies)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abrasive Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rest of the Faculty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You as Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broader Community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. If training/coaching on how to deal with abrasive teachers were available would you "sign up"?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)
Understanding why principals choose NOT to intervene can be just as beneficial as understanding why principals DO intervene. Please share your thoughts. Remember that your responses are strictly confidential.

21. List the reasons you have chosen NOT to intervene.
(Check all that apply, and add in your own reasons if the list is insufficient. The options are written in the present tense. Even so, mark the ones that were true at the time, if the situation you are describing is clearly in the past. If you add your own reasons, be SURE to check the "Other" box, or your write-ins will be lost.)

- The problem isn't serious enough yet.
- I have more urgent issues to deal with.
- I don't have sufficient proof at this point.
- The teacher is in a fragile position right now; I'm sure the situation will change on its own.
- The teacher is too well connected in this community.
- I believe the fallout from a termination would be even more detrimental to the school.
- There is no clear policy or procedure for intervention in cases like this.
- I haven't been trained in how to intervene successfully.
- I don't think I could count on the people that would need to support me.
- I'm not on strong enough ground to prevail in a grievance.
- The teacher union would be too difficult to deal with.
- Other (Add your own reasons.)

22. If training/coaching on how to deal with abrasive teachers were available would you "sign up"?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify) 

Page 8

Information About You as a Principal

You're almost done! Only a few last easy questions.

Answer questions 24-26 according to how things were during your most recent year with the abrasive teacher you have been reporting about. If you have never worked with an abrasive teacher, answer according to how things are now.
23. Your Age

24. Years in the Role of Principal/Supervisor of Teachers

25. Supervision Load
(Write the total number of teachers you supervised in the year you are reporting on.)

26. Your Sex

○ Female
○ Male

27. Your Race/Ethnicity
(Please choose the one that best describes you.)

○ American Indian or Alaska Native
○ Asian
○ Black or African American
○ Hispanic or Latino
○ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
○ White or Caucasian

28. When you were a student in grades K-12 what frequency and intensity of bullying did you experience during your WORST year?
(This could be bullying from classmates or teachers.)

○ None or little bullying
○ Infrequent moderate bullying
○ Infrequent severe bullying
○ Frequent moderate bullying
○ Frequent severe bullying

29. Thinking of your answer to Question 28, what type(s) of bullying did you experience?
(Choose the type or types of bullying behaviors that were most commonly used on you.)

□ None
□ Teasing, Verbal Assault
□ Shunning, Ostracism, Isolation
□ Rough Handling, Physical Assault
□ Other (please specify)
30. If needed, add any comments that would create a clearer picture of the bullying you received.


31. If you experienced bullying from teachers, please describe what the teacher did and how you felt or responded.


Invitation to Interview
If you are willing to share more details of your experience working with abrasive teacher(s), then mark "Yes" and provide your name and email address in the box below. This WILL allow the researcher to associate your name with your survey responses, however strict confidentiality will be maintained. Any experiences you share will be reported without being traceable to you, both in the survey and in the interview. Your thoughts, feelings, successes, and failures will be helpful to other principals and researchers.
If you do NOT want your answers in this survey to be identified with you, then mark "No."

32. Are you willing to participate in a 45-minute interview with the researcher?
(Note: Interviews will be scheduled at each principal's convenience.)

○ No
○ Yes (Enter your name and email address in the box.)
You may enter any comment you wish in the box below. You may explain one of your earlier answers. You may comment on the process. You may share any additional thoughts or insights you think might be helpful to the researcher. Or, you may leave the box empty. This is totally optional.

Since the survey is anonymous, the researcher will not be able to send a response (unless you have volunteered to interview.) However, your comments and even questions may add to the researcher's understanding.

33. OPTIONAL: If you wish to share any final comments, clarifications, or questions, enter them here.

Finish

Thank you for spending valuable time providing information for this study!

Remember: You may request an executive summary of this study by contacting the researcher.

If you have questions, concerns, or problems regarding the survey, please contact the researcher. You may also contact his dissertation committee chair.

Jim C Weller, at welleri@andrews.edu - Researcher
Dr. Erich Baumgartner, at baumgart@andrews.edu - Dissertation Committee Chair

When you close this window you will not be able to reopen the survey.
Options for matrix under Question 4.
Grade Level(s) Taught: Kindergarten, Grade 1-2, Grade 3-4, Grade 5-6, Grades 7-8, Grades 9-10, Grades 11-12, Grades 9-12, K-4, K-8, Grades K-12, Grades 1-4, Grades 5-8
Subject(s) Taught: General Ed Classroom, Art, Business Ed., English/Drama, History / Geography, Industrial Ed, Math, Music, P.E. / Health / Dance, Science, Special Ed,
Sex: Female, Male
Years in Teaching: 1-3 years, 4-10 years, 11+ years
Race/Ethnicity: American Indian / Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White or Caucasian

Grade Level(s) Taught:
  Kindergarten
  Grade 1-2
  Grade 3-4
  Grade 5-6
  Grades 7-8
  Grades 9-10
  Grades 11-12
  Grades 9-12
  Grades K-4
  Grades K-8
  Grades K-12
  Grades 1-4
  Grades 5-8

Subject(s) Taught:
  General Ed Classroom
  Art
  Business Ed.
  English/Drama
  Industrial Ed
  Math
  Music
  P.E. / Health / Dance
  Science,
  Social Studies
  Special Ed

Race/Ethnicity:
  American Indian / Alaskan Native
  Asian
  Black or African American
  Hispanic or Latino
  Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  White or Caucasian
APPENDIX I

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

First call or email:

Hello. My name is James Weller. I am researching K-12 principals’ responses to abrasive teachers. Thank you for filling out the “Survey for Principals Regarding Abrasive Teachers.” You indicated a willingness to talk with me about abrasive teachers and the interventions you have tried, or the reasons you have chosen not to intervene. I am grateful for the information you can provide. It will help educational researchers understand this whole dynamic of teachers who bully students and what principals have experienced in dealing with them.

Are you still willing to grant me an interview of about 45 minutes?

[If “yes”] I will send you more information on your rights and responsibilities in this process, and I will need a signed consent form back from you before the actual interview begins. Let me check to make sure I have your preferred email address and phone number.

What would be a good date and time for your interview?

[Then I emailed the information regarding the study and their rights as a participant along with the Informed Consent agreement and a confirmation of the date and time.]

Interview:

[Since I had his or her questionnaire in front of me, some “getting acquainted” questions were drawn from it. I wanted him/her to know that I had read him/her responses, and I was interested in understanding him/her experience more clearly. I began the interview once a comfortable interaction had been established.]

I will ask two kinds of questions: 1) Any clarifications I may need to help me understand a specific survey response better. 2) Then a series of questions that will allow you to speak more freely about your own experiences, attitudes and values regarding abrasive teachers.

But first a little housekeeping.

1. Are you aware that I am recording this interview for the purpose of later transcription?

2. Are you aware that the interview could take up to 45 minutes?

3. Could you tell me a little about your school just so I’ll understand your context?
Okay, let's get started.

4. [Questions from the participant’s survey]

5. Is there a trigger point or a key factor that causes you to confront an abrasive teacher?

6. How many interventions do you think you have done with abrasive teachers?

7. Have there been any that ended badly?

8. Have there been times you chose not to intervene? Why?

9. If you were coaching a rookie principal who had just run into his/her first abrasive teacher, how would you advise him/her?

10. If he/she were highly anxious about confronting the abrasive teacher, what would you say?

11. What effect did the intervention have on everyone involved? (Or what effects seem typical after an intervention? Plusses? Minuses?)

12. What is the difference, in your opinion between a tough teacher and an abrasive one?

13. That’s all the questions I had. Is there any other thing you would like to share?

14. By the way, why did you offer to interview?
APPENDIX J

SUPPRESSION OF 30 RECORDS

A more detailed rationale for removing 30 responses to questions 2 and 3 is provided here. One problem was that a number of principals reported the total number of teachers they had supervised over the past three years as being equal to the number of abrasive teachers they had supervised in same period of time. A possible explanation is that they misread question 3 to be asking how many abrasive teachers they had supervised over the length of their career rather than the total number of teachers they were currently supervising. A principal who misread question 3 and who had been in the office for less than four years would have filled in the same number. Therefore, a comparison was made against question 25 near the end of the questionnaire.

Question 25 asked each principal to state how many teachers were under his or her supervision at the time of the intervention they had just described, or at the present time if he or she had never supervised an abrasive teacher. If this answer to question 25 was the same as the first two, then they were kept in the calculation, since it is possible that a principal in a very small school could have inherited a difficult faculty. Indeed, each time these three numbers were the same, the number was small (from one to five.)

Still, 22 principals’ responses were suppressed when figuring prevalence of abrasive teachers in the wider teaching force. They were suppressed because they carried the same answers in questions 2 and 3, but a much larger answer in question 25. Since it is not likely they would have been so drastically demoted and have 100% abrasive staff, it made the answer to question 25 look like a better number for their total faculty count. However, I could not be certain of that.
Similarly 2 principals reported an only slightly larger number total number of teachers in Q3 than abrasive teachers (in Q2) but a much larger number in Q25’s question on supervision load. Again, it seemed doubtful that they would have been so seriously demoted. It made more sense to think they had not reported the right number in Q3 and I did not feel certain that I could use Q25’s number in its place (due to the “last three years” nature of Qs 2 and 3 and the “at the time of the intervention” time frame for Q25.

Another unexpected response was when a principal would report fewer total teachers than abrasive teachers. This happened on 3 reports. A possible explanation is that the principal may have used the second question on total number of teachers to report the additional abrasive teachers they had worked with outside of the three-year limit. In each of these 3 cases the total number of teachers was small and the whole record was dropped from the calculation of percentage.

Finally, three more responses were dropped due to miscellaneous strange patterns of response. One had reported one abrasive, one total, and one supervision load. It is possible that they were a head teacher with a cranky partner, but I sent invitations only to principals who were supervising two or more other teachers, so this explanation doesn’t work. Another principal had reported 5 abrasives, 1 total, and had not responded to Q25 on supervision load, so I had no way of even guessing what their case might be. The third principal had been filling in some strange answers such as “m”, “mm”, etc. and had reported “8” in Qs 2 and 3. When I talked with her she didn’t remember that number and told me “2 or 3” abrasive teachers were in her past supervision experience.


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Hawaii Conference, Honolulu, HI
Principal, Hawaiian Mission Academy, grades 9-12, 1995-2000

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Principal/Teacher, Tacoma Adventist School, 1987-1992
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Head Teacher, Nordland Adventist School, grades K-8, one teacher, 1980-1984

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