

2015

# School Violence and Teacher Resiliency at a Midwest Elementary/Middle School

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# Walden University

College of Health Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Jounice Wright

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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2015

Abstract

School Violence and Teacher Resiliency at a Midwest Elementary/Middle School

by

Jounice B. Wright

MA, Wayne State University, 1981

BS, Wayne State University, 1971

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Health

Walden University

September 2015

## Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate, from the perspective of teachers, the possible effect of school violence on teacher resiliency. School violence has been studied with respect to student behavior and academic success, as well as socioeconomic influences, but not with respect to teacher resiliency, as expressed by teachers themselves. Resiliency theory was the conceptual framework. Participants were all teachers of Grades 2-8 at an elementary/middle school in the Midwest. Twelve in-depth interviews were transcribed into text data and analyzed for common themes. Using NVivo, Version 10, I was able to more easily manage the volumes of text data. Reoccurring themes and meanings were triangulated with a resiliency questionnaire, school climate surveys, and field notes. The overarching themes that emerged were that teacher resiliency at the target school was lowered when its teachers were exposed to a school climate which allowed for excessive violence, especially fights. A second overarching theme was that there were inconsistencies in the support offered by the school administration, which negatively impacted teacher resiliency. A third overarching theme was that there was a significant lack of parental and community support, which also negatively affected teacher resiliency at the target school. Overarching themes that emerged can now be used to support the need for more effective teacher training about school violence. The outcomes may also help generate improved school violence policies at the local, state, and national levels.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research to the memory of my parents, Rufus and Elease Blackmon.

I am eternally grateful to them, because they saw in me qualities that I would never have known were there, and then they planted seeds from the time I was born until they left this earth, to ensure that those qualities would become fruitful.

## Acknowledgements

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

#### **National Problem**

School violence has become a major problem nationwide (Neiman, DeVoe, & Chandler, 2009; Fahsi & Luce, 2012; Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., O'Brennan, Lindsey, M. Gulemetova, M. (2013). The most significant effect of school violence is its negative influence on the potential of the nation's children in areas such as academic success, attendance, and maladaptive behavioral patterns (Allen, 2010). For teachers, violence at school and in the workplace represent a public health issue because the negative effects of violence may decrease teachers' resiliency. For teachers to become unmotivated and depressed because of a lack of training and resources in how to address school violence is unfortunate (Espelage, 2013). Further, when teachers begin to leave the profession prematurely because the resources and training to deal with issues involving school violence are not available to them (Garland, 2007, Duffy, 2009, Wilson, 2011), it is time for social change. As an example of the types of social change that would be helpful, teachers have specifically requested that school districts provide training in the areas of school violence that is related to sexual orientation and cyberbullying (Agosto, Forte, & Magee, 2012). Overall, that type of training has not been forthcoming. According to Espelage, 2011, more than 250,000 teachers in the United States are threatened annually with bodily injury while on school property). In terms of decreased wages, days at work, and instructional time, the cost of teachers being injured by school violence is great. These costs are also evident in the need for increased :

- medical attention
- psychological care
- workers compensation claims
- student disciplinary actions
- involvement by police
- requests for social work services
- use of the judicial system

In the nation's public schools, 31% of educator victims are male, whereas 69% are female. School violence occurs at a rate of 55% in secondary schools, as opposed to 45% in elementary schools, and 43% occurs in cities, 31% in suburbs, 11% in towns, and 15% in rural areas. (For the purposes of this study, a town is considered smaller than a suburb.)

### **Local Problem**

Data regarding health risk behaviors among young people is collected, and reports are generated every two years by the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS). Information that is relevant to this study pertains to cuts, bruises and broken bones, as well as information related to physical fights, weapons carrying, suicide, and bullying is offered by the YRBSS. A national YRBSS survey conducted in 2013 revealed that in Michigan, 15.5% of students reported carrying a weapon to school and 6.8% of students report not going to school one or more days because they were fearful (David-Ferdone, C. & Simon, T. R., (2014), 28.1% of male students and 15.0% of female students reported being in a physical fight on school property during the previous year. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,, 2014).

This study focused on an elementary/middle school in Detroit, Michigan. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported that school and community crime in the Detroit, increased alarmingly in 2009, David-Ferdon, C. & Simon, T.R. (2014). Almost 45% of students reported having been assaulted at school Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, 2014); 28.6% of females and 33.1% of males reported being in a physical fight during the previous year. The following table is an indication of the increase in school violence. With school violence increasing, an objective examination of its impact on teacher resiliency is in order.

Table 1

Number of School Shootings in the United States Over Time

Year	Number of Shootings
1970-1979	4
1980-1989	5
1990-2000	28
2000-2010	25

*Note.* From “*The final report and findings of the safe school initiative: implications for the prevention of school attacks in the United States.*” by Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski (2002), *Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office*, Reprinted with permission.

Table 1 is evidence that school shootings have been on the rise for the past four decades. The U.S. Department of Education (2007) recommended that teachers be made aware that they will need to become part of a cooperative team of operatives to effectively deal with school shootings as they work to maintain a safe learning environment. Such teams may include police and fire personnel, mental health agencies, counselors, emergency medical services (EMS) special weapons and tactics teams (SWAT), and bomb specialists (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Regarding school shootings, an approach that includes prevention, crisis planning, and school conditions was highly recommended (Daniels, 2010). No such training has been offered.

### **Nature of the Study**

This study was designed to investigate, from the perspective of teachers, the impact of school violence on teacher resiliency in Grades 2–8 at a Midwest inner-city elementary/middle school. Data were taken from in-depth interviews with twelve teachers. A qualitative research design was used because it allows for answers to questions such as why and how. The phenomenological approach was used because it is compatible with the process of investigating the lived experiences of participants. Interview questions centered on each participant's encounters with school violence over the past five years, workplace aggression, teacher training relative to school violence, and personal resiliency. Any perceived connection between school violence, workplace aggression, teacher training and their own resiliency is included in the discussion section.

The data also included a resiliency questionnaire, and the results of three schoolwide climate surveys. Upon completion of the study, all participants were provided with the findings



and implications of the study, and results were made available for public view after the researchers satisfactorily completed the requirements of the Walden University School of Health Sciences doctoral program.

### **Research Question and Subquestions**

The most prominent question associated with this study of school violence and teacher resiliency revolves around whether or not they are related, from the perspective of teachers. The following subquestions were answered based on the findings generated using text data from face-to-face interviews:

1. Does teacher resiliency decrease as school violence increases?
2. Does teacher resiliency increase as school violence decreases?
3. Is there no relationship between teacher resiliency and school violence?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate, from the perspective of teachers, the impact of school violence on teacher resiliency in grades 2-8 at a Midwest elementary/middle school. As an outcome, this study will add to the body of scientific knowledge regarding teacher resiliency and school violence, from the prospective of teachers. Further, because teachers will feel free to express professional insights as to what can improve the current status of school violence, administrators and policy makers may be provided with the information they need to formulate effective teacher training and school policy changes.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach, and employed the conceptual framework regarding resiliency as provided by Siebert (2005). A phenomenological approach

allows for the shared experiences of participants to be examined for the purpose of discovering trends, commonalities, and themes that can be used to guide policy change or future research. This is important for teachers because findings could positively influence their long term well being. The ability to highlight commonalities and themes in the lived experiences of teachers provides a credible foundation upon which to build needed changes. Qualitative research designs using phenomenology are well suited for answering questions involving what is happening, how, and why.

This study is based on the idea of resiliency. Resiliency, the concept that grounds this study, is seen as the ability to bounce back from unfortunate circumstances (Seibert, 2005). There are five hallmarks of resiliency, such as maintaining good health during adversity, problem solving skills, and expecting positive outcomes (see Figure 1) Protective factors (Henderson, 2012) also help to explain reasons for resiliency, or the lack of it, in the face of adversity (discussed in Chapter 2). Protective factors and resiliency itself are closely related to the probability that a teacher will continue in the profession or not (Espelage, 2013).

In this phenomenological study, resiliency, from the perspective of study participants, was investigated by using interviews, a resiliency questionnaire, field and journal notes. School Climate Surveys, a study instrument used to compare levels of school violence with resiliency levels was also used. Referring to resiliency as a personality trait that can be learned and enhanced, Siebert (2005) proposes that resilient people are at an advantage because they expect to bounce back from challenging circumstances (Siebert, 2005, p2). They are flexible, and they thrive in constant change (Siebert, 2005, p. 2). Teacher resiliency has been discussed with a view towards the conceptual perspective provided by Siebert (2005). Resiliency, the ability to adapt

to difficult or changing circumstances, is a character trait that can be developed (Siebert, 2005). The ability to maintain health, wellbeing and emotional stability are hallmarks of resiliency (Siebert, 2005). Resiliency measurements for youth and adults generally use self report instruments, and further research into reliable measurement scales is recommended (Windle, Bennett, & Noyes, 2011).

For the most part, Seibert's ideation regarding resiliency is similar to that of Henderson (2012). They agree that degrees and forms of resiliency are innate, and can emerge in the midst of and because of difficult circumstances. They also agree that resiliency is closely connected to environmental influences, and how one responds to them. Whereas Siebert (2005) looks upon resiliency as a personality trait, Henderson (2012) views it as a quality that everyone is born with. According to Henderson (2012), under the right circumstances anyone's potential for resiliency can be activated and developed.

Other resiliency experts, for example, Southwick & Charney (2012), use a separate set of parameters, resilience factors, to identify resiliency. Overall these authors are more closely aligned with Henderson's view than with Siebert's. In many ways, resiliency experts refer to terminology which, when examined, has the same operational meaning as terminology used by other experts. For example, Seibert speaks of problem solving skills in the same sense that Henderson speaks of perception and initiative. Southwick & Charney (2012) refer to this same resiliency factor as looking for meaning and opportunity (p.11). Whereas Siebert (2005) states that resiliency is a personality trait, it has also been defined simply as the ability to bounce back (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Resilient people, then, are not prone to take on a victim mentality, and they do not allow fear, worry, or anger to threaten their ability to function (Siebert, 2005). Now seen as an essential capability in every job category, resiliency involves the realization that when completely disruptive events occur, it is expected that one will experience permanent and positive changes when the crisis is over (Seibert, 2005, p. 6). One will cope or crumble, become bitter or better, and emerge either stronger or weaker (Siebert, 2005, p.6). Additionally, each of the authors cited above agree that although resiliency is innate, it needs to be discovered, nurtured, and developed.

Another description of resiliency is that humans are “hard wired” to be able to bounce back from adversity because of protective factors which may be either innate or external (Henderson, 2012). Psychiatry, psychology and the social sciences have traditionally focused on an approach to traumatic situations and negative circumstances which highlighted what is wrong (deficit model) and how to correct it from an external perspective until the 1900<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, however, resiliency research has shifted to a focus on what it is within individuals that enables them to bounce back from trauma and adversity.

The deficit model of human behavior, specifically as it relates to students, has caused teachers to focus on what is lacking in individual students, in schools, and in them. As documented by Henderson (2012), resiliency models highlight what is right with these entities, for the purpose of building on positive traits. Often, it is not possible to change the outside forces that fuel negative behavior, whereas building on innate factors that foster positive behavioral change can be very productive. Sometimes known as protective factors, these positive components can be highlighted in the lives of individuals to the degree that they affect positive change.

## Operational Definitions

Some of the terminology used in this study may have multiple meanings. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, the following operational definitions are offered:

*Bracketing.* A practice used by researchers to suspend any conscious memory of, reference to, or knowledge of the topic being shared (Creswell, 2013, p. 83).

*Bullying.* Actions repeatedly perpetuated over time with the intent of demeaning, degrading, causing physical or emotional harm where there is also an imbalance of power (Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., O'Brennan, L. M., & Johns Hopkins University, Gulemetova, M. & National Education Association (2011).

*Bully-victim.* One who has been bullied and who now bullies others (Nansel et al., 2002).

*Cyberbullying.* Negative communications using electronic devices or sent over the internet, including verbal harassment, belittling messages, revealing photos or videos and accusing verbiage (Agosto, Forte, & Magee, 2012).

*Guided instructional mode.* Students practice learned material with close monitoring from teacher. They may work alone or in structured groups.

*Independent practice instructional mode.* Students, working at their individual paces and levels, solve problems, write, and create without teacher intervention. Students may work alone, in groups, or they may free to engage with any other student

*Lecture instructional mode.* All students are focused on the teacher as she/he provides instruction in lecture format.

*Member checking.* The returning of transcript drafts to participants for them to validate their contributions (synonymous with follow-up interview and clarification interview) (McConnell-Henry, Chapman & Francis, 2011).

*Mobbing.* Aggression by more than one person toward a victim (Vickers, 2010).

*Perpetrator.* One who initiates an aggressive act (Espelage, D., Anderman, E. M., Brown, V. E., Jones, A., Lane, K. A., McMahon, S. D., ...Reynolds, C. R. (2013). Understanding and prevention violence directed against teachers,

*Protective factors.* Nurture and support in the workplace, positive connections and meaningful participation, life guiding skills and clear, consistent boundaries, purpose and clear expectations (Muller, Gorrow & Fiala, 2011).

*School climate.* A measure of how much students and staff members feel connected to and supported by one another and by school administrators (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2011).

*School environment.* A school's social and physical environment, including immediate neighborhood features (Lindstrom, Griffin, Carlson & Johnson, 2012).

*School violence.* Any behavior that violates a school's educational mission or climate of respect or jeopardizes the intent of the school to be free of aggression against persons or property, drugs, weapons, disruptions, and disorder (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2002).

*Teacher resiliency.* The ability to cope, adapt, bounce back, and to maintain health, wellness, and emotional stability in the midst of difficult or changing circumstances, (Siebert, 2005).

*Triangulation.* The use of more than one form of data collection method to test the same hypothesis within a unified research plan (Frankfort & Nachmias, 2008, p528).

*Victim.* One who has been bullied or has endured an aggressive act (E Espelage, D., Anderman, E. M., Brown, V. E., Jones, A., Lane, K. A., McMahon, S. D., ...Reynolds, C. R. (2013). Understanding and prevention violence directed against teachers,

*Workplace bullying.* Aggression in the workplace perpetuated by one or more persons where individuals believe themselves to have been harmed over a period of time, having little or no ability to defend themselves (Nielson, 2013).

*Zero tolerance.* The practice of responding with consequences for the first and every infraction of school policy Fedra, D. M., Gerberich, S. G., Ryan, A. D., Nachreiner, N. M. (2010).

### **Assumptions**

There has been no evidence of incentives that would induce participants in this study to be dishonest or deceptive; therefore I have assumed that all participants have honestly answered all questions. I have also assumed, based on my professional contact with each participant, that they all have sufficiently experienced school violence to be able to answer related questions based on their own experience. Each participant confirmed that they have read and understand the parameters of the informed consent document. Additionally, I assumed that all participants voluntarily consented to all parameters of their involvement in this study, and that they would fulfill their obligations until the study was completed. I assumed that 12 participants would be enough to produce data that will generate common themes and answer all of the research questions.

### **Limitations**

This study was designed to focus specifically on a set number of participants who work in a target school, therefore generalizations to large numbers of other schools is not a goal in this case. This reality, however, is not expected to significantly impact the ability of other researchers within the specific demographic area of the target school to duplicate this study. Also, the phenomenological research approach limits possible data gathering because it focuses on only one area of lived experience for each participant. Therefore the development of themes and trends resulting from data analysis has excluded other related lived experiences.

All of the participants in this study were my co-workers. Therefore, during the process of bracketing, I made a conscious effort to disallow any knowledge or personal emotion related to the topic at hand to enter the data gathering and analysis process. Bracketing involves listening and recording responses and observations as one would who had no prior knowledge or experience with the research topic. As the researcher, I have intentionally removed any prior mental or emotional connection to the subject matter as data is gathered and analyzed, and I have reported participant responses and observations as an objective investigator to the best of my ability.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study was based on 12 teachers, Grades 2–8, with at least 5 years of experience in an urban public school. Teachers of grades pre-school, kindergarten and Grade 1 were excluded because students in the lower grades are typically motivated to engage in behavior that is enjoyable, lacking the social skills to realize that an action may be right or wrong. Most often in gradeK and 1, unless a behavior is specifically characterized as inappropriate to children at this



level, they will continue with the behavior, unaware that it could be harmful. Teachers at this level expect that they will be required to provide social skills instruction in order to curb these tendencies. Conversely, students in grades 2-8 are more prone to intentionally engaging in hurtful behavior. Teachers at these levels expect to provide social skills instruction as well, however because of the harmful intent of violent behavior found in grades 2-8, teachers also find themselves seeking ways to cope with negative behaviors.

This study investigated the possible affect that school violence may have on teacher resiliency. Other possible causes of fluctuations in teacher resiliency were not discussed. Likewise, school violence was viewed in terms of overt acts. Although there may be minimal discussion regarding causes of student and workplace violence, the main focus was the effects of them on teacher resiliency. Further, each school has a climate, environment, and neighborhoods specific to that school; however, the phenomenological approach to data gathering allows that similar results may be found at schools that share similar demographics.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in that the information related to school violence and teacher resiliency provided from the perspectives of teachers can be used to:

- Create more effective teacher training programs and more proficient school violence policies.
- Develop local, state and district sponsored training related to the development, maintenance, and enhancement of teacher resiliency
- Service-related professions may be able to benefit from the results provided regarding workplace violence and how it relates to resiliency.

- Valuable additions to scientific literature on this topic may be an outcome
- Policy changes related to school violence at the local, state, and national levels could become an outcome of this study
- Decreased violence at the target school
- Enhanced school climate at the target school
- A rise in student attendance and achievement

Positive social change implications, therefore, involve the development of new and more effective teacher training regarding school violence. Another social change expectation relates to school policy changes that may serve to reduce school violence and increase teacher resiliency. Additions to scientific literature regarding school violence and teacher resiliency will provide guidance for future research because researchers will then be able to devote more energy to what is still not known about the topic, and to more easily conduct similar studies in their own geographic regions.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 was offered to provide an overview of this study. Chapter 1 also explained the problem under study from a local point of view. The problem statement, that very little research about resiliency from the point of view of teachers themselves, has been investigated. The overall nature of the study is that it takes the form of a qualitative research design which employs a phenomenological approach to data gathering. The research questions, does teacher resiliency decrease when school violence increases, does it increase when school violence decreases, or is there no relationship between school violence and teacher resiliency outline exactly what has

been investigated. In order to bring clarity to the reasoning for conducting this study, the purpose of the study and conceptual framework are offered, as well as the definition of terms. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate as to the effect school violence has on teacher resiliency, as told by teachers. The conceptual framework, resiliency, is grounded in the work of Siebert (2005)

The assumptions and limitations provide insight into parameters that are taken into account. The scope and delimitations segment assists in positioning this study among those similar to it, and the significance of the study illuminates its possible usefulness to all stakeholders. Moreover, the significance of the study highlights possible implications for positive social change. Chapter 2 provides a synopsis of current literature on the topics of school violence and teacher resiliency. In it there are references to topics such as bullying, classroom management, and school policy. Chapter 3 outlines the step by step process that was taken in conducting the study. In Chapter 3, ethical considerations are outlined that explain the procedure for conducting research using human subjects. Chapters 4 and 5 provide the findings, conclusions, discussion, and recommendation.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

A review of the current literature regarding school violence and teacher resiliency provided a foundational basis to investigate, from the perspective of teachers, the impact of school violence upon teacher resiliency. The review focuses on the effect school violence may have on teacher resiliency. Although school-related violent deaths are unusual, there were roughly 828,000 victims of violence, ages 12 to 18, in American schools in 2010 (E Espelage, D., Anderman, E. M., Brown, V. E., Jones, A., Lane, K. L., Mahone, S. D. Reddy, L. A....Reynolds, C. R. (2013), (2011). and approximately 7% of teachers had reportedly been threatened or attacked by a student (CDC, 2012). Also related to school violence, 71,2076 ages five to nine, are reported to have been assaulted and treated in hospital emergency rooms in 2012 (CDC, 2014).

Numerous studies have reported findings that school violence is a serious area of concern (Neiman, DeVoe, & Chandler, 2009; Espelage, et al., 2013; Bradshaw, C. P.; Waasdorp, T. E.; O'Brennan, L; M., & Johns Hopkins University, Gulemetova, M. & National Education Association (2011). other studies have offered information about teacher resiliency, as it relates to workplace violence, stress, and workplace climate/environment (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas, 2003, Lindstrom, Griffin, Carlson & Johnson, 2012). For teachers, the workplace is their school, and the school climate and environment are known to have an impact upon resiliency. Further, information regarding bullying and cyberbullying, mobbing and workplace violence, community violence and teacher resiliency will be discussed in this

literature review. In this study, school violence policies, school climate and environment, teacher training, community violence and protective factors are discussed.

For the purposes of this literature review, the following databases were used: Academic Search Complete, Academic Search Premier, ProQuest and PsycINFO, the Educational Research Information Center (ERIC). The following keywords were used: *school, violence, resilience, resiliency, teacher, resiliency, school, policy, theory, phenomenology, bullying, cyberbullying, bracketing, member checking, mobbing, protective factors, school climate, school environment, triangulation, workplace violence, zero tolerance, school policy, resiliency response, bystander intervention, classroom management, teacher training, teacher burnout, teacher retention, theory, conceptual framework, theoretical lens, and philosophies.*

### **Conceptual Framework (Teacher Resiliency)**

Siebert (2005) proposes that resiliency is the ability to bounce back from adverse circumstances, often spiraling upward to a better state of being than before (p. 2). More complete definitions of resiliency are that it allows one to (a) sustain good health under constant pressure, (b) apply skillful problem solving abilities, (c) overcome adversities, (d) change to a more effective way of working when old ways are not possible, 5) maintain health and resiliency without being harmful or dysfunctional (p. 5). The resiliency response (outlined in Table 1), according to Seibert (2005) is described in five definitive levels, and is found in people who possess these attributes:

Table 2

*The Resiliency Response***Level 1**-Maintains health and wellbeing

Example: Exercises, eats well, proper rest

Application: Competency in handling emotions, adequate energy

Opposite/Effects: Incompetency, low energy

**Level 2**-Good problem solving skills

Example: Appropriate responses to unexpected difficulties

Application: Proactive stance regarding challenging changes

Opposite/Effects: React rather than respond to unexpected changes

**Level 3**-Strong inner gatekeepers

Example: Strong self esteem and confidence, high moral character

Application: Ability to call upon inner strengths during challenging times

Opposite/Effects: Unable to respond appropriately to challenges

**Level 4(a)**-Enjoy lifelong learning

Example: Naturally curious

Application: Easily gathers knowledge and skills

Opposite/Effects: Holds on to old (unproductive) ways to doing things

**Level 4(b)**-Expects positive outcomes

Example: Remains hopeful

Application: Pleasant attitude

Opposite: Can be taken to extremes, developing unrealistic expectations

**Level 4(c)**-Engages in optimism or pessimism by choice

Example: Decides to be either optimistic or pessimistic depending on circumstances

Application: Flexibility, freedom to think as one pleases

Opposite/Effects: May be perceived as unable to commit

**Level 4(d)**-The synergy talent

Example: Able to merge concepts and tasks to achieve goals

Application: Greater competency and productivity

Opposite/Effect: Possibility of becoming overloaded

**Level 5(a)**-Serendipity

Example: Finds unexpected benefits hidden in negative events

Application: Ability to cope with negative circumstances

Opposite/Effects: Neglecting to deal with the negative realities of present events

**Level 5(b)**-Masters extreme resiliency challenges

Example: Overcomes serious illness or accident

Application: Bounces back from severe physical or emotional trauma

Opposite/Effects: neglects to credit persons which assisted on the way to recovery

**Level 5(c)**-Achieves transforming breakthroughs

Example: Becomes highly resilient

Application: Progresses from resisting to embracing change

Opposite: Attempts to operate in ways that are obsolete and nonproductive

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*Note:* From “The Resiliency Advantage” by A. Siebert, 2005, Barrett-Koeller, Publishers, p.10-15 Adapted with permission

The attributes displayed in Table 2 depict a personality type that is common to those who are able to survive terrible physical and emotional trauma. These attributes combine to create people who appear strong and intelligent, skillful and flexible. For some people, the attributes come naturally, and for others, they will need to be discovered and developed. Holding on to old ways of thinking and old ways of doing things in the face of difficult and changing circumstances can have negative effects on one’s health by aggravating existing chronic conditions. It can also be instrumental in bringing about other illnesses, such as high blood pressure, depression, and stroke (Seibert, 2005).

Referring to resiliency as a personality trait that can be learned and enhanced, Siebert (2005) proposes that resilient people are at an advantage because they expect to bounce back from challenging circumstances (Siebert, 2005, p2). They are flexible, and they thrive in constant change (Siebert, 2005, p. 2). Teacher resiliency has been discussed with a view towards the conceptual perspective provided by Siebert (2005). Resiliency, the ability to adapt to difficult or changing circumstances.

Resiliency, as seen by Siebert (2005), is present in people who have decided that they will survive and cope, and that things will turn out well no matter what the present circumstances appear to be (Siebert, 2005, p. 9). In this sense, resiliency can be seen as a conscious decision to make the best of what is, improve things if possible, and become determined that the outcome will be better than before things started to become challenging. In my experience, most teachers either grow into this way of being, or they become overly frustrated by the challenges of the profession. According to Seibert (2005), rather than being trained to be resilient, resiliency is an attribute that one discovers and then develops (Seibert, 2005, p. 9). That is, a person can discover and develop ways to remain calm, to problem solve, to be positive, and to break free from inner barriers (Siebert, 2005, p. 8).

Resiliency is also seen as an innate quality that emerges in response to adversity (Henderson, 2012). For teachers, positive affect can greatly reduce the effect of workplace stress and increase resiliency (Gloria, Faulk & Steinhardt, 2013). For administrators and managers who seek to develop a resilient workforce, it is advisable to encourage employees to engage in behaviors that improve their health. Additionally, as documented by Seibert (2008), employees should also be provided with positive feedback regarding their work performance. They should be afforded the opportunity to recognize that their work is important and meaningful, and they should be are recognized for their achievements.

### **Defining School Violence**

School violence is prevalent in several forms, but bullying is the mode of school violence which occurs most often. Definitions for bullying ordinarily center on aggression that is physical or emotional over time and is perpetuated with the intent to do harm by one who has some sort of



power over the victim (Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., O'Brennan, L. M., & Johns Hopkins University, Gulemetova, M. & National Education Association, 2011). Bullying between students is the most common form of bullying, but it can occur between student and teacher, teacher and student, teacher and teacher, parent and teacher, and administration and teacher (Espelage, 2013).

Most studies regarding school violence are written from the vantage point of the media, administrators, policy makers, or community activists, but seldom has school violence been correlated with teacher resiliency as told from the teachers' point of view. Violence against teachers is an especially serious problem because it detracts from the ability to have a positive learning environment, and it interferes with the ability to retain good teachers (Espelage, 2013).

### **Bullying**

The term bullying may refer to anything from teasing to physical assault (Harwood & Copfer, 2011). Other forms of school violence, such as vandalism, verbal assault, theft, destruction of property, and administrative intimidation are all factors which may have an effect on teacher resiliency (Galand, Lecocq & Philippot, 2007). Aggression which targets specific groups, such as the obese and disabled (Rose, Monda-Amaya & Espelage, 2011), or gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender populations, has begun to surface and, in some cases, is labeled school violence (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). It has been reported, for example, that a homosexual student (or even one who is presumed to be) may hear derogatory terms such as "faggot" as many as 26 times a day, approximately once every 14 minutes (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008).

Cyberbullying is seen as one of the more recent forms of school violence (Sbarbaro & Enyeart Smith, 2011). Negative communications using electronic devices sent over the internet, including verbal harassment, belittling messages, revealing photos or videos and accusing verbiage can be considered cyberbullying (Agosto, Forte & Magee, 2012). Further, any electronic communication that is sent repeatedly with the intent to harm is seen as cyberbullying (Sbarbaro & Smith, 2011). An effective anti-cyberbullying program is one which is designed by several stakeholders (Courvillion & Ilieva, 2011). Stakeholders who are involved in developing such a program should also remain involved throughout implementation and in maintaining the program (Courvillon & Ilieva, 2011).

Actions repeatedly perpetuated with the intent of demeaning, degrading, causing physical or emotional harm where there is also an imbalance of power have been defined as bullying (Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., O'Brennan, L. M., & Johns Hopkins University, Gulemetova, M. & National Education Association (2011). Bullying has also been referred to as relational aggression, (Elsaesser, 2012), as well as being termed violence over time including threats, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse (Elsaesser, 2012). Still another description regarding bullying distinguishes between the bully, the victim, and the bully-victim (Nansel, T. R., Overpeck, M., Pila, R. S., Ruan, W. J., Simmons-Morton, B. & Scheidt, P. (2001). An important factor in the definition of bullying is the intent of the perpetrator (Espelage, 2013). As stated earlier, in the school setting, bullying may take place involving student against student, student against teacher, teacher against student, teacher against teacher, or administrators against students or teachers (Wilson, 2011, Espelage, 2013, & Zerillo, 2011).

In order for an action to qualify as bullying, the intent of the perpetrator must be to cause harm, (Horton, 2011). Further, the type of action must be examined, and the balance of power between those perpetuating negative acts and those becoming victims must be unequal (Horton, 2011). Additionally, some of the more indelible forms of bullying are in categories such as intimidation and teasing (Agosto, Forte & Magee, 2012). Here, no one has actually experienced physical violence; however the groundwork for causing one to be reluctant to move and act freely without ridicule or emotional pain may have been laid (Agosto, Forte & McGee, 2012).

For the purposes of this study, bullying is defined as actions repeatedly perpetuated over time with the intent of demeaning, degrading, causing physical or emotional harm where there is also an imbalance of power Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., O'Brennan, L. M., & Johns Hopkins University, Gulemetova, M. & National Education Association (2011). According to the United States Government Accountability Office, approximately 31.5% of students are made fun of during the school day and called mean names, and 12.8% are physically hurt (Garby, 2012). Additionally, students with emotional, developmental, and behavioral (EDB) problems are more prone to be bullies. Also, lower levels of maternal mental health have become a predictor of bullying tendencies in children (Shetgiri, 2012). Further, students with attention deficit/hyperactive disorder (ADHD) and those coming from single parent homes, and who show low academic achievement are more prone to be bullies than those who do not fit these descriptions (Yang, 2013). This information is valuable because it allows teachers to better predict which among their students may be more volatile and who might become a victim.

### **School Climate and Physical Environment**

Other factors which may affect the rate of bullying are the school climate and physical environment (Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas, 2003). School climate refers to the overall connectedness that students and faculty members describe that they feeling toward the school, to one another, and to the community. School climate is also measured in terms of either positive or negative, as to the degree that those involved believe they are valued and can find support from others in the school. On the other hand, the school environment includes the attributes of the school climate in addition to the physical features of the school and surrounding community. A positive school climate is one where students feel safe, supported, and connected to their school, to their peers, and to their teachers. Especially regarding adolescents, the school environment can be instrumental in shaping student behavior (Chapman, 2011). Positive school environments are likely to foster more positive outcomes and less aggression (Johnson, 2012). Conversely, a school whose physical environment features an abundance of areas where students can gather undetected or unsupervised is viewed as one which is conducive to school violence (Johnson, 2012).

The role of teachers in connection with bullying has been examined at length (Allen, 2010; Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., O'Brennan, L. M., & Johns Hopkins University, Gulemetova, M. & National Education Association (2011). , 2011; Feda, D. M., Gerberich, S. G., Ryan, A. D., Nachreiner, N. M. (2010); Hong & Garbarino, 2012; Marsh, Williams & McGee, 2009). In a Turkish study, teachers were asked to respond to questions regarding the concept of bullying, why it occurs, their role as it relates to bullying, the affect it has on students, and what they thought should be done about it (Sahin, 2010). Bullying has been seen as an

outcome of societal failures (Horton, 2011), and as a result of complicated and deeply rooted causes (Dogutas, 2013). In the Turkish study, however, teachers reported that bullies use violence to demand justice when they feel they have been denied their rights (Sahin, 2010).

To understand bullying, teachers in the Turkish study focused more on student violence than on the emotional affects that bullying can cause. They report that the main causes of bullying are related to socioeconomic levels, family issues, the internet and other visual media, entertainment outlets, the environment, and cultural degeneration (Sahin, 2010). Similar to suggestions that violence can be reduced by maintaining a social climate where students feel they can ask for help (Eliot, 2010) these authors suggest that anti-bullying seminars, meetings with parents, and effective communication might help prevent bullying (Sahin, 2010). They suggest that the association between teachers and bullying at schools is such that one would not think of bullying independent of teachers. They also suggest that teacher training as to how to deal with bullying is essential (Sahin, 2010). Further, as a form of social capital, teachers who feel acknowledged and valued can more easily foster a school climate which is not conducive to violence (Roffey, 2012).

One factor that is seldom addressed regarding bullying is bystander intervention. The presence or absence of bystander intervention serves to provide indications as to the nature of the school climate (Barlight & Hubbard, 2013). That is, in schools where it is the norm for bystanders to attempt to intervene, it has been found that the school climate is pleasant and positive, whereas in schools where bystanders normally become spectators, the school climate has been found to be negative and confrontational (Barlight & Hubbard, 2013). Teachers, however, disagree among themselves as to whether they have the wherewithal to assist in the

prevention of school violence (Dogutas, 2013). That notwithstanding, the classroom norms that teachers establish have been shown to have a significant effect on possible bystander behavior (Pozzoli, Gini & Vieno, 2012). When viewed from this angle, teachers become part of the context out of which bystander behavior may be formulated (Pozzoli, Gini & Vieno, 2012).

### **Workplace Aggression**

As a form of bullying, mobbing is seen as a form of workplace aggression (Vickers, 2010). For the purposes of this study, workplace aggression is viewed as a form of school violence which has the potential to impact teacher resiliency. Mobbing can be seen as hostility by more than one person toward a victim (Mayhew, C., McCarthy, P., Chappell, D., Quinlan, M., Barker, M., & Sheenan, M. (2004). Mobbing is also evident when one has been ostracized or targeted for negative interactions by more than one person (Vickers, 2010). As will later be discussed, mobbing, or workplace bullying is highly correlated with the type of leadership an organization is operating under (Nielsen, 2012). Regardless, when one is targeted for aggressive acts, intimidated, ostracized or made to feel unwanted in the workplace, personal resiliency, as described above, is a likely to suffer.

Separate from bullying that involves students, workplace bullying between adults is a form of school violence that can lead to such outcomes as negative psychosomatic and psychological symptoms, social isolation, and maladaptive behavior (Finne, Knardahl & Lau, 2011; Neilson, Hetland, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2012). It can also lead to low self esteem, sleeplessness, trouble concentrating, anger, distress, absenteeism, concentration difficulties and chronic fatigue (Finne, Knardahl & Lau, 2011; Neilson, Hetland, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2012).

Defined as a situation where one or more individuals believe themselves to have been harmed over a period of time, having little or no ability to defend themselves, workplace bullying can be perpetuated by a single person, or by a group (Neilsen, 2013). Workplace bullying is most affected by the type of leadership which prevails in the workplace, and is more likely to be tolerated when the leadership style is one of avoidance or absence on the part of the leader (Neilsen, 2013).

To minimize the negative effects of workplace violence one may find attempts to normalize behaviors which had previously been seen as inappropriate, followed by the reframing of actual events into something more palatable (Vickers, 2010). By minimizing the negative effects of workplace violence, reframing it, normalizing it, desensitizing people to it, and then ritualizing it, workplace violence which would have seemed inappropriate becomes an expected part of the workplace culture (Vickers, 2010). The normalizing of workplace violence, however, provides an optimum atmosphere for the development of a resilient personality (Siebert, 2005).

Employee intimidation by supervisors and persons with the ability to have a negative impact on a teacher's pay, position, or specific duties must be included in a discussion regarding teacher resiliency. A lack of regulatory control, for example, may set the stage for principals to abuse their authority in ways that could be considered bullying (Dewet, 2010). Additionally, the absence of policy and legislation which would prohibit workplace mobbing and bullying may be conducive to outcomes such as low productivity, absenteeism, and high rates of turnover (Duffy, 2009). Sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and threats are areas which stand in need of workplace policy development (Fedra, D. M., Gerberich, S. G., Ryan, A. D., Nachreiner, N. M. (2010). ).

Verbal abuse and continuously disruptive behavior from students, vandalism, verbal attacks from colleagues, administrators and parents should all be considered in a discussion regarding teacher resiliency (Allen, 2010). A teacher's workplace is the school. Workplace aggression and violence perpetrated by adults must be factored in to the components that may determine the level of a teacher's resiliency. Fortunately, my professional experience has afforded me the opportunity to work in both positive and negative school climates. I am able to state, because of my professional background, that it is difficult to maintain high levels of motivation and sustained positive energy in schools where violence, abuse, intimidation, and disruptive behaviors are allowed to continue. The former statement is especially true when there is little or no administrative or parental support.

### **Teasing**

Apart from bullying as defined above, teasing takes on characteristics which set it apart. Teachers are generally challenged in trying to determine if teasing can be classified as bullying (Mooney, Creaser, & Blatchford, 1991). Teasing, however, can significantly impact the culture of a school (Harwood & Copfer, 2011). In differentiating between teasing and bullying, teachers must be proactive in curbing tendencies to tease, and often they must make on the spot determinations as to whether or not to intervene (Harwood & Copfer, 2011). Most often, in deciding whether teasing has crossed the line into bullying, intent to do harm is the determining factor (Harwood & Copfer, 2011).

Another factor regarding making determinations as to whether teasing is actually bullying or not is the personal experiences of the individual teacher (Harwood & Copfer, 2011). Specifically, one's own childhood encounters with teasing will tend to color a teacher's



perception of it as either prosocial or antisocial, such that her reaction may unintentionally minimize the situation on the one hand, or she may completely overreact on the other (Harwood & Copfer, 2011). The most prevalent reactions teachers have to teasing are verbal reprimands, open discussions with students, and attempting to diffuse the situation (Harwood & Copfer, 2011). Furthermore, negative situations that originate in the community that can be complex and hard to diffuse may become part of the school violence scenario (Milam, Holden & Leaf, 2010).

### **Community Violence**

Community violence can have a negative impact not only on a student's ability to maintain focus, but on perceptions of school safety as well (Milam, Holden & Leaf, 2010). Furthermore, highly publicized accounts of school shootings have fostered various types of attempts at making sure schools are safe (Coon & Travis, 2012). A growing trend is for schools to invite the services of security officers and police (Coon & Travis, 2012). Police officers have participated in such activities as patrolling school grounds and student travel routes, regulating traffic, advising and mentoring, conducting safety inspections, making arrests and settling disputes (Coon & Travis, 2012).

Other activities police officers have engaged in are teaching activities such as with antidrug and ant-bullying programs, ant-alcohol and crime prevention programs (Coon & Travis, 2012). Unless there is open and ongoing communication between security, police and school administrators, however, confusion may be the result (Coon & Travis, 2012). For some, the mere presence of police officers and patrol cars may signal a lack of school safety, and usher in a heightened state of sustained alarm (Milam, 2010).

### **Teacher Resiliency**

Resiliency, the ability to adapt to difficult or changing circumstances, is a character trait that can be developed (Siebert, 2005). The ability to maintain health, wellbeing and emotional stability are hallmarks of resiliency (Siebert, 2005). Resiliency measurements for youth and adults generally use self report instruments, and further research into reliable measurement scales is recommended (Windle, Bennett & Noyes, 2011). For the purposes of this writing, resiliency is seen in terms of five levels, (Siebert, 2005, p. 10, 11). As described in Figure 1, the five resiliency levels are optimizing health and wellbeing, developing good problem solving skills, strengthening inner gatekeepers, strengthening high level resiliency skills, and discovering one's talent for serendipity (Seibert, 2005,p.10-11). The definitive nature of the resiliency personality trait as offered by Siebert (2005) is made more valuable by a recent study which examined 19 resiliency scales for the purpose of finding out which of them showed the most psychometric vigor (Windle, Bennet, & Noyes, 2011).

Conflicting and inconsistent measurements of resiliency have made it difficult to develop an operational definition of the term. Reliable and valid psychometrics is required to be able to predict how well people are able to bounce back from adversity (Windle, Bennett, & Noyes, 2011). Among the resiliency scales assessed were the Dispositional Resilience Scale, The Resilience Scale for Adults, Psychological Resilience, The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, and the Resilience Attitudes and Skills Profile (Windle, Bennett, & Noyes, 2011).

None of the assessed measurement instruments in the above referenced study had all of the necessary capabilities to measure psychometric properties, and although it incorporated a strong sense of personal agency, the Brief Resilience Scale specifically stated as its purpose to

examine qualities which are related to resilience . The ability to demonstrate conceptual adequacy by examining resilience across multiple levels was only present in five of the 19 instruments . Having a reliable gauge with which to measure resiliency is just as important as giving consideration to factors which may have an impact on a teacher's ability to bounce back in the face of school violence. Three such factors, protective factors, teacher training, and individual coping strategies are important components related to measurements of teacher resiliency.

### **Protective Factors**

Protective factors have been studied to determine their relationship to teacher resiliency (Muller, Gorrow, & Fiala, 2011). These factors include purpose and expectations, nurture and support, positive connections and meaningful participation, life guiding skills, and clear and consistent boundaries. It was found that even though all protective factors may not be present, they had varying affects on individual teachers (Muller, Gorrow & Fiala, 2011). In one study, first year teachers listed perceived needs for the upcoming second year of teaching (Hobson & Ashby, 2012). At the top of the list were having a mentor, and general support from the school (Hobson & Ashby, 2012). A protective factor such as having a viable forum within which to discuss issues with other teachers was also seen as important to the well-being of novice teachers (Bell-Robertson, 2014).

Additionally, having support from administrators, especially as it relates to the handling of disciplinary matters, has been seen as essential in helping teachers decide if they should remain in the profession (Prather-Jones, 2011). As an integral part of the school climate, these protective factors were observed at differing levels between male and female teachers, and

differences were found between experienced and novice teachers as well (Muller, Gorrow & Fiala, 2011).

In a more general sense, innate protective factors have been viewed as having just as much resiliency potential as environmental ones (Henderson, 2012). For example, an innate tendency towards friendliness and a cooperative nature are qualities that can contribute to resiliency in the midst of turbulent circumstances (Henderson, 2012). Henderson (2012) suggests that the focus should be moved from viewing teachers as being at risk for burnout, to viewing them as individuals who have been able to sustain themselves amidst almost unbearable circumstances. By changing the focus from at risk to having survived, the important task then becomes developing whatever it is (innate or environmental protective factors) that has facilitated the ability for them to maintain where others would have crumbled (Henderson, 2012). Research efforts targeting which factors are most important and why that could help improve teacher resiliency and teacher retention is recommended (Muller, Gorrow & Fiala, 2011).

Among four domains which caused stress for beginning teachers, student behavior was the main contributing factor, followed by concerns about relationships with supervisors and peers, self-efficacy concerns, and insecurities related to student achievement (Reig, Paquette & Chen, 2007). Stressors such as those just mentioned are supremely important, but factors associated with the workplace climate and environment must also be considered. Likewise, individual student perceptions of school climate are said to have an effect on levels of bullying (Gendron, 2011), and the role of the school environment can have an effect on bullying at school as well (Green, J. G., Dunn, E. C., Johnson, R. M., & Molnar, B. E. (2011). Even considering

recent school shootings, which have given schools the overall reputation of being unsafe (Borum, 2010); the school climate can have an impact on teacher stress levels (Borum, 2010). Further, the fact that teachers face the threat of physical violence upon themselves daily in the workplace can cause the working environment to be especially stressful (Marsh, Williams & McGee, 2009).

### **Teacher Training**

Overall, there has been an expressed need on the part of teachers for training as to how to respond to student violence (Bradshaw, 2013, Craig, 2000, Dake, 2003, Daniels, 2011, Espelage, 2013 and Algozzine & McGee, 2011). Specifically in the areas of violence related to sexual orientation (Agosta, Forte & Magee, 2012) and violence related to cyberbullying, teachers have expressed a need for guidance (Hong & Garbarino, 2012). Additionally, training related to appropriate methods to restrain a child is lacking (Ryan, Robbins, Peterson & Rozalski, 2009). Improper restraint practices have been known to cause serious injury, and even death (Ryan, Robbins, Peterson & Rozalski, 2009).

As of 2009, Michigan was among the states which received guidelines from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) as to the use of restraint regarding children, but had not implemented any documented policies regarding the use of those guidelines (MDE, 2009). The suggested guidelines in Michigan call for allowing the use of restraints in situations involving property damage, the need to remove a student from the area, and for the purposes of safety of the student or staff member (Ryan, Peterson & Rozalski, 2009). The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) suggests that despite the fact that corporal punishment is illegal, reasonable force may be used for the following purposes:

- To restrain or remove a pupil whose behavior is interfering with the orderly exercise and performance of school district or public school academy functions within a school or at a school-related activity if that pupil has refused to comply with a request to refrain from further disruptive acts.
- For self-defense or the defense of another.
- To prevent a pupil from inflicting harm on himself or herself.
- To quell a disturbance that threatens physical injury to any person.
- To obtain possession of a weapon or other dangerous object upon or within the control of a pupil.
- To protect property. (MDE, 2014).

When students need to be restrained in Michigan, the administration and parents must be notified, and the details of the episode must be documented. As of 2009, Michigan was not one of the states that called for mandated staff training in restraint techniques. Rather, the MDE suggests that teachers independently seek out and participate in professional development opportunities that can provide guidance in this area (MDE, 2014). This unfortunate set of circumstances is frightening in that it leaves teachers to depend on their own devices if it happens that a child needs to be restrained. It also opens the door for legal action against the teacher if a child is injured. Effective classroom management strategies have been said to mediate disruptive situations (Allen, 2010). Although effective classroom management should lessen the need for physical restraint, by itself, it cannot totally negate the possible need to restrain a child in classroom situations.

## **Classroom Management**

As a part of classroom management, discipline can be seen as a major component (Dogutas, 2013). Articles and training manuals on classroom management tend to be written from the philosophy that children are inherently bad, and in need of control (Allen, 2010). Pre-service classroom management courses during teacher training may not provide all of what is needed for new teachers to be able to enter the classroom with sufficient confidence that they can manage classroom discipline (Allen, 2012, Espelage, D., Anderman; E. M., Brown; V. E., Jones; A., Lane; K. A., McMahon, S. D., ...Reynolds, C. R. (2013). . Therefore, teachers tend to learn classroom management either from their own experiences in the classroom, from their student teaching experiences, or from colleagues (Allen, 2010).

One of the most prominent truths that have been born out in my professional experience is that children ordinarily respond most positively to teachers who first show that they care. As a classroom management strategy, therefore, I have found that open and honest discussions with students can be very effective. In a mutually respectful and emotionally safe atmosphere, candid discussions with students tend to allow for the positive aspects of the character of students to surface. Although sustaining a climate such as this requires daily input on the part of teachers and students, negative circumstances, in my professional experience, occur less often, and are more quickly diffused.

Most anti-bullying programs offered to schools have training that is designed to help teachers understand and deal with bullying (Coon & Travis, 2012). They present orchestrated scenarios which depict bullying situations, and then suggest possible outcomes. Students are then encouraged to select an outcome which would eliminate the bullying. Absent from these

scenarios, however, is the deep and lasting emotional pain that accompany real life situations. Further, the issue of classroom management and its relationship with bullying in these orchestrated scenarios is seldom addressed (Allen, 2012). Classroom management, if it is covered in most bullying training programs, is portrayed in such a way as to indicate that the lack of classroom management skills are to blame for the amount of bullying that occurs (Espelage, 2013).

To its credit, the MDE offers the Advocating Strong Standards-based Induction Support for Teachers (ASSIST) website. This resource is designed to provide support for teachers in their first three years of teaching by connecting them with mentors, online resources, training opportunities, peer assisted learning, and documentation systems (MDE, 2014). The ASSIST website has been operational since 2006, yet there is no indication that its usefulness has been evaluated.

Additionally, in compliance with Public Act 6 of 1992, the MDE has published a document entitled “Alternatives to Corporal Punishment,” which outlines options teachers have available to them in lieu of physical force. Among the options are the consistent application of logical consequences to negative behavior, the use of positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, and contractual agreements between students, parents and teachers. Other alternatives include referral to a counselor, social worker or psychologist. Further, each district must publish a student code of conduct, and violations of it can result in suspension or expulsion (MDE, 2014).

In the Turkish study mentioned earlier, teachers stated that in-service training (INSET) as to how to handle peer bullying would be most appreciated (Sahin, 2010). They also suggest that



teachers be involved in the development of programs and projects that can help prevent bullying (Sahin, 2010). Academic studies shared between school management and teachers are suggested, and activities which incorporate the input of parents and students are recommended (Sahin, 2010). Finally, teachers in this study encourage the use of media outlets to broadcast educational programs, and that the government should take a more active role in the prevention of bullying (Sahin, 2010).

### **Policy**

Many school districts have contracted the services of consultants to assist in developing policies which address workplace violence (Duffy, 2009). Additionally, the presence of policies as to how to anonymously report workplace violence may serve to reduce its occurrence (Feda, 2010). At the school level, programs such as the Safe School Ambassadors (SSA) have shown that they can foster significant reductions in disciplinary actions and suspensions (Pack, White, Raczynski & Wang, 2011). In order to implement this program, ambassadors must be trained to identify, prevent, and respond to aggressive students and negative student situations. If the program is to be effective, students must be trained to be proactive, and to become helpful bystanders (Pack, White, Raczynski & Wang, 2011). Students must also be competent in preventing student mistreatment, interrupting mistreatment, finding an adult to help, and supporting mistreated students (Pack, White, Raczynski & Wang, 2011).

Regarding cyberbullying, several suggestions have been offered. For example, cyberbullying could be addressed as a topic of classroom discussion or activity (Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011; Jose, Kljakovic, Scheib & Notter, 2011). Cyberbullying prevention programs could be implemented, which would feature specific rules and consequences, and which would be

designed by a combination of students and teachers (Sbarbaro, 2011). Ongoing conversations and activities designed around the program should exist, and the acceptable practice of “digital citizenship” should be modeled, taught, and enforced (Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011). Access to and the use of digital devices should be closely monitored throughout the school day, and instruction in internet safety should be part of a comprehensive cyberbullying program (Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011).

At the state level, Montana is the only state which has not begun to post and enforce anti-bullying laws (Garby, 2011). State education departments are now publishing “grades” which are intended to report how the state is performing in the area of reduction school violence reduction (Garby, 2011). In 25 states, bullying is classified with harassment and intimidation, offenses which are subject to prosecution (Brubacher, Fondacaro, Brank, Brown & Miller, 2009). The question now becomes, will children be charged as criminals for bullying (Garby, 2011)? Also at the state level, The Minnesota Educators Study (MES) conducted an assessment of nine work related policies regarding how to report workplace violence.

The goal of MES was to determine the effect that having the written policies would have on the risk of physical assault. It was determined that the presence of written policies, the assurance of confidential reporting, and zero tolerance for violence may reduce the incidence of work related physical assault (Feda, D. M., Gerberich, S. G., Ryan, A. D., Nachreiner, N. M. (2010). Feda, D. M., Gerberich, S. G., Ryan, A. D., Nachreiner, N. M. (2010) reports that limited quantitative data is available regarding the prevalence of specific written violence policies related to schools. Although the focus of educational literature in this area is on zero tolerance policies and the consequences students face, ambiguity about the downside of zero

tolerance policies exists (Feda, D. M., Gerberich, S. G., Ryan, A. D., Nachreiner, N. M. (2010). Further, studies which evaluate zero tolerance policies do not do so from the vantage point of teacher safety (Feda, D. M., Gerberich, S. G., Ryan, A. D., Nachreiner, N. M. (2010).

Federal laws, such as the Guns Free School Act (GFSA) of 1994, the Improving America's School Act of (IASA) 1994, and the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act and the Safe Schools Act, both of 1994 are enforced at the school level (Feda, D. M., Gerberich, S. G., Ryan, A. D., Nachreiner, N. M. (2010). Specific written violence policies complete with training requirements and confidentiality of reporting corresponding to these laws at the school level, however, is not always readily available to teachers (Feda, D. M., Gerberich, S. G., Ryan, A. D., Nachreiner, N. M. (2010). As a novel approach, it has been suggested that a national registry be established which would document school violence, track the incidence of violence toward teachers, and screen, monitor and measure violence in K-12 schools (Novotney, 2009).

Another unique approach to school violence is offered in the form of "Preventing Lethal School Violence. (Daniels, 2011)" This innovative document makes a credible connection between bullying and school shootings, and frames school violence as a social problem (Daniels, 2011). Daniels (2011) further outlines features of successful violence prevention events, offers detailed descriptions of a positive school climate, and presents evidence-based data regarding violence prevention skills that would be valuable for teachers.

### **Teacher Retention**

Measurements of teacher efficacy and teacher commitment rates are positively correlated with teacher retention rates (Wei, 2000). Therefore, teacher connectedness is an area which

provides strong predictors of teacher retention (Garland, Lecocq & Philippot, 2007). That is, when supportive principals and colleagues assist in maintaining professional engagement and emotional support retention rates are higher (Garland, Lecocq & Philippot, 2007). Greater teacher retention could be fostered by increasing school resources, reducing class size, and by providing continuous training and support (Benhorin & McMahon, 2008). Recognizing that the school environment is a key component in teacher burnout rates, efforts to make schools safer could assist in teacher retention efforts (Johnson, Burke & Gielen, 2011). School administrators, community leaders, and policy makers must take seriously the need to evaluate and then support attempts to reduce school violence, especially against women, which make up 75% of US teachers (Espelage, D., Anderman, E. M.; Brown, V. E., Jones; A., Lane, K. L., Mahone, S. D. Reddy; L. A....Reynolds, C. R. (2013)

### **Teacher Burnout**

One of the strongest predictors of physical symptoms indicating teacher stress is the number of covert experiences of violence (Espelage, D., Anderman, E. M., Brown, V. E., Jones, A., Lane, K. A., McMahon, S. D., ...Reynolds, C. R. (2013). For example, minor and frequent but much less publicized repetitive disruptive behaviors in the classroom and in schools have a strong negative effect on teachers, and tend to contribute to teacher burnout (Garland, Lecocq & Philippot, 2007). In an international study designed to examine the theory that perceived resources and demands could predict whether or not stress would be experienced, it was found that factors such as individual stress and levels of occupational experience were important.

Further, coping skills were significant in determining whether or not burnout was experienced by participants (Ulrich, 2012). Low levels of between school burnout symptoms

were detected in this study, and individual teacher factors were associated with burnout symptoms (Ulrich, 2012). An important predictor of teacher burnout may be her perceptions of the workplace (Thompson, Amatea & Thompson, 2014). As previously discussed, in schools where there are unclear rules for student conduct, lack of administrative and staff support, misuse of behavior management procedures, and a tendency to use mostly punitive methods of control, the school climate is considered negative (Allen, 2010) and may be conducive to burnout. In essence, teacher burnout is an indication of the absence of teacher resiliency.

### **Summary**

A review of the literature regarding school violence and teacher resiliency has shown that teachers are frequently victims. School violence is prevalent in several forms, but bullying is the mode of school violence which occurs most often. Definitions for bullying ordinarily center on aggression that is physical or emotional over time and is perpetuated with the intent to do harm by one who has some sort of power over the victim (Bradshaw et al., 2011). Bullying between students is the most common form of bullying, but it can occur between student and teacher, teacher and student, teacher and teacher, parent and teacher, and administration and teacher (Espelage, 2013).

Most studies regarding school violence are written from the vantage point of the media, administrators, policy makers, or community activists, but seldom has school violence been correlated with teacher resiliency as told from the teachers' point of view. Likewise, teacher resiliency has been measured using several different types of instruments, most of which fall short of offering an operational definition of the term. As depicted by Al Seibert, resiliency is characterized by five distinct attributes, as outlined above.

Some of the relevant factors which may affect teacher resiliency are school climate and environment, bullying and other forms of aggression. The lack of adequate teacher resources and training, and burnout may contribute to the loss of resiliency among teachers. Additionally, the absence of policies at the local, state, and federal levels that would to protect teachers from school violence is a possible factor in the decline of teacher resiliency. This research was designed to examine the possible affect of school violence on teacher resiliency as told from the teacher's point of view. To illuminate the effect that school violence may have on teacher resiliency, a purposive sampling of participants participated in qualitative research which used the phenomenology approach, as described below.

The following section, Chapter 3, includes information as to exactly how this study was carried out. Discussions regarding the research design and rationale, ethical procedures, sampling, and data analysis are included. Chapter 3 also offers information as to data collection procedures, issues of trustworthiness, and instrumentation. Additionally, the role of the researcher as a study instrument is discussed.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

This study investigated the possible effect of school violence on teacher resiliency from the perspective of teachers. Using a phenomenological approach, teachers of grades 2-8 at an urban Midwest elementary/middle school have contributed data regarding their experiences with school violence, and how those experiences may be related to their own resiliency. Although it may seem prudent to begin examining student violence at a higher grade level, my experience in teaching grade two for at least 18 years has prompted me to start this inquiry at grade two. Also, having taught grades three, four, five, and six through eight intermittently for several years, my professional experience indicates that each of these grade levels are important to this study. Further, because of my exposure to the middle school environment for at least fifteen years, it seems appropriate not only to include teachers of these grade levels, but to investigate school violence in middle school grades as well.

The three major research designs are outlined in this chapter, including details as to which design is best suited to address specific types of research questions. This chapter also contains information as to the research design and data gathering approach that was used in this study, and the rationale for using the chosen design and approach. Also found within this chapter are the parameters within which ethical considerations were met, specific information regarding IRB approval, sampling and data collection information, and a discussion regarding issues of trustworthiness. The role of the researcher as a data gathering instrument is discussed in this chapter. Instrumentation and the data analysis process are outlined here as well.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

Within the methodology section of this study, I discussed the research questions that lay at the foundation of this investigation and conceptual framework through which this research will conduct. The core question which was investigated involves whether or not school violence has an effect on the resiliency of teachers, as told by teachers. The following sub questions were also investigated:

1. Does teacher resiliency decrease as school violence increases?
2. Does teacher resiliency increase as school violence decreases?
3. Is there no relationship between teacher resiliency and school violence?

### **Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Research Designs**

One of the most important decisions a researcher must make involves which research design is best suited for the topic at hand. As a way of making sure the research design is appropriate for the study, researchers are advised to consider which design will appropriately address the hypothesis or research question (Creswell, 2009, p3). Research designs can be found in three main categories. Quantitative research designs are especially well suited to address questions which involve how many or how much. They are also particularly useful in assigning cause and effect relationships.

Qualitative research designs are those which will address questions such as why or how. They focus on revealing insights into social or psychological issues. Qualitative designs are normally conducted in the natural setting of the participants, and the researcher may actually assume the role of a research instrument. The third category of research designs is mixed



methods. Mixed methods may feature a prominent quantitative component and supportive qualitative, a prominent qualitative and supportive quantitative data, or qualitative and quantitative components may be equally emphasized.

Therefore, research which includes a hypothesis and calls for answers in the form of numerical data is well suited for quantitative research designs, whereas qualitative research designs are most appropriate when there are questions which use terms such as why and how. Quantitative research designs are said to be more objective, and the ability to generalize to populations outside of the targeted study groups is greater. Sample sizes are generally larger for quantitative studies, and there is typically a study group which experiences some form of manipulation, and a control group which does not. Conversely, qualitative studies are known to be more subjective, using smaller sample sizes, and there is usually no control group involved.

Table 2

*Research Designs and Approaches*

Typical Tendencies	Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed-Methods
1. Philosophical Assumptions	Constructive advocacy Participatory knowledge claims	Post-Positive knowledge claims	Pragmatic knowledge claims
2. Strategies of inquiry	Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, Ethnology, Case study, Narrative	Surveys and experiments	Sequential, concurrent and transformative
3. Methods	Open ended questions, emerging approaches, text or image numerical data	Closed ended questions, predetermined approaches numerical data	Both open and closed ended questions, both emerging and predetermined approaches, and both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis
4. Practices of the researcher	Positions herself, and collects participant meanings, on a single concept, brings personal values into a study, studies the context or setting of participants, validates the accuracy of findings makes interpretations	Tests or verifies explanations, identifies variables to study, relates variables or hypothesis, use standards of validity and reliability, observes and measures information numerically, uses unbiased approaches, employs	Collects both quantitative and qualitative data, develops a rationale for mixing, integrates the data at different stages of inquiry, presents visual pictures of the procedures in the study, employs the practices of qualitative and quantitative research

of data, creates statistical procedures  
 agenda for change  
 or reform, collaborates  
 with participants

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*Note:* From Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, SAGE, Los Angeles, CA, Creswell, J. W. (2009). P. 17 Adapted with permission of the author.

Table 2 displays research designs and data gathering strategies that are known to be compatible. Each research design above capable of assisting to address research questions or to investigate a hypothesis. Also found in Table 2 is information pertaining to instrumentation. This is important because in order to adequately address the research question, appropriate research instruments must be applied. Additionally, Table 2 offers information as to proper researcher practices, which could assist in guiding research and eliminating researcher error. Finally, on close examination, Table 2 provides the ability to compare and contrast not only each research design, but the philosophical reasoning which underpins their existence.

### **Qualitative Research Design-Rationale**

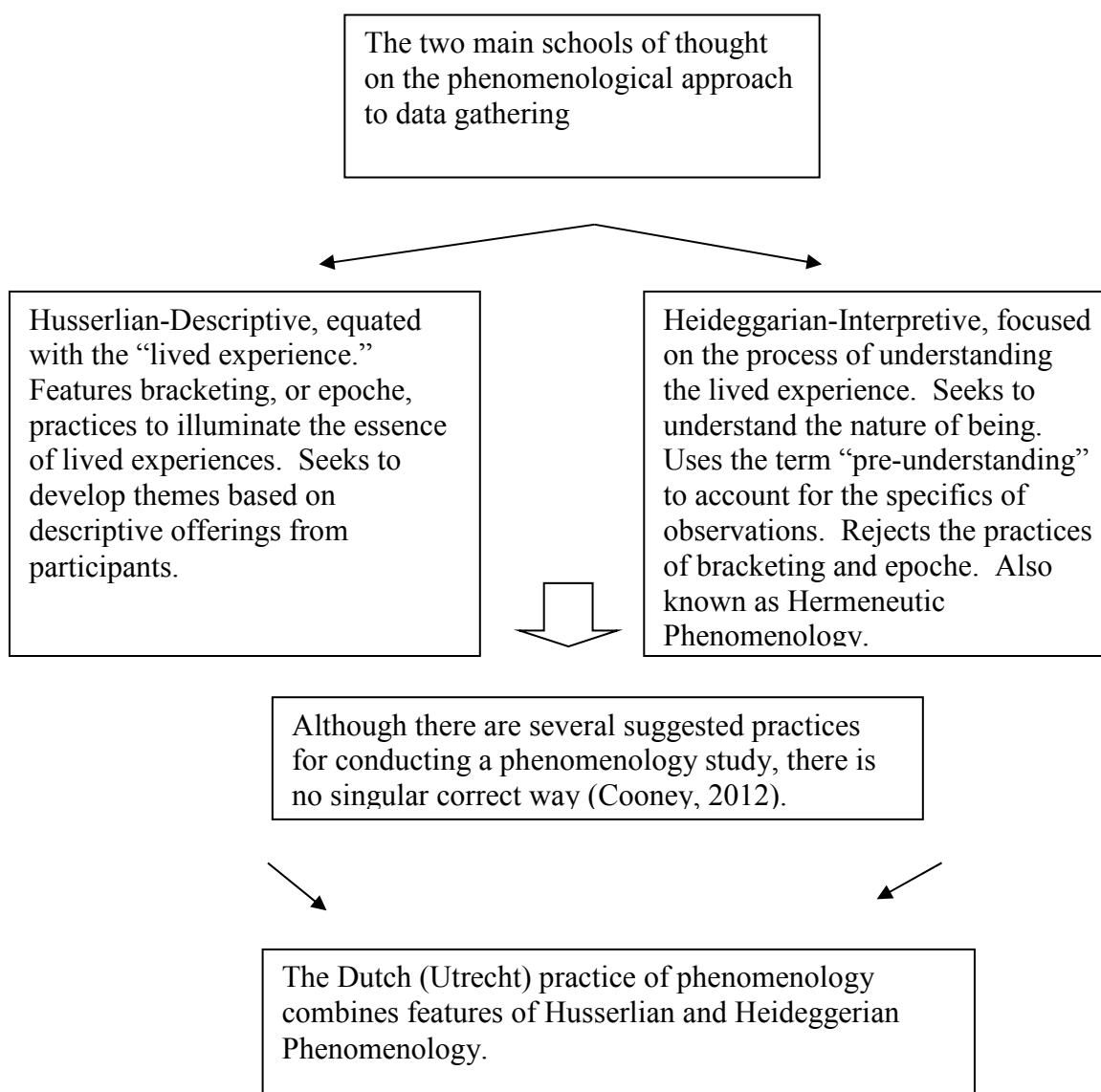
I chose a qualitative research design for this study because it allows for the collection of data that has the potential to answer my research questions. Further, a qualitative research design is appropriate for this study because I was able to position myself within the context of the research. I asked open ended questions, and focused on the single issue of school violence and teacher resiliency relationships. Also, as noted in Table 2, qualitative research designs are compatible with phenomenological investigative approaches. Using a phenomenological

approach for this study allowed me to collaborate with participants, interpret their responses, and construct meaning that can be used to answer the research questions.

As an approach to data gathering, phenomenology is among those which seek to explore the essence of a lived experience shared by a small group of participants. I have specifically chosen phenomenological research because it is best suited to address the research questions. It is unlikely that any other group can describe the affect that school violence may have on teacher resiliency better than teachers can, based on their lived experiences with it. Phenomenology began as a research tool in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Cooney, 2012), and later branched into two main schools of thought, as depicted in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1.

*A phenomenology flowchart.*



*Note:* Adapted from Dowling, M, Cooney A. (2012). Research approaches related to phenomenology: negotiating a complex landscape, *Nurse Researcher*, Vol. 20, (2), 21-27. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 1 highlights the two dominant trains of thought regarding phenomenological research. Heideggerian ideology calls for a more interpretive approach to research, and has also been called hermeneutic phenomenology. On the other hand, a Husserlian phenomenological approach provides for a descriptive interpretation of the experiences of participants. Husserlian phenomenology, used in this study, seeks to identify and interpret commonalities among the separate accounts of similar experiences for the purpose of developing themes. In this study, for example, if it had happened that most participants reported that they felt a sense of closeness with regard to the school climate, closeness among the school faculty may emerge as a theme in the study results. Faculty closeness may then be seen as a feature which fosters greater resiliency. In essence, Figure 1 demonstrates that a prominent goal of phenomenological research is to be able to depict the world as it appears to study participants (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008, p.180).

In attempts to identify how deeper meanings to common experiences can emerge, phenomenological research emphasizes the value of individual interpretations of the lived experiences (Wilson, 2012). Although the quality of hermeneutic narratives can depend on a combination of participant and the researcher efforts (Wiklund-Gustin, 2010), useful data can be derived from the lived experiences of those who are willing to share. The processes of bracketing, triangulation, analyzing data, and recognizing similarities in shared interviews has the potential to discover, categorize and discern meaning from lived experiences that might otherwise have remained hidden.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Before any data could be gathered, approval was obtained from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). After the study received approval to proceed, the IRB issued an approval number, which indicated that I was aware of and had agreed to protect the confidentiality of participants. IRB approval also means that the wellbeing of participants would not be infringed upon and that the participants are those who were suitable for the purpose of the stated research questions. Participating teachers were selected based on their having completed and submitted the informed consent form.

I have received a signed Letter of Cooperation from the Principal of my school (Appendix A), and following IRB approval (Approval #05-15-15-01918150) and the completion of a brief pilot study, teachers of grades 2-8 at the school who fit the inclusion criterion received a letter of invitation (Appendix B) and an informed consent form (Appendix B) in their mail box. By placing invitations and informed consent forms in the mailbox of each teacher of grades 2-8 who has taught in a public school for at least five years, all eligible participants were afforded the opportunity to accept or decline the offer to participate. Since there were twelve teachers who agreed to participate, there was no need to contact other eligible participants, for example, retired teachers. Recent estimates report that the largest numbers of teachers who leave the profession do so within the first three years (Roffey, 2012). After five years, teachers have experienced the teaching environment to the degree that they are to evaluate and express the affect that school and workplace violence may have had on them.

When 12 teachers indicated on the informed consent form that they were willing to participate, they were asked to complete a resiliency questionnaire. Only 12 participants was

preferred because of the volume of data that was expected to be produced from data collection process. A sample size of 12 also provides ample participants if one or two teachers had been unable to complete the study, or had decided to discontinue his/her participation. The remaining participants would have been enough to render the amount of data that can lead to the development of patterns and themes regarding school violence and teacher resiliency. Participant data saturation was reached when participants began to repeat responses or restate responses using different words. I realized that participant saturation had been reached at the end of the interview with P10. P11 and P12 provided confirmation that participant saturation had been reached.

### **Sampling**

This study has pursued a purposive sample of 12 teachers of grades 2-8. Purposive sampling is used when a researcher has already decided upon one or more criterion that participants should meet in order to be valuable in answering research questions (Trochim, & Donnelly, 2008, p49). Teachers of grades 2-8 who have recently retired (within the past two or three years) from the target school were not considered for participation because the sample size became large enough to proceed without them. A small sample size in phenomenological research can be valuable because it is able to supply sufficient data to achieve the study purposes without providing an over abundance of duplicate data (Parcsi & Curtin, 2013). There are exactly 30 teachers at the target school who are eligible to participate according to the inclusion criteria. For this study, however, sample size is guided by standards as outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2008). Of the 30 eligible teachers, participants were added until 12 confirmed that they would participate by signing the informed consent form. .



By placing invitations and informed consent forms in the mailbox of each teacher of grades 2-8 who has taught in a public school for at least five years, all eligible participants are afforded the opportunity to accept or decline the offer to participate. As earlier discussed, inclusion criterion involves teachers of grades 2-8 who have taught in public schools for at least five years.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection began when participants completed an in-depth interview and then a resiliency questionnaire. The data was then be analyzed in both descriptive and interpretive terms, triangulated with the school climate survey, and with field notes. Further, I employed the practice of bracketing and journaling to assist in controlling for bias, and I returned to each participant to inform them of the final contents of the transcribed interview. Field notes which were compiled during the entire process of data gathering became part of the data analysis process. Data from the interviews, resiliency questionnaires, the school climate surveys, journaling, and field notes were analyzed and triangulated to provide answers to the research questions.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

A purposive sample for this study was taken from a population of 30 instructional staff members at a Detroit Public School. The sample consisted of 12 teachers who have worked continuously at a Detroit Public School for at least five years. Age, gender, and nationality or ethnic group were not considered in sample selections. Data analysis regarding school violence and teacher resiliency was conducted by transcribing tape recorded responses and notes from in-depth interviews, reading them and re-reading them, and then submitting them to NVivo

(Version 10), a software program which analyzes data from audio and text responses. Handwritten interviewer notes were also considered for data analysis. Further, the results of recent school climate surveys became part of the data triangulation process. As noted earlier, school climate is highly correlated with levels of school violence, and should be factored in to examinations of teacher resiliency.

Although the research questions called for subjective responses, the responses were coded and analyzed. Analysis of interviews becomes possible by using such techniques as key words in context (KWIC, Blumenthal & DiClemente, 2004, pp.147-148). NVivo, Version 10 however, was the main data analysis tool, and was used to assist by coding, categorizing, and detecting common themes from qualitative data. Formerly known as NUD\*IST, NVivo is compatible with phenomenological research, and has the capacity to detect trends, and analyze qualitative in several different ways, exposing commonalities which may otherwise have been hidden (Bazely, 2007). The primary goal of data analysis here is to capture the essence of the shared experience as reported by study participants.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative researcher, the researcher is positioned as a research tool. That is, as one who interprets, describes and contributes to the data. The researcher can be seen as a source of the data that will become an integral part of the data analysis process. In this study, I have known each of the potential participants for at least six years. I have taught at the school where they teach for at least six years and, at one time or another, I have taught at least half of the target student population that will be discussed. Further, I was one of the teachers who completed the school climate surveys that became part of the data triangulation process. The participants in this

study are my peers and co-workers. There is no supervisory positioning involved, neither is there any favoritism or preferential status involved. The participants, for reasons that only they know of, have voluntarily participated in this study without any offer of enticement or payment.

I was successful in using the practice of bracketing throughout the data gathering process, thereby mitigating any potential bias that could be introduced because I am a staff member. Additionally, by journaling, I was able to keep track any tendencies to allow personal preferences, opinions, or biases out of the data collection process. Further, I discovered that the entire data gathering process required high levels of reflexivity, which is the ability to present the data as it is presented to me without adding or deleting based on personal bias. As an instrument in this research I was diligent to engage in ongoing self analysis as I described and interpreted patterns and themes that emerged during data analysis.

I read, re-read and transcribed the data, and NVivo (Version 10) was employed as a means to search through, categorize and classify data. As the researcher, however, I was the only entity responsible for interpreting and reporting the results of this study. This is important because it eliminates any possibility that the ultimate results could be influenced by a third party. It also eliminates the necessity of having to reach a consensus regarding the meaning of the data. That fact that I was the only researcher who interprets and reports the data results also serves to foster greater trustworthiness.

### **Instrumentation**

I gained permission from the principal of the target school using the Principal's Cooperation Agreement, found at Appendix A. This document not only informed the principal of the purposes of the study, but it provided for him an outline of the methodology. It explained

exactly what was being asked of the teachers, and provided an approximate time frame within which the study should take place. The interview questions can be found at Appendix D.

Interviews and research related activities took place during preparation periods and after school hours in a classrooms and in the computer lab. There were no off-site interviews.

Following the securing of the principal's permission to proceed, a request for data regarding school climate was given to the principal (Appendix E), which he signed and dated. This document is necessary because school climate is an important factor regarding school violence. In the data analysis phase of this study, interviews took place, and the results of them were triangulated with levels of teacher resiliency and with measurements of the school climate. Four participants submitted their resiliency questionnaires before they were interviewed.

Each participant was be given a letter of invitation (Appendix B) and an informed consent form. A confidentiality agreement form, assuring that I would not disclose or discuss information pertaining to the study with outside parties (Appendix C) was signed and issued to each participant. After the principal returned the signed Cooperation and Data Use Agreements, and the IRB had given permission to gather data, a target date was established for the two week data collection period. I began the writing of field notes on the first day of the data collection period, and I continued until all data had been collected, and throughout the data analysis process. I also engaged in journaling activities in between interview sessions. Each participant was asked to complete a resiliency questionnaire (Appendix F) during the data collection period, the results of which were triangulated with corresponding data.

Setting a target date before all informed consent forms were received was designed to encourage those who have not returned them to make their decisions promptly. Using a schedule

form that I created, I set appointments for interviews. The entire data collection period took place between May 18, 2015 and July 12, 2015.

In order to gain interviewing experience and provide approximate expectations for interviewing sessions, a brief pilot study was conducted. This study involved a teacher who had recently retired from the target school. She was provided with an invitation to participate, a statement of confidentiality, and informed consent form. She was interviewed using the document at Appendix D. The pilot study participant completed a resiliency questionnaire, and I engaged in journaling and writing field notes during this brief pilot study.

Interviews are the cornerstone of phenomenological research, and will play the most significant role in exposing trends and themes among participants. Before each interview, I made sure the environment was comfortable, and conducive to relaxed conversation. I tested all electronic devices and double-checked to make sure I had all necessary materials. In preparing to interview, I aimed to foster a relaxed atmosphere, making sure that participants knew they would not be judged, and that, as a teacher like themselves, I have personally pondered the answers to the interview questions. I assured them that there are no right or wrong answers, and that open and honest communication was the goal. Two tape recorders, extra tapes and batteries were available for interviewing purposes, as well as extra ink pens and note paper.

To maintain confidentiality, teacher identification is coded using a system such as, P1, P2. There was no discussion of research topics outside of the interview and follow-up sessions. Participants were admonished not to discuss the study with anyone for any reason, and to let me know if anyone attempts to discuss the study with them. All data was transported to my home and secured in a lock box during the data gathering period. I am the only person who has access

to any of the data generated by this study. When the interviews had been transcribed, I presented them to each participant as a draft of the finished document for the purpose of allowing for participant validation. Participants were only be able to view transcriptions taken from their own interviews, and no other documentation regarding the study was shared.

### **Data Analysis**

Table 3 shows the rationale and function of each data gathering instrument, how the data were analyzed, and the expected outcome.

*Table 3. Instrumentation*

Instrument	Data Analysis Process	Related Research Question	Expected Outcome
<b>Interview</b> <u>Appendix E</u>	Read and re-read data, have data transcribed, submit to NVivo, triangulate	Does teacher resiliency decrease as school violence increases? Does teacher resiliency increase as school violence decreases? Is there no relationship between violence and resiliency?	Emergent patterns and themes will be revealed, the essence of a shared experience can be described, new insights will be discovered and innovative
<b>Resiliency Quiz</b> <u>Appendix F</u>	Score according to the rubric provided by Seibert (2005) p.16-17, triangulate with interviews, and field notes	Does teacher resiliency decrease as school violence increases? Does teacher resiliency increase as school violence decreases? Is there no relationship	Emergent patterns and themes will be revealed, the essence of a shared experience can be described, new insights will be discovered and innovative recommendations will be made

between teacher  
resiliency and  
school violence?

Instrument	Data Analysis Process	Related Research Question	Expected Outcome
<b>Field Notes</b>	Read and re-read data, have data transcribed, submit to NVivo,	Does teacher resiliency decrease as school violence increases? Does teacher resiliency increase as school violence decreases? Is there no relationship?	Emergent patterns and themes will be revealed, the essence of a shared experience can be described, new insights will be discovered and innovative

Instrument Process	Data Analysis Question	Related Research Expected Outcome	Expected Outcome
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### **School Climate Survey**

Read and Triangulate	Does teacher resiliency decrease as school violence increases? Does teacher resiliency increase as school violence decreases? Is there no relationship between teacher resiliency and	Emergent patterns and themes will be revealed, the essence of a shared experience can be described, new insights will be discovered and innovative recommendations will be made
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### **Sample Transcription Data from Field Notes**

<u>Appendix J</u>	re-read data, triangulate with interviews resiliency quiz,	resiliency decrease as school violence increases?	patterns and themes will be revealed, the essence of a shared experience can be
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Does teacher resiliency increase as school violence decreases? Is there no relationship between teacher resiliency and school violence

described, new insights will be discovered and innovative recommendations will be made

Instrument	Data Analysis Process	Related Research Question	Expected Outcome
<b>Researcher's Journal</b>	Read, re-read data, triangulate with interviews resiliency quiz, field notes	Does teacher resiliency decrease as school violence increases? Does teacher resiliency increase as school violence decreases? Is there no relationship between teacher resiliency and school violence?	Emergent patterns and themes will be revealed, the essence of a shared experience can be described, new insights will be discovered and innovative recommendations will be made
Instrument	Data Analysis Process	Related Research Question	Expected Outcome
School Climate Survey	Triangulate with interviews resiliency quiz and field notes		

*Note:* Adapted from Siebert, A. (2005). *The Resiliency Advantage, Master Change, Thrive Under Pressure, and Bounce Back From Setbacks*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, CA. Reprinted with permission.

Table 3 outlines the relationships between the research instruments, the research questions and expected outcomes. It also provides a synopsis of the process that is used to analyze and triangulate the data used in this study. Data from the interviews was transcribed



and then analyzed using NVivo (Version 10). Data was then coded into emergent themes, trends, and meanings. Following that process, data was then triangulated with results from the school climate report and resiliency quizzes in order to detect possible correlations. Field notes were helpful in results and in the discussions phase of the study.

### **Summary**

Using a qualitative research design together with a phenomenological approach, this study sought to illuminate teachers' perceptions regarding any possible relationship there might be between school violence and teacher resiliency. IRB approval was necessary before the data collection process could begin, and participants were fully informed of what would be expected of them. They were also told that at any given point in time, they are free to withdraw from the study. In this study, data collection results of in-depth interviews, school climate surveys, field notes, a research journal, and a resiliency questionnaire, were analyzed and triangulated. A brief pilot study was completed before participants from the target school are interviewed.

One of the most important aspects of analyzing data and reporting research findings is the assurance that participant confidentiality will be maintained (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, pp. 280-281). Participant identifications were coded, and I remain the only person who knows the code. In this study, participants are known to the researcher, and I have transcribed and analyzed the data myself. This practice has provided an intimate relationship between me, what participants have offered, and the emergence of themes, trends, and patterns. Additionally, by transcribing the data myself, I am confident that nothing was accidentally omitted or added.

Beginning with the results of a brief pilot study, Chapter 4 includes a detailed report of the patterns and themes that emerged from data that was provided by the 12 study participants. Information as to the background of the pilot school is followed by the study setting, demographics, and data collection details. Data analysis procedures are revealed and specific findings are delineated. Further, highlighted in Chapter 4 are three overarching themes which surfaced from participant text data, in triangulation with the resiliency questionnaire, school climate surveys and field notes.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

This study was conducted to investigate the possible effect of school violence on teacher resiliency, as reported by teachers. Chapter 4 begins with an overview of the methodology and findings of the pilot study. Details and results of the main study are then offered: the setting, background of the target school, data collection and data analysis procedures, evidence of trustworthiness, results, and then a summary of the findings and results.

### **Pilot Study**

Before I initiated the main study, I conducted a pilot study to investigate the topic of school violence and teacher resiliency. The main research question was whether or not school violence had an effect on teacher resiliency. The following subquestions were also addressed:

1. Does teacher resiliency decrease as school violence increases?
2. Does teacher resiliency increase as school violence decreases?
3. Is there no relationship between teacher resiliency and school violence?

The sample for the pilot study, Participant 1 (PP1), was a teacher from the target school who had retired less than two years earlier, and who fit the parameters of the sample population. She had been teaching for at least 5 years at a public school and taught one of the school's elective classes to grades 2-8 on a daily basis.

PP1 was contacted by phone and agreed to be interviewed. She also agreed to answer the questions on the resiliency questionnaire. Equipped with two tape recorders and a note pad, the Teacher Interview Document (Appendix D), the Resiliency Questionnaire (Appendix F), the

Participant's Consent Form, Letter of Invitation (Appendix B), and Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix C), I met with PP1 in her home. Together, we reviewed the documents. I signed the confidentiality agreement form and gave it to PP1, and PP1 signed the consent form and gave it to me. We agreed that PP1 would complete the Resiliency Questionnaire and mail it to my home in a self-addressed envelope that I had provided.

Using The Teacher Interview Document, I posed the interview questions, and PP1 responded to each of them. At the close of the interview, I informed PP1 that I would transcribe her responses and show them to her so that she could decide whether or not she wanted to make changes. Research has shown that it is a valuable practice to allow participants to see their responses before they are analyzed, so that the intended meaning becomes part of the study results (Creswell, 2013, p. 83).

PP1 decided, after having seen the transcript that the response to one of the questions needed to be completely changed. I made the change in the transcript and then I began the process of analyzing the data provided by PP1. I read and re-read the responses in the transcript looking to see if any patterns or themes would surface. I then began to underline words that were being repeated in response to different questions, as those types of words might indicate that PP1 considered them indicative of a theme that could help explain the essence of a teacher's lived experience with violence at school, and how it might relate to resiliency.

### **Pilot Study Results**

After reading and rereading PP1's's transcript, I submitted PP1's responses to NVivo 10 for analysis. Some of the same words that I had highlighted surfaced as potential themes using this data analysis software.

Synopses of the major themes provided by PP1 were that:

- The environment can have a major impact on levels of school violence
- Threats, bullying, and fighting are problems at the target school, but not to the degree that they are troubling
- If you can get rid of the trouble makers in class, you will not be hampered in your attempts to teach
- Security at the target school was lacking
- Communication between teachers and parents is essential
- Violence has greatly increased over the years
- Unless school violence is under control, PP1 would not want to return to teaching.

### **Pilot Study Discussion**

PP1 scored very high on the Resiliency Questionnaire, indicating an extraordinary ability to cope with adverse circumstances. It was surprising, therefore when PP1 responded that a return to teaching, unless school violence is under control, would not be a desirable course of action. PP1's repeated references to threats and fights and to incidents which were personally traumatizing speak to the toll that school violence can have on an extremely resilient teacher. Other factors involving school violence, such as a lack of parental involvement and ineffective security measures surfaced as areas which stand in need of improvement regarding school violence.

Conducting a pilot study for this research brought to light some areas that could have been very troublesome otherwise as I approached the main study. First of all, although I had read, studied, and seen several videos on proper interviewing techniques, I was not experienced

in the art of the interview myself. I found that, more than once, I had to refrain from engaging in conversation with PP1. I also found that my non-verbal responses to PP1's offerings had to be controlled. Further, I had all of the necessary documents, but they were in an order that necessitated fumbling through them in order to properly sequence the interview process. Additionally, the pilot study showed that none of the interview protocol questions needed to be changed, and they remained as initially planned. Written as they are, they elicited a larger than expected amount of data. Therefore, the pilot study prepared me to expect more data than I previously thought there would be.

Again, Chapter 4 is offered to provide the results of this investigation. In this chapter, the data gathering process, including how the data were generated, coded, recorded, and analyzed is described. Specific findings are offered, and research outcomes are reported in this section. Evidence of trustworthiness is included in this section, and summarized answers to each research answer can be found in this section. Also included in this section are references to the conceptual framework from which the research questions are generated, as well as references to information that can be found in Chapter 2, the literature review.

### **Main Study Findings:**

#### **Emergent Patterns:**

**School violence defined.** The most frequent definitions of school violence offered by participants involved overt physical acts. Although Participants 8 and 11 (P8 and 11) cited cyberbullying as a form of violence, every other participant referenced fights and fighting as the most prevalent form of violence at the target school. Middle school teachers specifically spoke of fights more often than did elementary school teachers. Elementary school teachers, P3, P4,P

5, and P 7 and spoke of disruptive behavior such as noisemaking, leaving one's seat, teasing, name-calling, insubordination (defiant behavior), and excessive talking more than they spoke of fights when asked about school violence. P3 specifically states that, "It's good to have a daily routine, but sometimes you get students fooling around, talking and playing, even though they know what the routine is. It's very aggravating!"

**Levels of violence at the target school.** A noticeable pattern regarding levels of violence at the target school is that participants compared it to levels of violence at other schools. P10 stated that at another school where she worked, "The teachers there saw students disrespect me, and their comment was, 'oh, we don't have a policy for that here'" "They more or less hung me out to dry." P10 continued by saying that "Here, students know that we have our own culture in this classroom. I don't allow them to disrespect one another, and they definitely will not disrespect me." P9 offered that he was at a school where bullying and fights were the norm, so our school is like a "Piece of cake in comparison." P11 said that, "It could be a lot worse here, and it has been." In doing so, their combined comment is that the target school has much less violence than that which can be found at other schools. In particular, P9 also reported that there was so much violence at a school he used to work at, that he began to question his career choice. P10 reported that, at her former school, teacher disrespect, threats toward teachers and physical violence among students was "out of control." P10 also reported that her daily goal was to find a way to be transferred out of that school because of the "culture of disrespect and violence."

As will be seen below, the target school merged with two underperforming schools, and participants, especially P1, P3, P5, P6, P7 and P8 commented that the level of violence had greatly increased during the first year of the merge. P3 said that it was, "very stressful working

here that year.” P4 said that, “You just felt helpless, they are so much bigger than you, so what can you do? I used to try and break it up, but not now.” P7 said that, “It’s not like it used to be when parents were more involved. You could call a parent, and they would come right over just because you called.”

All 12 of the participants who commented on the level of violence before, during, and after the merge indicated that the level of violence increased dramatically the first year of the merge, and then began tapering off. P1 said that, “I was afraid someone was going to get hurt. Students ran up and down the halls chasing one another in the middle of classes passing, and I just knew that before long someone would be hurt. That kind of behavior doesn’t exist anymore, and it’s much better now.” P5 stated that “It wasn’t as bad for us as it was for the middle school wing. I hated to have to take my class down that hall because the big kids wouldn’t even move out of the way!” And P 2 stated that, “You could hardly get any parents to come in for a conference. It was very frustrating. I had a confrontation with one of my students because he insisted on brushing his hair in class. I took the brush and called to ask the parent to come in for a conference. My goal was to return the brush and develop a remedial plan for the student, because he was failing. The parent came in to get the brush, but she was not at all interested in helping her son pass my class. She spent the whole time fussing about the brush.” According to the majority of participants, the year after the merge saw fewer incidents of violence, and the present school year has even less violence. Both Middle School and Elementary School teachers indicated that the majority of the violence, when it was at its peak, was in the Middle School wing of the school.



P8 attributed decreases in violence over time to a) The eighth grade students graduated and moved on, b) The administration was consistent in issuing consequences for infractions against school rules, c) The culture of the school began to change and become more positive. d) At least six staff members from the schools with which the target school merged were replaced with new teachers from different schools during the second year.

**Factors that affect school violence.** Responses to probes regarding factors that affect school violence almost always involved the family and the neighborhoods students come from. Another frequent pattern in response to probing in this area was anger, and the lack of coping skills on the part of students who, “Don’t seem to have the social skills they need in order to resolve conflicts without fighting” according to P9. She also offered that neighbors who see our students out there fighting in the neighborhood are likely to blame the school for not getting it settled before they left school. What they don’t realize is that a lot of the problems that are found in our school are brought in with the students from the neighborhood. “All they know how to do is cuss and fight when they get mad,” stated P3. “It seems like they have never been taught to work things out, or to have a discussion when they disagree,” P 5 stated. P7 stated that, “Parents don’t help when they tell the kids that if somebody hits you, you have the right to hit them back. They should be telling them to tell us if they have a problem. Instead they talk about each other until somebody gets mad and lashes out, and there you go.” These statements are evidence of a pattern in response to probing in the area of anger, and the lack of coping skills on the part of students to deal with anger.

Overcrowded classrooms and the school climate were cited repeatedly as having an effect on school violence at the target school after the merger. P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, and P12

specifically stated that the merger with three underachieving schools had a major negative impact on the amount of school violence that has been experienced at the target school. P1 stated that “We were doing just fine until we had to move here. P8 stated that there is no way you could teach 45 students anything. They have to sit so close that they bump each other, and they don’t mean to, but they get mad because it happens.” “At the old school, we had parents who would come to conferences, and even though some students always tried to get away with stuff, most of our students followed the rules.” P3 stated that, “Very seldom did you hear a student using profanity, and if they did, they tried to make sure you didn’t hear it. Here, they used to get up in your face and cuss you out, and the parents wanted to know what you did to make them so mad!”

The lack of parenting skills was cited frequently as a contributing factor to school violence, along with low socioeconomic status. P8, a middle school teacher, reported that, “They become parents at a young age, before they complete school, and with the burden of raising a child without a strong support system, they don’t go to college. By the time we see their children, they are telling us they don’t know what to do with them. If you can’t control your own son, I know there’s nothing I can do with him!” P3 states that, “Parents need to realize that the person who walked out the door on their way to school is usually not the same person who enters the front door of the school. They need to own up to the misdeeds of their children and work with us instead of blaming us.”

P7 stated that “Parents don’t want to assume any responsibility for the learning of the kids; they think it’s all our job, and when they get in trouble, it’s all our fault.” P2 Stated, “I send homework every day, and only a small percentage of students actually do it and bring it

back. When I talk with parents about it, they say they didn't know how to do it themselves, so they couldn't help with it, or they say they didn't know they had homework." P12 offered that, "One of my kids comes to school just before lunch, every day. By that time half the day is gone, and he has missed out on too much for him to be able to keep up. What kind of parent allows that to happen?" P7 recalled a time when the temperature was below 20 degrees, and she stated, "One of my students came in with gym shoes and no socks."

To help curb violence, some participants suggested that more assemblies should be held. P5 commented that in the beginning of the school year, assemblies are pretty regular, and students are reminded of the student code of conduct, but then further into the school year, there are fewer and fewer assemblies. Parent meetings with the administration were suggested by seven of 12 participants. Parent workshops about students and school violence was also suggested by seven of 12 participants. P9 suggested the appointment of a "committee of teachers, parents, students, and an administrators" to address school violence.

**Teacher's responses to school violence.** Based on participant responses, there is a wide variety of strategies that are used to address school violence. Almost all of the participants stated, however, that they would not get into the middle of a fight and attempt to break it up. P10 cited an experience involving her husband, a teacher, where he attempted to break up a fight, and his ankle was broken in the process. He is now, "...In constant pain, and he has a metal pin holding his foot together."

The majority of participants (10 of 12) stated that they call for the security guard, and rely on him to break up fights. Another strategy is to allow students to intervene, and physically break up a fight. P6 and P8 both stated that it is not unusual for students, when they see an ongoing

fight, to step in and begin grabbing on the fighters in order to get them to stop. Another frequent response was to be proactive and stop fights before they start. One of the words used most frequently in response to classroom management probing is “monitor.” Participants overwhelmingly submitted that if they watch, keep an eye on, and monitor student activity at all times, students are less likely to engage in fighting. P9 stated that, “I very seldom allow myself to be distracted. I have all of my board work up before they come in so that I don’t have to turn my back to write on the board.” P12 stated that, I have the seats arranged so that I can see everyone’s face just by scanning the room. No one can hide behind anyone else.” P7 stated that, “Even in the halls, my class walks in front of me, and I tell the line leader where to stop. That’s so that they can’t get in trouble walking behind me.”

Additionally, P3, P4, P8, and P10 said that they use humor to diffuse situations which may blossom into conflicts. As stated by P3 when a student reached over and took another student’s eraser, P3 asked, “... is that eraser *that* important? What is the eraser doing for you? Is it bringing you loads of money? What’s going to happen if you never see that eraser again, will you die? I’m sure some of us in here can help you, and give you another eraser, would you like one of mine?” “What should you do about the eraser?” P4 stated that she often ask students to imagine themselves having and being capable of doing anything, and then she challenges them to come up with the best way to handle a situation.

**Violence and teaching duties.** Most participants stated that although they had not experienced much violence in the classroom, it can be very disruptive to the teaching process. They explained that the normal course of action is to somehow separate the fighters, investigate to see why and how the fight started, document the details of the fight, send the fighters to the

assistant principal, and then call parents to alert them that their child had been involved in a fight. P9 puts it this way, “So, a 30 second fight between two students, that 30 seconds of ugliness can turn into 30 minutes or even an hour of wasted instructional time, especially if several students are called out of the classroom as witnesses.” P7 stated that fights interfere with your teaching duties because, “You still have to take time and find out who started it, and then decide whether they need to go to the office. In the meantime, the other students are distracted, and you can’t carry on your lesson until you get things back under control.” P12 stated that, “Even when students are just teasing and name calling, you have to deal with the ‘he said –she said,’ and that’s time consuming.”

The top strategies in use at the target school to avoid violence are to familiarize classes with the student classroom rules during the first few days of class, and then to continue to reinforce the rules and consequences repeatedly throughout the first few weeks of school. All of the participants (P1-P12) cited consistency in following through with appropriate consequences as the key to effectiveness using this strategy. Another strategy involves seating arrangements. Teachers make sure students who might not like each other, or who it seems there might be a negative situation brewing, are not seated close together. Additionally, six of the 12 participants encourage students to take a hall pass and leave the classroom for a few minutes if it seems that they are going to be disruptive or unable to focus.

**School climate and culture.** When asking participants to describe the school climate and culture at the target school, I explained that the climate is the general feeling of belongingness and togetherness that they experience at the target school. Whereas the culture, I explained, refers to the ways in which we operate, and how we do what we do. Most responses to

this question indicated that the climate is relaxed, and as P3 expressed it, “laid back.” P4 specifically said that staff members, “Get along good and we work well together.” P2 stated that if something needed to be discussed, any staff member in the middle school wing could call a meeting.

The target school is situated such that grades 6-8 are held in classes along one corridor in the school, whereas grades preschool through grade one are located in a completely different corridor. Grades 2-5 are located on the second floor. P8 indicated that in the middle school staff members they feel free to call upon one another as needed, and they can count on each other to help out. Coincidentally, as I was leaving the middle school wing at the target school, grade 6-8 were gathering for a meeting which had been called by one of them.

**School violence and the community.** Several suggestions were shared in response to questions regarding community involvement. It was suggested that the community could be instrumental in keeping students safe while they walk to school, and they could assist in keeping the community clean. P9 specifically stated that the community could donate money so that the school could offer programs that would keep students occupied, and less likely to engage in violence. P11 suggested that students need actual mentors who will show they care, rather than speakers who come in and have assemblies. P8 stated that the school is always in need of volunteers. They could help monitor the hallways and make sure students are not able to gather and loiter in and around the school undetected.

**School Violence and Parents.** The most prevalent response to inquiries regarding parents is that they need to be more involved. As reported above, according to participants at the

target school, parental involvement is lacking. This reality is supported in the results of the School Climate Surveys. Also, P4, P5, P8 and P10 expressed the opinion that when parents do come to the school, they are very defensive; meaning that they tend to take the stance that someone is, as expressed by P10, “out to get their child.” Moreover, P1 expressed the concern that parents are encouraging their children that if someone hits them, to hit back, rather than encouraging them to let a staff member know if there is a problem.

P1, P3, P6, P7, P8 and P9, each using their own terminology, expressed a need for workshops that would be designed to help parents develop parenting skills. Especially for younger parents. These participants felt that having parents come together, share, and be coached as to best practices in child rearing could be beneficial. P7 recalled a situation where a student had been restricted from participating in a performance at school. P7 visited the student’s home to check on his attendance, and was told that he could not participate because he was on punishment. The student who was on punishment that day was actually outside playing basketball.

Parent workshops would help in letting parents know that, “There are resources out there.” states P3. P 12 said, “We always have handouts and brochures from the district for the parents, but we haven’t asked them what they need. They might not even need that.” P11 said, “If you have four kids, and the schoolwide field trip costs \$20.00, somebody is going to be left behind, if anybody goes, so they need help.” P2 stated, “A lot of places offer free food and cheap clothes, but if the parents don’t know, they can’t take advantage of it. If we had regular parent workshops we could share that kind of information, and information about free tutoring and other academic programs their kids might need.

**Teacher resiliency at the target school.** Resiliency was measured using a questionnaire that is published by Seibert (2007, p 16-18). Scores ranging from 50-69 indicate that individuals have difficulties bouncing back from adverse situations. They are not apt to learn from negative situations, and their job performance may suffer because they are deficient in coping skills. Scores ranging from 70-89 is reflective of individuals who have average coping skills, and whose abilities to adapt and to thrive in negative circumstances is adequate.



Table 4

*Teacher Resiliency Scores*

Participant Code	Score
P1	80
P2	81
P3	88
P4	71
P5	64
P6	87
P7	66
P8	77
P9	78
P10	85
P11	86
P12	82

circumstances are good. Finally, individuals whose scores are approximating 90 and above routinely look for and expect positive outcomes, no matter what the situation is.

Resiliency scores from participants in this study ranged from 64 to 88 (See Table 4). The mean score was 80.8, and the bi-modal scores were 85 and 88. The median score was 85. Participant resiliency scores indicate that, overall they are able to adapt and thrive under negative circumstances, and that they possess adequate coping skills. Based on participant responses to interview questions, resiliency fluctuated with levels of school violence depending on whether they were speaking of school violence at the target school before the merge, after the merge, or resilience at a former school.

Figure 1 above offers information regarding resiliency that is used to compare with participant responses. Statements such as “I’m ready to go, nobody listens to us, we’re not being heard” by P7 for example, reflects Level 1’s Opposite Effect and a resiliency level that has waned. Conversely, statements such as “I am not as stressed as I was the first year of the merger.” by P3 reflect higher resiliency levels. The results of this study indicate that levels of teacher resiliency are subject to fluctuations in the amount of school violence.

**School violence and attitudes about teaching at the target school.** Responses to probes about teaching at the target school indicate that participants are pleased overall that school violence is low, especially compared to other schools they have worked at and that they know of. None of the participants indicated that they were dissatisfied to the degree that they would seek employment elsewhere. Despite the level of violence that was experienced during

the first year of the merger at the target school, P7 was the only participant that stated she was ready to leave then.

In response to the interview question regarding attitudes toward teaching at our school, nine of the 12 participants suggested that there should be less suspensions. Seven of the 12 participants offered that there should be parent workshops, and all 12 participants noted that school violence is currently down at our school. Restorative Practices was suggested by 9 of the 12 participants as a daily school-wide activity. Responses to this question were those such as offered by P3, who said, "I like it here. My daughter is a sixth grader, and now that my son is going into the third grade, he will be transferred here next semester." P5 stated, "Even though we need tighter security and more support from the administrative staff, I don't want to work anyplace else." P12 stated that, "We offer a lot of programs that most schools don't have, like swimming, this is really a good school."

Restorative Practices is a strategy which teachers at the target school were just recently introduced to. The majority, eight of 12 participants, each cited this activity as one which could help relieve students of tension, increase communication between students and students, as well as between students and staff, and which could foster a more positive school climate. Restorative Practices calls for the entire class to position itself in a circle. The teacher/facilitator pose a question or introduce a topic that the class would respond to, such as, "What would you change about the school rules, and why." An object is passed from person to person in the circle, and only the person holding the object can speak. Everyone else must respectfully listen until it is their turn. Two participants (P5 and P9 both) reported that their students look forward to the

“talking circle,” and that every student in their classes participates each time Restorative Practices is conducted.

### **Overarching Themes**

**School Merger and Lower Resiliency.** The first overarching theme presented in the data is that the merger with three underachieving schools and the target school had a negative impact on the resiliency of teachers during the first year of the merger. Participant statements to that effect are as follows:

1. P3-“It was very stressful working here that year.”
2. P4-“You just felt helpless, they are so much bigger than you, so what can you do? I used to try and break up fights, but not now.”
3. P1-“I was afraid someone would get hurt. Students ran up and down the halls chasing one another in the middle of classes passing, and I just knew that before long someone would be hurt.”
4. P5-“It wasn’t as bad for us (elementary) as it was for the middle school wing. I hated to take my class down that hall, because the big kids wouldn’t even move out of the way!”
5. P2-“You could hardly get any parents to come in for a conference. It was very frustrating.”
6. P1-“We were doing just fine until we had to move here.”
7. P8-“There is no way you could teach 45 students in one classroom!”
8. P12-“At the old school, we had parents who would come to conferences and, even though some kids always tried to get away with stuff, most of our students followed the rules.”

9. P3-“Very seldom did you hear a student using profanity, and if they did, they tried to make sure you didn’t hear it. Here, they used to get up in your face and cuss you out, and the parents wanted to know what you did to make them so mad!”

10. PP1-“It was terrible when we first moved. And when that boy threatened to come back and get me and my family, I knew it was time to retire. At the time, my daughter was with me at the school, and if he was going to be allowed to come back, I wasn’t coming back.”

**Inconsistent Administrative Support.** The second overarching theme points to the practice of favoritism, or inconsistent administrative actions concerning how consequences will be levied among students. Participant statements to that effect are as follows:

1. P11-“Two students may be found to have committed the exact same offense, yet both are not suspended. A lot depends on who a child’s parents are, as to how much punishment is administered.”
2. P9-“It’s just not right if students who do the same thing don’t get the same punishment, and they (the students) know what’s going on. Some of them know they won’t be punished.”
3. P7-“You never know if the administration will support you, even when the student has clearly violated the student code of conduct.”
4. P11- “They (the administration) need to have our backs. We need to know that they will be there for us, not taking sides with the parents and reprimanding us.”
5. P8-The need to stay out of my way, keep the parents away from my door and let me teach. They’re not doing that.”
6. P7-‘I expect the administration to have my back when there is a dispute, not look at me as if I did something wrong.’”

7. P11-“The administrative team should investigate incidents to see who is at fault, and then make sure students are punished. Sometimes they do, sometimes they don’t. Sometimes they just send them back to the classroom, and nothing has been done at all.”
8. P1-4, 5-7, 9 and 11-Each voiced the opinion that there are too many suspensions.
9. P5-“And when they come back, nothing has changed, some of them want to be suspended.”
10. P6-“You just never know what (the administration) is going to do. One day they support you, the next day, they don’t.”

**Lack of parental and community support.** The third overarching theme which emerged from patterns in interviews is that there is a lack of parental and community support. Participant statements to that effect are as follows:

1. P7-“It’s not like it used to be when parents were more involved.”
2. P12-“You could hardly get any parents to come in for a conference (during the first year of the merger). It was very frustrating. I had a confrontation with one student because he kept brushing his hair in class. I took the brush and called to ask the parent to come in for a conference. My goal was to return the brush and develop a remedial plan with her so that her son could pass my class. She was not at all interested in helping him to pass. She spent the whole time fussing about the brush and telling me what “ya’ll teachers” need to do.”
3. P9-“Neighbors who see out students out there are fighting are likely to blame the school for not settling it before they left. What they don’t realize is that a lot of the problems that are found in our school are brought in here from the neighborhood.”
4. P3-“It seems like they have never been taught to work things out or have a discussion when they disagree.”

5. P7-“Parents don’t help when they tell kids that if someone hits you, you have the right to hit them back. They should be telling them to tell us if they have a problem. Instead, they sit and talk about each other until somebody gets mad and lashes out, and there you go.”

6. P3-“At the old school, we had parents who would come to conferences, and even though some students always tried to get away with stuff, most of our kids followed the rules.”

7. P6-“Very seldom did you hear a student using profanity, and if they did, they tried to make sure you didn’t hear it. Here, they used to get up in your face and cuss you out, and the parents wanted to know what you did to make them so mad!”

8. P8-“They become parents at a young age, before they complete school. And with the burden of a child, and without a strong support system, they don’t go to college. By the time we see their children, they are telling us they don’t know what to do with them. If you can’t control your own son, I know there is nothing I can do with him!”

9. P8-“Parents need to know that the person who walked out their door is not the same person who walks in to the front door of the school. They need to own up to the misdeed of their children and work with us instead of blaming us.”

10. P4-“I remember the day when it was less than 20 degrees outside, and one of my students came in with gym shoes and no socks. What kind of parent lets that happen?”

11. P10-“One of my students never gets here until lunch time, and when I spoke with his mother, she accused me of being out to get her son.”

12. P7-“I wanted one of my boys to come to rehearsal, so he could participate in our play. I actually went by his house to talk with his mother about it. She told me that he couldn’t

participate because he was on punishment. I looked down the street and noticed that he was outside playing basketball.”

13. P1,3,6,7,8 and 9 each using their own terminology expressed a need for parent workshops to help parents develop better parenting skills.

14. P9-“Students don’t seem to have the social skills they need in order to resolve conflicts without fighting.”

**School Security.** A very strong pattern which emerged in response to probes regarding school security at the target school is that it is lacking. Although there was an overwhelming consensus that security is in need of improvement, a connection between poor school security and school violence was not found. Further, a connection between poor security at the target school and teacher resiliency was not found. Participant statements, however, regarding school security are as follows:

1. PP1-“Security at the target school is lacking.”
2. P1-“There is only one security guard, and he can’t be everywhere at one time.”
3. P2- The security office is, “A nice guy and the kids respond to him well, but if something happened, he’s only one guy.
4. P7- After counting seven ways to enter the building, states, “Even when the metal detectors go off, nobody pays any attention. People can just come and go as they please around here, so if we had a shooter incident, I don’t know if we could all get out alive.”
5. P9-“Fire drills and take cover drills are good, but the kids need more practice preparing for intruder incidents.



6. P4-“I am not confident that they would know what to do if there was a bomb or a dangerous person in the school.”

7. P7-“I would not confront a man who came in if he had a weapon. He shouldn’t be able to get in. Parents and anybody can just come in and roam the halls around here.”

### **Setting**

All of the data collection activities took place at the target school, a Midwest elementary/middle school located in Detroit, Michigan. Usually, interviews took place in the teacher’s classroom after school hours or during preparation periods. All interviews were tape recorded, and interviewer field notes were taken each time. Most interviews took approximately 60 minutes. Two interviews were briefly interrupted by calls from the office requesting information and assistance. Interviews were resumed in those cases, and completed without further incidents. In all cases, special care was taken to make sure that participants were comfortable and relaxed, and that any possible disturbances would be held to a minimum.

### **Demographics**

#### **Background of Target School**

**School Merger.** Two years before this research began; the target school was merged with three underachieving schools. The target school was surrounded by highways and industrial buildings, and the majority of its students were either transported in by parents or by bus. At its former location, its reputation was one of high achievement, an elite elementary/middle school whose parents had submitted applications to secure their children’s attendance. After a change in address and the merge with three neighborhood schools, children from the three neighborhoods

were enrolled with students who were already enrolled at the target school. The school maintained its name, but many parents from the former address, for various reasons, pulled their children out of the target school. At the same time, parents seeking to enroll their children in a high performing school submitted applications so that their children could attend the target school.

**Effect of the Merger.** This background information is important because all but one of the study participants were also teachers at the target school before it was merged and moved to its present location. As the researcher, I also taught at the target school before it was merged with neighborhood schools. Additionally, this information is included because, as reflected in participant statements, the merging with underachieving schools is connected to changes in attitudes towards teaching for some of the participants. Further, the School Climate Surveys completed by participants during the first year of the merger is remarkable different from those taken during the second and third years after the merger.

Participants in this study were those who fit the inclusion criterion that was used for sampling purposes. All participants had worked in public schools consecutively for the past five years. In fact, they had all taught continuously for ten years or more. Four participants are teachers of grades 6-8 in English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies and Math. Four participants are teachers of grades three and four in English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies and Math.

One participant teaches Grade 5 Social Studies and Math. One participant teaches Computer and Technology skills in grades 2-8. One participant teaches Special Education, all subjects in grades 3-5, and one participant teaches Special Education, all subjects in grades 6-8.

So, each participant teaches in grades 2-8 at the target school, as required by the inclusion criterion. Age, gender, nationality or ethnic group was not considered in sampling for this study.

### **Data Collection**

There were a total of 12 participants for this study. After having been notified by Walden University's Institutional Review Board on Monday, April 27, 2015, that I had permission to conduct interviews at my school (Approval Number 05-15-15-0191815), I began by emailing each of the members on staff who fit the inclusion criterion for this study. I informed them that I was in the data collection process of my research, and that I needed their assistance. I asked them if I could interview them regarding school violence and teacher resiliency at our school, and I requested that they complete the resiliency questionnaire. I explained that I would need their signed consent form before we could proceed, and I attached the Letter of Invitation (Appendix B), the confidentiality agreement (Appendix C), the consent form, and the Resiliency Questionnaire (Appendix F) to the email.

Although I originally intended to solicit for participants at a staff meeting, just before I received IRB approval, staff meetings had been discontinued for the rest of the school year. I attached a copy of the Letter of Invitation (Appendix B), the Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix C), the Resiliency Questionnaire (Appendix F), and the Consent Form to each email. I then began asking faculty members if they had received the email, and whether or not they could participate. Teachers received the letter of invitation and consent forms in their mailboxes on Thursday, April 30, 2015, and eight teachers returned the consent forms and agreed to be interviewed and complete the questionnaire within a two week period. Interviews began on Tuesday, May 20, 2015 and were completed by Friday, July 12, 2015.

In compliance with both the confidentiality and consent agreements, at that point, participant's names were substituted with numbers, for example P1 for participant one. I then began to receive consent forms and resiliency questionnaires by email and in my mailbox at the target school, and some of the forms were hand delivered. Field notes assisted me in keeping track of the paperwork.

In-depth interviews and resiliency questionnaires were completed and received from the 12 participants. I received some completed questionnaires before the interview, and I interviewed some participants before I received their questionnaires. The principal at my school had previously signed the Cooperation Form and Data Use Agreement, and recent school climate surveys were received for the purpose of triangulating their data with interview data, resiliency questionnaires data, field notes and journal writings. The folders that were placed in mailboxes also contained copies of the resiliency questionnaire that is part of this study's data collection activity. Upon receiving the signed consent form from teachers, I requested that they also complete the resiliency questionnaire and return it within a week. By so doing, I could remind each participant of the specific day/time that they had agreed to return the questionnaire. All but two questionnaires were received by Wednesday, July 3, 2015, and the last of them were received by Friday, July 12, 2015. Ongoing journaling and field notes were maintained beginning when I received IRB approval to collect data.

The daily handwritten field notes that I took were instrumental in keeping track of what each participant had completed, or had yet to complete. For example, P3 had completed the interview but not the resiliency questionnaire. P6 had completed both the interview and the questionnaire, but had yet to receive a follow up member check visit. Field notes also helped me

to remember that I constantly needed to bracket any previous emotions and ideation as to how school violence might have affected me in the past, so that I could be fully focused on what interviewees were saying.

For each interview, I used two digital tape recorders, and I took field notes. I had previously assigned a participant number to each teacher, which I wrote on each resiliency questionnaire when it was returned. The folders in the tape recorders were coded to indicate who was doing the speaking, and the same coding structure was transferred into the NVivo 10 Software for analysis. Before each interview, I was careful to remind participants that whatever they said would remain confidential, and that they had the option of discontinuing at any time, with or without a reason. I further reminded them that there was no right or wrong response, and that if they were to discuss specific names in regard to illegal activities, I would be obligated to report it. For that reason, I asked them to speak in general terms if it seemed that it might become necessary to report a specific person to the authorities.

### **Data Analysis**

After each interview was completed, I began the process of transcribing participant responses verbatim from memory and from my field notes as much as possible. As soon as I could, I transcribed, word for word, each interview from the interview tape recording. During the transcription process I intentionally looked for themes, patterns and relationships among the responses of participants. For the purposes of this research, the term theme refers to any overarching ideology which has surfaced as a result of analyzing data. Patterns are to be seen as statements whose meanings became repetitive, even though they were expressed using different words. Relationships refer to connections between patterns and themes.

I followed the practice of looking for themes, patterns and relationships until all of the interviews had been completely transcribed. I then read and re-read each transcript and I submitted the interview data to NVivo (Version 10). In general, I was interested in what participants had to say regarding the core research question, How does school violence affect teacher resiliency? Specifically, I was looking for answers to the sub questions associated with this study, which are:

1. Does teacher resiliency decrease as school violence increases?
2. Does teacher resiliency increase as school violence decreases?
3. Is there no relationship between school violence and teacher resilience?

NVivo (Version 10) made it possible to import the interview documents and format the interviews so that all of the answers to question one from each of the 12 participants. for. I was able to see the similarities and differences in responses to each question almost at a glance using NVivo. This capability made it easier to perceive patterns and trends in participant responses. NVivo also has features that allowed me to see the data in graph, word tree, word cloud, and word frequency formats, further facilitating the development of categories and themes taken from larger units of information.

Triangulating participant resiliency scores provided insight into how baseline resiliency can be factored in with discussions regarding school violence, and teacher response. Likewise, the results of the school climate surveys were compatible with participant responses. There were no wide variations between the participant responses and the resiliency questionnaires or the school climate surveys. Additionally, the field notes served to remind me of individual

participant body language, gestures, tone of voice and speech patterns during the interviews, which was helpful in ascribing how deeply they felt about the topic.

Qualitative research designs which use a phenomenological approach to data gathering often focus on the development of patterns, themes, and relationships within the data (Creswell, 2009, p. 17). The data, normally in-depth interviews, focus groups, observations, and surveys and field notes, can be analyzed so that patterns, such as repetitive ideations in response to the same or similar questions, may begin to emerge. Patterns and similar trains of thought that trend toward a singular statement are then used to identify overarching themes. Overarching themes are statements upon which the vast majority of participants agree, as indicated by their individual participant responses.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness for this study was established by way of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Bracketing is a strategy which is used in research to establish credibility. As mentioned earlier, bracketing is the practice of suspending any conscience memory of, reference to, or knowledge of the topic being shared (Creswell, 2013, p 83). Additionally, any emotional connection to information being shared by participants during interviews was disallowed, and I received responses to interview questions as one would who had never been exposed to the participants, the topic, or their environment, to the best of my ability.

For this study, transferability is cited in the sense that researchers will be able to use the methodology herein to investigate similar topics with schools that share comparable

demographics with the target school. Rather than seeking the ability to generalize the results of this study to numerous schools which may be located in various parts of the nation, my focus was on reflexivity, or the practice of being reflective about my own perspective, so that I could guard against allowing it to enter the analysis process. Reflexivity enhances authenticity and fosters trustworthiness (Patton, 2002, p 41).

In order to establish dependability, I employed the practice of triangulation. Triangulation involves the use of more than one form of data collection method to examine the same research question (Frankfort & Nachmias, 2008, p528). In this study, the results of interviews were triangulated with the results of school climate surveys, resiliency questionnaires, journaling, and field notes. Triangulation serves to foster dependability because a result from more than one data source is more likely to reflect the true nature of the combined lived experiences of participants.

Confirmability can be seen as an indication that there is no variation from what participant responses read in the transcripts, and what they intended to say. For this study, confirmability was achieved by returning each participant's transcript to him/her, and receiving notice that they did contain what the participants intended to say. None of the participants indicated that changes should be made in their transcripts, and all of the transcripts were analyzed using their original transcriptions.

### **Summary**

The core question investigated by this study was does school violence have an effect on teacher resiliency. The results indicate that, from the perspective of teachers, school violence does affect teacher resiliency. As to the sub research questions, patterns and themes which



emerged from text data in triangulation with the other research instruments support the finding that teacher resiliency decreases as school violence increases, that teacher resiliency increases as school violence decreases. Therefore, as to Q3 of the research questions in this study, is there no relationship between teacher resiliency and school violence, there is a definite relationship between school violence and teacher resiliency.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of qualitative this study was to investigate, from the perspective of teachers in grades 2-8 at a Midwest elementary/middle school, the possible effect of school violence on teacher resiliency. It was conducted because there is a significant gap in scientific literature which addresses this topic from the point of view of teachers themselves. Twelve participants completed interviews and submitted resiliency questionnaire responses. School climate surveys researcher field notes, along with journal writings, were also analyzed. This chapter discusses interpretations of the findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications of the study. The goal of this investigation was to respond to the question of whether school violence had an effect on teacher resiliency, as told from the perspective of teachers. The three sub questions, found at the beginning of this study, were addressed.

According to the findings, there is a definite relationship between school violence and teacher resiliency. Teacher resiliency decreases as school violence increases, and teacher resiliency increases as school violence decreases. Results of this study could be instrumental in designing more effective teacher training and professional development programs that address school violence. School administrators and school districts could become more sensitive to the needs of teachers with respect to school violence, which could reduce burnout and increase retention. Finally, information in this study on the origins of school violence could help reveal ways to decrease it.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

From the in-depth interviews on school violence and teacher resiliency, several themes, patterns, and relationships emerged: types and levels of school violence, school climate and culture, factors affecting school violence, parent and community responsibilities, administrative support, school security, levels of teacher resiliency, and attitudes about teaching are themes that emerged as a function of data analysis relative to school violence. Although a review of the literature found that bullying is the most prevalent form of school violence nationwide (Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., O'Brennan, L. M., & Johns Hopkins University, Gulemetova, M. & National Education Association (2011), fighting was reported to be the most common form of violence at the target school.

Additionally, according to Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas (2003), the rate of school violence can be affected by the school climate. This was confirmed in the target school. When the school climate survey reflected a downturn in 2013, school violence went up and teacher resiliency went down. Following that year, however, this study found that the school climate became cooperative, friendly and professional. Following the decrease in school violence after 2013, teacher resiliency, according to text data, in triangulation with the school climate surveys and field notes, went up.

The review of the literature reported that school climate has been positively correlated with levels of violence (Chapman, 2011). This finding is supported in the current study. When school violence was reportedly low at the target school, the school climate survey indicated that teachers had given overall positive responses to the survey (2014 and 2015) in each category. Further, as cited earlier, school climate, an indicator of the amount of togetherness and closeness

students and staff experience, is also positively correlated with bystander behavior (Barlight & Hubbard, 2013) and levels of teacher stress (Borum, 2010). At the target school, when the school climate survey reported positive results in all areas, students are reported to have taken it upon themselves to assist in breaking up fights, and to encourage others to follow school rules.

The culture at the target school, as indicated by the ordinary methods of operation and unspoken practices, underwent critical changes in a short amount of time because of a merger with three underachieving schools. Yet, according to the school climate survey published in 2015, participants rated the school extremely highly in all areas. During the first year of the merger, according to participants, school violence increased, especially in the middle school. During the second year after the merger, the target school was able to regain and then sustain a culture which is maintained by norms that require teachers to teach and reinforce school and classroom rules.

The administration was instrumental in reducing violence by maintaining a zero tolerance stance, by consistently following through with consequences to infractions of the student code of conduct, school and classroom rules, and by making variations in staff appointments. Prather-Jones (2011) stated that having administrative support concerning disciplinary matters is a key component in decisions teachers make as to whether or not to remain in the profession. Based on participant responses, teacher resiliency fluctuated with events that were beyond their control. Textual data in this study, however, support the finding that the school administration was inconsistent in its approach to supporting teachers, and punishing students.

As told by teachers, when school violence went up during the first year of the merger, it was very stressful, they felt that no one was hearing them, and they felt helpless. Participants

reported the similar responses when they worked at schools where they were threatened and high school violence was a daily reality. P9 questioned his career choice, P10 was constantly looking for ways to get out of her situation, and P7, during the first year of the merger said, “I’m done.”

At the target school, a common theme was inadequate security. As discussed earlier, Coon and Travis (2012) suggest that police officers are now positioned to assist in security matters at schools. Not only are they engaging in teaching safety, but they are conducting anti-crime programs and patrolling student travel routes. They have become instrumental at regulating traffic around schools, advising and mentoring, conducting inspections, making arrests, and settling disputes (Coon & Travis, 2012). Apparently, the target school could benefit from some of these services. Training as to how to best implement collaboration with community partners, however, should precede any such effort.

The findings of this study are also consistent with those reported by Sahin (2010) with regard to teacher/parent/community responsibility. These authors found that family issues, the internet, socioeconomic factors and cultural degeneration all contribute to school violence. In their study, bullies were said to be seeking justice because they felt that somehow they have been denied their rights, and they resort to violence to demand justice. As suggested in the current study, to help remedy the trend of increasing school violence, teachers and parents should participate in seminars, workshops, and meetings, and that ongoing communication is necessary (Sahin, 2010).

Despite two participants out of 12 for whom school violence circumstances seemed to have made no difference in resiliency levels, the majority of participant resiliency responses were elevated after the levels of school violence were brought under control at the target school.

According to their resiliency scores, however, the two participants who indicated no change in their resiliency levels are also teachers who scored very high on the resiliency questionnaire. The resiliency questionnaires were instrumental in showing that there were no participants whose personal resiliency could be considered an outlier, and thus skew the findings of the interviews.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The phenomenological research approach limits possible data gathering because it focuses on only one area of lived experience for each participant. Therefore, the development of themes and trends resulting from data analysis has excluded other related lived experiences. Additionally, as a member of the staff of the school under study, research bias, which could potentially limit the study, has been controlled for using the process of bracketing.

### **Recommendations**

This study has highlighted relationships between school violence and teacher resiliency, as told from the perspective of teachers. Three overarching themes have been revealed, one of which involves inconsistencies in administrative support. Given that this finding may be the result of an unintended pattern on the part of the administration, the development of a log which will document the activities of the administration at the target school is recommended, so that unintended patterns are not allowed to exist. A second overarching theme involves the connection between parent and community involvement and school violence. It has been suggested that if teachers partner more closely with parents, and that if schools provide parent workshops and other community relations activities, the possibility exists that school violence might decrease, thereby increasing teacher resiliency. Further research into parent/community relations and teacher resiliency, therefore, is recommended.

## **Implications**

Insight into relationships between school violence and teacher resiliency, as told by teachers, has been the major outcome of this study. A review of the literature revealed that teachers are becoming depressed and unmotivated because of a lack of training relative to school violence (Espelage, 2013). As discussed earlier, they are also leaving the profession prematurely for these same reasons (Garland, 2007, Duffy, 2009, & Wilson, 2011). This study is one that can call attention to the link between school violence and teacher resiliency as told by teachers. At the school and community levels, policy and program changes can be made based on the suggestions of teachers who have experienced fluctuations in their own resiliency.

Because of this study, efforts to foster positive school climates should be given additional justification. Schools with positive school climates are also places where highly qualified teachers would want to work. Therefore, administrators would find it easier to maintain an effective and highly motivated staff after making changes that would improve school climates. This study suggests that it is imperative that schools develop an atmosphere of mutual respect, care and concern, belonging and togetherness.

At the level of school districts, this study is one that can support the position that oversized classrooms are counterproductive, and can become a breeding ground for increased violence. Further, school districts should also investigate avenues that would foster greater school/community relations, especially those that would lead to enhanced school security. In essence, funding should be made available to ensure that students, teachers, parents, and the community feel that they are safe in and around schools.

## Conclusion

An important predictor of teacher burnout is her perception of the workplace climate (Thompson, Amatea & Thomas, 2014). As established in this study, higher levels of school violence, an indication of a negative school climate, is a predictor of lower levels of teacher resiliency. Additionally, as shown in this study, lower levels of teacher resiliency are more probable at schools where there is a lack of administrative support (Allen, 2010). Moreover, inconsistent use of behavioral management procedures by school administrators, as was seen in this study, exacerbates a tendency towards teacher burnout (Allen, 2010).

The Michigan Department of Education has provided a website as a resource for teachers, but teachers have been admonished to *independently seek out training* and participate in professional development regarding school violence (MDE, 2014). The almost blatant lack of regard for teacher resiliency in the face of rising school violence is alarming. This study has shown that teacher resiliency is indeed affected by rising levels of school violence, and that lower levels of teacher resiliency, as told by teachers themselves, is a direct outcome of higher levels of school violence.



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## Appendix A: Principal's Cooperation Agreement

### Principal's Cooperation Agreement

Jounice B. Wright

19165 Annchester

Detroit, MI 48219

(313) 617-6260

March \_\_\_\_, 2015

Dear Dr. Wilson,

I am conducting a study on urban teachers' perceptions of school violence. As part of my graduate studies in Community Education and Program Planning at Walden University, I will be collecting data which will be essential in completing my doctoral research paper. The title of my doctoral study is School Violence and Teacher Resilience at a Midwest Elementary/Middle School, a qualitative phenomenology study. The research will include ten teacher participants. Procedures associated with the study involve one audio taped in depth interview with each teacher during after school hours, and a follow-up interview to verify the transcribed data from the initial interview. Additionally, teachers will be asked to complete a resiliency quiz. Interviews are expected to last approximately 45 minutes to 60 minutes. It is expected that the interview/observation process will be completed approximately two weeks, and I will make every effort not to disturb the learning environment of the school or classrooms during this process. This study is designed to provide a more complete knowledge base from which to

formulate training and programs which will assist teachers in developing greater resiliency, as well as to increase teacher retention rates in the Metropolitan Midwest area.

You may be assured that the participants, students, school, and location will remain anonymous during the entire research and publication process. Please sign the attached letter of request granting me permission to conduct this valuable research at Burton International Academy. I am truly grateful for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Jounice B. Wright

Ph D Candidate

Walden University

John Wilson, Principal

Date

## Appendix B: Invitation Letter

Invitation Letter

March \_\_\_\_\_, 2015

Re: Doctoral Study

Dear Teacher One,

My name is Jounice B. Wright and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. As part of my doctoral program, I will need to complete an independent research study that will be the basis for my final research paper.

In my research study, I will be conducting a qualitative phenomenology study of eight to ten urban teachers' perspective of school violence and teacher resiliency.

- I would like to invite you to participate in this study. In order to collect data for this study, you will be interviewed one time for approximately 45 to 60 minutes regarding teacher's perspectives related to school violence and teacher resiliency in grades two through eight at a Midwest Elementary/Middle School. You will be asked to complete a quiz that is designed to gauge how naturally resilient you currently are. Please note that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that all information provided by you will remain strictly confidential. Your name and any other information that might identify you, including the name of the school, will not appear in any report or document. In addition, the interview will not take place during your work day, and the quiz and questionnaire may be completed at your leisure during the two week data collection



period. I will make every effort to schedule your interview at a time that is most convenient for you.

If you would like to participate in this study, please read and sign the enclosed consent form. If you should have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact me via email at [jounice.wright@waldenu.edu](mailto:jounice.wright@waldenu.edu).

My doctoral chairperson's name is Dr. Patrick Tschida, and he can be reached by email at [Patrick.tschida@waldenu.edu](mailto:Patrick.tschida@waldenu.edu).

Sincerely,

Jounice B. Wright

Ph D. Student

## Appendix C: Confidentiality Agreement

### Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer: Jounice B. Wright

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research regarding “School Violence and Teacher Resiliency” a qualitative phenomenology study, I will have access to information which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidential Agreement, I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge copy, release, sell, and loan, alter, or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant’s name is not mentioned.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquires, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the research that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of the terms of this agreement will have legal implications.

7. I will only access or use systems or devices I am officially authorized to access, and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement, and I agree to comply with all of the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: Jounice B. Wright

Date:

## Appendix D: Teacher Interview Document

### Teacher Interview Document

#### Research Questions:

1. Does teacher resiliency decrease as school violence increases?
2. Does teacher resiliency increase as school violence decreases?
3. Is there no relationship between teacher resiliency and school violence?

#### Interview Questions:

1. How would you define violence?
2. How would you define school violence?
3. What are some factors that affect school violence?
4. Identify episodes of school violence that you have witnessed in your classroom, and in or around your school.

Explain how you handled the situation.

5. To what extent is school violence a problem at this school.
6. Did school violence ever affect your ability to pursue your normal teaching duties? Explain
7. How would you define the school climate and culture at your school?
8. What are five top strategies that you use to address violent behaviors at school?
9. How do you structure your classroom so that school violence is addressed?
10. What proactive measures can teachers take to prevent violent behavior at school?
11. What are your expectations as a classroom teacher regarding violent behavior at school?
12. How do you maintain a safe and nurturing environment in your classroom and at school?
13. If any, what role can parents play in addressing school violence?

14. If any, what role does the community play in addressing school violence?
15. How can teachers partner with parents and families to address violent behaviors at school?
16. Does having security measures in place help deter school violence? Explain.
17. What interventions are currently in place to address school violence?
18. Do you feel that these measures are productive? Explain.
19. In your view, has the level of school violence at your school increased or decreased over the years?  
  
Explain.
20. Has this change in the level of violence had an effect on your attitude about teaching?  
  
Explain.
21. Is there anything you would like to add regarding school violence and teacher resiliency?

## Appendix E: Data Use Agreement

### DATA USE AGREEMENT

This Data Use Agreement, effective as of DATE, is entered into by and between Jounice B. Wright and Dr. John Wilson. The purpose of this Agreement is to provide Data Recipient with access to a Limited Data Set (“LDS”) for use in research in accord with the HIPAA Regulations. Questions or concerns regarding this document should be directed to Dr. Patrick Tschida, Walden University Instructional Committee Chairperson, (612) 232-6654.

1. Definitions. Unless otherwise specified in this Agreement, all capitalized terms used in this Agreement not otherwise defined have the meaning established for purposes of the “HIPAA Regulations” codified at Title 45 parts 160 through 164 of the United States Code of Federal Regulations, as amended from time to time.
2. Preparation of the LDS. Dr. John Wilson shall prepare and furnish to Data Recipient a LDS in accord with HIPAA Regulations
3. Data Fields in the LDS. No direct identifiers such as names may be included in the Limited Data Set (LDS). In preparing the LDS, Dr. John Wilson shall include the **data fields specified as follows**, which are the minimum necessary to accomplish the research: Results of School Climate Survey.
4. Responsibilities of Data Recipient. Data Recipient agrees to:
  - a. Use or disclose the LDS only as permitted by this Agreement or as required by law;

- b. Use appropriate safeguards to prevent use or disclosure of the LDS other than as permitted by this Agreement or required by law;
  - c. Report to Data Provider any use or disclosure of the LDS of which it becomes aware that is not permitted by this Agreement or required by law;
  - d. Require any of its subcontractors or agents that receive or have access to the LDS to agree to the same restrictions and conditions on the use and/or disclosure of the LDS that apply to Data Recipient under this Agreement; and
  - e. Not use the information in the LDS to identify or contact the individuals who are data subjects.
5. Permitted Uses and Disclosures of the LDS. Data Recipient may use and/or disclose the LDS for its research activities only.
6. Term and Termination.
- a. Term. The term of this Agreement shall commence as of the Effective Date and shall continue for so long as Data Recipient retains the LDS, unless sooner terminated as set forth in this Agreement.
  - b. Termination by Data Recipient. Data Recipient may terminate this agreement at any time by notifying the Data Provider and returning or destroying the LDS.
  - c. Termination by Data Provider. Data Provider may terminate this agreement at any time by providing thirty (30) days prior written notice to Data Recipient.
  - d. For Breach. Data Provider shall provide written notice to Data Recipient within ten (10) days of any determination that Data Recipient has breached a material term of this Agreement. Data Provider shall afford Data Recipient an

opportunity to cure said alleged material breach upon mutually agreeable terms. Failure to agree on mutually agreeable terms for cure within thirty (30) days shall be grounds for the immediate termination of this Agreement by Data Provider.

- e. Effect of Termination. Sections 1, 4, 5, 6(e) and 7 of this Agreement shall survive any termination of this Agreement under subsections c or d.

7. Miscellaneous.

- a. Change in Law. The parties agree to negotiate in good faith to amend this Agreement to comport with changes in federal law that materially alter either or both parties' obligations under this Agreement. Provided however, that if the parties are unable to agree to mutually acceptable amendment(s) by the compliance date of the change in applicable law or regulations, either Party may terminate this Agreement as provided in section 6.
- b. Construction of Terms. The terms of this Agreement shall be construed to give effect to applicable federal interpretative guidance regarding the HIPAA Regulations.
- c. No Third Party Beneficiaries. Nothing in this Agreement shall confer upon any person other than the parties and their respective successors or assigns, any rights, remedies, obligations, or liabilities whatsoever.
- d. Counterparts. This Agreement may be executed in one or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.



- e. Headings. The headings and other captions in this Agreement are for convenience and reference only and shall not be used in interpreting, construing or enforcing any of the provisions of this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, each of the undersigned has caused this Agreement to be duly executed in its name and on its behalf.

DATA PROVIDER

DATA RECIPIENT

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Title: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Resiliency Questionnaire

### Resiliency Questionnaire

Rate yourself on the following items:

(1=very little, 5=very strong)

\_\_ In a crisis or chaotic situation, I calm myself and focus on taking useful actions.

\_\_ I'm usually optimistic. I see difficulties as temporary, expect to overcome them, and believe things will turn out well.

\_\_ I can tolerate high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity.

\_\_ I adapt quickly to new developments. I'm good at bouncing back from difficulties.

\_\_ I'm playful. I find the humor in rough situations, laugh at myself, and am easily amused.

\_\_ I'm able to recover emotionally from losses and setbacks. I have friends I can talk with. I can express my feelings to others and can ask for help.

\_\_ I feel self confident, appreciate myself, and have a healthy concept of who I am.

\_\_ I'm curious, I ask questions. I want to know how things work. I like to try new ways of doing things.

\_\_ I learn valuable lessons from my experiences and from the experiences of others.

\_\_ I'm good at solving problems. I can think in analytical, creative, or practical ways.

\_\_ I'm good at making things work well. I'm often asked to lead groups and projects.

\_\_ I'm very flexible. I feel comfortable with my paradoxical complexity. I'm optimistic and pessimistic, trusting and cautious, unselfish and selfish, and so forth.

\_\_ I'm always myself, but I've noticed that I'm different with different people and in different situations.

\_\_ I prefer to work without a written job description. I'm more effective when I'm free to do what I think is best in each situation.

\_\_ I "read" people well and trust my intuition.

\_\_ I'm a good listener, I have good empathy skills.

\_\_ I'm nonjudgmental about others and am comfortable with many kinds of people.

\_\_ I'm very durable. I hold up well during tough times. I have an independent spirit underneath my cooperative way of working with others.

\_\_ I've been made stronger and better by difficult experiences.

\_\_ I've converted misfortune into good luck and found benefits in bad experiences.

Source: Seibert, A. (2005). The resiliency advantage, mater change, thrive under pressure, and bounce back from setbacks, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco, CA, p16-17

## Appendix G Letter of Permission (Siebert)



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8 January 2015

Jounice B Wright

Hello Jounice,

You have permission to use the material that you requested, The Resiliency Quiz and The Five levels of Resiliency, from *The Resiliency Advantage by Siebert* with rights you requested for your project.

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"the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." mahatma gandhi

"until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened." anatole france, french author, nobel laureate

## Appendix H

Letter of Permission (Creswell)

Hello Jounice Wright,

I work with the permissions department of SAGE Publications. We recently received your request through the mail (attached) to use a table from a Creswell book (Research Design 3<sup>rd</sup> edition). You can consider this email as permission to use the material as detailed in your letter for your upcoming research. Please note that this permission does not cover any 3<sup>rd</sup> party material that may be found within the work. We do ask that you properly credit the original source, SAGE Publications. Please contact us for any further usage of the material, including republication.

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