

**A Study of Manitoba Principals' Experiences of Workplace Mistreatment, Its  
Frequency, Its Severity and Its Impacts**

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### **Abstract**

In Canada and in many other jurisdictions, the job of principals has been described as complex (Combs, Edmonson & Jackson, 2009; Duke, 1988; Pollock & Ryan, 2013). With such a task, levels of stress and job dissatisfaction could affect the ability of principals to fulfill all job requirements (Keashly, 1997; Raver & Nishii, 2010). One such stressor on a principal could be elements associated with mistreatment by other adults in the principals' workplace network. There are no studies in the academic research to date that touch specifically on the types of general workplace mistreatment (Price Spratlen, 1995) that the principals suffer or the impacts that these incidents have on the principals. The purpose of this research was to contribute to the filling of this void by examining what twelve middle years school principals in Manitoba perceived as mistreatment from adults, the attributes of the mistreatment incidents regarding alleged perpetrators, frequency and severity of the incidents and the impacts on principals, particularly regarding well-being and job satisfaction.

This exploratory study used mixed methods inquiry (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) focusing on uncovering both quantitative data regarding the principals' perception of the frequency and severity of the mistreatments, as well as qualitative data regarding the ways that principals constructed understandings of mistreatment and its impact. A heuristic framework was used to catalogue the perceptions of workplace mistreatment provided by the principals using classifications drawn from the organizational behaviour literature, Namie and Namie's (2004) Workplace Mistreatment Severity Continuum and Blase and Blase's (2006) Levels of Aggression for Workplace Mistreatment.

Findings from this study suggested, first, that the principals participating in this study did experience incidents of general workplace mistreatment ranging from incivility to mobbing, but not physical violence. Secondly, the survey results revealed that the frequency of mistreatments was not high, but that when the incidents did occur, some were perceived as severe and stressful regardless of where they fell on the workplace mistreatment continuum heuristic. Principals suffered a range of negative impacts, some enduring, such as stress, but the negative impacts did not prevent them from expressing high levels of overall job satisfaction.

*Keywords:* principal, workplace mistreatment, well-being, negative impacts, job satisfaction

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## **Chapter One: Background to the Study**

Academic and professional authors writing about many jurisdictions across North America and beyond point to a reality that while the leadership role of the principal is central to student success in school (Leithwood and Seashore Louis, 2012), the job is becoming increasingly demanding (Ballantine & Hammack, 2009; Combs, Edmonson & Jackson, 2009; Copeland, 2001; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Duke, 1988; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Friedman, 1995; Gmelch & Swent, 1984; Martin & Willower, 1981; Pollock & Ryan, 2013; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2004; Whitaker, 1996; Young, 2011), and in some jurisdictions it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit qualified candidates to take on these leadership roles (Barty, Thomson, Blackmore & Sachs, 2005; Brooking, Collins, Court & O'Neill, 2003; Canadian Association of Principals & The Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014; Educational Research Service, 2000; Fenwick, 2000; Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Gronn & Rawling-Sanaei, 2003; Lovely, 2004; Mascall & Leithwood, 2012; Normore, 2013; Olson, 1999; Potter, 2001; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998; Zellner, Jinkins, Gideon, Doughty & McNamara, 2002). Extensive literature on principal recruitment and retention documents what principals, and potential principals, perceive to be the challenges and rewards of the role (Lovely, 2004; Portin, Shen & Williams, 1998; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003; Whitaker, 1996). While interpersonal relationships and personnel issues are often cited as challenges, and possible sources of principal burnout causing people not to seek a principalship position, there is virtually no research that actually examines the topic of general workplace mistreatment of principals by other adults. This mixed methods study sought to address this topic by examining the experiences of twelve principals of middle years schools in Manitoba.

Principals tell North American researchers that the number of tasks associated with the job are continually increasing and none seem to ever be deleted from the task list (Portin et al., 1998; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003; Whitaker, 1996); indeed, “[t]he expectations placed on principals by ... local policymakers, parents, and the public have reached epic heights” (Lovely, 2004, pp. 2-3). If both the role and the job description are herculean challenges and a source of “constant pressure” (Whitaker, 1996, p. 67), it is not surprising that the recruitment of candidates and principal retention to avoid turnover is a topic on many educational research agendas (MacBeath, 2006). Canada is not immune to this problem of principal recruitment (Taylor, 2008; Williams, 2001). Fink and Brayman (2006) comment on the “growing unpopularity of the principalship” (p. 84) as can be seen with fewer teachers aspiring to step into the principal role (Alphonso & Bradshaw, 2014; Lenarduzzi, 2015; McIsaac, 2014; Normore, 2013; Pollock, Wang & Hauseman, 2014; St-Germain & Boucher, 2015; Williams, 2001). Also, studies reveal issues of stress on the job that negate recruitment of teachers into the rank of principal in Canadian schools (Canadian Association of Principals & The Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2014; Newton & Wallin, 2013).

Stone-Johnson (2012) contends that a substantial portion of those who take on a principalship consider resigning soon after they start in the principal role due to the overwhelming nature of the job and their personal needs. Reasons why this occurs, as suggested by other authors, include: politics, administrivia, time requirements, lack of professional growth opportunities, and, central to this thesis, difficult interpersonal relationships caused by conflict (student discipline, parental concerns, personnel issues, central office demands) (Alphonso & Bradshaw, 2014; Lovely, 2004; Ballantine & Hammack, 2009; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2004). Interestingly enough these are the same reasons that are cited as reasons leading to principal

burnout and lack of motivation to seek a principalship (Canadian Association of Principals & The Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014; Combs et al., 2009; Duke, 1988; Sarros, 1988; Whitaker, 1996; Williams, 2001). In Ontario, a study by Learning Partnership (2008) identified the top three reasons that teachers provided for not seeking a principalship as:

- 1) the time required to fulfill job responsibilities has increased substantially making it difficult to balance family and school responsibilities;
- 2) the job is viewed as very stressful; and
- 3) it is difficult to satisfy the many demands of parents and the community. (p. 86)

The top reason identified above by Learning Partnership in 2008 had not changed since a Canadian study by Williams (2001) where one amongst the five most cited causes of dissatisfaction for principals was time on the job to accomplish various sub-groups of tasks (and these subgroups all related to time, effectively becoming the top five reasons), with parent demands ranking ninth (or fifth if all the 'time' complaints are grouped into one ranking at the top). In this study of principals' experiences of general workplace mistreatment the focus is not restricted to demands from parents and the community (#3 from the Learning Partnership (2008) study above), but rather this research considers all principal experiences involving other adults, where the adults are categorized broadly into 1) professional and non-professional staff/employees and 2) members of the public/community.

An extensive review of the general workplace mistreatment literature in the educational domain provides some rather surprising results. The phenomenon of administrator mistreatment by other adults in the school community is addressed only in a cursory manner (Carroll, 1999; Council on School Administration & The Alberta Teachers' Association, 2001; Desrosiers, 2010; Dowhaniuk, Drennan & Whetter, 2004; Keel, 2000). Most of these instances are

substantiated neither with empirical data, nor with supporting documentation, nor with associated narratives. There is a dearth of information regarding this specific subject in Manitoba as well.

Using The Manitoba Teachers' Society as an example, since one of the roles of The Society is to protect its members, the scarcity becomes glaring. An early document where The MTS acknowledged that workplace mistreatment existed, for teachers, was published in 1992. The document was entitled *Protocol on Teacher Abuse* (The Manitoba Teachers' Society, 1992). That document began with the following statement: "In 1990, a Society study found that teachers believed that physical and emotional abuse directed against them was increasing" (The Manitoba Teachers' Society, 1992, p. 2); and this is telling in terms of the length of time the idea of workplace mistreatment has been considered by the MTS. Abuse for the purposes of the 1992 document included, but was not limited to: hitting, kicking, breaking car mirrors, verbal abuse, obscene gestures, abusive phone calls and the like, due to the physical and emotional pain that could be caused by such acts (The Manitoba Teachers' Society, 1992). Although principals are not mentioned *per se* in the document, principals in the province of Manitoba are considered teachers; thus, the policy proposed in the document could well provide the principals with a certain protection. Over ten years later, a second example of the acknowledgement of mistreatment in the workplace appeared on the front page of a 2003 issue of *The Manitoba Teacher*. This study prepared by The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) Disability Benefits Plan (DBP) showed that about 80% of "principals and vice-principals put parental harassment ... high on their lists" of stressors (The Manitoba Teachers' Society, 2003, p. 1). That same year, Judson (2003) confirmed that "[w]e hear increasingly about situations where a parent or group of parents has behaved in a manner that threatens educators. In some cases, this has involved the

threat of physical violence” (p. 265). All of these parental reactions – harassment, threats, physical violence – fall under the umbrella of workplace mistreatment, yet The Manitoba Teachers’ Society had chosen to do no further research into this finding since 2003. Later, in 2004, The Manitoba Teachers’ Society felt it necessary to explain how to identify cases of bullying of school personnel, by students and other staff members, and to encourage the insertion of “Freedom from Violence” (The Manitoba Teachers’ Society, 2004, p. 5) clauses into collective agreements, but no further research was undertaken. However, in 2014, The Manitoba Teachers’ Society launched a poster campaign to raise awareness regarding workplace violence (physical, verbal and cyber harassment and bullying) and the need to report incidents to supervisors (The Manitoba Teachers’ Society, 2014b). These examples indicate that the MTS is aware of the existence of mistreatment – under its various names such as harassment, bullying, violence – for all staff who work in schools. However, it has avoided, to date, researching issues of workplace mistreatment against teachers or principals. This, and the absence of empirical data from any other Manitoba source, suggests that research on the subject of mistreatment of principals in their workplaces in Manitoba is needed.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine a select sample of twelve Manitoba middle years (grades 5-9) school principals’ identification and understanding of workplace mistreatment from other adults, its frequency and severity, as well as to understand the impacts that these experiences had on principals’ well-being and job satisfaction.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the stated purpose, this study specifically addressed the following questions:



- 1) What do principals perceive as instances of workplace mistreatment from other adults (teachers, senior administration, parents, the wider community, etc.) in their work settings?
- 2) What are the attributes of the mistreatment incidents in terms of:
  - a. the range of alleged perpetrators of the workplace mistreatment;
  - b. the frequency of each principal's experiences of mistreatment;
  - c. the perceived severity of each principal's experiences of mistreatment; and
- 3) How does the experience of mistreatment at work impact principals in terms of personal well-being and satisfaction in their jobs?

## **Methodology**

For this study, I chose a mixed methods research (MMR) design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Onwuegbuzie, 2012). Mixed methods research has, as Creswell (2014) suggests, its philosophical and epistemological grounding in pragmatism. Pragmatists understand “that knowledge claims cannot be totally abstracted from contingent beliefs, interests, and projects” (Howe, 1988, pp. 14-15) as all humans filter knowledge through their belief systems; however, pragmatism is a search using values and beliefs for solutions to real problems ending in an offer of improvements in the world (Creswell, 2014; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). Approaching my topic with such a lens afforded me a logical integration of different perspectives of reality, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, and allowed the study of this real-world problem (Biesta, 2010; Creswell, 2014; Greene & Hall, 2010; Howe, 1988; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007; Mertens, 2010; Morse, 1991; Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins, 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010).

For the quantitative parts of the study, I examined data which could be quantified as provided in several semi-structured interview questions, as well as data from three written paper surveys regarding the types, frequency (1 survey) and severity (2 surveys) of workplace mistreatments as demarcated in the general workplace mistreatment literature (Glomb, 2010; Rospenda & Richman, 2004). To garner the qualitative data, I used two semi-structured interview sessions. Wishing to study in a comprehensive manner how principals understood their personal experiences of workplace mistreatment, its substantive issues and its impact on them gave the qualitative part of the study a constructivist orientation (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). I attempted to identify and understand “the processes of how people [principals] acquire[d] or construct[ed] different meaning(s)” (Stinson & Bullock, 2013, p. 1257) regarding the types of mistreatments and their impacts.

This study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design as I collected both quantitative and qualitative data at relatively the same time and then used the same constructs, comparing what was discovered in the two data types to confirm or disconfirm my findings/assumptions (Creswell, 2014). For the most part, different research questions were addressed in the qualitative and quantitative parts of the study so only a limited mixing of the data was possible. In fact, there were differences between the interview and survey parameters, meaning that the quantitative data did not lend itself to be mixed at all with the qualitative data regarding the impacts on the principals of enduring workplace mistreatment. Notwithstanding this one theme that provided no opportunity for mixing, I followed the chosen MMR plan and consistent with this type of MMR, there was minimal interaction between the qualitative and quantitative data during the data collection, calculation and coding and first phases of analysis, but all data was considered together in the final correlational and comparative analyses. In the

end, mixing the two data types allowed some level of confirmation regarding the principals' perception of the frequency, types and severity of the instances of workplace mistreatment through the use of numerical data and data-rich citations to support the inferences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), making the results of this MMR "greater than the sum of its parts" (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006, p. 59).

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

In this section I briefly describe some key terms and the ways that they have been used in the thesis. Included is select terminology from the academic organizational behaviour literature on workplace mistreatment, as well as terms specific to the organization of K-12 schooling in the province of Manitoba. In this section, I purposely did not define workplace aggression, workplace mistreatment, harassment and the other terms related to the topic of workplace mistreatment, as the range of definitions of these concepts will be taken up in detail in the literature review in the next chapter. However, in this thesis, 'general workplace mistreatment', 'workplace mistreatment' and 'mistreatment' are used interchangeably.

**Council of School Leaders (COSL):** Principals in Manitoba are members of The Manitoba Teachers' Society. COSL is a sub-group of The Manitoba Teachers' Society that serves as the professional voice for principals and vice-principals. Administrators may choose to belong to this organization by paying the yearly dues.

**Parent:** This person is the legal guardian of a school-age child responsible for the child's education and whose child currently attends a school in a particular school division.

**Parent Advisory Council (PAC):** In this thesis the term parent advisory council is used to describe any group of parents of children in a particular school who have some level of formal status at the school where their children attend. These parents come together with the principal

for meetings to discuss items of interest to them and their children in the school. In Manitoba there is legal provision for the establishment of *Advisory Councils for School Leadership* [as a] *Regulation* (Manitoba Regulation 54/96), one in each school where requested by parents. These parent groups exist in many schools in the province while others continue to operate less formally outside of the provisions of these regulations. The term Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is used as an umbrella term here to designate a school-based parent group.

**Perpetrator (alleged perpetrator):** Hauge, Skogstad and Einarsen (2007) define a perpetrator as the adult who exposes another adult to mistreatment behaviours at work. For the purposes of this thesis, the term perpetrator is used to identify an adult who initiates any type of mistreatment action against the principal. Further, the perpetrators as acknowledged in the findings and concluding chapters 4 to 7 refer to the alleged perpetrators as the principals perceived them to be. In an effort to shorten the text, the word alleged is to be understood as the qualifier before the noun perpetrator.

**Principal:** This person is defined by the *Public Schools Act* of Manitoba (2015) as the educational leader in the school as well as the manager of all aspects of a public school building who has the formal and legal responsibilities for that particular school, its students and its staff. She or he is an employee of the school division and answerable to the divisional senior administration and the school board trustees.

**School (Board) Trustee/Trustee:** Manitoba's public school system has a governance structure that involves 37 school divisions each of which has a school board consisting of between 5 and 11 elected school trustees (*Public Schools Act*, 2015). The trustee, as part of the school board, is responsible for working with the other members of the board to plan and deliver

the educational services through policy governance to the particular division for which he or she was elected.

**Senior Administration:** The senior administration of a school division includes the superintendent and assistant superintendents, who are responsible for all aspects of the school division as required by the Manitoba Government and for the evaluation of principals and vice-principals. The elected school trustees hire the senior administration to carry out this work in the school division.

**Target:** The target in this study is always a principal and this principal is the employee whose “well-being is harmed by an act of aggression” (Aquino & Thau, 2009, p. 718) or mistreatment by another adult in the workplace. The term is used interchangeably with the term *victim* in this thesis.

**The Manitoba Teachers’ Society (MTS):** The Manitoba Teachers’ Society is the professional organization/union to which public school teachers, principals and vice principals in Manitoba belong.

**Victim:** The victim in this study is always the principal who has suffered emotional, psychological or physical harm to his or her well-being as a result of perceived workplace mistreatment. The principal becomes a victim when he or she comes to the realization that he or she has been mistreated, thus harmed (Agervold, 2007). The term is used interchangeably with the term *target* in this thesis.

**Workplace:** For the purposes of this study the term workplace does not pertain simply to the specific geographical location of the school in which the principal works. The concept is broader than the individual school building, encompassing several layers in the school environment including the school building itself, the area surrounding the school (such as the fields, walkways, and school grounds), the school division board office and other divisional

buildings, and even other buildings and spaces where principals interact with adults concerning school business (such as community BBQ's, professional development locations, provincial education libraries, cyberspace and the like). In effect, the workplace is any space where adults maintain a relationship with the principal of the school regarding what is happening in that principal's building and this environment provides the context for possible mistreatment. This workplace is built around the network of adult relationships as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *The Principal's Workplace – A Network of Relationships*

	<b>Public/Community</b>		<b>Professional/Employees</b>	
	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Institutional</b>	<b>Professional Staff (i.e. B.Ed., MBA, etc.)</b>	<b>Non-Professional Staff</b>
<b>School System</b>	Parents  Community Members	School Board Trustees	Senior Administration/ Superintendents  Secretary-Treasurer  Administrative Colleagues i.e. principals, vice-principals	Administrative Assistants  Transportation Managers  Support Staff
<b>Principal</b>				
<b>School</b>	Parents  Community Members  Neighbours to the School	Parent Advisory Council  School Advisory Council	Teachers	Administrative Assistants  Educational Assistants  Bus Drivers  Custodians

The adults in Table 1 include both professional and non-professional staff (employees) who are paid to work in the school system; such as teachers, superintendents, colleagues, educational assistants, custodians and bus drivers, as well as other adults from the public domain; such as school board trustees who receive a stipend for their work, and others including, parents, parent advisory councils and community members, who, while integral actors in the system, work on a volunteer basis for the betterment of the students.

### **Delimitations/Parameters of the Study**

Managing a study of this large, and largely un-studied, topic required the establishment of certain parameters at the outset. This research project was delimited in three significant ways: (i) it focused only on principals' perceptions and disclosures of workplace mistreatment; (ii) it focused on general workplace mistreatment; and (iii) it focused on Manitoba's school principals with middle years students in their schools.

**A Focus on Principal Perceptions.** Data for this research comes from interviews and surveys completed by twelve principals who agreed to participate in this study. It is based upon these principals reporting of their experiences of mistreatment and their accounts of how particular behaviours constituted mistreatment from their perspectives. It is possible that the other adults involved in the incidents described by the principals might have offered different accounts of events (or intentions) providing differing interpretations and insights which might have provided a more detailed 360 degree analysis of specific mistreatment incidents, but such approaches lay outside the scope of this study.

**A Focus on General Workplace Mistreatment.** In this study I focused on workplace mistreatment, in general terms, using the constructs from the general workplace mistreatment literature. Despite the recent widespread international attention to mistreatment due to sexism in

the workplace (Government of Canada, 2017; Martin, 2017; Paul, 2017), including criminal activities of sexual harassment and sexual assault, this type of harassment/assault was not particular to this study and was therefore not included on the surveys. In addition, while there was some discussion of gender differences regarding mistreatment in terms of the experiences of the principals in this study, none of the female or male participants raised the issue of sexual harassment during any of the interviews.

**A Focus on Manitoba Middle Years School Principals.** I confined this study to public schools in the province of Manitoba, and only recruited principals who were currently working in that role and who had a minimum of two years of experience in the community in which they were currently working. The principal had to have at least one year of experience in his or her school. I chose to focus on school principals working with students from the middle years, grades 5-9. At this level parents are often still involved with their children's schooling, usually not as involved as in the primary years but more so than at the high school level (Berla, 1992; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Hill & Taylor, 2004). This is also a timeframe that includes the onset of puberty and adolescence potentially making these grade levels challenging for all adults involved with children of this age (Ballantine & Hammack, 2009). Disagreements between adults regarding adolescents may have caused more conflict between the adults in the schools, leading perhaps to more mistreatment.

### **Limitations of the Study**

First, my study is limited in scope by the sample that I have chosen. Given that I had only twelve participants who volunteered from throughout the province of Manitoba, this does not provide representation of all the school divisions in the province proportionate to the distribution of population. Accessing a representative sample, particularly when researching a sensitive topic



such as workplace mistreatment, was another difficulty (Penrod, Preston, Cain & Starks, 2003) so I used a purposeful sample with an element of convenience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2012), choosing only those principals of the stipulated grades who believed that they had something to say regarding mistreatment/harassment of principals in schools or who had an interest in sharing their conception of workplace mistreatment; all of the principals who volunteered were chosen.

Secondly, I chose to concentrate on the middle years level of schooling (grades 5 to 9), ignoring the primary and secondary levels of school principalship. Therefore, the pool for the sample of participants to be interviewed was relatively small in comparison with the 688 public school principals in the province (Government of Manitoba, 2014), resulting in data that, like any other purposefully sampled group, would not be representative of all principals, and therefore, not generalizable over larger populations (Patton, 2002) and without predictive power (Phillips, 2014). Thus, potentially important comparisons such as between the genders and urban and rural configurations were not possible with this sample of twelve.

Thirdly, the collection of qualitative data from interviews has its own inherent limitation. Qualitative interviews produce data that is retrospective, revealing and perhaps accurate, but it cannot be independently verified as the data reported is coloured by the self. Researchers in psychology and organizational behaviour point out that collecting sensitive information, such as information regarding workplace mistreatment issues, is challenging as the data may contain errors and be biased (including selective memory or exaggeration) due to faulty memories or erroneously constructed experiences over time in the memory (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003; Henry, Moffitt, Caspi, Langley & Silva, 1994; Neuman & Baron, 1998).

A fourth limitation of this study was that there is a scarcity of research on “dark side” (Griffin & O’Leary-Kelly, 2004, p. 4) behaviours in the school as a workplace and specifically related to school principals. For this reason, I needed to draw on relevant research on workplace mistreatment from other domains, such as organizational behaviour, management, sociology and psychology to craft the study and to parallel the results with other workplaces in general.

### **Significance of the Study**

Blase and Blase (2002) state unequivocally that “[a]ll concerned with public education should work to create awareness of factors potentially related to the problem of abuse” (p. 718) in the workplace, while Price and Calder (2000) note, regarding the workplace, that “[i]n today’s climate, the reality is that harassment issues *will* [italics in original] arise” (p. 169). Conn (2004) expounds on what happens in schools and all the potential actors involved:

Adults in the school setting are not immune to feelings of helplessness and victimization at the hands of bullies and harassers. Unfortunately, administrators, teachers and other school personnel often feel like they are on the firing line with volleys originating from one or more directions, sometimes simultaneously. Building principals may feel harassed by central office personnel; the superintendent or assistants, staff of buildings and grounds services, or even the transportation manager. At the same time they may be receiving heat from disgruntled teachers or parents. (p. 104)

Given the scarcity of research into workplace mistreatment by adults in schools and the fact that working in schools is considered a high risk occupation (Fahie & Devine, 2014), this study attempted to contribute to the bank of knowledge regarding mistreatment of principals in the schools as workplaces. There was a definite gap in the literature on this topic; therefore, I

proposed an exploratory empirical study into what principals believed were incidents of workplace mistreatment, its frequency and severity and its negative effects on them, paying specific attention to harm to their well-being and job satisfaction. The final question of the study was particularly important as Combs et al. (2009) contend that research examining school principals' satisfaction and stress "will be helpful to those who provide support to school leaders and are concerned about principal attrition and pending shortages" (p. 11).

This study is significant for the following reasons. First, it provided one of the first attempts to study and provide empirical evidence into what Manitoba principals consider to be workplace mistreatment toward them from other adults in the school community. Secondly, the findings from this research could not only be enlightening for current administrators, allowing them to feel less isolated when and if instances of mistreatment occurred, but also for future administrators, who may be fearful of taking on administrative responsibilities that include the possibility of being mistreated in the workplace. Thirdly, insights provided by principals experiencing workplace mistreatment in this study added to the evidence already in the literature for school settings. Given that there were already studies regarding teachers who experienced workplace mistreatment with regards to stress, coping strategies or changes in job satisfaction, this study enlarged the research of mistreatment by adults in schools. Finally, Blase and Blase (2002) challenged researchers to "systematically examin[e] the 'dark side' of school leadership" (p. 672) and its effects. Accordingly, I tried to formalize, through empirical research, what some suspected, and some knew through legal challenges (Keel & Tymochenko, 2007), was happening in terms of mistreatment of principals in the school setting. In brief, this study contributed to the scholarly literature by offering some awareness into the under-examined area related to

principals' perceptions of workplace mistreatment – a venture into the dark side of principals' workplaces, the schools.

## **Chapter Two: A Review of the Related Literature**

In this chapter, I review the relevant literature related to the theme of general workplace mistreatment as well as the more specific literature available regarding mistreatment incidents, between adults, in a school setting. To begin I define workplace aggression, also referred to as workplace mistreatment, from the organizational behavioural literature and I elucidate the range of possible behaviours that can be considered as mistreatment through the constructs presented in that literature. These constructs form the basis of my study regarding workplace mistreatment of principals. Secondly, I turn to the legal definitions and refer to Canadian, and more specifically, Manitoban laws, codes, and school division agreements and policies to understand the type of protection accorded to workers against mistreatment in workplaces in general and in schools in particular. Third, I provide an overview of possible impacts and consequences of workplace mistreatment from the varied literatures. Fourth, I take a brief look at the statistics of the “dark side” (Griffin & O’Leary-Kelly, 2004, p. 4) of workplaces in general and schools in particular. Fifth, I provide evidence of the existence of workplace mistreatment in schools by summarizing academic/professional, legal and popular media examples of adult-on-adult mistreatment in the school context, focusing on two particular types: principal-on-teacher harassment and then adult-on-principal mistreatment. Next, I discuss the conceptual framework that I will use for classifying workplace mistreatment as defined by the principals as well as for judging what the principals deem as the severity and impact of such mistreatment. I conclude this chapter with a summary of the key points.

### **Constructs of Workplace Aggression/Mistreatment**

The terms to describe workplace aggression are varied and sometimes used interchangeably with terms such as interpersonal workplace aggression, workplace deviance or

mistreatment in the workplace (Hershcovis & Reich, 2013; Salin, 2003), but, regardless of the term chosen, all are drawn from a significant and coherent body of scholarship in the organizational behaviour literature. Aggression is defined by Aquino and Thau (2009) as “behaviour directed toward another person or persons that is carried out with the intent to harm” (p. 718) either psychologically or physically. Andersson and Pearson (1999) deem it to be “attempted injurious or destructive behaviour, in violation of social norms” (p. 455). Terms such as workplace aggression, interpersonal workplace aggression and workplace mistreatment are often used interchangeably in the literature but I will refer to such behaviours hereafter as general workplace mistreatment, seen “as negative acts that harm the target and which the target is motivated to avoid” (Hershcovis & Reich, 2013, p. S26). A second umbrella term often used to indicate workplace mistreatment is a term used in jurisprudence regarding “traditional conceptions of harassment (e.g. sexual or racial)” (Keashly & Harvey, 2005, p. 202), but its use has become more generalized for other workplace situations. I will discuss this particular term and the distinction further on in this chapter. In sum, regardless of the name chosen to identify the workplace mistreatment, cases of mistreatment lead to an insecure work environment and can lead to psychological or emotional trauma or negative repercussions to the physical health of the target.

An important starting point, regardless of the name of the workplace mistreatment construct, and the key to recognizing workplace mistreatment is that the perpetrator’s behaviour is seen by the target as aversive and potentially harmful (Brodsky, 1976). A litmus test for the identification of mistreatment is, according to Oppenheimer and Pratt (2003), “evaluated based on the recipient’s response rather than the perpetrator’s intentions” (p. 29), thus, not absolving the perpetrator of responsibility for unintentional acts. Reactions by the targets may differ

regarding what seem to be less aggressive mistreatment behaviours. For instance, some principals may find a particular less severe behaviour to be a mistreatment while others do not; nonetheless, workplace mistreatment impacts the target in negative ways (Blase, Blase & Du, 2008; Hoobler & Brass, 2006). Understanding the different constructs of workplace mistreatment gives a lens from which to examine the possible mistreatment of principals in the workplace. So, what are the constructs used to discriminate between the possible different behaviours of the perpetrators?

The variety of constructs in the organizational behaviour literature regarding workplace mistreatment allows for distinctions to be made regarding how perpetrators treat targets with respect to the perceived severity of the perpetrator's actions. For the purposes of this thesis, I select only those forms of workplace mistreatment that do not involve the perpetrator *necessarily* being in a supervisory position, although the perpetrator could be a supervisor. Aquino and Thau (2009) offer the following constructs of workplace mistreatment that they suggest can be seen as ranging in severity: incivility, social undermining, harassment, bullying, mobbing and physical violence. I define and provide examples of each of these constructs in the following paragraphs with a view to better understanding the possibilities for workplace mistreatment in the schools as workplaces.

**Incivility.** Incivility is a disruptive behaviour which can be obviously intentional to the target or the intent of the behaviour can be concealed. It is a behaviour that disrupts a respectful workplace. Andersson and Pearson (1999) contend that “[w]orkplace incivility is low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviours are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others [italics in original]” (p. 457). Because the norms of respect may differ

from one organization or one social context to another, the perpetrator may not realize he or she is being uncivil in a particular workplace due to a lack of social insight on his or her part.

Cortina, Magley, Hunter Williams and Day Langhout (2001) identify three of the major behaviours of incivility as: treating others with disrespect, condescension and degradation.

Incivility may seem harmless, but one person's disregard for another can have negative impacts and cause greater harm in the long run (Pearson, Andersson & Wegner, 2001).

**Social Undermining.** Duffy, Ganster and Pagon (2002) define social undermining behaviours as those which are “intended to hinder, over time, the ability to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success and favorable reputation” (p. 332). The target, in instances of social undermining, will perceive that there is intent to harm behind the perpetrator's behaviour. Further, social undermining “behaviors will not necessarily have a permanent and significant impact if ‘emitted’ rarely, but rather, their effects add up over time” (Duffy et al., 2002, p. 333). Some examples of *direct* social undermining behaviours include: making derogatory statements, spreading insults and rumours, distributing uncorroborated emails, showing outright personal rejection either verbally or by giving the silent treatment, and delivering belittling statements and criticism; all of which hinder both the relationships between the target and perpetrator and the reputation of the target (Duffy et al., 2002; Hershcovis, 2011; Stout, 2016). Some examples of *indirect* social undermining include: withholding needed information, slowing down the work process to make the target look bad or intentionally failing to defend someone in a workplace disagreement situation (Duffy et al., 2002; Neuman & Baron, 1997).

**Harassment.** Unlike the two previous constructs of incivility and social undermining, harassment is often used as a general, all-encompassing descriptor of a particular behaviour, but



it also begets both criminal and civil definitions in law. Colman and Otten (2006) remark on the duality of harassment, first as defined under the “umbrella of human rights legislation and jurisprudence” and, second, as the new workplace harassment policies “to mandate civility in the workplace” (p. 77). Thus, harassment as a construct, used in the workplace literature, does not always lead to criminal charges and its definitions are somewhat broader than those provided in section 264 of the *Criminal Code of Canada* (1985) where the target always fears for his or her safety. Both criminal as well as civil harassment, as defined in law, can occur in school settings (Keel, 2004; Keel & Tymochenko, 2004, 2007; Tymochenko & Keel, 2006), but other forms of harassment, as defined as follows can occur as well. With regards to the workplace literature, Björkqvist, Österman and Hjelt-Bäck (1994) define harassment as “[r]epeated activities, with the aim of bringing mental (but sometimes also physical) pain, and directed to one or more individuals who, for one reason or another, are not able to defend themselves” (pp. 173-174). In this definition there is no stipulation that the target fears for his or her safety, simply that the person cannot access adequate defense mechanisms. The search for a concise definition of harassment in the organizational behaviour literature is indeed a challenge (Crawshaw, 2009) because there is no one definition that is broad enough to cover the range of different meanings found in the literature.

Henderson (1992) provides a different definition of harassment in the workplace literature as he suggests that it is “a willful course of conduct directed at a specific person which seriously alarms or annoys the person, ... which serves no legitimate purpose” (p. 21) and with which the perpetrator may or may not intend to instill any serious annoyance or harm. When comparing the aforementioned examples from the *Criminal Code of Canada* (1985), Björkqvist et al. (1994) and Henderson (1992), definitions range for harassment from annoyance to repeated

pain, to fear for one's safety. A fourth possibility in defining harassment is provided by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (2013), which states that harassment encompasses "any unwanted physical or verbal behaviour that offends or humiliates" (§2). Most of the definitions of harassment stipulate that it is a persistent behaviour over time but the Canadian Human Rights Commission (2013) provides that "serious one-time incidents can also sometimes be considered harassment" (§2) and the British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association concurs (Krieger, 2015) that one-time incidents can indeed constitute harassment of administrators.

Harassment, thus, encompasses a broad range of possible behaviours and can be a one-time or repeated event; a precise list, like those provided for incivility and social undermining, is not as readily apparent in the literature. To judge whether a behaviour is harassing, broadly speaking, harassment can be seen as any example of an interpersonal stressor (Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Keashly, 1997) caused by a perpetrator, that the target perceives as mistreatment and which is detrimental to the target producing stress and strain, triggering dissatisfaction, withdrawal, anxiety, depression, headaches and neck strain (Raver & Nishii, 2010). This list from the work of Raver and Nishii (2010) signals a main distinction in severity between different constructs of mistreatment. Aquino and Thau (2009) note that the severity of harassment is such that there is a physiological response to the mistreating behaviour, unlike incivility or social undermining where the reaction is more psychological. For the purposes of this paper, one of the ways the term harassment in the workplace is used is not always as a criminal act; it is, as Bowling and Beehr (2006) choose to define it more broadly, "interpersonal behavior aimed at intentionally harming another employee in the workplace" (p. 998).

**Bullying.** Salin (2003) describes the construct of bullying “as *repeated and persistent negative acts* towards one or more *individual(s)*, which involve a *perceived power imbalance* [italics in original]” (pp. 1214-1215). Salin (2003) contends that for the most part bullying occurs between members of the same workplace, whereas the previous forms of workplace mistreatment described above may involve actors external to the workplace. Examples of bullying behaviours include: repeated abuse and reminders of blunders, offensive remarks and verbal abuse, ridicule, insulting, teasing, slander, total social exclusion, neglect of the target’s views and devaluation of his or her efforts (Einarsen, 2000; Hershcovis, 2011). One study regarding bullying amongst professionals in schools, by Einarsen, Raknes and Matthiesen (1994), suggests that bullying may not be as prevalent in the teaching profession due to the relative autonomy and independence that teachers have in their workplaces. Teachers are less likely to experience bullying situations with the principal, it is suggested, as generally close interactions on a daily basis are minimized. However, examples of bullying amongst school personnel do exist in the literature; whether it be the principal excessively monitoring teachers or intimidating them with his or her perceived power (James Matsui Research, 2005) or the principal’s moral authority being attacked through the distribution of a letter written by a superintendent and trustee (Retiring principal, 1982).

**Mobbing.** Mobbing is a term coined by Leymann (1990, 1996). Mobbing is a form of harassment and bullying that must not be confused with the other constructs (Gülcan, 2015). Mobbing is a very severe form of harassment that involves more than one perpetrator (Salin, 2003; Zapf & Einarsen, 2005; Zapf, Knorz & Kulla, 1996) and which “always includes organizational dynamics and involvement” (Duffy & Sperry, 2012, p. 4). The interplay and dynamics amongst the actors in the workplace group allows the manifestation of mobbing, which

is a psychological attack on one person by many (Leymann, 1996). An example of mobbing includes persistent harassment in the workplace often forcing the marginalisation of one worker from the group.

**Physical violence.** This construct includes physical acts of aggression by the perpetrator against the target. Examples of such behaviours are hitting or pushing the target (Aquino & Thau, 2009) as well as spitting, scratching/pinching, punching, kicking, biting and assault with a weapon (Rasmussen, Hogh & Andersen, 2013). This type of mistreatment is overt and highly visible, as opposed to more psychological mistreatments in the workplace; thus, “physical aggression ... occur[s] less frequently because the costs of engaging in such behaviour are high” (Aquino & Thau, 2009, p. 720).

Some of the concepts, as previously defined, seem different enough to demarcate with ease, yet amongst others the distinctions seem blurred. Seeking precision in the literature regarding the constructs of harassment and bullying reveals considerable disagreement (Cemaloğlu, 2011). Some researchers from the workplace treatment domain argue that there are too many constructs to represent the different perpetrator behaviours (Hershcovis, 2011) while others counter that the numerous constructs for workplace mistreatment are justified as each label captures specific differences in the type of mistreatment being researched (Tepper and Henle, 2011). The Canadian Human Rights Commission (2013) selects the term harassment as its construct to indicate mistreatment at work, insisting that it is the employers’ responsibility to provide a workplace free of harassment; but upon reading the definition, it is clear that the Commission includes a wider array of workplace mistreatment constructs than other researchers would use to define this construct. This leads lawyer Gouveia (2007) to suggest that a more precise conceptual definition of harassment in terms of workplace mistreatment would be an

asset to lawyers, the courts and targets as “[c]urrent legislative provisions and legal principles fall short of offering all employees comprehensive and consistent legal protection ... at work” (p. 140). In another example of the confusion regarding the terminology, Namie and Namie (2003) use the term ‘bullying’ to describe all types of mistreatment at work, and state that “[a]ll harassment is bullying as long as the actions have the effect, intended or not, of hurting the Target” (p. 3). Namie and Namie (2003), despite their insistence that all workplace mistreatment is bullying, themselves distinguish between the various workplace mistreatment behaviours by ranking them on a “scale of damage” (p. 10) to the target, where the range begins with incivility as a 1 on the low end of the scale, to harassment and bullying which fall throughout the middle ground of 6 and 7, to physical violence which they consider as a 10. It is important to note that, again, harassment and bullying are grouped together as if there is minimal distinction between the two constructs.

I am left to wonder, with so much variation about the terms, which constructs are used to designate cases of workplace mistreatment in the context of schools. After comparing the constructs to the language used in documents for schools in Manitoba, such as policies, procedures and collective agreements, the two terms that appear most often as labels for workplace mistreatment are harassment and violence. Workplace violence includes not only physical attacks but verbal ones as well. In the organizational behaviour literature, these would fall under different construct names, but in the school literature they are under the one term. The term harassment also brings confusion as it encompasses a range of behaviours as defined in school policies, some of which can be identified under different constructs terms such as incivility or social undermining. In the educational domain, the behaviours encompassed under the two terms of harassment and violence are wide-ranging, and lack a certain specificity to

define the multiple layers of what constitutes workplace mistreatment in schools. This is coupled with a vagueness regarding protections afforded school personnel regarding workplace mistreatment. I now examine and summarize these concepts in laws, policies and regulation documents.

### **Laws, Policies and Regulations Regarding Harassment as Workplace Mistreatment**

Even a single complaint of harassment at work may cause issues for the employee and employer under human rights or labour legislation, under the criminal and civil codes or under collective agreement clauses, which may lead to grievances. Hence, an examination of the laws, policies and procedures on harassment, as it is used to signify workplace mistreatment, is integral to this study. As noted earlier in Colman and Otten (2006), the description of the duality of harassment in the workplace allows harassment to be defined not only as a criminal act, but also as a term to encompass a litany of relatively severe unwanted behaviours in the workplace. Harassment becomes, in educators' documents such as collective agreements and policy manuals, the construct used to symbolize a wide range of workplace mistreatment behaviours. So, to protect educators from workplace harassment in varied forms, teachers' unions in Canada have been trying to negotiate harassment workplace clauses into collective agreements over the past ten years (Colman & Otten, 2006), and as will be seen shortly, there has been some success in this area. Again, the chosen concept to define workplace mistreatment in school documents is the word harassment, but this term is used to indicate a more expansive set of behaviours than simply the strict criminal code definition or definitions as per the human rights documents. The push for protection clauses for professional school staff should not be a surprise as the term "parental harassment" is now defined in the literature and "while not a legal term, [it] has been explained as the use of confrontational tactics which attack teachers, or which have the

consequence of reducing a teacher's ability to conduct herself effectively within the school and which harm her well-being or professional reputation" (Judson, 2003, p. 77). These types of behaviours could, depending on the context and severity, also be defined as social undermining, harassment and bullying in the organizational behaviour literature. Of note in this definition is the fact that the generalization revolves around teachers and that there is no mention of principals.

Currently, all schools in Manitoba, other provinces in Canada and certain other countries around the globe, are required to have provisions and policy regarding workplace, safety and health, under which, the concepts of workplace mistreatment and harassment fall (Potts, 2006; Stewart & Knott, 2002; *Workplace Safety and Health Act: Workplace Safety and Health Regulation*, 2006). In Canada, the policies regarding workplace safety and health find their origins in the *Canada Labour Code* (1985), just as provincial human rights legislation stems from federal legislation. Manitoba schools, not being an exception, are required to adhere to stipulations set out in clauses in provincial documents, such as labour codes and human rights legislation. Yet, the term workplace mistreatment is not currently used in the aforementioned documents. Harassment and violence are the concepts used in the labour codes and human rights legislation to distinguish and encompass the various instances of mistreatment in schools. These are also the chosen terms used in collective agreements and policies in school divisions. As a result, to research workplace mistreatment through the educators' lens, I examine the pertinent documents regarding the constructs of harassment and violence as alternatives for workplace mistreatment. I examine the following codes, acts, legislation, agreements and policies to discover what constitutes harassment and violence for school personnel, as well as the possible protection accorded to school personnel, such as principals, from adults: the *Human Rights Code*

(2015), the *Workplace Safety and Health Act: Workplace Safety and Health Regulation* (2006), the *Criminal Code of Canada* (1985) including both criminal as well as in civil litigation, the *Public Schools Act* of Manitoba (2015), and school division/district collective agreements and policy manuals. I also scrutinize The Manitoba Teachers' Society handbook as The MTS advocates for a harassment-free and non-violent workplace (i.e. no workplace mistreatment) in many articles, yet there are few policies in their handbook relating to procedures used to investigate issues.

**Human Rights Legislation: *Human Rights Code*.** The Government of Canada (2015), in their survey of public sector employees in their workplaces, defines harassment, as just one or a series of incidents, as follows:

any improper conduct by an individual that is directed at and offensive to another individual in the workplace, including at any event or any location related to work, and that the individual knew or ought reasonably to have known would cause offence or harm. It comprises objectionable act(s), comment(s) or display(s) that demean, belittle, or cause personal humiliation or embarrassment, and any act of intimidation or threat. It also includes harassment within the meaning of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (i.e. based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, and pardoned conviction or suspended record).

(¶Q. 63)

This definition implies not only harassment as defined earlier, but rather includes varied types of workplace mistreatment such as incivility, social undermining, bullying and mobbing.

In Manitoba, the *Human Rights Code* (2015) based on the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (1985) offers the following more restrictive provisions regarding harassment:



**19(1)** No person who is responsible for an activity or undertaking to which this Code applies shall

(a) harass any person who is participating in the activity or undertaking; or

(b) knowingly permit, or fail to take reasonable steps to terminate,

harassment of one person who is participating in the activity or undertaking by another person who is participating in the activity or undertaking.

**“Harassment” defined** [all bold and quotations in original]

**19(2)** In this section, **“harassment”** means

(a) a course of abusive and unwelcome conduct or comment undertaken or made on the basis of any characteristic referred to in subsection 9(2); or

(b) a series of objectionable and unwelcome sexual solicitations or advances; or

(c) a sexual solicitation or advance made by a person who is in a position to confer any benefit on, or deny any benefit to, the recipient of the solicitation or advance, if the person making the solicitation or advance knows or ought reasonably to know that it is unwelcome; or

(d) a reprisal or threat of reprisal for rejecting a sexual solicitation or advance. (*Human Rights Code*, 2015, ¶19)

Human rights laws such as this example, however, are limited in their protection of employees, such as school principals, and ways for these employees to get redress for other potential occurrences of general workplace harassment (Namie, 2007) as the concepts do “not extend to protect persons from harassment if such conduct is not linked to a protected ground (such as race, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation and so forth)” (Hudson, 2015, p. 1), as set forth

in subsection 9(2) as applicable characteristics. Namie and Namie (2004) contend that the scope of “harassment’s definition [must] ... cover ‘status-blind’ situations” (p. 326), meaning inclusion of all workers not just those stipulated as having the aforesaid applicable characteristics already accepted in law. To help broaden the applicability of the term *harassment*, as it pertains to mistreatment of school personnel in Manitoba, certain school trustees supplement the *Human Rights Code* (2015) definition with local divisional policy definitions, as discussed below.

**Labour Legislation: *Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act*.** Harassment refers to “objectionable conduct that creates a risk to the health of a worker or severe conduct that adversely affects a worker’s psychological or physical well-being” (*Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation*, 2014, p. 80). The *Act* also stipulates that employers are required to prevent workplace harassment. Adding to the general definition, the regulation designates three conditions for determining if indeed workplace harassment is taking place:

“harassment” means any objectionable conduct, comment or display by a person that

- (a) is directed at a worker in a workplace;
- (b) is made on the basis of race, creed, religion, colour, sex, sexual orientation, gender-determined characteristics, political belief, political association or political activity, marital status, family status, source of income, disability, physical size or weight, age, nationality, ancestry or place of origin; and
- (c) creates a risk to the health of the worker. (*Workplace Safety and Health Act: Workplace Safety and Health Regulation*, 2006).

An important aspect of this labour legislation regarding the overall health, welfare and safety of the worker in the workplace, relating to section (c), was highlighted on February 1st, 2011 in the province of Manitoba. Jennifer Howard, the Minister of Workplace, Safety and Health, at the

time, announced that in order to “address psychological harassment such as intimidation, bullying and humiliation, ... [e]mployers will be required to ensure that workplaces are free of harassment by developing and implementing policies to prevent and address harassment if it occurs” (Government of Manitoba, 2011, ¶2). Up until this time, school divisions were not required to have harassment policies in their manuals or to worry about possible mistreatment of their employees, but policy creation followed soon after in several school divisions. This announcement by Minister Howard extends the labour legislation regarding workplace harassment in Manitoba to include any mistreatment that is directed at the worker in the workplace and that creates a psychological health risk to the worker; this is a much broader scope than the definition provided in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (1985) which concentrates only on legally protected social status characteristics. Thus, this labour legislation could be read to include incivility, social undermining and it certainly encompasses harassment, bullying and mobbing – all defined previously in this thesis as workplace mistreatment. Effectively then, a principal who feels he or she is being treated uncivilly, harassed or generally mistreated in a school would have recourse against his or her employer for psychological or physical impacts, using this regulation.

***Criminal Code of Canada: Criminal and Civil Harassment.*** The definition of harassment provided in section 264 of the *Criminal Code of Canada* (1985) specifically states that the target of criminal harassment is a person who fears for his or her safety in all circumstances due to a perpetrator’s behaviours. These behaviours include the following fear-inducing strategies:

- (a) repeatedly following from place to place the other person or anyone known to them;

- (b) repeatedly communicating with, either directly or indirectly, the other person or anyone known to them;
- (c) besetting or watching the dwelling-house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them, resides, works, carries on business or happens to be; or
- (d) engaging in threatening conduct directed at the other person or any member of their family. (*Criminal Code of Canada*, 1985, ¶2)

Reasonable human beings, such as principals, understand that in all cases where a person fears for his or her safety, i.e. criminal harassment involving either oral or physical threats or stalking, whether it be teachers, vice-principals or principals who have the fear, the police should be contacted immediately. Possible consequences if a person is found guilty of fear-inducing harassment of another person appear in section 810 of *Criminal Code of Canada* (1985). Most of the known cases regarding the workplace mistreatment construct of harassment of adults in schools are identified because they result from court decisions based on the *Criminal Code of Canada* (1985) and are published as such. Unless court proceedings occur, information regarding harassing incidents is difficult to uncover. However, not all cases of harassment are considered criminal; therefore some mistreatments of adults in schools may not be as readily recognized.

In contrast to criminal harassment, there is in law a definition of civil harassment. This type of harassment causes “negative workplace interactions that affect the terms, conditions, or employment decisions related to an individual’s job, or create a hostile, intimidating, or offensive working environment, but which are not based on legally-protected social status characteristics” (Rospenda, Richman, Ehmke & Zlatoper, 2005, p. 96). The province of Ontario uses a broad definition to include the above-mentioned interactions concluding that harassment “means engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is

known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome” (Cabel, 2009, p. 7). This definition incorporates all of the previously identified workplace mistreatment constructs even though the catch-all construct here is the term civil harassment.

Keel and Tymochenko (2007) stipulate four categories of civil harassment, as follows:

- 1) Oral: shouting, swearing (but not slander);
- 2) Physical: attempting to intimidate by physical presence;
- 3) Written: submitting numerous letters, faxes, emails that disrupt the administrator’s time and impact his or her work at the school;
- 4) Telecommunications and Internet: making lengthy, repeated phone calls, leaving numerous voice mails or emails, known as cyber-harassment or cyberbullying (Eden, Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2013), disrupting the administrator’s ability to deal with other school issues.

Again, the choice of the construct of harassment to designate the inappropriate workplace behaviour in no way negates the fact that there is a place for the other constructs of workplace mistreatment to fit into these four categories. For instance, oral civil harassment could easily be complemented by the constructs of incivility or social undermining. Physical civil harassment could also be defined as the construct of bullying, while written submissions or telephone interventions, depending on the number and content, could range through the constructs from incivility to social undermining to bullying even to mobbing!

In law, these four categories of civil harassment are identified as nuisance issues; nonetheless “the tort of nuisance has been clearly interpreted by Canadian courts to enable appropriate action to be taken to protect persons from harassment, even if such harassment is termed nuisance” (Keel & Tymochenko, 2007, p. 388). There are two sections in the *Criminal*

*Code of Canada* (1985) that support these nuisance cases – section 180 (1) which describes a common nuisance and section 372(3) which addresses repeated phone calls to the same person. Such activities, as described in these sections, do not involve defamatory comments but there is a persistence to the mistreating behaviours; “the litmus test in any situation involving bothersome behaviour is whether the conduct goes beyond what the courts might consider to be freedom of speech or exercise of any other private rights” (Keel, 2004, p. 211).

In sum, the key points regarding nuisance harassment are: that the conduct is unwanted by the target, that it is identified as persistent mistreatment by the target, and that it surpasses what would be recognized as civil behaviour in that given situation. As described then, civil harassment can easily occur in any workplace setting and may likely occur in schools involving mistreatment of principals or teachers. Perpetrators may not even recognize that the principal or teacher is identifying the behaviour as mistreatment but if the target finds it to be harassing, it may well be (Oppenheimer, 2004; Oppenheimer & Pratt, 2003). So, civil harassment could be quite common in the schools and could be an area in need of further research. In fact, the *Public Schools Act* of Manitoba (2015) contains several clauses to protect those within the school from possible civil harassment from outsiders.

***Public Schools Act.*** According to Keel (2004), sometimes “[e]ducation legislation may be applicable or useful where the activity falls short of criminal harassment. For example, where the conduct in question is harassing but does not meet the threshold that the educator fears for her or his safety” (p. 193). Thus, in terms of the *Public Schools Act* of Manitoba (2015), there are seven articles which give direction to school authorities, in cases of nuisance (harassment), safety and civil restraint concerns. These articles are all from section 231:

- 231(1) Selling goods, etc. prohibited without approval

- 231(2) Disturbances prohibited
- 231(3) Direction to leave school premises
- 231(4) Person required to leave
- 231(5) Assistance from a peace officer
- 231(6) Offence
- 231(7) Court order relating to offence

All of these clauses in the *Public Schools Act* of Manitoba (2015) relate to how principals may deal with adults who are attempting to sell unwanted items in the school or who are trespassing at the school causing disturbances that interrupt the learning of students – displaying uncivil behaviour in the school setting. Using this *Act*, principals have recourse to hold adults external to the school liable for inappropriate actions and conduct in the school as a workplace. These are cases that are civil in nature. The simple fact that the *Public Schools Act* of Manitoba (2015) recognizes, by inclusion, that mistreatment and harassment can occur in schools supports the purpose of this paper but the *Act* does not afford protection to employees internal to the system from other employees – such as harassment of teachers by principals or principals by superintendents. This protection remains a more local issue with provisions found in documents such as collective agreements and school division/district policies.

**School Division/District Collective Agreements and School Board Policies.** There are 37 public school boards in the province of Manitoba, plus the Manitoba Institute for Trades and Technology; therefore, 38 different collective agreements. The first collective agreement to include a stipulation regarding harassment, as a mistreatment in the schools, and the protocol for dealing with such cases in the form of a letter of understanding attached to the collective agreement, was that of the Division scolaire Franco-Manitobaine and l'association des

éducatrices et éducateurs Franco-Manitobains (AÉFM) (2014). The local association, after having had minimal success with investigations into seven harassment cases, turned grievances, worked for five years to gain this provision (Alarie, 2010). Since then, eleven other divisions/associations in Manitoba have added articles to their collective agreements regarding harassment, stipulating sexual and other forms of harassment in the workplace as can be seen in Table 2.

All of the clauses state that a member of the association is entitled to a workplace free of harassment. To define harassment, the clauses reference one, two or all three of these documents: the *Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation* (2014), the *Human Rights Code* (Manitoba) (2015) and/or the *Public Schools Act* of Manitoba (2015). Many of the harassment clauses are paired with a *Freedom from Violence* clause explaining that the workplace is to be free of physical violence, verbal abuse or physical assault. In other Manitoba collective agreements which do not have harassment clauses, some offer *Freedom from Violence* clauses, but, as can be seen in the table, other divisions offer no protection at all to staff members regarding workplace mistreatment issues. Of note, from the footnote in Table 2, is that every *Freedom from Violence* clause is worded in the same way regarding workplace abuse, but the Louis Riel School Division and Louis Riel Teachers' Association (2014) and Pine Creek School Division and Pine Creek School Division Association (2014) collective agreements specify the types of mistreatment, such as: acts of violence against a person or his or her family and/or possessions, obscene gestures, verbal abuse, threats of physical abuse and harassment. All of these examples from the collective agreements could be classified on the "scale of damage" (Namie & Namie, 2003, p. 10), also known as the "workplace mistreatment continuum [which]



Table 2. *Clauses in Manitoba Collective Agreements Regarding Harassment and Violence in the Workplace*

* = collective agreement has this clause					
<b>Division/ Teachers' Association</b>	Clause re: Harassment in general, including sexual	Clause re: Sexual Harassment (only)	Clause re: Freedom from violence**	Clause re: Respectful workplace	Clause re: Work environment
DSFM/AEFM	*		*		
Beautiful Plains			*		
Borderland	*		*		
Brandon			*		
Evergreen			*		
Flin Flon	*				
Fort la Bosse			*		
Frontier					
Garden Valley	*		*		
Hanover					
Interlake			*		
Kelsey	*		*		
Lakeshore			*		
Lord Selkirk			*		
Louis Riel	*		*		
MITT (MB Institute of Trades)					
Mountain View			*		
Mystery Lake/Thompson					
Park West		*	*		
Pembina Trails	*		*		
Pine Creek	*		*		
Portage la Prairie					
Prairie Rose	*				
Prairie Spirit					
Red River Valley					
River East Transcona					
Rolling River					
Seine River				*	
Seven Oaks					
Southwest Horizon			*		
St. James-Assiniboia			*		
Sunrise	*		*		
Swan Valley			*		
Turtle Mountain	*				
Turtle River			*		
Western					*
Whiteshell			*		
Winnipeg	*				
** Every clause invokes the following ideas: that all teachers should have a working environment free from physical violence, verbal abuse or the threat of physical assault					
All data retrieved from The Manitoba Teachers' Society Website, <a href="https://www.mbteach.org/collective-bargaining/collective-agreements.html">https://www.mbteach.org/collective-bargaining/collective-agreements.html</a>					

ranges from irritating but harmless incivility, through mildly and severely harmful bullying, to physical assaults and the rare homicide” (Namie & Namie, 2004, p. 325), with types of workplace mistreatment such as gestures falling at the lower end and physical abuse at the upper end.

Of further interest in Table 2 is that there are anomalies in three collective agreements regarding the constructs chosen: Park West School Division and Park West Teachers’ Association (2010) only treats sexual but no other form of harassment, Seine River School Division and Seine River Teachers’ Association (2014) chooses to use the concept of a respectful workplace, thus avoiding the term harassment in the collective agreement, with Western School Division and Western Teachers’ Association (2010) doing the same and including a clause simply regarding the work environment. Namie and Namie (2004) remind us, however, that few workplaces “enforce the policies mandating ‘respect’” (p. 317), so perhaps the Seine River (2014) clause provides little protection. Next, both Seine River (2014) and Western (2010) refer to the Human Rights and Labour legislation cited above in these clauses in their collective agreements. Finally, many of the collective agreements stipulate that a breach of the clause is to be investigated in confidence, but explicit terms as to how to do this and whether to consider the impacts on the employees vary by division, as the terms are not specified in all the collective agreements. Thus, 32% of the divisions use the construct of harassment to recognize mistreatment as a possible issue in the schools and 58% use *Freedom from Violence* clauses as the wording in the collective agreements to recognize and protect employees from workplace mistreatment. A staff officer from The Manitoba Teachers’ Society confirms that during the last rounds of bargaining, The Manitoba Teachers’ Society has stopped asking local bargaining committees to negotiate inclusion of harassment clauses in collective agreements as the Society

believes that the Human Rights and Labour laws provide enough protection for employees from harassment (A. Peters, personal communication, May 2, 2016).

Division policy offers what, at the outset, seems to be more protection for employees in terms of workplace mistreatment in schools. Most of the school divisions in Manitoba, in terms of policy and regulations, address the issue of workplace mistreatment under three possible policy (sometimes called division regulation) titles: harassment, violence, and/or respectful workplace. Some have policies under all three, others have just one, and yet, despite the requirement by law after 2011, some have no policy titles that deal with the constructs, as is seen in Table 3. Despite the variation in the titles of the policies, the policies and regulations in place define what constitutes harassment, bullying, abuse and violence in schools – effectively defining workplace mistreatment – and what a respectful workplace should be like. Further, they include the complaint procedure, some complete with the necessary forms to complete and submit, for those who suffer workplace mistreatment in the forms of harassment and bullying, as well as the confidential nature of the investigation and the reporting procedures (for example, Interlake School Division, 2015; St. James-Assiniboia School Division, 2015). Most of the policies and regulations state explicitly that they are based on the *Human Rights Code* (Manitoba) (2015) and the *Workplace Safety and Health Act: Workplace Safety and Health Regulation* (2006). While it seems that these policies and regulations provide more protection to school employees than the collective agreements do, they are nonetheless creations by School Boards and, as un-negotiated documents, are less binding in nature since workers' rights which are not collectively bargained are subject to change by the individual School Boards without consultation with the local teachers' associations.

Table 3. *Divisional Policies and Regulations in Manitoba Regarding Harassment and Violence in the Workplace*

* = policy manual or regulations include this construct				
<b>Division/</b>	<b>Policy re:</b>	<b>Policy re:</b>	<b>Policy re:</b>	<b>No policies</b>
<b>Teachers' Association</b>	<b>Harassment</b>	<b>Workplace</b>	<b>Respectful</b>	<b>on these</b>
		<b>Violence</b>	<b>Workplace</b>	<b>constructs</b>
DSFM/AEFM	*			
Beautiful Plains	*			
Borderland				*
Brandon	*			
Evergreen				*
Flin Flon	*	*		
Fort la Bosse	*			
Frontier			*	
Garden Valley		*		
Hanover	*		*	
Interlake	*	*	*	
Kelsey	*			
Lakeshore				*
Lord Selkirk	*	*		
Louis Riel	*			
MITT (MB Institute of Trades & Technology)				No manual on line
Mountain View	*			
Mystery Lake/Thompson	*	*		
Park West	*	*		
Pembina Trails	*	*		
Pine Creek	*	*		
Portage la Prairie	*			
Prairie Rose	*	*		
Prairie Spirit	*	*		
Red River Valley		*	*	
River East Transcona	*		*	
Rolling River	*	*		
Seine River	*	*	*	
Seven Oaks	*	*		
Southwest Horizon				*
St. James-Assiniboia			*	
Sunrise			*	
Swan Valley	*			
Turtle Mountain	*	*		
Turtle River		*		
Western				*
Whiteshell				*
Winnipeg	*	*		
** Data retrieved from each school division website using search terms: harassment, violence, respectful				

**The Manitoba Teachers' Society.** As mentioned, The Manitoba Teachers' Society defers to aforementioned provincial legislation for dealing with workplace mistreatment and harassment issues. The policy handbook of The Manitoba Teachers' Society (2015) includes only the following three statements regarding harassment and workplace violence:

- 1) members have the right to participate “in the Society free from harassment and bullying” (p. 18);
- 2) “all forms of discrimination, harassment and stereotyping in teaching and within Manitoba schools and communities, should be eliminated in accordance with federal, provincial and international human rights legislation and declarations” (p. 95); and,
- 3) “all cases of workplace violence, harassment, injury, accidents or verbal abuse as defined by the *Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation* (2014) should be reported by the Member to the Member's Local and to the employer and should be pursued by the Society, where necessary, subject to the approval of the Members involved” (p. 100).

The Manitoba Teachers' Society (2015) also stipulates in its policy handbook that it will work on behalf of any member who files a complaint or grievance about being harassed. In truth, however, “most people don't complain about harassment” (Oppenheimer & Pratt, 2003, p. 6) in the workplace unless it is severe and violates criminal law in the strict sense as set out in the *Criminal Code of Canada* (1985). This may, in fact, be the reason that The Manitoba Teachers' Society pays little attention to the less severe forms of workplace mistreatment. If no one is discussing this as an issue, then perhaps it is not an issue, or perhaps it is, as Namie and Namie (2003) describe it, “the silent epidemic” (p. 6).

### **Impacts and Consequences of Workplace Mistreatment**

Workplace mistreatment can be overwhelming to the targets and much of the organizational behaviour literature confirms and reports on the negative psychological and physical impacts and consequences of workplace mistreatment. A recent study shows “that exposure to workplace harassment increases risk for illness, injury, or assault. ... [as there are] enduring negative effects of harassment over time (Rospenda et al., 2005, p. 107). Workplace mistreatment may engender health, social and economic consequences for the target (Namie, 2007; Tepper, 2000).

Physical impacts can include, but are not limited to, ulcers, nausea, hypertension, indigestion, insomnia and nightmares, eating disorders, diarrhea, fatigue, fibromyalgia, itching and skin disorders, dizziness, heart palpitations, cardiovascular stress-related disease, drug dependency, hair loss, headaches/migraines and back aches (Brodsky, 1976; Keashly, 1997; Namie, 2003). Psychological impacts can include, but are not limited to, stress and post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, exhaustion, high blood pressure, sleeplessness, anxiety, mood swings, loss of empowerment, loss of concentration, insecurity, irrationality, dignity loss, anger, fear, panic attacks, frustration and feelings of self-doubt, shame, confusion and humiliation (Beatty, 2000; Blase & Blase, 2002, 2003; Brodsky, 1976; Cemaloğlu, 2011; Fahie & Devine, 2014; Gouveia, 2007; Keashly, 1997; Namie, 2003, 2007; Namie & Namie, 2003, 2004; Rospenda & Richman, 2004; Schat & Kelloway, 2003). A principal, subjected to workplace mistreatment, is at risk for all of these possibilities.

In the following examples, workplace mistreatment is shown as stressful, causing very real impacts and having far-reaching consequences regardless of where it falls on the “workplace mistreatment continuum” (Namie & Namie, 2004, p. 325). First, beginning with less severe

forms of mistreatment, behaviours such as gestures, facial expressions and verbal come-backs, although symbolic in nature, are still emotional experiences and Neuman and Baron (1998) suggest they can take an emotional toll on people at whom they are directed. Brock and Grady (2002) contend that “encounters with angry or displeased parents are stressful” (p. 22) and may register as more severe with the principals, depending on the circumstances. Such events in the workplace may then turn into exhaustion, even burnout (Brock & Grady, 2002; Oplatka, 2003). Continuous mistreatment at work leads to what Namie and Namie (2003) term “Prolonged Duress Stress Disorder (PDSD)” (p. 64) which develops after the target experiences bullying or mobbing mistreatments. In the extreme, Matthiesen and Einarsen (2004) and Namie (2007) argue that work-induced trauma can be as disruptive of life as traumas induced by war. Thus, various levels of stress are major consequences of workplace mistreatment.

Psychological anguish in terms of stress is not, however, the only consequence of workplace mistreatment. Job satisfaction has been shown to be negatively affected by workplace mistreatments such as harassment (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Heurta, & Magley, 2013; Cortina et al., 2001; Hoel, Cooper & Faragher, 2001; Keashly, Trott & MacLean, 1994; O’Farrell & Harlan, 1982; Rospenda & Richman, 2004; Salin, 2003). Harassment may make targets miserable and “[i]t substantially diminishes both their job satisfaction and their productivity” (Brodsky, 1976, p. 45). The importance of feeling satisfaction in doing one’s job is not to be taken lightly as it leads to better physical health, encourages less absenteeism, and affords better resilience and efficiency in the workplace (Gmelch & Gates, 1998; Pepe, 2011; Saari & Judge, 2004; Spector, 1997). In the education literature, regarding teachers, Leithwood and Beatty (2008) confirm that “what people do depends on what they think *and* [italics in original] feel – their ‘internal states’” (p. 8). These internal states include the emotions related to

job satisfaction, morale, stress, burnout, anxiety, self-efficacy and motivation. It is thus important to recognize workplace mistreatment in the schools and challenge the adult perpetrators in order to keep all staff psychologically and physically fit, satisfied and productive.

### **The Dark Side of the Workplace - Statistics**

Unfortunately, as Brodsky (1976) contends, “most human beings ... do see the right to harass as a privilege and will accept an opportunity presented to them” (p. 6); if they do, they go over to what is often referred to as the “dark side” (Griffin & O’Leary-Kelly, 2004, p. 4) of human behaviour in organizations. The constructs that I have described, including incivility, harassment, bullying, and other workplace mistreatment actions are behaviours belonging on this dark side of the workplace (Blase & Blase, 2004; Griffin & O’Leary-Kelly, 2004; Namie & Namie, 2003). Rayner and Keashly’s (2005) research explores the prevalence of dark side behaviours and how they vary across countries with American and British employees acknowledging occurrences of moderate to severe incidences of workplace mistreatment ranging between approximately 30% to 60% over the course of their careers. Nielsen, Skogstad, Matthiesen, Glasø, Aasland, Notelaers and Einarsen’s (2009) meta-analysis review of research on workplace mistreatment over a one year period documented levels as low as 2% in Scandinavia and as high as 55% in Turkey. While research into such behaviours in public workplaces, to supply the aforementioned figures, and creation of employment laws regarding mistreatment issues in general have grown in the past years (Blase & Blase, 2002; Yamada, 2010), research into the different constructs of mistreatment are too scant to fully understand the real scope of the problem (Cowie, Naylor, Rivers, Smith & Pereira, 2002).

Research studies into mistreatment issues for workers in the field of education are no exception and are so minimal (Blase et al., 2008; de Wet, 2010; Fahie & Devine, 2014) that one



might question the existence of mistreatment amongst adults in schools as workplaces. American researchers extrapolate from research samples that between 17% and 37% of working populations suffer workplace mistreatment, such as bullying (Namie, 2007) with some suffering bullying in the workplace from the current President of the United States (Cillizza, 2017). Hoel et al. (2001) estimate that the prevalence of such mistreatment in the workplace is upwards of 10% of the current international workforce, while in Canada, 19% of public sector employees respond that they have been targets of harassment (Government of Canada, 2015), 44% of Canadian nurses claim to experience abuse at work (Shields & Wilkins, 2006), 17% of workers in Québec claim abuse at work from superiors/colleagues (Conseil canadien de la sécurité, 2004) and, in general Canadian workplace surveys, 45% of respondents assert that they were bullied compared to only 35% found in a U.S. study (CareerBuilder-Canada, 2012; Manitoba Blue Cross, 2018). All of these are general statistics from public sector surveys which sometimes ask about the previous year in question and sometimes ask about experiences over a person's career.

What, however, is the availability of statistics for the field of education? I only found two studies that give statistical percentages regarding workplace mistreatment; the first uses the term bullying to define the mistreatment, the second defines the mistreatment as harassment. The authors of the first study relate that one of every two teachers in Ontario's secondary schools indicates that he or she has been bullied at school some time during his or her career, predominantly by students and parents (James Matsui Research, 2005). As previously mentioned, a survey by the Disability Benefits Plan of The Manitoba Teachers' Society reported that about 80% of administrators are highly stressed by parental harassment (The Manitoba Teachers' Society, 2003). With only two studies, one must question why there is a dearth of research into the topic of workplace mistreatment in schools? If the 10% prevalence estimate for

workplace harassment cited earlier is accurate, and if allegations of harassment at work are on the rise in society today, as some authors suggest (Brown, 2005; Coates, 2011; Hudson, 2015; Price & Calder, 2000), surely there must be principals who have experienced the dark side of their workplaces. Next, I survey the literature to find examples of mistreatment amongst adults in the school as the workplace.

### **Specific References to Adult-on-Adult Workplace Mistreatment in School Settings**

The literature regarding adult-on-adult mistreatment in the school as a workplace is not prolific, however, some literature does exist to corroborate its existence. It may be that few studies have been completed because, as Hall (2005) suggests, teachers “are the least capable of identifying bullying in the workplace” (p. 47) as they often think that whatever the issue is, it is their fault, and they strive to resolve the situation in a non-confrontational manner. Thus, incidents go unreported or unrecognized as “helping” types (like teachers, nurses and counsellors) constantly try to figure out what they did wrong, rather than blaming the perpetrator (Brodsky, 1976; Hall, 2005; Namie, 2003, 2007). This allows the perpetrator to continue with the negative behaviours much longer than in some other professions. Often, as teachers tend to stay in the same school year after year, they “suffer emotional distress far longer” (Hall, 2005, p. 47) than some other professions where transfers within departments are common, never recognizing that they are suffering workplace mistreatment and that its impacts are far-reaching enough to cause an emotional toll, either physically or mentally. As an example, a seasoned high school football coach from the United States, in the middle of a second losing season, resigned from his coaching position after receiving verbal abuse and online death threats from parents and community members; but he still remained on staff at the school (Daniels, 2017). Accordingly, for the purposes of this section, I will provide examples from the existing literature for two

different combinations of adult-on-adult mistreatment in the schools: principal-on-teacher mistreatment followed by adult-on-principal mistreatment. The literature can be grouped into three categories: academic/professional, legal, and popular media and I will provide illustrations of each, as available.

**Principal-on-Teacher Workplace Mistreatment.** In some cases the perpetrator of workplace mistreatment directed toward teachers is their principal. The academic/professional literature shows that this is indeed the case. In a study commissioned by three of the teacher organizations in Ontario (OSSTF, ETFO, OECTA), both elementary and secondary teachers report that incidents of being harassed by principals or superiors are second only to harassment by students, with examples of such reported mistreatments including excessive monitoring, withholding of information, trivial fault-finding, intimidation or persistent unwarranted criticism (James Matsui Research, 2005). In terms of empirical research, Blase and Blase (2002) are the pioneers of research into principal-on-teacher mistreatment in the United States. In an early study, Blase (1990) found that principals who mistreat generally aim to control teachers through excessive surveillance and discreditation so that those targeted teachers will leave a particular school. This finding led to many years of further research on this topic. Blase and Blase (2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007), and later, Blase et al. (2008) and Blase, Blase and Du (2009), focussed their research on the power of the principal and how, as leader and boss, some principals used their hierarchical power to abuse, harass, mistreat and intimidate the teachers within their schools. Their research also examined the “extremely harmful consequences such forms of leadership have on life in schools” (Blase & Blase, 2002, p. 672), including the effects on morale and school culture.

Blase and Blase (2002, 2003, 2004, 2007) organize teachers' perceptions of principal mistreatment into three levels based on the level of aggression of the behaviour. Level 1 includes indirect, moderately aggressive behaviours including such behaviours as discounting teachers' needs, isolating teachers, favoring particular teachers or withholding resources. These level 1 behaviours correspond with the workplace mistreatment literature definitions of incivility and social undermining and rank as 1 or 2 on the Namie and Namie (2003) damage scale. Level 2 behaviours are direct with escalating aggressions including such activities as spying, overloading with work and criticizing both publicly and privately. Such level 2 behaviours on the Blase and Blase aggression scale seem to imply behaviours such as harassment, bullying and mobbing – those behaviours that are in the middle of the Namie and Namie (2003) damage scale. Level 3 behaviours are direct and severely aggressive including threats, explosive outbursts and reprimands, unfair evaluative practices and obstructing teacher advancement. Because level 3 includes threats, behaviours would be high up the Namie and Namie (2003) scale, perhaps 8 to 9, bullying and beyond, but not quite a 10 which would mean physical violence. In terms of impact on the target, Blase and Blase (2002) are careful to point out that less harm does not necessarily stem from lower level behaviours as “the degree of harm related to any single aggressive behavior varied from one victimized teacher to another, as one would expect” (p. 685). Thus endorsing what the organizational behaviour literature tells us, the impact and effect depend on the target's perception of the mistreatment (Brodsky, 1976; Oppenheimer & Pratt, 2003). Further, Namie and Namie (2003) do not profess to understand the real intent of principals – their study of 50 teachers is based strictly on teacher perceptions of the principals' behaviours. Regardless, the teachers perceived that the intent of the principals was indeed to harm them.

These principal-on-teacher harassments caused psychological and emotional responses, physical and physiological problems and damaged relationships within the school setting; both the teachers' professional and personal lives were affected (Blase & Blase, 2002) over the varied time frames that the mistreatments occurred – from six months to as long as nine years. Examples of such adverse effects included: humiliation, loneliness, fear, anxiety, anger, depression, sleep disorders, chronic fatigue, nausea, headaches, and neck/back pain. Certain combinations of these effects “create significant ‘life-altering’ experiences for teachers” (Blase & Blase, 2002, p. 716) with “devastating outcomes” (Blase & Blase, 2003, p. 407). Blase and Blase (2003) submit that the teachers define mistreatment and abuse from their principals in the same manner that others in the public and private sector define it when speaking of their bosses, and in all cases teachers felt that complaints to superiors (in this case, to superintendents regarding the principals' abusive behaviours) result in no action on the part of superiors. Impacts can be longer-lasting when the teachers feel they have no protection from the mistreatment and no possibility of transfer from one school to another.

Research by de Wet (2010) in South Africa regarding bullying mistreatment of teachers by principals confirms the original research by Blase and Blase (2002, 2003, 2004) both in terms of abusive behaviours of the principal that affect teachers, as well as the resulting adverse effects. According to de Wet (2010), the phenomenon of principal-on-teacher bullying manifests itself as “the principal's persistent abuse of power that may impact negatively on the victims (teachers)” (p. 1451). As found in the Blase and Blase (2003) research, de Wet (2010) discovers that teachers who are bullied in the workplace feel that they do not have opportunities for recourse against their superiors. The research by de Wet (2010) enhances former studies of principals who harass teachers as she adds a list of common characteristics that these abusive

principals share, including; envy, destructive narcissism/self-importance, evil, hypocrisy, persistence and manipulative tendencies.

The latest scholars to do research on bullying of teachers, and indicating that some principals do indeed mistreat their teachers at times, are Fahie and Devine (2014) from Dublin. These researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 24 primary teachers, who identified themselves as being bullied. While the study did not focus directly on principals who bully teachers, the resulting examples and commentary show that, in some instances, the teachers' perceive that they are mistreated by principals. Fahie and Devine (2014) found that power differentials effected how these particular teachers felt they were treated and that the impacts on the teachers related to mistreatment at work were psychological, physical, economic and social – the same categories that Namie and Namie (2003) had identified years earlier in their research. In this study, the teachers were so victimized that they could see themselves as nothing else but victims and these teachers accessed coping strategies such as documenting events, contacting the union, undertaking litigation or leaving the job to escape the mistreatment.

In terms of legal examples of principal-on-teacher mistreatment, both civil and criminal cases of harassment exist. Potts (2006) identifies the phenomenon of principal-on-teacher abuse in support of his contention that schools are more dangerous places today than they were in the past. Potts (2006), citing Knott and Stewart (2004) who provide details on the case of *Menzies v Barnet, Central London County Court, United Kingdom, 2003*, offers the example of a teacher who sues her school “claiming that she was harassed and bullied by the school principal and that this behaviour constituted a breach of duty of care owed to her” (p. 326). The principal's rude, dismissive and undermining behaviours demeaned and humiliated the teacher and the judge agreed that these were harassing behaviours, awarding the teacher monetary damages.

Canada is no exception when it comes to criminal or civil proceedings regarding harassment of teachers by principals. A study of British Columbia cases by Litke (1999) notes that over the course of that particular year in British Columbia, there were six confirmed cases of an administrator harassing a teacher, but he does not elaborate on the findings of each case. A more recent study of harassment charges won by teachers against principals shows that only about 3% of harassment cases filed against principals in British Columbia have resulted in prosecution (Krieger, 2015).

Another legal example involves a teacher dismissed from teaching in White Bear First Nation, Saskatchewan, for not submitting government funding reports on time to the principal and being insubordinate when asked about it by the Board. This teacher won his case as “Board members harassed and threatened teachers and created a working environment that made it impossible” to do their jobs adequately (Wrongful dismissal, 1999, p. 14). A teacher in Newfoundland and Labrador won at arbitration for being harassed by school personnel, as well as by the outgoing and incoming principals (Flaherty, 2011). A second case from Newfoundland, *Avalon North Integrated School Board v. The Newfoundland Teachers’ Association*, found a principal guilty of sexual harassment of two teachers, as he put his arms around them, pressed up against them and touched their breasts (MacKay & Sutherland, 1992). Moving to Ontario, in Ottawa, a teacher with several physical ailments, grieved and won a case, citing mental distress, against her principal whose disciplinary actions were seen by the arbitrator as harassing (Micallef, 2013). In Essex County, Ontario, a pregnant teacher won against a principal who commented on her breast size and his comments were found to be harassing and discriminatory (Haykowsky, 2007). Finally, a principal in Ontario pursued a female staff member, even after

she made it clear that they were just friends, with gifts, phone calls, and appearances outside her house. He was convicted of criminal harassment (Governing Ourselves, 2010; Junkin, 2007).

The final way that writers communicate occurrences about principals mistreating staff members is through media reports and blogs, which are not as readily available on the Internet as one would believe since searches find the empirical and legal cases the great majority of the time. Assessments in the media, of course, must be viewed with skepticism as they may be written with the intent to provoke and may provide more opinion rather than researched fact. However, so long as these writers are not simply lying for attention, their musings do confirm, at least to some extent, the existence of some forms of principal-on-teacher harassment and mistreatment. Two examples in the Canadian media of such principal behaviours and actions are as follows. Jilks (2011), from Ontario, uses her blog to assert that she knows from experience principals that bully teachers by yelling at teachers in the hallway, office or staffroom, by undermining the teachers' authority, and by "emotionally push[ing] and shov[ing]" (¶8) teachers. She claims that these behaviours are far from isolated incidents and will continue as incidents go unreported and uninvestigated. An article in *The Chronicle Herald* (2014) posits that despite complaints of harassment (sending suggestive text messages, commenting on their appearance) by three different female staff members, the principal of the school was still on the job in his Halifax, Nova Scotia school. No resolution to this problem was reported.

We have seen through academic research in three countries, the United States, South Africa and Ireland, as well as through legal cases from Canada that some principals sometimes mistreat the teachers in the school. Is the opposite equally plausible? Are there instances where principals suffer workplace abuse at the hand of teachers or other adults in their school communities?



**Adult-on-Principal Workplace Mistreatment.** To my knowledge, there is no academic, empirical research into adult-on-principal mistreatment in the school as a workplace. So, one may question if, given the principals' role, no one dares mistreat him or her. After all, the principal is the hierarchical head of the school and supposedly holds the most decision-making power. Namie and Namie (2003) contend that people who mistreat and harass often target stronger people, such as principals, as "the public persona they present is a mask of bravado and superiority" (p. 39). Consequently, principals could be harassed because of their status and authority (Ballantine & Hammack, 2009). Authors, in contexts other than strictly academic/professional research, mention the concept of principal mistreatment, confirming its existence. In the absence of empirical studies on the topic, it is upon these legal cases, journal articles based on legal actions and media reports that I conceive this part of the literature review.

To begin, I give an overview of certain legal cases, both criminal and civil, providing a summary of the facts and decisions in each case where the principal is mistreated by other adults in the principal's workplace (see Table 1). Since there are no reports of incivility or social undermining in the literature, these cases serve, at minimum, as examples of types of proven harassments that exist. The majority of the cases are defamation or slander suits with some resulting in harassment charges, but there is one case of forcible confinement, one case of likely assault, one case of uttering threats and a civil suit regarding telephone harassment. First, I will discuss several defamation suits, where those unhappy with decisions of principals attempt to reverse those decisions by harassing the principals through slandering them. In an older case, from 1982, and using this example to support the idea that harassment of principals is not a new concept, in *Wilcox v. Calgary Board of Education*, a principal won a defamation case against a trustee and the superintendent who wrote a letter to the Parent-Teacher Association of the school

attacking the moral integrity of the principal who requested his retirement for January, but asked to come back to finish the year at the school on full salary. The principal won \$5000 plus costs (Retiring principal, 1982). In the 1990s in the case of *Mitchell v. Nanaimo District Teachers Association et al.*, a group of teachers who were on strike created a cartoon with the principal as the central figure and sent it for publication to the local newspaper. After its publication, the principal was the subject of much humiliating banter and jokes. The principal won the case and \$15,000 (Defamation of a principal, 1993). Next, in “*Campbell v. Cartmell*, the defendant (teacher) engaged in a letter writing campaign against the plaintiffs (administrator and Board) for a period in excess of five years” (Judson, 2003, p. 274) where she attacked the character of the plaintiffs. Mrs. Cartmell wrote complaints about paint fumes in her classroom, negligence on the part of the administrator as a student died from a fatal reaction to peanuts while in the principal’s care, as well as alleged forgery, fraud and theft by the administrator and Board. She made many other false statements in letters to the Minister of Education, politicians, media outlets and Internet bulletin board systems. She was found guilty of harassment. Similar to Mrs. Cartmell, in the *Kohuch v. Wilson* case, “the defendant, Ms. Wilson, had conducted a concerted campaign to discredit the professional reputations of the principal and school superintendent” (Roher, 2003, p. 467) through the use of a petition, about seventy letters, a public meeting, a radio show, letters to the editor and a phone-in complaint line which she advertised in the local newspaper. She, too, was found guilty of harassment. Next, Mrs. Lim – who worked in the school library as an aide and had a son with exceptional needs in the same school – claimed, through a letter writing campaign, that racial prejudice and dishonesty on the part of the principal and the guidance counsellor caused a reduction in her working hours and her son’s loss of a scholarship. The court found in this case of *Wagner v. Lim*, that the “evidence clearly proved the defamatory nature of

the letters and article published” had slandered the plaintiffs (Judson, 2003, p. 278). In one of the first cases of defamation stemming from postings on a website, SchoolWorks!, principals and teachers at two different schools in Alberta received monetary compensation for slanderous remarks published by disgruntled parents on the SchoolWorks! site. All parents involved and the website operator were required to pay various sums (Winans, 2006). In *Ottawa School Board v. Scharf* (2007), a parent tried to intimidate the principal into leaving a special needs child in a grade 1 French Immersion program, despite the child being age appropriate for grade 6, by issuing a News Release on the Internet with slanderous comments and by circulating the release in emails to other school principals in Ottawa, School Board trustees, and members of the provincial legislature and federal parliament (Macerollo, 2009). The principal won \$15,000 amongst other gains as the judge found all statements false and defamatory. In the 2010 case of *Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board v. Lentini*, a court found a parent’s remarks posted on social media sites about the principal’s pedophilia and homosexual tendencies to be defamatory. The parent was upset due to the principal’s decision to change the level designation of the football team from AAA to AA and so the parent commented on a Facebook page created for the football team. The Court awarded the principal \$20,000 in damages, \$7,500 in aggravated damages and \$9,000 in court costs (Wickens, 2011). In the case of *Elkow v. Sana* from Edmonton, Sana, the parent, defamed principal Elkow by sending emails accusing Elkow of being non-professional, criminal and racist to school staff, other parents, students, other community members, the administration and Trustees of Edmonton Public Schools, an MLA, the Minister of Education, as well as the Human Rights Commission. Sana also drove her van close to the school (she was not allowed on school grounds due to a trespass order) with a sign taped to the van encouraging parents to call and report the principal. Elkow was awarded nominal

damages of \$1,000 with the court noting that the amount “was not intended to minimize the seriousness of the defamatory actions taken by Sana, but rather because there was little likelihood of recovering a larger sum of money from a single mother of 6 children” (Stout, 2016, p. 6). Next, in the case of forcible confinement, a mother, whose son was recently expelled from the school by the principal, followed the principal into her office and would not let the principal leave. The mother blocked the door and, in spite of requests by the principal to open the door, the mother did not. This led to criminal proceedings where “[i]n the decision of *R. v. Van Santen*, the court found an angry parent guilty of forcible confinement of a school principal” (Judson, 2003, p. 272). The possible assault case is *R. v. Whitehorne*, where a parent in Newfoundland and Labrador arrived at the school and pushed a principal who was trying to corral the parent’s unruly child, but the court found the parent not guilty when his doctor testified that the parent was not physically capable of such an action (Winans, 2005). A different case of mistreatment involved police charging a father for uttering threats against the principal and vice-principal, as the father believed that they had not investigated the sexual assault of his daughter (Wickens, 2015). This case is still before the courts. Lastly, in terms of the nuisance complaint and civil harassment of a principal in a school, there is the case of *Peel District School Board v. Taurozzi* (1998). Taurozzi made twenty to thirty phone calls per day to the supervisor to complain about a particular situation in the school and the judge issued a restraining order based on the principle of telephone harassment. This case is a precedent as it “may have been the first opportunity for the court to deal with the issue of harassing telephone calls in the education context” (Keel, 2004, p. 199). These examples of legal actions provide confirmation that principals do indeed suffer mistreatment by other adults within the school community.

My review of the literature identified five journal or chapter articles, all of which involve decisions from the courts where principals, after suffering harassment from parents, teachers, or superintendents, have been supported by the courts as being harassed and stressed. There are two American examples from South Dakota and Colorado, respectively. First, Zirkel (2010) presents the case where a teacher is judged as insubordinate and harassing to her principal due to numerous written responses contradicting what the principal was asking her to do to improve her teaching. Secondly, Brass (1992) recounts how he was accused of sexual harassment and how he was harassed by certain community members along with the leadership of the school district regarding the accusation, causing damage to his dignity and reputation. Brass (1992) claims that the accusation was unfounded and he did win monetary compensation from the courts, “a letter of recommendation from the superintendent, and a guarantee that the content of that letter would be upheld by the central administration” (p. 475) in spite of their harassment and dismissal of him regarding the accusation.

In terms of Canadian examples, in Ontario, De Wit (2007) describes how a Court upheld the principal’s denial of access to the building and grounds, via a trespass letter, as the parent of a second grade student was following teachers and principals to their cars to discuss his daughter, being hostile and writing malicious complaint letters to the principal and teachers. Lastly, from British Columbia, a Canadian case of insubordination involved a guidance counsellor teacher who, after having had several altercations with the principal using loud, abusive and unacceptable language and having received warnings for these altercations, shouted at the principal, yet again, that he had “done enough damage” (Pidcocke, Magsino, Manley-Casimir, 1997, p. 61) to a particular student, in front of the student and others in the school hallway. The principal had told the student’s parent about an incident where the girl had tried to go off with a

man but had been stopped by school personnel, and the girl did not want her parents to know. The teacher was found guilty of misconduct.

With regards to media reports, I found three Canadian newspaper articles and one teacher magazine article that provide examples of adult-on-principal mistreatment, although due to the nature of the publications in question, they must be seen as uncorroborated reports as they were never brought to court or investigated by school divisions. The first, from Manitoba, entitled “Retiring Principal Claims He was Bullied” (Martin, 2006), addresses a principal being verbally assaulted, intimidated, bullied and harassed by parents in the community over a period of three years and in an effort to protect his staff from bullying, he confronted the harassers, who in turn, perpetrated a more vindictive response. In the second article, out of Ontario, “Raging Parents: The New Schoolyard Bullies” (Brown, 2005), a veteran principal explains, “[w]e have parents spitting, swearing and pushing principals from one end of their office to another in an attempt to intimidate them” (§ 20). Brown (2005) provides a second, more gruesome example when telling the story of an inebriated father stomping into the principal’s office “waving a gun because he was angry his daughter had broken her arm on a school skating trip” (§ 22). In the third, a somewhat more recent situation in Manitoba, a parent abused a principal of a school both verbally and in writing as the parent believed that the principal had not dealt with a student bullying issue and the parent wanted the principal removed from her job (Martin, 2012). Finally, in the latest incident reported in Manitoba, which involved the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, the Manitoba Labour Board and The Manitoba Teachers’ Society, a principal was the target of “systemic harassment and bullying over a period of years, started by the husband of a fellow school colleague” (Tuhtar, 2015, p. 11) due to the principal initiating and successfully completing a transfer of the wife to a different school within the division.

Boyes (2002) contends that “parental harassment of school personnel exists” (p. 8) but evidently, so do other types of adult-on-principal harassment. There is logic to this as principals hold the final decision-making power in the schools, and if particular adults are not happy with what is happening, they may plead their cases and if they feel they are not having success, behaviours may denigrate. The mistreating behaviours seem to devolve from using inappropriate gestures or offensive remarks toward principals, to shouting, to swearing, to badgering, to demeaning comments or letters regarding baseless complaints, to intimidation to threats (Reed, 2004). These behaviours range in seriousness, with some “*verbal* and *passive* [italics in original] forms of aggression ... [becoming] ... extremely damaging” (Hoobler & Brass, 2006, p. 1125) to the target.

This section of the literature review confirms that workplace mistreatment does occur for principals in schools, shown from these legal examples leading to charges of harassment against certain adults in the school community. However, there is no mention of whether or not incivility or social undermining, the less severe constructs to describe workplace mistreatment exist, as these are not prosecutable in a court of law. Interestingly, there is no academic research where the principals describe their lived experiences and the impacts from their point of view of the range of mistreatment that they may endure; only the legal or media examples are available. Should the principals not be given a way to voice their perceptions of mistreatment and its impacts regarding the dark side of the school as a workplace?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is a heuristic that combines several pieces of research on workplace mistreatment (see *Figure 1*). It is used to analyse the types of workplace mistreatment experienced by participating principals and the severity of their reported

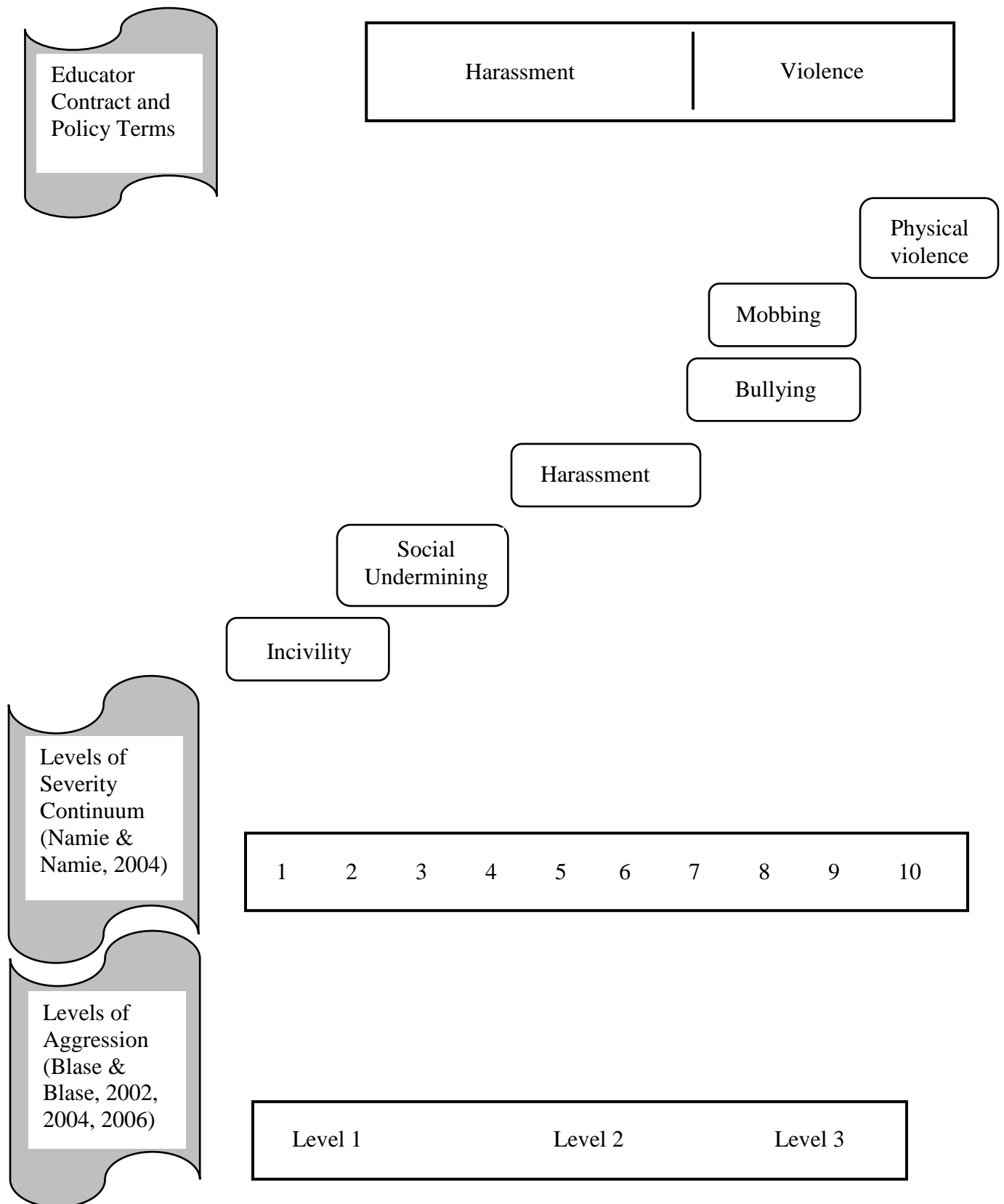


Figure 1. Mistreatment Constructs Clustered According to Continuums



mistreatment. The purpose of the framework is to provide a synthesis of some key concepts and hierarchies from the behavioural organization literature on general workplace mistreatment and the work done on mistreatment in educational settings. A challenge in developing such a framework is the fact that there is a degree of ambiguity and overlap within the definitions of the constructs in the literature as well as in everyday usage as to how people interpret the term that they are employing. For instance, while there was some dissention amongst certain researchers in the organizational behaviour domain regarding the more subtle points used to distinguish between the constructs of harassment and bullying (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Aquino & Thau, 2009; Crawshaw, 2009; Hershcovis, 2011; Tepper & Henle, 2011), this conceptual framework placed the constructs in order as portrayed in *Figure 1* where incivility was lowest on the scale ranging up through social undermining, harassment, bullying, mobbing and physical violence, as found to be common amongst several of the researchers in the organizational domain (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Aquino & Thau, 2009). In terms of severity, the boundaries between the constructs as described in the literature (Hershcovis, 2011; Tepper & Henle, 2011) were sometimes open to interpretation causing limitations to the notion that the hierarchy of incident severity had clear-cut and specific moments when the severity changed. Nonetheless, the framework allowed for an effective analysis of the constructs that the principals reported as being the types of mistreatment they experienced in their roles as well as the perceived severity of the incidents.

The framework I created begins with the vocabulary of the workplace mistreatment constructs most familiar to educators – harassment and violence – and overlays those two terms with the constructs used most frequently in the generalized workplace mistreatment literature as defined by those researchers. To this basic framework, I added the indicators of severity along

this workplace mistreatment continuum, as proposed by Namie and Namie (2004). Their scale is described as follows: irritating incivility and inappropriate gestures directed toward the principal at level 1, through mild to repeated harassment at levels 5-6-7, through incessant bullying at levels 7-8-9, finishing with physical violence as the most severe form of mistreatment at level 10. Lastly, Blase and Blase's (2002, 2003, 2007) *Levels of Aggression*, gleaned from studies where teachers perceived that they were mistreated by their principals, is added to complete the heuristic. The Blase and Blase (2006) *Levels of Aggression* are carefully placed to correspond with the constructs from the organizational behaviour literature and the severity on the Namie and Namie (2004) scale of severity. For instance, Blase and Blase's (2006) level 1 mistreatments, as previously noted, are identified as indirect and moderately aggressive, those which are of "low intensity, subtle and somewhat discreet verbal and non-verbal behaviour" (pp. 164-165) including a lack of support, which corresponds to uncivil treatments and the less severe treatments in the social undermining construct. Level 2 aggression, described by Blase and Blase (2002, 2003, 2004) is direct, escalating aggression. At this level criticism is "often associated with strong negative affect including yelling and pounding a desk" (Blase & Blase, 2006, pp. 161-162) and this criticism can be levelled either in private or in public. Such behaviours are shown on the construct scale as surpassing minor social undermining and moving to harassment or bullying, where the perpetrator would be "making unreasonable demands; [using] criticism: the ubiquitous form of level 2 mistreatment; private criticism; and public criticism" (Blase & Blase, 2003, p. 382). Finally, to become a level 3 aggressive behaviour, the "victimized teachers believed that most of the principals they described 'intended to harm' and even 'destroy' them" (Blase & Blase, 2006, p. 162), which would be consistent with the effects of mobbing from the generalized workplace mistreatment literature. By adding Blase and Blase's (2006) *Levels of*

*Aggression* to the heuristic, a link is provided between the literature from the organizational behaviour domain to the educational domain as the Blase and Blase (2006) research is the only one to my knowledge that considers the subject of mistreatment in the school as a workplace and assigns those mistreatments to different constructs, or *Levels of Aggression*, as Blase and Blase (2006) defined them.

This heuristic that combines the terminology of leading scholars regarding general workplace mistreatment concepts, with the somewhat limited research of adult-on-adult mistreatment in an educational setting and the terminology common in Manitoba collective agreements and policies provides the amalgamated overview found in *Figure 1*. Its value to the thesis lies in the fact that by blending two research domains it provides a unique global lens for measuring and discussing principals' reported experiences of mistreatment.

### **Summary**

There is currently no targeted academic research regarding mistreatment of school principals in their workplaces, but legal cases and popular media examples do exist, indicating a likelihood of its presence. Academic research into principal-on-teacher mistreatment exists as both empirical and legal cases, but academic research from the other perspective, the principals' side, is non-existent. This clearly indicates a gap in research in the educational domain. The organizational behaviour literature provides definitions and conceptualizations to distinguish between the types of workplace aggression and mistreatment – incivility, social undermining, harassment, bullying, mobbing and physical violence – for workplaces in general but these have not been applied to principals encountering these different behaviours from adults in schools. Further, School Boards, in the collective agreements and their policies/procedures, have not adopted this range of constructs and, as the review of the literature shows, prefer to use the terms

harassment and violence, citing government legislation regarding harassment as the foundation of their policies. However, confusion regarding the parameters of behaviours included in the term harassment abounds, as touched on in this literature review. As well, the literature review provides evidence that harassment is defined so broadly in some school documents as to encompass behaviours ranging from incivility to bullying. Without a distinct understanding of what principals understand as workplace mistreatment, it is impossible to appreciate the range of harassment (i.e. workplace mistreatment) that principals suffer at the hands of adult perpetrators. Another part of this research is to discover who exactly, from the principal's network of relationships in the workplace (Table 1), the adult perpetrators may be. From my overview of the literature, I note that parents, senior administration, trustees and teachers seem to pose more problems than, for example, educational assistants, who are never mentioned. Finally, it is impossible to recognize which behaviours impact the principals most and to foresee other consequences for the principals as a result of mistreatment. All these aspects point to the need for an exploratory study into what the principals view as workplace mistreatment, who the perpetrators tend to be, and the particular perceived impacts on said principals. Finally to end this chapter, I described a new heuristic as the conceptual framework that I used as the theoretical lens for my adult-on-principal workplace mistreatment research. The methodology for my study is provided in the next chapter.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

I chose a mixed methods research (MMR) design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Onwuegbuzie, 2012) for this exploratory study. MMR designs are, I believe, especially appropriate to Educational Administration research because, as Leithwood (2012) explains:

‘hard’ quantitative evidence cannot, by itself, provide the guidance for policy and practice that many educators and policy makers now expect of it. ... Furthermore, the data generated by these favored forms of research are far less conclusive than is sometimes claimed, ... relying on multiple methods within the same study, particularly where analyses are carried out independently, provides an even stronger basis for establishing claims of greater or lesser certainty. (pp. 58-59)

MMR lent itself well to this study since it allowed me to integrate findings from the quantitative data, in terms of frequency, severity and types of mistreatment identified in the school as a workplace by the participating principals, with the qualitative data, the more subjective perspectives of the realities of workplace mistreatment that the principals related in their interviews. The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data both separately at first and then together permitted me to compare, contrast and interpret the quantitative and qualitative information using inductive, deductive and abductive reasoning (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Using inductive reasoning, I looked in the data for similar ideas related by multiple participants. I deduced that the recurrence of particular ideas constituted a category of interest in the study. Finally, drawing on Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), I used abduction in an effort to uncover inferences – a set of explanations for understanding my results – when the data from all three phases of research, the qualitative and the quantitative, were combined.

## Research Design

As a mixed methods researcher, drawing on Teddlie and Tashakkori's (2009) quasi-mixed multistrand design and Creswell's (2014) convergent parallel mixed methods design, I made three choices regarding the design type, the weighting of the data sets and the time orientation of data collection. First, the quantitative and qualitative data were collected one following the other in an eight month time frame. Both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the research process used terminology that was similar so that the constructs resembled those of workplace mistreatment from the organizational behaviour literature, as defined in the literature review. The mixing of the data occurred at the end rather than throughout the research process, making it a partially mixed study (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009), as opposed to a fully-mixed study where the mixing of the data occurs throughout the research process. Second, for this study, I chose to put equal weight on the quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2014) as I used one to inform the other. Third, I chose to collect the data sequentially in three phases – a semi-structured interview (qualitative), followed by surveys (quantitative), followed by a second semi-structured interview (qualitative). By selecting this time orientation, I had the chance to analyze the first data set of interviews before distributing the surveys and before doing the second round of interviews. This phased, sequential approach allowed me to refine my instrumentation and data collection tools as I went along, enriching the data that had been collected in the first round of qualitative interviews (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

This research study was approved by the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) on July 18, 2016. I initiated the contact with The Manitoba Teachers' Society's General Secretary and President on August 8, 2016, receiving their approval

to present to the Council of School Leaders on October 11, 2016. I made a formal presentation at the October 21<sup>st</sup> MTS COSL regional directors meeting where I distributed a letter outlining the study (Appendix A) and I asked the regional directors to solicit participation. I completed the pilot study of the surveys from August 15 – 28, 2016. The first one-on-one interviews began on October 21, 2016 and were completed by December 13, 2016. The surveys were distributed at the end of the first interview session and all were returned by the end of February, 2017. The second one-on-one interviews began on March 23, 2017 and were completed by May 4, 2017, with all member checks returned by the end of May.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

My objective regarding participants for this study was to find principals with experience with students from grades 5 to 9, encompassing elementary and middle schools with those grade levels. The principals all had to have a minimum of two continuous years of experience in the principal role in their particular school divisions. It did not matter if the principals had changed schools during those years so long as they had been working in the same school division at some combination of the 5 to 9 levels for a minimum of two years at the time of the study. To locate such a sample of participants, I used both formal and less formal recruitment strategies. With the permission of The MTS (Appendix B), I made a formal presentation to all the regional directors of The Manitoba Teachers' Society's Council of School Leaders (COSL) and asked them to distribute introductory letters to potential participants in their regions throughout the province. I also personally distributed introductory letters (Appendix A) to professional colleagues who were at meetings where I was in attendance, I spoke to principals that I knew, and I spoke to friends who knew of principals in other divisions that might have been interested in the study.

Thus, through these two approaches, I located the population for this purposeful sample (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2013, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2012) using the “‘snowball’ technique” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 32). The sample was purposeful in that it restricted the selection to principals working with middle years students who had two years of experience, but the selection also had an element of convenience sampling (Johnson & Christensen, 2012) in that all the principals who volunteered for the study and were willing to participate were accepted, leading to a less randomized, perhaps less representative, yet practical sample.

Twelve principals contacted me by email, as recommended in the introductory letter, volunteering for the study. I accepted all twelve. Amongst the twelve participants, I had worked closely with two of them when I was a principal, I knew five of them as acquaintances from seeing them at workshops and meetings, and the other five participants I had never met before. The participant sample included an array of different workplace locations throughout the province of Manitoba, a gender balance, and a range of school administration experience as seen in Table 4.

Next, I invited the participants to join in the study by sending each a formal letter and informed consent form (Appendix C) to either a home mail address or to a personal email address which was not related to school business, to assure their privacy. The participants all responded affirmatively, signed the letter of consent at the first interview session and understood that no compensation would be provided (Appendix C). The participants and I communicated by email throughout the process using this private email address that they provided to me at the outset. I sent copies of transcripts to this address for triangulation purposes, a preliminary summary of the findings of the study, as well as using the address to set dates for the second round of face-to-face semi-structured interviews.



Table 4. *Participant Personal Demographics*

Participant #	Pseudonym	Gender	Years in Administration as Principal and/or Vice-principal	Years in Career as Principal	Years as Principal in the School Used in This Study
1	Sabrina	F	11	8	7
2	Cal	M	14	9	8
3	Linda	F	10	8	8
4	Annie	F	21	14	14
5	Alexandra	F	14.5	12	3.5
6	Arthur	M	25	15	3
7	Barry	M	13	9	7
8	Thomas	M	17	14	13
9	Steve	M	14	9	6
10	Victoria	F	8	3	3
11	Chuck	M	12	10	10
12	Amadeus	M	17	13	6
<b>AGES: 43-58</b>	<b>Averages:</b>		<b>14.8</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>7.4</b>

Table 5 reflects the type of school in which the participants are principals, the grade levels of the students in the school and its location. The school data shows that there are four rural schools, one northern school and seven urban schools, all from the City of Winnipeg. There are a variety of school configurations including six English only schools, three French immersion milieu schools and three dual track (both English and French immersion combined) schools.

Before the first semi-structured interview (Appendix D), when replying to my request for participants, three of the respondents, Thomas, Victoria and Amadeus, stated that they did not believe that they were mistreated at work but were interested enough in the study to volunteer to discuss the topic. As the first interview session unfolded, the three who claimed never to have

Table 5. *School Designation and Location*

Participant #	Pseudonym	School Configuration	Type of School	School Location	Part of Province
1	Sabrina	K to 8	English	Rural	South East
2	Cal	6 to 8	Dual Track	Urban	Winnipeg
3	Linda	5 to 8	French immersion	Urban	Winnipeg
4	Annie	6 to 8	Dual Track	Rural	South South West
5	Alexandra	K to 9	English	Urban	Winnipeg
6	Arthur	6 to 8	French immersion	Urban	Winnipeg
7	Barry	K to 9	English	Rural	North Central
8	Thomas	6 to 8	English	Urban	Winnipeg
9	Steve	6 to 8	English	Urban	Winnipeg
10	Victoria	K to 8	French immersion	Urban	Winnipeg
11	Chuck	6 to 8	Dual track	Northern	North North
12	Amadeus	K to 8	English	Rural	South West

been mistreated were all able to provide examples of behaviours that they had experienced from other adults that would be interpreted in the organizational behaviour literature as mistreatment. They did in fact perceive that they were mistreated, at times, although not frequently. Amadeus confirmed his surprise realization that he had been mistreated when he shared, “I can think of another situation that recently happened actually...I guess when you start to ...peel the onion. ... What’s even more interesting is earlier on in our conversation I told you I’d never felt mistreated!” (Amadeus, I1, pp. 447-449). The other eight respondents had joined the study because they believed they were mistreated and had stories to tell regarding their mistreatment – some instances were described as minor in nature, using their words, and others quite explosive.

**Data Collection and Validation/Trustworthiness**

The research questions for this study form the basis of the methods chosen to collect and analyse the data. The research-over-time data collection took place in three distinct phases comprised of two one-on-one face-to-face interviews with each participant, and three paper surveys for each participant to complete. One interview was conducted by phone since the participant lived far from the researcher in Northern Manitoba. All of the other interviews were done in person with the researcher driving to various locations throughout the province. At the end of the final interview I asked each participant if I could contact him or her if I had questions of clarification during the data analysis phase and all agreed that I could. The specifics of the three data collection phases are described below.

**Phase 1 – Interview 1 (abbreviated as I1 in findings)**

The first interview ranged from 32 to 81 minutes in duration with the average being 52 minutes. The main purpose of the first semi-structured interview (Appendix D) was to clarify what the different principals understood as workplace mistreatment and its impacts on them as principals. As DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) suggest, I began with broad open-ended questions before focusing on the particular areas for which I was looking for information: their stories of mistreatment and its impacts. An illustration of the open-ended and more focused questions used during the first interview, and their connections back to the research questions guiding the study, are provided in Table 6, along with the complete interview protocol found in Appendix D.

I used the pre-determined set of open-ended questions and probes shown in Table 6 to prompt the discussion, but added questions and explored the themes in more depth if I felt I

Table 6. *Interview 1 - Purpose of Study Paired with Questions*

Purpose of Study/Research Question	Open-Ended Questions	Probes (if needed)
- To understand what principals identify as workplace mistreatment from other adults	- In your current position as principal of XXX school, and thinking only of adult-to-adult interactions, to what extent do you believe that you have experienced mistreatment at work and in describing the extent, could you identify some examples of these mistreatments?	- Describe XXX incident in a little more detail and tell me how often such a mistreatment occurs in your workplace.  - You seem to be focusing on interactions with adults from the 'public', was there ever a time when you were possibly mistreated by a member from your profession, your 'professional world'? (OR exchange the placement of 'public' and 'professional world')
- To discover how principals construct their understanding of mistreatment	- Why do you perceive these particular incidents as mistreatment?	- What is it about these incidents that gives you cause to categorize them as such?
- To understand the impact of workplace mistreatment experiences on principals	- Talk to me about how you deal with these incidents, after the fact – after the person who is mistreating you (the perpetrator of such actions) has left your vicinity?  - Talk to me about how such incidents affect how you do your job, both positively and negatively.  - In what ways are such incidents impactful on you, personally, in your workplace or at home?	- Prompt regarding physical and psychological well-being

needed clarification for the points the participants were making. The advantage of choosing semi-structured interviews (for the two interview portions of the study) was that such interviews allowed participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms which, in turn, helped the researcher understand some of the more complex social issues vis-à-vis workplace mistreatment. After each interview was complete and I had transcribed it, I sent each participant his or her transcript asking for comments and clarifications.

## Phase 2 – Surveys

The second phase of research consisted of the administration of three different survey instruments. I gave the survey instruments to the participants at the end of the first interview and explained how to complete the surveys and clarified any questions they had. I then left the surveys with them to complete in their own time and afforded them the chance to email me during their completion of the survey should further questions arise. No one did this. I provided stamped, envelopes addressed to me for the out-of-town participants and drove to collect the surveys from the in-town participants when they emailed me to indicate that the surveys were ready for pick-up.

The first survey instrument questioned principals regarding the frequency of the various types of mistreatment in the workplace, *over the school year previous to the present year*. Survey 1, the frequency instrument, is found in Appendix E. It is based on Glomb's (2010) twenty item *Aggressive Experiences Scale* in combination with Rospenda and Richman's (2004) twenty-nine item *Generalized Workplace Harassment Questionnaire (GWHQ)*. Permission had been granted by these authors to use their survey items (Appendix F). Both these questionnaires have demonstrated validity in general workplace environments, however, before using the survey on my specific group of participants, I field tested my version of the survey on a small group of five principals, from elementary and secondary schools, to assure that the directions were easily understandable and to assure that the data being collected would be useful to this study. Given the lack of principal-focused research on the issue of mistreatment in schools, this field test was also necessary to assure that the terms listed on the survey were comprehensible to the principal sample in the field test and that these items were possibilities of mistreatment experienced, or understood as mistreating behaviours, in schools as workplaces in Manitoba. Finally, I asked the

principals to provide me with other instances of mistreatment they had encountered that were not mentioned on the survey, so that I could assure a broad range pertinent to a principal's experience. To assure that the survey did indeed fulfill these three objectives, I asked the field-test group for suggestions regarding the instrument itself as well as changes and additions to the instrument (see Appendix G for the questionnaire). An example of the combined questions from Glomb's (2010) and Rospenda and Richman's (2004) surveys, along with items that I added based on suggestions by principals, is found in Appendix H.

Each of the survey items in Appendix H is related to a different construct of workplace mistreatment, as described in the literature review. Table 7 matches the survey items to the mistreatment constructs. Some of the items could be interpreted as being one of two constructs and it is the context, for instance where there is a power relationship or not, that differentiates between the constructs of mistreatment behaviours in such cases.

The next two survey instruments, in Appendices I and J, measure the principals' perception of the severity of the mistreatment at work. I created the scale for the surveys based on Namie and Namie's (2003) ten point "scale of damage" (p. 10) where the 1 represents less severe than the 10 which is the most severe. I added an additional marker essentially as a zero to indicate that the mistreatment had not occurred for a given principal. Because these were new instruments, I did another field test to validate them and to see if any changes were needed so that principals could better understand the intent and I made some changes to the instruments from the suggestions I received. The survey constructs on these surveys are identical to the survey items on the first survey regarding frequency. This time, however, one survey asked about the severity of mistreatment by professionals (teachers, superintendents, vice-principals) and the other by members of the public (parents, community members and the like) (See Table

Table 7. *Survey Items Matched to Mistreatment Constructs*

Question No.	Survey Item	Type of Mistreatment
1	using an angry tone of voice toward me	incivility
2	yelling or screaming at me	harassment or bullying
3	sabotaging or devaluing my work	social undermining or mobbing
4	making angry/hostile gestures (e.g. pound fist on desk, roll eyes, point finger)	harassment
5	avoiding me	incivility
6	withholding information from me	social undermining
7	talking down to me (e.g. treat me as inferior to them)	incivility
8	swearing at me	harassment
9	phoning me or sending emails repeated times to swear and complain about me or my building	harassment
10	using hostile body language	harassment
11	hitting me physically/physical assault	physical violence
12	insulting or criticizing me verbally (including sarcasm)	incivility
13	failing to correct false information about me	social undermining
14	interrupting or cutting me off while I am speaking	incivility
15	getting 'in my face'	harassment
16	pushing me or grabbing me	physical violence
17	throwing something at me	physical violence
18	spreading rumors about me/gossiping	social undermining
19	making verbal threats	harassment or bullying
20	making physical threats	harassment or bullying
21	damaging my personal property (e. g. car)	physical violence
22	whistle-blowing or telling superiors about my behaviour	social undermining or mobbing
23	belittling my opinions (me) in front of other people	social undermining
24	making negative comments to me about my intelligence, competence, or productivity	social undermining or mobbing
25	making negative comments to others about my intelligence, competence, or productivity	social undermining or mobbing
26	paying little attention to my ideas or opinions	incivility
27	repeatedly reminding me of my blunders at work	bullying
28	ridiculing me in front of the staff	bullying
29	using social media to insult me, spread rumors or slander my reputation	harassment or bullying
30	marginalizing me from the staff	bullying
31	withholding resources (e.g. supplies, equipment) to do my job	social undermining

1). The principals were asked to choose one member of the public and one member of the profession (as described in the directions on the survey) to think of when completing each of the two severity surveys (Appendices I and J).

### **Phase 3 – Interview 2 (abbreviated as I2 in findings)**

The second face-to-face interview, in this the third phase of the research, ranged from 26 to 46 minutes in duration with the average being 35 minutes. The purpose of the second interview was to further research the principals' perceptions of workplace mistreatment and how they resolved the incidents (if they could), coped with the stress, and continued to maintain job satisfaction in spite of the mistreatment at work. Some of the open-ended questions for this semi-structured interview (Appendix K) were prepared at the outset of the study, but several questions arose during the first round of one-on-one interviews, so that the interview instrument was adjusted accordingly with the input of my doctoral committee. The same procedure for member checks applied to this interview as it did to the first interview. An illustration of the open-ended and more focused questions used during the second interview, and their connections back to the research questions guiding the study, are provided in Table 8, with the complete interview protocol found in Appendix K.

While listening carefully to what the participants were saying throughout each interview session, it was impossible to do any appreciable analysis while conducting the interviews except for parenthetically noting some responses that were reiterated by several or all participants. I also tried to make connections to the literature review, the conceptual framework for the study and the proposed research questions with what they were saying while listening to their answers. I wrote, in shorthand, some notes on the Observational Protocol sheets (Appendix L) I had



prepared as well as notes under particular questions in the Interview Protocol itself as themes related to specific research questions arose.

Table 8. *Interview 2 - Purpose of Study Paired with Questions*

Purpose of Study/Research Question	Open-Ended Questions	Probes (if needed)
- To understand what principals identify as workplace mistreatment from other adults	- Before we get on to the focus of today's interview, I wonder if you would you like to talk about any other incidents of workplace mistreatment and the impacts that they have had on you that came to mind after the previous session?	
- To understand the impact of workplace mistreatment experiences on principals	<p>- Before we get on to the focus of today's interview, I wonder if you would you like to talk about any other incidents of workplace mistreatment and the impacts that they have had on you that came to mind after the previous session?</p> <p>- Thinking about all the incidents you have shared with me, how do you resolve the situations of workplace mistreatment, both internally (within yourself as in intellectually and emotionally) and externally (amongst the parties involved in the conflict)?</p>	<p>- Is there any resolution with those adults who mistreat you? What do you do?</p> <p>- Is it difficult to satisfy the many demands of both the public and professional communities when it comes to solving problems that are sources of mistreatment?</p>
- To discover if, in their opinions, workplace mistreatments affect the principals' level of stress	<p>- [Relating to an Australian study by Philip Riley (2015)] Would you say, from personal experience, that mistreating behaviours by other adults in the school environment is a major source of stress for you or not?</p> <p>- Why do you classify the stress the way you do?</p>	- It is difficult in the moment when you are dealing with those mistreating you, but is there ever complete resolution or does it just eat away at you?
- To discover if, in their opinions, workplace mistreatments affect the principals' job satisfaction	- Despite the incidents that you described last time (and this time – if needed), you keep coming back every day to your principal job. Would this be an indication that you are generally satisfied in your current role as principal? Please explain your answer.	<p>- What makes you feel satisfied in your role as principal (even) when dealing with certain instances of mistreatment?</p> <p>- What makes you dissatisfied?</p> <p>- Do you have particular coping mechanisms that you access to maintain satisfaction in your job?</p> <p>- How did you find out about these strategies that are effective for you?</p>

**Validity, Reliability, Credibility, Trustworthiness and Legitimation**

There is a complexity to the issue of checking on the quality or the validation of Mixed Methods Research data, results and interpretations since there are three component parts that must be assessed: the quantitative study, the qualitative study, and the integrated findings. To begin, Creswell (2014) iterates that validity for a convergent parallel mixed methods design study, such as mine, “should be based on establishing both quantitative validity (e.g. construct) and qualitative validity (e.g. triangulation) for each database” (p. 223). Before proceeding to legitimizing the inferences from the mixing of the data, I had to first confirm the validity of the quantitative data and the reliability and trustworthiness of the qualitative data. In the following section, I explain how I assured validity and credibility in the data I collected.

First, in terms of quantitative validity and reliability for the surveys in the second phase of my research, the items chosen for the surveys (Appendices E, I and J) were based on surveys which had already been proven to have content and construct validity from their extensive use in organizational behaviour research (Glomb, 2010; Rospenda & Richman, 2004). The scale of severity was also based on the scale proposed by Namie and Namie (2003). However, since I added five items which have not been previously validated and I created a scale with ranges to show severity, I needed to field test all three surveys in a pilot study with a random group of principals before using them with my purposefully sampled group.

Thus, in August of 2016 as previously mentioned, I conducted a pilot study of the quantitative survey instruments used to measure the frequency and the severity of possible mistreatment at work. Although these items had been validated previously with other populations, I needed to assure in the present case that the surveys held (a) validity in the educational domain and that there would be (b) validity for the five items (question numbers 9,

26, 27, 28, and 30) added to operationalize the constructs identified in the heuristic (see *Figure 1: Mistreatment Constructs Clustered According to Continuums*). Therefore, in order to confirm validity of these adapted surveys, due to new items and the new population, a pilot study was conducted by requesting that six participants, who are or were principals in the public school system of Manitoba, complete the surveys. Four of the participants were elementary principals and two were from the secondary level. Two of the six were recently retired. Five of the participants were from urban schools and one was from a rural setting.

Confirmation of survey validity requires that the survey instrument be appropriate for its specific purpose and its particular population, along with measuring what the survey is intended to measure (Hittleman & Simon, 2002). Principals in the pilot study were asked to complete the surveys along with a brief questionnaire about the surveys (Appendix G). The feedback received from the pilot participants indicated that the surveys were understandable for this population and concise for the most part. The feedback also showed that the amount of time allotted for completing the surveys was more than adequate. This feedback on the surveys was also helpful in making minor adjustments to the surveys in order to clarify directions and items for the population of educators. Principals requested some changes in format, such as assuring that the titles and rating samples were included at the top of every page of the survey for easy reference when completing the frequency survey. Principals also made two suggestions regarding the directions for completing the surveys. First, they wanted to be explicitly told in the directions of the frequency survey, that they were permitted to come back to the frequency survey and change their answers if, during the completion of the severity survey, they realized that the answer on the frequency survey was not accurate. Second, in terms of the two severity surveys, the directions were embellished by explaining that the principal should think of all the interactions

that they had with the particular adult about whom they were thinking when completing the survey, even if those interactions occurred for a longer time than the one-year period that they were restricted to when completing the frequency survey. Principals saw a flaw in the severity surveys in that it was missing the option of stating that the item listed was indeed a mistreatment in their opinion but that they had not experienced such a mistreatment with the person they were thinking of to complete the survey; therefore, they could not rate its severity. The only options given in the first version of the severity surveys were to say that it was not a mistreatment at work or to rate its severity. As a consequence, I added a box to indicate this third possibility, allowing me, in the final analysis, to add to my understanding of what principals believe, or do not believe, to be mistreatment at work. Two participants did not like the fact that I had used N/A (not applicable) on the survey regarding the severity of mistreatments for particular items that were not germane to actions of adults as members of the public, rather than the profession. They found this confusing. So, I changed the order of the questions in both the professional and public severity surveys and simply left the two questions that seemed to be inapplicable to the public (given that they concerned issues which only take place amongst co-workers) as the last two questions on the survey regarding interactions with professionals. This meant that the survey regarding professionals stayed two questions longer than the one for the public but the first twenty-nine questions still lined up for later analysis. Finally, one principal suggested that I had no items regarding social media harassment and given its potential to harm in this day and age, I could perhaps add one. To that end, I added question 29. With this feedback, I overhauled the original surveys, to create the final versions of the frequency and severity surveys which were ultimately used with the study participants for this doctoral research (Appendices E, I and J).

In an effort to assure that the surveys did indeed measure what I wanted them to measure and gave me data which would be useful in my analysis, I conducted a mock analysis of the data by creating spreadsheets in Excel and testing possible graphs and selections of items based on popularity of responses, sex of the respondent and type of setting. This mock analysis confirmed that the data that I would obtain using these surveys was indeed measuring what I intended – that the terms for mistreatment in more global workplaces, other than schools, were understood, that at least some of those mistreatments were experienced by principals, and that those experiences were felt with a certain severity by the principals that endured them. In sum then, this pilot study provided face validity and content validity for the quantitative survey instruments used in this exploratory study.

Secondly, in order to show credibility or trustworthiness in the qualitative data, I tried to be vigilant against my biases, having personal knowledge of the principal role, during the interview process and during the analysis of same. In qualitative research, “the researcher is the instrument” (Patton, 2002, p. 109); thus the credibility and dependability of the data depend on the ability of the researcher to ask appropriate questions, to probe for important data throughout the interview process and to be trusted (Creswell, 2013; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). For the qualitative part of the study, unlike manipulating figures in quantitative research, researcher subjectivity is an issue. Accordingly, I clarified my bias in the study from the outset, by acknowledging that I had been a principal who had suffered mistreatment in the workplace. This admission made me conscious of possible biases which could have resulted from what I learned through experience. For instance, I believed from my first-hand experience as a principal that mistreatment did exist. However, given that there was very limited research in the domain, I wanted to explore if it was a phenomenon that had

happened only to me or that it happened to others. Through stories from colleagues, I was fairly certain it was not just the way I was dealing with people, but then, these colleagues were only from my school division, so perhaps mistreatment could have been related to the school division dynamics. Before the research, I believed that parents and community members would be perpetrators, again based on my experiences, and perhaps superintendents; however, I was surprised by the final overall placement order of perpetrators reported in this thesis. I also understood, from lying awake at night after an incident of mistreatment, that the incidents did affect my well-being. I often ruminated on instances that kept me awake and so I felt I needed to take time to rejuvenate myself, but I never did. I just got up and went back to work the next day, even though I was upset or worried about how to resolve the issues.

Given my background, I knew that I had to attempt to *bracket* myself out of the study (Creswell, 2013) by arriving at the interview with no preconceived notions regarding what I would hear from the principals in this study and by asking follow-up questions based on exactly what I heard, not on what my bias told me should be the case. By carefully asking questions based solely on what that participants had shared, I tried not to contaminate the data with my previous knowledge, biases, assumptions and understandings. Thus, by recognizing this pitfall and stating up front my personal experience with and past knowledge of the construct of workplace mistreatment in the role of principal I tried to reduce as much as possible, my subjective interpretations when drawing out the implications of the study (Creswell, 2013).

I believe that my previously-lived experiences were, however, a source of positive outcomes in the research process, in the sense that the principals were comfortable talking to one of their own, and would often say things like, ‘but you know that’ or ‘but you understand that, right?’ Strauss and Corbin (1990) contend that personal knowledge makes a researcher more

open-minded and able to see and understand events and actions with more facility, compared to a researcher without personal experiences in the domain. Because I was familiar with the lexicon and the tasks that a principal undertakes, there were many occasions when I could clearly understand the principals' explanations, where someone without my background would not have been able to comprehend as easily the examples without asking many more questions for clarification.

Another method I used to try and reduce the inherent subjectivity in the qualitative data and to increase the reliability of the findings was careful triangulation of the data throughout the process. I triangulated by comparing the interview data from the two semi-structured interviews (Appendices D and K) with what I observed during the interview process on the observational protocol (Appendix L). A further method of triangulation for the qualitative data is a member check or respondent validation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). I offered the typed transcript of his or her own personal interview to each participant, via personal email, and I asked each participant to read and provide feedback as to whether or not I had correctly transcribed their experiences, from the participant's point of view. Each participant was invited orally at the end of interviews one and two, and in the written email, to add written comments to expand on the data provided during the oral interview, should he or she so desire. All the participants affirmed, within three weeks of receiving the transcriptions, that they were a true representation of what was said during the interview. The ultimate use of the descriptions, duly triangulated, and the descriptive statistics allowed me to determine themes in the data; no significance claims were possible considering the sample size and the recruitment strategy used in this study. The recruitment strategy also did not provide a representative sample, nor was it

meant to do so. Nonetheless, the constructs explored and the themes discovered were and are of interest and importance to school principals.

Thirdly, the mixing of the data in a mixed-method study requires a validation process. The comparing and contrasting of the different data sources (the interviews and the surveys) in this study facilitated “corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251), which in turn helped to validate the findings. Further, once the analysis of the two separate data sets were mixed to form inferences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), I checked the legitimization of the inferences. To check the legitimacy of the data, during the analysis process, I minimized weaknesses in the study by attempting a good integration of the two data types (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006) in that I looked for similarities and differences amongst the themes in both the types of data. This, even though somewhat limited by the differences in the wording of the questions and the survey items, hopefully improved the inference quality and inference transferability so as to successfully legitimize the inferences within and amongst the two data types (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006).

### **Data Analysis – Quantitative Data**

The data from the three surveys was analyzed in two different ways – one way for the survey regarding frequency of mistreatments for principals at work, and one way for the surveys regarding severity of mistreatments for principals at work. Overall, the quantitative data analysis is descriptive, rather than inferential, as no significance testing was done on this small data sample. It becomes thus a non-probability sample which impedes the ability to make statistical inferences on the data.

**Frequency survey.** The data from the frequency survey was entered into an Excel spreadsheet. The mode, shown as a percentage, was chosen as the optimum method for



representing the data for this survey as the choices for answers were in intervals such as 1 to 5, 6 to 10, and so forth (see Appendix E for a copy of the survey). Each participant's responses for the four possible perpetrators of mistreatment (teachers, senior administration, parents, other) were entered by participant number into the excel spreadsheet. Percentages were calculated based on the number of participants who identified a particular modal interval to establish an overall picture of how often in the year in question that the principals in the study reported experiencing each type of mistreatment by the listed perpetrators.

**Severity survey.** The severity survey data uses the mean, calculated again in an Excel spreadsheet, as the data from these surveys are scored by each participant on a scale of 1 to 10. This type of continuous data in these surveys lends itself to such an interpretation. Each participant's responses for the perpetrator that they chose (one member of the public and one member of the profession) was entered into the excel spreadsheet. For this survey, the average severity rating for each perpetrator for each of the mistreating behaviours in the survey list was calculated (see Appendices I and J for copies of the two surveys).

### **Data Analysis - Qualitative Data**

Since “[q]ualitative data analysis is much more eclectic [than quantitative data], and there is no single ‘right way’ of analyzing the data” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 93), and it is not a technical or mechanical process (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), I used inductive reasoning and reflection throughout the analysis process. Here I describe my transcription process which helped me with my coding and categorizing procedure, and further, I describe how I used an ongoing process of analysis for validation.

**Transcription.** As the interviews were completed, I transcribed each of them myself. Interviews with the participants were set up over a period of three months so that the

transcription of the interviews could be done as soon as possible after they had been completed. The first interview transcriptions took place from October to December, 2016 and the second interview transcriptions occurred from March to May, 2017.

Transcribing the interviews myself, and as soon after their completion as possible, afforded me two things: first, the opportunity to remember certain names and phrases said during the interview that may have been lost if the waiting period between the interview and the transcription had been too long; and secondly, I could better acquaint myself with the data to begin the process of analyzing this qualitative data using a process of inductive reasoning. The approach to reasoning was one of ongoing discovery, while coding the data. I coded the data by placing segments of transcript into categories in Excel spreadsheets. Thus, coding and categories became interchangeable terms for my analysis.

**Coding.** The data from the first and second interviews were not coded together in the same spreadsheet because, as is requisite in a “convergent parallel mixed methods” (Creswell, 2014, p. 222) approach, all data from the different research processes is analyzed separately before mixing the findings to confirm and disconfirm evidence for my assumptions. First, the responses from the participants were coded and transferred manually into categories in Excel spreadsheets. Segments of the transcripts were categorized into pre-identified categories related to each of the research questions which were the basis of the initial analysis at the outset of the process, while other categories emerged as the analysis proceeded. These ideas fell under the title of *Emergent Categories*. If an idea did not fit easily into any category but was something that I thought could become important later, I filed that idea under the heading *General Interest*, to be re-categorized when I recognized its importance. The list of ideas in the *General Interest* category was very large up until approximately the transcription of the fourth interview per

session. The commonalities between participants then began to solidify and by about the transcription of the fifth interview I went back and moved items from the *General Interest* category to categories of their own based on the emerging commonalities. For example, the category of *Resilience* from the first round of interviews did not emerge as a category in and of itself until after the first several interviews had been transcribed when it became apparent that many principals were showing resilience after the mistreatment episodes. The final coding of the data fell into the categories shown in Tables 9 and 10. Of note is that, in the final analysis, some of the segments of transcript supporting particular ideas in the emergent category of *General Interest* were not used, as the ideas did not recur amongst the participants.

After creating these initial spreadsheets, the second phase of the coding process was to listen again to the recordings and read the transcriptions at the same time in order to look for support for the original categories created during the transcription process, should any support have been missed. I was vigilant to follow “the cardinal rule of coding in qualitative analysis [which] is to make the codes fit the data and not vice versa” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 152). Hence when, on the second pass of the data, I noticed similar ideas shared by two or more principals, I would add a category to the spreadsheet to reflect that idea and recheck all the interviews to see if it existed in more than two cases. In this second pass, I also found that I had missed some of the supporting segments of transcript for some of the emergent categories from the first four interviews that had been transcribed, as at the outset of the coding process, some of the ideas seemed innocuous, but later became valuable additions as common ideas that were emerging amongst the participants.

The third phase of the qualitative data analysis was to reread what was in each category of the Excel spreadsheets to understand whether or not the ideas placed in the categories did

Table 9. *Coding Qualitative Data from Interview 1*

Stages 1 & 2		Stage 3	Thesis Location
Pre-Identified Categories	Emergent Categories	Re-Categorization	
Adult Perpetrators Identified		1. <i>The distinction between conflict and mistreatment:</i> - ‘crossing the line’.	Chapter 4
Mistreatments:			
- Incivility			
- Undermining		2. <i>Organizational behaviour mistreatment types as per (i) adults involved, (ii) how the incidents occurred, and (iii) examples.</i> - Adult perpetrators identified; mistreatments; threats; disciplining staff.	Chapter 4
- Harassment			
- Bullying			
- Mobbing			
- Violence			
Negative Impacts			
Positive Effects/Job Satisfaction			
	Frequency	3. <i>Principals’ heuristic of mistreatment and threats</i> - Severity – major/minor; threats.	Chapter 4
	Severity – minor/major		
	Threats		
	Sexism	4. <i>Negative Impacts</i> - Stress, fatigue, loss of sleep, work-life balance, emotional harm, fear, physical reactions.	Chapter 6
	Mental health of parents		
	Disciplining staff		
	The Manitoba Teachers’ Society		
	Protection of staff	5. <i>Positive effects/ Job satisfaction</i>	Chapter 6
	Solutions and resolutions	6. <i>Others</i> - Role of MTS; Rural experiences; Solutions and resolutions; Resilience.	Themes throughout; left out; future research.
	Rural experiences		
	Resilience		

Table 10. *Coding Qualitative Data from Interview 2*

Stages 1 & 2		Stage 3	Thesis Location
Pre-Identified Categories	Emergent Categories	Re-Categorization	
Negative Impacts of Mistreatment		1. <i>Negative Effects of Mistreatment</i> - Stress, fatigue, loss of sleep, lack of work-life balance, emotional harm, fear, physical reactions.	Chapter 6
Enduring Impact of Mistreatment		2. <i>Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction</i> - Stress, sleep loss, lack of work-life balance, feeling drained, emotional upset, physical reactions.	Chapter 6
Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction		3. <i>Enduring Effects</i>	Chapter 6
Resolution - External - Internal			Future research.
Coping Mechanisms	Learning to Cope	4. <i>Others</i> - Coping strategies; Resilience and efficacy; Role of MTS.	Themes throughout; left out; future research.
	“Here for the kids”		
	Resilience		
	Protection of staff		
	The Manitoba Teachers’ Society		

indeed support that category. From there, I created typed summaries of what I saw as relevant in each category, complete with anecdotal support in the form of segments of the transcripts. I created one summary for the categorized data for Interview 1 and one summary for the categorized data for Interview 2. The creation of these summaries allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the data and also allowed me a chance to revisit the categorized information for a fourth time (see Appendices M and N). Some categories were too large to be summarized in a

concise manner and this led to the generation of more specific new emergent categories. I also rearranged of some of the coded phrases into categories to which they seemed better suited. Some of the meanings of certain phrases supported two or three themes and if such was the case, the phrases were copied and placed in all the pertinent categories.

**Ongoing Data Analysis and Trustworthiness.** A constant comparative method (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) was what I used as I transcribed and then reread the transcripts in order to identify ideas pertinent to the research questions. I searched for supportive documentation for each of the categories already in the Excel spreadsheets from what I had found in the initial reading through the data. I also searched for ideas that disconfirmed what seemed to be the commonalities between participants. I made four detailed readings of the data and by “continually comparing specific incidents in the data [I was able to] refine these concepts ... [and] explore their relationships to one another” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 137). The addition of categories and merging of categories continued throughout this process of analysis. This resulted in the listings in Tables 9 and 10 as the final categories from which I selected the supporting segments of transcript for this thesis.

To further enhance the analysis of the second round of interviews and to assure that I had not missed any relevant segments of text in the coding in my spreadsheets, I did two further analyses. First, I used the search function in the Word program to assure that all possible references to certain terms and ideas were accounted for in the Excel spreadsheets. I also used the Provalis (2014, Version 4.1.31) QDA Miner program, called WordStat, for content analysis and text mining. I only used this computer program for the second round of interviews because, in the first round of interviews, the description of the incidents did not correspond with the words used in the behavioural organization literature (such as incivility and undermining) making the

nature of the analysis to be a product of the words in context, rather than just the words.

However, for the second round of interviews, I learned the WordStat program and pulled out all the instances of keywords by frequency that would be important in the final analysis of the data.

This program also allowed me to look for word variations that expressed similar themes, such as stress, stressors, stressful and toll. The words which appeared most frequently in the data, or as synonyms for other words, are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. *WordStat Analysis of Interview 2 Data*

Aggressive	Agitated	Anger
Angry	Annoyed	Anxiety
Attack	Attacked	Attacking
Balance	Belief	Beliefs
Bothered	Bothersome	Box
Bullying	Communicate	Communicated
Communicating	Conflict	Coping
Demographic	Demographics	Displeased
Displeasure	Disrespect	Disrespectful
Dissatisfying	Dissatisfaction	Draining
Emotional	Emotionally	Emotions
Exercise	Feel	Feeling
Feelings	Frustrate	Frustrated
Frustrating	Frustration	Hostility
Impact	Inappropriate	Irate
Laugh	Mad	Media
Mistreatment	Paperwork	Perception
Problem	Racism	Relationship
Relationships	Resolution	Resolve
Resolved	Respect	Respectful
Rewarding	Satisfaction	Satisfied
Satisfy	Satisfying	Strategies
Stress	Stressed	Stressful
Stressor	Stressors	Superintendent
Superintendents	Support	Supporting
Supports	Taxing	Threatened
Threats	Toll	Tone
Unresolved	Values	Yelling

In the final rereading of qualitative data from both interviews, I looked for disconfirming evidence, “information that presents a perspective that is contrary to the one indicated by the established evidence” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 212). For instance, sometimes I was confused as to the reason why people would say that the mistreatment didn’t “eat at” them at all and then come back and say they never wanted to go through it again; it was obvious it had affected them in some way. I noted the disconfirming ideas under the title *Disconfirming* at the bottom of each category of the Excel spreadsheet so that I could revisit these thoughts and ideas later. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), “[t]he report of disconfirming evidence in fact confirms the accuracy of the data analysis, because in real life, we expect the evidence for themes to diverge and include more than just positive information” (p. 212).

Categorization of the data was always under scrutiny, even during the typing of the first version of the thesis. While typing, I noticed that in a few rare instances, some of the experiences of harassment that the participants related during the first interviews were misplaced, either because I had forgotten particular details of the definitions or because certain words misled me to put the experiences in the wrong categories. I rearranged the incidents in question as I was typing the thesis. While adding segments of transcript to the thesis, I changed the colour of the segments from black to green, to assure that the data I had compiled was thoroughly reflected in the thesis text. However, after completing the typing of one of the answers to a certain part of a research question, I went back to see if any of the segments of transcript were still left in black and reflected on why this would be the case. This process allowed me again to check if there was disconfirming evidence.

The final stage of data analysis in MMR requires the search for convergence and divergence amongst the quantitative and qualitative sources of data (Creswell, 2014; Johnson et



al., 2007). I tried to uncover the commonalities amongst the qualitative and quantitative data to end up with these as a set of explanations for understanding my results (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The mixing of data phase of analysis highlighted some similarities in my data between what the participants had inadvertently said regarding the frequency and severity of the workplace mistreatments during the interviews and their responses on the three surveys. The quantitative results tended to reaffirm what was said in the qualitative interviews.

### **Data Reporting Format in the Thesis**

Segments of transcript from interviews quoted in this thesis are notated in the following manner: the pseudonym of the participant is given, followed by either I1 or I2 to indicate which interview that the quote is taken from, followed by the page number in the transcription. The transcriptions of the participants for both interview one and interview two are typed in numerical order from 1 to 12, irrespective of the fact that the second interviews did not occur in the same sequential order of 1 to 12 as the first interviews did. The surveys are designated throughout the analysis as Frequency Survey, Severity Survey – Professional, Severity Survey – Public.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the mixed-methods research methodology and research design that I used for this study. I presented how I dealt with certain ethical considerations and confidentiality matters with the participants during the study. Next, I outlined the study timelines. Then, I explained the participant selection process that I used to engage my twelve principals as participants. Further, I described the three phases of the data collection process by giving an overview of the semi-structured interview process to be used on two occasions and I explained the survey instruments to be used for data collection, along with how I conducted the pilot study of those instruments. Then I provided validation procedures that were

used to verify the validity, credibility and legitimation of the data. I described how I coded/categorized and analyzed the data that was generated during the research process. Lastly, I described the format I chose to use to cite the principals' remarks verbatim in the findings sections, as well as naming the three surveys to ensure consistency and understanding in the thesis.

## **Chapter Four: Findings (1) – Principals' Experiences and Perceptions of Workplace**

### **Mistreatment**

This chapter introduces the reader to the principals' global distinctions of 'reasonable conflict' and mistreatment related to their interactions with adults based in the workplace. Next, data, along with some analysis, are shared, related to the first research question in this study: What do principals perceive as instances of workplace mistreatment from other adults (teachers, senior administration, parents, the wider community, etc.) in their work settings? I present a broad range of examples of the instances of mistreatment, as related by the participants, and link them to the corresponding definitions of such constructs from the literature review conducted for this thesis (incivility, social undermining, harassment, bullying, mobbing and physical violence).

Principals, in general, while not using the specific terminology of the organizational behaviour literature to identify the types of mistreatment encountered, described situations they had experienced that fit on the continuum from incivility to mobbing. The boundaries between the different constructs were sometimes blurred and overlapping. It was a challenge on occasion to place an account into just one construct, in which case I referred to the chosen definition from the organizational behaviour literature and categorized the story to where I considered it fit best. If the story was an example of a mistreatment that could be placed into more than one category, for instance a case of mobbing that contained some elements of social undermining, it was categorized at its highest level – in this case mobbing. Similarly, incidents of mistreatment by the superintendents, which may or may not contain an uncivil approach to a matter, are grouped, with the exception of distinct cases of social undermining, in the section on bullying because of the power differential between the principal and the senior administration. Among the

participants in this study, there were no mistreatment instances reported of the highest level on the continuum, physical violence.

All of the principals in this study distinguished the notion of “conflict” from that of “mistreatment” and recognized that some level of “reasonable conflict” was an inevitable aspect of their role as they tried to provide support to all of the students and staff in their buildings. For example, Chuck related the following:

I get lots of disagreements, of course, I mean that that happens every week, but those disagreements will happen and they're not always negative. They're just disagreements. ... I enjoy a healthy debate with parents and students ... and staff about the direction of certain things. That is not mistreatment to me. (Chuck, I1, pp. 429-431)

Amadeus concurred by providing this statement, “conflict is natural, it's the most natural thing to occur [so] ... there's nothing wrong, I would invite disagreement, but how it's done” (Amadeus, I1, p. 465) in terms of the tone of the message delivery and the place of the discussion was what distinguished the interactions as mistreatment (or not) for him. Steve expressed a similar perspective, but added the possibility of a principal provoking mistreatment as he commented: “You put ten adults in a room together, you're gonna have conflict. Is it bullying? No. It's conflict. If you respond badly, then it could turn into it [bullying or mistreatment]” (Steve, I1, p. 357).

Similarly, principals such as Thomas, Linda, Victoria and Chuck commented that they did not mind conflict with a parent that came in angry but with whom the principal could rationalize and strategize. They preferred the parent who, once the emotion was gone from the discussion, was willing to listen instead of those that became abusive to attain the ends that they

wanted. Principals, such as Cal, Thomas, Victoria and Chuck, chose to describe this difference between regular conflict and mistreatment by noting that interactions with certain parents went “over the line” or “crossed the line”. However, the line sometimes appeared to be a little fuzzier with their bosses – members of the senior administration such as superintendents and assistant superintendents. Regarding the superintendents in his school division, and reflecting on their positional authority and the ways in which they might affect his career, Steve held, “they’re my boss and really they can kind of do what they want” (Steve, I1, p. 344). Thus, to some degree, conflict with the superintendents, as leaders of the school division, was sometimes pragmatically not identified as mistreatment, rather the cost of being employed and “doing business”. Examining the distinguishing features of workplace mistreatment from reasonable conflict and the principals’ understanding of where the line is crossed from the principals’ own descriptions of their experiences of mistreatment is explored in the rest of this chapter.

### **Findings: Types of Mistreatment**

The types of mistreatment identified in the heuristic *Figure 1: Mistreatment Constructs Clustered According to Continuums* in chapter 2, and reproduced as *Figure 2* here – created by drawing on the constructs described in the organizational behaviour literature (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Aquino & Thau, 2009; Hershcovis, 2011; Tepper & Henle, 2011), and specifically the work of Blase and Blase (2002, 2003, 2006) in educational contexts, as well as the work of Namie and Namie (2004) – range in severity from the least severe, or the lowest level; incivility, through social undermining, harassment, bullying, mobbing, to the most severe or the highest level; physical violence. The principals in this study recounted incidents that represented all of these levels of workplace mistreatment, with the exception of physical violence. The following section provides a summary, by mistreatment category, of the instances

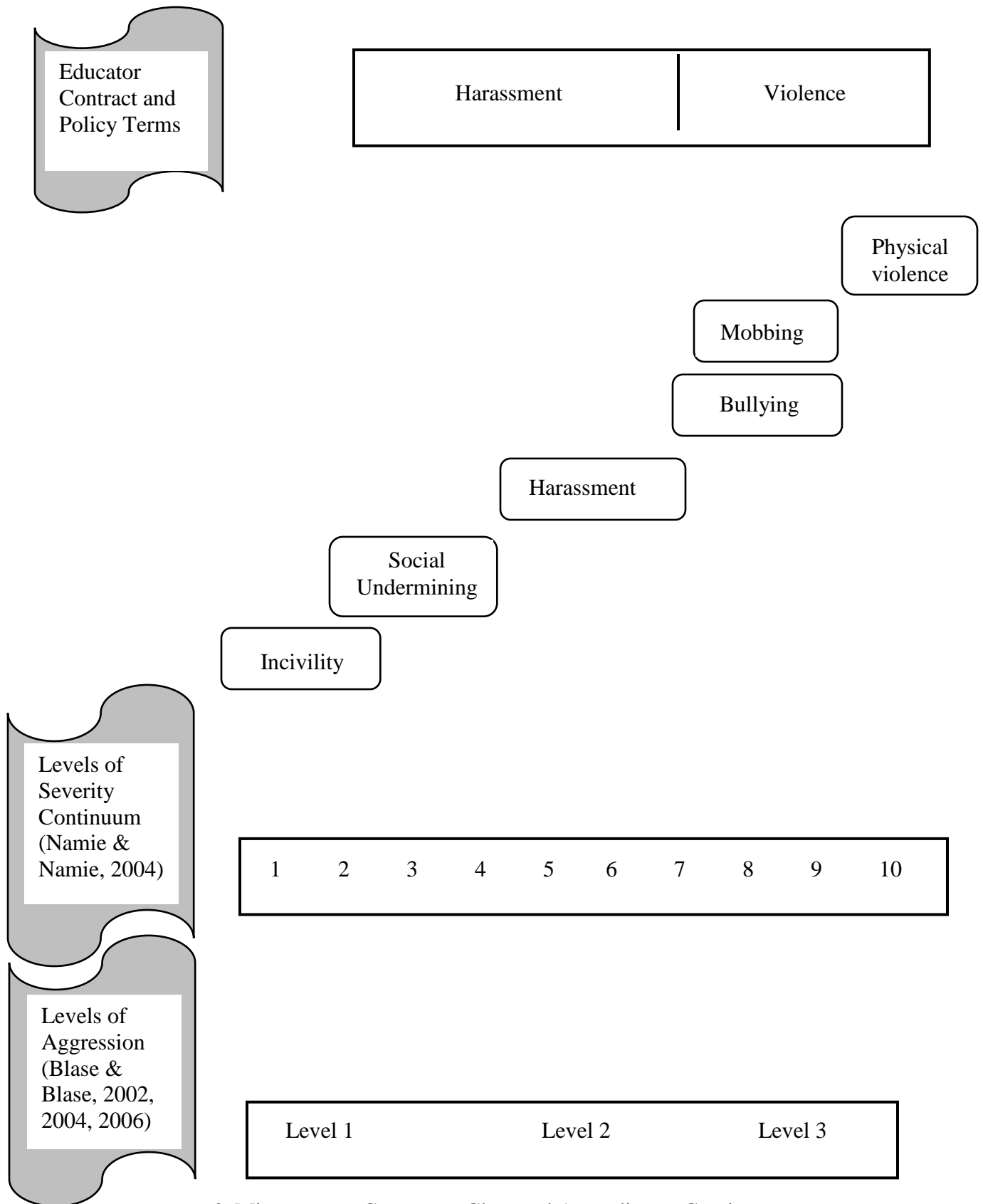


Figure 2. Mistreatment Constructs Clustered According to Continuums (previously Figure 1.)

that represent the principals' descriptions and constructed understanding of their experiences of mistreatment by adults in their workplace. Following a brief reintroduction to each construct, the listing of the adult perpetrators of the behaviour and the forums in which the interactions occur, select examples are provided supporting the principals' perceptions of the existence of the particular construct in their workplaces. The examples are organized in sub-sections based on the alleged perpetrator of the actions.

**Incivility.** The first and lowest level of mistreatment from the organizational behaviour literature is incivility. This behaviour “*is low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviours are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others* [italics in original]” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457).

**Perpetrators, forms and focus of incivility.** The principals identified a variety of adults who had treated them in an uncivil nature. This group of adults included: parents (mothers, fathers, and foster parents), bus drivers, trustees and teachers. The interactions took place in various formats, such as on the phone, by email or in person (face-to-face). Amadeus shared, “You get a vicious email, you get a phone call, you get somebody very upset who drops by and comes out attacking” (Amadeus, I2, p. 326). The face-to-face incidents happened in various locations that included the principal's office as well as public venues (school corridors, gyms, meeting rooms or on school grounds). While the principals did not always identify these adults as using incivility during their interactions, as they were unfamiliar with the construct terminology, they did describe the perpetrators as disrespectful, angry, irate, rude, edgy, grumpy, agitated or confrontational. These words are all associated with incivility and perhaps “crossing the line” in the principals' minds from regular conflict. Further terms that came up in the

descriptions to distinguish between incivility and normal conflict were: ranting, berating, demeaning, condescending or bristling. Many times the principals described the perpetrators as volatile or having lost control of themselves so much as to be in a rage.

*Incivility by parents and other members of the public.* Incidents of this form of workplace mistreatment described by the principals in this study stemmed from a variety of different issues including differing opinions and frustrations about school programming, school policies and procedures, as well as student supervision and discipline. Many of the episodes occurred either on the phone, in phone messages, in emails, or in notes in children's agenda books sent back to the school for the principal to see, but "that are very inappropriate for children to even see" (Sabrina, I1, p. 14). Sabrina described an "irate parent on the phone" (Sabrina, I1, p. 54) and she explained that you have no choice but, "you let them talk, you let them rant, yell whatever" (Sabrina, I1, p. 28). Thomas was of the same opinion when encountering "parents who are angry and they verbalize their position and ... what they think I did wrong or whatever else" (Thomas, I1, p. 308). He saw these parents as needing to "just blow off steam ... [so he] just sit[s] and listen[s], 'cause they have to blow off steam" (Thomas, I1, p. 307). He concluded however, that "they're entitled to their opinions and I listen and I try to find a resolution" (Thomas, I1, p. 308). Furthermore, despite the anger and rude approach, he didn't "consider that mistreatment" (Thomas, I1, p. 308) because his interpretation of mistreatment was reserved for much more grave instances. He explained that he saw parents that "became physically threatening ... as mistreatment 'cause that's unacceptable" (Thomas, I1, p. 308). Thomas' line that was crossed was much farther along the continuum than some of the other principals.

Cal, Steve, Barry, Annie and Arthur all concurred with Amadeus' observation that parents could get quite "verbally aggressive" (Amadeus, I1, p. 447) and "elevate their voices"



(Amadeus, I1, p. 453) on the phone; but many of these principals believed that those parents were often bolder on the phone than they were in person.

Linda's example regarding the various modes of communication relayed how the communication mode made a difference in the treatment of the principal. She believed that "people hide behind the emails" (Linda, I1, p. 79) and offered an example of a female parent who "was very bold with emails but if you saw her in person, or over the phone, that human interaction tended to soften her a little bit" (Linda, I1, p. 79). Arthur agreed with this assessment commenting "more often parents ... write down what they would not be able to say in person, so they are more aggressive via email" (Arthur, I2, p. 146).

Confirming what Linda noted above, examples of emails and letters sent to principals that revealed the incivility of the written word were relatively abundant, with over half the principals able to put their hand on an email or letter within minutes of being asked. A few of the following excerpts showed the flavour of what some of the principals received:

- "As a principal, you are clearly an extremely controlling individual who dictates anything and everything beyond the realm of any common sense whatsoever." (Sent to Cal)
- "So either you aren't supervising at all, or you are, but doing an incredibly poor job. Whichever the case may be, it's pitiful." (Sent to Victoria)
- "I am beyond pissed now. Your 'no bullying policy' is shit. I am contacting the school board and the police to make a formal complaint." (Sent to Arthur)
- "Your school is an utter embarrassment and please know that if anything happens to any children due to your ineptitude we will happily inform any family/lawyer/police

that this has been an ongoing issue that YOU [sic] have repeatedly ignored. Thank you for your UN-cooperation [sic].” (Sent to Victoria)

Some incidents of incivility did occur in person and during face-to-face interactions in either the principals’ personal offices or in a more public arena such as the general office space or the school hallways, but the number of times these were mentioned suggested that they occurred less frequently than by email or on the phone. Chuck provided the example of a foster father who “confronted [him] ... right at the doorway, so it was half in [his office] and half in the general office” (Chuck, I1, p. 408). He was calling the principal names over what the principal had deemed a minor lunch incident but the father “stormed out before [the principal] could even give him any kind of explanation. ... He (the parent) was in a bit of a rage” (Chuck, I1, p. 405). When these face-to-face incivilities occurred, Cal attempted to judge the body language of the parents and sometimes, he claimed, you “remind them, ‘please don’t be yelling at me or this conversation’s over’” (Cal, I1, p. 41) and sometimes “you just ask them to come back another time when they’re prepared to talk” (Cal, I1, p. 43). Sabrina and Annie also stated that they would not hesitate to end an uncivil conversation and invite the parent back at a later date when the discussion could be done in a calmer atmosphere. Arthur summed up the three things that he believed revealed incivility during in-person interactions with frustrated and angry parents: “the very loud tone [such as screaming, (clarified later in the conversation)] ... the body language ... and the specific message [content] that they’re conveying” (Arthur, I1, p. 228). These were indicators to Arthur that the interaction had changed from a situation of reasonable conflict to workplace mistreatment.

School board trustees represented another group of people classified in Table 1 as members of the public. While principals did not generally have regular interactions with trustees

they were mentioned by a few participants with reference to incivility. One example was a story told by Alexandra of an irate and demanding school trustee who in her view over-stepped his authority as a member of the school board and whose behaviour towards her was uncivil, on occasion. He would, she commented, “come into the school and he’d say, I got a complaint about whatever it was and fix it” (Alexandra, I1, p. 188) even though it was not in his mandate to micromanage her school, nor was he her immediate supervisor.

*Incivility by professional and non-professional employees.* The majority of the examples of incivility provided by the principals in this study concerned their interactions with the public, most specifically the parents. There were also examples of incivility involving other adults who were employed by the various school divisions.

*Incivility by teachers and professional colleagues.* In terms of the professional employees, instances of incivility by colleagues were only reported by two principals in their interviews. Thomas provided the example of a teacher who spoke to him twice with much disrespect and rudeness but the situation resolved itself as in “those two instances, same person, they came to [him] within 24 hours and apologized. ... They just came forward and said ‘that was wrong, I shouldn’t have done that’” (Thomas, I1, p. 309). The second example of treating a colleague in an uncivil way occurred when a principal, who had a project denied funding by a committee, phoned Victoria, the principal in this study, who had consulted for that particular committee and “in a tone that was quite rude” (Victoria, I1, p. 379) criticized the work of Victoria. Victoria articulated that this berating by a colleague “stung for a couple of days [and she] would say that was mistreatment [due to the fact that] the call was pretty acid in tone” (Victoria, I1, p. 379).

*Incivility by bus drivers.* Regarding interactions with other school board employees, both Annie and Barry, in their rural communities, had bus drivers, non-professional employees, who treated them unsuitably. Annie recounted:

And the driver just snapped at me. Bus is loaded...with kids and teachers. ...and the driver said to me, “well you can’t, we’re not waiting for this student we’re just gonna go because I have to get back and I have to do my run” and he kind of completely lost control. ... [He] was still edgy and grumpy and then from that point forward any time that driver was driving for us, he was just agitated and really rude and indifferent. (Annie, I1, pp. 119-121)

Barry had similar issues with his bus drivers, as he “got berated by two of the bus drivers for the way [he] dealt with the kid, in front of kids and these parents” (Barry, I1, p. 259) in the doorway to the school. He invited the bus drivers to come into his office to discuss the student’s misbehaviour, but the drivers continued to yell at the principal in public. Both Barry and Annie commented on the repetitive nature of the bus drivers yelling which seemed to stem mainly out of exasperation for issues caused by their charges on the buses.

**Social undermining.** The second category of mistreatment identified in the organizational behaviour literature is social undermining. Social undermining behaviours can be direct (i.e. making derogatory statements, delivering belittling statements) or indirect (i.e. criticizing behind one’s back, withholding information), both of which, “hinder, over time, the ability to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success and favorable reputation” (Duffy et al., 2002, p. 332).

The principals in this study identified a variety of instances of social undermining, although not all of the principals verbally demarcated the behaviours as undermining. Adjectives

that principals used to describe such interactions that undermined them were: passive-aggressive, manipulative, underhanded, belittling, belligerent, secretive, unprofessional, sabotaging, and sneaky. Principals also described that, in their opinion, the perpetrators who engaged in undermining lacked integrity and/or honesty.

**Perpetrators, forms and focus of social undermining.** What was clear in this study was that the people whom principals reported as undermining them worked primarily within the school environment itself: teachers, support staff, administrative colleagues, superintendents, and even a secretary-treasurer for a school division. None of the principals in this study described in either of their interviews an instance where they believed that they had been undermined by a parent, although there were a small number of more serious instances of parental harassment and mobbing, discussed later, that included elements of social undermining the principal. Further, some accounts by the principals where the superintendent or a trustee became involved in incidents of whistle-blowing, or where a parent made a report about the principal to a superior, showed that parents were indirectly attempting to undermine the principals' authority to have their concerns addressed farther up in the school division hierarchy.

The social undermining experiences described in this study happened in various settings, from on the phone to in person, by email or by posting to a bulletin board group, in small groups at staff meetings or in large groups with parent audiences or in private, but overheard by the principals themselves or reported to the principals by others. The indirect social undermining or clandestine events were comprised of certain adults doing or saying things behind the principal's back or "little whisperings, you know and things that went behind closed doors" (Alexandra, I1, p. 169). Annie contended that "undermining, passive-aggressive behaviour, where people disregard what you ask" (Annie, I1, p. 144) happened relatively regularly. She viewed this as

mistreatment, not just simple conflict, as the perpetrator was going out of his or her way to undermine the principal's authority and thwart progress in the building. The issues that seemed to stimulate social undermining behaviours toward the principals were: unpopular principal initiatives or decisions, advancing change in the school, questioning principal experience and competence, workload assignments of teachers, as well as staff supervision and evaluation.

*Social undermining by professional and non-professional employees.* The following examples of social undermining behaviours are categorized by the perpetrators mentioned the most, the teachers and superintendents, to those mentioned only once, such as one particular secretary-treasurer of a school division and a school custodian.

*Social undermining by teachers.* The most popular word that participants used in the first interview to describe teachers who undermined was "passive-aggressive" (Linda, Cal, Steve, Annie, Alexandra). Johnson and Klee (2007) contended that these were "behaviours that convey[ed] aggressive feelings through passive means: verbal indirectness, verbal passivity, indirect and physically passive behaviors, action avoidance, blame avoidance, change avoidance, resistance" (p. 131) and negativism. Ignoring one's boss or what one's boss asks one to do was also seen as a passive-aggressive marker in workers (Fox & Spector, 1999). In terms of passive-aggressive tendencies in this study, several of the principals found that a teacher would say one thing in an individual meeting with the principal and then ignore it after the meeting was over. For instance, Annie recounted:

We would make a bit of a plan and then the teacher would return to the classroom and not follow the plan. And then I would have to call him back in and say you're not following the plan [and he would respond] "Well I can't follow that plan."

“Why can’t you follow that plan?” “Because I don’t agree with that plan, it’s your plan not my plan.” (Annie, I1, p. 135)

Steve gave a similar description of teachers agreeing to some course of action and then not doing it: “A lot of passive-aggressive BS. ... Saying yes to me on an initiative and then going behind my back and saying how crappy it is to someone else” (Steve, I1, pp. 340-341). In Alexandra’s case, upon her arrival on the first day in her new school as principal, she was greeted by one of the male junior high teachers like this:

He said, “It’s like the Titanic, we know where we’re going, it steers itself and you don’t have to change anything”. So, you know, I see that as a form of mistreatment because you’ve already set a tone to me. It’s kinda like a warning. It’s almost like a threat. I think that’s how, like when he left my office, I wasn’t really sure exactly what to think but I felt threatened by that. I felt like, OK, so you’re telling me it’s running perfectly, don’t bother changing anything ’cause there’s no need and if you do, you’re a fool because I’m already giving you this warning. (Alexandra, I1, p. 165)

A second junior high male teacher had similar passive-aggressive comments for Alexandra as she was carrying in boxes; the “grade nine math teacher says to me, ‘Oh, uh, so I hear you don’t have any junior/senior high teaching experience’, and I said, ‘Yah, that’s correct’ and he said [voice change with sarcasm in tone] ‘well, this should be interesting,’ and he smiled smugly and walked away!” (Alexandra, I1, p. 166).

Steve distinguished between passive-aggressive and aggressive behaviour in different moments with the same teacher. He described a male teacher who he believed needed a wake-up call to work harder in the classroom and his decision was to change the teacher’s workload from

math to science. The teacher's first response was to tell Steve that the teacher chosen to take over the math courses was not a good teacher. Steve told the story this way:

So that wasn't ... passive-aggressive, that was pretty aggressive. And then he told me to my face, said, yah, well, yah I'll do it, whatever you need me to do, I'll do. And then, I hear him talk, telling other staff, "well I'm not gonna use the curriculum, I'm just gonna do what I want in the class." ... Just find their friend to agree with them – to say what they're doing is OK. (Steve, I1, p. 342)

Victoria liked to deal with issues in-house and described how she was not happy when a teacher would not talk to her about a decision Victoria had made and went instead directly to The Manitoba Teachers' Society before having a discussion with the principal. This could be seen as a passive-aggressive way to deal with an unpopular decision made by the principal. Victoria rationalized the incident in this way:

Teachers have the right to call The Manitoba Teachers' Society. This person was angry because, I don't remember, it was something trivial, like I said they couldn't go on a field trip or something like that. ... Like is it a threat [the decision to go to MTS]? There is that structure in place [to go to MTS]. Was I happy about it? I thought there was another way to deal with it but I don't know if I felt threatened, just undermined. (Victoria, I1, pp. 391-392)

Teacher supervision and the principal's role as instructional leader in the school was a common area where the principals in this study discussed experiencing social undermining behaviours from teachers. Amadeus shared that behind his back he has heard certain teachers "belittle, make comments, talk about my, bring into question my competency" (Amadeus, I1, p. 457). Annie commented on similar occurrences. According to Annie:



In the office it would have been, just kind of suck it up, but then turn around and complain out of the office to others. [The teacher said to others,] “And she’s picking on me, or, is she doing this to you, because this is what she’s doing to me?” ... Not yelling, not really in my face, it would have been much more indirect and under the table. (Annie, I1, p. 135)

In Chuck’s case, a male teacher was not using Chuck’s suggestions for improving the evaluation procedures for the students in his class:

He would listen to the things I had to say, but he wouldn’t follow up on them. He wouldn’t do them. He, just little things like, you know ... You have this lesson and now I’d like to know how you’re gonna measure this. And he would agree, oh yah, yah, but he would never produce like a rubric, or any tool that he was using. And so, frequently his lessons were ... just poor and the kids were beginning to act up. (Chuck, I1, pp. 415-416)

Of particular concern for principals was undermining actions that occurred in public forums such as staff meetings or in front of parents. In Linda’s words, “it’s just a lack of respect and it undermines my abilities and my authority, really” (Linda, I1, p. 100). Likewise, Arthur believed that when the critique was done in too public a manner, it was sometimes to sabotage principal initiatives and his leadership in the school. He related:

A teacher, who has a very strong will, strong opinion, will try to ... sabotage initiatives, opinions, ideas, structures because in her opinion [because] we worked together many, many, many, years ago ... we should be on the same playing field. ... I’ve had to have many conversations with this teacher to say that if she’s dissatisfied with decisions that I make or not liking a certain path we’re going

down, that she come and talk to me in private and not rally people against a decision, an initiative ... in a team meeting situation. ... It's OK to make a comment but then also provide a possible solution. If it's in a public venue, such as a staff meeting or a team meeting, [it becomes difficult] to manage that situation in a very public venue. (Arthur, I1, pp. 224-225)

As will be seen in the following segment of text, Amadeus did not see being challenged in a public forum as necessarily constituting mistreatment, but rather that when things happened behind his back that did indeed constitute mistreatment. He gave the benefit of the doubt to those who undermined when he said:

Have I felt mistreated? I think sometimes some people don't always know the proper arena, something is said at a staff meeting in the background where it was unprofessional, disrespectful, and really could have been said in a different arena and probably hit the target a lot better. ... Is that mistreatment? I don't know. ... The difference is though ... when things are said behind your back. (Amadeus, I1, p. 459)

Finally, the principals in this study identified three instances where they felt undermined by other principals. Sabrina described how she felt undermined by her divisional principal colleagues at principals' meetings in the first few years that she was an administrator. She felt she was "not given the same opportunity for voice than some of the other ones [principals]" (Sabrina, I1, p. 31). Annie suffered a different problem where, in an effort to undermine her and show her lack of ability as a new administrator in a smaller school division, the seasoned veterans made the new members chair meetings and make up agendas – and this without experience or knowledge of the history of topics for the agendas. Annie found this unfair and

inappropriate and simply a way to undermine the new person's abilities. In Barry's case it was his own vice-principal who he felt tried to undermine him at every turn, and he shared that he withstood "unprofessional behaviour from my vice-principal [including] ... public criticism in staff meetings" (Barry, I1, p. 249).

*Social undermining by senior administration.* The next group of perpetrators that principals identified were the superintendents, along with members of their department. Principals sensed undermining by the superintendents when the principals felt that they were not supported regarding particular decisions they had taken when interacting with other adults. Several principals felt that when they had made, in good faith, what they considered to be a correct decision they expected the superintendents' support, certainly if in the public eye. If there had been an error made, then the principals would have wished that the discussion of the issue be held in private in a face-to-face interaction. The perceived lack of support and undermining from the superintendent's department was reflected in the number of instances that some of the study's participants recounted.

The superintendent was perceived as being unsupportive regarding difficult decisions in terms of teacher discipline in incidents mentioned by Annie, Cal and Chuck. During a case of teacher discipline Annie commented that in that moment:

I felt undermined by both people [the male teacher and the superintendent]. ... I didn't feel supported by the superintendent in dealing with that situation, didn't feel that the superintendent did their end of the work that needed to happen around the discipline of a teacher 'cause that's tricky stuff. (Annie, I1, p. 137)

This instance was related to the supervision of a teacher who Annie had come to see as ineffective in the classroom and who had become involved in a physical altercation with a

student. It took a lot of coaching but the principal felt that she had moved the teacher to the point that the teacher could see “there’s lots of things going on right now that I’m [the teacher] not doing a very good job. And [the teacher] was probably open to a leave or ... a different job, change” (Annie, I1, p. 136). However, the superintendent, instead of allowing Annie to do the difficult task of letting the teacher go, or the superintendent doing that job himself, he chose simply to move the teacher within the division to become another principal’s problem.

In Cal’s case, not only did he not feel supported, he was upset that the superintendent would base a decision on information from others on his staff, and not from the principal himself. In this case, in an effort to improve the work of a particular female teacher, Cal was put on the defensive by the superintendent because the teacher complained to the superintendent’s office and the superintendent “followed up by interviewing everybody else [on staff] first [and Cal was] ... the last person, not interviewed, but told” (Cal, I1, p. 49) what he should have done, having never had a chance to explain why he was doing what he was doing with this particular teacher.

Chuck’s case related to the dismissal of a male teacher and what he saw as a lack of involvement by the superintendent. Chuck related:

The superintendent at the time was not very supportive ... he didn’t really want to meet, he just wanted me to deal with it, and I said “no”, I said “we’ve done that and now I need you to come and meet”. And I wanted the meeting to be at division office, but the superintendent wanted to meet at the school, which I thought was a little ridiculous, given the nature of the conversation I was gonna have with this teacher. Basically it was, you know, we’re done and, here are the things you need to do or you’re gonna be dismissed. ... I didn’t think that would

be the safest and best place but the superintendent overruled me and he came anyway. So we met and we sat down with the teacher. ... I began the meeting. The superintendent didn't say anything at first, he just kinda sat there ... [until the male teacher to be fired started] yelling about things that him and the superintendent had talked about at another earlier time, I guess. (Chuck, II, p. 411)

Chuck felt undermined because he was uninformed about promises that had been made between the superintendent and the teacher.

Annie recounted a different example of her superintendent undermining her in front of parents. She felt undermined in front of parents, when her superintendent, after hiring her as a new principal of the middle school, felt the need to intervene, in Annie's eyes, to show that even though he had hired her, he thought she wasn't capable *as a woman* to be a principal in a middle years school. She explained:

Where I would have felt mistreatment would have been when he would get involved in stuff that really was stuff that I could handle but he would kinda take my power away from me publicly ... in front of an audience of parents [and] ... then he asked me to go get him a glass of water publically. ... I was pretty new in my position in this school. And so then his actions and comments back [to parents during a discussion] undermined my leadership role. (Annie, II, pp. 116-117)

Superintendents are not only important in terms of legitimizing principals' professional status and authority with their staff and parents but they are also in many ways the gatekeepers to a principal's career development. This was an issue raised by Thomas and Arthur, both of whom felt undermined when passed over for promotions or placements in certain schools, with one

principal calling it mistreatment and the other not identifying it as such. Thomas explained, “I don’t know if I’d call it mistreatment as much as philosophy in terms of how they look at advancement of people for positions” (Thomas, I1, p. 312). In Arthur’s case, coming from a principal position, then taking a position at the board office that was subsequently cut; he wanted to be placed back into a principal role. Despite his many years of experience, he had to bid on positions four times for which he was told, that he “wasn’t the candidate selected” (Arthur, I1, p. 220). This process made him feel “not validated, undervalued, undermined” (Arthur, I1, p. 222). He wondered aloud where the “valuing the years of service, the contributions, the skill set, the experience [were, as he felt] ... mistreated by the process” (Arthur, I1, p. 223).

One final incident of social undermining by senior administration involved a division’s secretary-treasurer. Annie reported that this particular secretary-treasurer in a rural school division undermined the administrators in the division by withholding information from them. She explained:

We didn’t always get the information we needed around budgets and managing budgets and so then if you would call to ask a question, the response, I think the person was threatened by the question, and so the response made you feel like you were stupid. ... Or you’d get an email and it would go to a whole group and it would imply that people weren’t doing their job around the budget but you weren’t sure, “Was that me? Was that me? Did I do that?” ... I think for me the most frustrating part would have been the comments back, either on [the] phone or [by] email that implied you were stupid if you would ask a question. (Annie, I1, p. 118)

*Social undermining by Support Staff – Educational Assistants and Custodians.* Two groups of non-professional employees also demonstrated undermining behaviours toward their principals as can be seen in the incidents recounted by Annie and Cal where educational assistants and custodians were culpable of undermining. Being from a rural division, Annie recounted the issue of an educational assistant (EA) undermining how she was running her school:

[The EA] publicly was saying what was happening for a student, [and this] was not OK [as it was confidential information] and so they [the EA] were out in the community and they were ... saying things about the student and lying and saying that I wasn't doing my job. ... Just flat out lies about what was happening and not happening and then spreading those rumours in the community. I would say, I mean the mistreatment came just in terms of what was happening behind my back, [but] like right at your face, [she said] "no, I didn't do that." (Annie, I1, p. 131)

Cal recounted a similar story of an educational assistant who was "very manipulative and lacked honesty and integrity" (Cal, I1, p. 68) who undermined his and others' authority with "belligerent" (Cal, I1, p. 67) comments when the person wasn't there, sometimes posting unfavourable comments on the school bulletin board, which he had to remove or ask her to remove.

A different incident regarding support staff involved a custodian. Annie described custodian defiance that could be interpreted as undermining when she related this incident:

Can you take care of this? Takes it from me, hides it. So, passive-aggressive, open

defiance, I'm not sure how you would describe that. [His behaviour was] inconsistent there, right? Like sometimes you make a request, no problem, and the next time you make the same kind of request, it's oh, it's openly defied. (Annie, I1, p. 128)

*Social undermining by members of the public – school trustees.* Finally, the members of the public that principals identified as undermining them the most were the elected school trustees, some of whom were parents from the community. Cal, Barry, Steve and Amadeus shared the same concern in that they believed that the trustees should have had a hands-off approach and not dealt directly with the principals in their schools, in an effort to avoid undermining the work and leadership of the principals. According to these four principals, if the trustees had concerns, the trustees should have gone through the proper channels – through the superintendent – to have those concerns addressed. Barry explained that when the trustee overstepped his or her bounds, it seemed that there was an “underhandedness ... [especially when] the board trustee believes that he or she should be in schools constantly, wanting to run the school and basically tell people what to do” (Barry, I1, p. 251). Barry continued by explaining that insofar as school trustees go, in his small rural school division, “they just feel that it’s their place to interfere” (Barry, I1, p. 251) which undermined his ability to effectively principal his school because the trustees assured parents that they would take care of the parent complaints personally by coming directly to the school to speak with the principal, without referring the parents to the school first. Steve recounted that a trustee would enter his building looking for information; “trustee XXX was always in the mix” (Steve, I1, p. 349). Steve shared that this trustee “did nothing to [his] face [...but he would put] staff in positions where they felt like they had to talk ... using that authority [of elected official] in an inappropriate way” (Steve,



I1, p. 349), undermining what Steve was trying to create as a culture in his building. Finally, Amadeus remembered one situation of undermining “where [he] didn’t get support from the superintendent. It’s because the parent had been a previous trustee” (Amadeus, I1, p. 462) and the former trustee, now parent, was undermining Amadeus regarding class placements in his school.

Examples of the lower level workplace mistreatments as presented here for incivility and social undermining reveal that the principals do indeed consider these types of behaviours to be mistreatments. They could easily provide many examples when asked to share what they considered as these types of mistreatments. However, examples of some of the higher level mistreatments were not as plentiful, which will be seen in the ensuing sections.

**Harassment.** The third type of mistreatment from the organizational behaviour literature is harassment. Harassment is a more severe form of workplace mistreatment that is unwanted and harmful, regardless of the perpetrator’s intent. Brodsky (1976), one of the first authors to distinguish the five types of harassment at work, defined it broadly as attempts by a perpetrator to torment, wear down, frustrate or get a reaction from an individual by using persistent pressure and intimidation, thus causing discomfort in the target. The term conjures up many different interpretations as it encompasses a very broad range of offensive, stress-causing behaviours which some researchers state must be repeated over time (Björkqvist et al., 1994; Crawshaw, 2009; Henderson, 1992) while other authors, in the more modern literature, accept one-time incidents which are serious and severe in nature to be harassment as well (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2013; Krieger, 2015). Bowling and Beehr (2006) state that “workplace harassment ...is defined as interpersonal behavior aimed at intentionally harming another employee in the workplace” (p. 998) and indicate that “the more common minor instances

include obscene gestures, dirty looks, threats, yelling” (Bowling & Beehr, 2006, p. 998) swearing and the like, always aimed toward a specific person.

The principals in this study told several stories of harassment, although, again they did not necessarily always use that particular terminology. In one case, Alexandra explained why she would not term what happened to her as harassment; “I didn’t use the term harassment as I believe that means it is repetitive, done over and over from parents and I have not had that happen to me (Alexandra, II, p. 214). Principals also used the term bullying when the behaviours that they described better aligned with the organizational behaviour category of harassment because bullying should be used to refer to mistreatment occurring within the context of a ‘power over’ differential, which wasn’t always the case regarding what the principals recounted.

**Perpetrators, forms and focus of harassment.** Most of the examples of harassment of principals in this study came from adults in the public domain – parents as individuals, both mothers and fathers; groups of parents banding together including Parent Advisory Council (PAC) chair people and members; and community members who used media or other means to denigrate the principal. On a few occasions principals reported that it was an angry teacher who harassed them, but given that these employees were bound by collective agreements, divisional policies and the *Code of Professional Practice* (The Manitoba Teachers’ Society, 2014a), it was not surprising that this was uncommon in the accounts provided by the principals. Where did these situations of harassment occur? The participants recounted incidents of harassment that occurred in person, by phone (both at school and at home), by email, by video-recording, during PAC meetings, outside in bus loops, and through the use of (or the threat of the use of) public media such as newspapers, television and other methods, such as through First Nations Chiefs and Band Councils.

To some of the principals, the harassing-type behaviours they recounted felt abusive, aggressive and abrasive. Principals in this study described verbally harassing situations in the following manner; the perpetrators yell/scream using a loud volume, swear, are disrespectful, intimidating or harsh in choice of words, use condescending, very confrontational or aggressive tones and threaten other actions. More serious than isolated incidents categorized as incivility, the repetitive nature of certain verbal harassments was wearing on the principals, as could be seen in the descriptions of two of the principals. Barry, describing the repetitiveness of the behaviours explained that the parents were trying “just [to] pick pick pick pick pick pick pick pick pick pick” (Barry, I1, p. 272) and Sabrina shared that, when there was more than one child in the school from a family with a history of harassing the principal; “You never had a chance to recuperate so it would just be bang bang bang bang for seven years” (Sabrina, I1, p. 24).

Principals, as school leaders, often became the focus of unresolved conflicts that parents had with teachers and other staff members, as well as having to deal with parental challenges to their own decisions and actions. The issues that principals described as triggering harassing behaviours from parents were varied and included: their disciplining of a parent’s child and the corollary of a perceived lack of discipline regarding other children; their enforcement of school rules and general management of the school; and, their attempts to proceed with changes within the school. The few incidents of harassment from teachers that were discussed involved either the principal’s supervisory responsibilities or programming decisions in the school.

With regard to physical harassment the only glimpse of the physical side came when principals described the use of finger-pointing, the slamming of desks, and the perpetrator being in overly close proximity. Many of the principals in this study labeled this behaviour as being “in their face”. All of these physical-type incidents of harassment involved parents and stemmed

from parents being unhappy and forcefully questioning the principals' decisions regarding dealing with children.

*Harassment by parents and other members of the public.* Principals reported that certain individual parents, both mothers and fathers, had a penchant for harassing them by inundating them with phone calls, emails and in-person visits to the schools. These communications, in addition to being excessively repetitive and sometimes occurring over a period of years, were often abusive as they used unacceptable and threatening language to impugn the personal and professional integrity of the principals. Not only did they at times affect the principal's personal well-being, they were seen as hindering the work of the principal and disrupting the smooth running of the school. Frequently these incidents were focused on the conduct of individual children or on school-based programming decisions.

In regard to phone call harassment, Sabrina related that, "I was at one point having three hour conversations on a daily basis" (Sabrina, I1, p. 23) with a particular mother because the mother did not like how Sabrina was handling discipline matters in the school. These calls were seen by Sabrina as crossing the line in that they were stopping her from doing an effective job with the students and staff in her school. Cal felt that the repetitive nature of some of the phone conversations with certain mothers at his school constituted harassment when they would challenge his authority by telling him continually, 'you will do this, you will do this, you will do this' (Cal, I1, p. 59). Annie described an ongoing incidence of parental harassment via phone calls, and at times visits, from a male parent as extreme: "Multiple children, multiple years. Same behaviour, but it was always extreme," (Annie, I1, p 143) in terms of the yelling and abuse she felt from the words he used. These examples of harassment through repetitive emails, phone

messages and phone calls all gave the principals some distance from the perpetrator, providing time to process the message and figure out what to do next.

Sabrina discussed two different harassing in-person incidents with particular families. First, she felt harassed and intimidated by a father and mother with whom no one in the small community wanted to deal. Sabrina explained:

No one [other parents, superintendents, law enforcement] will ever touch them because they're terrified of them, they're scared of them. The father is a big guy, he uses intimidation tactics, he towers over me, a huge guy. He's affiliated with [a particular gang]; there's some drug affiliation there. He's a tow truck driver. He has a chop shop. They're very aggressive, very aggressive parents. (Sabrina, I1, p. 33)

Sabrina felt that this situation constituted harassment because the father used his size, and rumoured gang affiliation, to try to intimidate the principal. He approached her aggressively whenever he did not agree with what she had done when disciplining his child. Secondly, Sabrina found it to be harassing that she had to police her school dealing with a different "couple of parents, who were actually banned from the whole school division property because of the mistreatment [of staff]" (Sabrina, I1, p. 11). Sabrina found herself, on multiple occasions, calling the police to assist her in removing these parents from the school. She also had previously asked one of the same parents in her office, "to leave 'til they are ready to talk to [her] because they are just screaming and yelling and swearing at [her]" (Sabrina, I1, p. 13). Sabrina found the threatening nature of the parents returning to the school property, even once they were banned, along with the yelling and swearing on many occasions because of disagreements with how the

staff dealt with issues with the children, to be very disconcerting for the entire staff, and, to her, a clear example of harassment.

In another example Linda, after implementing a divisional directive to change the grade levels for her school, was repetitively contacted by a particular mother who was opposed to the change. Linda described the mother by saying; “when she wants something, she’s really in your face” (Linda, I1, p. 106). Linda furthered her description of the harassment noting that the mother “was very confrontational, abrasive and attacking... like in your face and challenging” (Linda, I1, pp. 104-105). Enduring multiple meetings with this parent took its toll on Linda, like the indelible mark left on the following principals after only one situation of harassment.

Chuck, Thomas and Alexandra each described severe one-time events of harassment by a parent but, like many who attempt to define harassment, thought that for something to constitute harassment, it had to have been repetitive, so they did not categorize the incidents as harassment despite knowing that they had been mistreated. Chuck’s one-time event was with a foster father. In this instance a twelve year old girl had left the school property at lunch for the first time. She was to stay on the grounds and Chuck had spoken to her about her error when she came back from lunch off the school property. The foster father came in for a face-to-face visit and Chuck described the situation as follows:

Well as soon as he walked into the office he got right up against me and pointed his finger at me and ... he started swearing at me and calling me names and he ... basically accused me of not keeping track of his daughter. And, so his aggressiveness kind of raised the alarm of others, the secretary and my vice-principal. ... I’ve had people get angry before but never to that degree or in that

way where they're getting angry and physically way too close and screaming and pointing. (Chuck, I1, p. 405)

Thomas shared two similar situations with male parents who visited the school. In the first instance, a male parent was upset about a teacher in the school who had accused his daughter of a particular offence, and the teacher's story was totally different than the student's. Thomas described that encounter as; "the parent then came in to me to complain about the situation and the teacher, and used significant foul language and racist terminology toward the teacher in his yelling at me" (Thomas, I1, p. 304). Thomas' second example was more extreme. Again, a male parent, a different one from the first example, "was completely out of order, overreaction to a situation [of the principal disciplining the child for inappropriate behaviour in class] ... completely distorted from reality. So he had a very emotional response [and] he brought it here" (Thomas, I2, p. 192). Threatening both his personal well-being and his professional integrity, the father:

attempted to intimidate [me]. He was actually a very large man. Came into my office, unannounced, stood before me, yelled, swore, and physically slammed his fist on my desk ... leaned on my desk, leaned forward, looked down at me because I was in my chair. ... [and also] offered threats of having my job and going to the media ... [and] then ended by making a very hard slamming of his fist on my desk causing everything on my desk, including my monitor, to shake. (Thomas, I1, pp. 304-305)

In Alexandra's case, the mother "was actually semi-calm to begin with but then it escalated" (Alexandra, I1, p. 182). Alexandra had kept notes in a file regarding a specific incident with the student, but in that file were also notes regarding issues dealing with the parents

which Alexandra considered confidential. The mother “leapt over the table and grabbed the file and said ‘gimme that file’” (Alexandra, I1, p. 182). Alexandra continued:

She took it and she wouldn’t let it go ... and it tore and then she was standing towering over me and then I felt ... I was being assaulted so I got up to go to the door and she blocked the door and she said, “you can’t leave.” ...I just called over to the vice[-principal], or to the ... secretary and said you need to call the police and then the mom sort of backed off and swore and went raging off [without the torn file] and kept cursing and swearing out the door. (Alexandra, I1, p. 182)

More than half the principals interviewed agreed that slander<sup>1</sup> by parents was harassment. Slander, for these principals meant that the parent was calling them inappropriate names or accusing them of being something they were not; thus hurting their reputation. Cal noted that in the cases where you were slandered, he felt “on the defensive” (Cal, I1, p. 46). Linda said the name calling by certain parents was “an attack on my character or the character of my very competent staff,” (Linda, I1, p. 100) and she felt it difficult to defend herself against such insults while remaining in her professional role. Sabrina described a situation in which, “certain parents started ridiculing me to other colleagues in the division” (Sabrina, I1, p. 34). She had previously explained in the interview that these parents “knew how to target. This is ... very like adult bullying, right, so they would target specific adults in the building and then they would make it their mission to do something about it” (Sabrina, I1, p. 10).

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<sup>1</sup> The principals in the study used the misnomer of ‘slander’. From a strictly legal perspective this is an incorrect term as the definition from the Canadian Bar Association – British Columbia Branch (2016) portends that for spoken words to become slander “the communication must be made to other people, not just to the person it’s about” (¶1). So, while the principals claimed that they were slandered by these parents, legally, no slander could have been proven as the parent was talking directly to the principals themselves, not to others. These could, however, be labelled cases of defamation.



Two of the principals, Alexandra and Victoria, became particularly upset when they felt that they were unfairly labeled racists as they found that to “make that kind of an accusation right off the hop was really horribly offensive” (Alexandra, I1, p. 181). In one instance, a father was upset that his child was asked to hold a door open for people entering, and the child happened to be of Indigenous background. The father claimed that his was the only child that ever had to hold the door, which wasn’t the case as it was a politeness practice in the school. Alexandra related:

The dad came into school just raging ... [and] he accused me of being racist. And that’s a real big thing, right, ’cause that’s a personal slander. ... He was always very explosive. So, that was another thing too ... it’s not even work related any more, you are calling me personally a racist. ... I danced around it and it all ended up working itself out in the long run. But it didn’t eliminate the stress and again, I just felt like I was attacked by him. (Alexandra, I1, pp. 180-181)

Victoria too was labeled a racist without any chance to “start a reparative conversation” (Victoria, I1, p. 373) with one particular mother. The mother told Victoria:

that it [bullying] was happening because [Victoria] was racist and [she] wasn’t intervening on behalf of her child ... [and the mother made] sure [Victoria] knew the connections she had, the political connections ... her reserve, their chief ... almost as though that would threaten [Victoria] to act differently than [she] otherwise would have. (Victoria, I1, pp. 373-374)

***Harassment by parent advisory councils and media.*** Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) also known as Parent Advisory Groups, or the more formal title of *Advisory Councils for School Leadership* (Manitoba Regulation 54/96) exist in Manitoba schools to provide a vehicle for two-way communication between a school and its community, as well as to be a source of advice on

specific issues to the principal. However, for some of the principals in this study these groups of parents could become sources of harassment when members individually or collectively were seen to be over-stepping their mandate. Amadeus spoke of incidents – both individually and collectively – with his PAC which he considered harassment. He described his interactions with one Council Chairperson as follows:

[She would] for a lack of a better word, bully or persuade or try to direct the school. She was really passive-aggressive. She'd kinda drop by and she would turn around and tell me [voice changes to a whisper] "you know that's not really a good decision – you're not gonna get a lot of support for this" and "there's a lot of grumblings going on in the community."

(Amadeus, I1, pp. 468-469)

For Amadeus, the frequency of these meetings, the fact that he felt she was addressing her particular concerns rather than expressing the voice of the PAC, and the manner in which he thought she was challenging his authority in the school made this ongoing behaviour one which could be deemed harassment.

Amadeus also spoke of what he felt was harassment from a group of parents from the school's PAC who steadily challenged him over an initiative he was introducing to change his school from individual grade level homerooms to multi-grade level homerooms. In addition to criticizing the plan at PAC meetings, they went behind his back to get a petition signed to prevent the multi-age classrooms from being implemented the following year. The "pressure from the community going to a board meeting and pressuring the superintendent's office [was so great that Amadeus] ...had a lot of people come to [him and]... say, 'do you really want to die on this hill?'" (Amadeus, I1, p. 448).

Barry also talked of conflicts at some of his Parent Advisory Council meetings – going as far as referring to them as “the Wolf PAC” (Barry, I1, p. 261) meetings because of the way in which some of the members of the council approached discussions with him including; “the finger pointing, it would be the stare down, or, like you know, requesting information that they had no right to” (Barry, I1, p. 263). When the principal would refuse particular requests due to confidentiality, the parents would go out into the small community to say the principal was lying and uncooperative. Exceeding their mandate, and in Barry’s view crossing over from providing advice to harassing conduct, he commented, “ [the parents] thought it was interrogation time to bring up issues and to get parents in to complain about everything that was going on in classrooms, why were things being taught that way ... confidential matters” (Barry, I1, p. 262), and “basically thinking that they can patrol the school, that they have a right to see a bunch of documents” (Barry, I1, p. 261).

A final significant source of harassment, that several principals discussed at some length, were situations where parents threatened to use the media to publicly malign the principal and for which the principal often had no recourse. Thomas shared that “threats of going to the media are common” (Thomas, I1, p. 305). Arthur felt harassed when parents negatively publicized events to a wider audience through the media. He felt that he had no means of redress in such a situation, again, characteristic of harassment, as sometimes the issues were confidential and he was not at liberty to discuss them or it was not his place to respond as only the superintendents or trustees had the right to speak on behalf of the division and its schools. By way of illustration, Arthur described how, after suspending a particular student for paddling some other students during the lunch hour, “the parents of course were very upset, went to the media and said they were very dissatisfied with the process. They said in the interview [to the media], ‘he [Arthur]

doesn't know what he's doing' and so on," (Arthur, I1, p. 228) and the parents' thoughts were published in the press. Yet the principal was never given the opportunity to be interviewed to share his side of the story and no one from the board office defended the principal's follow-through on division policy, which led to his feelings of harassment from these parents.

***Harassment by professional staff – teachers.*** While most accounts of harassment provided by the principals in this study involved members of the public, a few principals chose to recount examples related to professional staff, including particular experiences with teachers. For example, Amadeus, Chuck and Linda told stories regarding teachers that could be considered one-time harassment events, as they exceeded the boundaries for incivility or undermining. Each incident involved an important personnel issue where the principal was acting in a supervisory role, and disciplining the teachers in question. Notwithstanding the protection afforded the principals in The Manitoba Teachers' Society (2014a) *Code of Professional Practice*, in collective agreements and in divisional policy and procedure documents (see Tables 2 and 3), these principals described how they felt they were mistreated. In Amadeus' case, he described how he had tried to support the teacher in classroom discipline through classroom visits by both him and his vice-principal. The principal also provided suggestions, professional development activities, and mentoring, but without any noticeable improvement in the teacher's practice. The principal found "that kids [were still] hanging off an overhead projector screen [... and] standing on a table [...which he found was] inappropriate and unsafe behaviour" (Amadeus, I1, p. 460). When both the principal and his vice-principal held several formal conversations to initiate disciplinary action the teacher articulated a totally different perception of what was happening in the classroom, yelling at the principal overtly challenging his supervisory role and skill set. The teacher ended up going on medical leave when the principal documented a requirement for

improvements in classroom management. Amadeus felt both hurt and harassed as he was not able to help the teacher improve but he also did not believe that the teacher had a right to talk to him in such a manner on those many occasions.

Chuck also had a teacher that had been informed that he would be dismissed if he didn't improve his teaching. Chuck described the situation as follows:

I've tried to work with him, now I need to set these things very clear or else. And I've rarely had to do that but in this case I had to, I felt. So he got upset and he began to kinda yell at me ... in a yelling voice, and this is during the school day and in our meeting area, the only one in the school that's right off the library, and of course there are kids in the library, so they overheard this, right? ... When he stood up to leave he pointed [at the principal] and yelled. (Chuck, I1, p. 413)

Chuck acknowledged that this was a high stakes meeting, but regardless of the emotional level, the finger pointing and the yelling together made this a more threatening interaction than it needed to be and, in the principal's view, this constituted harassment. A similar reaction from one of Linda's teachers occurred when she also was trying to discipline a teacher. Linda relayed that the teacher "is coming in confronting me and saying she's not doing this and ... yelling at me too, and that to me that's major" (Linda, I1, pp. 100-101). This incident caused much stress for Linda, as the previous ones did for Amadeus and Chuck, and due to the tone and nature of the interaction, could be interpreted as harassment of the principals who were trying to have difficult conversations with teachers regarding their professional competence.

**Bullying.** The fourth type of mistreatment from the organizational behaviour literature on generalized workplace mistreatment is bullying. Bullying involves "*repeated and persistent negative acts* towards one or more *individual(s)*, which involve *a perceived power imbalance*

[italics in original]” (Salin, 2003, pp. 1214-1215). Due to the fact that a power differential is involved in this type of mistreatment, it most often occurs within the established hierarchy of the workplace.

**Perpetrators, forms and focus of bullying.** The examples of bullying that the principals illuminated over the course of the interviews mostly involved a perceived abuse of power by the superintendents. There was one case where a school trustee was involved.

Einarsen (2000) and Hershcovis (2011) delineated certain behaviours as those of a bully and the behaviours selected by the principals in this study that correspond with the researchers identified behaviours were: offensive remarks, verbal abuse, ridicule, devaluation of the principals’ efforts, and reminders of blunders. Given that the exchanges involving bullying were amongst school personnel, the bullying experiences happened in person or on the phone and in either the principal’s school or at the board office.

***Bullying by senior administration.*** Steve and Thomas both stated that they had experienced incidents of bullying by members of their superintendents’ departments. Both men delineated the incidents as mistreatment due to what they perceived as the negative ways in which the senior administration spoke to them, the odd reasons for which they believed they were affronted, and their belief that they generally had little or no recourse after the incidents. However, they were wary to define these experiences as bullying because, as Steve contended, “[The] superintendent is a tough one, ’cause they’re my boss and really they can kind of do what they want. ...They have their opinion” (Steve, I1, p. 344). Yet, some incidents that the principals described could be labeled bullying because of the verbal confrontation and the tone of the message delivery. Further, what the principals perceived as unfair criticism of their work, the

undermining of their authority with staff and/or the public and generally the devaluing of their efforts added to the principals' perception that bullying was occurring.

Steve described a situation where he was given a presentation involving some 90 *PowerPoint* slides, prepared by the superintendents' department to deliver to the parents at his school. He described what happened when he was summoned to the board office following the presentation as:

Well I didn't stick to the script 100%. ... I veered off script for 20 seconds and that's the line that went, made it to the press and then I got phone calls the next day, not saying "good job", not saying "good job presenting this." ...It was like, "you need to stick to the script," from a couple of superintendents, well, one super[intendent] and one assistant [superintendent]. It's one guy in particular that was a little more aggressive to me than others. ... It was not a collegial conversation. ... And that was always my issue, it's, we do a billion good things every day, you don't get a phone call and then you do one thing that doesn't fit with what they want and then you get a phone call, right? (Steve, I1, pp. 364-365)

In Thomas' case, after Thomas had taken the advice of the divisional Manager of Human Resources and Personnel to dismiss an educational assistant, he was "called on the carpet" (Thomas, I1, p. 322) and "yelled at by [his] boss, who is perceived as being extremely powerful," (Thomas, I1, p. 321), without the chance to explain that Thomas made the decision in consultation with the Manager of Human Resources (HR) and Personnel. He did as instructed by the manager of HR, which caused this fallout and he was called to the board office to deal with it in person. In Thomas' words:

Then when the grievance hit the fan, the superintendent called me in and ragged on me for my decision, because ultimately it's my decision – despite what HR says. [The superintendent] ... ragged on me ... finger wagged, hands slapping on desk, “you should know better”, raised voice, intimidating power. (Thomas, I1, p. 311)

Despite the fact that Thomas maintained, “quite honestly, I was ticked off at it,” (Thomas, I1, p. 311) and he admitted that it was a stressful experience for him, he neither said nor did anything to protect himself from such a tirade. When asked if he had contacted The MTS regarding the incident, highlighting both the issue of the power-over structure of the environment and that such an action could have on his professional career, he responded abruptly; “at that point in my career, am I gonna go to the union with an issue about that? Hell no!” (Thomas, I1, p. 311).

Sabrina's experience with bullying on the part of her superintendent was more subtle than the aforesaid male principals' stories. Despite the fact that Sabrina reported the continual harassment by three mothers in her school over a period of years, the superintendents' department was not of much help in resolving the constant barrage of yelling, accusing and verbal assaults from these parents. The parental harassment continued for a long period without support from her superiors. Instead, the superintendent devalued Sabrina's efforts in those difficult circumstances by telling her, “you're going to look back on it [and say] ‘oh, I'm glad I went through that’ because you'll be able to handle things in a different way now” (Sabrina, I1, p. 19), as if Sabrina was not doing her best every time she was confronted by this group. This bullying by neglect led to an unsafe and unhealthy work environment for Sabrina, from which she should have been protected according to the Respectful Workplace clause in her divisional policy manual.



*Bullying by senior administration in concert with trustees.* Both Barry and Amadeus commented that they felt pressure from the close ties between trustees and superintendents. Trustees, acting collectively as a School Board and within the provisions of the Minister of Education and provincial Government of Manitoba, have responsibility for the delivery of school programs in the division, including staffing. It is the Superintendent hired by the Board who provides professional leadership to the staff of the schools. In Manitoba this generally has meant that School Boards focus their attention on matters of policy and divisional oversight and most have fairly clear protocols for managing conflict such that the Board will only become involved after efforts to address the issue at the school level and with senior administration has been unsuccessful (Manitoba School Boards Association, 2014). When these protocols are circumvented principals may feel mistreated. Barry, for example, detailed a story where a parent “would be going down to see the superintendent and the school trustee about their kids and the school” (Barry, I1, p. 266) and according to him the devaluation of his work at the school was constantly “fueled by [the] school trustee [and] superintendent” (Barry, I1, p. 266), as neither would follow the divisional protocol of sending the parent back to the school for answers. He felt that the superintendent and the trustee accepted all complaints from the parent, knowing full well that the parent had gone over Barry’s head, but never redirecting the parent to Barry. Barry was never accorded the courtesy of a rebuttal or a chance to discuss issues directly with the parent. Barry would simply be phoned and repeatedly accused of not running his school effectively. Barry felt ridiculed by the superintendent, as the superintendent was criticizing his work, without cause, in Barry’s mind.

In Amadeus’ case, Amadeus had suspended a female student for carrying drug related paraphernalia to the school, a balance-scale and baggies, and the girl was believed to be

distributing drugs in the school, although Amadeus had no corroborating proof. Amadeus explained that the incident was seen differently by the superintendent, in part, he felt, because one of the parents was a former school trustee in the division and the parents had gone straight to the superintendent, bypassing the principal. He cited:

I had two very aggressive parents and I had a superintendent who was there and because of political pressure, [the superintendent] had me apologize but ultimately try to pull back my five day suspension to a three day suspension. ... I felt disempowered at that point in time. ... Did I feel mistreated? Yes, I did. ... I felt I had no support at that point in time. (Amadeus, II, p. 455)

Stories as examples of incidents of bullying were far less frequent than those of incivility, social undermining and harassment with only ten perceived instances reported. This supports Einarsen et al.'s (1994) general assertion that bullying may not be as prevalent in the teaching profession as other workplaces due to the relative autonomy that principals have in running their own schools. Principals do not usually have daily interactions with their superintendents, thus limiting the number of possibilities for bullying incidents. However, the power that senior administrators may exercise with regards to a principal's authority and career makes the incidents, when they do occur, appear severe.

**Mobbing.** The fifth type of mistreatment from the organizational behaviour literature is mobbing. Only one principal elucidated a case of mobbing in his school, although he did not use this term when explaining the bullying and harassment (the words he used) that he suffered. The principal is correct in identifying that harassment can form a part of the mobbing experience (Gülcan, 2015; Leymann, 1996). More completely, Leymann (1996) defines "psychological terror [violence] or mobbing in working life [as] involv[ing] hostile and unethical

communication which is directed in a systematic way by one or a few individuals towards one individual who, due to mobbing, is pushed into a helpless or defenseless position” (p. 168).

Mobbing incidents are the result of actions that are frequent and last over a long period of time. This particular workplace mistreatment resulted in this principal taking a medical stress leave from his building during the year of the study. The organizational dynamics in the school were such that the principal perceived that he was harassed and bullied, both verbally and psychologically by his staff, his vice-principal, his superintendent and a school trustee, so much so that he became marginalized, which are several of the classic conditions of mobbing (Duffy & Sperry, 2012; Leymann, 1990, 1996; Zapf & Einarsen, 2005; Zapf et al., 1996).

Barry’s perception of his situation was that he was mistreated by an entire group of staff members in his school, some teacher members of the executive of the local association of The Manitoba Teachers’ Society executive, as well as the superintendents’ department in his division. The situation was further exacerbated by the fact that he was principal in a small town where everyone in that community, as well as the neighbouring one, were somewhat aware of what was going on at his school. Barry sought protection through The Manitoba Teachers’ Society and received support from both a staff officer and the Disability Benefits Plan (DBP). He took leave from what he and his staff officer defined as a toxic workplace in April of the school year previous to his participation in this study.

Barry was the principal of the school that he spoke about for this study for seven years. He stated that he really did not notice, at first, that he was being undermined and harassed by members of his school team. He shed light on the experience by saying that certain members of his staff, did

it very sneakily, you know. It’s like you talk about the bully, and the

underhanded [way]. And you go by in the hallway and some people will whisper something ... and you're watching and you don't quite know why ... or something like that, because it's done in a very secretive way. And either, as I say, underhanded, behind you or even in front of you and you're so busy you don't realize what's going on. (Barry, I1, p. 252)

Barry looked for support from his vice-principal but he did not feel that she was in his corner either; she was more of a direct line to deliver unfounded accusations, in Barry's opinion, to the superintendent. Barry noted that there were five teachers "working in concert with the VP" (Barry, I1, p. 258) to create sometimes trivial issues that they would then blame on his incompetence. One example was that staff members created a commotion regarding the length of grass in the ditches around the school so that when the students were sent out from a class to search for samples of foliage, they had a difficult time with the assignment. The staff complained to the parents of the students that it was the principal's fault that he had not ordered that the ditches be mowed. The parents came to the school and went to the board office to complain about the principal, even when the ditch mowing was not within the principal's purview. So, Barry shared that the staff tried to

pass the blame for something that I didn't even create. Well thanks ever so much, you guys created the issue so I've gotta go and clean up your mess. Then ... I go clean up the mess and the superintendent phones, "What are you doing?" "Well, cleaning up the mess that was created". ... So ... talk about the daggers and the arrows pointed at me for everything. (Barry, I1, p. 257)

He also stated that he thought that the vice-principal was looking out for her own interests and "betrayed [Barry] big time" (Barry, I1, p. 252) by criticizing him to the superintendent regarding

changes at the school which they had agreed on as an administrative team, meeting agendas, school events and the like, behind his back. According to Barry, he was the target of ongoing criticisms from the vice-principal that constituted mistreatment and contributed to what the literature would define as mobbing, through actions that included:

public criticism in staff meetings, [phoned the superintendent to report issues, for which Barry then received] criticism from the superintendent, phoning board members and so-called complaining about my actions or lack of actions ... very blaming. Blaming behaviour for things that were going wrong at the school – from simple things from playground maintenance ... things like weeds growing in front of the school ditch ...and not following proper channels of communication.  
(Barry, I1, pp. 249-250)

After a while, Barry felt uneasy about the number of times that the superintendent had contacted him regarding mundane issues of which the superintendent should have had no knowledge. He described the repetitive phone calls from the superintendent to check up on him as:

further bullying, harassment, uh constant phone calls. It would be, the phone calls would be constant every day ... on the hour, “What’s going on?” “Nothing’s going on. I’m teaching a class. What do you want me to do here?” “Well I just got a text from somebody saying that you’re doing this.” I said, “What am I doing wrong?” So, it’s like a lot of innuendo, a lot of commentary [to the superintendent] ... behind the scenes. (Barry, I1, p. 255)

Barry’s mistrust for the superintendent grew after these numerous calls when finally he realized that the superintendent had done similar things to other members of various school staffs

who were no longer with the division. Barry “just kinda thought OK, it happened to one person, happened to another person, happened, and so [he’s] lookin’ at these lines here and [he’s] saying, wait a minute, [he’s] about the twelfth or fifteenth person that this has happened to” (Barry, I1, p. 252). However, by then it was too late. Barry opined:

You get told when you’re gonna be removed from your job. You get told like the last day of April, before you can even be looking maybe for another position ... so it really goes to show what they value. And that’s what so disappointing, so disheartening. (Barry, I1, p. 252)

By this point Barry had contacted a Manitoba Teachers’ Society staff officer and a Disability Benefits Plan officer who provided support and the appropriate sick leave. However, for Barry the mistreatment from the superintendent continued. Instead of showing concern for this employee who was mentally drained, as his DBP officer summed up and Barry shared, “no respect, you know, and no care, no concern [from the superintendent]” (Barry, I1, p. 286). Not believing Barry was really and truly ill, members of the superintendent’s department

were phoning this staff officer. They were harassing him. They sent letters to him about [Barry stating] that the staff officer needed to get stuff from [Barry’s] doctor. ... And the letters, they even questioned the doctor’s ...medical qualifications. ... And in the letters they questioned [Barry’s] sick leave. (Barry, I1, p. 282)

Barry ruminated aloud while recounting the story, “I’ve already wracked my brain, I’m mentally, I’m drained” (Barry, I1, p. 256), showing his devastation and the difficulty of reliving the incidents, summing up with, “and I just have to wonder why?” (Barry, I1, p. 257).

This experience was an extreme case and it was the only one recounted by any of the principals in the study that could fall into the mistreatment category of mobbing. The fact that so many parties were involved in this recounted incident from teachers both within and outside the school, to the vice-principal, to the superintendent's department, confirmed his marginalization from his peers in his school division and the ensuing psychological abuse.

### **Summary**

This chapter, the first of three findings chapters, began an exploration of school principals' experiences of workplace mistreatment framed by a typology that offered a hierarchy of types of mistreatment ranging from what are considered low level – incivility and social undermining – through moderate level – harassment – to severe level mistreatments, which involved bullying, mobbing and physical violence. While the principals in this study did not necessarily use the terminology of this typology, they were able to describe a broad range of experiences consistent with the constructs of the continuum, primarily at the low and moderate levels. No incidents of the most severe form of mistreatment, physical violence, were reported by any of the principals. Based on information from an initial set of interviews with each participant the chapter sought to provide an initial exploration of how each of the principals defined mistreatment as crossing the line between what they saw as legitimate behaviours and reasonable conflict with other adults in their workplace and various forms of workplace mistreatment.

Central to the notion of workplace mistreatment are the concepts of “intent to harm” (Aquino & Thau, 2009, p. 718) and of “a violation [breach] of social norms” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 455) in an organization. The accounts in this chapter highlight how harm was variously described in terms of personal harm related to one's well-being and professional harm related to a principal's status and authority in the school, their sense of professional competence,

and their careers. The relational nature of the principals' workplaces and its importance, with the two main groups of professional and non-professional employees and the public, as described in chapter 2 Table 1, is confirmed by the data in this chapter that shows that mistreatment is perceived to arise in many of these relationships. A wide range of adults were identified by the participants as perpetrators of mistreatment with parents being the most commonly identified members from the public arena and teachers being the most common from the professional employees pool. Mistreatment by senior administration constituted a perceived issue for a few principals and was seen as particularly important because of the superintendent's positioning in the educational hierarchy and thus, having a potential impact on the principal's career development and trajectory.

The foremost issues that caused the perpetrators to "cross the line" with the perpetrator in question (identified in parentheses after the issue) were:

- principals' decisions and/or initiatives (parents, teachers, superintendents, trustees);
- principals as agents of change in the school (parents, teachers, superintendents, trustees);
- principals' discipline, control and supervision of students (parents, superintendents, trustees, bus drivers)
- principals' supervision and evaluation of staff (teachers, superintendents, educational assistants);
- principals' experience and/or (in)competence (parents, teachers, superintendents, trustees); and



- differing opinions and frustrations about school programming, policies and procedures (parents, teachers).

The principals' accounts in this chapter suggest that these Manitoba school principals experienced many different types of mistreatment, in a variety of different forms and for a variety of reasons, as they went about their daily business. The next chapter will add to this knowledge by exploring further the most common perpetrators amongst adults who mistreat, as well as by indicating the perceptions of the principals with respect to the frequency and severity of each of the mistreatment constructs.

## **Chapter Five: Findings (2) – Principals' Perceptions of the Perpetrators of Workplace Mistreatment and the Frequency and Severity of the Incidents and Data Mixing**

This chapter provides the findings and analysis from this exploratory study regarding Research Question 2, as well as the mixing of the data from both the quantitative and qualitative data collections. Research Question 2 looks at three attributes of the reported incidents of mistreatments of the principals:

- a. the range of perpetrators of the workplace mistreatment;
- b. the frequency of each principal's experiences of mistreatment; and
- c. the perceived severity of each principal's experiences of mistreatment.

First, I present the quantitative data to address the aforementioned questions, along with explanations and analysis. Next, I present the rationale for mixing the two data types and proceed with the mixing process. I compare and contrast the two types of data in the study. I scrutinize the numerical data from the surveys and relate it to what the principals said in the interviews, looking for inferences where one data type, the qualitative, supports the other data type, the quantitative, or vice-versa. I provide confirming and disconfirming evidence found when looking at the data sets together. The chapter concludes with a summary of the information provided for Research Question 2 and the mixing of the qualitative and quantitative data.

### **Findings: Perpetrators of the Mistreatments (Research Question 2a)**

During the first interview the principal participants were asked to think only about adult-to-adult interactions in their role as principals and to identify and describe examples of mistreatment that they had experienced. This open-ended question led the principals to share many accounts regarding the relationships that they felt crossed the line and turned into the examples of mistreatment cited in chapter 4. This network of adult workplace relationships

(Table 1) became a focus for compiling the data regarding the perpetrators of mistreatment as it showed the range of relationships inside the principals' workspaces from professional staff to non-professional staff to the public as well as from both within the immediate school environment to the divisional system as a whole.

From the adults in this workplace network, I tallied which perpetrators were identified most often as being involved with incidents of mistreatment from information given in the first set of interviews. Table 12 shows the complete range of perpetrators. The most frequent perpetrators identified were parents, as all twelve principals provided, without prompting, one or more accounts regarding the parents. Parents were followed closely by teachers and superintendents with these three groups of people accounting for 59% of all of the incidents of

Table 12. *Adults Identified as Using Mistreating Behaviours from Interview 1*

<b>Adults Identified during Interview #1</b>	<b>Number of Participants in Interview #1 Identifying this Adult or Group</b>	<b>Percentage of Incidents Involving the Named Perpetrator</b>
Parents: mothers, fathers, foster father	12	21%
Teachers: as individual staff members or in groups or cliques	11	20%
Senior Administration: Superintendents/Assistant Superintendents	10	18%
Trustees and Former Trustees	6	11%
Principal Colleagues	4	7%
Parent Council or Advisory Group/Parent Council Chairpersons (PACs)	3	5%
Vice-principal Colleagues	2	4%
Educational Assistants (EAs)	2	4%
Custodial Staff	2	4%
Bus Drivers	2	4%
Community Members	1	2%
Secretary-Treasurer (for the school division)	1	2%

mistreatment described by the principals. The next most common category of perpetrator was school trustees, who were identified by 6 out of 12 participants, but ranked at only 11% of all incidents. In total, the principals identified twelve different adults or adult groups that approached them in ways that they considered to be possible workplace mistreatment.

In terms of which parents were involved, Table 13 shows how many of the principals identified mothers, fathers, parents, and foster parents as perpetrators while recounting their experiences. It should perhaps be of no surprise that parents are the number one perpetrator given the number of interactions that principals have on any given day with the various parents of the numerous students in their schools.

Table 13. *Breakdown of Parent Data Based on Stories Recounted*

<b>Father</b>	<b>Mother</b>	<b>(Both) Parents</b>	<b>Foster Father</b>
15	14	10	1

Teachers as perpetrators ranked second in Table 12, notwithstanding the fact that teachers are bound by The Manitoba Teachers' Society (2014a) *Code of Professional Practice* (Appendix O). The majority of the incidents that the principals shared regarding teachers were situations of undermining the principal behind his or her back. The principal found out about these tactics either by overhearing discussions in staff rooms or by relying on other teachers or community members (especially in small towns) that reported information to the principals.

Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents, the Senior Administration of the school division, ranked third in terms of being perceived as perpetrators of mistreatment. The hierarchy of the school system, thus who has the power in relational situations, was at play in these instances, with senior administration of a school division holding considerable authority over the

career development of its staff, in particular its principals. The principals in this study most often reported that they decided not to address their perceived mistreatments from their superiors because of the relational power differential, showing an underlying issue that perhaps the principals did not want to harm their career trajectory.

### **Findings: Frequency Survey of the Experiences of Mistreatment (Research Question 2b)**

The principals completed the Frequency Survey regarding certain workplace mistreatment incident possibilities (i.e. the survey items) common in organizational behaviour surveys and they were asked to concentrate on only the year directly prior to the 2016-2017 school year in which this study was conducted. The survey required principals to focus on three categories of adults: parents, teachers, and senior administration/superintendents – the three groups identified most frequently in the data presented in Table 12 and if they wished, to add a fourth category in an *Other* column provided on the survey. During the survey completion, the principals did not know to which construct each of the survey items belonged. The items were listed on the survey in random order to assure that the principals did not see a pattern amongst the types of mistreating behaviours.

The completion of the surveys by the principals resulted in the highest response rates for both parents and teachers as adult perpetrators. Data on the senior administration/superintendents from the 12 participants revealed that four of the participants had placed zeros for all the items, indicating that those four principals did not perceive their senior administration as mistreating them in any of the ways described in the survey items.

In the *Other* column on the survey, three principals chose their vice-principals and other principals chose to write in a trustee, a custodian, a support staff member, a principal colleague and a community member, resulting in some minimal data for those perpetrators. However, it is

interesting to note that 33% of the administrators penciled in another administrator with whom they worked as a perpetrator of mistreatment when given a chance to add whomever they wished from the year that had just passed.

Tables 14 to 19 show the survey item numbers with a brief description of each item grouped according to the workplace mistreatment construct into which the item is placed. The entire survey document, for reference on the exact wording of the items, can be found in Appendix E. The percentages in each table are for the modal ranges given on the survey and the data is reported in two tables per category of perpetrator – by parents, then teachers, and then senior administration/superintendents, where the first table shows all of the data and the second table provides a summary by construct. There is an anomaly in the three tables due to the definition chosen to describe bullying in chapter 4. The categorization of bullying in chapter 4 used the strict definition that there would be a power-over relationship in order to constitute bullying. For the surveys however, the chart used to distinguish between the items per construct, found in Appendix H, indicates that certain items fall only into the bullying construct. These items are counted as bullying in the survey results, despite the fact that parents and teachers should not technically have power over the principals (Hodson, Roscigno & Lopez, 2006). Principals themselves used the terms harassment and bullying interchangeably in the interviews and making the distinction between the two constructs is a complex task as even in the organizational behaviour literature there is questionable consistency; what one researcher considers harassment blurs into what another would describe as bullying (Crawshaw, 2009; Hershcovis, 2011).

Table 14. *Frequency of Mistreatments by Parents over a One Year Period (2015-2016)*

Item	Frequency					
	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Total
<b>Construct 1: Incivility</b>						
#1. Using an angry tone of voice	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	6 (50%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	12 (100%)
#5. Avoiding me	4 (33%)	0 (-)	5 (42%)	3 (25%)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#7. Talking down to me	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	4 (33%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#12. Insulting me	2 (17%)	6 (50%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#14. Cutting me off	3 (25%)	2 (17%)	4 (33%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#26. Paying little attention to my ideas	6 (50%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	2 (17%)	12 (100%)
<b>Incivility Total</b>	<b>19 (26%)</b>	<b>14 (19%)</b>	<b>23 (32%)</b>	<b>9 (13%)</b>	<b>7 (10%)</b>	<b>72 (100%)</b>
<b>Construct 2: Social Undermining</b>						
#3. Devaluing my work	2 (17%)	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#6. Withholding information	3 (27%)	1 (9%)	4 (36%)	3 (27%)	0 (-)	11 <sup>2</sup> (100%)
#13. Not correcting false information	6 (55%)	3 (27%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	0 (-)	11 (100%)
#18. Spreading rumours	3 (27%)	4 (36%)	3 (27%)	0 (-)	1 (9%)	11 (100%)
#22. Whistle-blowing/telling superiors	5 (42%)	2 (17%)	3 (25%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#23. Belittling my opinions	5 (42%)	5 (42%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#24. Negative comments to my face	4 (33%)	5 (42%)	1 (8%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#25. Negative comments to others about me	2 (20%)	4 (40%)	3 (30%)	0 (-)	1 (10%)	10 (100%)
#31. Withholding resources	11 (92%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
<b>Social Undermining Total</b>	<b>41 (40%)</b>	<b>28 (27%)</b>	<b>21 (20%)</b>	<b>9 (8%)</b>	<b>4 (4%)</b>	<b>103 (100%)</b>

<sup>2</sup> If the total number of respondents is below 12, this indicates that one or more principals noted on their surveys that they did not believe that the descriptor represented a form of mistreatment and therefore, they found the item not applicable.

Table 14. *Frequency of Mistreatments by Parents over a One Year Period (continued)*

Item	Frequency					
	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Total
<b>Construct 3: Harassment</b>						
#2. Yelling or screaming at me	2 (17%)	7 (58%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#4. Hostile/angry gestures	2 (17%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#8. Swearing at me	4 (33%)	6 (50%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (12)
#9. Offensive emails/phone calls	2 (17%)	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#10. Hostile body language	5 (42%)	5 (42%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#15. Getting 'in my face'	6 (50%)	3 (25%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#19. Verbal threats	5 (42%)	4 (33%)	3 (25%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#20. Physical threats	10 (83%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#29. Social media insults	7 (64%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	0 (-)	1 (9%)	11 (100%)
<b>Harassment Total</b>	<b>43 (40%)</b>	<b>37 (35%)</b>	<b>19 (18%)</b>	<b>3 (3%)</b>	<b>5 (5%)</b>	<b>107 (100%)</b>
<b>Construct 4: Bullying</b>						
#27. Repeatedly reminding me of blunders	7 (58%)	1 (8%)	3 (25%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#28. Ridiculing me in front of staff	8 (67%)	3 (25%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#30. Marginalizing me from staff	9 (75%)	1 (8%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
<b>Bullying Total</b>	<b>24 (67%)</b>	<b>5 (14%)</b>	<b>6 (17%)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>1 (3%)</b>	<b>36 (100%)</b>
<b>Construct 6: Physical Violence<sup>3</sup></b>						
#11. Hitting me/assault	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#16. Pushing me	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#17. Throwing something at me	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#21. Damaging my property	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
<b>Total Physical Violence</b>	<b>36 (100%)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>36 (100%)</b>

<sup>3</sup> **Construct 5 – Mobbing**, as an individual construct, is not scored in the survey data. Mobbing is a combination of many types of workplace mistreatment which occur in a workplace over a longer time period and as such could not be measured effectively by this type of survey, even though some of the constructs of mistreatment fall into the mobbing category depending on the context of the situation.



**Parents.** When asked to reflect on their experiences of workplace mistreatment by parents over the previous one year period according to a set list of possible items of mistreatment, principals reported experiencing many instances of incivility and social undermining, fewer instances of harassment and bullying, and for that year, no incidents of physical violence. The perception by the principals of the frequency of the mistreating behaviours by parents from the survey is shown in Table 14.

***Incivility.*** Looking at the data, instances of incivility from parents were the most frequent forms of mistreatment endured by principals over the course of the year. Thirty-two percent of the principals shared that they perceived that they were treated uncivilly from 6 to 10 times in the year in question. The construct of incivility, when compared to all the other possible constructs of mistreatment, also shows the highest frequency in terms of instances of mistreatment occurring more than 5 times in one year. Two of the twelve principals reported having been mistreated by parents who used an angry tone of voice toward them (#1) over 15 times during the year, and two participants also reported experiencing parents who paid little attention to the principals' ideas or opinions (#26).

***Social undermining.*** Moving on with the frequency of social undermining behaviours, the answers reflect a range of frequencies depending on the survey item. While some principals reported not experiencing each of the undermining behaviours over the course of the year, at least two thirds of the principals reported that they had experience with the following items: parents devaluing their work (#3); withholding information (#6); spreading rumours (#18); and, making negative comments about them either to their face (#24) or to others (#25). However, looking at the frequency with which principals reported experiencing these behaviours more than 10 times during the year, this indicates that principals experienced considerably fewer incidents

of social undermining from parents compared to incidents of incivility. The undermining behaviour included on this survey that all principals, with only one exception, reported not experiencing over the course of the year was withholding resources from them to do their job (#31), reflecting the reality that parents have little ability to control access to school resources.

***Harassment.*** As noted in chapter 4, harassment represents a more severe form of workplace mistreatment than incivility and social undermining, as it is always unwanted and harmful. Principal responses shown in Table 14 reflect, like their responses on incivility and social undermining, a range of experiences depending on the specific type of incident described. However, there is a distinct decline in the frequency of incidents of harassment reported compared to the constructs of incivility and social undermining. Table 14 shows that only two types of harassing behaviours – offensive emails/phone calls (#9) and hostile body language (#10) – were reported by only one or two principals as occurring at a high frequency (more than 10 times over the year). This reflects a frequency rate lower than the frequency reported for social undermining and considerably lower than that for incivility.

When principals' responses to the nine individual harassment items are combined to create an overall composite picture of their responses to harassment items on the survey as shown in Table 15, forty percent of the principals responded that they had not been subjected to specific incidents of harassment over the one-year time frame. The percentage of principals who answered zero – indicating that they had not experienced this behaviour in the previous year – was highest for the following three items: getting in the principal's face (#15) at 92%, making physical threats (#20) at 83%, and using social media to insult the principal or spread rumors (#29) at 64%. The most frequent action recognized as harassment was yelling or screaming at the principal (#2) occurring between 1-5 times in that year, or at 58%.

Table 15. *Summary of Reported Mistreatments by Parents and by Construct*

Construct	# of Items	Frequency					
		0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Total
1. Incivility	6	19 (26%)	14 (19%)	23 (32%)	9 (13%)	7 (10%)	72 (100%)
2. Social Undermining	9	41 (40%)	28 (27%)	21 (20%)	9 (8%)	4 (4%)	103 (100%)
3. Harassment	9	43 (40%)	37 (35%)	19 (18%)	3 (3%)	5 (5%)	107 (100%)
4. Bullying	3	24 (67%)	5 (14%)	6 (17%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	48 (100%)
5. Mobbing	See	Footnote	#2				
6. Physical Violence	4	48 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	48 (100%)

**Bullying.** Upon reaching the construct of bullying, while some incidents are reported, the frequency of such behaviours decreases considerably from the previous constructs. For each of the three survey items categorized uniquely as bullying behaviours the majority of principals reported that they had not experienced this behaviour from parents in the previous year, and where incidents were reported their frequency was generally low (1-5 or 6-10 times in the year). Given the fact that the parents and members of the community are not usually in a position where they have much power over the principals so as to be able to bully them, this data seems appropriate.

**Physical violence.** Finally, for the four different survey items that tested this construct, 100% of the principals stated that they had not suffered any physical violence to their person or their belongings during the 2015-2016 school year. Again, this is not to confirm that this type of behaviour never happens, rather that it had not happened during the school year in question for this sample of principals as indicated in the aforementioned Table 15 which provides a summary of principal responses regarding parental mistreatment by construct.

**Teachers.** The number of times that principals perceived that they were on the receiving end of mistreatment from teachers is shown in Table 16. Zero is often the mode for most of these construct items, indicating that many principals reported that they did not endure such types of mistreatments from teachers during the year involved. In terms of their experiences of the various constructs of mistreatment identified in the survey, when they did occur, the responses related to teachers have a number of similarities to those reported for parents. However, looking at the frequency with which principals experienced such mistreatments, teacher initiated mistreatments were generally reported as occurring considerably less frequently than those with parents. Akin to the parent data, instances of incivility and social undermining were reported more times than incidents of harassment, and principals again reported no incidents of physical violence from teachers during the period in question.

**Incivility.** The first difference of note in Table 16, compared to Table 14 which showed the parent data, is that for the first two types of incivility every principal had been mistreated by teachers who either used an angry voice toward them (#1) or avoided them (#5), in the year in question. In fact, 100% of the principals had teaching staff express their displeasure with the principal between 1 and 10 times in that year by addressing the principal in an angry tone (#1). In terms of staff who avoided the principals (#5), five principals had this happen between 1 and 5 times and five others encountered this behaviour between 6 and 10 times, a rating of 42% for each, or a total of 84%. While other forms of incivility such as talking down to me (#7), insulting me (#12), and paying little attention to my ideas (#26) were reported as occurring, it was very rare for these to be described as what might be considered high frequency occurrences (more than 10 times over the course of the year).

Table 16. *Frequency of Mistreatments by Teachers over a One Year Period (2015-2016)*

Item	Frequency					
	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Total
<b>Construct 1: Incivility</b>						
#1. Using an angry tone of voice	0 (-)	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#5. Avoiding me	0 (-)	5 (42%)	5 (42%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#7. Talking down to me	6 (50%)	4 (33%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#12. Insulting me	5 (42%)	5 (42%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#14. Cutting me off	1 (8%)	6 (50%)	4 (33%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#26. Paying little attention to my ideas	6 (50%)	3 (25%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
<b>Incivility Total</b>	<b>18 (25%)</b>	<b>34 (47%)</b>	<b>15 (21%)</b>	<b>3 (4%)</b>	<b>2 (3%)</b>	<b>72 (100%)</b>
<b>Construct 2: Social Undermining</b>						
#3. Devaluing my work	1 (8%)	6 (50%)	4 (33%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
#6. Withholding information	4 (36%)	2 (18%)	4 (36%)	1 (9%)	0 (-)	11 (100%)
#13. Not correcting false information	7 (58%)	4 (33%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#18. Spreading rumours	5 (42%)	5 (42%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#22. Whistle-blowing/telling superiors	9 (75%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#23. Belittling my opinions	5 (42%)	6 (50%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#24. Negative comments to my face	6 (50%)	5 (42%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#25. Negative comments to others	5 (45%)	6 (55%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	11 (100%)
#31. Withholding resources	11 (92%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
<b>Social Undermining Total</b>	<b>53 (50%)</b>	<b>36 (34%)</b>	<b>14 (13%)</b>	<b>2 (2%)</b>	<b>1 (1%)</b>	<b>106 (100%)</b>

Table 16. *Frequency of Mistreatments by Teachers over a One Year Period (continued)*

Item	Frequency					
	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Total
<b>Construct 3: Harassment</b>						
#2. Yelling or screaming at me	8 (67%)	4 (33%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#4. Hostile/angry gestures	4 (33%)	5 (42%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#8. Swearing at me	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (12)
#9. Offensive emails/phone calls	8 (67%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#10. Hostile body language	7 (58%)	5 (42%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#15. Getting 'in my face'	9 (75%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#19. Verbal threats	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#20. Physical threats	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#29. Social media insults	11 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	11 (100%)
<b>Harassment Total</b>	<b>81 (76%)</b>	<b>20 (19%)</b>	<b>5 (5%)</b>	<b>1 (1%)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>107 (100%)</b>
<b>Construct 4: Bullying</b>						
#27. Repeatedly reminding me of blunders	8 (67%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#28. Ridiculing me in front of staff	6 (50%)	6 (50%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#30. Marginalizing me from staff	8 (67%)	3 (25%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
<b>Bullying Total</b>	<b>22 (61%)</b>	<b>11 (31%)</b>	<b>3 (8%)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>36 (100%)</b>
<b>Construct 6: Physical Violence</b>						
#11. Hitting me/assault	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#16. Pushing me	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#17. Throwing something at me	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#21. Damaging my property	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
<b>Total Physical Violence</b>	<b>48 (100%)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>48 (100%)</b>

***Social undermining.*** With regards to items on the survey related to social undermining by teachers, the principals reported this as occurring less frequently than incivility. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the principals stated that they had experienced teachers commenting negatively to others regarding their principal's intelligence, competence or productivity (#25), between one and five times over the year. Closely following that item, 50% of the principals reported that during the year they had experienced teachers sabotaging or devaluing their work (#3) between one and five times and that certain teachers belittled the principal's opinions (#23), again from one to five times in the previous school year. One survey item of particular interest was the indication that teachers withheld information from their principals (#6) on a fairly regular basis. Item #6 received the highest percentage rating of any of the other social undermining construct items in the 6 to 10 times category, at 35%, thus illustrating a certain penchant for this type of mistreating action amongst certain teachers.

The two lowest ratings regarding social undermining constructs reveal that only 17% of the principals felt that teachers whistle-blew or told their superiors about them (#22) in the year in question. This is believable due to ramifications such an act may cause for the teacher. The act of whistle-blowing, defined here as telling a superior about a principal's actions, would normally run contrary to The Manitoba Teachers' Society (2014a) *Code of Professional Practice* (Appendix O) which explicitly states that a teacher must first talk to the teacher/principal with whom he or she has a complaint and then, only after informing that teacher/principal personally of his or her intention to do so, can the reporting teacher go to another, higher authority. Finally, a mere 8%, or one principal, indicated that a teacher had withheld resources or supplies. This is logical, as was also the case with the parents, because it is usually the principal, through

allocations in the school budget, who purchases and dispenses the supplies; it is not in the purview of most teachers.

**Harassment.** Upon reaching the construct of harassment, the principal response data in Table 16 shows a substantial decline in the frequency of such incidents compared to incivility and social undermining and considerably lower frequencies compared to incidents of parental harassment (Table 14). Of the nine items related to harassment on the principal survey there was only one – making hostile gestures such as eye rolling or finger pointing (#4) – where more than half of the principals (67%) reported experiencing the behaviour during the year and this was the only behaviour where any principal reported a frequency of occurrence higher than 10 times during the year.

**Bullying.** Reports of bullying behaviours by teachers, similar to what was reported in the parent data, decrease considerably compared to the previous three constructs, with two of these behaviours, making physical threats (#20) and insults on social media (#29), reported as being non-existent from teachers during the 2015-16 school year, according to the principals in the study. The behaviour of making verbal threats (#19) occurred only 1 to 5 times to only one principal as it rated at 8%. Again, all of this is logical because The Manitoba Teachers' Society (2014a) *Code of Professional Practice* prohibits teachers from taking these sorts of actions against principals meaning that they could be disciplined and in extreme cases risk losing their jobs. The one potentially bullying behaviour that was reported and identified on the survey as happening from 1 to 5 times for 50% of the principals was the ridiculing of the principals in front of the staff (#28), although because the power-over structure is almost non-existent for teachers over principals, where the teachers are concerned, the ambiguity in the literature would allow for the identification of such a behaviour as social undermining or harassment.



**Physical violence.** Lastly, comparable to Table 14 regarding the parent data, principals disclosed that during the 2015-2016 school year, in 100% of the cases, they never suffered physical violence at the hands of any one of their teachers. This is confirmed in Table 17 where principal responses regarding mistreatment by teachers for the year 2015-16 are summarized by construct.

Table 17. *Summary of Reported Mistreatments by Teachers and by Construct*

Construct	# of Items	Frequency					Total
		0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	
<b>Incivility</b>	<b>6</b>	18 (25%)	34 (47%)	15 (21%)	3 (4%)	2 (3%)	72 (100%)
<b>Social Undermining</b>	<b>9</b>	53 (50%)	36 (34%)	14 (13%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	106 (100%)
<b>Harassment</b>	<b>9</b>	81 (76%)	20 (19%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)	0 (-)	107 (100%)
<b>Bullying</b>	<b>3</b>	22 (61%)	11 (31%)	3 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	36 (100%)
<b>Mobbing</b>	<i>See</i>	<i>Footnote</i>	<i>#2</i>				
<b>Physical Violence</b>	<b>4</b>	48 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	48 (100%)

**Senior Administration/Superintendents.** While all of the principals in the study filled in the survey regarding this particular possible perpetrator, as previously noted, four of the twelve principals placed zeros in the boxes for all the survey items related to senior administration, indicating that mistreatment coming from their supervisors was non-existent for the year in question. The data reveals that the frequency of mistreatment by the senior administration or the superintendents of school divisions in the study is low, although it does exist in some cases.

An important change in Table 18 when compared to Tables 14 and 16 is that several items that fell under harassment in the previous two data tables have been moved to the bullying section of this table because those items change from harassment to bullying when there is a power-over relationship between the parties involved, as described in chapter 4. In this case,

because the superintendents have positional power over the principals, items #2, #19, #20 and #29 have been moved from the harassment section in Tables 14 and 16 to the bullying section of Table 18, even though, as previously noted, the line between the constructs of harassment and bullying is sometimes blurred. The number of times that principals perceived that they were on the receiving end of mistreatment from senior administration is shown in Table 18.

The data reveals that only one principal indicated that the behaviour of whistle-blowing or telling a superior about him or her (#22) happened to him or her 11 to 15 times over the course of one year. There is no other behaviour that occurred more than 6 to 10 times. The modal frequency for most behaviours was 0, followed by the mode of 1 to 5 times. With a frequency rating of 6 to 10 times, a maximum of only 2 principals (17%) indicated that their work had been devalued (#3). Further, in the rating of 1 to 5 times, the highest percentage found in Table 18 with regards to the superintendents is a mere 33%, both for talking down to principals/treating them as inferior (#7) and for withholding information from the principals (#6). These figures are much lower than the percentages found in the parent data and teacher data in Tables 14 and 16. The answer of zero times, regarding all of the items on the survey about the behaviours of the superintendents was the most popular modal answer, in a range from 58% to 100%, indicating that the superintendents mistreated the principals far less often than did the parents and the teachers for the year in question. In fact, in addition to the four questions regarding physical violence which had a 100% score across the data for all three of the perpetrators named on the survey, three other items on the bullying end of behaviours received 100% non-occurrence on this survey: making verbal threats (#19), making physical threats (#20), and using social media to insult (#29). On the teacher survey, the principals rated #20 and #29 at 100% non-occurrence as well, but item #19 regarding verbal threats coming from superintendents with its reported

Table 18. *Frequency of Mistreatments by Senior Administration over a One Year Period (2015-2016)*

Item	Frequency					
	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Total
<b>Construct 1: Incivility</b>						
#1. Using an angry tone of voice	9 (75%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#5. Avoiding me	8 (67%)	3 (25%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#7. Talking down to me	7 (58%)	4 (33%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#12. Insulting me	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#14. Cutting me off	8 (67%)	3 (25%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#26. Paying little attention to my ideas	9 (75%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
<b>Incivility Total</b>	<b>52 (72%)</b>	<b>15 (21%)</b>	<b>4 (5%)</b>	<b>1 (1%)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>72 (100%)</b>
<b>Construct 2: Social Undermining</b>						
#3. Devaluing my work	8 (67%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#6. Withholding information	7 (58%)	4 (33%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#13. Not correcting false information	9 (81%)	2 (18%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	11 (100%)
#18. Spreading rumours	8 (73%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	11 (100%)
#22. Whistle-blowing/telling superiors	11 (92%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#23. Belittling my opinions	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#24. Negative comments to my face	10 (83%)	2 (17%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#25. Negative comments to others	9 (81%)	2 (18%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	11 (100%)
#31. Withholding resources	10 (83%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
<b>Social Undermining Total</b>	<b>83 (76%)</b>	<b>16 (17%)</b>	<b>5 (5%)</b>	<b>1 (1%)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>105 (100%)</b>

Table 18. *Frequency of Mistreatments by Senior Administration over a One Year Period (continued)*

Item	Frequency					
	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Total
<b>Construct 3: Harassment</b>						
#4. Hostile/angry gestures	9 (75%)	3 (25%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#8. Swearing at me	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#9. Offensive emails/phone calls	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#10. Hostile body language	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#15. Getting 'in my face'	11 (92%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
<b>Harassment Total</b>	<b>53 (89%)</b>	<b>6 (10%)</b>	<b>1 (2%)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>60 (100%)</b>
<b>Construct 4: Bullying</b>						
#2. Yelling or screaming at me	11 (92%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#19. Verbal threats	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#20. Physical threats	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#27. Repeatedly reminding me of blunders	11 (92%)	0 (-)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#28. Ridiculing me in front of staff	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#29. Social media insults	11 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	11 (100%)
#30. Marginalizing me from staff	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
<b>Bullying Total</b>	<b>79 (95%)</b>	<b>2 (3%)</b>	<b>2 (3%)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>83 (100%)</b>
<b>Construct 6: Physical Violence</b>						
#11. Hitting me/assault	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#16. Pushing me	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#17. Throwing something at me	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
#21. Damaging my property	12 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	12 (100%)
<b>Total Physical Violence</b>	<b>48 (100%)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>0 (-)</b>	<b>48 (100%)</b>

100% non-occurrence shows, perhaps, that the superintendents chose their words more carefully when dealing with their principal personnel. In Table 19 principal responses regarding senior administration mistreatment for the year 2015-16 are summarized by construct.

Table 19. *Summary of Reported Mistreatments by Senior Administration and by Construct*

Construct	# of Items	Frequency					
		0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Total
<b>Incivility</b>	<b>6</b>	52 (72%)	15 (21%)	4 (5%)	1 (1%)	0 (-)	72 (100%)
<b>Social Undermining</b>	<b>9</b>	83 (76%)	16 (17%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)	0 (-)	105 (100%)
<b>Harassment</b>	<b>5</b>	53 (89%)	6 (10%)	1 (2%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	60 (100%)
<b>Bullying</b>	<b>7</b>	79 (95%)	2 (3%)	2 (3%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	83 (100%)
<b>Mobbing</b>	<i>See</i>	<i>Footnote</i>	<i>#2</i>				
<b>Physical Violence</b>	<b>4</b>	48 (100%)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	48 (100%)

This data reveals that in a given school year, many of the items that signify general mistreatment in other workplaces outside of the school system did not happen with great frequency to the principals in this study. The most common range for any mistreatment that did occur was from 1 to 5 times during the year (less than once a month) and it was rare that a mistreatment happened more than 15 times in a year. However, when speaking of mistreatments that occurred more than 15 times a year, it was most common for parent actions to fall in this modal range and least common for superintendent actions. This may well be accounted for based on the number of interactions that a principal has with a variety of different parents over the year, as well as the fact that the principal may be dealing with two parents (and sometimes more) per student in his or her school. A principal would have far fewer interactions with the senior administration in the division, which, depending on the school division, accounts for from one to five people at the maximum.

The most frequent mistreatment behaviour on the part of parents was using an angry voice toward the principal (#1) and the result is the same in the teacher data. Insofar as superintendents are concerned, the most common mistreatments toward their principals are withholding information from the principal (#6) and talking down to the principal (#7).

The frequency data also exposes certain mistreatment constructs as being more common in the school as a workplace than other constructs; incivility and social undermining actions far outweigh the other construct possibilities for mistreatments toward principals. For instance, accounting for parents, teachers and superintendents together, the most common mistreatments, looking at the data for between 1 to 10 times per year, that principals reported as incidents were:

- undermining – sabotaging or devaluing the principal’s work (#3) at 63%
- incivility – using an angry voice toward the principal (#1) at 61%
- incivility – avoiding the principal (#5) at 54%
- incivility – interrupting or cutting the principal off (#14) at 54%
- incivility – talking down to the principal (#7) at 46%
- undermining – withholding information from the principal (#6) at 45%

Noting that the most frequent behaviours from these three perpetrators fall into the incivility and social undermining constructs, often thought of as lower level mistreatments, does this necessarily mean that principals in schools are not impacted as severely as other workers in other workplaces? Do all principals in this sample perceive the severity of the mistreatments in the same way? What do the principals perceive as the most severe mistreating actions that are directed toward them? The next data set addresses these questions.

**Findings: Severity Surveys of the Experiences of Mistreatment (Research Question 2c)**

The first purpose of the two surveys (Severity Survey – Professional, for a trained adult paid to work in the educational domain and Severity Survey – Public, for an adult as a member of the public – Appendices I and J) was to discover what types of mistreatments that the principals found to be the most severe. The principals were asked to think of one perpetrator that was most dominant in his or her mind when it came to mistreatment at work. It did not matter when the mistreatment had occurred, but the person who best fit the bill was the person that came to mind first in each of two categories - mistreatment by someone in the professional realm and then mistreatment by a member of the public. The member of the public that once again was chosen the most often was a parent, and the member of the professional staff chosen most often was a teacher.

Some principals chose different adults other than the perpetrators chosen by the majority. These included: a principal colleague (twice), a vice-principal, a consultant with the school division, all of these from the professional side, and from the public side, a neighbour to the school. The superintendents did not figure at all into this data regarding the severity of the mistreatments. The two most common answers of adult perpetrators, for the stories shared in answer to Research Question #1, have again risen to the top for the question of severity of the incidents.

In this section severity is examined from several different perspectives. In the first instance, a general measure of severity is reflected in the continuum that has informed the whole thesis from the heuristic that categorizes severity from incivility to violence (*Figure 1 repeated as 2*). The Severity Surveys added to this by asking principals to identify a particularly memorable perpetrator of mistreatment and for each one of the items on the survey to score their

experiences with that perpetrator in mind. The scale used ranged from 0 to 10, with 10 being the highest possible/most severe score for that item. In Tables 20 (parents) and 21 (teachers) all scores of 8 or more are shown in bold text as indicating a perceived high level of severity by the principals. For each category in the continuum a total of the number of high severity items each principal recorded is also shown. These totals provide a perspective on both the level of severity for individual behaviours and the degree to which the mistreatment described was broadly spread across the range of generalized workplace mistreatment actions. In addition, an average based on all severity scores for each item is shown in the far right column of the tables. Due to the limited representativeness of the participant sample, the means calculated in Tables 20 and 21 are not meant to indicate that statistical analyses were performed for the purpose of testing for significant differences. More definitive quantitative statements would require a much larger sample that would allow for inferential statistical analyses such as t tests, chi-square, analysis of variance and the like. The means in these tables, therefore, are indicators of a descriptive nature, which do not prove or disprove, but which are used to identify the perception of severity of the experience of mistreatment in these principals' eyes.

There are several particularities in Tables 20 and 21. First, the data from those principals who did not select either parent or teacher during the completion of the severity surveys are omitted from the tables. Further, there is coding used in Tables 20 and 21 to identify why certain principals did not rate the severity of particular items. The letter H<sup>4</sup> is used in Tables 20 and 21 to represent that the principal thought the item constituted mistreatment, even though it was not in his or her realm of experience for the person/incident(s) on which he or she was concentrating; while the letters NM (not mistreatment) are used to indicate that the principal did not believe that

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<sup>4</sup> The letter H was chosen from the word harassment as a symbol for what principals considered mistreatment. This researcher did not want to choose M and cause confusion between M and NM in the tables.



the item was mistreatment under any circumstance. Instances of H or NM were not used in the calculation of the means. The Tables which follow, Table 20 (regarding parents) and Table 21 (regarding teachers) display the data collected for the two severity surveys.

**Parents.** Table 20 reports the principals' perceptions of the severity of the mistreatment by parents. This data is based on 11 of the 12 principals that chose a parent to think of when completing the Severity Survey – Public, as one principal chose a neighbour (community member) who lived behind the school. Table 20 also shows a diversity of responses regarding the perceived severity of the experiences for each of the survey items. For example, Tom, an experienced, veteran principal never scored the severity of the instances of workplace mistreatment above an 8; for the parent he had chosen to focus on for this survey, which was intended to encompass the most severe incidence of mistreatment that he had experienced, he scored the parent 'getting in his face' as a 4.5 on the severity scale. His responses represent an outlier in this data considering every other principal had, at a minimum, rated six or more of the items in the 8 to 10 (or high) range. An explanation for Tom's rating was previously suggested in chapter 4 where he acknowledged fairly unequivocally that he had a tendency of feeling less affected by experiences of workplace mistreatment. He reported having experienced fewer instances of workplace mistreatment, in fact, only four of them, and all from earlier in his career. It is also worth noting that when initially volunteering to participate, he stated that he thought that the study would be interesting but he began by adamantly stating that he did not believe he had been mistreated at work. In contrast, the two principals who rated the experiences with parents as the most severe were Sabrina with 23 of the 29 items in the 8-10 range of severity and Annie with 21 of the 29 items within this same high range. Linda was next in line with 16 of the

Table 20. *Principals' Perceived Severity of Mistreatments by the Public – Parents*

Item	Principal											Ave
	Sabrina	Cal	Linda	Ann	Alex	Art	Barry	Tom	Steve	Chuck	Amadeus	
Incivility												
#1 Using an angry voice	10	8	9	10	10	8	8	2	8	7	7	7.9
#5 Avoiding me	10	7	8	10	2	4	8	NM	1	NM	8	6.8
#7 Talking down to me	10	7	8	10	10	H	8	1	8	5	8	7.5
#12 Insulting me	10	7	8	10	9	8	8	1	8	6	8	7.5
# 14 Cutting me off	10	4.5	7	10	7	8	8	NM	8	5	8	7.6
#26 Paying little att'n to my ideas	10	4	8	7	3	4	9	NM	8	NM	8	7.1
High Severity Totals (6)	6	1	5	5	3	3	6	0	5	0	5	7.4
Social Undermining												
#3 Devaluing my work	10	9	9	10	9	4	8	1	7	4	9	7.6
#6 Withholding information	3	6	5	4	10	H	7	1	8	NM	8	5.8
#13 Not correcting false information	8	4	8	10	9	H	8	1	8	NM	8	7.1
#18 Spreading rumours	8	5	8	10	10	H	8	1	8	H	4	7.1
#22 Whistle-blowing/telling superiors	10	8	8	10	H	7	8	H	7	NM	H	8.3
#23 Belittling my opinions	10	7	8	8	9	3	7	H	8	7	8	7.6
#24 Negative comments - competence 1	10	6	8	10	8	9	9	2.5	8	H	4	7.5
#25 Negative comments – competence 2	10	6	6	9	9	H	9	2.5	8	H	9	7.6
High Severity Totals (8)	7	2	6	7	7	1	6	0	6	0	5	7.3

Table 20. *Principals' Perceived Severity of Mistreatments by the Public – Parents (continued)*

Item	Principal											Ave
	Sabrina	Cal	Linda	Ann	Alex	Art	Barry	Tom	Steve	Chuck	Amadeus	
Harassment												
#2 Screaming at me	10	9	7	10	10	3	8	3	6	7	4	7.0
#4 Hostile/angry gestures	10	9.5	7	10	6	5	8	4	2	8	4	6.7
#8 Swearing at me	10	9	9	10	2	3	9	3	1	8	2	6.0
#9 Offensive emails/calls	8	9	8	10	4	8	7	1	8	5	4	6.5
#10 Hostile body language	10	8.5	9	10	4	3	7	1	7	8	3	6.4
#15 Getting in my face	10	8.5	8	10	3	4	7	4.5	4	8	H	6.7
#19 Verbal threats	9	8	8	10	H	8	8	3.5	4	9	H	7.5
#20 Physical threats	H	9	H	10	H	H	H	2.5	4	9	H	6.9
#29 Social media insults	10	H	H	6	7	H	5	H	8	6	8	7.1
High Severity Totals (9)	8	8	5	8	1	2	4	0	2	6	1	6.8
Bullying												
#27 Repeated reminding me of errors	10	6.5	6	4	3	H	7	H	8	H	H	6.4
#28 Ridicule in front of staff	8	7	7	4	3	3	5	H	2	5	H	4.9
High Severity Totals (2)	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5.7
Physical Violence												
#11 Hitting me/ assault	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	-
#16 Pushing me	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	-
#17 Throwing something	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	-
#21 Damaging my property	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	-
High Severity Total (4)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Overall High Severity Totals (29)	23	11	16	20	11	6	16	0	14	6	11	-

29 items scored in the high range of severity, the same number as Barry. Three of the four women who completed this survey regarding interactions with a specific parent found those interactions to be higher in severity than did their male counterparts.

In terms of the averages, or the overall composite picture, regarding the perceived severity of the actions of parent perpetrators, the principals scored the following items from the survey at the highest level (average for descriptive purposes only is found in parentheses out of 10):

- #22) social undermining – whistle-blowing or telling superiors about my behaviour (8.3);
- #1) incivility – using an angry tone of voice toward me (7.9);
- #3) social undermining – sabotaging or devaluating my work (7.6);
- #14) incivility – interrupting or cutting me off when I am speaking (7.6);
- #23) social undermining – belittling my opinions (me) in front of other people (7.6);
- and
- #25) social undermining – making negative comments to others about my intelligence, competence, or productivity (7.6).

Described as 8.3 out of 10, and therefore rating #1 in terms of severity, it appears that the principals were most affronted by parents who would go above their heads to the superintendents to report what the parents deemed to be incapacities in the principal while fulfilling his or her role. The severity of whistle-blowing or telling superiors about a behaviour could be seen by principals as an effort on the parents' part to undermine the principals' power in the school by reporting what the parents perceived as wrongdoings of the principal in his or her school. Principals, like other workers, do not like another person to whistle-blow or speak to superiors

without first relaying the concerns to the person directly involved. Such behaviours harm the principal's sense of identity and of self in his or her role, and perhaps show a certain disrespect for the principal. If the senior administration were to receive numerous complaints from parents, this may thwart upward mobility in the principal's career.

Parents, as was also the case in the frequency survey, often use an angry tone of voice but this survey shows that that tone is found by the principals to be only second in severity, at 7.9 out of 10. This suggests that principals find the action of whistle-blowing or telling superiors about them, while less frequent, more severe than listening to a parent who communicates using an angry tone. The next four mistreating actions, in terms of the severity, are tied at 7.6 out of 10, with three of the four items (#3, #23, #25) involving negative activities, in an effort to undermine the principals. Principals in this study generally perceived uncivil actions (#1, #14) and social undermining actions (#3, #22, #23, and #25) to be more severe than other potentially more harmful mistreatments, such as harassment and bullying. Further discussion regarding this point is found in the analysis for this section.

**Teachers.** The principals' perceptions of severity of the mistreatment by teachers are shown in Table 21. This data is based on 8 of the 12 principals choosing a teacher as the perpetrator to think of when completing the Severity Survey – Professional. The data from the four principals regarding adults different from the majority response of teacher, as previously explained, are not considered in Table 21.

Table 21 shows the range of responses regarding the perceived severity for each of the survey items when the principals thought about a particular teacher who severely mistreated them. This data confirms, when compared to the data presented in Table 20, that the severity of mistreatments by teachers is much lower than those same mistreatments by parents. With one

Table 21. *Principals' Perceived Severity of Mistreatments by Professionals – Teachers*

Item	Principal								Ave
	Cal	Linda	Annie	Art	Tom	Steve	Chuck	Amadeus	
Incivility									
#1 Using an angry voice	6	9	7	2	NM	7	7	6	6.3
#5 Avoiding me	6.5	9	3	3	H	8	NM	9	6.4
#7 Talking down to me	6	9	6	H	H	7	7	4	6.5
#12 Insulting me	7	8	4	3	H	7	7	4	6.5
# 14 Cutting me off	6.5	10	6	6	H	8	5	8	7.1
#26 Paying little att'n to my ideas	8	9	3	H	H	7	NM	4	6.2
High Severity Totals (6)	1	6	0	0	0	2	0	2	6.5
Social Undermining									
#3 Devaluing my work	8	8	8	6	H	8	H	8	7.7
#6 Withholding information	7	9	4	H	H	7	H	8	7.0
#13 Not correcting false information	6	8	5	H	H	8	H	H	6.8
#18 Spreading rumours	7	8	4	2	H	8	H	6	5.8
#22 Whistle-blowing/telling superiors	8.5	H	5	H	H	5	NM	5	5.9
#23 Belittling my opinions	8	8	4	5	H	7	H	5	6.2
#24 Negative comments - competence to my face	7.5	9	4	5	H	7	H	H	6.5
#25 Negative comments – competence to others	5.5	8	4	H	H	7	H	7	6.3
#31 Withholding resources	H	8	3	H	H	5	H	H	5.3
High Severity Totals (9)	3	8	1	0	0	3	0	2	6.3

Table 21. *Principals' Perceived Severity of Mistreatments by Professionals – Teachers*  
(continued)

Item	Principal								Ave
	Cal	Linda	Annie	Art	Tom	Steve	Chuck	Amadeus	
Harassment									
#2 Screaming at me	7	8	9	3	H	6	7	3	6.1
#4 Hostile/ angry gestures	H	6	7	3	1	6	H	5	4.7
#8 Swearing at me	H	H	H	H	H	3	8	H	5.5
#9 Offensive emails/calls	7	H	8	7	H	5	H	H	6.8
#10 Hostile body language	5	8	4	2	1	6	H	H	4.3
#15 Getting in my face	7.5	9	6	2	H	7	6	H	6.3
#19 Verbal threats	8.5	7	7	H	H	6	H	H	7.1
#20 Physical threats	H	H	8	H	H	2	H	H	5.0
#29 Social media insults	H	H	6	H	H	7	H	H	6.5
High Severity Totals (9)	1	3	3	0	0	2	1	0	5.8
Bullying									
#27 Repeated reminding me of errors	8	9	3	H	H	7	H	4	6.2
#28 Ridicule in front of staff	8	7	4	3	H	4	H	H	5.2
#30 Marginalization from my staff	H	8	5	2	H	7	H	4	5.2
High Severity Totals (3)	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	5.5
Physical Violence									
#11 Hitting me/ assault	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	-
#16 Pushing me	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	
#17 Throwing something	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	-
#21 Damaging my property	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	-
High Severity Total (4)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
Overall High Severity Totals (31)	7	19	4	0	0	7	1	4	-

sole exception, Linda, who rates 18 of the 31 survey items as being on the high-end at 8 out of 10 times, there is not another principal who indicates that high a severity regarding interactions with teachers. In fact, both Arthur and Thomas rate none of the items above an 8. Linda did describe an incident with a teacher who she believed had bullied and harassed her and other staff members, and if this was the teacher about whom she was thinking when she completed the survey, this could account for her much higher severity ratings than her contemporaries.

In terms of the overall composite picture of how the principals' perceived the severity of mistreatments by teacher perpetrators, four items garnered the highest average severity level (out of 10 and for descriptive comparison only):

- #3) incivility – sabotaging or devaluating my work (7.7);
- #14) incivility – interrupting or cutting me off when I am speaking (7.1);
- #19) harassment – making verbal threats (7.1); and
- #6) social undermining – withholding information from me (7.0).

The principals had the most trouble with, and found it the most severe form of mistreatment when the teachers tried to sabotage their plans for changes in the school or to programs or when particular teachers did not appreciate the work that the principal was doing. This sabotaging, similar to the number one response in terms of severity from the parent angle, could also be seen as an effort on the part of the teachers to undermine the principals' authority within the school. Two of the aforementioned items regarding severity, #19 (making verbal threats) and #6 (withholding information) were nonetheless shown to be very infrequent as an act initiated by teachers on the frequency survey, with only 8% and 18% commenting on them happening from 1 to 5 times within the previous year. The other two items rated here as the most severe in this survey were also rated highly in the frequency survey about teachers where half or



50% of the principals indicated an occurrence of between 1 to 5 times for #3 (sabotaging work) and #14 (interrupting). A difficulty arises when trying to explain how teachers, given the restrictions proffered in their collective agreements, division policies and The Manitoba Teachers' Society (2014a) *Code of Professional Practice*, could ever make a verbal threat toward their principals (#19), but an attempt at this discussion will be undertaken in the following section.

Looking at the overall data, it is apparent that the principals' perceptions of whether or not a particular behaviour constituted workplace mistreatment were fairly similar to the accepted norms of workplace mistreatment (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Aquino & Thau, 2009; Hershcovis, 2011; Milam, Spitzmueller & Penney, 2009; Tepper & Henle, 2011). However, a further interesting area to consider with data from this survey is what certain principals characterize as not being mistreatment. As can be seen considering the notation of NM in Tables 20 and 21, some principals expressed the view that, regardless of whether they were talking about a perpetrator who was a parent or a teacher, some incidents described on the survey did not constitute mistreatment. These items across the surveys pertaining to both parents and teachers were:

- #5) incivility – avoiding me (3 principals);
- #22) social undermining – whistle-blowing or telling superiors about my behaviour (1 principal); and
- #26) incivility – paying little attention to my ideas or opinions (2 principals).

Item #5, avoiding the principal, was chosen by three principals as not being workplace mistreatment, despite the fact that it appears regularly as one of the indicators of mistreatment on organizational behaviour surveys (Glomb, 2010; Rospenda & Richman, 2004). Item #22,

whistle-blowing or telling superiors about their behaviour, is a thought-provoking incongruity as one principal thought that it was not mistreatment regardless of whether a parent or teacher was doing it, whereas this particular item rated as the highest in severity for the rest of the principals when it was inflicted by parents! This could be rationalized in two ways. First, certain principals may have taken whistle-blowing by its strict definition, indicating illegal activity and having never received any accusations regarding such activity the principal in question indicated that it was not mistreatment in the school as a workplace (Sullivan, 2009). On the other hand, the principals who scored the item may have taken a more global picture of any reporting to their superiors, regarding legal or illegal matters, and they felt perhaps that their reputations were harmed in the eyes of their superiors with such an action on another adult's part, or perhaps they felt that they had no chance for redress, or they felt betrayed because the adult did not consult them with the concern that was directly related to a the problem at the school level that the principal should be afforded the opportunity to resolve.

Next, item #26, paying little attention to the principals' ideas, also rated fairly highly for most of the principals as being an issue when communicating with parents, yet, two principals did not see it as a mistreatment when dealing with parents, and one of those same principals did not see it as a mistreatment when dealing with teachers. This could be explained in the context of the communications or the attitudes of the principals – it may well be that certain principals disregard, as a matter of course, those adults who pay little attention to their ideas as simply having opinions different than the principals'. Other principals, on the other hand, may see it as an opportunity for an intriguing debate of ideas with parents and personnel when parents or staff argue against the presented opinions, rather than a mistreatment.

The remaining four items (#1 – angry voice, #6 – withholding info, #14 – interrupting, #13 – not correcting false info), each of which one principal chose as not being mistreatment, all fall into what is considered the lower level of the workplace mistreatment constructs, as incivility or social undermining. Those principals obviously do not recognize such activities as mistreatment. At the other end of the spectrum however, there were no disagreements; every principal recognized the items that indicated the constructs of harassment, bullying and physical violence as indeed describing mistreatment at work.

### **Mixing the Two Data Types: Quantitative and Qualitative**

This section comprises the final analytic step in a “convergent parallel mixed methods” (Creswell, 2014, p. 222) approach, which was to consider all the data from the different research processes, both quantitative and qualitative, in a search for confirming and disconfirming evidence for the ideas as presented in the separate data analysis portions of the study. Table 22 shows the data type(s) and chapter(s) in the thesis from where information was gleaned for the mixing of the data. **Bold type** indicates a major role or presence for the mixing and regular type indicates a more minor role or presence.

The procedure of using one method of data collection to inform the other, in order to find confirming evidence of particular ideas, is important in the mixing process; however, it is important to note, as shown in Table 22, that different methodologies were generally employed to address different research questions or different aspects of the same research question limiting, on occasion, the relevance of a compare and contrast approach. In the final analysis, as can be seen in Table 22, there was no possibility of mixing the data regarding impacts, which follows in chapter 6, as the survey and interview parameters were completely different.

Table 22. *Emphasis on Data during the Mixing Process by Research Question*

<b>Research Question</b>		<b>Data Type(s)</b>	<b>Chapter(s)</b>
1	What do principals perceive as instances of workplace mistreatment by other adults (teachers, senior administration, parents, the wider community etc.) in their work setting?	<b>Qualitative (Interviews) &amp; Quantitative (Surveys)</b>	<b>Chapter 4 &amp; Chapter 5</b>
2	What are the attributes of the mistreatment incidents in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the range of alleged perpetrators of the workplace mistreatment;</li> <li>b. the frequency of each principal's experience of mistreatment;</li> <li>c. the perceived severity of each principal's experiences of mistreatment?</li> </ul>	<b>Qualitative &amp; Quantitative</b>  <b>Quantitative &amp; Qualitative</b>  <b>Quantitative &amp; Qualitative</b>	<b>Chapter 4 &amp; Chapter 5</b>  <b>Chapter 5 &amp; Chapter 4</b>  <b>Chapter 5 &amp; Chapter 4</b>
3	How does the experience of mistreatment at work impact principals in terms of personal well-being and satisfaction in their jobs?	<b>Qualitative</b>	Chapter 6

### **Principals' Perceptions of Instances of Workplace Mistreatment by Other Adults in Their Work Setting.**

The initial interview with participating principals focused on their experiences of general workplace mistreatment over the entire course of their careers as principals. The qualitative data from these interviews provided detailed descriptions of their experiences of different types of general workplace mistreatment, something on the range of perpetrators, and information on the ways in which individual principals distinguished between legitimate conflict and mistreatment. Quantitative data from the Frequency Survey (which asked principals to focus on mistreatment in the previous year) and Severity Surveys (which asked principals to focus on one perpetrator) provided some general confirmation on the broad range of perpetrators that the principals

identified as well as the three most frequent groups of perpetrators – parents, teachers, and senior administration.

In chapter 4 a six-category typology of mistreatment drawn from the literature (incivility to physical violence) was used to organize the principals' interview accounts of mistreatment. The survey instruments used in chapter 5 also used these categories and were expanded to include specific behaviours aligned with each form of mistreatment. While the principals were generally not familiar with the terminology used for the workplace mistreatment constructs in the organizational behaviour research and did not always verbally label a particular mistreating behaviour with the correspondent term, I found, for the most part, confirming evidence in what they said orally and what they indicated as their survey responses. The stories of mistreatment that principals told generally could be placed with confidence into one of the six categories along the mistreatment continuum (*Figure 1* and/or *2*), and the responses to the two surveys suggested that the principals generally could relate to the specific incidents described and recognized them as mistreatment. An important element in both data sources was the fact that different principals held some differing views as to when a certain behaviour, in a specific situation, was seen as constituting mistreatment. Shown most explicitly in the NM responses on the Severity Survey, this was also evident in some of the interview discussions of when behaviours crossed the line from legitimate conflict to mistreatment.

Comparing the two sets of data provided useful insights into the way in which principals responded to item #22 on the Severity Survey regarding whistle-blowing or telling superiors about the principals' behaviour. An analysis of these responses suggests that this survey item really combined two distinct actions. Whistle-blowing often implies an intense and serious course of action as it commonly involves reporting illegality and unethical actions, while an

adult going directly to the superintendent or a trustee about what he or she believes the principal has done incorrectly is more an issue of what constitutes choosing appropriate channels of communication and conflict resolution in the school division. As previously alluded to, it is impossible to distinguish which of these two ideas the principals entertained when completing the survey; however, all of the stories shared by the principals involved the latter interpretation. One principal indicated on the survey that to him this item did not ever constitute workplace mistreatment, suggesting perhaps the former action, whereas other principals had no trouble recounting stories about the latter part of the item where they showed they were worried about their reputations and how the opinion of the superintendents would be influenced by accounts of issues at the school emanating from parents or teachers.

### **Principals' Perceptions of Particular Adults as Perpetrators in Their Work Setting.**

The survey data from the Severity Surveys corroborated the consistency regarding the perpetrators identified most often by the principals in their stories from the first round of interviews (I1) (see Tables 20 and 21). In the first round of interviews (I1), the perpetrators identified the most by the principals as the sources of mistreatment, ranked in the following order: parents, teachers and superintendents (see Table 12). This ranking is supported by the perpetrators that the principals chose when given an option to select only one perpetrator from the public domain and one perpetrator from the professional domain as they completed the Severity Surveys (see Severity Surveys in Appendices I and J). The principals chose parents (11 out of 12 principals chose this option), as the members of the public, who ranked number one during I1, and they chose teachers (8 out of 12 principals chose this option), as the members of the profession, who ranked number two during I1. Thus, the principals in this study were

constant in their opinions of whom they saw as the greatest perpetrators of mistreatment in their workplace.

### **Principals' Perceptions of the Frequency and Severity of Their Experiences of General Workplace Mistreatment.**

Principals were not asked a direct question regarding either the frequency or severity of their experiences of mistreatment in the interviews, but they did share some relevant perceptions while speaking to the researcher. Furthermore, the timeframe that the principals were asked to use in their initial interviews was their whole career as a principal while the timeframe for the Frequency Survey was the previous one-year period. Notwithstanding these distinctions, the descriptions that the principals provided in the interviews generally served to confirm and expand upon the data from the Frequency and Severity surveys administered.

Central to the design of this research has been a continuum drawn primarily from the general workplace mistreatment literature, the Blase and Blase (2002, 2004, 2006) research and the Namie and Namie (2004) research, shown in *Figure 1* and repeated as *Figure 2*. This continuum grouped workplace mistreatment into six broadly hierarchical categories from incivility to physical violence based on the researchers' interpretations of the severity and/or level of aggression of the actions. It is these categories that provide the framework for the Frequency and Severity Surveys as well as the presentation of principals' experiences of mistreatment presented in chapter 4.

**Frequency.** As noted at the outset of this study, there is no research to my knowledge on principal mistreatment in Canada and elsewhere; thus making it difficult to make comparative statements about what constitutes high or low frequencies of various forms of mistreatment.

The Frequency Survey that the principals completed attempted to collect detailed responses on the frequencies of some 31 different forms of mistreatment experienced by the participants stemming from either parents, teachers, or senior administration for a one-year period. The quantitative data presented in chapter 5, it is suggested, indicates overall a fairly low incidence of mistreatment. Frequencies declined sharply moving from lower levels of mistreatment (incivility and social undermining) to higher level incidents (harassment, bullying and mobbing), and disappeared at the highest level (physical violence). Higher frequencies of mistreatment (incivility, social undermining, and harassment) tended to be reported for parents compared to teachers, and high frequencies of mistreatment from senior administration were largely absent (Tables 14 to 19).

Although the interview data addressing experiences over the length of participants administrative careers provided incidents of sustained and severe forms of harassment, bullying and mobbing, most often the participants reinforced the perception that for these middle years Manitoba principals, general workplace mistreatment by adults was a part of their job, but in their experiences incidents were relatively infrequent and usually at the lower level in terms of severity. Linda, for example, called those instances of mistreatment “hiccups along the way” (Linda, I2, p. 64), while Thomas explained that in his view, cases of mistreatment, “they’re the exception, not the rule” (Thomas, I2, p. 203) as he submitted, “that the amount of mistreatment is actually very, very small [and] on an occasional basis” (Thomas, I1, p. 303). In sum, Victoria described it as “an ebb and flow effect [where sometimes the principal had to deal with] a few of those calls or conversations kind of close together” (Victoria, I2, p. 266) and at other times, workplace mistreatment seemed non-existent. In sum, in addition to broadly confirming the quantitative findings presented, the interview data provided a rich elaboration of the forms and



formats that these incidents took as well as the range of contextual triggers associated with their occurrence.

**Severity.** The question of the severity of principal workplace mistreatment was approached in several different ways in this study. The mistreatment continuum and the constructs it highlights (*Figures 1 and/or 2*) provided one analytical lens. A second lens was the Severity Survey, framed by the continuum constructs, which asked principals to describe the severity of one set of experiences with what they considered their most challenging experience of mistreatment with a member of the public and a professional employee. A third lens was provided by principals' comments on severity shared during the first interview session. Comparisons across these data sources and lenses was complicated by the reality that principals generally did not use the academic terminology associated with the mistreatment continuum, and by the fact that the principals' severity scoring for each of the items on the Severity Survey appeared to be an item specific score (i.e. 10 representing the highest form of, for example, yelling at me) rather than a more generic score (where yelling at me might, hypothetically, be a 3 whereas extreme forms of physical violence would rank as a 10).

To conclude, while the continuum of mistreatment constructs (*Figures 1 and/or 2*) remained the most basic indicator of severity, the Severity Survey served to highlight differences between principals. Both qualitative and quantitative data sources provided evidence of differences in experiences, and in their interpretations of what constituted incidents of mistreatment that impacted the principals for Research Questions 1 and 2. There was, however, no quantitative data requested regarding the impacts of the mistreatments on the principals, so, as noted in Table 22, no mixing of data sources was possible for Research Question 3.

## Summary

This chapter began by introducing the three sub-questions for Research Question 2, which looked at the attributes of the mistreatment of principals in terms of the range of perpetrators, the perceived prevalence of the experiences of mistreatment, and, the perceived severity of the experiences of mistreatment. The results regarding the range of adult perpetrators of workplace mistreatment in the schools showed that the list of adult perpetrators of mistreatment was lengthy, but that the top three offenders, in rank order were; parents, teachers and superintendents. The quantitative results regarding the frequency of mistreatments indicated that the occurrences of mistreatment were not particularly high, but that when the incidents did happen, many were perceived as severe and stressful in the principals' minds, even if they were on the lower end of the continuum (see *Figure 1* in chapter 2). The results on the Severity Surveys suggested that all principals identified higher level incidents (harassment, bullying and physical violence) as severe in nature, but that there was a range in acknowledgement of the severity of incidents for instances of incivility and social undermining.

Mixing of the quantitative and qualitative data revealed several inferences such as:

- the principals in this study were consistent in their opinions of who they regarded as the most frequent perpetrators of workplace mistreatment (parents and teachers);
- the principals' verbal constructions of incidents of workplace mistreatment corresponded broadly to what they indicated as constituting mistreatment in the Frequency and Severity Surveys;
- the principals maintained that the frequency of more severe forms of mistreatment, from bullying to physical violence, were practically non-existent.

Notwithstanding the fact that the principals reported a range in severity, with no physical violence reported, as well as an infrequent nature of occurrences of workplace mistreatment, they still reported serious harm and negative effects of mistreatment, particularly for sustained and unresolved forms of mistreatment. The next chapter delves more deeply into an important residual effect of the mistreatments, such as stress, the effects on the well-being of the principals and the effect that mistreatment has on the principals' sense of satisfaction in their jobs.

### **Chapter Six: Findings (3) – The Impacts and Effects of Workplace Mistreatment**

This chapter provides the findings for Research Question 3 of this exploratory study. Research Question 3 delves into the perceived impacts and effects that mistreatment in the workplace has on the principals. Researchers (Keashly, 1997; Namie, 2007; Neuman & Baron, 1998; Rospenda et al., 2005) agree that workplace mistreatment may engender consequences to a person's health and well-being and that the impacts can be substantial. These impacts relate to the idea of *harm* that the principals feel when mistreated. The principals shared the following data regarding that harm, with many of the incidents relating to personal rather than professional harm, but nonetheless, the incidents affected the principals' well-being.

Thus, for Research Question 3, I ask: How does the experience of mistreatment at work impact principals in terms of personal well-being and satisfaction in their jobs? In order to discuss the effect on the well-being of principals who perceive that they have experienced mistreatment, I propose several interconnected elements. First, it is necessary to understand what the principals contend is the range of negative impacts of the mistreatment. Secondly, it is important to comprehend the possible enduring nature of the negative impacts; whether there are residual effects over a short or a long period of time. Finally, I describe how the principals in this study see mistreatment as impacting their feeling of satisfaction in their jobs.

#### **Findings: Range of Negative Impacts of Workplace Mistreatment**

According to the principals in this study, incidents of workplace mistreatment affect them in many different, negative ways. Principals shared what negative effects the mistreatments had on them during the first interview, as that was one of the specified interview questions. Interestingly, however, during the second interview, the principals again repeated certain effects of being mistreated, without prompting, while they were giving answers to other questions from

the semi-structured interview protocol. The recurring comments on particular effects in both the first and second interviews, one with a prompting question and one without, led me, as researcher, to believe that most of the principals had experienced incidents of workplace mistreatment over the course of their careers that, depending on the incident, had a pronounced effect on their overall well-being. The six negative effects that figure prominently in the data from the interviews were:

- stress/“taking a toll”;
- fatigue/sleep loss;
- involuntary physical reactions;
- hurt to personal and/or professional esteem and resultant self-doubt;
- strong emotional responses such as, crying/upset, living in/with fear and anger;  
and
- cynicism/disillusionment with the job.

These negative effects are strikingly similar to the research done in the field of education by James Matsui Research (2005) in Toronto, Canada, Blase and Blase’s (2009) research in the United States, and Riley’s (2015) research in Australia. Supporting segments of text for each of these negative effects are found below.

**Stress/“Taking a Toll”.** These words were the most used by the principals during the first and second interviews when describing how various incidents of mistreatment affected them. “Work-related stress for upper management and executives [i.e., principals] are an expected part of the leadership role” (Hawk & Martin, 2011, p. 365) and the principals in this study found that to be the case. Not all stress is considered bad or unhealthy to an individual’s well-being, as some of the stress is temporary and the individual has the ability to cope, rather

than being in distress which is negative stress and which is less easily overcome (Hawk & Martin, 2011; Queen & Queen, 2004). What is stress? Brock and Grady (2002) and Buhler (1993) describe stress as the body's non-specific response to stressors in the environment. Stress manifests itself both mentally and physically as wear and tear due to difficult experiences in one's life (Lyles, 2005) or, as Okoroma and Robert-Okah (2007) contend; "too much pressure on the principal" (p. 4). An individual may identify that he or she is stressed when there is an "unrelieved tension caused by an imbalance between the encountered stressors and the resources available for dealing with those stressors" (van der Merwe & Parsotam, 2011, p. 667); however, this assessment of the situation is personal. It depends on the individual's subjective appraisal of the incident. The result of the stress can be an "alteration of physiological and psychological homeostasis (equilibrium or balance) resulting from internal and external job pressures that are perceived as threats to the individual's well-being or self-esteem" (Denga & Ekpo, 1994, p. 3).

The principals in this study, who perceived that they were mistreated, were no exception to feeling stress after incidents occurred. With the exception of Steve, every principal mentioned explicitly that they suffered stress when living through, and in, the aftermath of mistreatment incidents. Several principals, including Steve, also revealed that such incidences of mistreatment took a toll on their lives, although Steve did not define this toll as stress.

Linda described the toll regarding the workplace mistreatments using these words; "It is the major stressor. The adult bullying for sure, that's the major stressor. I mean even the paperwork, that's all manageable ... but when it becomes an emotional thing, that's always the most difficult part" (Linda, I2, p. 73). Thomas concurred that it was "a source of stress" (Thomas, I2, p. 213) for him and difficult to deal with depending on the gravity of the situation. Chuck explained that mistreatment "can be very stressful when you're confronted with it"

(Chuck, I2, p. 301). Victoria worried about “fir[ing] him [a community member] up” (Victoria, I2, p. 246) with what the community member regularly complained about – a lack of supervision on the playground by his house. Victoria continued; “That had impact ... because it became stressful” (Victoria, I2, p. 246), always worrying about that person’s reaction on social media posts and on answering machine messages to the principal directly. Cal commented on how it was important to carry on, despite the mistreatment. He confirmed this by saying; “So, we do need to persevere ... as we deal with these difficult situations that are stressful ... it’s part ... of the job that we do” (Cal, I2, p. 53). Alexandra did persevere through several incidents, but one that was particularly ruthless, made her claim; “I would probably go on stress leave before I go through that again” (Alexandra, I2, p. 119). This was an incident of harassment by one of her teachers who had lied to her staff officer from The MTS about a reprimand that the teacher received from the principal. The principal went through months of harassment only to be exonerated by The MTS when the complaint was dismissed because the teacher was really not assessing the reading of her students as she was supposed to have done and she had fabricated the results for the students.

Other principals insisted the unresolved problems that lingered over time were a stress-producing factor. The search for resolution that was not forthcoming caused incidents to become stressful. The unpredictability of what parents and community members would do when exasperated and threatening took a toll on Victoria. She shared:

There’s like the stress that comes with it because I’m trying to problem-solve and troubleshoot something that I don’t know exactly where it’s going, without taking my eye off the ball, which is the child. So I feel like it’s trying to kind of, still

bring my best self to the situation, while I'm feeling like stressed and angry too.

(Victoria, I1, p. 383)

Similar to Victoria, Amadeus eventually came to the realization that the stress he felt was caused by not being able to resolve problems. He stated, "When you've exhausted all possibilities for resolution [with the perpetrator], you remain stressed" (Amadeus, I2, p. 331).

Still other principals talked about the different types or levels of stress they felt, depending on the actors involved in the mistreatments. Linda compared the difference in the stress of dealing with student misconduct, which she thought was less stressful, to the stress of dealing with adults who mistreated her. She related the difference between dealing with the child and the adult as:

coming from a child, ... where ... we're doing what we can to help him and or her and we know that this child has some needs that aren't being met and [we're] trying to figure that out, yah, of course it's stressful. But ... they're not attacking your person, your dignity, your character ... when someone does that, that's to me, that's more stressful. (Linda, I2, pp. 73-74)

Linda saw this as personal harm to her identity.

Arthur, like Linda, made a comparison by distinguishing his level of stress depending on the adult with whom he was dealing. He felt a higher stress when dealing with his own staff members. Arthur found incidents with staff that were undermining him to cause the most stress. He stated, "Absolutely it is [a source of stress]" (Arthur, I2, p. 157), certainly at "an event where I'm ... under duress or under attack by a staff member for decisions that I made" (Arthur, I2, pp. 149-150). When that situation played out, he felt the event to be difficult to handle due to the



“toll and stressors that it create[d]” (Arthur, I2, p. 150) amongst his personnel. Ultimately he recognized the harm that this incident caused to his identity.

For other principals, those who reported having suffered the most at the hands of the perpetrators, the stress became overwhelming. In Sabrina’s story of dealing with a group of three mistreating mothers, she admitted that the persistent mistreatments at work, “after a couple of years, it really took a toll on me” (Sabrina, I2, p. 8), but because she was used to walking as a strategy to deal with “a lot of stress ... I ended up losing 50 pounds” (Sabrina, I2, p. 8). It got so bad that, in her words, she advised, “I would say it was heavily stressful, to the point where I was in conversations with my superintendent around taking a leave because it was just too much” (Sabrina, I2, p. 19). In Barry’s case, he found mistreatment from a clique of five of the staff to be overwhelming. Barry described his feelings regarding workplace mistreatment by those staff members as follows:

They’re the major stress for me because I want to make sure I’m doing a good job, I want to listen, I want to try. If there is an issue, to address it the best way that I can. But when you’ve got people coming at you and they’ve now painted you ... as the problem. How do you dispel those clouds ... of revenge? (Barry, I2, p. 183)

He explained that, for him, the stress was more mental than physical. He labeled it as being weary; “I’m done ... I’m mentally, I’m drained. ... Now thankfully, it wasn’t the sense of physically ill, not yet, not yet” (Barry, I1, p. 256). He added, “Working in an environment like that [encountering many mistreating episodes] for so long, it finally takes a final toll on you professionally and personally (Barry, I1, p. 285). Finally, Barry confided, “There were times when I didn’t want to get out of bed” (Barry, I1, p. 299). The level of stress for both Sabrina and

Barry mounted as time and the mistreatment went on, so much so, that they both wanted to leave their workplaces to find some relief.

To conclude, as seen in these segments of text, most of the principals in this study confirmed that one of the noticeable effects of suffering mistreatment at work was, at times, a resultant stress along with a feeling that these incidents harmed them personally. It was not, however, simply some level of general stress caused by the incidents of workplace mistreatment that affected principals. The principals also named other specific negative effects, many associated with the stress or resulting from the stress, which follow.

**Fatigue/Sleep Loss.** Thomas was the only exception in the category of sleep and fatigue that denied that there were any effects on him after incidents of mistreatment. Every other principal described losing sleep or being fatigued or losing sleep from dealing with the incidents of workplace mistreatment. Thomas, on the contrary, was resolute in the fact that even with “the parent coming in and slamming his fist on the desk, [he] thought about it for a while [but there was nothing] ... long lasting. [And he continued], “do I lose sleep? No!” (Thomas, I1, p. 324). Yet, many of the principals, such as Annie, Arthur, Barry, Steve, Victoria and Chuck noticed that they became very fatigued. Linda, Sabrina, Alexandra, Arthur, Barry, Steve, Chuck, Amadeus associated their sleep loss after incidents of mistreatment directly to the incidents of mistreatment. The following examples support the contention that fatigue, lying awake to process events, prolonged sleep loss, need for medication to sleep and thoughts about changing jobs due to irregular sleep patterns, are results of dealing with mistreatment at work.

Several of the principals used the word fatigue to explain how they felt after incidents of mistreatment, relating this tiredness the next day at work to their lack of sleep. Arthur noted that there were both “physical and the psychological ... signs of fatigue. ... Reliving the scenarios ...

sleep certainly [was lacking]” (Arthur, I1, p. 238). Victoria thought that dealing with incidents of mistreatment “does wear you down. Like, you get tired of it (Victoria, I1, p. 385). Fatigue for Annie would show itself in her physical appearance. Annie commented that she was one of the lucky ones: “When I’m stressed, I sleep. So my sleep is never disrupted. Yay for me!” (Annie, I1, p. 152). She recognized “that sleep is often the first thing that’s interrupted for people. For me it would be, I get tired [and] ... I probably pull back, ... I withdraw a little bit until I feel I am back more in a competent state” (Annie, I1, p. 152). She stated that even though she did sleep, she felt fatigued and had dark circles under her eyes.

Second, the principals recognized that the processing of the incident of mistreatment caused problems with their ability to sleep because they just couldn’t “turn it off” as Chuck described:

These things really do affect me. I have a hard time shutting off the brain at night and it’ll mull around in there and I’ll be up till three, four in the morning and I’ll be a basket case the next day. (Chuck, I2, p. 291)

Like Chuck, Linda suffered as she would be woken from sleep thinking about an unresolved incident of mistreatment. She described some of her nights as follows:

I’d be up in the middle of the night to go to the ... bathroom and then you’re up ... then I wouldn’t go back to sleep, like, so I might as well go and clean up my emails and get some work done. ... So sometimes, yah, I’d lose sleep over it, absolutely ... I’d come home with it and ... yah, I would lose sleep over some of these issues and how to solve them. (Linda, I1, pp. 102-103)

Steve indicated that he often couldn’t sleep due to processing an incident, so he tried to resolve them in his own mind before leaving school. He clarified:

If I haven't had a chance to really deal with it well enough, and I know it's ... gonna come back at me the next morning ... I think it's nice to have some sort of control of it before you leave, and if you can't do that you're, "what the hell's gonna happen tomorrow morning?" (Steve, I1, p. 361)

Then, of course, Steve acknowledged that he lost sleep. Alexandra and Amadeus said basically the same thing as Steve. Alexandra shared, "I'm not good at letting things go, so I lose sleep ... I do not do a good job at turning things off when I leave the building" (Alexandra, I2, p. 118); while Amadeus commented, "I just have to find ways to be able to process it. ... I sort and file all of my different experiences in my head [and ask myself] how much insomnia do I [want to] have?" (Amadeus, I2, p. 330).

Victoria tried to rationalize her lack of sleep as her own challenge, regardless of mistreatment. She structured her thoughts this way:

The physical thing is very interesting because they're all assumptions, right? Like, to me, if I'm gonna link work to physical, there is no way to say  $A = B$ , so I'm again left assuming but I would assume, sleep is impacted. So, but then, I know that I don't always sleep well, [so what is the real cause?] (Victoria, I1, p. 394)

Because Victoria was not a great sleeper at the best of times, she was reluctant to blame sleeplessness on the incidents of mistreatment, but she did admit during the interview that replaying the incidents in her mind kept her awake at night!

Thirdly, in some cases, the sleep loss became prolonged when an issue went unresolved for a longer period of time. Chuck suffered from a more lengthy insomnia which can be seen in this confession: "There have been sleepless nights for sure. ... I've had a sleepless summer once" (Chuck, I1, p. 439) when a parent continued to contact him throughout the summer regarding a

mark that his daughter received that the parent insisted be changed. Chuck continued to explain how the gravity of the stress at times affected his sleep when he shared: “It has happened where I’ve ... been too stressed to sleep and although I try hardly to ever miss work, I have had, on occasion, had to stay at home and sleep ... because I couldn’t sleep the night before” (Chuck, I1, p. 440).

Fourthly, being awake at night was so bad for three of the principals, Sabrina, Amadeus and Alexandra, that they needed medications, some prescribed by doctors, some over-the-counter, to get any sleep at all. Amadeus named the precise prescription drug he was taking: “I frequently have to take sleeping medication because of how much goes on. ... For me to get a good night’s sleep I take RAN-Zopiclone ... because a night’s sleep is worth gold” (Amadeus, I1, pp. 472-473). Both Alexandra and Sabrina admitted that they felt like drugs were a necessary evil to help them function the next day at work. Alexandra shared that she “started taking sleeping pills ... not prescribed ones, but over-the-counter” (Alexandra, I1, p. 204) because she didn’t “sleep right” (Alexandra, I1, p. 199) as she “could feel [her]self working [herself] into this neurotic worrisome piece” (Alexandra, I1, p. 199) after being mistreated. Sabrina fully acknowledged that without some help, she could not sleep either. “When you go home, you think about the day and you can’t turn it off – I needed to get meds to sleep” (Sabrina, I1, p. 34). As can be seen, the principals in this study knew how important sleep was to their well-being and to avoiding the feeling of fatigue the next day at work. Thus, on occasion, when the principals experienced negative, sometimes severe, effects from mistreatment, as did these three principals, they felt the need to search out methods to gain the restorative sleep necessary because they just couldn’t mentally turn off reliving particular mistreating incidents that had occurred.

Finally, Victoria and Chuck, having felt the effect of sleep loss due to dealing with incidents of workplace mistreatment, contemplated aloud whether or not they should change jobs. In her fatigued moments, Victoria became “downtrodden and wonder[ed] why [she was] doing this and what importance it ha[d]” (Victoria, I2, p. 266) as she felt: “I’ve given the best of myself to people who don’t appreciate anything” (Victoria, I2, p. 266). She also shared that “You get tired of it. You kind of, after a while, [it] makes you feel like ‘why am I doing this job?’ ‘Why am I here?’” (Victoria, I1, p. 385). Chuck conveyed exactly the same thoughts as Victoria when discussing his lack of sleep: “I’ve had some really rotten days where I’ve thought about, you know, is it all worth it? ... Like, why am I doing this?” (Chuck, I1, p. 437). So, when these principals were fatigued due to a lack of sleep, their motivation to continue to do the job weakened.

**Involuntary Physical Reactions and Manifestations.** Sabrina summed up this particular effect well when she explained that having contact with the group of harassing parents who repeatedly complained and video-taped her in her rural community caused her stress to reappear, even though she thought she was through it. She purported that: “when you see them in the community, it’s an involuntary reaction your body gives you. I didn’t expect to feel stressed that way.” (Sabrina, I1, p. 34). She went on to share a particular incident, during the second interview, that described exactly what she meant by this involuntary reaction. She shared:

I was out shopping with a friend of mine at Sobey’s ... and ended up bumping into one of the parents. And I didn’t tell my friend [that this person had mistreated me] and he said, “why are you all of sudden different?” And I didn’t notice [but] the whole day ... I was sick the whole day, just from seeing her. It was ... an

involuntary reaction. ... I think after you've dealt with abuse for that long, that it physically impacts you afterwards. (Sabrina, I2, p. 10)

In her first years as principal of the second school to which Alexandra was appointed and where she felt undermined by male members of her junior high staff who questioned her qualifications, she felt she was getting physically ill. She explained that until that point, she rarely got sick, but put in the new situation, "I was sick, you know, my throat, I was losing my voice, I was super stressed at work [and] at home rather snippy with my family" (Alexandra, I1, p. 170). To this day, Alexandra reports that when there are incidents that were similar to when she felt she was sorely mistreated in the past – for instance when she was called on the carpet by a teacher and a staff officer from The Manitoba Teachers' Society – she reacts physically. She explained:

I still get a little bit of a gut feeling when I know I have to have *that* conversation with people ... it's a physical gut feeling of, whoa, I remember sitting in that meeting [with The Manitoba Teachers' Society] and I don't ever want to go there again. (Alexandra, I1, pp. 197-198)

When incidents of mistreatment happened, that triggered thoughts of her more severe incidents and she confided in her husband:

There's that same sick feeling. ... I said to my husband, I can't go through that [a severe episode of mistreatment] ... again. If it ever happens again, I'm just gonna quit 'cause I, I can't do that again. It's too emotionally draining. (Alexandra, I1, p. 199)

Amadeus wanted to put down his apprehensive reactions to his age. He could not provide a reason for why he was having such involuntary feelings at this point in his career. He tried to

justify his reactions by saying, “I don’t know if it’s age or expectation ... I’m finding myself becoming more anxious as I get old” (Amadeus, I1, p. 474).

Victoria commented on the fact that repeated mistreating contact from a person who remained anonymous on the phone resulted in a physical response within her. She explained: “Being yelled at... four or five times a year, just randomly, ... kinda gets your heart rate up and then you just wait for the next time” (Victoria, I1, p. 389). This person never afforded her the opportunity to resolve the issue before hanging up. She also did not want to directly associate some health scares with the stress of her job, unlike Amadeus, but could not help but wonder:

There’s been a couple of things in the last couple of years, I don’t know if it’s aging or bad luck ... but, there’s been a couple of things that have ... cropped up.

You know, when I look at the risk factors, I don’t really have any except stress. So then I’m left thinking, well, it is a manifestation of stress that these two health events have come up when I’m otherwise healthy and don’t have any other risk factors? So I’d say there’s potentially been a couple of physical manifestations that seem like they could only be linked to stress. (Victoria, I1, pp. 394-395)

She was careful not to make a causal link to the stress of the mistreatment or to claim that the sole connection for her physical ailments was her stressful job, but she hinted at it in this explanation.

Finally, Barry described that his doctor diagnosed him with “symptoms of anxiety and depression” (Barry, I1, p. 285) and the doctor told Barry, “physically, you’re red in the face, your blood pressure’s up, and you don’t wanna eat, you don’t want to sleep” (Barry, I1, p. 279). These indicators were how his body showed it was stressed. In the doctor’s view, Barry reported these



physical manifestations being as a direct result of the mistreatment episodes that Barry suffered in his school.

Therefore, according to Sabrina, Alexandra, Amadeus, Victoria and Barry, sometimes their bodies reacted to the incidents of mistreatment. The reactions were involuntary but also included diagnosed symptoms that manifested themselves from various episodes of mistreatment. The principals revealed these physical reactions, but it was not just physically that these principals were affected. There were mental effects of the mistreatments as well, that are revealed in the next several paragraphs.

**Hurt to Personal and/or Professional Esteem and Resultant Self-Doubt.** Principals such as Cal, Linda, Arthur, Thomas, Barry, Victoria and Chuck disclosed that the damage to personal and/or professional esteem/self-image and the resulting hurt and self-doubt caused by some incidents was difficult to manage. First, Linda shared how her hurt was emotional, personal and professional in terms of her reputation. Linda explained that “there was a lot of emotional damage ... well it’s just hurtful, ’cause it’s your reputation” (Linda, I1, p. 78) and she felt it was unfair to be painted in a negative light to her superintendents by the mistreating adults. She continued by explaining that “an attack on people’s character, on [her] character ... [in] disturbing [emails], when someone is, well for lack of a better word, kind of trashing [her]” (Linda, I1, p. 80) by forwarding emails to the superintendents, was extremely hurtful. She pursued this same line of thought in the second interview, as she found that this was “something that hurts you to your core ... more a personal attack on your character and ... it could be very emotionally distressing” (Linda, I2, p. 74).

Cal noted that how he was approached by a mistreating adult made a difference to the hurt inflicted on his personal esteem. He said: “We’re human beings and we’re not all thick

skinned and you know, we deal with it differently, and depending on how people bring it to your attention ... it has an effect on your own self-esteem, self-image” (Cal, I1, p. 59). Also for Cal, there could be a loss of professional esteem, certainly when superintendents were involved in bullying the principal. Bouncing back from the more intense forms of mistreatment was difficult for Cal as he shared that “it took a long time to recover from” (Cal, I1, p. 48) an episode where a teacher accused him of harassment and the superintendents believed the teacher and sanctioned him, when he believed he had done nothing wrong except trying to get the teacher to do her job. This incident made him feel diminished in terms of his professional esteem and he worried about “how others [superintendents and staff] may perceive [him]” (Cal, I1, p. 59) in terms of his professionalism. He seemed to doubt his ability to function as successfully in his role without his professionalism intact. He summed up the emotional hurt during the second interview by enlightening this researcher on the fact that in a few of the instances of workplace mistreatment, he found that it was:

Definitely a source of stress. ... I don't think the average person actually enjoys navigating through that. Right? Unless you are totally immune to it. ... I think most people, when you look at social-emotional intelligence, are affected in some way. (Cal, I2, p. 51)

Barry, Chuck and Alexandra also worried about damage to their reputations, but they commented on loss of integrity resulting in self-doubt. Barry explicated: “My reputation was injured by the mistreatment” (Barry, I1, p. 298). Further, he claimed that he had moments of “self-doubt. Are the decisions you make, are they correct? ... They affect your perception of yourself for your own personal integrity” (Barry, I1, p. 277). He added that his “professionalism ha[d] been questioned” (Barry, I1, p. 277) and he had “a negative feeling about [him]self ... a

negative perception” (Barry, I1, p. 277). Similarly, Chuck found it hurtful when the perpetrators “attack[ed] [his] integrity” (Chuck, I2, p. 301) during mistreating conversations. Alexandra, wanting to display her integrity and work ethic to her superintendents, commented on an incident of mistreatment that she felt changed the superintendents’ views of her, which in turn she perceived as harming her reputation. She related:

I don’t want this to hit the fan again. And I think I worry too about perception out there, like what I want my superintendents to think. I’m doing good work, I want to feel good about what I’m doing and when you get complaints like that it makes you worry. (Alexandra, I1, p. 199)

Arthur did not comment specifically on losing his personal or professional esteem or integrity, but his commentary below clearly shows self-doubt. His emotional response caused him to question whether what he was doing was appreciated and respected. He questioned:

Do people value me? Do people perceive me as a positive leader, as a good leader? In my opinion that’s a very normal reaction when there’s a confrontation or something ... that’s very emotional. So for me, if I feel mistreated, automatically it’s ... emotional, and those types of questions that percolate in my mind are the ones about my value, my contribution, my ... validity. (Arthur, I1, p. 235)

After much mistreatment at work, Barry’s self-doubt left him in much the same place as Arthur. Barry was led to the brink, as was evident when he shared the following:

I can’t do the job. I must be no good. So, why am I doing this anyways? Maybe I should just end it all. ... Either leaving the employment, leave teaching all

together, or just ending it all. ... I mean those were thoughts that have crossed my mind. (Barry, I1, p. 279)

Keeping their professional reputations in good stead with their superintendents, as well as their school communities, was evidently important to these principals. When individuals who were mistreating them questioned their integrity, thereby hurting their reputations, this also caused damage to their personal or professional esteem and potentially, in their minds, a stall in their career trajectories. A further reaction was that mistreatments triggered self-doubt in some of them. These internal emotional responses to the mistreatment were not the only ones as there were three other, stronger, more visible responses including crying, fear and anger.

### **Strong Emotional Responses.**

*Crying/upset.* Both men and women admitted to being affected so much by mistreatment that they had to cry to let out their stress and frustration. Sabrina, while infusing humour into her words, perhaps to laugh instead of cry, shared: “Sometimes I would just go home and sit and cry. If you had a tendency to drink, you’d drink yourself silly” (Sabrina, I1, p. 33). Alexandra also mentioned, while laughing, that “sometimes [she could] be on borderline teary ... like if it’s like a real assault ... [she]’ll have a sob for a minute or two [and she felt she wanted to] start drinking” (Alexandra, I1, pp. 192-194). Alexandra admitted that in tough times, “I just phone someone who I know is a good ear to listen and ... [will say] ‘it’s OK to cry’ and they’re not gonna judge me on it” (Alexandra, I2, p. 114). Barry, too felt it was important to give oneself space to release emotions by crying. He contended that after suffering mistreatment: “You have to rebuild your own self-worth and do what you find that’s important for yourself. And ... it’s OK to cry; it’s OK to talk about it” (Barry, I2, p. 184).

*Living in/with fear.* The next strong emotional response to incidents of mistreatment was fear. There were two types of fear represented through the course of the interviews. Principals were either living in fear or living with fear. Certain principals, Alexandra, Cal and Steve gave examples during the interview regarding this living in fear, where they worried and were in fear of a lack of support from their superintendents in the future, instigated by reactions of the superintendents to previous incidents of mistreatment with which the superintendents became involved. The principals who were living with fear, such as Victoria and Arthur, were fearful of actions other mistreating adults could take against these principals.

Alexandra, Cal and Steve felt unsupported by their superintendents and this caused them to live in fear. For Alexandra, when a trustee came to her and commanded her to change something in her school, she looked to the superintendent for guidance but felt that she got no support. As she explained, “so, I lived in fear. Like we’d [she and her vice-principal] better make this [the problem presented by the trustee] go away [at the school level] ’cause I don’t want anything to escalate to [the superintendent] because [the superintendent was no help and simply] said make it go away” (Alexandra, I1, p. 188).

Cal expressed the concern that a previous parental complaint to senior administration would affect how they viewed him. In Cal’s words:

When put in a position in front of members of the superintendent’s department and ... a parent’s allowed to make accusations and call you everything under the sun and no one intervenes to support you; that stays with you. Because then you realize, you know what, you may not get the level of support that you think that you need. (Cal, I2, p. 42)

Cal feared that the senior administration would not lend them his support in the future due to this incident.

Steve also had issues with lack of support from his senior administration in dealing with parental conflict. To abate his fear, Steve attempted to play out possible scenarios of resolution before arriving at the meeting with the senior administration to which he had been summoned at the board office. He worried about the reactions coming back from the senior administration, and he rehearsed, as follows:

If I know I'm gonna upset the people at the board office [for a way he dealt with a mistreating parent], what's the response gonna be like? I think I put myself in that, I make up what ... I think could happen and what really happens really isn't that big of a deal. ... If there's a situation where it's tense, and ... I have done something where I think I'm gonna get some negative feedback from my bosses, before it's dealt with I tend to figure out what's gonna happen before it's gonna happen. ... Right? And I always go to the, well I think everyone does this, the worst one, right? I think that's pretty natural. (Steve, I1, pp. 367-368)

By choosing the worst possible outcome and knowing it was a possibility before entering the meeting with the superintendents, this seemed to allay some of Steve's fears. He noted that the "ragging" on him was never as bad as he envisioned it was going to be, but that he felt support for his efforts in the school diminished after those types of encounters. So, he lived in fear that when he would need the support from the superintendent, it would not be as forthcoming.

On the other hand, Victoria lived with persistent fear of the media responding to those who did not know or understand both sides of a story of school incidents involving students. She claimed: "To be honest, there is an element of fear because I know that ... there had been several

kind of high profile [cases] in the media” (Victoria, I1, p. 383), and she did not want to become another one. She feared that the threats, from certain parents and community members of going to the media when they were unhappy with her and her decisions, would come to fruition and this always niggled in the back of her mind. She summed up the living with this fear by saying “It does make you cautious for sure” (Victoria, I1, p. 386).

Arthur also lived with fear, but he named it insecurity. He was fearful about how other staff members thought of him and how he handled the mistreatment incidences. This was evident when he shared: “Did I do the right thing? How is this being perceived? Is this person talking to other colleagues? So it’s all of the insecurity, uncertainty about what’s going on behind the scenes” (Arthur, I2, p. 150). Arthur did not want to appear weak to his staff when dealing with mistreatments by parents or other staff members, but, like Victoria, he lived with the fear that the staff would be critical and this was irksome in his mind.

**Anger.** The final strong emotional response to incidents stemming from mistreatment at work for Victoria, Thomas, Alexandra and Chuck, was anger and shock. As previously noted, Victoria became stressed, fearful and then angry when parents threatened to go to the media. As a superintendent was ragging on him, Thomas exclaimed: “Quite honestly, I was ticked off at it” (Thomas, I1, p. 311), yet he said nothing. Alexandra became angry, but only after processing the event. She stated: “I always tend to blame myself first and say, what could I have done differently to prevent it? And then work through it. Sometimes, that’s when I get angry ’cause you realize, it wasn’t me, it wasn’t what I did. (Alexandra, I2, p. 138)

The full range of the emotions listed in this section during and after an incident of mistreatment was described by Chuck, regarding a parent who mistreated him in full view of many others in the school. He said, “I went from being shocked, upset, somewhat frightened, to

anger actually. How dare he come and do that in front of all these kids?” (Chuck, I1, p. 405).

This example displays just how central the three strong emotions described in this section are to the discussion regarding the negative reactions of principals to mistreatment at work.

**Cynicism/Disillusionment.** While not as popular a response as responses such as stress and sleep loss, cynicism and disillusionment were ideas that Alexandra, Steve, Chuck, Victoria and Barry mentioned several times as negative effects caused by mistreatment at work. For example, Alexandra proffered that surviving mistreatment at work can make “one a little more jaded about some things ... you lose some of the passion for what you’re doing because as a human being you can only take that much for so long” (Alexandra, I1, p. 195). In Alexandra’s case she explained that a perceived lack of support from the superintendent level, when she was confronted by the mother who had mistreated her and then blocked her in her office, disheartened her. She shared: “I think I’m disillusioned a little bit with [the superintendent]. Am I really out there on my own? If something goes wrong ... who has my back?” (Alexandra, I1, p. 195). Steve too felt that he was perhaps affected negatively by incidents of mistreatment, such as the superintendent ragging on him regarding his not sticking to the script in a 90 page slide presentation or parents’ repeated harassing phone calls regarding his discipline choices for their child, because, as he disclosed: “You can get cynical, I think” (Steve, I1, p. 359). He rationalized that the cynicism could have caused him to:

maybe minimiz[e] some of the stuff that need[ed] ... more effort ... because you’re dealing with so many major, wacky things [referring to mistreatment from parents] that you don’t necessarily have time, patience or energy [to put] into these other things that also really matter, ... [such as being] an instructional leader. (Steve, I1, pp. 357-358)



Like Steve and Alexandra, as noted previously, both Chuck and Victoria questioned if they were appreciated for the work they were doing and at times, especially during the stressful times caused by mistreatment, they wondered “why [they were] doing this and what importance it ha[d]” (Victoria, I2, p. 266).

The greatest impact of mistreatment appeared to affect the person that suffered the most serious of the examples of mistreatment as presented in this thesis, mobbing. Barry summed up how a mobbing incident affected him in this way:

It impacts you morally, socially and emotionally. And that’s the pain we talk about [when there are kids] that come from situations where they suffer trauma. I suffered trauma. And that’s what my doctor has told me, I have suffered trauma. And not enough to make me physically ill, but enough to basically question my whole ability to teach, to question my whole ability to work again, and to actually be able to function as a person. (Barry, I1, pp. 270-271)

So, Barry chose to tell his story to this researcher. He added, though, that he:

shouldn’t be resurrecting the pain, but I think that’s what you have to do, is you have to finally sit down and tell the story, show your emotions, show your care, show your concern, and bring it back to your core values. ... I’m not looking for empathy or sympathy; I’m just looking for understanding. You know, to say that this could happen to anybody. (Barry, I1, p. 296)

His disillusionment was apparent in these words but he wanted to try to assure others that there was a solution. It was possible to be disillusioned but his message was that anyone could work through it, so he felt compelled to participate in this study to deliver that message.

Barry's words are indeed a warning for those principals who suffer mistreatment at work. Suffering mistreatment at work had many negative effects on the principals in this study, from stress/toll, to fatigue/sleep loss, to involuntary physical reactions, to hurt to professional and/or personal esteem and resultant self-doubt, to strong emotional responses including; tears, living in/with fear and anger, to, finally, cynicism/disillusionment with the job.

### **Findings: Enduring Impacts of Workplace Mistreatment**

Three-quarters of the principals (Chuck, Victoria, Amadeus, Linda, Barry, Sabrina, Cal, Thomas and Arthur) believed that when workplace mistreatment happened, it was a major source of stress, with some feeling residual effects of the stress lasting longer than others. In fact, the length of time that the stress and effects from certain mistreatment incidents remained with these principals ranged, in their estimation, from a couple of days to forever! Whereas Linda said that the residual effects lasted, "never more than a couple of days [as she was] not one to persevere on things too long" (Linda, I2, p. 63), others, such as Cal, told a different story. He shared: "Oh, it does [eat away at you]. For sure. You know, you like things to go away but some things just don't go away" (Cal, I2, p. 41) when describing a teacher who had complained to the superintendents about him which he believed was unfounded and, therefore, harassment. To which, Alexandra would add regarding a previously mentioned particularly difficult encounter with a teacher and The MTS that lasted over six months, "I think about it. I play it over and over and over again ... I think it still eats away" (Alexandra, I2, p. 118). In her estimation, she "would say that [the major impact from the mistreatment incident] was probably five months [but she] still think[s] about it, and still think[s], I don't ever want to be in that situation again" (Alexandra, I2, p. 119).

Chuck shared “that in time it will all fade” (Chuck, I2, p. 282), but he explained that he never forgot the feeling. This was evident in how vividly he recalled the incidents of mistreatment that he chose to recount about parental harassment. Consequently, some, but not all, principals acknowledged that certain incidents did indeed eat away at them – certainly if they fell in the higher echelons of severity in their minds.

In the following paragraphs, initially I elucidate the principals’ reactions to certain incidents during and in the immediate aftermath of the incident. Second, I explore the principals’ thoughts regarding particular incidents that drag on and thus, seem to eat away at the principal. Next, I comment on how there are residual effects on the principals when the principals believe the incident is unresolved or when the principals must continue to work with the perpetrator. Finally, I share those incidents that became recurring memories and the residual effects of these incidents which seemed to eat away incessantly, and with some force, on the principals concerned.

In the immediate aftermath of incidents, incidents that the principals viewed as less forceful than others or as one-time occurrences with particular adults, the principals commented on their emotional reactions as strong at the outset and then petering out. Barry talked about how incidents seemed to eat away more robustly immediately after they had occurred. He believed that mistreating incidents “eat away initially with more intensity, in the first 24 hours” (Barry, I2, p. 150). Barry ventured that this was perhaps caused by “those feelings of guilt, that it was my fault, takes a while for it to go away” (Barry, I2, p. 184). Then, Barry continued that there were other pressing issues at school that forced the experience further out of scope and so it ate away less. However, he did admit that, depending on the incident, it did not completely leave his mind.

Victoria agreed that when she perceived the incident to be minor, it did not eat away for as long a period of time, but she still reacted negatively to the incident. Regarding an incident with a principal colleague who had mistreated her by treating her uncivilly after she had taken a particular decision against him, Victoria described the incident as bothering her such that she “kinda chewed on it for a day or two” (Victoria, I1, p. 389). While the incident had a long-term consequence as it “affect[ed] how [she thought] of the person as a colleague but ... it wasn’t something [she] worried about or ... carried for a long time” (Victoria, I1, p. 389), as she stated that she viewed the mistreatment as less significant than some others.

Chuck admitted that certain mistreating incidents took a little time to get over as there were usually so many thoughts going through his head. When a father stood yelling in close proximity to Chuck in Chuck’s office doorway, Chuck noted that “it took ... a couple of days for those various emotions to have their day in the sun, so to speak” (Chuck, I1, p. 435). After the emotional reaction and time to reflect, Chuck could then go about his regular business.

Secondly, particular incidents that seem to drag on, for lack of resolution due to circumstances or the personalities of the actors involved, seemed to eat away at the principals for an indeterminate amount of time. In Chuck’s case, a father was unhappy with a final mark that his daughter received in French class. The father phoned the school at the end of the day on the last day of June to complain, but by then the teacher had left on vacation. The principal tried to explain the difficulty of changing the mark at that point. The parent continued to harass the principal by phoning him at home during the month of July causing Chuck to have “a sleepless summer” (Chuck, I1, p. 439) since he did not want to change the student’s mark without consulting the teacher, who was unavailable at that time.

Thirdly, particular incidents that did not seem to be able to be resolved ate away at the principals. This occurred even more so when the principals were required to continue working with the perpetrator of such incidents. According to Arthur, Chuck, Victoria, Amadeus, Sabrina, Barry, and Steve, unresolved issues led to the incidents eating away, and unresolved issues with perpetrators with whom the principal still had contact were particularly aggravating.

In terms of unresolved incidents carrying on and eating away, or as one of them put it “gnawing” at the principals, Barry, Chuck, Arthur and Amadeus shared the following. Barry noted that the impossibility of resolution with certain perpetrators was stressful for him because, as he alleged: “I am still a person of great character, so it gnaws at me... I would say sometimes it’s ... gone on a year” (Barry, I2, pp. 170-172), particularly when he saw no resolution in sight. The previously mentioned incident that gnawed at Chuck was also due to an unresolved issue over the summertime. Chuck explained that the incident ate away at him for “more like a few weeks” (Chuck, I2, p. 285) where he’d “been thinking about it the whole time. ... It was bugging [him] and [he] thought, ‘I’m going to ruin my summer thinking about this, so I do what to resolve this?’” (Chuck, I2, p. 289). Next, Arthur admitted that the non-resolution and resultant memory caused issues with him while trying to do his job. He said: “Absolutely [it eats away at me in terms of] ... not being able to focus; that event or that situation, coming back in my mind even though I’m trying to perform other tasks, other duties” (Arthur, I2, p. 149). This effect of gnawing was true for Amadeus as well. He stated: “Where you don’t see a way for resolution or for a plan B, C, or D to get there, it leaves you with stress” (Amadeus, I2, p. 331) and he admitted to having prolonged thoughts regarding how to resolve the situation.

Having to sustain continual contact with perpetrators or constantly being reminded of them caused the mistreating incidents to eat away. Sabrina, Steve and Arthur made the following

observations. Sabrina believed “that if the contact hasn’t been diminished [between her and the perpetrator], if it hasn’t been severed, then it’ll just keep eating away at you” (Sabrina, I2, p. 10). In Sabrina’s case, it was much more difficult to sever these ties as she was from a rural area and admitted “I still live in the community” (Sabrina, I2, p. 11) which forced her to see the perpetrators each day and allowed the memories to eat away at her for a more extended period of time. She explained, regarding one of the perpetrators of her mistreatment:

I bumped into somebody two days ago at the clinic. So, they come up to me and they talk to me as if nothing ever happened. But inside it’s like, you crumble because, you’ve been [mistreated]. The effect that they had on you for that long a time, ’cause it was 7 years, [doesn’t go away]. ... You look at them and it’s like, how do I escape this? ... I’ve spoken to my children about leaving the community. I need to, and I’ve lived there for forty years. (Sabrina, I2, p. 11)

For Sabrina, being trapped in her community and not being able to resolve issues with community members was a real problem. “When [she saw] those people or even ... a picture of them ... something ... triggers then those feelings” (Sabrina, I2, p. 29) and it ate away at her.

Steve claimed that, for him, one of the big issues of unresolved incidents was when the media interjected itself into the situation and did not fairly represent both sides of the argument. He noted that these incidents that played out in the media ate away at him because “they’re more public” (Steve, I2, p. 228) and he saw the stories repeatedly retold by media outlets. He contended that what was printed or reported, “That’s nothing like what I said” (Steve, I2, p. 228) and sometimes it only fueled the perpetrator to continue the unwanted behaviours. Because these stories were replayed, incorrectly in the principal’s estimation, and the principal never had a

chance to correct inaccuracies in the stories that were aired or printed, the principal was reminded of the non-resolution of the incident; thus, it ate away at him.

Arthur noted that residual effects, like stress and worry, varied depending on the number of personal contacts with the perpetrator with whom the unresolved incident occurred and how that when he encountered the perpetrator again all the memories came back:

It could be a couple of days, it could be a week, it could be two weeks depending on what the event is and the interaction that I may be having with that person. ... I think that most often if I have a daily interaction with the person ... with whom I felt threatened ... I think that that would carry on for longer. ... There isn't a definite period of time. It could be a year or two, maybe I don't run into that person for a while and then I see this person at a professional learning event and then all of the emotions can come back. (Arthur, I2, pp. 150-151)

For Arthur, the less he saw the perpetrators of the mistreatment, the less the incidents ate away at him.

Finally, the strongest residual effects came from those incidents that resulted in emotional memories that the principals could not erase; therefore, those incidents tended to eat away incessantly and forcefully on the principals. For instance, Sabrina's emotional response regarding the mistreatment at work that she had suffered by the group of mothers who perpetually harassed her never left her. She described the life-changing nature of her experience, its residual effects and her memories of the harassment in the following manner:

It'll just keep eating away at you. ... There's no way around it, they're just always there. ... It may feel less over time, but I don't think you could ever shake

those feelings. I think that stays with you. And that's why it changes you as a person. (Sabrina, I2, p. 10 & p. 29)

In terms of the severity of the incidents, principals such as Cal, Amadeus and Arthur, indicated that the more severe they perceived the incident to be, the longer it seemed to linger in their minds. Thus, certain recurring memories had the residual effect of activating stress for the principals when the thoughts returned. Cal shared that, for him:

Depending what the circumstances are ... and the level and the magnitude of the incident, they [the stress and negative effects] can stay for a while. ... You know what? It still's in the back of my mind the way I was threatened by a parent, and that's over 2 years now. (Cal, I2, p. 41)

Cal also shared that he had tried to forget, but there were times when that residual memory came to the forefront and he would relive the incident over again in his mind.

Amadeus admitted that certain memories of incidents troubled him more than others and that the stress they caused never seemed to end. He explained:

It's bothersome. ... For me, if it didn't create stress I wouldn't think about it again. ... I do think about it. It comes back to my mind. I kind of revisit a certain situation. ... I wouldn't say it's a preoccupation of all your thoughts but if it comes back in your thoughts then it's creating stress. (Amadeus, I2, pp. 327-328)

He continued to explicate further how memories of mistreatment came at odd times:

There's situations of things where I could be sitting in a boat fishing, and I wish they wouldn't, but there are situations where you kinda go, god that was, you know, for a lack of a better word, really stupid. Like where the heck was that coming from? (Amadeus, I2, p. 328)



Continuing with the idea that particular events percolated incessantly in the minds of the principals, events which involved superintendents seemed to have lingering emotional effects that ate away on the principals' psyches. Steve, Cal, Thomas and Alexandra elucidated how mistreatments by superintendents had enduring impacts on them in their roles as principals, perhaps because they felt hurt, perhaps because of the possible negative impact on their careers. Steve explained that with his one oral error veering off the provided script during the presentation of 90 slides to parents, his superintendents turned on him and it had a lasting negative effect on how he viewed their problem-solving ability. His anger was evident in his explanation: "I think the thing that eats away the most is you work your ass off; you do a billion good things and they come at you for one thing that maybe they don't like" (Steve, I2, p. 229). Steve shared that this incident soured him on that division and he looked for jobs in other divisions to relieve the stress from the eating away of that incident.

Cal's incident with a superintendent, who disciplined him based on a report by one teacher, but not corroborated by any other members of his staff, and in fact refuted by other staff members, caused mistrust and worry regarding support he would receive from the superintendent if a problem arose in the future. He expounded:

It eats away because ... you might not get the support that you think you deserve or need to fulfill your responsibilities as an administrator. ... We have some people who quickly go to the school board because they get more support from them [the superintendents] than you may as an administrator [who is on] their [the superintendents'] own team. (Cal, I2, p. 42)

Cal admitted that this incident continued to eat away at him to this day because he thought it was unfairly handled, he was misjudged by the superintendents and the superintendents would consider this incident when looking at promotions.

Alexandra's worry about getting backing for incidents at the school level, when needed, from her superintendents' department was similar to Cal's. She became distrustful concerning a superintendent that was unsupportive and it made her many years of being a principal difficult. She questioned:

I don't know if I want to do this job, because many times you feel like ... there are not people that have your back. Like ... you have your inner team that may have your back, but you don't necessarily feel that way from above. Sometimes you're lucky ... and it's not that the superintendent wasn't a good person, but I was just shocked that that [to side with a mistreating parent, not the principal] was her first response. (Alexandra, I1, p. 183)

Alexandra lamented that if the superintendent did not support her against what she perceived to be a severely mistreating parent, that when she needed the support the most she would not get it. The recurring memory of how the superintendent dealt with the issue of mistreatment ate away at Alexandra because she worried regularly about would happen the next time there was an incident of mistreatment.

In Thomas' case, he iterated that a mistreating incident by a superintendent "had a significant impact on [him]. It kept [him] thinking for a long time, many many many days. For a person who has a knack of being able to walk away and turn off the job" (Thomas, I1, p. 321), he found his own response to be very disconcerting. The fact that Thomas was able to vividly describe his response to this incident, over ten years after the fact, suggested the incessant nature

of this recurring memory. For all of these principals, the memories seemed to have had profound effects as they stayed in the back of their minds eating away and resurfacing later as residual memories to cause them stress.

To substantiate just how strong the negative residual effects were, and how the memories could never be erased, three of the principals went so far as to comment that the experiences of mistreatment at work ate away at them so much so that it probably shortened their lives.

Alexandra stated: “I’m a worrier, so I was super stressed ... I’m sure it shortened my life by many months or many years” (Alexandra, I1, p. 177). Sabrina talked along the same lines: “I’m sure the seven years [with the three mothers who harassed her] shaved 2 years off my life” (Sabrina, I1, p. 33). Barry knew his life had been shortened as he had “suffered trauma” (Barry, I1, p. 270) and he could never regain the time he lost worrying about why the mistreatment at work was happening and this stopped him from “function[ing] as a person” (Barry, I1, p. 271). These three principals understood that the effect of mistreatment at work endured long after the offending episodes had ended.

### **Findings: Principals’ Job Satisfaction and Mistreatment**

Satisfaction, as defined in this study and relayed to the participants during the second interview, was described to them as a positive, global feeling (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008) with a sense of pride that one reaps from what one does on the job and the other aspects associated with it (Spector, 1997). This definition is similar to that of Locke (1976 as cited in Gunn & Holdaway, 1985), who described job satisfaction “as the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the perception of one’s job as fulfilling” (p. 1) and by Friesen, Holdaway and Rice (1981) as “an employee’s total feeling towards the job” (p. 1). Based on these definitions, resoundingly, all principals in the study responded that they were satisfied in their jobs, despite suffering various

workplace mistreatment episodes. All of the principals explicitly indicated that they were proud of what they did every day and that they were satisfied with their actions and choices.

The principals did, however, provide caveats when discussing their satisfaction, as the mistreating episodes at the time of their occurrence made the job more challenging and reduced their feelings of satisfaction while the effects of the mistreatment lingered. As Amadeus noted: “I’m very satisfied in my role as a principal. I like what I do. I do though, see how draining it can be” (Amadeus, I2, p. 314). Linda echoed Amadeus’ sentiments by stating that she “was very satisfied in [her] role as principal ... the benefits outweighed the ... negative parts ..., it’s very rewarding” (Linda, I2, p. 64). Alexandra gave the same impression as she exclaimed: “I find my work satisfying yes, but I find my work overwhelmingly challenging” (Alexandra, I2, p. 124). Steve’s satisfaction was clearly evident when he responded with: “I love it. I love it. ... It’s crazy. It’s fun” (Steve, I2, pp. 229-230), but he noted that he became frustrated during moments of mistreatment. Amadeus agreed with Steve, that the job was fun: “It is a good gig, it’s fun, it’s interesting, there’s always so many different things going on” (Amadeus, I2, p. 330). Sabrina confirmed that she, too, was enamored, thus satisfied, about the job: “Ah, I love my job! Yah, I think I’m the luckiest person to be in a job that I have a lot of passion for” (Sabrina, I2, p. 13), and this in spite of being harassed by a group of mothers over a seven year period. That passion was evident in many of the principals’ answers, with most confirming that, as Barry alluded: “I’ve taken this stuff on because I love what I do. I have a passion for it” (Barry, I2, p. 175). Even Barry, in spite of the fact that he was on stress leave from his job at the time of the interviews, confirmed that he was still satisfied overall in his role as principal as he was passionate about what he was doing.

What kept the principals satisfied in their jobs, despite the instances of mistreatment?

There were four indicators that recurred during the discussions of satisfaction. These were:

- working as a team with the teachers in the building;
- realizing successes on a daily basis in the schools, especially with students;
- affecting positive change to the culture of their schools; and,
- receiving positive feedback and appreciation from their colleagues and other members of the public.

Below, I provide examples for each of these areas of satisfaction for the principals in this study.

Finally, I remark on how the principals, at times, and in spite of the overall general satisfaction they claimed to feel, felt at least some dissatisfaction and questioned their reasons for doing the job due to the stressful events, such as workplace mistreatment, that occurred.

**Working with Teachers.** In the first instance, principals, such as Victoria, Amadeus, Linda, Sabrina, Cal, Barry, Steve, Alexandra and Annie, were satisfied when they felt that the team of teachers in their building were all there working together to enhance the learning and progress of the students. They seemed to take pride in encouraging the success of their team of teachers and thought of it as a privilege to work with their team. One key element to Victoria's satisfaction was, "there's a team of people I work with here" (Victoria, I2, p. 260) and this team provided support not only to her students but to her as well. She put her efforts into working with this team regarding "the celebrations in schools ... when we're together doing something as a big group and I see what teachers and kids can do together. I think that's pretty special" (Victoria, I2, p. 261). Amadeus appreciated the "collaborating of [his] team [and] seeing them progress" (Amadeus, I2, p. 316) to the point where, he said, if the team worked well enough together, he would become "superfluous [in his] job" (Amadeus, I2, p. 316). This was his goal, to have his

staff become autonomous, and it satisfied him and made him proud, knowing he had supported his team in their growth toward this end. He described it as being “about competency, feeling good, coming in, seeing how things move forward” (Amadeus, I2, p. 316). Cal appreciated:

the collegiality. The relationships that I have with my staff ... and for the most part, what they give me in return. ... I can walk away knowing that they are working very hard for all of us on behalf of our kids. (Cal, I2, p. 44)

Several principals felt that supporting their teachers with their professional development and offering them opportunities to learn helped the team become a cohesive whole. Barry liked “examining curriculum with the teachers [and] training teachers how to mark provincial assessments [as it was] very worthwhile professional development. Made me feel very satisfied” (Barry, I2, p. 175). Steve claimed that he liked to “be a teacher-leader and help kids and teachers do better. ... Think about things differently and make them consider doing things different for their kids” (Steve, I2, p. 230). Victoria earned her satisfaction by investing time in the youngest members of her team to achieve positive gains. She saw her work with new teachers at the dawn of their careers as very satisfying. She felt she’d “invested there ... had reaped something for them and for the kids ... [and] that’s rewarding” (Victoria, I2, p. 260). Alexandra was in awe of the many staff members on her team and she was proud to encourage them to go to greater heights. She expounded:

Staff who really are educators and ongoing learners and just see the power that they have in making a difference in kids’ lives. And ... how much they influence where those kids eventually end up. So, some really pretty amazing people that I’ve had the privilege to work with. And so it’s really neat to see the potential in them, that they don’t sometimes see and if you can be that person who just says,

“you know you’re really good at this, have you ever thought of ...”, and then igniting them [as a nudge into administration, perhaps]. (Alexandra, I2, p. 126)

**Realizing Success in the School.** In the second instance, realizing successes on a daily basis in the schools affected the satisfaction level of several of the principals. Chuck explained his strategy as:

I always have ten or fifteen things but I get satisfaction in finishing one and then taking on the next and the next and getting it off the plate and I know the plate is always full, but for me, that’s how I keep it all kind of in line. (Chuck, I2, p. 296)

Being capable of seeing advancement in his agenda on a daily basis was key for Chuck to considering himself successful and satisfied.

Alexandra, Arthur, Annie, Cal, Sabrina, and Thomas gleaned their daily measures of satisfaction from the students in their buildings. They reaped their satisfaction from seeing the students and how they grew, learned and matured. Alexandra placed the students as her number one provider of satisfaction. She said: “I love love love the kids. So I think that’s the best part of my job. ... Kids keep me young ... ’cause they’re always always in touch with whatever the current things are, and so that piece I love” (Alexandra, I2, pp. 124-127). Arthur also thought that the students played a very important role in his satisfaction in the job. He felt that “knowing that [he had] opportunities to make a difference on a daily basis” (Arthur, I2, p. 151) and in the lives of the students was paramount to his happiness and satisfaction in the job. He elucidated that he enjoyed:

interacting with students and seeing their love of learning, but also their love of being in a place where they’re being valued. So, there’s the academic portion but there’s also the relationship pieces ... the social emotional pieces that are ... being

fostered. And I know that we are working diligently to create mindful future citizens as they grow through middle years and teenage years and ... providing opportunities for them to learn from their decisions. (Arthur, I2, p. 152)

Next, for Cal, getting out of his office and into the school classrooms to work with more of the students than simply those sent to the office as discipline issues gave him satisfaction daily. He maintained:

Unfortunately you don't see enough of the 90% [those students who are never sent to the office] but you know they're there. And you try and make the connections with that 90% as well to enjoy ... the positive of our profession. (Cal, I2, p. 44)

Cal continued to explain that seeing growth in the students was very satisfying:

Seeing that 'ah ha' moment when they come to some stark realization that ... they can be successful as a student. Watch students change their behaviours. Watch students participate in co-curricular activities and have their moment to shine. And as ... administrators ... trying to give and provide opportunities for kids to shine. (Cal, I2, p. 44)

In Sabrina's case, her highs came from seeing student success. She stated her satisfaction came from:

When you see the kids are happy. ... They're running around. ... You're seeing them learning and you're seeing them heading in directions and on the right path. Love conflict management and helping them work through the natural stepping stones of growing up. ... That's gotta be the best part of the job. It's most rewarding. (Sabrina, I2, p. 14)



Thomas reminded himself daily that in his job:

It's about kids. And I love working with kids and the kids come in and kids are smiling, kids are learning, kids are happy to be here. ... There's just engagement, and being able to work with kids for three years [in a middle school] and you see the amazing growth in kids in three years. It's a fabulous experience and to know that I contribute. And then you get kids that come back years down the road, and go, [voice changed to higher pitch] "oh I remember you, and you know you made a difference in that kid's life". (Thomas, I2, p. 201)

**Affecting Positive Change.** Thirdly, principals in this study expressed continued satisfaction when they realized that they were affecting positive change to the culture of their schools. Barry, Amadeus, Alexandra, Arthur and Steve iterated the importance of the feeling of satisfaction while watching how they effected change in their buildings. Barry commented that there was:

The satisfaction of just knowing that I have, I have a talent, a skill, a capacity to lead and offer change and to actually guide people ... looking at ... how do we implement our programming, you know, whether it be the timetabling, the scheduling, the testing, ... planning those co-curricular activities, ... celebrations of learning. (Barry, I2, p. 173)

Amadeus used positive self-talk to stay satisfied when attempting this difficult task of making positive change. He stated, "It's what I tell myself, that I'm doing in my job. ... I think I look at that and I feel good about where things are moving [in terms of changing the school culture]" (Amadeus, I2, p. 317). Like Amadeus, Alexandra noted that: "There is some satisfaction in seeing change, when you lead change, and you know, and knowing you're making

a difference” (Alexandra, I2, p. 124). All the while Arthur treasured bringing “projects to fruition, ... seeing the culture of a school come together, [and] hearing from community members how they appreciate the work that’s being done” (Arthur, I2, p. 152). Steve admitted that he wasn’t totally changing the culture of his school [from the previous administration] but that he was satisfied to have a hand in helping move along the culture of the school. He said: “I haven’t changed the culture, I’ve just I’ve opened it up. I’ve made it; I’ve expanded it [since the previous principal was here]” (Steve, I2, p. 231).

**Positive Feedback.** The final aspect of the principals’ work that they reported as resulting in that feeling of professional satisfaction was receiving positive feedback from both members of the public and members of the professional staff, including superintendents, teachers, community members such as seniors, parents, and PAC members. Amadeus, Thomas Victoria, Sabrina and Arthur all expressed the importance of external appreciation for what they did as adding to their satisfaction. Amadeus termed this as “reaffirming competency” (Amadeus, I2, p. 316) and he thought this was extremely important. He appreciated when members of his PAC commented positively on the job he was doing and when they worked as part of the entire school team. He noted: “When somebody [a parent] turns around and you know they appreciate, they see what you’re doing, they understand ... they’re patient, and they’re kind of a team member. It really works awesome!” (Amadeus, I2, p. 318). Also, the short fly-by visits from the superintendents made Amadeus feel satisfied as he explained: “When they do come and give some positives, it does ... make you feel competent in what you’re doing” (Amadeus, I2, p. 316).

Thomas reinforced how important the positive feedback from students turned adults was when he recounted: “I was walking through Safeway to pick up my kid’s birthday cake and this woman comes up to me and just goes, ‘Mr. Thomas!’ and gave me a great big hug and a kiss on

my cheek” (Thomas, I2, p. 202) and his wife could not understand why the woman had done that. He explained to his wife that it was a former student, and now a member of the public, and he was very satisfied with this reaction from the student many years later. These principals articulated the importance of having a critical adult eye see and express appreciation for what was happening in their buildings as this led to a more satisfied feeling of accomplishment.

Yet, despite the overwhelmingly positive response to the question of whether or not they were satisfied in their role as principals, the principals in this study did, at times, question why they were doing the job in such a stressful environment. As previously mentioned, Barry, Chuck and Alexandra all weighed whether the job they were doing was worth the effort. Chuck also affirmed with certainty that he “could make more money working half as much with half as much stress, for sure. ... There are jobs out there [like that]” (Chuck, I1, p. 437). Alexandra admitted that while she was satisfied, if she suffered more mistreatment it would be more difficult to stay in a positive mind frame. She said: “I think if I had that [workplace mistreatment] coming at me all the time, I don’t know how much longer I would want to continue doing the same level of work” (Alexandra, I1, p. 196). However, generally speaking, the satisfaction of the principals in this study was not too affected by the incidents of mistreatment – they had many other accomplishments in their school buildings which gave them that positive, global feeling (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008) and sense of pride from a job well done (Spector, 1997).

### **The Impact of Mistreatment on Principals’ Job Satisfaction**

A substantial body of research reviewed in this thesis provides that job satisfaction can be negatively affected by general workplace mistreatment making the targets unhappy and sometimes causing them to quit their jobs (Brodsky, 1976; Budd, Arvey & Lawless, 1996;

Cortina et al., 2013; Cortina et al., 2001; Hoel et al., 2001; Keashly et al., 1994; O'Farrell & Harlan, 1982; Raver & Nishii, 2010; Rospenda & Richman, 2004; Salin, 2003). Some of the principals in the study did report that their job satisfaction diminished somewhat during mistreatment episodes, but overall they had no trouble using the word *satisfied* to define their overall feelings toward their jobs. Randon (2010) suggests that satisfaction with one's job is sometimes unstable and changing; that it evolves depending on the experiences and the expectations of the employee, and it can change throughout a person's life. The principals' interviews suggested that dissatisfaction with their jobs was higher at the times when they were suffering through incidents of mistreatment, but, generally, once the focal point of the experience had passed, even if some residual effects of the incident remained, they returned to their general satisfied states. Pepe (2011) found that the more school principals were satisfied in their work, the more they demonstrated resilience, and this allowed the principals to bounce back from problem issues. The overall feeling of satisfaction interconnected with the capacity for resilience seemed to help these principals when the need arose to overcome instances of workplace mistreatment.

In this study, I found that the principals were satisfied when they worked with the team of teachers, when they saw students realize success, when they believed that they were positively changing the school culture, and when these successes were acknowledged by others. In line with the findings of several researchers, a major source of job satisfaction resulted from feeling a sense of achievement (Friesen et al., 1981; Gunn and Holdaway, 1985; Iannone, 1973; Rice, 1978; Schmidt, 1976), as evidenced by the aforementioned four indicators of the principals in this study. In the data presented in chapters 4 and 5, principals describe a broad range of forms of general workplace mistreatment that they had experienced at different points in their careers

across the spectrum of what Blase and Blase (2003, 2006) classify as Level 1 (low) and Level 2 (medium) in terms of severity. Each principal's experiences and reactions to mistreatment incidents was unique, but overall I believe that regarding the impact of workplace mistreatment on the satisfaction that the principals felt in their jobs, the feeling of dissatisfaction seemed to be only slight and for a limited period of time. Somewhat surprisingly, this expression of job satisfaction was professed even by the principals (Sabrina and Barry) who reported the most severe incidents of mistreatment, and in Barry's case, the most serious negative effects. When asked if she was satisfied, Sabrina said: "Yah, I love my job!" (Sabrina, I2, p. 13). Barry felt that he had "a talent, a skill, a capacity to lead and offer change and to actually guide people" (Barry, I2, p. 173) so he confirmed that he liked to "put [him]self right into that whole work piece [such as timetabling, helping teachers with professional development, having meetings, etc.] because [he] found it professionally satisfying" (Barry, I2, p. 176). The principals in this study found satisfaction in many other aspects of their jobs, as seen in Barry's citation, so the dissatisfaction with workplace mistreatment was tempered and did not significantly affect their principals' overall job satisfaction. Therefore, to answer the research question, regarding the impact of workplace mistreatment on job satisfaction of these principals, the impact in this instance was minimal and for a limited amount of time, unlike the stress and other negative effects that seemed to linger. The principals found satisfaction in many other parts of their jobs so the dissatisfaction with workplace mistreatments was tempered and did not significantly affect their principals' overall job satisfaction.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the findings related to Research Question 3 which queried the possible perceived impacts and effects that mistreatment in the workplace had on the principals

in this study. The range of negative impacts, as given by the principals, included stress/toll, fatigue/sleep loss, involuntary physical reactions, hurt to self-esteem and resultant self-doubt, strong emotional responses including; crying/upset, living in/with fear and anger, and cynicism/disillusionment with the job. These negative impacts corresponded closely with both findings from research in more general workplaces, as well as in educational workplaces, as common responses to being mistreated. Additionally, I found that the negative impacts of experiencing certain incidents of mistreatment did endure over time, with some principals admitting that the effects lasted a few days to several years to longer. Surprisingly, suffering incidents of mistreatment at work did not seem to affect the feeling of satisfaction that the principals felt in their jobs. The principals found other sources of pride which negated the intermittent dissatisfaction caused in the immediate aftermath of being mistreated. Thus, to answer the third and final question of this research study, workplace mistreatment did cause negative impacts on the principals, but overall it did not undermine the satisfaction that the principals felt in their roles.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Implications for Future Studies**

This chapter provides a conclusion to the thesis by discussing the overall themes stemming from the findings of this study into general workplace mistreatment of principals by other adults in the workplace and by examining possible future areas of research. In the first part of this chapter, the major findings and themes are highlighted. The second part of the chapter provides several implications for both theoretical research and practical applications arising from the findings and analysis of the data. Despite the unique context for the research in terms of the specific nature of the principals' roles in Manitoba's schools, the implications for future research could bolster the value of the work done here were it to be done in more diverse contexts with different principal participants.

### **Major Themes of the Research Study**

Principals, like everyone else, go to work each day hoping to be treated with respect as they devote their lives to their chosen career. Yet, even as they work as leaders in their respective schools forging, hopefully, positive relationships with both professional and non-professional staff members, with parents and the public-at-large, as well as with members in the larger school division bureaucracy, such as senior administration and trustees, the principals in the schools in Manitoba could be at risk of harm when the interactions become less positive. This complex web of relationships with myriad adults has the potential of leading to conflict, conflict which could turn into workplace mistreatment. The choice of an adult to mistreat always depends on the relationship between the parties involved and the context of the situation. Thus, the purpose of this exploratory study was to explore instances of workplace mistreatment of principals by other adults with whom the principals interacted in the school environment, to examine the frequency and severity of the perceived incidents of mistreatment, and finally to discover the impacts that

those mistreatments had on the principals both physically and emotionally. This study offered an initial insight into the construction of workplace mistreatment by school principals as the dark side of the principals' workplace remains a very under-studied area.

The twelve participants, both men and women, who took the time to share their experiences and stories and to fill in the quantitative surveys provided a rich starting point for this first study of workplace mistreatment of principals in Manitoba. The sharing of their experiences may benefit future generations of administrators insofar as they gain some awareness of the phenomenon of workplace mistreatment from their colleagues. Within this small group of participants, there was a good mix of principals with seven principals working within the City of Winnipeg, four working in rural areas, and one working in northern Manitoba. The principals also worked in various configurations of schools – English language only, French immersion only or dual-track schools with grade groupings ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 9.

The data collected for this study was analyzed using a mixed methods approach. The two different sets of semi-structured interviews, administered at two different points during the 2016-2017 school year, provided an opportunity to delve into the principals' experiences, perceptions and construction of workplace mistreatment based on the themes promoted by the research questions. All twelve participants shared information openly; they were willing to address all of the topics and shared, some with more difficulty than others, and the emotional impact of dealing with situations of workplace mistreatment. Between the conducting of the first and second interviews, the participants also completed the three surveys regarding the frequency of mistreatments during the previous school year and the severity of one of their experiences of mistreatment. There were two different survey styles where frequency was recorded in terms of



ranges, such as 1 to 5 times per year, 6 to 10 times per year, and the like, and where severity of incidents was indicated using a sliding scale of severity, from 1 to 10.

While the results of the study were not earth-shattering, as workplace mistreatment amongst these twelve middle years principals was not found to be daily or so debilitating that all of the principals needed to leave their jobs, this initial study into principal perceptions of workplace mistreatment has established a starting point upon which future research can build. Following are the recurring themes discovered which relate to the research questions proposed at the outset of the study.

**Research Question 1.** The first research question sought to understand if workplace mistreatment existed and how principals constructed what they believed was workplace mistreatment, if it did indeed exist. The principals confirmed the existence of the phenomenon by sharing what they perceived to be many instances of workplace mistreatment. Categorizing the incidents, according to the heuristic (*Figure 1: Mistreatment Constructs Clustered According to Continuums*) at times provided a challenge to the researcher as the context of the principal-adult interactions played a role, as did each principal's interpretation of the incident and on occasion this caused some blurring in the boundaries between constructs and the task of categorization.

The study showed that the principals suffered mistreatment along the scale of mistreatment constructs (*Figure 1: Mistreatment Constructs Clustered According to Continuums*), from incivility, through social undermining, harassment, bullying and up to mobbing. None of the principals in this study told stories of physical violence. Each principal, when describing his or her perception of mistreatment, discriminated between the concept of "normal", or what they believed was legitimate conflict that came with the principal role, and the concept of mistreatment, as that was when the principal identified that particular adults had

“crossed the line”. Each principal seemed to have his or her own individual boundaries with the context of the interaction helping the principal to determine where the line was. At times, principals referred to the legal boundaries set up by legislation or to the professional boundaries set up by policies, collective agreements, divisional procedure documents and The Manitoba Teachers’ Society (2014a) *Code of Professional Practice* to assist in the definition of appropriate and inappropriate (mistreating) behaviours. In terms of crossing the line, particularly when referring to non-professional staff and members of the public, some principals acknowledged that the adult perpetrators may have not been familiar enough with the aforementioned documents and their meaning, so in spite of feeling mistreated, the principals gave the benefit of the doubt to the perpetrators insofar as they did not make formal complaints or bring formal grievances against those offending adults.

An overarching and recurring theme that permitted the principals to distinguish whether the interactions with the adults were seen as legitimate conflict or incidents of mistreatment was the sense of harm that the principals felt from the experience, whether intended or unintended (Aquino & Thau, 2009). The harm the principals felt seemed to be of four different types. First, there was what could be deemed as professional harm, or mistreatment that would cause damage to the principals’ professional status through a loss of their professional authority and their capacity to work effectively in their respective schools. The second type of harm, closely related to professional harm was harm that could be caused to their career development, resulting, perhaps, in a thwarting of their upward mobility as principals or in a loss of job security. The third type of harm was personal harm or damage to the principals’ personal identity and their well-being, as sometimes the principals’ positive self-concept was affected if their integrity or competence were questioned. This category of harm was the one taken up most fully in chapter

6. Finally, the fourth possible harm to principals through incidents of mistreatment could be called educational harm to students. When principals thought that parents were preventing changes within the school, that the principals felt were for the betterment of the students or of the school and the school culture, the principals felt mistreated because they deemed what they were doing was best for the students in their charge.

Beside the harm caused by incidents of mistreatment, principals also defined the interactions with particular adults as examples of mistreatment when they perceived that the adult in question had breached social or organizational norms (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), a divisional protocol or a professional code. The school as a workplace, as is the case in other workplaces (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), is built on a set of relationships amongst the actors, where there are certain expectations of behaviour associated with these relationships. First, principals expected that adults would show a degree of respect for them by addressing them in a professional manner, leaving out screaming or profanity. While it is true that norms of respect differ from organization to organization and between professional staff and members of the public (Milam et al., 2009), the principals in this study had certain expectations that the adults with whom they interacted would be aware that respect and courteousness should permeate the interactions. This was not always the case, and when this social norm was breached, the principals generally felt mistreated.

What was clear from a number of the interviews was that the confidence and support of the senior administration was seen to be very important to the principals' professional authority and effectiveness. If principals felt mistreated by senior administration, their feeling that they would receive support from their senior administration dwindled. At times, the principals seemed

to lose confidence in their ability to principal as effectively as they had in the past without that support from those higher up in the hierarchy.

The principals had an expectation that where issues and conflicts arose, concerned professional staff or non-professional staff and members of the public would first attempt to resolve issues with the principal at the school level before approaching the senior administration of the school division. For the professional staff members, this was a requirement written into the *Code of Professional Practice* (The MTS, 2014a). Principals expected that a specific line of communication be followed for problem-solving where, in the chain of command, they expected to be given due process to attempt resolution of the issues. Going over the principals' heads to report perceived unseemly behaviours and actions on the principals' part, effectively not using proper channels, was seen as a breach of organizational norms, as well as a source of potential harm for these principals which often resulted in the principals identifying this as workplace mistreatment.

What provocations caused the adult perpetrators to cross the line, triggering the mistreatment episodes that caused harm and possibly breached the organizational norms as previously described? The data from the study suggests that for different adult perpetrators groups there tended to be a range of prompting stimuli, but all of the triggers were related directly to the principals in their roles as leaders. First, specific system initiatives stemming from the province or the school division that carried requirements that the principal adhere to in his or her role often provoked adults to mistreat the principal. Secondly, frustrations on the part of the other adult regarding the principal's experience and perceived (in)competence in the administering of the school caused angst. Within particular contexts, principals' decision-making and being a change-agent in their respective schools was met with resistance and mistreatment

from some parents, teachers, superintendents and trustees. Differing opinions and frustrations about school programming, policies and procedures was another area when parents and teachers sometimes crossed the line from legitimate conflict into the realm of mistreatment. The issue most often reported by the principals when discussing mistreatment by parents, was their handling of discipline, control and supervision of students. Student discipline issues, however, also caused certain superintendents, trustees and bus drivers to cross the line. For teachers and educational assistants, supervision and evaluation of these staff members by the principals regarding work assignments were of particular concern and sometimes engendered mistreatment incidents.

As noted earlier, the workplace for this study is defined as the interwoven relationships between the various adult actors and their principals (Table 1) and in this web of relationships Manitoban principals have particular notions and expectations of how communication should take place. Thus, the abstract scales developed across different workplaces by scholars, and shown in the conceptual framework (*Figure 1* and/or 2) may not necessarily apply lock-step to the Manitoba school context as the principals in this study judged incidents based on the style of the interaction, their personal expectations about the workplace and the potential harm exacted. As the principals recounted their stories, sometimes an incident that I coded as being of lower order, such as a mistreatment from the incivility construct that the principals thought frivolous and therefore did not take earnestly, would seem to harm principals more than an isolated threat, that would be defined as considerably higher on the severity scale, as they believed that the threat could or would not happen in reality.

The findings of this study confirm that workplace mistreatment of principals did exist for this group of principals in Manitoba schools and that these treatments range along the continuum

from incivility to mobbing. The findings are similar to the Blase and Blase (2006) principal-on-teacher workplace mistreatment, but there are some differences due to the principals' placement in the hierarchy. The principals' role as a leader and how the principal manages his or her role in the school could incite workplace mistreatment amongst the many adults in the web of relationships. In sum, principals felt mistreated when adults crossed the line by breaching social or organizational norms or when the adults, in the principals' view, caused them personal or professional harm.

**Research Question 2.** The second research question sought to understand the attributes of workplace mistreatment incidents on principals regarding the range of adult perpetrators in the workplace, as well as the frequency and severity of each principal's experiences of mistreatment. Beginning with the perpetrators of the mistreatments, the principals in this study identified an array of adults associated with the incidents reported. In rank order, those adults were: parents (father, mother, foster father), teachers, senior administration, trustees, principal colleagues, members of Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), vice-principal colleagues, educational assistants, custodial staff, bus drivers, a secretary-treasurer for a division and community members. Both the quantitative and qualitative data confirmed that the most frequent perpetrators of workplace mistreatment from the public domain were the parents, while from the professional and non-professional employees' category, it was teachers first followed by the senior administration.

What types of workplace mistreatment behaviours were common amongst the top three perpetrators – parents, teachers and superintendents? The majority of the parents' actions, whether alone or in groups such as PACs, tended to be uncivil or harassing in nature. The data from this study did not show instances of social undermining on the part of the parents. Parents have every right to be involved as partners in their children's education, to access information

and policy documents as they pertain to the children, as well as to discuss the provincial report cards that they receive, according to documents from Éducation et Formation Manitoba (2016), based on the *Public Schools Act* of Manitoba (2015). Given that social undermining is sometimes hidden from the targets and done behind the targets' backs, it is plausible that some parent-partners were talking to others in the school community in stores, through emails or on bulletin board chats, but the principals in this study seemed unaware that this undermining may have been going on.

On the other hand, lower order mistreatment by professional staff members tended to fall under the construct of social undermining. Most of the actions by teachers recounted by the participants in this study happened behind the principals' backs or more subtly using what were seen to be passive-aggressive tactics, effectively undermining changes that the principals were trying to effect in their schools. While sometimes the senior administration were reported as using undermining tactics with the principals or belittling them in a public forum, mistreatment, more specifically bullying by senior administration, was seen by the principals as having a far greater potential for harm, as the senior administration held power over the principals according to the educational hierarchy.

The power dynamic at play in the descriptions of incidents of mistreatment involving the senior administration is important to address. Parents and teachers do not technically have power over the principals, whereas the superintendents do. Some principals' comments highlighted the power of the senior administration to undercut principals' professional authority with staff and with parents from the community. In the principals' evaluation of the situation, criticism by superintendents was seen as a negative and an impediment towards career advancement. Under this same power dynamic, two principals expressed the view that they were in a position where

they had little realistic recourse for follow-up that did not involve more harm in terms of serious career implications. These principals chose not to confront the superintendents when they felt bullied; they “swallowed their pride” to keep those relationships intact.

The next part of Research Question 2 examined participants’ reported frequency of occurrence of different categories of mistreatment. For the school year in question (2015-2016), the principals confirmed though the answers in their surveys that instances of mistreatment were more common amongst members of the public as opposed to members from the professional ranks. The most common range for any mistreatment that did occur, whether from members of the public or from the professional realm, was from 1 to 5 times a year (less than once a month) and it was rare that any principal reported experiencing any form of mistreatment happening more than 15 times in the year reported on. However, when speaking of mistreatment that did occur more than 15 times a year, it was much more common for parent actions to fall in this modal range than teachers and least common for senior administration. While the survey data indicated that every principal perceived that they had experienced mistreatment, in some way, at the hands of parents and teachers, not every principal reported mistreatment by his or her senior administration. This point was supported by the data from the semi-structured interviews as anecdotes regarding parents and teachers were much more plentiful than those regarding senior administration.

In the case of these principals and their experiences, the frequency data also showed that adult actions in the area of the lower level constructs, such as incivility and social undermining, far exceeded the number of occurrences of the higher level constructs further up the mistreatment continuum (*Figure 1* and/or *2*), such as harassment, bullying and mobbing, including the highest order of mistreatment, physical violence. By placing the seven mistreatment constructs into three



groups, lower level, higher level and highest level of mistreatment, the following themes become apparent.

In their role as leaders of the schools, much of the principals' job is to deal with difficult situations, frustrations and perhaps misunderstandings amongst the actors. The lower level incidents, such as incivility and social undermining, were the ones that most principals in the study seemed to consider as being "part of the job" or "coming with the territory" and the principals saw them as a common feature of their work. During the semi-structured interviews, the principals, while identifying feeling mistreated and wishing the adults had chosen to approach matters in a more civil manner, also added that they expected to encounter such situations, certainly with parents.

The next group of higher level constructs from the continuum (*Figure 1* and/or *2*), including harassment, bullying and mobbing, were shown to be much less frequent in occurrence in the principals' workplaces. These mistreatments involved more intense interactions with adults than those from the lower level constructs. Within this second grouping, however, there is ambiguity in the literature in terms of the distinction between harassment and bullying, and this ambiguity is evident in the principals' verbal descriptions as well. The principals themselves often used the words harassment and bullying interchangeably. However, the examination of the specific items coded as harassment on this survey, revealed that, in terms of the definitions and categories developed for this study, the perpetrators used more harassment tactics than bullying or mobbing. Harassment was clearly more frequent coming from parents than teachers, which is not surprising given that teachers are governed by the *Code of Professional Practice* (The MTS, 2014a). Although instances of harassment were less frequent, the harm produced by episodes of harassment, as well as by bullying and by mobbing, were at times reported as having wide-

ranging, long-lasting impacts on the principals' well-being. The principals also reported that harm was caused for them when they perceived an issue to be unresolved. That ability to find resolution after being mistreated was important to reduce or end the stress they felt.

The highest level mistreatment construct, the third group, contains only one construct. That construct is physical violence. For the year in question, 2015-2016, there were no reported incidents of physical violence, either in the interviews or in the data from the surveys.

The frequency survey data also showed that when thinking of mistreatment episodes, sometimes the principals needed to look no further than their colleagues. When the principals were given the option to write in any other adult from whom they perceived mistreatment, 33% of the administrators selected another administrator (a principal of another school, a vice-principal) with whom they worked. This may show that conflicts amongst administrators at the same power-level are a relevant aspect to working as a principal, or it may show that there is much competition between the administrators in certain school divisions.

The final part of Research Question 2 dealt with the severity of the mistreatment incidents. Severity in this study was addressed in several different ways. In the first instance, the continuum that frames the study (*Figure 1* and/or *2*) provides a basic point severity scale from incivility to physical violence. Second, a Severity Survey was administered to all principals where they were asked to focus on one memorable perpetrator and to record the severity of his or her different behaviours on a sliding scale from 1 to 10. A third source of data came from the interviews with participants. Comparing these three data sources was difficult and, at times, so was interpreting the data from the Severity Survey. However, if severity is taken to mean perceived harm and negative impact on a principals' well-being it was apparent that

- i. different principals had different experiences and perceptions in terms of their assessments of severity; and,
- ii. principals could perceive particular episodes as affecting their well-being more than others, even if the action happened to fall near the less severe end of the continuum (*Figure 1* and/or *2*), as one of the group of lower level constructs, such as incivility and social undermining.

The aforementioned inferences suggest that Namie and Namie's (2004) scale of severity of the various workplace mistreatment constructs (*Figure 1* and/or *2*), while partially congruent with the findings in this study, needs some qualification. The scale provides that the severity of the mistreatment should correspond with the aggressiveness level of the mistreatment with the uncivil behaviours rating about a 1 or a 2, ranging up to a 7 or an 8 for harassment and bullying and a 10 for physical violence. A general overall interpretation of this scale makes sense in that usually moderate cases of harassment are more severe than moderate cases of incivility, or that cases with the highest level of physical violence are worse than cases with the highest level of social undermining. However, the data in this study suggests that these categorizations are not all clear-cut. The principals' perceptions of the severity of mistreatment did not depend solely on the construct, in terms of it being lower or higher up the construct continuum (*Figure 1* and/or *2*), rather it depended more on the specifics of the incident as well as the resulting impact that the incident had on the principals in terms of the harm it caused them. To this extent, the principals seemed to have their own individualized and contextualized constructions of low and high severity.

**Research Question 3.** The third and final research question sought to examine how experiencing workplace mistreatment impacted the principals regarding their well-being and job

satisfaction. Beginning with the principals' well-being, they described a range of negative impacts on their health and well-being caused by the experiences of mistreatment at work. These emotional and physical impacts included: stress/"taking a toll", fatigue/sleep loss, involuntary physical reactions (such as heart racing), hurt to self-esteem and resultant self-doubt, along with other emotional responses such as crying, living in/with fear and anger, and cynicism/disillusionment with the job. The negative effects of the mistreating instances on the principals in this study resemble those mentioned in the broader organizational behaviour literature. That literature identifies both physical and mental manifestations stemming from being mistreated at work that are borne out in this study (Beatty, 2000; Brodsky, 1976; Cemaloğlu, 2011; Fahie & Devine, 2014; Gouveia, 2007; Keashly, 1997; Langlois, 2011; Namie, 2003, 2007; Namie & Namie, 2003, 2004; Rospenda & Richman, 2004).

The greatest impact to the principals' well-being seen in this study was personal harm, in terms of their changing positive self-concept as a result of the incidents, and their questioning themselves in terms of their character, their integrity or their competence in their roles. The principals shared that the negative impacts of experiencing incidents of mistreatment did endure over periods of time, ranging from a few days to never going away. Those more severe incidents that never went away were represented by recurring thoughts at odd and various times as the principals went about their daily lives. What Blase et al. (2009) labeled as intrusive thoughts from the teachers' perspectives in their study, parallels here the residual effects of the recurring thoughts that the principals in this study explained that they weathered. In any case, particular incidents of mistreatment at work seemed to have an enduring impact, including effects such as personal harm affecting the general well-being of the principals in this study.

In spite of the negative impacts on their well-being caused by incidents of workplace mistreatment, enduring these incidents appeared not to affect the general feeling of satisfaction that the principals held in their jobs. This overall sense of satisfaction emanating from the principals in this study runs somewhat counter to the research regarding the maintenance of satisfaction in jobs where adults are targets of mistreatment (Budd et al., 1996; Cortina et al., 2013; Cortina et al., 2001; Hoel et al., 2001; Keashly et al., 1994; O'Farrell & Harlan, 1982; Raver & Nishii, 2010; Rospenda & Richman, 2004; Salin, 2003). The results of the study indicated that principals maintained a high level of job satisfaction despite experiencing mistreatment that ranged from incivility all the way to the rare case of mobbing. The principals acknowledged that the frequency of lower order incidents of mistreatment did not interfere with their general feeling of overall satisfaction with their work. They also recognized that the most severe incidents happened sufficiently infrequently as not to affect their global satisfaction over the long term. The principals in this study noted that they were able to find many other sources of pride in their jobs and this seemed to mitigate the aftereffects that may have been caused by the workplace mistreatment. Some of those sources of pride for these principals were when they worked with the team of teachers, when they saw students realize success, when they positively changed the school culture and when these successes were acknowledged by others.

This finding is similar to the findings of the Canadian Association of Principals and The Alberta Teachers' Association (2014) where 90% of the Alberta principals who responded to the survey agreed that the advantages of the profession outweighed the disadvantages, causing an overall feeling of satisfaction. The profession was found by the Alberta principals to be rewarding, but "growing complexities and expectations ma[de] this a challenging and nettlesome career" (Canadian Association of Principals & The Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014, p. 7).

Some principals in that Alberta study agreed that they were satisfied in their jobs, but they did not recognize that the stress from the job was harming internally and that they needed coping mechanisms to deal with the stress, in spite of the satisfaction they felt in their jobs. This may also have been the case with the participants in this study where the principals did not equate their inability to sleep or their fear as internal stressors that could affect their job satisfaction.

To summarize, the answer to the research question regarding the impact of workplace mistreatment on job satisfaction for the principals in this study was that the impact of mistreating actions by other adults affected their satisfaction only slightly and for a limited period of time, unlike the other negative effects on their well-being that seemed to linger. The principals found satisfaction in many other parts of their jobs so the dissatisfaction with workplace mistreatment was tempered and did not significantly affect their principals' overall sense of job satisfaction.

### **Discussion of Implications for Changes to the Conceptual Framework, Future Research and Applications**

Given that this study was exploratory in nature, the possibilities for extended and future work on the topic are abundant. So, in this section, I propose how the conceptual framework could be reimaged to better understand the principals' experiences of workplace mistreatment in future research. I choose to limit the discussion for future research and applications to eight options, but there are indeed many more possibilities. I suggest six options for further research, followed by two options suggesting practical applications arising from the study.

**Changes to the Conceptual Framework.** The conceptual framework or the heuristic (*Figure 1*) provided an excellent starting point for comprehending the types of mistreatment experienced by the principals and signaled that some mistreatments could/would be more severe than others. It was logical that the principal that suffered the incident of mobbing indeed found it

more severe than some of the other principals that experienced only incivility and social undermining. However, in my opinion after my research, this view of severity regarding incidents of workplace mistreatment is oversimplified. There is also a range in the severity of the mistreatment within each of the mistreatment constructs. To improve the conceptual framework, I suggest adding a vertical severity continuum range within each of the constructs. Such an addition would allow a finer delineation regarding the severity of the incidents of mistreatments within a construct. For instance, in terms of inappropriate emails, principals such as Steve and Amadeus considered most of the emails as minor incidents of incivility, however, Cal found a few of the emails he received to be more major or severe in nature. This change, in turn, may afford a greater appreciation of the subjective nature of each experience as it pertains to the effect on the well-being of the principal who declared that certain acts of incivility had affected him more adversely than those acts had effected other principals.

Further, the levels of aggression proposed by Blase and Blase (2004, 2006), regarding teachers mistreated by principals, showed some similarities to the experiences of the principals; however, several of their descriptors focused on the employees'/teachers' views rather than those of the supervisors/principals. In this sense, to make better use of the levels of aggression framework (Blase & Blase, 2004, 2006), descriptors could be adapted to mirror the principals' experiences and job requirements, thus creating a levels of aggression framework from the point of view of a supervisor.

**Further Research.** Six broad options for future research are proposed here. These six categories include: changing various factors or variables of the study, examining sexual harassment as opposed to general workplace mistreatment, linking personality or leadership style with the frequency and severity of mistreatment, studying satisfaction of principals in their roles,

examining resiliency, self-efficacy and coping strategies of principals to overcome mistreatment, and investigating long-term impacts of workplace mistreatment on principals. For each of the options provided in this section, I expand on the idea with examples for additions and changes to future studies that could be prepared in the area of mistreatment of principals at work.

***Changing Various Factors or Variables of the Study.*** There are many possibilities to enhance this research by simply changing the research demographics. First, for instance, with a larger sample of participants, the researcher could better contrast the male versus the female experience to understand if there is a gendered component regarding mistreatment in schools. A number of researchers have concentrated for several decades on differences of being a female versus a male in a leadership role (Brunner, 2000; Bryant, 2004; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Oplatka, 2002; Shakeshaft, 1999; Wallin & Crippen, 2008), but issues concerning mistreatment of principals by gender would be a unique field of study. By studying the differences between men and women holding the principal role, the researcher could confirm or negate the conjecture proposed by four of the five women in this study that women are treated differently and, perhaps, perceive the severity of the treatments differently.

Secondly, with a larger sample of participants, the researcher could better grasp the differences of mistreatment between the urban, rural, northern and First Nations principals' experiences in Manitoba. The upcoming prevalence of contextualizing experiences to where they take place for educators is apparent, with Wallin (2005a, 2005b) studying female principals in rural areas and Irvine, Lupart, Loreman and McGhie-Richmond (2010) focusing on principals and their view of inclusion in rural schools. Further, studies of leadership practices in First Nations schools (Scott, 2017) and contrasting the urban and rural principal experiences (Beesley & Clark, 2015) are pertinent topics in educational administration today.



Thirdly, a different sample of principals could provide enlightening information regarding the differences and similarities between how experienced principals process the mistreatments compared to their more junior counterparts. The juxtaposition of the choices that less experienced principals make when confronted with mistreatment incidents, as opposed to principals later in their careers, could provide interesting findings, as it has already been discussed that experienced principals tend to have a more positive impact on school performance than the more inexperienced members of the profession (Béteille, Kalogrides & Loeb, 2012; Clark, Martorell & Rockoff, 2009; Papa Jr., Lankford & Wyckoff, 2002) and that principal stability gained through experience in particular schools changes certain parental attitudes (Clark, Martorell & Rockoff, 2009).

Fourthly, and especially important in continuing this research, would be to examine differences in the mistreatment constructs and how the severity may change depending on the levels of the schools in which the principals work. A study by VanderJagt, Shen and Hsieh (2001) has already examined principals' perceptions of the severity of student problems and that study acknowledges that problems are indeed more severe at the secondary than the elementary level. By design, this study was restricted to only principals who worked in schools from Kindergarten to grade nine, and those principals were asked to concentrate on experiences that happened when students in their schools were in the grade five to grade nine range. No data was sought in this study for the primary grades, the Kindergarten to grade three range, nor anything from the secondary level, the grade ten to twelve range. Looking at grade ranges would also lend itself to examining, possibly at the same time, the size of the school, such as under 200 students or over 1600 students, including the local environment/context of the schools, which is what

VanderJagt et al. (2001) did as well in their aforementioned study. These are several of the other possible factors or variables which are available as options for future study.

***Examining Sexual Harassment as Opposed to General Workplace Mistreatment.***

This study focused specifically on general behaviours in the workplace that caused the principals to feel that they were mistreated. Not one principal described any instances of sexual harassment. However, with the recent focus on sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace in Manitoba (Martin, 2017; Paul, 2017), in Canada and the United States in terms of the Twitter feeds for the #metoo (Zacharek, Dockterman & Sweetland Edwards, 2017) and #times up (Langone, 2018) movements, it is an appropriate time to study this phenomenon in the context of the school as a workplace. In fact, the Government of Canada (2017) very recently published a report regarding public consultations held with employees regarding harassment and sexual violence in the workplace, where they found an under-reporting of incidents. There may have been an under-reporting of incidents of sexual harassment in this study as well.

***Linking Personality or Leadership Style with the Frequency and Severity of Mistreatment.*** Does the person at the helm and his or her style of tackling problems or making decisions affect whether or not he or she will be mistreated? Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) studied the leadership styles of men and women to find that “women’s leadership styles were more democratic than men’s even in organizational settings, possibly reflecting the special legitimacy problems that female leaders face if they attempt to take charge in a clear-cut, traditionally hierarchical manner” (p. 794). In the workplace mistreatment domain, Skogstad, Nielsen and Einarsen (2017) broached a similar topic regarding employee well-being and its correlation with destructive forms of leadership. A future study of principals and the style they

choose to problem-solve issues could shed light on whether their choices contribute to their mistreatment at work.

A second possibility regarding a study of leadership style would be a comparison of the principals' leadership tendencies to how and how often the principals are (mis)treated by the adults. For example, does an authoritarian principal-led staff meeting lead to more social undermining by the teachers due to the top-down nature (Pearce & Conger, 2003) of the interactions? Does "[t]he emphasis on leadership centered on control and oversight – in other words, the 'vertical model' of leading (Pearce & Conger, 2003, p. 3) have an effect on the treatment received in return? Does a more transformational (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Duke, 1999, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008), transformative (Shields, 2013) or shared (Luc, 2004) style of leadership result in more or fewer instances of mistreatment from parents, teachers and superintendents? Given the number of different leadership styles and possibilities discussed in education, linking the leadership style to workplace mistreatment may instruct the principals in the better styles of leadership to assume in the school environment.

***Satisfaction of Principals in their Roles.*** This research possibility arises from an incorrect assumption by this researcher that mistreatment at work would reduce the satisfaction that the principals felt in their jobs. There is not much recent Canadian research on the topic of principals' satisfaction; in fact, the Canadian research that is cited in this study is from Gunn and Holdaway (1985) and Friesen et al. (1981). Updating satisfaction studies by pursuing further research regarding the relationship between the psychological experiences of being mistreated and the lack of feelings of dissatisfaction caused by those hurtful experiences could be important. Further, more accurate data regarding the relationships between experiences, thoughts, emotions

and the positive perception of work, despite mistreatment, would lead to a better understanding of how principals continue to sustain feelings of pride and satisfaction throughout their careers.

***Resiliency, Self-efficacy and Coping Strategies to Overcome Mistreatment.*** This research project could be twinned with the abovementioned research on the principals' satisfaction, as the overall feeling of satisfaction is interconnected with the capacity for resilience and self-efficacy, two traits indispensable to overcome the effects of the incidents of workplace mistreatment. Pepe (2011) found that the more school principals were satisfied in their work, the more they demonstrated resilience, and the capacity to recover from problems they encountered in the workplace. Studying if principals who perceive that they have been mistreated have a tendency to be resilient or show self-efficacy would add not only to this research but to Pepe's (2011) contention above. Further, studying the strategies that the principals use to cope with instances of workplace mistreatment and to then become more resilient after the instances would also add to the knowledge base regarding mistreatment as the research on coping strategies at the moment concerns only how teachers cope (Blase & Blase, 2002), not principals.

***Long-Term Impacts of Workplace Mistreatment on Principals.*** To better understand whether or not being mistreated at the school as a workplace has long-term effects, a longitudinal study must be conducted. Such a study could assess the principals over a period of fifteen to twenty years. According to Pearson et al., (2001), certain mistreatments, such as incivility, that while not particularly serious as one stand-alone incident, could have a cumulative effect if instances of incivility were repeated, thus leading to perhaps a greater impact on the principals over the course of a career. Another study regarding the long-term impacts of mistreatment could focus on those individuals, such as administrative assistants, colleagues and significant others, who become the social support systems for the principals and how these individuals provide

“buffering effects” (Keashly & Harvey, 2005, p. 224) to help the principals cope. Dovetailing on that possible study could be a study which pursues how the mistreatments that affect principals also affect those “third-party” individuals who, while not directly involved in the mistreating episode, are called upon to deal with the episode in another way, such as by providing support. Recent research shows that there can be work-home “spillover” (Carlson, Ferguson, Perrewé & Whitten, 2011; de Wet, 2010; Frone, 2003; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Haines, Marchand & Harvey, 2006; Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Saari & Judge, 2004) when one of the family members is mistreated at work. In a Canadian study by James Matsui Research (2005), the educators ranked disruption in family life as number seven out of the twelve most common problems related to dealing with incidents of mistreatment at work.

A final future area of investigation into long-term effects of mistreatment could relate to studying the principals to see just how much mistreatment that principals could endure before needing to take either a short-term or long-term leave from the job. As Duffy et al. (2002) contended, when discussing the impacts of social undermining, mistreatment actions will not necessarily have significant impacts if the occurrences are rare; however, “their effects add up over time” (p. 333). Principals who are subjected to many instances of workplace mistreatment could find it more difficult to deal with the instances after a certain point and they could feel that a leave from the job may be needed or even necessary to maintain their own well-being.

**Practical Applications.** As noted in the literature review in Tables 2 and 3, school division documents throughout the province tend to restrict the definition of workplace mistreatment to a criminal offense, as in sexual harassment, or as a clear violation of the *Workplace Safety and Health Act: Workplace Safety and Health Regulation* (2006). This study shows that there are many other possible ways that principals are mistreated in the workplace. As

far back as the early nineties, The Manitoba Teachers' Society (1992) was insistent "that school boards, as employers have the responsibility of providing a safe workplace for teachers and must assume their appropriate role in protecting their employees" (p. 3) from abuse, in other words workplace mistreatment. Looking at the number of times the principals in this study were mistreated, the progress on this requirement of the school boards has been slow, to say the least. According to Keashly and Harvey (2005), "emotionally abusive behaviors are more likely to occur in a societal context that is either tolerant of such behavior or does not define it as problematic" (p. 212). They go on to contend that management "viewed as having taken the target's concerns seriously and taken steps to alter the situation, [allowed] targets [to feel] ... valued and the effects of the mistreatment were viewed as easier to deal with" (Keashly & Harvey, 2005, p. 225). So, if school trustees are interested in improving schools, as is their mandate, they must not only care about students, they must care about the well-being of the staff and in particular the mental health of principals running the schools. The trustees must also be viewed as being supportive of policies to mitigate workplace mistreatment. To that end, now knowing that principals do encounter many different constructs and severities of mistreatment at work, as well as knowing that there are many negative impacts and an emotional cost that accompany the mistreatments, policies and procedures should be enhanced to better protect the principals from adults who seek to mistreat by incivility, social undermining, harassment, bullying and mobbing. Following are two possibilities for the practical application of the findings of this study which involve the reworking of school division policies and procedures, as well as planning and adopting professional development activities for principals regarding mistreatment in the workplace.

***Rework School Division Policies and Procedures.*** In terms of promising ideas that could be put into practical use in the school divisions, a reworking of the documents that contain the policies and procedures regarding workplace mistreatment would be advantageous. As noted in Tables 2 and 3, the vocabulary used in these policy documents is very limited – harassment, violence and respectful workplace. Some of the policies, such as those relating to a respectful workplace are vague and often inadequate to protect the principals from the wide-range of workplace mistreatment possibilities from the adults with whom they interact. Keashly and Harvey (2005) suggest that “the organization’s response can play a critical role in the target’s overall appraisal of and response to abusive treatment” (p. 226). Once the policies and procedures are reworked, then they need to be enforced; something that Sabrina found not to be the case in her division when the three mothers continually harassed her and she got no support from the senior administration. Several school divisions, as well as The MTS, have poster initiatives, invoking the ideas of a safe and respectful workplace, but these are not found in all schools. An effort to place posters in all schools to educate the adults on the wide-range of workplace mistreatments that occur in schools would be one immediate change that would alert adults in the school environment to the fact that workplace mistreatment would not be tolerated. This could be accomplished under the direction of the provincial government through Manitoba Education. Such a change in policies and procedures to support the principals, along with an enforcement of the policies, would be a start to curtailing the incidents of workplace mistreatment. The organization has a critical role to play in the “facilitation or mitigation of this phenomenon” (Keashly & Harvey, 2005, p. 229).

***Plan and Adopt Principal Selection and Preparation Strategies.*** A second practical application of the data gleaned in this study relates to principal selection and preparation

strategies. If, indeed, principals at all stages of their careers experience mistreatment, as this study showed, given that the principal with only three years experience as well as the principal with more than twenty-five years experience, had both endured episodes, then principals must be prepared for this eventuality soon after their appointment to the role of principal. They must also be trained and/or reminded of possible strategies to deal with such incidents throughout their careers. To help principals, professional development opportunities are key.

The findings from this research are enlightening for current administrators and provide an interesting if somewhat limited understanding of workplace mistreatment that occurs in many corners of the province of Manitoba. Providing the principals already in the job with this information could be one step toward helping them feel less isolated in thinking that the incidents “only happen to them” or perhaps in some way that they are at fault. For those principals who have just been selected to fill the role, principal preparation programs that include a presentation of the constructs of workplace mistreatment, along with strategies on dealing with mistreatment in the workplace and coping after the incidents, may prevent burnout during the principals’ careers. As noted in the literature review for this thesis, with regards to principal burnout, the challenging nature of the role of principal, including but not limited to the following areas; politics, administritivia, time requirements, lack of professional development opportunities and difficult interpersonal relationships due to conflict (Alphonso & Bradshaw, 2014; Ballantine & Hammack, 2009; Canadian Association of Principals & The Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2014; Lovely, 2004; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2004) would all be touched on in a principal preparation program that was designed to include a section dealing with workplace mistreatment. Knowledge regarding workplace mistreatment could be interwoven into one of the abundant traditional frameworks of and dimensions for leadership (Fullan, 2014; Leithwood, Harris &



Hopkins, 2008; Wallace Foundation, 2013) as an essential part of a principal preparation program. After all, any excellent professional learning program for principals takes the time to emphasize the many aspects of the principal role including skills allowing principals to sustain stability (management) and improvement (leadership) in schools (Leithwood & Seashore Louis, 2012). Certainly, understanding workplace mistreatment, how to deal with it the moment it happens, and how to cope with it long-term would be an investment in future principals' well-being, leading perhaps to more longevity in their careers. Such training could also assist with the issue of retention of principals in many countries (Barty et al., 2005; Brooking et al., 2003; Draper & McMichael, 2003; Educational Research Service, 2000; Fenwick & Pierce, 2001; Gronn & Rawling-Sanaei, 2003; Lovely, 2004; MacBeath, 2006; Mascall & Leithwood, 2012; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Stone-Johnson, 2012; Zellner et al., 2002), including Canada (Taylor, 2008), because as the confidence of the principals grows regarding how to deal with these issues, they may be less likely to leave the job. Principals need these professional development opportunities to develop skills regarding how to work through the mistreating episodes with a view to maintaining and retaining them in their principal roles.

### **Summary**

Blase and Blase (2002) encouraged researchers to "examin[e] the 'dark side' of school leadership (p. 672), and that was indeed what the purpose of this study was, and this from the principals' point of view. As society and its organizations start to focus more on respectful workplaces as a fundamental right for all employees, the work in this study is certainly timely. Clearly, this indicates that workplace mistreatment exists and needs to be more ably addressed. Thus, this thesis did add to the existing research on mistreatment in the schools by providing insights into what principals perceived as workplace mistreatment by other adults in their school

settings, and its effects on the principals who have a fundamental right to a respectful, mistreatment-free workplace.

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## Appendix A

### Letter of Introduction to the Study to Garner Participants



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

Research Project Title: **A Study of Manitoba Principals' Constructed Understanding of Workplace Mistreatment, Its Frequency, Its Severity and Its Impacts**

Dear Possible Participant,

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am doing a research study in order to complete the requirements for my Ph. D. thesis. The theme of my study is principals' experiences of mistreatment or harassment by other adults (i.e. professional and public) while fulfilling their role as principal of a public school. I am looking for principals who perceive that they have been mistreated/harassed by other adults while fulfilling their role as principal of the school.

There will be approximately 16 participants in the study. The participants will be principals with at least two years of experience in the principal role in a given community and with at least one year of experience at the middle years level. The principal may have changed schools over the two year period, but is in the same school division and working in a middle years school for the year previous to commencement of the study. This study uses a purposeful sampling approach, in that you have been approached by another individual and asked to participate in the study. After considering the particulars of this study as listed below, you may then decide whether or not you would like to participate in this important research. Should you decide to participate, please send me your contact information from your personal email account.

I anticipate that the study will last approximately eight to ten months but your commitment would be approximately four to five hours of time over that period, depending on the length of the audio-recorded interviews and time used for perusing the typed transcripts of what you have said.

There will be three phases to the research: an in-depth interview of approximately 60 – 90 minutes, three short paper surveys to complete in approximately 45 minutes, and a final interview of approximately 60 minutes. The overall length of time for the data collection seems long but I will complete data analysis after each of the first two phases, before going onto the last. Our interactions will be audio-recorded for later transcription and you will scrutinize the transcriptions for accuracy and to make any additions or changes you would like. The amount of

time spent during any part of the process is at the participant's own discretion. Interviews will be conducted at a time and place of the participants' choosing.

Because the individual interviews will be audio-recorded, comfort with being recorded while talking is an asset. The initial interviews would take place starting in October of the 2016-2017 school year. The surveys would be available in January or February of 2017. The second individual follow-up interview of approximately one hour would take place in March to June of 2017. You will be provided with the written transcripts of your audio-recordings to peruse, to review, to comment on and to elaborate on, in writing, should you so desire, before the thesis is written. This would require a maximum of a couple of hours, at your discretion.

Confidentiality will be maintained as all of the audio-recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my house and will be transcribed only by me at this same location. The signed consent forms and any other data which directly identifies participants will be stored in a separate filing cabinet in my house from the anonymized data. The computer used for storing and analyzing the data will be password protected. Participant numbers and pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of all participants and pseudonyms will be used if any other people are named during the interview process. Contacts with you, as participants, will be by using your personal telephone number or personal email and meetings for the interviews will take place outside the school at a location of your choosing. All indicators of school and location will be redacted in the final presentation of the data. All recordings and transcripts will be destroyed once the research study has been completed and after the required five year period has elapsed.

You will receive no compensation for your participation in the study, but you are welcome to receive a summary of the final research findings, should you so desire.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board, ENREB. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the above named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca). You may also contact my thesis advisor, Dr. Jon Young, at [Jon.Young@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Jon.Young@umanitoba.ca) should you have any further questions or concerns.

If you could help me complete my study by volunteering to become a participant, I would be sincerely appreciative. Please email me or phone me as soon as possible with your contact information. Your participation will greatly help everyone learn about an under-researched part of the principal experience.

Thanks!

Corinne Barrett DeWiele

**Appendix B****UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA****Faculty of Education****Consent Form for the The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS): President and General Secretary****Informed Written Consent Form**

Research Project Title: **A Study of Manitoba Principals' Constructed Understanding of Workplace Mistreatment, Its Frequency, Its Severity and Its Impacts**

Principal Investigator: Corinne E. Barrett DeWiele

Research Supervisor: Dr. Jon Young, University of Manitoba

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

As a doctoral candidate and graduate student in the Faculty of Education, I have chosen to do my research on workplace mistreatment of principals. The purpose of this study is to examine select Manitoba middle years (grades 5-9) school principals' identification and understanding of workplace mistreatment from other adults, its frequency and severity, and to understand the extent of the impact that these experiences have on principals regarding stress and job satisfaction.

The following three questions will guide the purpose of this study and provide the focus for the research:

- 1) What do principals perceive as instances of workplace mistreatment from other adults (teachers, senior administration, parents, the wider community, etc.) in their work settings?
- 2) What are the attributes of the mistreatment incidents in terms of perpetrators (the adults using mistreating behaviours), issues (in what instances the situations occur), frequency and severity?
- 3) How does the experience of mistreatment at work impact principals in terms of personal well-being and satisfaction in their jobs?

There will ideally be sixteen (16) participants in the study – one principal per Council of School Leaders' (COSL) region – with one year experience in his or her present school, but a minimum of two years of experience as a principal. In order to select the participants, the President of the MTS and General Secretary of the MTS grant permission for the researcher to speak with the COSL chairperson and the COSL regional directors to distribute a letter to solicit participation in the study. The principal him- or herself will contact this researcher with his or her personal contact information should he or she desire to participate. In the case of two participants from the same region, a random selection draw will be held to choose only one.

The study will consist of two individual interviews per participant, each one lasting a minimum of one hour and a maximum of one and one half hours. Interviews will be conducted at a time and place of the participants' choosing, but never in the school building, in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The completion of three brief pen and paper surveys is also a requirement.

The individual interviews will be audio-recorded for later transcription. Each participant will have the opportunity to review, to comment on and to elaborate on the typed transcription of his/her audio-record. The amount of time spent perusing the transcripts is at the participants' discretion with an anticipated one to two hours in total as being sufficient for this process.

The entire process of data collection will take place during the 2016-2017 school year. It is estimated that the total time commitment for the entire process will be no more than four to five hours per participant.

I foresee minimal risk to participants in this study, with the exception perhaps of the recounting of incidents that may cause some anxiety, depending on the nature of the incident. Should such be the case, participants will be reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without prejudice, simply by indicating verbally that they no longer wish to continue. I will remove all data that the withdrawn participant has given me from the final analysis in the study.

Confidentiality will be maintained as all of the audio-recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my house and will be transcribed only by me. The signed consent forms and any other data which directly identifies participants will be stored in a separate filing cabinet in my house from the anonymized data. The computer used for storing and analyzing the data will be password protected. Participant numbers and pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of all participants and pseudonyms will be used if any other people are named during the interview process. All identifiers such as schools and divisions will be redacted before anything is published. The only other people that will have access to the anonymized data will be my thesis advisor, Dr. Jon Young, and the members of my thesis committee. All recordings and transcripts will be destroyed five years after the end of the research study.

The findings of this research will be shared with my thesis committee and the outside examiner as part of the completion of my Ph. D. program. The completed thesis will be placed in the repository on the University of Manitoba's MSpace. Further, the findings may appear in reports presented at local, national and international conferences and it may be disseminated in professional and scholarly journals.

You will receive a brief summary of the initial research findings by either email or mailed letter within two months (approximately August 2017) of the completion of the data collection. There will be no remuneration to the principals for participating in this study.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to allow access to the

COSL chairperson, regional directors and staff officers. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. The University of Manitoba may look at the research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board, ENREB. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the above named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Name of the President of The Manitoba Teachers' Society Giving Written Consent:

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the General Secretary of The Manitoba Teachers' Society Giving Written Consent:

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

President's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

General Secretary's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix C

### Consent Form for Participants



**UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA**

**Faculty of Education**

Informed Written Consent Form

Research Project Title: **A Study of Manitoba Principals' Constructed Understanding of Workplace Mistreatment, Its Frequency, Its Severity and Its Impacts**

Principal Investigator: Corinne E. Barrett DeWiele

Research Supervisor: Dr. Jon Young, University of Manitoba

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask me. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

As a doctoral candidate and graduate student in the Faculty of Education, I have chosen to do my research on principals' experiences of mistreatment (sometimes referred to as harassment) by other adults (i.e. professional and public) while fulfilling their role as principal of a school. The purpose of this study is to examine select Manitoba middle years (grades 5-9) school principals' identification and understanding of workplace mistreatment from other adults, its frequency and severity, and to understand the extent of the impact that these experiences have on principals regarding stress and job satisfaction.

The following research questions will guide this investigation:

- 1) What do principals perceive as instances of workplace mistreatment from other adults (teachers, senior administration, parents, the wider community, etc.) in their work settings?
- 2) What are the attributes of the mistreatment incidents in terms of perpetrators (the adults using mistreating behaviours), issues (in what instances the situations occur), frequency and severity?
- 3) How does the experience of mistreatment at work impact principals in terms of personal well-being and satisfaction in their jobs?

There will be approximately 16 participants in the study. The participants are all principals with two or more years experience in their respective communities. In order to select the participants randomly, an introductory letter with identical content was given to all those who indicated an interest in this study through their COSL regional representative. Those who

responded by supplying me with the contact information necessary were entered into a selection draw (in the case of two possible participants from the same region) to choose the 16 participants. You were one of those selected participants from one of the 16 COSL regions in Manitoba.

The study will consist of two individual one-on-one interviews per participant, each interview lasting a minimum of one hour and a maximum of an hour and a half. There are also three brief surveys to complete between the recording of the first and second interviews which will take approximately forty-five minutes. The first one-on-one interviews will be audio-recorded for later transcription. You will be provided with the typed transcript of your audio-recordings to review, to comment on and to elaborate on, in writing, should you so desire, before the final thesis is written. The amount of time you spend on perusing the transcripts is at your discretion, but I expect that the total time commitment will be no more than one to two hours for perusal. Interviews will be conducted at a time and place of your choosing. Both interviews will take place outside of school buildings and outside of the regular school day. The total time commitment for the entire process will be no more than four to five hours.

Given the nature of the study, there may be minimal risk depending on the stories that are recounted and the emotional toll they may have caused. You will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without prejudice, simply by indicating verbally that you no longer wish to continue. I will remove all data that you have given me from the final analysis in the study should you choose to withdraw.

Confidentiality will be maintained and guaranteed as all of the audio-recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my house and will be transcribed only by me. Any written notes and survey data will also be kept in the locked filing cabinet. The signed consent forms and any other data which directly identifies participants will be stored in a separate filing cabinet in my house from the anonymized data. The computer used for storing and analyzing the data will be password protected. Participant numbers and pseudonyms will be used to protect the identities of all participants and pseudonyms will be used if any other people are named during the interview process. All indicators of school and location will be redacted in the final presentation of the data. The only other people who will have access to the anonymized data will be my thesis advisor, Dr. Jon Young and the members of my thesis committee. All recordings and transcripts will be destroyed once the research study has been completed and disseminated and after the five year required period, approximately during August of 2022.

The findings of this research will be shared with my thesis committee and the outside examiner as part of the completion of my Ph. D. program. The completed thesis will be placed in the repository on the University of Manitoba's MSpace. Further, the findings may appear in reports presented at local, national and international conferences and it may be disseminated in professional and scholarly journals.

You will receive a brief summary of the initial research findings by either email or mailed letter within two months (approximately August 2017) of completing the interviews and surveys. Upon request, you are also welcome to receive a full summary of the final research findings by mail or email. There will be no remuneration for participating in this study.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without

prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. The University of Manitoba may look at the research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board, ENREB. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the above named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Semi-Structured Interview Protocol 1 - Open-ended Questions/Prompts

**Introduction:** Thank you for volunteering to participate in this interview and for completing the appropriate paperwork regarding ethics. The interview will run as long or as short a time as you wish depending on your answers. As you know, I am investigating your perceptions of mistreatment to a principal in a principals' workplace. In this first interview I am interested in having a quite general and open-ended conversation about your thoughts and experiences about my research topic of principal mistreatment/harassment by other adults encountered throughout the day in your role as principal. After this first interview I am hoping you will complete some more detailed surveys about this topic, and then a few months later, I hope that you would allow me to come back on complete a follow-up interview. As you know, all information will be kept confidential by the processes described in the informed consent letter that you just signed. I will turn on the recording device now. [Turn on recorder]

Thanks again for volunteering to participate in this interview. Have you reviewed the informed consent form? Do you have any questions or concerns with this interview? Remember, you may choose to stop at any time without explanation. Let's begin with an easy question.

- 1) Please tell me how long you have been an administrator, how long you have been a principal and how long you have occupied your current position in your current school.
- 2) In your current position as principal of XXX school, and thinking only of adult-to-adult interactions, to what extent do you believe that you have experienced mistreatment at work and in describing the extent, could you identify some examples of these mistreatments?

## POSSIBLE PROBES:

- Describe XXX incident in a little more detail and tell me how often such a mistreatment occurs in your workplace. (Repeat as per number of participant's examples dictates.)
  - Why do you perceive these particular incidents as mistreatment? What is it about these incidents that gives you cause to categorize them as such?
- 3) Prompt for a broader range of adults **if needed:** You seem to be focusing on interactions with adults from the 'public', was there ever a time when you were possibly mistreated by a member from your profession, your 'professional world'? (OR exchange the placement of 'public' and 'professional world')
  - 4) Talk to me about how you deal with these incidents, after the fact – after the person who is mistreating you (the perpetrator of such actions) has left your vicinity?
  - 5) Talk to me about how such incidents affect how you do your job, both positively and negatively.
  - 6) In what ways are such incidents impactful on you, personally, in your workplace or at home? (possible prompt regarding physical and psychological well-being)
  - 7) Is there anything else you would like to add?

That is all the questions that I have for you today. Do you have any questions for me?

[Answer Questions]

Thank you for your time in participating in part one of this study. I will be sending you a transcription of our conversation in the near future to check for accuracy and to write in changes if you wish to clarify something for me. I will of course redact all names and all mentions of things that will identify you.

As you are aware, the next step in the process is for you to complete these three short surveys [given to participants at the end of the interview] regarding workplace mistreatment behaviours. After I have finished transcribing all the first-session interviews and collating the survey data, I will arrange the second interview as I need to use information from the first interviews and surveys for the second interview. I sincerely appreciate the time you are devoting to this project and I thank you very much.

## Appendix E

## SURVEY 1 – EXPERIENCES AS PRINCIPAL OF THE SCHOOL

Please indicate, in the box provided, how many times in the school year that just passed (August 1, 2015 to July 31, 2016), you have experienced the following behaviours originating from *adults* in your school community. Write one answer under each of the adults listed in the first three columns. Feel free to change your original answers as you go along if you think of more instances. You may choose to add additional adults (VP, trustees, community members, etc.) in the fourth column and answer with him/her/them in mind as well.

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Frequency table</i>
0	Never
1	1 – 5 times
6	6 – 10 times
11	11 – 15 times
16+	More than 15 times
NA	Prefer not to answer/no answer

	Teachers	Senior Administration	Parents	Other adult Specify : (Ex: VP, Trustee, etc.) _____
1) using an angry tone of voice toward me				
2) yelling or screaming at me				
3) sabotaging or devaluing my work				
4) making angry/hostile gestures (e.g. pound fist on desk, roll eyes, point finger)				
5) avoiding me				
6) withholding information from me				
7) talking down to me (e.g. treat me as inferior to them)				
8) swearing at me				
9) phoning me or sending emails repeated times to swear and complain about me or my building				

	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Frequency table</i>		Teachers	Senior Adminis- tration	Parents	Other adult Specify : (Ex: VP, Trustee, etc.) _____
	0	Never					
	1	1 – 5 times					
	6	6 – 10 times					
	11	11 – 15 times					
	16+	More than 15 times					
	NA	Prefer not to answer/no answer					
10) using hostile body language							
11) hitting me physically/physical assault							
12) insulting or criticizing me verbally (including sarcasm)							
13) failing to correct false information about me							
14) interrupting or cutting me off while I am speaking							
15) getting 'in my face'							
16) pushing me or grabbing me							
17) throwing something at me							
18) spreading rumors about me/gossiping							
19) making verbal threats							
20) making physical threats							
21) damaging my personal property (e. g. car)							
22) whistle-blowing or telling superiors about my behaviour							
23) belittling my opinions (me) in front of other people							
24) making negative comments to me about my intelligence, competence, or productivity							
25) making negative comments to others about my intelligence, competence, or productivity							
26) paying little attention to my ideas or opinions							
27) repeatedly reminding me of my blunders at work							
28) ridiculing me in front of the staff							



	<i>Answer</i>	<i>Frequency table</i>		Teachers	Senior Adminis- tration	Parents	Other adult Specify : (Ex: VP, Trustee, etc.) _____
	0	Never					
	1	1 – 5 times					
	6	6 – 10 times					
	11	11 – 15 times					
	16+	More than 15 times					
	NA	Prefer not to answer/no answer					
29) using social media to insult me, spread rumors or slander my reputation							
30) marginalizing me from the staff							
31) withholding resources (e.g. supplies, equipment) to do my job							

**Please circle the answers which best describe you:**

I am:        MALE        FEMALE        OTHER        PREFER NOT TO ANSWER

I work in the following school setting:    URBAN        RURAL        NORTHERN

In terms of size, I consider my school division to be:    LARGE        SMALL

I am the principal for these grades: (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

### Permission from authors to use survey items from previously published work

#### Rospenda & Richman (2004) GWHQ Survey

9 July, 2016 15:16

Dear Professor DeWiele,

Thank you very much for your interest in the GWHQ. You have my permission to use the items. (I really need to set up a website where people can download the instrument, since my colleague Judy Richman and I are happy to allow anyone to use it - we just have no webpage-development skills.) I'm attaching a copy both of the article that has the original set of items, as well as our most recent version that we've been using in a study of college students (we added some items to assess cyber-harassment, as well as more passive forms of harassment).

If you happen to translate the instrument to French, I would greatly appreciate it if you could share a copy of the translation.

Best of luck on your research!

Warm regards,  
Kathy

Kathleen Rospenda, PhD  
Associate Professor of Psychology  
Department of Psychiatry  
University of Illinois at Chicago

#### Glomb (2010) AES Survey

**De :** Theresa Glomb

**Envoyé :** 10 juillet 2016 10:50

**À :** Corinne Barrett DeWiele

**Objet :** Re: Permission to use items from AES

Thank you for your interest in my work! I would be delighted to have you use the scale (attached). I am also including a paper that details the scale a bit more.

Please update me with progress. As more people use it, it would be great to track norms, etc.

Best wishes,

Theresa

## **Appendix G**

### **Pilot Study Feedback Questionnaire**

#### **Feedback about 3 surveys for Doctoral Study regarding Workplace Mistreatment of Principals by Corinne Barrett DeWiele**

Thank you for taking the time to fill in the surveys as the participants in my pilot study for the quantitative data portion of the study. Your time is greatly appreciated.

Please jot down answers to the questions below as you complete the surveys and add any details that you think are pertinent. (Use the back to expand comments if necessary).

- 1) Approximately how much time did it take you to complete the surveys overall? Each survey?
- 2) Were the directions provided detailed enough for ease of understanding?
- 3) Were the survey items easily understood?
- 4) Did the possible answers provided allow you to choose the answer that you wanted to choose?
- 5) Did you like the format of the surveys or do you have suggestions for improvement?
- 6) Please share any other comments that would make the survey completion part of the study better for future participants.

Thanks again! Please return this sheet and the completed surveys to Corinne.

**Appendix H**  
**Categorization of Survey Items with Types of Workplace Mistreatment**

Question No.	Survey Item	Type of Mistreatment
1	using an angry tone of voice toward me	incivility
2	yelling or screaming at me	harassment or bullying
3	sabotaging or devaluing my work	social undermining or mobbing
4	making angry/hostile gestures (e.g. pound fist on desk, roll eyes, point finger)	harassment
5	avoiding me	incivility
6	withholding information from me	social undermining
7	talking down to me (e.g. treat me as inferior to them)	incivility
8	swearing at me	harassment
9	phoning me or sending emails repeated times to swear and complain about me or my building	harassment
10	using hostile body language	harassment
11	hitting me physically/physical assault	physical violence
12	insulting or criticizing me verbally (including sarcasm)	incivility
13	failing to correct false information about me	social undermining
14	interrupting or cutting me off while I am speaking	incivility
15	getting 'in my face'	harassment
16	pushing me or grabbing me	physical violence
17	throwing something at me	physical violence
18	spreading rumors about me/gossiping	social undermining
19	making verbal threats	harassment or bullying
20	making physical threats	harassment or bullying
21	damaging my personal property (e. g. car)	physical violence
22	whistle-blowing or telling superiors about my behaviour	social undermining or mobbing
23	belittling my opinions (me) in front of other people	social undermining
24	making negative comments to me about my intelligence, competence, or productivity	social undermining or mobbing
25	making negative comments to others about my intelligence, competence, or productivity	social undermining or mobbing
26	paying little attention to my ideas or opinions	incivility
27	repeatedly reminding me of my blunders at work	bullying
28	ridiculing me in front of the staff	bullying
29	using social media to insult me, spread rumors or slander my reputation	harassment or bullying
30	marginalizing me from the staff	bullying
31	withholding resources (e.g. supplies, equipment) to do my job	social undermining

# Appendix I

## SURVEY 2: RANGE OF SEVERITY OF BEHAVIOURS – INTERACTIONS WITH PROFESSIONALS

First, please select **ONE** of the following adults from your **professional contacts** on whom you would like to concentrate while completing this survey regarding the severity of mistreatments that you endure at work. Choose the professional contact whose behaviours, you feel, had the most impact on you and/or your career. Consider all interactions with this adult over the time that you worked with him or her. If you choose, OTHER, please specify about whom you are thinking. **Place a check mark in the box provided to indicate the adult selected.**

<b>Teacher</b>	
<b>Senior Administration/Superintendent</b>	
<b>Other: (ex: vice-principal, etc.)</b> _____	

Next, using the bars below as a sliding scale of 1 to 10, indicate, by drawing a line across the bars, the range of severity of each of the following items as you have experienced them in your role as principal.

Further, if you **do not view the descriptor as a form of workplace mistreatment** from this particular adult, please indicate so by placing a check mark in the box provided. If you **do view the descriptor as a form of workplace mistreatment** by this adult, **but have not personally experienced it**, please indicate so by placing a check mark in the box provided and then providing no rating.

*1 indicates hardly severe enough to rate but it does exist*

*10 indicates the most severe form of workplace mistreatment possible*

### 1) using an angry tone of voice toward me

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**2) yelling or screaming at me**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**3) sabotaging or devaluing my work**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**4) making angry/hostile gestures (e.g. pound fist on desk, roll eyes, point finger)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I have seen but not experienced

**5) avoiding me**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**6) withholding information from me**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**7) talking down to me (e.g. treat me as inferior to them)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**8) swearing at me**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**9) phoning me or sending emails repeated times to swear and complain about me or my building**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**10) using hostile body language**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**11) hitting me physically/physical assault**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**12) insulting or criticizing me verbally (including sarcasm)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**13) failing to correct false information about me**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**14) interrupting or cutting me off while I am speaking**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**15) getting 'in my face'**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced



**16) pushing me or grabbing me**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**17) throwing something at me**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**18) spreading rumors about me/gossiping**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**19) making verbal threats**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**20) making physical threats**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**21) damaging my personal property (e. g. car)**

|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |  
 1        2        3        4        5        6        7        8        9        10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**22) whistle-blowing or telling superiors about my behaviour**

|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |  
 1        2        3        4        5        6        7        8        9        10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**23) belittling my opinions (me) in front of other people**

|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |  
 1        2        3        4        5        6        7        8        9        10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**24) making negative comments to me about my intelligence, competence, or productivity**

|        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |  
 1        2        3        4        5        6        7        8        9        10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**25) making negative comments to others behind my back regarding my intelligence, competence, or productivity**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**26) paying little attention to my ideas and opinions**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**27) repeatedly reminding me of my blunders at work**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**28) ridiculing me in front of the staff**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**29) using social media to insult me, spread rumors or slander my reputation**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**30) marginalizing me from the staff**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**31) withholding resources (e.g. supplies, equipment) to do my job**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**Please circle one:**

I am        MALE        FEMALE        OTHER        PREFER NOT TO ANSWER

I work in the following school setting:    URBAN        RURAL        NORTHERN

In terms of size, I consider my school division to be:    LARGE        SMALL

I am the principal for these grades: (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix J

## SURVEY 3: RANGE OF SEVERITY OF BEHAVIOURS – INTERACTIONS WITH THE PUBLIC

First, please select **ONE** of the following adults from your contacts **with the public** on whom you would like to concentrate while completing this survey regarding the severity of mistreatments that you endure at work. Choose the member of the public whose behaviours, you feel, had the most impact on you and/or your career. Consider all interactions with this adult over the time that you dealt with him or her. If you choose, OTHER, please specify about whom you are thinking. **Place a check mark in the box provided to indicate the adult selected.**

<b>Parent</b>	
<b>School Trustee</b>	
<b>Other (ex: community member, etc.)</b> _____	

Next, using the bars below as a sliding scale of 1 to 10, indicate, by drawing a line across the bars, the range of severity of each of the following items as you have experienced them in your role as principal.

Further, if you **do not view the descriptor as a form of workplace mistreatment** from this particular adult, please indicate so by placing a check mark in the box provided. If you **do view the descriptor as a form of workplace mistreatment** by this adult, **but have not personally experienced it**, please indicate so by placing a check mark in the box provided and then providing no rating.

*1 indicates hardly severe enough to rate but it does exist*

*10 indicates the most severe form of workplace mistreatment possible*

### 1) using an angry tone of voice toward me

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**2) yelling or screaming at me**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**3) sabotaging or devaluing my work**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**4) making angry/hostile gestures (e.g. pound fist on desk, roll eyes, point finger)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**5) avoiding me**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**6) withholding information from me**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**7) talking down to me (e.g. treat me as inferior to them)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**8) swearing at me**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**9) phoning me or sending emails repeated times to swear and complain about me or my building**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**10) using hostile body language**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion					<input type="checkbox"/>	Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced				

**11) hitting me physically/physical assault**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion					<input type="checkbox"/>	Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced				

**12) insulting or criticizing me verbally (including sarcasm)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion					<input type="checkbox"/>	Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced				

**13) failing to correct false information about me**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion					<input type="checkbox"/>	Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced				

**14) interrupting or cutting me off while I am speaking**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion					<input type="checkbox"/>	Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced				



**15) getting 'in my face'**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**16) pushing me or grabbing me**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**17) throwing something at me**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**18) spreading rumors about me/gossiping**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**19) making verbal threats**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**20) making physical threats**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**21) damaging my personal property (e. g. car)**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**22) whistle-blowing or telling superiors about my behaviour**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**23) belittling my opinions (me) in front of other people**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐

Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐

Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**24) making negative comments to me about my intelligence, competence, or productivity**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**25) making negative comments to others behind my back regarding my intelligence, competence, or productivity**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**26) paying little attention to my ideas and opinions**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**27) repeatedly reminding me of my blunders at work**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

☐ Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion

☐ Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced

**28) ridiculing me in front of the staff**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion				<input type="checkbox"/>	Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced				

**29) using social media to insult me, spread rumors or slander my reputation**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not workplace mistreatment, in my opinion				<input type="checkbox"/>	Workplace mistreatment that I may have seen but not experienced				

**Please circle one:**

I am      MALE      FEMALE      OTHER      PREFER NOT TO ANSWER

I work in the following school setting:    URBAN            RURAL            NORTHERN

In terms of size, I consider my school division to be:    LARGE      SMALL

I am the principal for these grades: (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix K**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Protocol 2 - Open-ended Questions/Prompts**

**Introduction:** Thank you for volunteering to participate in this second interview. The interview will run as long or as short a time as you wish depending on your answers, up to 60 minutes. As you know, I am continuing to investigate your perceptions of mistreatment in a principals' workplace. Also, as you know, all information will be kept confidential by the processes described in the informed consent letter that you previously signed.

I will turn on the recording device now. [Turn on recorder]

Thanks again for volunteering to participate in this interview. Do you have any questions or concerns with this interview? Remember, you may choose to stop at any time without explanation. Let's begin, shall we?

- 1) Before we get on to the focus of today's interview, I wonder if you would you like to talk about any other incidents of workplace mistreatment and the impacts that they have had on you that came to mind after the previous session?
- 2) Thinking about all the incidents you have shared with me, how do you resolve the situations of workplace mistreatment, both internally (within yourself as in intellectually and emotionally) and externally (amongst the parties involved in the conflict)?

#### **POSSIBLE PROBES:**

- a) Is there any resolution with those adults who mistreat you? What do you do?
- b) It is difficult in the moment when you are dealing with those mistreating you, but is there ever complete resolution or does it just eat away at you?

- 3) Despite the incidents that you described last time (and this time – if needed), you keep coming back every day to your principal job. Would this be an indication that you are generally satisfied in your current role as principal? Please explain your answer.

*DEFINITION IF NEEDED: Satisfaction is a positive, global feeling (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008) and sense of pride that one reaps from what one does on the job and the other aspects associated with it (Spector, 1997).*

POSSIBLE PROBES:

- a) What makes you feel satisfied in your role as principal (even) when dealing with certain instances of mistreatment?
  - b) What makes you dissatisfied?
  - c) Is it difficult to satisfy the many demands of both the public and professional communities when it comes to solving problems that are sources of mistreatment?
  - d) Do you have particular coping mechanisms that you access to maintain satisfaction in your job? How did you find out about these strategies that are effective for you?
- 4) A study by Philip Riley (2015) regarding principals' occupational health, safety and wellbeing underscored just how much stress Australian principals endured in their roles in schools and the study showed that adult-on-adult bullying was increasing slightly year-over-year during the study timeframe. Would you say, from personal experience, that mistreating behaviours by other adults in the school environment is a major source of stress for you or not? Why do you classify the stress the way you do?
- 5) As we wrap this up, is there anything else you would like to add?

That is all the questions that I have for you. Do you have any questions for me?

[Answer Questions]

Thank you for your time in participating in part three of this study. As I did after transcribing the first interviews, I will be sending you a transcript of our conversation to check for accuracy and to change or enhance in terms of explanations if you would like to provide clarification.

If by some chance I feel the need to clarify something with you during the data analysis phase, would I be able to contact you by email or phone at a later date?

If you have so requested, I will be sending you a summary of the findings once I have completed the preliminary analysis. I sincerely appreciate all your time in helping me to better understand the principal's view of what constitutes workplace mistreatment by adults in schools and its impact on you! Thank you so much!

**Appendix L**

**Observational Protocol – Interview 1 or Interview 2**

**Participant # - \_\_\_\_\_ Fictional Name - \_\_\_\_\_**

**Date of Interview - \_\_\_\_\_**

**Time of Interview - \_\_\_\_\_**

**Place of Interview - \_\_\_\_\_**

**Processes Observed –**

**Reflective Notes (emerging themes or concerns) -**



## **Appendix M**

### **Summary of Key Points from Round 1 of Interviews Regarding Principals' Constructed Understanding of Workplace Mistreatment and its Effects**

#### **1) Distinctions between conflict/disagreements and mistreatment from adults**

- a) Principals understand very well the difference between reasonable conflict, due to their role and how they are trying to support all the students in their buildings. Examples:  
Chuck – “I get lots of disagreements of course, I mean that that happens every week, but those disagreements will happen and they’re not always negative. They’re just disagreements. I enjoy a healthy debate with parents and students when that happens, and staff about the direction of certain things. That is not mistreatment to me.” Amadeus – “conflict is natural, it’s the most natural thing to occur,” so “there’s nothing wrong, I would invite disagreement, um, but how it’s done” in terms of the tone of the message delivery and the place of the discussion.
- b) Principals do distinguish between regular conflict/disagreements and mistreatment, noting that certain interactions with parents go “over the line” or “cross the line” (Cal, Thomas, Victoria, Chuck). However, the line was a little fuzzier when it was their bosses as superintendents and assistant superintendents that seemed to be crossing the line. They tentatively shared these stories with one participant explaining that she couldn’t share her story as it was so specific that the superintendent would know she had participated in the study. “It’s just so specific that I feel like, I don’t think there’s any way you could use it that, ’cause it’s so specific. ... Which is telling, isn’t it?” (Victoria, Interview 2). Steve said, “Superintendent is a tough one, ’cause they’re my boss and really they can kind of do what they want.”

- c) Principals also distinguish between a parent with whom the principal can rationalize and strategize, once the emotion is gone from the discussion, and those that are abusive.

(Thomas, Linda, Victoria, Chuck)

- d) Principals found adults to be more difficult to deal with than students and found that adults mistreat most often and that it was nearly impossible to predict. Example:

Alexandra – “I’ve never had harassment from students, oddly enough, I think the students are the easy part of the job, there’s some more challenging kids, but I’ve never felt threatened by a student. It’s sometimes, the adults that are associated with that student that are the most difficult.” Steve – “it was some of these parents were so crazy, you never really knew when it [the abuse] was coming... but the farther I step back when looking at these situations ... there’s one key thing that they’re all doing, they’re just trying to defend their kid. All of them. They do it really badly, but they’re all looking out for their kid.” Linda – “Although they’re all so different that they kind of blind side you anyway, you never really see them coming.”

## **2) Why principals define these scenarios as examples of mistreatment (in their words with ideas combined into sentences by CBD)**

*(Many references included indications that it is how they are approached by the adults that makes them decide whether it is mistreatment or not. For example: nicely saying you're mistaken as opposed to insulting the principal seems to be where the line is.)*

- a) It is an abusive relationship that crosses ‘a line’ as ‘nobody deserves to be treated that way for that long’.

- b) It is a threat to your intelligence, competency and your safety, something you fear, and it thus creates some negative impact on the principal in terms of career, family, or physical well-being.
- c) It calls the principal's ethics and motives into question when accusing the principal of lying.
- d) It is a personal 'attack on me' which includes anger and aggression toward the principal that he or she never asked for.
- e) It results in reputational damage, in trashing or insulting of one's character, in 'a threat to your integrity as a human being'.
- f) It is an adversarial challenge without logic, foundation or respect for following the protocol/process, making it impossible to rationalize with the abusive challenger by keeping it personal and not productive.
- g) It occurs because people are not able to cope with whatever the situation is that they need to cope with and they are 'taking it out' on the principal as the 'dumping ground'. It also occurs because people have a mistrust of authority already and have an agenda that they carry out and they could care less what the principal has to say.
- h) It is unfair, unjust, dishonest, demeaning, disrespectful, intimidating, berating and condescending.
- i) It includes swearing or an inappropriate 'tone of voice or just inappropriate stuff you just can't use in a place of business which is basically what this place is for me'.

**3) Mistreatments from behavioural organization literature categorized as per principal data: Adults Involved (A), How Interactions Occur (H) and Principals' Descriptions and Examples (D)**

- a) *Incivility*: **(A)** parents including mothers, fathers, foster parents, step-parents; bus drivers; trustee; teachers **(H)** by phone or email, in person/face-to-face, repeat offenders, in public arena (school corridors, gyms, at meetings) **(D)** yelling, screaming, swearing/verbally aggressive, ranting, berating, foul language, racist terminology, demeaning, condescending, disrespectful, irate, nasty, abrasive, angry, rage, confrontational, rude, edgy, grumpy, bristling, agitated, lost control of themselves, ‘guns a blazing’, volatile, loud tone, aggressiveness, aggressive body language, ‘called me everything under the sun’, ‘outside the norm of how I like to be talked to’
- b) *Social Undermining (of note – parents do not show up in this category)*: **(A)** principal colleagues, trustees, superintendents, staff member/teachers, vice-principals, EAs, secretary-treasurer for school division, custodian **(H)** on phone, in person, by email or postings to the group, in front of parent audiences or staff groupings, at staff meetings, doing or saying things behind the principal’s back/ ‘little whisperings, you know and things that went behind closed doors’ (Alexandra) **(D)** (adjectives) belligerent, manipulative, lacking integrity and honesty, underhandedness, sneakily, secretive, unprofessional, belittling, confrontational, yelling, (examples) not given same opportunity for voice as experienced admin, question how the principal is doing his job, put on defensive by superintendents when trying to get staff member to do her job or lack of support in disciplining teachers or in decisions taken by principal, superintendents addressing everyone for one person’s mistake instead of talking to the principal in question, advancement based on ‘who you know’, yelled at and called on carpet by powerful superintendent, sabotage initiatives, questioning competency, posting unfavorable email regarding principal decision for rest of staff to see, passive-aggressive

teachers, public displays of disagreement showing lack of respect, withholding information, little 'digs', going to MTS, open defiance to requests by saying yes and not doing it/disregard for what you ask, lack of respect for protocol or following through on improvement plans. Citation from Annie: "he [superintendent] would get involved in stuff that really was stuff that I could handle but he would kinda take my power away from me publicly" "what he did was take away my power in that moment in in front of an audience of parents" OR "saying that I wasn't doing my job ... just flat out lies about (pause) what was happening and not happening and then spreading those rumors in the community."

- c) *Harassment*: **(A)** group of parents, parents as individuals – both mothers and fathers, parent council chair people and PAC groups 'Wolf PACs', VP, superintendent, anonymous community member, teacher **(H)** on phone, in person, by email, video recording of principal's activities, contact at home, at parent advisory meetings, having child document principals moves, reporting principals' decision to media, **(D)** explosions 'in waves' or explosions defined as (Alexandra) 'harsh, swearing, body stance, tone, volume, and the repetitive finger pointing', repetitive events with 'no chance to recuperate', repeatedly blasting principal, "coming to a parent advisory council and standing on top of the table to scream and yell and stomp" (Sabrina), slander/being called racist, being told over and over what principal MUST do, attack on principals' character, public verbal attacks with an audience of children, staff, other parents, taking file towering over principal and then blocking door to principal, lack of loyalty by VP to P, constant daily phone calls, ragging on principals = unpacking ragged on me as meaning "finger wagged, hands slapping on desk, 'you should know better', raised voice,

intimidating power", repetitive phone calls to school resulting in cease and desist letters, repetitive phone calls to complain, tear a strip off principal and hang up without identifying himself, parent petition against principal going to board office trustees

- d) Bullying **(A)** parents as individuals – both mothers and fathers, teacher, superintendent, community member, PAC president **(H)** in person, on phone, in classrooms **(D)** using physical presence – “they’re scared of them. The father is a big guy, he uses intimidation tactics, he towers over me, a huge guy, he’s affiliated with XXX (gang name), there’s some drug affiliation there, he’s a tow truck driver, he has a chop shop. They’re very aggressive, very aggressive parents” (Sabrina), impose herself with repetitive domineering and control behaviours, incoherent yelling and screaming on many occasions ‘hell on wheels’ (Annie), target the principal and other adults in building, ridiculing principal in community, inappropriate language and aggressiveness, repeated phone calls, passive-aggressive behaviours, ‘a witch hunt’ (Amadeus)
- e) *Mobbing*: **(A)** group including superintendent, VP, teachers and parents **(H)** daily criticisms, phone calls, critiques from all actors so that “I couldn’t even trust them. I wouldn’t even know what, because half of them always had ears to the superintendent.” (Harry) **(D)** whistle-blowing to superintendent by VP (who wanted P’s job and was friend of Superintendent), negative comments to superintendent about competence and how principal deals with issues, negative comments from staff to students about competence of principal “underhanded and you go by the hallway and some people will whisper something to a kid and you’re watching and you don’t quite know why is that kid is turning ghostly white right now.”

- f) *Physical Violence*: did not occur for these principals – closest examples were from parents where they were ‘in my face’ or ‘got right up against me and pointed his finger at me’ or ‘getting angry and physically way too close and screaming and pointing’ (Chuck) but these do not count under the definition of physical violence

#### **4) Principals’ “Heuristic” of Mistreating Behaviours and Threats:**

- a) Principals in this study seem to categorize the behaviours as major, medium and minor.
- b) Principals, interviewed in this study, do not have the vocabulary to distinguish between ‘incivility’ and ‘mobbing’ but they do see a difference between major and minor behaviours.
- c) Sometimes their major and minor categorization doesn’t match the scale of mistreatment. They find that more public displays of disagreements, yelling and screaming, are major, even though they may just be uncivil actions on the part of the parents, according to the behavioural organization literature.
- d) Sometimes the same type of incident can be categorized as major and minor (such as an irate parent on the phone – Cal) depending on the severity of the accusation and the language used.
- e) All threats are considered major to principals (EVERY principal recounted a story of a threat) – threats were to go to: the board office/superintendent/your boss, the media/press, band chiefs, the minister of education, politicians, the police or RCMP, their lawyer, Principals are also threatened with: going ‘over your head’, having the principal’s job, taking the student out of that school to another school, bringing a gun to school and shooting anyone in the way, to take the principal ‘out to the parking lot’, to punch/beat up anyone she could find (2 different incidents) and ‘to hunt you down’.

- f) Major issues in principals' minds are not always equal to harassment and bullying and physical violence on the Namie and Namie scale.

### 5) Negative Impacts

- a) Stress (Sabrina, Cal, Annie, Alexandra, Barry, Steve, Victoria, Chuck, Amadeus)
- b) Fatigue, dark circles under eyes (Annie, Arthur, Barry, Steve, Victoria, Chuck)
- c) Loss of sleep as you can't 'turn it off' (Linda, Sabrina, Alexandra, Arthur, Barry, Steve, Victoria, Chuck, Amadeus) and some need 'to get meds to sleep' (some prescribed by doctors, some over the counter) (Sabrina, Amadeus, Alexandra). Get up in middle of night and do emails as principal can't get back to sleep (Linda) or have to miss work next day for lack of sleep (Chuck). Except Annie "when I'm stressed, I sleep. Yay for me!" and Thomas "something I learned a long time ago is that this is a job and I have a family and I walk out the door, it's off."
- d) Reflect a lot, replay in brain, reliving the scenarios to see what could be done differently (maybe too much- 'I've wracked my brain, I'm mentally, I'm drained'), journal, log incidents (Sabrina, Linda, Arthur, Barry, Thomas, Steve, Victoria, Chuck, Amadeus)
- e) Effects at home: Preoccupied from family, snippy with family/low patience level, neurotic worry, inability to communicate, inability to keep relationships, 'wear the problem' as a mood changer, lack of 'fuel in tank' (Linda, Annie, Alexandra, Barry, Steve, Victoria, Amadeus)
- f) Lack of work-life balance (Victoria, Steve, Amadeus)
- g) Effects at work: Short to people, avoid dealing with certain issues or not dealing well enough (Alexandra, Steve) Example: "you're like a small piece of butter and a big piece of bread – you're spread thin." (Steve)



- h) Hurt, character attack hurts, hurtful to reputation (Cal, Linda)
- i) Emotional damage: reduced self-esteem, reduced self-image, self-doubt (Cal, Linda, Arthur, Thomas, Barry)
- j) Upset, shaking, borderline teary with sobs, sit down to compose oneself by taking deep breaths (Alexandra, Linda, Sabrina, Chuck)
- k) Living in/with fear, worry, somber, pensive, anxious (Linda, Alexandra, Victoria, Chuck, Amadeus)
- l) Tired, pull back, withdraw, need to decompress alone (Annie, Barry, Chuck, Sabrina, Alexandra) “Sometimes I would just go home and sit and cry. If you had a tendency to drink, you’d drink yourself silly.” (Sabrina) or “start drinking (giggle)” (Alexandra)
- m) Need to vent to: VP, secretary, spouse, family member (Sabrina, Cal, Linda, Annie, Arthur, Victoria, Chuck, Amadeus)
- n) Involuntary reactions from body/physical bad gut feeling when seeing or dealing with the people again (Sabrina, Alexandra)
- o) It rattles you for future interactions (Cal, Barry)
- p) Heart rate increases (Victoria, Barry)
- q) Life-shortened due to negative experiences: “shaved two years off my life” (Sabrina) or “I’m sure it shortened my life by many months or (giggle) many years” (Alexandra)
- r) Ticked off, angry (Thomas, Victoria, Chuck)
- s) Shock (Chuck)
- t) Sickness, loss of voice (Alexandra)
- u) Makes you jaded, disillusioned, have negative perceptions, become cynical (Alexandra, Barry, Steve, Victoria, Chuck) “I think it does it does wear you down. Like you get tired

of it. You kind of, after a while, makes you feel like ‘why am I doing this job’? (laughs)

"Why am I here? “ (Victoria)

- v) Person on stress leave as told by a doctor: “It impacts you morally, socially and emotionally. And that’s the pain we talk about kids that come from situations where they suffer trauma. I suffered trauma. And that’s what my doctor has told me, I have suffered trauma.” AND “one’s perception of self, you know, um, (tongue click) I can’t do the job, I must be no good, so why am I doing this anyways, maybe I should just end it all?” AND “physically, you’re red in the face, your blood pressure’s up, and you don’t wanna eat, you don’t want to sleep, so some of the physical things." "You don’t wanna answer the phone. You don’t wanna go outside. You wanna just basically hide from the world. You know, or anybody that that that that would have any care or concern for me. I don’t wanna hear it. I just don’t wanna listen or talk about it." "So it was a, it was an inability to communicate.” “symptoms of anxiety, depression, self-worthlessness, I mean, uh, I mean working in an environment like that for so long, it finally takes a final toll on you professionally and personally” (Barry)

## 6) Positive Impacts

*(Principals are lifelong learners as ALL of them took these experiences as learning opportunities and they are resilient. ‘What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger’ (Cal))*

- a) Reflect and use as learning opportunity, new pathways to be creative in problem solving (Cal, Linda, Annie, Alexandra, Arthur, Barry, Thomas, Steve, Victoria, Chuck, Amadeus)

- b) Feedback helps improve how principals deal with situations and problems in the system, and they can change their approach after feedback (Cal, Annie, Arthur, Thomas, Victoria, Chuck, Amadeus)
- c) Raised consciousness about actions and reactions, ‘tool kit is bigger’ (Sabrina, Alexandra, Steve)
- d) Strengthens school community as a whole to support student in spite of aggressive perpetrator (Sabrina, Barry, Victoria)
- e) Makes you tougher and it gets easier to deal with “in a weird way” (Victoria)

#### 7) Other Possible Ideas to Pursue or Add to Discussion Section as Themes for Next Study

- a) Avoidance of **contacting MTS**, confidence in MTS (Sabrina, Cal, Annie, Alexandra, Arthur, Thomas, Chuck, Amadeus) or Assistance from MTS as crucial (Steve, Barry)
- b) The principals’ hearts were very much in the right place despite the abuses they suffered. Many of them, Chuck, Steve, Amadeus Cal, Linda, Alexandra, and Barry commented on the importance of **being there for their students first as their “foundation”** (Chuck). As Steve put it, “Priorities, kid before anything else. And then that’s how you survive. You don’t worry about math, you worry about a kid. If you can put your focus on the kid, you’re gonna survive.” While Chuck reiterated three times during the interview, despite being accused of lying fairly often as the principal of his school, “I always, I try to act in the best interests of the student first.” Linda said that her staff always have “the best interests of kids at heart, as did I.” Colleagues of Amadeus, after he received “pressure from the community going to a board meeting and pressuring the superintendent’s office” to reverse the principal’s decision of implementing multi-age classes, queried, “do you

really want to die on this hill?” to which he responded, I want to stick to what the right thing is for the kids. ... and I said, if it’s the right thing, I will.”

- c) **Sexism** – no difference according to my data - Linda: "I wonder if it was a man (emphasized) principal, if the treatment would be any different. Like, you know, if I was a man answering the phone as the principal or greeting people or whatever, if there would be a little bit less abuse? Because I think we still, you know, whether we want to admit it or not, I think there is still some of that residual sexism that exists.”
- d) **Mental incapacity of parents** – Principals give benefit of doubt to parents based on mental capacity and ability to understand (Sabrina, Linda, Alexandra, Steve, Chuck, Amadeus)
- e) **Principals try to protect their staff from mistreatment** – Example: Linda "I tried to take some of that away from them if I could and always let them know I was supporting them and not to worry about it, I’ll deal with it, and yes, of course." Also said by: Sabrina, Cal, Alexandra, Barry, Thomas, Chuck
- f) **Small communities** – slightly different experience in terms of information being spread in the community that would not occur in greater metropolis such as Winnipeg (i.e. not one Winnipeg principal mentioned the effect of something ‘in the community’ but all small community principals did). Members from adjacent communities would ask what was going on in a particular school in a particular town.

## Appendix N

### Summary of Key Points from Round 2 of Interviews Regarding Principals' Constructed

#### Understanding of Workplace Mistreatment and:

- how it is resolved (and not),
- satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the job
  - coping mechanisms
  - stress & frequency

#### 1) Resolutions in Cases of Mistreatment

##### a) Resolution comments (general statements)

- All participants agreed that **there is never total resolution** on all issues of mistreatment. All gave an emphatic 'no' in response to this question.

Select examples:

- “Quite often we agree to disagree. Sometimes it just stays as an unresolved cloud depending on how often I have contact with that person.” (Arthur) (Cal, Amadeus, Chuck used the same words, ‘agree to disagree’)
- “Sometimes there were superficially [resolutions] but there were underlying, undercurrents that would be ongoing. So, they would appear to have deescalated and I would feel like the problem had been resolved but then all it takes is something very small to be able to retrigger everything all over again.” (Sabrina)

- “But fair’s not always equal, equal’s not always fair in terms of how you differentiate the discipline right? And it’s tough for people to understand and realize that.” (Cal)
- **Some admitted that the perpetrator that they are dealing with makes a difference** in the resolution.

Select Examples:

- “This is where you understand you don’t actually have control over the human element.” (Victoria)
- “If it’s a parent or someone external to the school, of course it’s easier to have it unresolved. If it’s a staff member that is more challenging because there’s more daily interaction and those I guess I try to find different pathways of coming to some type of resolution, just so we can have a common understanding of how we need to be as a as a as staff members.” (Arthur)
- **Some use avoidance strategies** to not end up with a situation that becomes unresolved.

Select Examples:

- “I swore to myself, in at that moment, on the last day of school, do not answer your phone. I don’t because I know if it’s an angry parent, I may not be able to resolve it and it’ll bother me all summer. ” (Chuck)
- “That one particular mom, I just stopped calling her before putting a consequence in place for her daughter” [as she would just yell at the principal]. (Linda)

- ““Why did I even confront this? Why did I even take this on? ...Am I going to deal with that this time? Or am I just going to just kinda drive around it sort of thing. Not to not to crash into it.” (Barry)
- **Some were able to “box it up”** if it wasn’t too big an issue

Select Examples:

- “just kind of compartmentalize it.” (Cal)
- “To put it in context...where, that’s that situation and that point in time. We have to learn to move from that.” (Barry)
- "I try to put it away is what I do. It’s like I’ll give it the time and then I just try to move it to the side in my mind. ... I’ll give this like the 3 minutes after the call to kind of like come down from the adrenaline and like hit the reset. And then I just have to like, pack it away, because what else are you gonna do? Carry it all day? that isn't a good thing.” (Victoria)

**b) External resolution (amongst the parties involved)**

- **All principals like to have conversations** with the perpetrators. They do not like to use email as a communication tool.

Select Examples:

- “I prefer to do that sort of thing face to face because I think that’s more personal, and it’s more meaningful cause they could read facial expressions and, you know, they could read that my intent.” (Linda – but also Chuck, Amadeus, Victoria)
- “Communication is over the phone or in person. I always encourage my staff and myself included, if there is a problem that needs resolution or a

concern that's raised, I do not use email to address concerns, resolve problems; it's too difficult to tease out the emotion." (Arthur)

- There are slight differences, in the end, in the ways to resolve issues concerning parents/community members (the public) and staff (the professionals) but all begin the same way (see steps below).
  - **Step 1** by all principals: "I always do the call back and I always reiterate the things that we have in place." (Chuck – but also Barry, Thomas, Arthur)
  - **Step 2** by all principals: "creating an environment where parties can be heard" (Amadeus) and "if there's a negative tone, then I ask politely if we could talk at a reasonable and respectful level." (Sabrina – but also Linda, Arthur)
  - **Step 3** by all principals: "listen to them, you know, validate their feelings and let them know that you'll verify the information that was shared and following up further in terms of trying to get some clarity of what occurred." (Barry – but also Thomas lets them 'vent', Arthur, Linda, Sabrina)
  - **Step 4** by all principals is to seek resolution: "if there's something we can do to fix things then and something you know we observe everything then we try and do that" (Thomas – but also Barry, Amadeus, Chuck, Linda) or "asking them what it is that they're seeking and then from there building a path" [to resolution]. (Arthur)
- Final step if needed for the public: "here was a number of times in that meeting where I was that close (puts finger and thumb close together) to saying this



meeting's going to end and then we're going have the superintendent's office."

(Amadeus – but also Sabrina)

- Final step if needed for the professionals: "particularly with the issue of staff, I've had to have the Society involved in working with difficult situations to resolve it."

(Barry – but also Cal)

- Some **principals need to show** staff that they are continuing on with the work at hand and **that the mistreatment does not affect the job at hand.**

Select Examples:

- "It's my responsibility to return to work to keep things normal and normalize and that the people see that that has not, or that will not detract me from what I need to do." (Chuck)
- "I know that that some other people heard. I went out and I shared with some of my close colleagues and confidants ... sort of shared the situation and they shared their feedback on what they heard. So it was more kind of a debriefing" [with staff in earshot of the mistreatment]. (Thomas)

**c) Internally resolution – *intellectually***

- Principals **need to vent** to other confidants to 'process' the events: (Thomas, Linda, Sabrina, Victoria, Cal, Amadeus, Barry)

Select Examples

- "I talk to some people cause they're around and they're my confidants. I talk to my guidance counsellor, my vice-principal and my administrative assistants 'cause they're so close to me. And so it was just a conversation – 'So can you believe that guy?'" (Thomas)

- “I think with time, for me, I process it. ... I do need to discuss it with someone so I’ll either discuss it with my assistant superintendent, or, you know, a very trusting or trustworthy person. ’Cause I do need to vent it and verbalize it to sort through it and process it.” (Linda – also Sabrina)
- “When it come it becomes an abusive situation, you just try to find people to talk to [such as my parents or friends or a therapist].” (Sabrina)
- Principals try to **rationalize the incidents so as not to take them personally, research and reflect to understand, and use them as lifelong learning opportunities** (Cal, Amadeus, Arthur, Barry, Sabrina, Victoria, Chuck, Barry, Thomas, Linda)

Select Examples:

- “I’m always trying to put myself in the situation. ... trying to see it from the other side” [to see] where perhaps some of the aggression, some of the frustration, some of the misunderstanding may come from.” (Arthur)
- [To discover why this person might be behaving so badly] “We just we just Facebooked him, to see, like I don’t have a Facebook account though, we googled just to see what we could learn about him that might help us understand. ... [after finding out information] OK, I understand why you’re angry, your anger is not really directed at me ... now knowing that has actually helped me kind of have more empathy and understand that when he does that, it isn’t about the kids and his dogs but it’s really about a bigger thing.” (Victoria)

- “Those were, you know, those were the hiccups along the way, I mean there’s stressors that come with everything, but they’re also learning opportunities.”

(Linda)

- Principals try to rationalize the incidents **and convince themselves they made the right choice** (Arthur, Amadeus, Barry, Cal)

Select Examples:

- “coming back to uh why I made a decision or why it is that that person may feel like that ... and most of the time I’m able to get to a point where ... reassure myself that it happened for a reason.” (Arthur)
- “making sure that I was grounded in my own beliefs despite” [the mistreatment]. (Barry)

**d) Internal resolution – *emotionally***

- Principals had difficulty trying to explain how they deal with resolution to mistreatment emotionally. They kept going back to things they would do and intellectually how they thought about it. They seem, in general, to admit that **emotionally it sticks with you but intellectually you can put it away more easily** (Sabrina, Amadeus, Victoria) and this bears out and is explained in more detail under the question regarding whether or not the incidents ‘eat away’ at them.

Select Example

- “it is always there but I wouldn’t say that it wears on me like before, that gets easier over time.” (she noted it gets easier to box it up) (Sabrina)

- Principals attempt to **process emotions intellectually** yet it **affects them physically** (Amadeus, Linda, Sabrina, Barry)

Select Examples:

- “I just have to find ways to be able to process it. And really, what all it really is, how do I sort and file all of my different experiences in my head. Um, you know, and how much insomnia do I have?” (Amadeus)
- “When I see those people or even see a picture of them or see something that triggers then those feelings. ...I don’t think you could ever shake those feelings. I think that stays with you. And that’s why it changes you as a person.” (Sabrina)

- Principals prefer to deal with emotions **in private settings (in office, in gym)**

(Arthur, Cal, Chuck, Linda)

Select Example:

- “Something happens that’s of kind of a high degree of stress, I kind of retreat into my office, shut the door, just try to calm myself.” (Chuck)

## 2) Does Mistreatment ‘Eat Away’ at Principals & For How Long?

- **Unresolved issues** (Chuck, Victoria, Amadeus, Arthur) and **having contact with** those who mistreat the principals (the perpetrators) (Sabrina, Barry, Chuck, Arthur) are the things that eat away at the principals

Select Examples:

- “I would say that if the contact hasn’t been diminished, if it hasn’t been severed then it’ll just keep eating away at you. ... There’s no way around it, they’re just always there. ... it may feel less over time, but I don’t think

you could ever shake those feelings. I think that stays with you. And that's why it changes you as a person." (Sabrina)

- "I'm still a person of great character, so it gnaws at me." (Barry)
- "Absolutely [it eats away at me]. ... "not being able to focus, that event or that situation, coming back in my mind even though I'm trying to perform other tasks, other duties." (Arthur)
- The 'eating away' **varied in length of time** from a couple of days to forever, if they have contact with the perpetrator again. The more severe the incident, the longer it lasts with the principal. (Victoria, Amadeus, Cal, Arthur)

Select Examples:

- "Depending what the circumstances are and the level and the magnitude of the incident, they can stay for a while. ... you know what, it still's in the back of my mind the way I was threatened by a parent and that's over 2 years now." (Cal)
- "I think that it eats away initially with more intensity, in the first 24 hours, questioning myself, did I do the right thing ... it could be a couple of days, it could be a week, it could be two weeks depending on what the event is and the interaction that I may be having with that person. ... I think that most often if I have a daily interaction with the person ... with whom I felt threatened ... I think that that would carry on for longer. ... There isn't a definite period of time. It could be a year or two, maybe I don't run into that person for a while and then I can this person at a professional learning event and then all of the emotions can come back." (Arthur)

### 3) Principals' Coping Mechanisms & How They Learned Them

❖ Principals coping mechanisms are varied immensely. Here is the list of the numerous activities (without the supporting quotes due to space limitations in this summary).

- Physical activity, and regularly, such as running (Victoria), walking (Sabrina, Barry), cutting the grass (Chuck), work out (Amadeus, Cal, Arthur)
- “Try to separate the two” (work and home life) (Chuck – but also Amadeus, Victoria, Thomas)
- Reading (Victoria, Linda, Sabrina, Barry)
- Reflection through journaling or while driving home (Sabrina, Arthur)
- Go into classrooms at school and interact with the reason they are in the school in the first place, the students and staff (Chuck, Thomas)
- Laughter/Play jokes on the staff (Linda, Chuck, Thomas)
- Talk to colleagues and/or family who they could trust about such incidents (Victoria, Linda, Sabrina, Thomas, Cal)
- Talk myself out of the negativity, not taking things personally, positive self-talk (Linda, Thomas, Chuck, Barry, Cal)
- Socializing with people from outside the school community about non-school topics (Barry, Linda, Thomas, Arthur)
- Cooking (Linda, Barry, Thomas)
- Yoga/Relaxation Techniques/Deep breathing (Cal, Linda, Chuck, Arthur)
- Use humour to diffuse the situation (Thomas, Victoria)

- Consider taking a leave, noticing more principals taking leaves (Sabrina, Barry, Victoria)
  - Give a time limit to get over the incident for that day and move on “it’s not healthy for me to wallow in that for any length of time” (Linda – also Victoria, Thomas)
  - Listening to music (Victoria)
  - Sculpting (Amadeus)
  - Watching TV (Barry)
- ❖ The majority admit that they found that **they learned coping strategies by “trial and error”** or by “a little bit of osmosis” (Chuck) from family, either “**self-directed**” (Chuck – also Victoria, Thomas, Sabrina, Arthur, Amadeus) or by taking advice from others (Cal, Chuck). Some agree that **MTS or divisional workshops were useful** such as cognitive coaching, emotional intelligence, healthy living/mindfulness, dealing with difficult people, and mediation training: “I think it’s a combination of workshops, professional reading, talking with colleagues, trying different uh strategies [like] some have been learned through workshops, seven habits of highly effective administrators or uh people (Arthur – but also Barry, Victoria, Linda, Sabrina). **No one claimed to have learned any coping strategies during their university** training (Victoria, Chuck, Amadeus, Linda, Thomas, Arthur, Sabrina, Cal), even at the Master’s level, “I don’t think any of my university courses had anything to do with coping, managing, they were all more, if I look at my master’s work, philosophy and how to administer.” (Thomas)

#### 4) Are Principals Satisfied, Despite Mistreatments? What Makes Them Feel Satisfied?

- **Resoundingly, all principals responded that they are satisfied** in their jobs, despite suffering various workplace mistreatments, and they are proud of what they do every day (Sabrina, Cal, Linda, Arthur, Barry, Thomas, Victoria, Chuck, Amadeus), but they can easily give ways that they are dissatisfied when asked. They are **satisfied for the most part but there are caveats to the satisfaction**, one of those being when they suffer mistreatment at work.

Select Examples:

- “Well who likes to be treated like that? ... I’m very satisfied in my role as a principal. I like what I do. I do though see how draining it can be.”  
(Victoria)
- “it is a good gig, it’s fun, it’s interesting, there’s always so many different things going on.” (Amadeus)
- “I mean, the benefits outweigh the negative parts there, it’s very rewarding.” (Linda)
- **Resilience (from first interview) and belief systems that keep core values in tact:** there to help kids (as per first interview) and that is their foundation and motivation for what they do (Sabrina, Cal, Linda, Barry, Arthur, Chuck, Thomas, Arthur). They can put up with the mistreatments as they reap satisfaction from seeing the students and how they grow and mature and learn.

Select Example:

- “I think it’s because I remember why I got into this profession as a teacher in the first place and it’s about kids. And I love working with kids and the kids



come in and kids are smiling, kids are learning, kids are happy to be here. ... there's just engagement, and being able to work with kids for three years and you see the amazing growth in kids in three years. It's a fabulous experience and to know that I contribute. And then you get kids that come back years down the road, and go, (voice change to higher pitch) oh I remember you, and you know you made a difference in that kid's life." (Thomas)

- **Investing time in staff for positive gain and the concept of the 'team' of teachers in the building** rather than the negatives that come from the time invested in the mistreatment events: (Victoria, Amadeus, Linda, Barry, Cal, Sabrina)

Select Examples:

- "working with new teachers has been a big one where I see people starting their career, open to dialogue and suggestions and feeling like I see growth ... I've invested there." (Victoria)
- "I take great pride in trying to see how I can support others in in their development." (Amadeus)

- **Receiving positive feedback ('reaffirming competency') and appreciation from public and professionals** [superintendents, teachers, community members such as seniors, parents, PAC] regarding school events, decisions, visits, the job they are doing: (Amadeus, Victoria, Sabrina, Thomas, Arthur, Amadeus)

Select Example:

- “I believe most people I deal with in this community appreciate what I do, and think I’m doing a good job so, the naysayers can be on the outside and I’m fine with that.” (Thomas)

- **Controlling their workspace/school:** They cannot control what other people or policy dictate but they can control their workspace (Cal, Sabrina, Victoria, Chuck, Amadeus, Barry).

Select Examples:

- “I always have ten or fifteen things but I get satisfaction in finishing one and then taking on the next and the next and getting it off the plate and I know the plate is always full, but for me, that’s how I keep it all kind of in line.” (Chuck)
- “it’s what I tell myself that I’m doing in my job. ... I think I look at that and I feel good about where things are moving.” (Amadeus)

5) **When are Principals Dissatisfied?** (*Select examples not provided in all categories as some are more obvious*)

- **Always dealing with the behavioural issues and troubleshooting and the time that takes to sometimes not reach a resolution** (not the well-behaved student and his/her parents): (Chuck, Cal, Victoria, Amadeus)

Select Example:

- “How do I draw a conclusion on this important issue? I either say, this child is lying or this parent’s lying or this parent’s lying or this teacher’s lying or some combination and that’s an untenable situation to be in. But

that's taken a lot of time and I feel like, I guess, I'd almost put that in the unresolvables, right?" (Victoria)

- **Disconnect between the school and the superintendents' office or the department of education or trustees interference** – lack of consultation regarding decisions that affect the school, number of meetings outside the building: (Chuck, Barry, Thomas, Victoria, Amadeus, Linda, Barry)
- **Paperwork overload/Administrivia** from superintendents, Minister of Education, Government of Manitoba, divisional personnel, report card reading on the weekends: (Chuck, Victoria, Linda, Sabrina, Thomas, Arthur)
- **Difficulty of work-life balance:** (Chuck, Amadeus, Victoria, Thomas)  
Select Example:
  - “the laughing the kidding around [at home], the person I was before, I think I lost it for some time. So I think I need to find that back. I think it's that whole idea of balance, right?" (Amadeus)
- **Job weighs on you over time, stresses you out:** (Amadeus, Victoria, Chuck)  
Select Example:
  - “I don't get very much pleasure in the day because I'm always dealing with the, what we would deem, the hard core issues that a lot of teachers just never encounter.” (Chuck)
- **Time constraints and working on other people's schedules:** (Victoria, Sabrina, Linda, Cal, Chuck)
- **Lack of resources** - for teachers, for inclusion: (Amadeus, Linda, Cal)

- **Teachers lack of engagement with certain students and best practices:** (Cal, Sabrina)

Select Example:

➤ “You sit back and you go hhhh (sigh) what else do I need to change to help get these guys moving. I think that’s probably the only piece to my job that I’m like hhhh (sigh) how do I get these guys going? ... Sometimes those professionals are, they’re just stuck sometimes and they just need to get over that.” (Sabrina)

- **Socio-economic issues in a small community:** (Barry)
- **Parent’s sense of entitlement:** (Amadeus, Arthur)
- **Delivering bad news to a staff member** (no spot for them next year in the school): (Thomas)

#### 6) Philip Riley Study Questions – Is Mistreatment a Source of Stress? Is it Increasing Year-over-Year? Speculation on the Cause?

- Principals were firm in the belief that **“when it happens it is a major source of stress.”** (Chuck – but also Victoria, Amadeus, Linda, Barry, Sabrina, Cal, Thomas, Arthur)
- **Aggressivity of public** (parents & community members), **and in one case professional personnel** (teachers & superintendent), **has increased**, in their perception since either when they were in school or since they started their principalships but the incidences are the “exception not the rule” (Thomas) (Amadeus, Linda, Chuck, Victoria, Barry, Sabrina, Cal, Thomas, Arthur)

- **Causes for this increase in aggressivity by the public**, as perceived by the principals:

- a) **Increased technology use**: demands for answers right away (Chuck, Linda, Arthur)
- b) **Shift in societal norms, attitudes and/or demographics**: (Cal, Arthur, Linda, Amadeus, Thomas)

Select Example:

- “Parents as a whole now are **less supportive of the school system** and of the people and professionals who work in schools and that they are much quicker to defend their child. And to take that role on aggressively, than in the earlier days where it was you’re teacher said, therefore it is. That is not the case now.” (Thomas)

- c) **Disrespectful communication** style: (Chuck, Victoria, Linda)

Select Example:

- “There used to be times where parents would call and it used to feel more like a question or a help me understand or can you look into this for me. ... [Now] they’re already a full head of steam, like looking to the top and ... that’s not necessary, these are resolvable. And I feel like it’s not often framed as a question or help me understand. And there’s very rarely the kind of the consideration that there could be more sides to this. ... It’s much more a tone of control and demand.” (Victoria)

*Incidental responses that supplemented information for questions already asked in**Interview #1***7) Negative Impacts on Principals**

- **Stress/duress/toll** (Chuck, Amadeus, Victoria, Linda, Cal, Arthur):

Select Example:

- “It is the major stressor. The adult bullying for sure, that’s the major stressor, I mean even the paperwork that’s all manageable ... but when it becomes an emotional thing that’s always the most difficult part.” (Linda)

- **Sleep loss** (Amadeus, Linda, Chuck):

Select Example:

- “These things really do affect me. I have a hard time shutting off the brain at night and it’ll mull around in there and I’ll be up til three four in the morning and I’ll be a basket case the next day.” (Chuck)

- **Attack on person, character, integrity, self-worth dignity is very hurtful**

(Victoria, Linda, Chuck, Barry):

Select Example:

- “I do have a tendency to take it personally. And not as an attack on me as a person, more as an attack on my integrity that something has gone wrong in the school and I should be aware of it.” (Chuck)

- **Downtrodden, fight or flight** (Victoria, Barry):

Select Example:

- “a few of those calls or conversations kind of close together, you can get pretty downtrodden and wonder why you’re doing this and what

importance it has. And there have been days I've gone home and thought, I've given the best of myself to people who don't appreciate anything I've done and my kids get whatever leftover energy there is." (Victoria)

▪ **Insecurity and uncertainty:**

Select Example:

- "Did I do the right thing, uh, how is this being perceived, is this person talking to other colleagues, so it's all of the insecurity, uncertainty about what's going on behind the scenes." (Barry)

▪ **Residual Effects years later** (Barry, Sabrina, Cal, Amadeus):

Select Example:

- "I bumped into somebody two days ago at the clinic ... so they come up to me and they talk to me as if nothing ever happened. But inside it's like, you crumble because ...the effect that they had on you for that long a time, 'cause it was 7 years. ... You look at them and it's like, how do I escape this? So this has even been a long process for me this year, where I've spoken to my children about leaving the community. I need to, and I've lived there for forty years." (Sabrina)

**8) Some New Examples of Mistreatment Were Cited:** but for the most part they were variations on a theme from the first round of interviews and supported the data that has already been analysed; more variations on a theme that can be used to support the first round, rather than as new individual examples.

**9) Other Ideas to Pursue at a Later Date – for Discussion section perhaps**

- a) **Principals reframe workplace mistreatment incidents by renaming them**  
(perhaps to make it feel less hurtful or harmful?): frustration, dissonance, anger, emotional outpouring, (email) blasts
- b) **Differences from big city to small communities**
- c) **Stage in life affects how principals do the job**
- d) **Advice to parents**
- e) **Suggestions for principal preparation:** provided by 2 participants
- f) **Excuses for parents are provided** (as in interview 1)
- g) **MTS** – not used much by many of these administrators.

Select Example:

- “I’ve never attended an MTS workshop for anything” (Thomas) and this comment about MTS mandate, it “has become a union, is no longer an association” (Amadeus)



## **Appendix O**

### **The Manitoba Teachers' Society Code of Professional Practice**

#### **Code of Professional Practice**

The Code of Professional Practice establishes the required standards of conduct for all members of The Manitoba Teachers' Society, whether acting in an employed position under a Collective Agreement, or acting in an appointed or elected position. A member's professional behaviour must reflect the spirit as well as the letter of the Code.

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#### **Code of professional practice**

Members are bound by the following principles and each Member's professional behaviour must reflect the spirit as well as the letter of these principles:

1. A Member's first professional responsibility is to the Member's students;
2. A Member acts with integrity and diligence in carrying out professional responsibilities;
3. A Member avoids involvement in a conflict of interest, recognizes that a privileged relationship with students exists and refrains from exploiting that relationship for material, ideological or other advantage;
4. A Member's conduct is characterised by consideration and good faith. The Member speaks and acts with respect and dignity, and deals judiciously with others, always mindful of their rights;
5. A Member respects the confidential nature of information concerning students and may give the information only to authorized personnel or agencies directly concerned with the individual student's welfare;
6. A Member first directs any criticism of the professional activity and related work of a colleague to that colleague in private. Only after informing the colleague of the intent to do so, the complainant may direct in confidence the criticism to appropriate officials through the proper channels of communication. A Member shall not be considered in contravention of this Article in the following circumstances:
  - a) consulting with the Society or the Member's Local president;
  - b) taking any action that is allowed or mandated by legislation;
  - c) where the Member is acting in good faith and without malice in the discharge of the legitimate duties of the Member's appointed or elected position;
7. A Member does not bypass immediate authority to reach higher authority without first exhausting the proper channels of communication;
8. A Member makes an ongoing effort to improve professionally;
9. A Member adheres to collective agreements negotiated by the Society and its Local; and
10. A Member or group of Members makes only authorized representations to Outside Bodies on behalf of the Society or its Locals. Without the express permission of the Society, no Members conferring with Outside Bodies may explicitly or implicitly claim that they represent the Society or its Locals.

(The Society approved new Bylaws at its 2014 AGM. Bylaw IV includes the Code of Professional Practice that applies to all teachers who are members of the Society. Bylaw IV also

outlines what constitutes *professional misconduct* and how the Code is enforced. The Society's Constitution and Bylaws outline the remedies or sanctions that can be imposed against any teacher who violates the Code of Professional Practice.)

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