Spring 5-2019

A Narrative Inquiry With Three Formerly Abrasive Leaders: Stories of Disruption, Awakening, and Equipping

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This dissertation, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the College of Graduate and Professional Studies of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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Dr. Joey Cope, Dean of the College
of Graduate and Professional Studies

Date: 04/13/2019

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School of Educational Leadership

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by

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April, 2019

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the three formerly abrasive leaders of this study and their superiors who intervened.

Acknowledgments

The completion of this study involved the participation of many people. Their contributions of time, effort, and support are immensely appreciated.

I first want to acknowledge and thank my dissertation committee: Dr. Peter Williams (Chair), Dr. Garry Bailey, and Dr. Jaime Goff. I was blessed with their theoretical expertise, practical knowledge, and personal interest in this study. They offered valuable guidance and support throughout the inquiry process. I am thankful for the depth of their contributions to this study.

There are also individuals who assisted with this inquiry in other substantive ways. Dr. Dana McMichael (manager of dissertations and projects) during the past few years has regularly contacted me with reminders and words of encouragement. I am amazed at her abilities and continued enthusiasm. I have also received significant assistance from several executive coaches and a program director who reached out to clients about participating in this study. This inquiry would not have been possible without these individuals investing their time and effort. I am grateful for their support and dedication.

Finding participants for this study was more difficult than I had initially anticipated. This challenge caused me to be even more grateful for the three formerly abrasive leaders who collectively spent several hours of time with me to inquire into their stories. This study depended upon continued involvement by these leaders. I am immensely appreciative of their willingness to explore their stories and the nature of their experience.

Finally, I am deeply thankful for my family and friends who journeyed with me the past few years. They carried a heavier load than I had desired. I am humbled by their graciousness.

Abstract

Psychological aggression in the workplace is known to be destructive. Most commonly, knowledge of this workplace dynamic is through the literature of workplace bullying or abusive supervision and from the perspective of the accuser. Very little is known of the perspective of the accused—whether found guilty or not of an accusation. Moreover, unknown in the literature is the valued perspective of the leader who (a) acknowledged his or her behavior was inappropriate and (b) significantly improved his or her interpersonal workplace behavior and management strategies. Thus, the purpose of this study was to inquire into the experience and meaning making of three formerly abrasive leaders who were positively influenced with intervention and whose complaints of abrasive behaviors were substantially reduced or eliminated. Narrative inquiry, conceptualized as a highly relational and collaborative method, was used to inquire into the developmental experience. Using this method, each leader and the researcher inquired into the stories of the leader. The inquiry with each leader culminated with a co-composition of his experience of moving away from the use of abrasive behavior in the workplace. Each leader's experiential co-composition was included as a stand-alone chapter and was the initial level of experiential analysis. The final chapter of this dissertation, a proposed journal article, offered a secondary level of analysis to examine three emergent narrative threads (disruption, awakening, and equipping) from within and across narrative accounts. Related stories and experiences of each leader were presented within the discussion of each emergent thread. In addition, the conceptual framework of adult development theory, specifically the works of Jack Mezirow and Robert Kegan, enhanced understanding of the experience of each leader. Stories from each leader, which offered insight into each of four shared concepts (meaning making, impetus of development, assumptions, and blind spots) were offered.

Practical implications and study limitations as well as future research directions were also discussed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The prevalence and depth of harm caused by psychological aggression in the workplace is significant. Fox and Stallworth (2005) reported 95% of employees indicated they had, within a 5-year time span, some exposure to bullying behaviors. Supporting the depth of harm, Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002) found 80.5% of targets claimed, "No other event in their life affected them more negatively than the [workplace] bully" (p. 98), even though these participants, collectively, also experienced divorce, bereavement, and grave illness. Similarly, Mayhew et al. (2004) concluded targets of bullying in the workplace may experience a similar level of emotional trauma as victims who have been physically assailed. These studies, among numerous others, indicate psychological aggression in the workplace profoundly impacts many people. Regardless of whether the psychologically aggressive behavior is initiated by a coworker or a manager, or if it is permitted to continue due to leader (or leadership) failure, the prevalence and depth of harm can be immense.

Scholars have used a "variety of labels" (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018, p. 41) to conceptualize and offer insight into the complex dynamic of psychological aggression in the workplace. This chapter begins with a brief introduction to the three especially relevant concepts for this study: workplace bullying, abusive supervision, and leader failure. Next, is a discussion of the concept of abrasive leaders, the focus of this study. Following these introductory comments, the research problem, purpose of the study, and the research question are presented. Next is an explanation of the significance of the problem, an introduction to the conceptual framework, and the definitions of key terms. Last, the limitations and delimitations of this study are articulated.

Background

  The background for this study on the experience of formerly abrasive leader includes a

brief introduction to concepts of workplace bullying, abusive supervision, and failed leaders. As

scholars from different disciplines, backgrounds, and perspectives studied the complex dynamic

of psychologically aggressive behavior in the workplace, the developing conversations among

disciplines sometimes overlapped. And sometimes, the ongoing intradisciplinary discussions

demonstrate the challenges of studying complex dynamics from within a single discipline.

  Rayner and Cooper (2003), following a review of management literature for their study

on how subordinates perceived the toughness of their managers, wrote that they

> were surprised at the lack of focus on negative behavior in the management literature.
> [Similarly,] the bullying literature emerged as the mirror image, with little or no attention
> being paid to positive behavior . . . There is sparse data from the management, leadership
> and conflict literature for the study of negative behavior by managers at work. (p. 50)

In agreement with Rayner and Cooper (2003), Shaw, Erickson, and Harvey (2011) stated the

history of leadership research seemed to be primarily interested in understanding "good" or

"effective" leadership. Likewise, Schyns and Shilling (2013), in agreement with Tepper (2007),

claimed "leadership researchers only recently adopted the [destructive leadership] topic from

other areas such as bullying and counterproductive work behavior" (p. 139). Thus, it seems

reasonable to include a brief introduction to the concepts of workplace bullying and abusive

supervision prior to discussing leader failure.

  Workplace bullying and abusive supervision. Empirical study of psychological

aggression in the workplace is relatively recent, beginning about 30 years ago. Leymann (1990),

a Swedish researcher, is credited with being among the first researchers to write of this

phenomenon when, in 1990, he explored the psychological harm of workplace mobbing (Rai &

Agarwal, 2015). Since the inception of studying psychological aggression in the workplace,

numerous studies have been conducted to examine an abundant number of variables and perspectives (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013; Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013; Samnani & Singh, 2012). While the earliest studies focused on psychological harm, researchers in other disciplines gained interest in studying the phenomenon. Currently, psychological aggression in the workplace is studied in many disciplines: sociology, psychology, organizational development, organizational psychology, leadership, management, business ethics, or a blending of the disciplines (Baillien, DeCuyper, & De Witte, 2011; Bloch, 2012; Fredericksen & McCorkle, 2013; Hutchinson & Hurley, 2013; Pilch & Turska, 2014; Stouten et al., 2011).

One approach to studying psychological aggression in the workplace is through examining the perspective of various stakeholders. Not surprisingly, the stakeholder most frequently studied is the accuser or the target (Bloch, 2012; Jenkins, Winefield, & Sarris, 2011; Rai & Agarwal, 2015). The literature from the target's perspective is predominately located using the key terms *workplace bullying* or *abusive supervision* (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Einarsen, Skogstad, & Glaso, 2013; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Tepper, Simon, & Park, 2017).

Hauge, Skogstad, and Einarsen (2009), summarizing the earlier work of Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, and Cooper (2003), succinctly described workplace bullying as "repeated and prolonged exposure to predominantly psychological mistreatment, directed at a target who is typically teased, badgered and insulted, and who perceives himself or herself as not having the opportunity to retaliate in kind" (p. 350). Although many scholars use this definition for the concept of workplace bullying, it is not universally accepted. A lack of a common definition of workplace

bullying causes confusion when studying the phenomenon of psychological aggression in the workplace.

Despite the lack of a unifying definition of workplace bullying, an academic search of the literature indicates an increasing interest in the concept of workplace bullying. In the spring of 2017, I conducted a research library search on the term *workplace bullying* and located nearly 10,000 matches in academic journals where the term was used within the text. This same search, conducted in January of 2019, showed nearly 12,000 matches. These numbers indicate strong and increasing interest among scholars on the concept of workplace bullying.

Another label commonly used by scholars for psychological aggression in the workplace is *abusive supervision*. Tepper (2000) referred to *abusive supervision* as the "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors excluding physical contact" (p. 178). Similar to workplace bullying, there is increasing interest on the topic of abusive supervision. Using the search term of abusive supervision, an academic search generated 82 published studies from 2000–2012 (Martinko et al., 2013). Of these studies, Martinko et al. (2013) found that 76% were conducted during the most recent 4-year time span under review (2008-2012). These statistics indicate a significant increase in interest of the studying of abusive supervision (Martinko et al., 2013).

Several of the studies on abusive supervision examined the relationship between a supervisor and an employee's health and well-being. Research has indicated employees who reported abusive supervision experience (a) a less favorable attitude toward the job, life, and the organization (Tepper, 2000); (b) stress (Breaux, Perrewe, Hall, Frink, & Hochwater, 2008); (c) emotional exhaustion (Aryee, Sun, Chen, & Debrah, 2008; Wu & Hu, 2009); (d) burnout (Carlson, Ferguson, Hunter, & Whitten, 2012); (e) decreased job satisfaction (Bowling &

Michel, 2011; Breaux et al., 2008; Haggard, Robert, & Rose, 2011; Lin, Wang, & Chen, 2013); (f) post-traumatic stress disorder (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Tehrani, 2004) and (g) other forms of psychological distresses such as depression, anxiety, detachment, self-image, insomnia, and affective well-being.

In addition to studies on the accuser's health and well-being, several researchers specifically examined relationships between the accuser and his response to the supervisor or the organization. When a person perceives himself to be a target of bullying behaviors, he may, in response, demonstrate aggression (Burton & Hoobler, 2011), decreased effort (Harris, Harvey, & Kaemar, 2011), reduced performance (Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011), decline of citizenship behaviors (Xu, Huang, Lam, & Miao, 2012), decreased organizational citizenship (Rafferty & Restubog, 2011), and an increase in workplace deviance/resistance/retaliation (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Mitchell & Abrose, 2007). These studies indicate that when someone perceives himself to be the target of bullying behaviors by an organizational leader, it may be detrimental to his well-being and have a negative impact on the target's response to the supervisor or the organization.

Leader failure. Many concepts, terms, and definitions are used to explain leader failure (Einarsen et al., 2013; Schyns & Schilling, 2013). A few of the more common leader failure concepts are abusive supervision, bully leader, derailed leader, destructive leadership, detrimental leadership, dysfunctional leader, petty tyranny, and toxic leader. Einarsen et al, (2013) included a few of these terms when they identified 19 labels previously introduced by scholars to describe various concepts of leader failure. The same year, Schyns and Schilling (2013), in a meta-analysis of destructive leadership, listed 12 destructive leadership concepts. Only three destructive leadership concepts from their list were included in Einarsen et al.'s

(2013) list of failed leaders. Similarly, Shaw et al. (2011) and Einarsen, Aasland, and Skogstad

(2007) also included disparate concepts when describing destructive leadership. There is a lack

of consistency among scholars when using terms and definitions or identifying concepts to

describe or explain leader failure.

In addition to the lack of clarity in terms and definitions, there is a lack of a common

conceptual framework (Einarsen et al., 2007) or unifying theory (Einarsen et al., 2013). Einarsen

et al. (2007) summed up these challenges when he wrote, "Although there is some conceptual

overlap among these concepts, no agreed upon definition or overarching concept exists within

this field, making it difficult to compare and contrast the findings of different studies" (p. 215).

Not surprisingly, I found these same challenges also exist within the literature streams of

workplace bullying and abusive supervision.

Regardless of the challenges, there have been multiple attempts at creating common

language and presenting models, frameworks, and theories of leader failure. One helpful model,

presented by Einarsen et al. (2007), is a taxonomy of destructive and constructive leadership

behaviors (see Figure 1). As illustrated by this model, there are two dimensions of directed

behaviors: (a) behaviors toward a subordinate and (b) behaviors toward the organization. This

model is beneficial in that each destructive or constructive leadership concept can be plotted

according to the two dimensions of whether the leadership concept demonstrates either pro or

anti behavior toward either the subordinate or the organization. Using this taxonomy of

destructive and constructive leadership behaviors, tyrannical leadership behavior (a behavior that

abuses subordinates yet is in accordance with legitimate organizational goals and strategies)

would be placed in the pro-organizational behavior/anti-subordinate behavior quadrant. Derailed
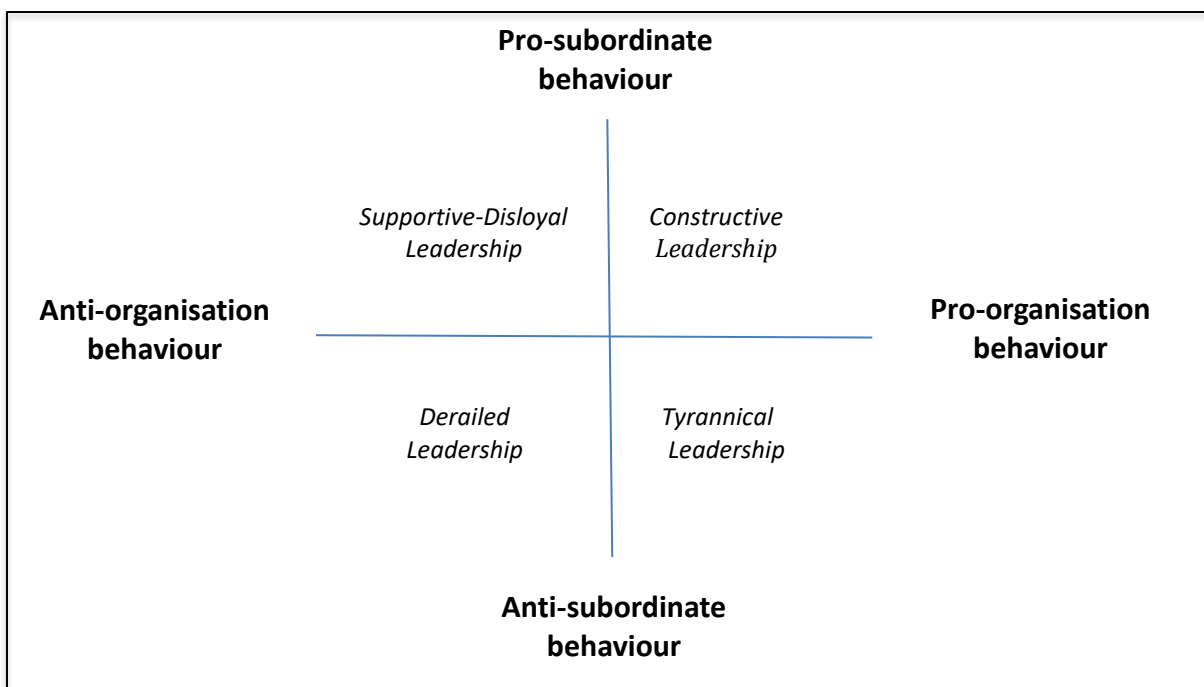
Figure 1. A model of destructive and constructive leadership behavior. From "Destructive Leadership Behaviour: A Definition and Conceptual Model," by S. Einarsen, S. Aasland, and A. Skogstad, 2007, *Leadership Quarterly, 18*, p. 211. Copyright 2007 by Elsevier. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix B).

leadership behavior (mistreatment of the organization and subordinates), would be located in the lower left quadrant (Einarsen et al., 2007; Einarsen et al., 2013).

Einarsen et al.'s (2007) model of destructive and constructive leadership behavior is helpful because it (a) integrates varying leadership concepts that show how these leadership behaviors may relate to one another when considering subordinate and organizational behaviors, and (b) illustrates how positive and negative behaviors may simultaneously be demonstrated by one leader. This concept is illustrated with tyrannical leadership where a leader behaves in manners which are both pro (organization) and anti (subordinate).

Padilla, Hogan, and Kaiser (2007) offered another helpful concept: the toxic triangle. They asserted, "Destructive leadership entails the negative consequences that result from a confluence of destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments" (Padilla et al., 2007, p. 176). This development is consistent with a systems perspective of organizations and addresses the complexity of this organizational dynamic without over-emphasizing one aspect.

The abrasive leader. One concept of leader failure not commonly found in the literature is the abrasive leader. Levinson (1978) asserted the leader who has an abrasive personality will "puzzle, dismay, frustrate, and enrage others in organizations" (p. 87). He further remarked, "Men and women of high, sometimes brilliant, achievement who stubbornly insist on having their own way, and are contemptuous of others, are the bane of bosses, subordinates, peers, and colleagues" (Levinson, 1978, p. 87). Stated another way, Levinson (1978) communicated the person with an abrasive personality is the "intellectual bully" who has little regard for others while having a "passion for perfection, accuracy, and completeness" (p. 87). Levinson (1978) claimed, rather surprisingly, this individual "is often genial and helpful to people he is not supervising" (p. 88) even while seeking domination of others.

Although there is limited knowledge of the abrasive leader within the scholarly literature, the concept is discussed within the coaching practitioner literature. Crawshaw (2005), a scholar-practitioner, built upon the concepts of abrasive personality presented by Levinson (1978). Abrasive behavior, as defined by Crawshaw (2005), may "consist of any behavior between an executive and coworkers that creates emotional distress sufficient to disrupt organizational functioning" (p. 3). After coaching more than 450 abrasive executives through more than two decades as a practitioner (inclusive of 8 years as a scholar-practitioner), Crawshaw (2013b)

"discovered that the five most commonly exhibited abrasive behaviors are over-control, threats, public humiliation, condescension, and overreaction" (p. 6). Other examples of abrasive behaviors include overwork, intimidation, unfair or unrealistic demands, setting up subordinates to fail, domination, and disrespect (Crawshaw, 2005, 2013b; Levinson, 1978).

Contributing to the understanding of abrasive leaders are Hicks and McCracken (2009), who wrote an abrasive leader is "a person whose capacity for analysis and problem solving is not at all matched by equal skill as a . . . leader" (p. 82). Considering Levinson's (1978), Crawshaw's (2005, 2013b), and Hicks and McCracken's (2009) descriptions of an abrasive leader and applying them to the destructive and constructive leadership behavior model (Einarsen et al., 2007), it appears these leaders, at times, demonstrate strong antisubordinate behaviors and, somewhat more obscure, antiorganizational behaviors. Although these leaders are interested in production and achieve short-term results, they are simultaneously destructive to those around them.

Einarsen et al. (2007) used words such as *overly ambitious*, *manipulative*, *intimidating*, *cold*, *arrogant*, and *harassing* for individuals who exhibit both antiorganizational and anti-subordinate behaviors. Two destructive leadership concepts Einarsen et al. (2007) included in this quadrant are derailed leadership behavior and the dark side of leadership. The model of destructive and constructive leadership behavior (Einarsen et al., 2007) assists in illustrating how an abrasive leader may compare to other types of destructive leaders. It also confirms the probable difficulties of working with an abrasive leader who is neither pro-subordinate nor pro-organization but has "a strong and very intense emotional interest in himself" (Levinson, 1978, p. 89).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the significant and growing interest in the study of psychological aggression in the workplace, including hundreds of journal articles, numerous researchers recognized that one important perspective has been largely unstudied: the perspective of the workplace bully (Branch et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins, Zapf, Winefield, & Sarris, 2012; Martinko et al., 2013; Rai & Agarwal, 2015; Rayner & Cooper, 2003; Samnani & Singh, 2012). Rayner and Cooper (2003) described this situation as "the black hole of workplace bullying literature since most of what is known about the workplace bully [is known] from other people and events that happen around them" (p. 47). Echoing the lack of study on the workplace bully is Rai and Agarwall (2015), who claimed that research on the workplace bullying phenomenon has been "hyper-focused on targets of workplace bullying" (p. 42). They contended researchers have ignored studying the bully and the bystander, who are "two other crucial actors in the bullying process" (Rai & Agarwal, 2015, p. 42).

Unfortunately, a significant percentage of individuals accused of being workplace bullies are organizational supervisors (Aryee et al., 2008; Harris at al., 2011; Lin et al., 2013). The magnitude of this problem is seen in the findings from the Workplace Bullying Institute-Zogby (WBI) U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey (Namie, 2007). In this online survey of 7,740 participants, the researchers discovered that 72% of bullies in the workplace were bosses (Namie, 2007). And, in a subsequent study, WBI (Namie, 2014) found that 56% of workplace bullies were someone with a higher rank. These studies suggest there continues to be a problem with at least the perception of poor supervisory conduct or, at most, actual bullying behavior by supervisors.

As previously indicated, numerous researchers argue (a) there is a lack of firsthand knowledge of the perspective of the accused workplace bully and (b) workplace bullying behaviors are sometimes used by organizational leaders. Furthermore, Branch et al. (2013) confirmed, "Little is known about the cessation of workplace bullying [and contend there is a need to explore] cases where satisfactory resolutions have resulted for all parties involved . . . to enable us to understand better what promotes the cessation of bullying" (p. 293). Confirming these assertions, I was unable to locate any scholarly work within journals that sought the voice of the leader who once used abrasive behaviors and who currently has few or no reports of abrasive or destructive behavior. Therefore, the problem was the lack of understanding how a formerly abrasive leader describes and makes sense of the experience which significantly and positively changed his[1] behavior.

Purpose of the Study

In this study, I sought to generate knowledge by inquiring into the leader's experience of significantly reducing or eliminating abrasive behaviors in the workplace. More precisely, the purpose of this study was to inquire into the experience and meaning making of organizational leaders who were positively influenced with intervention and whose complaints of abrasive behaviors were substantially reduced or eliminated. The findings of this research may inform human development policies and practices on effective support for abrasive organizational leaders. Improved organizational policies and practices, which support leaders in changing these behaviors, will positively impact the organization.

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[1]Abrasive leadership behaviors may be exhibited by any gender or either sex. For ease of reading this dissertation, male pronouns are used.

Research Question

This narrative inquiry entailed one central research question: How does an organizational leader describe and make sense of the movement away from the use of abrasive behaviors? Knowledge gained from this research involving multiple organizational leaders will assist in better understanding the firsthand experiences of these leaders and the meaning they made from the journey that moved them toward utilization of more effective interpersonal behaviors.

Significance

This study of the experience of leaders who moved away from the use of abrasive interpersonal behaviors following intervention is important for several reasons. First, this study provides a significant, yet missing, piece of understanding the phenomenon of psychological aggression in the workplace. The voice of the aggressor is nearly nonexistent in the extant literature (Branch et al., 2013; Rai & Agarwal, 2015; Rayner & Cooper, 2003), and there are no published studies on leaders who once were abrasive leaders. Understanding the phenomenon of workplace psychological aggression has been hindered by not hearing the voice of the formerly abrasive leader. This study provides a place for the voice of this leader as he describes and makes sense of his developmental journey. This knowledge presents a more complete understanding of this complex phenomenon, and, more specifically, the person who once was an abrasive leader.

Second, this study offers knowledge by exploring the experience of the formerly abrasive leader using a conceptual framework of adult development. A significant amount of research conducted on psychological aggression in the workplace is through the lens of psychology and from the perspective of the target. Exploring the experience of the formerly abrasive leaders,

through inquiring into their stories, provides a developmental perspective currently not found in the workplace bullying, abusive supervision, or abrasive leader literature.

Third, this study of the leader's experience is important since it expands knowledge and understanding for scholars and practitioners on how better to assist abrasive leaders with improving behaviors. This study is useful in discovering what practices or policies were helpful, or not helpful, in navigating the challenges of personal development for leaders who have significantly improved their interpersonal behaviors.

Fourth, a direct consequence of the third, is this study may assist practitioners in reducing workplace suffering. Studies have shown the emotional suffering in the workplace is pervasive and causes significant harm when someone perceives himself to be the target of a workplace bully (Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Mayhew et al., 2004; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002). If there is a better understanding of the journey toward cessation of abrasive behaviors, and if there are enhanced practices or policies that can support the leader through this development, the workplace could see a reduction in employee suffering.

Conceptual Framework

My study was influenced by two respected theorists of adult development: Robert Kegan and Jack Mezirow. Kegan (1982, 1994) and Mezirow (1993) each proposed and refined theories that sought to explain how adults learn—and how adults develop—across work and life contexts. Studying their works prior to conducting my research helped me to more fully understand adult developmental concepts. I believed being more informed about adult development theory, as described by Kegan (1982, 1994) and Mezirow (1993), would help me better understand the experience of the formerly abrasive leader.

I noticed four shared concepts in my review of Kegan's (1980, 1982, 1994) constructive developmental theory (CDT) and Mezirow's (1990, 1997b, 2000) perspective transformation theory. Two of the four key concepts are explicit in my research question. They are (a) meaning making (How does someone make sense or create meaning of his experience?) and (b) the impetus of development (What prompts change?). These two concepts are interwoven for both Kegan (1982, 2009; Kegan & Lahey, 2016) and Mezirow (1990, 1997b, 2000).

Two other concepts, not explicit in the research question but useful for greater contextual understanding, are (a) assumptions (How do assumptions hinder personal development?) and (b) blind spots (How does blindness impact development?). In addition to the four shared concepts, I also present how these theorists discuss the purpose or role of emotions. My desire in using these four specific concepts was to connect my study to the existing conversation of adult development theory and provide a strong conceptual context for my study.

Definition of Key Terms

Abrasive behaviors. Abrasive behaviors are defined as "any behavior between the executive and coworkers that creates emotional distress sufficient to disrupt organizational functioning" (Crawshaw, 2005, p. 3). Five of the most commonly demonstrated abrasive behaviors include "over-control, threats, public humiliation, condescension, and overreaction" (Crawshaw, 2013b, p. 6). Other abrasive behaviors may include intimidation, lack of emotional control, or reacting quickly with incomplete or inaccurate information. The behavior is frequently seen to be excessively critical or harsh for a given situation. Disruption of organizational functioning is described below.

Abrasive executive/leader. Crawshaw (2005) introduced the term *abrasive executive*. She defined an abrasive executive "as any individual charged with managerial authority whose

interpersonal behavior causes emotional distress in coworkers sufficient to disrupt organizational functioning" (Crawshaw, 2005, p. 14). An executive is defined as anyone in a level of authority over others in the workplace. Disruption of organizational functioning is defined below.

Abusive supervision. Tepper (2000) referred to abusive supervision as the "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (p. 178).

Accused/bully/perpetrator. These three terms identify the individual whose interpersonal behavior with a coworker is perceived as bullying or abrasive by the coworker who may consider himself to be a victim or target of workplace bullying. The accused may be a supervisor, peer, or a subordinate. Being the accused does not necessarily indicate guilt.

Bullying. Bullying for this study is "described as a gradually escalating phenomenon—a process that can last for years, where ever more intense and frequent negative acts are directed at a subordinate or a peer, leading to victimization of the recipient" (Glambeck, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2015, p. 68).

Bystander. For this study, a bystander is someone near a bullying incident who may also be a witness. A bystander may be a coworker, but it could also be someone outside the organization such as a customer or vendor.

Destructive leadership. Einarsen et al. (2007) defined destructive leadership as "the systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization's goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation, well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates" (p. 208).

Disruption of organizational functioning. Crawshaw's (2005) definition of abrasive executives includes the phrase "disruption of organizational functioning" (p. 13). Crawshaw (2005) defined this phrase as

> manifestations such as, but not limited to: expressions of emotional distress on the part of employees, reduction of performance in coworkers, complaints to superiors and/or human resources, attrition of valued employees, or harassment or hostile environment lawsuits. Disruption is assessed and determined by responsible superiors and/or organizational human resources representatives. (p. 14)

Transformed/transformation. For this study, transformed is defined as a positive change in interpersonal behaviors within the workplace. This change is substantial personal development from unacceptable to adequate interpersonal behavior as defined by a responsible senior organizational leader, executive coach, or human resource representative. Believing development is a process, a living in the space "in-between," it is anticipated there will be occasional setbacks. It is also understood an individual never arrives at total transformation.

Workplace bullying. Workplace bullying for this study "consists of repeated and prolonged exposure to predominantly psychological mistreatment, directed at a target who is typically teased, badgered and insulted, and who perceives himself or herself as not having the opportunity to retaliate in kind" (Hauge et al., 2009, p. 350).

Limitations and Delimitations

There were four primary limitations of this study: (a) the participants were exclusively male and Caucasian, (b) the participants were within a limited age range—approximately 45–63 years of age, (c) recruitment of participants was challenging, and (d) the documented experience was the leader's perception of the journey through his performance of that narrative. This study was not a collection of facts. It was anticipated that there may be some degree of image maintenance.

This study was delimited to one construct within the psychological aggression in the workplace literature: the abrasive leader. It was further delimitated by not studying the amount or quality of personal change or the outcomes for the leader. The aim of this study was to understand the leader's experience of his developmental change and how he made sense of that journey. It is believed that understanding more clearly this experience will enhance knowledge, generate additional curiosity, and prompt further research on related topics.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 began with a brief overview of workplace bullying, abusive supervision, and leader failure. This discussion was followed with an introduction to the concept of abrasive leaders. Next, the statement of the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the research question were presented. Offered next was a discussion of the significance in understanding how the changed leader describes and makes sense of his journey. Chapter 1 concluded with a brief introduction to the conceptual framework of this study, the definition of key terms, and articulation of the study limitations and delimitations.

In Chapter 2, I further discuss the conceptual framework of this study. I then present what is currently known of the firsthand accounts of the accused or self-described workplace bully as it relates to his experience. Interwoven with the firsthand accounts are the qualitative researcher's observations and impressions from those studies. Last, I conclude Chapter 2 with the findings from the extant literature that seeks the firsthand accounts of the accused or self-described workplace bully as it relates to their developmental journey.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Psychologically aggressive behaviors in the workplace are detrimental to a healthy and productive workplace culture (Burton & Hoobler, 2011; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011; Tepper et al., 2011; Xu et al., 2012). They also negatively impact employees and organizations (Bowling & Michel, 2011; Breaux et al., 2008; Carlson et al., 2012; Fredericksen & Morkle, 2013; Pilch & Turska, 2014; Tepper, 2000). Commonly labeled by laypeople as workplace bullying, this global social phenomenon is primarily studied though the literature streams of abusive supervision or workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2013). Researchers, attempting to understand this growing and multi-faceted phenomenon, have engaged in a considerable amount of multidisciplinary research during the past 25 years. However, most of this research has been from the perspective of the accuser—it is his or her perception of being bullied (Martinko et al., 2013; Rai & Agarwal, 2015).

There is very little research from the perspective of the accused or self-described workplace bully (Branch et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012; Rai & Agarwal, 2015). And, indeed, there are no published studies focused on the perspective, lived experience, or journey of the former workplace bully or abrasive leader. Given the influence of organizational leaders, my study focused on leaders who once were the abrasive leader. Specifically, the leaders of this study were individuals who, prior to intervention, used abrasive behaviors in the workplace.

Crawshaw (2005) introduced the concept of abrasive executives. These leaders "rub people the wrong way" (Crawshaw, 2010, p. 59). As previously explained, these individuals most commonly use the abrasive behaviors of "over-control, threats, public humiliation, condescension, and overreaction" (Crawshaw, 2013b, p. 6) as methods to accomplish work through others. Abrasive leaders, however, may also utilize intimidation, unfair or unrealistic

demands, setting up subordinates to fail, domination, excessive work, and disrespect (Crawshaw, 2005, 2013b; Levinson, 1978). While the term *abrasive* has not been widely used within the scholarly literature, it is an appropriate description of destructive behaviors in the workplace. Many leaders who demonstrate abrasive behaviors may not consider themselves workplace bullies, even though their behaviors are destructive. The concept of abrasive executives is more inclusive of negative leader behavior that is somewhat common in the workplace. This concept serves the purpose of this study.

The problem explored in this study was the lack of understanding of how formerly abrasive leaders would describe and make sense of the journey that significantly and positively changed their interpersonal behaviors. The purpose was to generate knowledge by inquiring into the experience of the formerly abrasive leader's journey toward cessation of the detrimental interpersonal behaviors following intervention. My desire with this inquiry was to offer a space of co-inquiry with the leader into his developmental experience. Ultimately, I hoped the co-compositions from this research could inform organizational policies that may inspire hope and offer support for abrasive leaders.

Throughout this dissertation, I frequently use the term *accused* when referring to participants in the extant literature. In some cases, the participant was found to be guilty of the allegation and other times he was found not guilty. In some studies, the individual self-described as a workplace bully whereas in other studies the bullying criteria may have been established by the researcher. Similarly, a participant was sometimes identified as a leader and sometimes he was listed as a coworker. Sometimes, the status was not articulated in the literature. In the review of literature, I include relevant descriptions of the accused, if known.

Chapter 2 has three main sections. The first section is the conceptual framework for the research study. Within this section, I introduce and describe how aspects of Kegan's (1980, 1982, 1994) constructive developmental theory and Mezirow's (1990, 1997b, 2000) perspective transformation theory—commonly referred to as transformative learning theory—influenced this study. In the second section, I present what is currently known from the voice of the accused using a thematic and somewhat chronological approach. I also interweave throughout the narratives the observations and impressions of the researchers. In the third section, I present the findings of the researchers that relate to the experience of the accused. Integrating the extant literature as it relates to the research problem and question provided context for my proposed study on the journey and meaning making of the accused's developmental experience.

Conceptual Framework: Adult development theory

In my review of Mezirow's and Kegan's adult developmental theories, I noticed four shared concepts that I believed would better assist me in understanding the experience, journey, and meaning making of the formerly abrasive leader. These concepts provided me direction and focus for this study (Green, 2014). In the next section I describe and compare each of the four concepts as they specifically related to my study. I conclude the conceptual framework section by briefly exploring how Mezirow (1996, 2000, 2003, 2009) and Kegan (1980; Kegan & Lahey, 2001, 2009) described the use or role of emotion in their respective theories.

Meaning making: How does someone make sense or create meaning? The concept of meaning making is central to the adult developmental theories of Kegan (1982, 1994) and Mezirow (1990, 1997b, 2000). To understand how Kegan (1982, 1994), Kegan and Lahey (2009), and Mezirow (1990,1997b, 2000) conceptualized meaning making, I introduce each of their core ideas and then discuss some of their similarities or differences.

Kegan (1980, 1982, 1994) and Mezirow (1990, 2000) asserted that personal development focuses on the learner's consciousness or mind. Both theorists further claimed that adult development is not the acquisition of additional skills but a transformation of mind (Kegan, 1982, 1994, 2009; Mezirow, 2000, 2003). Kegan (1982, 2009) described personal development as essentially moving toward a more complex way of knowing. Kegan's (1980) early research indicated, to a large degree, that each level of consciousness "organizes our thinking, feeling, and acting over a wide range of human functioning" (p. 374). In essence, each increasing level of consciousness creates sense (makes meaning) of the world in a similar manner regardless of the individual's activity or function. Interestingly, this finding was discovered to be predictably true even when accounting for the uniqueness of individuals (Kegan, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2009). As someone develops and moves to a higher level of consciousness, he makes meaning through a more complex way of knowing (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Even though Kegan and Mezirow had a common belief that personal development stems from consciousness of the mind, Mezirow (1998b) did "not believe in adult 'stages of development'" (p. 65). Rather, Mezirow (2000) argued that each person has habits of mind, "a set of assumptions—broad, generalized, orienting predispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience" (p. 17). It is habits of mind that dictate how an individual makes meaning of his world and experiences (Mezirow, 1990, 2000). Thus, meaning making is an individual endeavor and is not movement to a different, predictable, category of meaning making (Mezirow, 1998b, p. 65).

Largely unnoticed by individuals, Mezirow (1996) argued that habits of mind cause individuals to not "think for oneself—to negotiate one's own purposes, values and meanings" (p. 119). Rather, habits of mind caused an individual to uncritically accept another person's

purposes, values, and meanings as one's own. Mezirow (2000) claimed these unconscious habits

of mind at making meaning are "for the most part, uncritically acquired in childhood" (p. 1). Yet

Mezirow (1990) also acknowledged that education, life experiences, and culture are contributing

factors to how individuals make meaning. Meaning making, for Mezirow (1996), involved

"learning within established frames of reference and learning to transform them" (p. 115).

In summary, Kegan (1982, 1994), Kegan and Lahey (2009), and Mezirow (1990, 1997b,

2000) believed adult development comes from the mind: It is a new way of interpreting self,

others, and the world. Kegan and Lahey (2009, 2010) believed there are predictable and

sequential levels (stages) of adult development, whereas Mezirow (1990, 2000) insisted that

adult development entails an individual changing his habits of mind. Kegan (1982, 2009) and

Mezirow (1990, 2000) also espoused that an individual's meaning making ability is limited

either due to the person's developmental stage (Kegan) or his habits of mind (Mezirow).

Development in making meaning for Mezirow (2000) begins with an individual critically

reflecting upon his assumed beliefs and values which were primarily acquired in his youth.

Kegan (1994, 2009), though, asserted that major developments in making meaning occur at each

level of adult development when the individual takes a step back to make assessments through an

expanded and more complex perspective; this is a developmental shift to an entirely different

system of meaning making.

Assumptions: How do assumptions hinder personal development? Kegan and Lahey

(2001, 2009, 2016) and Mezirow (1997a, 1998a, 1998b, 2000) wrote of the critical importance of

recognizing assumptions as pivotal for future growth. Kegan (1980, 1982, 1994) used a

philosophic concept known as the "subject-object relationship" to discuss assumptions. Things

that are "subject" to Self are invisible; Self is unaware of their existence (Kegan, 1994, 2009;

Kegan & Lahey, 2009). An individual is "subject" to unquestioned beliefs, values, or thoughts that are held so tightly that the person assumes them to be true; the individual does not see them—they are invisible. In contrast, things that are "object" are those things an individual can reflect on, examine, and take control of (Kegan, 1994). In essence, these are things that an individual "sees."

Development, for Kegan (1994) and Kegan and Lahey (2009) is movement from "subject" to "object." It is making the invisible visible. Described another way, Kegan and Lahey (2009) expressed it as movement from something that controls and uses Self to something Self controls and uses. Kegan and Lahey (2009) asserted a person's unquestioned beliefs, values, or thoughts, that he believes to be true, are assumptions. They may or may not be true, but as long as they are unquestioned, they are invisible to Self and are thus assumptions (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Mezirow (1997b) proposed that "frames of references are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They [assumptions] selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition and feelings" (p. 5). Furthermore, Mezirow (1997b) wrote that individuals have a "strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions" (p. 5). To assist individuals in merely rejecting ideas that do not fit assumptions, Mezirow (1990, 1997b, 1998a, 2003) consistently espoused the importance of critical reflection of assumptions (CRA). It is through CRA that an individual may learn to think for himself—to learn the ability to reason—rather than to think and "act on the concepts, values, and feelings of others" (1998a, p. 185). Basically, Mezirow (1998a) argued that an individual simply assumes the meanings other people constructed until he engages in critical reflection of those assumptions.

CRA encourages the questioning and evaluation of prior learning (Mezirow, 1990, 1998a). This process may, ultimately, lead to challenging habitual patterns of thinking and meaning making that have long been taken for granted (Mezirow, 1990). CRA also has "major potential for effecting change in one's established frame of reference" (Mezirow, 1998a, p. 186). Mezirow (1998a) described CRA as "the function of thought and language that frees the learner from frames of reference, paradigms, or cultural canons [built upon assumptions] . . . that limit or distort communication and understanding" (p. 191). It is CRA, Mezirow (1998a) argued, that is the "emancipatory dimension" of adult learning since it frees "oneself from our conditioned assumptions about the world, others, and ourselves" (p. 191). Mezirow placed immense importance on challenging assumptions so that an individual may be freed to think for himself and thus develop his own thoughts, beliefs, and values.

In summary, both Kegan and Lahey (2001, 2009, 2016) and Mezirow (1997a, 1998a, 1998b, 2000) attested to the importance of recognizing and challenging assumptions; it is only through this process that personal development may occur. Kegan (1982, 1994) believed that personal development encompasses moving things from "subject" to "object": A move from invisible to visible. It is not possible to obtain a different stage of meaning making without this movement (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). However, Kegan (2009) was adamant that there is value to each developmental stage of meaning making. Simply stated, Kegan and Lahey (2009) believed each stage is a different way of making meaning, not necessarily better.

Mezirow (2000) may have agreed with Kegan (1994) that assumptions are invisible and help determine how a person understands his experiences. However, Mezirow (1990, 1998a) argued that adults uncritically accept the ideas of others—an individual does not question what he previously learned, especially from childhood. Mezirow (1997b, 1998a, 2000) believed that

by critically challenging these assumptions an individual learns to reason and begins to think for himself. This process, Mezirow (1998a) argued, frees individuals from their limited perspectives and is an improved way of knowing.

Blindness: How does blindness impact development? As recently discussed, Kegan and Lahey (2009) believed that those things that are "subject" to an individual are invisible to him. These things are a part of self: They are, simply, who the person is. Kegan (1994) and Kegan and Lahey (2001) expressed that individuals frequently do not have much of an idea that they can make meaning any differently; their beliefs, values, and thoughts are embedded in their sense of self and their own meaning making system. Stated another way, those things that an individual is "subject" to, those things that are invisible to him, create blindness. Kegan (1994) expressed blindness in this way: "Shaping, selecting, and patterning reality in some fashion also means not designing it in some other fashion. . . . Being active in our seeing and hearing can mean being actively blind to what we do not see and deaf to what we do not hear" (p. 204). Basically, as individuals construct meaning, there is, inevitably, a level of blindness.

Similarly, Mezirow (1990) wrote, "What we do or do not perceive, comprehend, and remember is profoundly influenced by our meaning schemes and perspectives" (p. 2). In acknowledging the work of Daniel Goleman, Mezirow (1990) continued, "We trade off perception and cognition for relief from the anxiety generated when the experience does not comfortably fit these meaning structures" (p. 2). Further elaborating on this concept, Mezirow (1990) asserted, "When experience is too strange or threatening to the way we think or learn, we tend to block it out or resort to psychological defense mechanisms to provide a compatible interpretation" (p. 2). To put it another way, a person becomes selectively blind when an experience does not fit his meaning making system.

In summary, Kegan and Lahey (2009, 2010, 2016) and Mezirow (1990) agreed that individuals in their meaning-making process are selective in what they are attentive to, thus being at least partially blind to other aspects of their experiences. Kegan and Lahey (2009) asserted that individuals become partially blind as they construct meaning. This blindness hinders movement from "subject" to "object." Kegan and Lahey (2009) claimed development is fundamentally dependent upon this internal change. Mezirow (1990, 1997b, 1998a) believed development requires critical reflection of assumptions to overcome blindness of his assumptions. If blindness persists, development is stagnated. Bringing assumptions to awareness—reducing blindness—is essential to development, according to Kegan (1994), Kegan and Lahey (2009), and Mezirow (1997b, 1998a, 2000).

The impetus of adult development: What prompts change? Sometimes it is helpful to first explain what something is not. To better understand what may prompt change, I briefly explored what these theorists suggest may deter change. Kegan and Lahey (2009) asserted that what hinders change are those things that "spur passionate commitments not to change" (pp. 307–308). Kegan and Lahey (2001, 2009) argued that each person has a highly effective anxiety management system they refer to as "immunity to change." It is this system that constantly manages ever-present fear (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Kegan and Lahey (2001, 2009) suggested this immunity system works so well that most people are completely unaware of its existence.

The immunity to change system, Kegan and Lahey (2009) espoused, is "robust and self-sustaining, and permit[s] us to function in a wide variety of situations" (p. 48). There are benefits to having an automatic, well-functioning immunity system that manages emotions—especially anxiety (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). The cost, though, is high: It prevents development to a higher level of functioning even when the personal growth is highly desired (Kegan & Lahey,

2009). Like the immunity system in a healthy body, the immunity to change system powerfully

works to keep things as they are (Kegan & Lahey, 2001, 2009): "It is a system of self-protection"

(Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 50); it shields individuals from excessive fear and anxiety. However,

this effective system, while tremendously beneficial, hinders change—hinders development.

Changing the focus from what hinders change to what prompts change, Kegan and Lahey

(2009, 2010) asserted that individuals frequently find themselves with problems in which there is

a gap between the person's mental complexity and the complexity of the world's demands.

Kegan (1994) referred to this experience as being "in over our heads." Believing individuals

have an immunity to change, Kegan and Lahey (2009) proposed the concept of "optimal

conflict" to prompt the development of mental capacity.

Optimal conflict involves a persistent challenging experience, designed to cause a person

to "feel the limits" of his current meaning-making system, about something the person cares

about, with sufficient support so the person does not feel overwhelmed or is able to diminish the

challenge (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Individuals, in this supportive environment, assess their

current ways of knowing, explore assumptions, and consider that their assumptions are not

always true (Helsing, Howell, Kegan, & Lahey, 2008). Helsing et al. (2008) argued that when

individuals begin to make their assumptions more complex (causing them to increase their

capacity for complexity) they are undertaking transformative learning.

Somewhat similar to the Kegan and Lahey's (2009) idea of reaching the limits of one's

thinking, Mezirow (1990, 1993, 1997a, 2000) presented the concept of a disorienting dilemma

and its role in perspective transformation (later to be called transformative learning theory).

Mezirow (1990) claimed "anomalies and dilemmas of which old ways of knowing cannot make

sense become catalysts or 'trigger events' that precipitate critical reflection and transformation"

(p. 5). The externally imposed disorienting dilemma is caused when a person's established pattern becomes dysfunctional and simply trying harder will not work (Mezirow, 1993). The disorienting dilemma, Mezirow (1993) suggested, may either be a series of insights over time or an epochal event such as the death of a mate or a divorce. Mezirow (1997a), in a letter to the editor of *Adult Education Quarterly* asserted, "A significant personal transformation involving subjective reframing, that is, transforming one's own frame of reference, often occurs in response to a disorienting dilemma." To Mezirow (1990, 1993, 1997b), the disorienting dilemma prompts change.

The role of emotion in adult development. Mezirow (2009), after more than 20 years of contemplation and writing about perspective transformation theory, confirmed his approach to adult development as a "rational, metacognitive process of reassessing reasons that support problematic meaning perspectives or frames of reference" (p. 103). This rational emphasis, though, has brought criticism of his work (Kitchenham, 2008). Specifically, a criticism is the lack of discussion on the role of emotions in his theory (Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006). However, in Mezirow's (1996, 2000) writings he acknowledged individuals need to (a) become emotionally capable of change and (b) develop empathy toward others.

To understand the role of emotions in Mezirow's perspective transformation theory, there is a need to understand his belief on the concept of awareness. Mezirow (2009) argued, "Most of the process of learning occurs outside of awareness and may include emotional, intuitive, symbolic, imaginistic, and/or contemplative modes of learning" (p. 124). However, Mezirow (2009) asserted, perspective transformation theory is concerned with the "rational process of learning within awareness" (p. 124). The distinction Mezirow made between awareness and outside of awareness may account for his lack of emotive discussion. If the process of learning

through emotion exists primarily outside of awareness and the theory is concerned with what occurs within awareness, it is reasonable that Mezirow would not elaborate on the concept of emotion. Although Mezirow (2009) later agreed on the importance of emotions and the need for further clarification of emotion within the theory, he seemed primarily interested in perspective transformation within the realm of awareness—a rational process.

In my review of Mezirow's writings, I noticed he did not name many emotions. Neither did he significantly discuss the emotional impact of challenging situations. I was somewhat surprised with this discovery since his theory, at least in part, seeks to strengthen discourse, reduce violence, and lead to emancipation—arguably highly emotional experiences. However, in late life, Mezirow (2009) admitted, "the process of transformation is often a difficult, highly emotional passage" (p. 95). And, he further asserted, "learners attempting to cope with transformation . . . [have a] degree of anxiety" (Mezirow, 2009, p. 95). Thus, Mezirow acknowledged, at least in later life, how transformational change may be highly emotional.

The role of emotion, for Mezirow, seems to have progressed throughout the development of his theory. Eventually, Mezirow (2003) acknowledged,

> Qualities of emotional intelligence (self-awareness and impulse control, persistence, zeal and self-motivation, empathy, and social deftness) (Goleman, 1995) are obvious assets for developing the ability of adults to assess alternative beliefs and participate fully and freely in critical-dialectical discourses. (p. 60)

Yet, while admitting emotional intelligence is valuable, Mezirow (2009) continued to reaffirm that perspective transformative theory is a rational, metacognitive theory of adult development.

Unlike my review of Mezirow's writings, the writings of Kegan (1980) and Kegan and Lahey (2001, 2009) are filled with emotion-rich words. It is common to read words that express the emotions of suffering, anxiety, tension, distress, depression, pain, loss, burden, guilt, or fear. Kegan and Lahey (2009) claimed development involves the head and the heart working together;

development involves our feeling and our thinking. Expressed another way, it is where individuals are "thinking about our feelings" and "feeling our way to new ways of thinking" (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 216).

As previously discussed, Kegan and Lahey (2001, 2009) suggested that each person has a highly effective anxiety management system they refer to as "immunity to change." Kegan and Lahey (2009) argued this internal regulatory system constantly manages ever-present emotions— especially anxiety and fear. It is this immunity system, running efficiently—protecting individuals from excessive fear and anxiety—that can hinder personal development by creating blind spots and living challenges (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). The anxiety caused by fear, Kegan and Lahey (2009) claimed, "resides at the level of feelings rather than cognitive thought" (p. 48). Hence, recognizing and responding to emotions are important elements to reducing anxiety.

Development is hindered when an overly responsive immune system has given "relief from anxiety while creating a false belief that many things are impossible for us to do—things that in fact are completely possible" (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 50). Thus, individuals, mistakenly believing an achievement cannot be attained, do not even attempt to seek the achievement. Kegan and Lahey (2009) suggested individuals can expand their limited borders through the, previously introduced, concept of optimal conflict where "new ways of thinking permit new ways of feeling, and new ways of feeling encourage and validate new ways of thinking" (p. 217).

Kegan and Lahey (2009), following 20 years of study, attested to the interrelatedness of emotion and thinking as they related them to the immunity system and how the system hinders development. They believed that understanding this interrelatedness assists in closing the gap

between what an individual wants to accomplish and what he actually accomplishes. Stated another way, emotions motivate behavior.

In the first section of Chapter 2, I discussed four concepts shared by adult developmental theorists Mezirow (1990, 1997b, 2000) and Kegan (1980, 1982, 1994). I also introduced how these theorists have written about the concept of emotion within their respective theories. The next section of Chapter 2 is an examination of the extant literature of the voice of the accused and observations or impressions of the accused by the researcher.

The Accused: The Firsthand Accounts

In the second section of Chapter 2, I explore the literature of firsthand accounts of the accused. As previously discussed, the accused is an individual who (a) has been accused of workplace bullying—regardless of the investigative outcome, (b) describes himself as a workplace bully, or (c) is identified by the researcher(s) as someone who fits the study parameters of a workplace bully or abrasive leader. The literature hearing the voice of the accused is sparse (Branch et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012; Martinko et al., 2013; Samnani & Singh, 2012). It primarily comes from qualitative data in doctoral dissertations of individuals who had already been long-time executive coaching practitioners. In addition to these qualitative studies, there are a few quantitative studies that research the accused. None of these studies, however, provide firsthand accounts of experience. Thus, the qualitative studies alone present the extant literature of the accused from his firsthand accounts (see Appendix C).

This literature review of the voice of the accused has three sections. In the first section, I introduce the literature search strategy. In the second section, I synthesize the narrative of the accused as it relates to his thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Interwoven within the second section are the researchers' observations and impressions of the accused. As such, the

second section of the literature review is a metasynthesis as I introduce the voice of the accused from multiple studies (Polit & Beck, 2010). In the third section of Chapter 2, I present the researcher's findings that relate to the experience of the accused as communicated in the extant literature.

      Literature search strategy. Even though scholars determined a need to hear the voice of the workplace bully in 2003 (Rayner & Cooper, 2003), very few studies have focused on this perspective. Desiring to locate the research related to the firsthand voice of the workplace bully, I created a process to ensure studies within the given parameters were located. Part of this process established criteria for inclusion and exclusion of literature as suggested by Randolph (2009). The criteria for inclusion were as follows:

- Years: 2005–2018

- Types of studies: qualitative and quantitative studies

- Types of publications: journals and dissertations

- Researchers: academic scholars, scholar-practitioners, and practitioners

- Participants in studies: organizational perpetrator, organizational perpetrator and target, organizational leader as perpetrator, abrasive leaders

- Study focus: behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts

- Key concepts: transformed organizational leader, interpersonal skill, development, workplace bully, abrasive leader, abusive supervision, perpetrator

- Language: English

I excluded studies where the sole perspective was that of the perceived target. Also excluded were studies of sexual harassment and studies conducted outside of an organizational context.

Data collection. Using the specified parameters, I conducted and documented multiple searches for relevant literature using ACU OneSearch during the month of May 2017. As anticipated, there were no scholarly studies using my key concepts that answered my research question. Thus, I "moved up" the conceptual ladder on each of my key concepts to locate studies that slightly differed from my specific research question (Foss & Waters, 2016). I located a total of 902 articles in these searches. Following removal of duplicate articles and articles that otherwise were not within the parameters of my research, as described above, the total number of articles was reduced to 137. Upon review of abstracts and, if needed, skimming of the article, the number of articles requiring a more involved review was reduced to 54.

The remaining articles were a combination of (a) the bully (17 articles), (b) the organizational bully as part of a larger study (27 articles), (c) dissertations (4 articles), and (d) workplace bullying/abusive supervision/other related literature reviews (6 articles). Upon further review of these articles, the studies that did not address the firsthand experience or meaning making of the participant through a description of his thoughts, beliefs, or actions were also excluded. The final number of qualitative studies of the firsthand accounts of the accused came to nine.

Throughout the reading of the literature, to ensure current research and relevant articles were obtained, I searched reference lists provided in the studies, utilized scholar.google.com, and reviewed the research publications list of the International Association on Workplace Bullying and Harassment (IAWBH) website. Furthermore, I conducted another academic search using ACU OneSearch in January 2019 to ensure I had all pertinent studies. During the search one additional dissertation was located and relevant findings were incorporated into Chapter 2. This

search process provided me with a high level of confidence that studies and papers within the given parameters had been located.

   Identifying meaningful statements. Consistent with Randolph's (2009) and Foss and Waters's (2016) suggestions, I identified meaningful statements within the literature of the voice of the accused. Specifically, I looked for (a) statements that provided insight into the thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the participants, and (b) claims, assertions, and findings made by the researcher in his or her attempt at discovering the essence of the experience or journey of the accused. As I read through the data, I either quoted the article, including the citation, or I used the Microsoft snipping tool to copy and paste the quote into my working document of meaningful statements.

   Giving meaning. Continuing with a qualitative research literature review, as suggested by Randolph (2009), I proceeded to give meaning to the data I was reading. I made a copy of the working document, cut apart the quotes, and then placed them into general topics that I saw emerging from the data. Following this step, I reviewed each of the quotes within the general topics for relevancy to that topic—moving those that were not to a more closely related category. Upon completion of this process, I identified sub-topics within each larger topic. It was during this process where I attempted to "interpret and paraphrase them [the quotes] as groups" (Randolph, 2009, p. 11).

   The accused. In this next section of the literature review, I identify and communicate the "essence of [the] primary researchers' experiences with the phenomenon" (Randolph, 2009, p. 11). I will (a) examine how the accused viewed himself prior to the accusation, (b) present the initial reactions when the accused first came to understand the bullying accusation, and (c) describe the reactions by the accused over time.

Prior to accusation. The accused frequently considers himself, and is considered by others, as ambitious, driven, goal oriented, and accomplished (Castle, 2014; Crawshaw, 2005; Harrison, 2014; Samenow, Worley, Neufeld, Fishel, & Swiggart, 2013). Crawshaw (2005) described the three executives in her study as intelligent and technically proficient: They were driven to excel and exceed company objectives. Similarly, Harrison (2014) and DeSanti (2014) confirmed the participants had high expectations of themselves and others. One participant described himself as "always driven to be the best . . . a boss with high standards and aspirations—demanding of myself and others . . . a leader with a reputation for turning around underperforming organizations by sitting [sic] standards, holding people accountability [sic], and weeding out those who could not change" (DeSanti, 2014, p. 94). DeSanti (2014) concluded from the self-descriptions of her participants that they "viewed their work ethic and standards as strengths" for themselves and the organization (p. 109).

Harrison (2014) described the participants as having strong personal value systems that emphasized responsibility, independence, hard work, and loyalty. Study participants also frequently spoke of fairness as another strong personal value (Castle, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2011). The participants were dedicated. When asked to "take one" for the company, they did not question the request. One participant, asked by a senior manager to do work outside of her job description such as excessively monitoring someone's work or criticizing a team member's work, was willing to assist with the task (Jenkins et al., 2012). To these leaders, their follow through on these types of requests demonstrated dedication and loyalty to the organization and the superior.

Harrison (2014) discovered that many of the leaders in her study began their careers as hardworking successful individual contributors who were primarily promoted due to their ability

to get work done. They were exceptional individual contributors. However, with the move to leadership, little or no leadership training was provided (Harrison, 2014). Not knowing how else to resolve challenges with coworkers, Harrison (2014) observed that these leaders resorted to the self-driven tactic that previously worked for them: working hard. Their exclusive focus: results.

Crawshaw (2005) and Harrison (2014) noted these leaders became impatient and frustrated with individuals whom they perceived as not able to keep up or who lacked the same desire to deliver results. Crawshaw (2005) found her participants believed difficult coworkers were categorically lazy, stupid, or insolent. To these leaders, this was reasonable explanation for difficult coworkers.

The participants sometimes perceived challenging coworkers as breaking accepted norms of organizational life (Bloch, 2012). In Bloch's (2012) study of primarily nonleaders, participants believed they were legitimately reacting to some genuine organizational problems caused by the victim. In the participants' explanations, it was the victim who caused a problem for the organization by not following social norms (Bloch, 2012). These same participants also expressed that, while they acted upon the victim, other coworkers felt as they did about the victim: The victim is the problem. The accused, although acting alone, felt he had the support of his coworkers in the workplace. (Of note is that 12 of the 15 participants in Bloch's [2012] study had participated in horizontal bullying—the bullying of a peer. In the other studies in the literature review a greater percentage of the participants were leaders: The target was not likely to be a peer. The difference in the sample may explain this finding presented by Bloch [2012] that coworkers were supportive of the bullying actions of the accused. This description is not provided elsewhere in the literature.)

In the quest for results, the executives saw aggressiveness as the means to the end (Crawshaw, 2005). To these leaders, aggression was the tool to increase coworker motivation for attaining results: "Coworker emotions (the 'soft stuff') were distractions" (Crawshaw, 2005, p. 167). Illustrating the use of, and thoughts supporting, aggressive management strategies are two participants in DeSanti's (2014) study. Lloyd simply stated, "I accomplished the mission for which I was recruited" (p. 118). Matthew told it like this:

> Only when I got upset, did he [the accuser] get the message. Had he continued, he would have lost his job. The guy who called me a bully was coddled as a child by his mom. He was not accustomed to someone telling him that he was really being a jerk—but it was just true. This probably sounds bad, but I think I did him a favor, because he grew up and got into the adult world. (DeSanti, 2014, p. 118)

Many of the participants used anger as the "go to" solution with coworkers, once they felt a need to increase or enhance productivity (Crawshaw, 2005; DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014; Samenow et al., 2013).

Participants frequently believed their anger was justified at the time of an incident (DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014). The justification for anger to one manager seemed appropriate given the subordinate did not "deliver the expected results and therefore betrayed the leader's trust" (Harrison, 2014, p. 213). In addition, participants sometimes believed aggression was necessary to motivate coworkers into competency (Crawshaw, 2005). Interestingly, some managers would, at a later point, feel a "level of remorse" (Harrison, 2014, p. 213).

Even though many of the accused leaders described themselves as highly competent and driven for success, they also expressed that they felt isolated, unsupported, highly stressed, pressured to deliver results, and frustrated with the lack of resources. They sometimes felt caught in the middle—being "subject to demands from above and below" (Harrison, 2014, p. 223). And, despite pleading for assistance, their requests were frequently rejected. While these

participants had been strong individual performers, Harrison (2014) and Crawshaw (2005) agreed that these leaders found it frustrating to try and achieve results through others.

Several participants in Harrison's (2014) study reported being mentally and physically exhausted by their personal intense approach to work with 2 of the 12 participants ending up with substantial health issues. One leader described having significant stress due to inadequate staffing and trying to perform multiple ambiguous roles:

> I was also finding it a very stressful time. The workload was huge. My job really should have been done by two people and I was expressing that saying that that needed to happen. I was being told, "Well that's not going to happen." Then I started having to cover for doctors as well, so therefore I didn't have doctors in the emergency department. I didn't have doctors seeing mental health patients on the wards and I had to do both in each area. (Jenkins et al., 2012, p. 494)

In summary, the extant literature of the workplace bully, from their firsthand accounts, provides several descriptions to understanding how the participants perceived themselves prior to being accused of bullying. It can be seen from these self-descriptions, as well as researcher observations and data analysis, that those accused of workplace bullying are frequently driven, accomplished, and gifted problem solvers who had strong personal value systems emphasizing responsibility, independence, hard work, and loyalty (Crawshaw, 2005; Harrison, 2014; Samenow et al., 2013).

Many of these participants began their successful careers as hardworking individual contributors who were promoted into leadership positions with little or no leadership training (Harrison, 2014). Feeling frustrated with getting work accomplished through others, some of these participants chose to motivate through aggression. Commonly, these leaders felt justified in their anger (Crawshaw, 2005; DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014). Several leaders admitted to feeling isolated, unsupported, highly stressed and pressured to deliver results—sometimes with a lack of resources (Harrison, 2014). Some leaders even confessed to being mentally and

physically exhausted by their personal intense approach to work. These descriptions assist in understanding how those accused of workplace bullying perceived themselves prior to the allegation of bullying.

Initial reaction to accusation. The extant literature indicates, when an accused first hears of the bullying accusation, strong emotions usually surface. Several participants in the studies communicated initial reactions of anger, outrage, hurt, or devastation (Crawshaw, 2005; DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014). Crawshaw (2005) observed that each of the 3 participants in her study appeared "deeply dismayed by the degree of distress and alienation [to/from coworkers] depicted in the [360] feedback" (p. 175). Even stronger emotions were shown when McGregor (2015a) expressed that some participants "likened the accusation of being a workplace bully to other serious claims such as being a racist, a sexual harasser, a bigot or even a pedophile" (p. 184). To demonstrate further the harm and increased emotional impact, some participants believed there was a "lack of understanding or thought around the impact of being accused" (McGregor, 2015a, p. 184). Those participants described the lack of understanding of the damage as devastating (McGregor, 2015a).

After the initial shock of the allegation, managers were frequently surprised that their behaviors could be viewed as bullying since they saw themselves as simply carrying out normal managerial duties. DeSanti (2014) wrote that nearly everyone in her study accurately defined bullying. They also denied they bullied anyone. This is similar to the findings of Jenkins et al. (2011) where 90% of the alleged perpetrators stipulated "they have 'never bullied anyone'" (p. 5)—even though 26% of the bullying cases were substantiated. In one substantiated case, the participant did not believe her behavior could be defined as bullying and expressed that her managerial style was reasonable (Jenkins et al., 2012). Crawshaw (2005) expanded the concept

of denial experienced by the three executives she studied. Each of these participants, Crawshaw

(2005) observed, appeared deeply dismayed by the impact of their behavior upon their

coworkers. Yet they also defended their behavior as essential to accomplishing their goals

(Crawshaw, 2005).

For many managers, the complaint was the first notification of any type of conflict with

the accused (Jenkins et al., 2012). In this same study, a prevalent belief of managers was that the

bullying complaint followed the accused attempting to manage poor performance or a difficult

employee. Jenkins et al. (2012) further explained that while the participants could describe

negative behaviors, they rejected that the behaviors showed a pattern of bullying. These

participants viewed their behavior as "reasonable, although unpopular, aspects of their role"

(Jenkins et al., 2012). To them, they were just doing the work they were hired to do. And, for

some managers, they believed they were the ones being bullied (McGregor, 2015b).

Strong emotions often continued beyond the initial reaction to the allegation. Harrison

(2014) found that following receipt of the participant's 360 report, it was common for the leaders

to be embarrassed and disappointed. In addition, many participants thought they needed to

suppress their emotions. One participant found guilty of bullying described it this way: "I feel

like I can't even react angrily because that would justify the claim in the first place. I feel like I

am having to restrain or temper my reactions and my emotions" (Jenkins et al., 2012, p. 40).

Another participant, later cleared of bullying allegations, admitted,

> I don't know that I did have a [coping] strategy, and you know, I just . . . I don't know. I
> just basically gritted my teeth and went in there and did my job. I tried to be as normal as
> possible and it was incredibly hard, and I obviously didn't succeed particularly well.
> (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 40)

The health and well-being of the accused frequently required time away from the

organization. All 24 participants in the Jenkins et al.'s (2011) study reported "severe mental

health problems" (p. 499) which they attributed to the bullying allegations brought against them. In this same study, 12 participants stated they had to take off time from work due to anxiety, depression, stress, or a diagnosed psychological disorder (Jenkins et al., 2011). Furthermore, nearly half of those needing time away from the office were absent for more than 2 weeks (Jenkins et al., 2011).

Showing the depth of emotional harm, one participant, found not guilty of the accusation, was unable to work for 10 months (Jenkins et al., 2011). In addition, 2 other participants, at the time of their interviews, were applying for workers' compensation for sustaining a psychological injury. Jenkins et al. (2011) discovered that the physical and psychological ailments were independently reported regardless of being "found guilty or not guilty of bullying or harassment" (p. 57).

Jenkins et al. (2011) stated the depth of emotional suffering, even when found not guilty of harassment or bullying, can be significant. One manager, who retired soon after being found not guilty of sexual harassment and bullying, expressed,

> It [the allegation and process] affected me severely. I became suicidal. Seriously, I was devastated, mortified, and began to question what I had done, and to whom. . . . It was the worst period of my entire life. I suffered a racing heart; my blood pressure escalated; I experience my first ever panic attack; I had a continual pressure in my chest; I could not eat; I felt I could trust no-one; I became deeply depressed. (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 39)

Another manager stated,

> I would sit in my car, I would pull up in the car park in the morning and I would sit there and cry and I'd think I can't go in. One day I actually turned around and came home. . . . I'd reached a point where I sat in my office one day and I could understand how people could kill themselves and I just sat there and I was crying and for about three hours I sat there and I looked at the ceiling and I thought it would be really easy because I had bars across there and I said gee that would be so easy and then I am sitting there and I suddenly realized what I was doing and I am thinking this is madness. (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 39)

The reactions of these two managers, each found to be not guilty of the bullying allegations brought against them, illustrate how troubling the accusation may be to the accused even when the allegation was not founded. Although there is a level of emotional distress among the accused in other studies, suicidal despair was not found elsewhere in the literature.

In summary, when the accused first comprehends that a bullying allegation has been brought against him, there are a variety of strong emotions ranging from embarrassment, hurt, or devastation to outrage (Crawshaw, 2005; DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014). Many of the leaders believed they were simply conducting ordinary, although unpopular, managerial duties. Interestingly, these participants nearly always denied that they bullied anyone (DeSanti, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2012). Furthermore, Jenkins et al. (2012) reported that the notification of the bullying allegation, for several managers, was the first notice of any type of conflict with the worker. Yet in this same study, the leader believed the accusation was in response to managing poor performance or a difficult employee.

The extant literature indicates strong emotions continue beyond the initial reaction of the accused. Many leaders suffered decreased health and well-being with a large percentage eventually needing time away from work—even if found innocent of the charges (Jenkins et al., 2011). All participants of the Jenkins et al.'s (2011) study required time away from the organization. These participants reported "severe mental health problems" that they related to the accusation (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 499). The harm was so great for 2 participants that they became suicidal—even though found not guilty of the allegations (Jenkins et al., 2011).

Reactions over time. Even though most participants denied the bullying accusation, many of them discussed seeking assistance to improve "leadership, communications, sensitivity, and self-awareness" (DeSanti, 2014, p. 114; see also McGregor, 2015b). The participants recognized

that there were inner aspects of themselves they could improve even while internally rejecting the allegation, and sometimes the charge, of bullying. Some of the specific areas where participants sought improvement were managerial skills, patience, problem-solving, and the creation of more effective leader-subordinate relationships. In addition, DeSanti (2014) articulated that some participants spoke about "conferring with a trusted network for confirmation, feedback and advice regarding the accusation" (p. 115).

DeSanti (2014) stated that participants found this experience of being accused increased their mindfulness. One participant, Carl, explained that he had "deep disappointment that the label has again been applied. Disappointment in myself, yes, but also in those I feel misunderstood me profoundly" (DeSanti, 2014, p. 101). Another accused, Matthew, expressed he now accepts more responsibility. He said, "I did take a look at what I did and tried to be objective about how I could have done better" (DeSanti, 2014, p. 101). Matthew added,

> Others gain experience and improve, and so have I. I now look at the core fault when a problem comes up. . . . Usually a problem occurs because I was not as involved as I should have been, so I take the blame more. (DeSanti, 2014, p. 101)

Another participant, Ben, stated going through this experience taught him "I can and do make errors" and this "knowledge brings awareness which leads to positive action" (DeSanti, 2014, p. 101).

Not only did some participants approach working and leading differently, several participants reported they were being more proactive and positive in exercising their authority rather than reacting to circumstances (Harrison, 2014). Part of this development included relinquishing control. Participant 1 illustrated this idea when she stated, "In the past, it would have sent me off the rocker and I would be diving in, ordering people around. Now I can sit

there and watch it being done way better than I could ever have conceived it" (Harrison, 2014, p. 227).

Jenkins et al. (2011) reported the accused experienced a loss of confidence and trust for the organization and with coworkers. Many participants believed the organization did not offer sufficient feedback to deter poor leadership behavior. Harrison (2014) reported management stepped in to assist or intervene in only three out of 12 cases. And, as stated earlier, most individuals accused of bullying were surprised by the accusation. They communicated they had no prior knowledge of any complaints and had "never received any clear, constructive feedback that they needed to change" (Harrison, 2014, p. 218). With the lack of organizational leadership in providing the accused with sufficient feedback, the poor behaviors shifted for these leaders only once they could no longer "tolerate the strain involved in keeping things going as they were" (Harrison, 2014, p. 219).

Several participants also expressed a loss of trust in the organization when it offered little to no assistance for the accused while offering assistance to the accuser (Jenkins et al., 2011; McGregor, 2015b). These participants expressed lack of assistance in two specific actions: (a) the victim receiving emotional support and services not offered to the accused, and (b) the belief by the accused that taking time away from the job would be viewed by the organization and coworkers as detrimental to his case (Jenkins et al., 2011). Complicating these assessments by the accused, however, was that many of the participants did not acknowledge to management their emotional distress or a need for help during or following the bullying investigation (Jenkins et al., 2011).

Fairness was a significant value to many accused perpetrators (Castle, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2011; McGregor, 2015b). Whether or not the accused was found guilty of the allegation,

many participants believed the organization did not follow their own policies. One accused

manager, found not guilty of bullying, stated,

> It [the process] was managed completely wrong. At all stages the policy said you have
> got to try to deal with it at the time, and try to resolve it at the lowest level, but basically
> there was no chance given to us to try to resolve it at that level. The policy wasn't used
> at all I don't think. The first thing I heard was well you are stood down. (Jenkins et al.,
> 2011, p. 41)

Another manager, who was later found guilty of bullying, believed the allegations were biased

and she was not permitted natural or procedural fairness (Jenkins et al., 2011). She believed the

policies and processes were not followed and, at the time of the research interview, was in the

process of suing her employer. Other examples of unfair practices, as described by participants

of this study, were the appearance of the organization simply siding with the complainant and the

accused feeling bullied by the organization (Jenkins et al., 2011; McGregor, 2015b). Many

participants perceived fairness was largely absent during the investigative process (Jenkins et al.,

2011; McGregor, 2015b).

DeSanti (2014) reported several of the participants experienced loss of trust with

coworkers. Participants frequently developed self-protective measures resulting from being

accused of bullying. One participant stated she began limiting her interactions with coworkers

and, if she needed to address an issue, she would always have a third-party present. She also

determined to always have "proof" of interactions and would send questions by email with a cc

to a supervisor as a paper trail (DeSanti, 2014). April and Joanne, two other participants, also

expressed utilizing paper trails for more protection. April added that she became increasingly

careful to frame her communication in such a manner that her intent was clear, leaving no room

for misunderstanding (DeSanti, 2014).

Several participants developed new ways of thinking. DeSanti (2014) and McGregor (2015b) noted several of the participants experienced changes in beliefs, attitudes, and/or behaviors as a result of the accusation. McGregor (2015b) discussed one participant who engaged in employer-paid external counseling sessions. That participant expressed,

> I learned that I can't change those around me, they will be what they will be, but I can change what happens inside me, how I chose to approach things and what my attitude will be. The best thing about counselling really was that it helped me work out that I am an okay person. (McGregor, 2015b, p. 120)

In addition, many participants noticed an increased need to protect themselves (DeSanti, 2014; McGregor, 2015b). One participant noted that he became reliant on only a small group of key people leading him to become more remote. Another participant, Martin, expressed similar concerns. He described himself as having severe mistrust of others. He also expressed his belief that his prior employer was "inherently corrupt" (DeSanti, 2014, p. 99). Due to his experience, he admitted to being more withdrawn, stating, "People who I thought were my friends were not" (DeSanti, 2014, p. 99).

Sometimes the accused (guilty or not) decided to leave the organization (Jenkins et al., 2011). Two participants left an organization because they perceived a lack of support during the investigation and it was disturbing for them to be aware of the continued rumors about their management competencies (Jenkins et al., 2012). In this same study, several other participants wanted to leave the organization but were unable to either due to lack of external jobs or financial circumstances. DeSanti (2014) reported 6 of 9 participants similarly sought relief through leaving the organization, and Jenkins et al. (2011) reported 25% of the participants ultimately left the organization.

In this section on the voice of the accused, I discussed several firsthand accounts as the accused discussed his thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors. Also included were the

researchers' observations and impressions of the participants. The accounts were grouped into three categories: (a) the participants' views prior to becoming aware of the accusation, (b) a description of the initial reactions of the participants, and (c) the participants' reactions over time. In the final section of the review of literature, I present the relevant findings of the extant literature.

The Researchers' Findings: The Experience of the Accused

Although the researchers have many findings in their research, in this section of the literature review, I present the findings that specifically relate to the experience or the journey of the accused and his meaning making. In addition, I introduce the topics of emotion, intent to harm, lack of insight, awareness of impact, and prior influences. Numerous researchers identified these topics throughout the stories of the accused. These topics are significant to understanding the journey and the meaning making of the experiences by the accused.

The experience and meaning making. The participants in these studies had (a) been accused of bullying behaviors, (b) self-identified as someone who had previously demonstrated bullying behaviors, or (c) met the criteria established by the researcher for being categorized as a workplace bully or an abrasive leader. Some of the participants were determined to be guilty of the accusation while other participants were found not guilty. The participants could have been a peer or leader to the perceived target. Although there are significant variables among the participants in the extant literature, there are four concepts where multiple studies indicated similar experiences of the journey and the meaning making of the accused. These four concepts are *just*, *unjust*, *enduring injury*, and *epiphany*.

Just. One concept communicated in these studies was the accused's belief his behavior was just. Many participants specifically stated they felt justified in their actions due to perceived

employee laziness, stupidity, defiance, or errors (Bloch, 2012; Castle, 2014; Crawshaw, 2005; DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014; Samenow et al., 2013; Zabrodska, Ellwood, Zaeemdar, & Mudrak, 2014). Many times, the participants believed they were the defender of a moral standard and they were only performing the tasks they were hired to do (Bloch, 2012). In addition, participants frequently thought of themselves as "crusaders for excellence" (Crawshaw, 2005, p. 163) and their behavior was necessary (Bloch, 2012; Castle, 2014). Sometimes, the participants experienced some level of regret but would later rationalize their abrasive behaviors (Harrison, 2014). In the extant literature, the accused frequently felt justified in the use of abrasive behaviors.

  Unjust. Many participants believed the claim and the process to be unjust (Jenkins et al., 2011; McGregor, 2015a, 2015b; Samenow et al., 2013). Samenow et al. (2013) wrote in their composite case study that it was normal for the accused to feel unfairly punished. Several participants believed the real bully was the person who made the claim (Jenkins et al., 2011; McGregor, 2015b). Some participants communicated that the complaints were business decisions they had to implement but were not responsible for creating.

  When complaints were made, the accused frequently felt the organization did not "have his back" (Jenkins et al., 2012). This dynamic commonly led the accused to feeling unjustly bullied, not only by the accuser but also by the organization (McGregor, 2015a). In addition, numerous participants across the studies indicated they were not treated as well as the accuser. Furthermore, many participants believed there was a stigma associated with the accusation that could not be overcome. McGregor (2015b) in her grounded theory study presented a theoretical model of guilty until proven innocent. McGregor (2015b) discovered this theme of guilt based solely on an accusation within each participant's experience.

Enduring injury. Numerous researchers discussed the tremendous impact the accusation had on the emotional and mental health of the participants (DeSanti, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2011; McGregor, 2015b). For many of the participants, the bullying investigation lasted for months, under which they felt a cloud of suspicion, feeling isolated and separated from the organization (McGregor, 2015b). Another participant expressed the process "took seven months and it was tortuous!" (McGregor, 2015b, p. 105). For some of the participants the accusation, even when not guilty, caused severe health issues requiring them to be absent from work for numerous months (Jenkins et al., 2011). McGregor (2015b) reported that the participants likened the accusation to a crime or sin, and DeSanti (2014) discussed the enduring injury and dissonance as both personal and professional. The emotional injury for many of these participants was tremendous and long-lasting.

Epiphany. The participants who experienced a personal shift in perspective and behavior frequently described developing a deeper awareness—a moment of awakening, an epiphany (Harrison, 2014). Harrison (2014) described the shift in thinking as "revised mental models about leadership and an increased awareness of their [the participant's] impact on others" (p. iii). This shift in thinking, DeSanti (2014) agreed, is cognitive as well as behavioral. Harrison (2014) asserted, "For the shift to occur and be sustained, they [the participants] needed to be ready and willing to change, which included being open to constructive feedback and introspection" (p. 186). Crawshaw (2005) did not use the word *epiphany* but described the concept as having the blinders removed. These participants, who were once blind, now see. Prior to this moment, the participants did not understand there was a problem. However, once the blinders were pulled off, the participants recognized the significant issue and were eager to be coached in developing emotional competency (Crawshaw, 2005).

Other relevant findings. The remaining findings are concepts present throughout the extant literature. However, they seem to be partially concealed, at least initially, from the accused; the accused seems to not be aware of their influence or impact until they are brought to his attention. Thus, they are not included in the prior section on the firsthand experience or the journey and meaning making of the accused. The concepts, however, of emotions, intent, and awareness are discussed in the abusive supervision and workplace bullying literature. The remaining topics described by the researchers included emotions, intent to harm, lack of insight, awareness of impact, and prior influences.

Emotions. Each researcher described the emotional upset of the accused upon finding out of the bullying allegation. And, as previously described by many participants, the intense emotional upheaval continued for an extended period. Words commonly used by the participants or researchers to describe the emotional upset of the accused included *anger*, *vengeance*, *contempt*, *resentment*, *disgust*, *disbelief*, *outrage*, *hurt*, *devastation*, *frustrated*, *regret*, and *shame*. Providing some clarity, Harrison (2014), describing her participants, wrote, "Where things typically would leave the tracks and spiral upward toward abrasion was when the leader was unable to manage escalating feelings of anger" (p. 179).

Not only is there emotional explosiveness, there also may be a rapid swing of emotions. Zabrodska et al. (2014) described one narrator as oscillating "between competing emotions— feeling self-righteous at one moment in the event, doubtful or even remorseful at other moments" (p. 25). Illustrating a similar reaction was the disruptive physician in his response to being told he must correct his behavior. Samenow et al. (2013) described the physician as having shame and outrage.

Crawshaw (2005) asserted that the "inattention to emotion (emotional *un*intelligence) contributes to the executive's interpersonal incompetence" (p. 251). She expressed her work as an executive coach was "to get them to see and accurately understand emotion" (Crawshaw, 2005, p. 188). Emotional incompetence is a constant theme within the stories of the accused.

Intent to harm. DeSanti (2014) asserted that the initial strong emotional reactions of surprise and shock indicated there was "no conscious intent among those accused of bullying to harm others" (p. 122). She further explained that none of the participants in her study expressed any desire to seek retribution. Jenkins et al. (2012) agreed that there does not appear to be an intent to cause harm. One accused, following dismissal from his job and subsequently losing an unfair dismissal lawsuit against his employer, expressed he did not mean to hurt anyone. (Jenkins et al., 2012). This same accused, though, also said he "did not believe that he was sexually harassing or intimidating his staff" (Jenkins et al., 2012, p. 495). Two other examples of not intending to harm were provided by Jenkins et al. (2012). In both situations, the participants justified and normalized their behaviors with their coworkers. They believed their accusers were "overly sensitive or exaggerating the impact" (p. 495). They acknowledged there was no intent to harm anyone.

Lack of insight. Frequently, the participants lacked insight into their behaviors (Crawshaw, 2005; Harrison, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2012). Jenkins et al. (2012) asserted that their study supports the concept that there was little insight by the accused into how his behavior may either (a) contribute to a stressful workplace or (b) be interpreted as bullying. For some managers, they perceived their tough management approaches as normal and reasonable, when "in fact it is intimidating in nature and a strategic form of bullying" (Jenkins et al., 2012, p. 497). Crawshaw (2005) endorsed the concept of lack of insight when she wrote, "All of the executives

grossly underestimated the degree of distress that they had generated in superiors, peers, and subordinates, as reflected in the 360-degree feedback surveys and concerns expressed in my initial meetings with company representatives" (p. 175). Other participants, who had been found guilty of bullying, demonstrated their lack of insight into the severity of their behaviors when they communicated that the "judgment against them was unfair and too harsh" (Jenkins et al., 2011, p. 41). Crawshaw (2005) put it bluntly when she concluded, "These individuals were clueless; they were profoundly lacking in psychological insight into the impact of their behavior on coworker emotions" (p. 62).

Awareness of impact. The extant literature suggests there is an awareness, among the accused, of their behaviors yet an unawareness of the impact of their behaviors (Crawshaw, 2005; DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014). DeSanti (2014) summarized the participants of her study as having "clarity about themselves, their feelings, actions, and intentions within the workplace" (p. 106) yet a lack of ability to consider their impact upon others. Thus, DeSanti (2014) concluded, there is a sense of awareness (in self), while there is also a lack of awareness (of others). Zabrodska et al. (2014) had similar findings. One narrator described his own behavior as "cold and icy" (p. 25). From this narrator's own statement, Zabrodska et al. (2014) asserted that the narrator's self-description illustrated a level of self-awareness.

Somewhat dissimilar to these findings is Bloch (2012), who questioned the concept that perpetrators may be socially unaware. Bloch (2012) suggested the perpetrators seemed "highly aware" of how coworkers viewed each other. Moreover, Bloch (2012) noted that the workplace bully believed his coworkers shared his same thoughts about the targeted individual. The self-identified bully used the beliefs of the group as justification for his negative actions (Bloch, 2012). Basically, he believed he was acting in defense of his like-minded coworkers. However,

Bloch (2012) also concluded she found the perpetrators, in general, not to have expressions of empathy for the victim indicating limited social competencies.

DeSanti (2014) reported that all but 2 of her participants had either (a) no real ability or (b) no real desire to understand another person's perspective. In her analysis, DeSanti (2014) asserted it was not only a lack of self-awareness but also a lack of desire for making meaning from the experiences. Crawshaw (2005) concluded the executives she studied were only "minimally aware of the nature and degree of their destructive impact on coworkers" (p. 62). Zabrodska et al. (2014) suggested it was only after the accuser sought help that the narrator understood the full impact of her behavior and felt "horrified by its effects" (p. 25). Each of these assessments illustrate the challenge in understanding how an accused bully may or may not be aware of his impact.

Crawshaw (2005) noticed the 3 executives in her study eventually envisioned a highly different strategic approach to motivating employees. She credited this, at least partially, to increased awareness. Previously the executives, when faced with the possibility of not achieving objectives, felt threatened and would act aggressively toward coworkers whom the executives believed to be lazy, stupid, or insolent. The growth in the executives' awareness and control of their emotional explosiveness allowed them to motivate others through reducing rather than escalating their threatening behaviors toward others. Crawshaw (2005) asserted this shift in behavior allowed the coworkers to focus on the executive's management objectives rather than the executive's poor behavior—the ultimate desire of the executive. Crawshaw (2005) determined that "framing the loss of emotional control as a loss of competence had an immediate effect on these executives: They became hyper-aware of their success and failure in maintaining

emotional control" (p. 187). Framing the message in this manner played to the strengths of the leader who constantly strove to have super competence (Crawshaw, 2005).

   Prior influences. Several individuals accused of workplace bullying explained they had a history of, or exposure to, mistreatment (Crawshaw, 2005; Harrison, 2014; Samenow, Swiggart, & Spickard, 2008). Samenow et al. (2008) reported that many of the disruptive physicians had "long-standing family of origin and/or developmental issues that pre-dispose them to their behaviors" (p. 37). Harrison (2014) identified similar findings when she wrote that some participants brought either a history of being mistreated or witnessing mistreatment with family members or previous bosses. Crawshaw (2010) concluded that the abrasive leaders did not think of their "behavior as unacceptable or abnormal, because most of them grew up with it" (p. 62).

   In this third section of the literature review, I presented four research findings that relate to the conscious experience of the accused and his meaning making. These concepts included just, unjust, enduring injury, and epiphany. In addition, I discussed other relevant concepts to the experience of the accused. These topics included emotions, intent to harm, lack of insight, awareness of impact, and prior influences. Nearly every researcher interweaves these concepts throughout the stories of the accused. These topics are significant to researchers in understanding the journey and the meaning making of the experiences by the accused, even though the accused is, initially and apparently, largely unaware of their importance.

Conclusion

   The voice of the accused, as previously discussed, has rarely been studied (Branch et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012; Martinko et al., 2013; Samnani & Singh, 2012). And the lived experience, or journey of the former workplace bully, has not been studied. An investigation into the literature revealed no published studies on the journey and sensemaking of the leader

who no longer used abrasive interpersonal strategies to lead others. Thus, the problem explored in this research is the lack of understanding of how leaders who had utilized abrasive leadership behaviors would describe and make sense of the journey which significantly and positively changed their interpersonal behaviors.

Accordingly, the purpose of the study was to generate knowledge by inquiring into the leader's journey toward cessation of the abrasive behaviors following intervention. My narrative inquiry entailed one research question: How does an organizational leader describe and make sense of the movement away from the use of abrasive behaviors?

I began the literature review with an introduction of a conceptual framework of adult development theory. My study was about a journey of personal change, a journey of individual development. I believed setting my study within a conceptual framework that included two influential voices of adult development theory would assist in better understanding the leaders' experiential journey. I discussed four-shared concepts of Kegan's (1980, 1994) constructive developmental theory and Mezirow's (1990, 1997b, 2000) perspective transformation theory. These theories of personal development assisted in giving me direction and focus for my study (Green, 2014).

Next, I discussed the voice of the accused. Within this second section of the literature review, I presented the firsthand voice of the accused, as articulated by the researchers of the extant literature. Using a narrative approach to present the extant literature, I (a) explored how the accused bully viewed himself prior to the accusation, (b) discussed his initial reaction at the time of learning of the accusation, and (c) communicated his reactions over time.

In the last section of the literature review, I presented the researchers' thoughts and findings of the journey or experience of the accused and his meaning making. In addition, I

introduced other relevant concepts of emotion, intent to harm, lack of insight, awareness of impact, and prior influences. These concepts, which the accused seems largely unaware of at the time of the accusation, are significant to understanding the experiences and the meaning making of the journey.

As can be seen from the literature review, there is depth of knowledge to be learned from the accused. There is a richness to these stories which has only recently been explored. Most research on the accused is from the perspective of the accuser; it is his perception of the experience. Lacking is knowledge from the accused. Neither are there published scholarly works on the experience of the leader who successfully moved away from abrasive behaviors. Given this dynamic and complex phenomenon, hearing from all relevant stakeholders is necessary (Branch et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012; Rai & Agarwal, 2015). This research study aimed to hear from the leader who once was the formerly abrasive leader, the person some individuals would label as the workplace perpetrator. Because this is a relatively unexplored territory, as described in the literature review, an exploratory study is an appropriate choice. In the next chapter, I explain the research method and research design to effectively hear the voice of the formerly abrasive leader.

Chapter 3: Research Method and Design

Several researchers have asserted the voice of the workplace perpetrator needs to be heard (Branch et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012; Martinko et al., 2013; Rai & Agarwal, 2015; Rayner & Cooper, 2003; Samnani & Singh, 2012). In fact, searches of the literature in May 2017 and January 2019 confirmed there were only a few studies that provided these firsthand accounts (Bloch, 2012; Castle, 2014; Crawshaw, 2005; DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012; McGregor, 2015b; Samenow et al., 2013; Zabrodska et al., 2014). Furthermore, none of the extant literature offered firsthand narrative accounts of the workplace leader who once was the abrasive leader. In this study, I sought to hear the voices of 3 formerly abrasive leaders.

Chapter 3 begins with a discussion of the research method for this study and the role of the researcher as inquirer. Next is a description of the research design including the role of participants as narrators and the data collection and data analysis methods. Last is a discussion of trustworthiness, assumptions, and design limitations.

Research Method

The purpose of this study was to inquire into the experience and meaning making of organizational leaders who were positively influenced with intervention and whose complaints of abrasive behaviors were substantially reduced or eliminated. Because little was known from the formerly abrasive leader, a qualitative exploratory study with a goal of generating knowledge was conducted (Creswell, 2014; Leavy, 2017; Patton, 2015). Two goals in using qualitative methods are (a) to more fully comprehend an experience and (b) to describe the complexity of an experience—the behaviors, attitudes, feelings, perceptions, opinions, challenges, and victories (Patton, 2015). Through qualitative inquiry, deeper meanings of the experience of the formerly

abrasive leader could be discovered. Thus, qualitative research on this topic, where there is little extant literature, is a beneficial method to learn how the transformed leader would describe and make sense of his experience using his own thick descriptions (Ivankova, 2015; Leavy, 2017; Patton, 2015; Polit & Beck, 2010).

Narrative inquiry. As a study that explored life experience as well as the meaning making, this study included elements of two qualitative inquiry frameworks: narrative and phenomenology (Patton, 2015). Interestingly, several researchers attest that elements of these two types of inquiry are closely related (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, 2013; Sutton, 2012). It is not surprising then that elements from phenomenology may be found in narrative inquiry, the method used in this study.

For this study, I closely followed the narrative inquiry method introduced, defined, and further developed by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Clandinin (2013) along with its accompanying assumptions or commitments. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) advocated the use of narrative inquiry as a way of understanding experience. They suggested,

> Narrative inquiry come[s] out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which his or her experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomena studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomena. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomena under study. (p. 477)

These foundational ideas are fundamental to narrative inquiry as introduced and shaped by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Clandinin (2013).

This approach in using narrative is unlike other types of narrative studies where stories and narratives, or the creation of narratives or stories, are data (Clandinin, 2013). Clandinin and

Connelly (2000) expressed, "Our central interest [is] in understanding our own and others'

experiences. As we tell our stories as inquirers, it is experience, not narrative, that is the driving

impulse. For us, narrative is the closest we can come to experience" (p. 188). The focus in

narrative inquiry is on understanding experience; it is not using stories as data to be analyzed

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The assumptions and commitments of narrative inquiry assist in understanding the

method and analysis. Philosophically, narrative inquiry presents truth as a constructed reality:

There is not an objective truth to be discovered. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) contended that

the stories we tell and live by are fluid; they are always being shaped. Stories are in the process

of becoming—much like people are continually in process. In narrative inquiry, the researcher

(the inquirer) and the participant (the narrator) are co-composers in the reconstruction of stories

as they live alongside each other during the study—each in the midst of their own ongoing

journeys (Clandinin, 2013).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggested that good narrative, similar to other forms of

qualitative research, "relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalizability" (p. 7).

Referencing this earlier work (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), Clandinin and Connelly (2000)

"wrote about good narrative as having an *explanatory*, *invitational quality*, as having

authenticity, as having *adequacy* and *plausibility*" (p. 185). Lindsay and Schwind (2016) offered

these two questions for the assessment of narrative inquiry: "Are the narratives authentic and true

to the participants' experiences as they told them? Are the narratives written, examined and

explained in a sufficient enough manner to be adequate and logically plausible?" (p. 15).

Narrative inquiry honors the narrators while simultaneously inviting them to co-inquire into their

told and untold stories. Narrative inquiry, like other qualitative methods, does not use evaluative criteria of quantitative research.

With the rising popularity of narrative research, Clandinin (2006) and Caine et al. (2013) expressed the need of making distinct the epistemological and ontological commitments of narrative inquiry. Identifying the epistemological foundation, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained the greatest influence on their conceptualization of narrative inquiry was John Dewey, "who believed that examining experience is the key to education" (p. xiii). The epistemological commitment of narrative inquiry is that experience is a valuable form of knowledge. Simply, narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience, of knowing.

Building further upon Dewey's (1938) concepts, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) conceptualized understanding experience "through a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with the dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place" (p. 12). Furthermore, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) espoused three key ontological commitments: (a) narrative inquiry is above all relational, (b) experiences are continuous—meaning experiences come from and grow into other experiences—and (c) social interactions and influences are a primary focus of the inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). Understanding and adhering to these epistemological and ontological commitments, Clandinin (2006) contended, are essential to conducting good narrative inquiry.

Researcher as inquirer. Unlike other types of empirical research methods, the inquirer is the instrument in qualitative inquiry (Ivankova, 2015; Leavy, 2017; Patton, 2015). It is important, therefore, for an inquirer to build strong qualitative skills (Patton, 2015). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stressed the "importance of acknowledging the centrality of the researcher's own experience—the researcher's own livings, tellings, retellings, and relivings" (p. 70). They emphasized the importance of the researcher understanding his own experience with the

phenomenon prior to engaging in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thus, narrative inquiry begins with the researcher's autobiography—what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) referred to as a narrative beginning (p. 70). Adhering to their recommendation, prior to this study, I began an inquiry into my stories and experience with abrasive leaders (see Chapter 4).

Qualitative research requires not only analysis and reflection by the researcher but also reflexive practice (Leavy, 2017; Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) described reflection and reflexive practices in this way:

> The qualitative analyst owns and is reflective about her or his voice and perspective; a credible voice conveys authenticity and trustworthiness; the inquirer's focus becomes balance—understanding and depicting the world *authentically* in all its complexity while being self-analytical, politically aware, and reflexive in consciousness. (pp. 603–604)

Polit and Beck (2010) asserted that qualitative researchers, to do high-quality work, "must be reflexive and conceptual throughout their project" (p. 1455). Through reflexive practice, I continually reexamined my own thinking patterns and how those patterns influenced what I saw and how I described it (Leavy, 2017; Patton, 2015).

Narrative inquiry is not meant to be objective and distant but rather subjective and relational (Clandinin, 2013). Clandinin (2013) described narrative inquiry as "people in relation studying people in relation" (p. 141). As I attempted to understand the narrators' stories and meaning making, my knowledge, beliefs, values, and experiences influenced what I heard. In fact, I was affected by my own strengths and limitations. I desired to understand the depth and richness of the narrator stories. I attempted to be true to the context and meaning making of the narrators as I created the initial draft of our co-composition (Clandinin, 2013).

Research Design

The research question for this study was, How does an organizational leader describe and make sense of the movement away from the use of abrasive behaviors? To answer this question, narrative inquiry, as conceptualized by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), proved to be an effective method. Next, I discuss the major components of the research design: the narrators, data collection, and data analysis methods.

The narrators. In narrative inquiry, stories are communicated by a narrator—the person who lived through the experience. The inquirer and the narrator subsequently inquire into the stories with the desire of deepening the understanding of the stories and the overall experience. This study was designed to communicate the experience of multiple narrators and explore how they individually described and made meaning from their experiences. In addition, the inquiry examined emergent narrative threads across accounts (Clandinin, 2013).

The concept of saturation is common to qualitative research and assists in determining the range for the number of participants. Sutton (2012) described saturation as the point in a study when "there is a judgment of *diminishing returns* and little need for more sampling" (p. 350). In other words, additional data collected by a researcher does not provide new insights. However, the concept of saturation is not applicable to narrative inquiry. I was not seeking a representative sample with the purpose of generalizing the results to a larger population. In fact, the primary focus in narrative inquiry is on the particulars within the stories as well as the resulting relationship between the narrator and the inquirer (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Attaining saturation or seeking generalization were not goals of this study.

To assist in determining an appropriate range for the number of narrators in this study, I reviewed the literature of narrative inquiry as well as the qualitative studies that sought the voice

of the accused. I could not identify in the literature any specific recommendations for the number of narrators in a narrative inquiry. However, two graduate students of Clandinin, Lessard and He, each had 3 narrators (see Clandinin, 2013). Moreover, one large narrative inquiry had 11 inquirers with 19 narrators (Clandinin, 2013). A small number of narrators (per inquirer) is supported by Creswell (2014), who asserted that most narrative studies he had examined involved 1 or 2 participants. In my review of the qualitative studies of the voice of the accused, the range of participants included as few as 3 (Crawshaw, 2005) and as many as 12 (Harrison, 2014). However, none of these studies were narrative inquiries.

There was a lack of specific direction within the literature on the potential range of narrators for a similar inquiry, yet there were indications. Thus, as I contemplated the number of potential narrators, I considered (a) my time and financial constraints, (b) the relatively limited time frame of experience under study (the journey of the change of behavior), and (c) the need to rely on what others had done in their research. Therefore, it seemed reasonable to seek a range of 3 to 6 potential narrators. However, I was not certain if this range was appropriate.

With an emergent design, I was determined to remain flexible and analytical, adjusting as needed. I was concerned, with this potentially sensitive subject that some narrators would decide to not complete the inquiry, but this fear was not realized. Three narrators participated in and completed this inquiry. For a dissertation project exploring a limited time frame of experience, three narrators were appropriate.

To ensure this inquiry could generate knowledge in response to my research question, I had three inclusion criteria for the narrators:

- The leader had attended coaching, training, or intervention sessions due to use of abrasive behaviors. I believed it was important to have independent verification that

the individual was involved in coaching, training, or intervention due to the specific use of abrasive behaviors.

- At least 2 years had passed since the first coaching, training, or intervention session. Participants who were continuing with coaching may be included in this study, if the initial coaching session was at least 2 years prior to the research interview. The researchers of the qualitative studies in the literature review indicated that being accused of workplace bullying was emotionally challenging. Many of the participants became depressed, and 2 admitted to being suicidal. Another finding was that the emotional ramifications were long-lasting. Kegan and Lahey (2009) described personal growth as learning more complex ways of knowing, and this frequently involves meeting up against challenges where prior ways of thinking were not adequate. Mezirow (1990, 1997b, 2000) asserted people are prompted to grow following a disorienting dilemma. The potential participants for this study were likely to have had difficulties in managing emotions during and following the intervention. Providing a minimum requirement of 2 years seemed reasonable and appropriate. It allowed the passage of time for a narrator to (a) understand and process the challenging emotions that may have surfaced, (b) reflect upon the situation, and (c) make meaning of the experience.

- Another party (two executive coaches and a codirector of a professional development program) confirmed the leader had no (or few) current reports of abrasive behavior and validated significant personal growth during the intervention process.

In addition, there were two exclusion criteria for this inquiry: (a) The participant did not speak English, and (b) the abrasive leader did not acknowledge prior use of abrasive behavior.

While there is a lack of empirical evidence to indicate the overall effectiveness of executive coaching (Hodgins, MacCurtain, & Mannix-MacNamara, 2013), Crawshaw's (2013a) yet-to-be-independently-verified success rate of over 85% in coaching executives indicates there may be, among some executive coaches, a high level of success in assisting organizational leaders in moving away from the use of abrasive leadership behaviors. I anticipated that the primary source for narrators would be through referrals from executive coaches who had worked directly with these leaders in improving their interpersonal behaviors and who could independently verify their development.

In January 2018, I contacted an executive coach who specialized in working with organizational executives needing assistance to improve their interpersonal behaviors and management strategies. In addition to being an executive coach, she also trained other professionals in the active research methods she uses with perpetrators. In my email contact with this executive coach in January 2018 (see Appendix D), I reintroduced myself, the study title, study design, and study eligibility criteria. I also welcomed questions. In addition, I attached a one-page study information sheet (see Appendix E) and the informed consent (see Appendix F). The executive coach immediately responded to the email and informed me she would contact former clients to see if they would be interested in participating in this study. Throughout the next few months, the executive coach also contacted several coaches she had trained to determine if they had former clients who may be interested in inquiring into their experience.

Within 4 months, 3 leaders had agreed to engage in this narrative inquiry. The first 2 leaders had been contacted by their executive coaches. To locate a third leader, I emailed a codirector of a program for professional development who then contacted a former program participant. I learned within a few days that the former program participant was interested in this

inquiry. Each potential narrator upon expressing interest received an email from his executive coach or the program codirector, with the one-page study information sheet and the informed consent. Through the process of seeking narrators, numerous executive coaches agreed to follow-up with former clients. However, all but 2 coaches ultimately informed me they were unable to locate a willing narrator. The recruitment process, while time-consuming, seemed effective in the solicitation of the few narrators needed for this study.

Upon obtaining the potential narrator's permission, the coach or codirector forwarded the leader's contact information to me. I then called each potential narrator to introduce myself, confirm he met the criteria, and discuss the informed consent as well as when/how it would be best for us to engage in our first inquiry. I also explained the anticipated time commitment and the leader's right to stop participation at any time. During the initial conversation we made arrangements for the first inquiry session. Prior to the first inquiry, the leaders had emailed me signed copies of their informed consent forms.

For this research study, I had three assumptions about the narrators. The narrators would be able to

- recollect the thoughts and behaviors they experienced throughout the journey;
- have insight into their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors; and
- reflect upon and truthfully speak of their transformative journey.

Several researchers (Crawshaw, 2005; Harrison, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012) indicated individuals accused of workplace bullying may lack insight or awareness of the impact of their detrimental behaviors upon other people. It was not known if the formerly abrasive leader would have insight, or would have gained insight, into his behaviors.

Data collection. The preferred data collection strategy for this research project was face-to-face audio recorded interviews. If face-to-face was not an option for a narrator, a second option was the use of Skype or another similar means of visual communication. A third option was to engage in telephone conversations. Although I was willing to travel, the first 2 narrators (who resided a few time zones away from me) desired phone conversations. The third narrator agreed to meet me in person in his hometown on two separate weekends. Meeting in person involved airplane travel plus a 2-hour drive to the meeting destination.

To help protect the identity of the narrators, I went to great lengths to conceal their identity. All research documents were located on my personal home computer which was password and virus protected. I was the only person who used and had access to this computer that was in my locked home office. All backup data were secured on three computer thumb drives that were stored at my home in a locked fireproof cabinet. Furthermore, all narrator documents contained only the pseudonym for the narrator. There was one document with identifying information, and it remained in the locked fireproof cabinet unless it was in use. The protection of the identity of the narrators was extremely important.

Based upon my reading of the literature and the developing questions I had for the narrators, I had prepared a general interview guide (see Appendix G). The open-ended questions, grouped by topic, were designed to help obtain the in-depth and rich stories from the narrator (Flick, 2014; Patton, 2015). Using the interview guide, I anticipated I could remain "fairly conversational and situational" (Patton, 2015, p. 438). Turner (2010) stated that using this approach in his research permitted him to ask relevant follow-up or probing questions and permitted a personal approach during the interviewing process. He saw this approach as beneficial to his study. My primary use of the interview guide, however, occurred not during an

inquiry session with the narrator but between the inquiry sessions as I reflected upon the prior

inquiry and prepared for the next.

During the introduction of the first inquiry session, I attempted to build rapport by being

welcoming, attentive, and appreciative. I confirmed the amount of time the narrator had

available, and I strictly adhered to the agreed upon time. I again reviewed with the narrator the

inquiry method, research time frame commitment, informed consent form, confidentiality, and

the leader's right to stop participating. In addition, I provided the narrator with a brief idea of

what to expect during the inquiry and informed him I would take notes and may use my

interview guide. I then asked the narrator if he had any questions of me. Prior to beginning the

inquiry, each participant agreed to being audio recorded.

The first session began with a single statement to the narrator: "Tell me about you and

your journey away from the use of abrasive behavior in the workplace." I did not focus the

initial discussion to any specific event or time, although the narrator understood the purpose of

the study and the research question from prior communications. Each narrator then began to

provide me with a glimpse of who he was, who he is, and who he is becoming.

At the end of the first inquiry session, I expressed appreciation for the narrator's time and

involvement in this study. We also determined a day and time for the next inquiry. In addition, I

informed the narrator I would personally transcribe our conversation during the next few days,

and when the transcription was complete, I would email a copy to him. I encouraged the narrator

to review the transcription and let me know of any changes. Prior to ending the initial session, I

asked the narrator what pseudonym he would like me to use throughout this inquiry. I was

surprised each narrator seemed to enjoy thinking about his "name." As each one declared his

name, he also expressed the reason for the choice. This seemingly small gesture seemed to help strengthen the collaborative atmosphere I was attempting to build.

Following each session, I completed my field notes and updated my research diary. I also transcribed the statements and reflected upon our inquiry session. The recordings were especially helpful. It was important to hear the narrator's exact words, hear his tone, feel his emotion, and again experience the inquiry session. The transcription process was tedious and took numerous hours to complete. However, the recordings were valuable to this inquiry. I listened to each one numerous times as I sought to understand each narrator's experience.

Technology, I learned, does not always work perfectly. As a precaution, I used two digital recorders. The digital recording would sometimes skip a word. Sometimes it was difficult to understand a word or short phrase. And sometimes I was not quite sure of the intended meaning of a comment. As I transcribed the recordings, I inserted a comment bubble to the right side of the transcription when I had a question for the narrator. With nearly every transcription, the narrator provided clarification and offered suggestions for changes. I made the corrections and returned the updated version to the narrator. This process, I believe, helped build trust.

I systematically prepared for each follow-up inquiry session with each narrator. In my preparation, I read multiple times all of the prior transcripts, field notes, and research diary entries related to the narrator's inquiries. I also reviewed the executive summary sheet and the interview guide. Last, I prepared a document that included (a) an introduction to the next inquiry, (b) a list of questions I had of the narrator, (c) a statement to obtain permission to record, and (d) a summary of the prior conversation. I believed going through this process with each session helped me better understand the narrator and his experience. For the narrator, the

summary of the prior session seemed to assure him that I was understanding his stories. Offering the narrator an opportunity to correct or affirm the summary also demonstrated the collaborative focus of this inquiry.

This iterative process continued until the narrator and I believed the stories were sufficiently told and transcribed. The study information sheet provided to the narrators indicated that during the course of several months there would be two to four sessions of 45–60 minutes. Being an emergent design, the narrators and I adjusted to our needs and the needs of the study. The conversations spanned between 2 weeks (one narrator) and 2 months (two narrators). There were between three and six inquiry sessions with each narrator, and the length of each inquiry session was between 30 minutes and 2 hours. Collectively, the inquiry produced in excess of 10 hours of recorded conversation, 250 pages of transcriptions, 50 pages of field notes, and 75 emails.

Data analysis. Analysis in narrative inquiry is dissimilar from some types of analysis in other qualitative methods where emergent themes are identified and categorized (Clandinin, 2013). It is also unlike analysis where "the stories or narratives and/or the production of the narratives or stories are the data" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 216). However, narrative inquiry analysis is similar to other types of social science: It requires "evidence, interpretive plausibility, logical construction, and disciplined thought" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 485). As previously explained, narrative inquiry is a study of experience as story. And, as conceptualized by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), it is both phenomenon and method. Thus, the analysis must also remain true to the (previously discussed) epistemological and ontological commitments of narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

Case-level analysis. At the end of the final inquiry session with each narrator, he and I (again) discussed I would be preparing an initial draft of our experience together as he was telling of his experience away from the use of abrasive behaviors. Being a collaborative inquiry of co-composing the narrator's experience, I encouraged his observations, clarifications, and changes to the narrative draft. I desired that the narrative account represent "something of who they [each] were and were becoming" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132). In this process of creating each initial draft, I sought to honor each individual and his stories as well as remain true to the epistemological and ontological commitments of narrative inquiry.

The process of creating each initial draft was time intensive. With the detail involved in this inquiry, I completed the initial draft of one narrator before I started composing the initial draft of another. I initiated the case-level analysis by rereading, in sequential order of the inquiries, all the field notes, transcriptions, and related research diary notes. In the first reading, I refrained from taking notes; I wanted to obtain an essence of the stories. In the next reading, I began to take notes and conceptualize the narrative account. Ultimately, I determined, the initial draft of the narrative accounting could be effectively presented in, essentially, chronological order.

In the next reading of the field notes and transcripts, I created a document where I sorted all the data (field texts) into chronological order. To easily identify the greater context of the field text, I included the number of the inquiry session and the corresponding line numbers from the transcript. I also changed the color of powerful or meaningful words and phrases to red and highlighted in yellow significant events. Nearly all the field texts of each narrator were placed into a single document. From the field text document, I created an outline of chronological

events and significant concepts. Thus, in effect, I had a chronological outline and a

corresponding document from which to create the initial narrative accounting.

Creating the initial draft was also a time-intensive process. I considered how to

incorporate the narrator's voice and mine into the composition (Clandinin, 2013). I

contemplated how to write of lives (mine and his) that were in the process of becoming. The

draft also needed to illustrate an incompleteness so it would invite co-composition (Clandinin,

2013). In wanting to honor lives lived, I struggled at times knowing what, and how, to write.

The narrative writing process was lengthy and included numerous drafts and refinements before I

hesitantly emailed it as a draft to the narrator where I welcomed comments, feedback, and

suggestions for change.

Each narrator responded to the narrative account draft by responding to inserted

comments and making edits. This process continued until both the narrator and I believed the

account represented his and our experience (see Chapters 5–7).

Secondary level of analysis. A second level of analysis articulated by Clandinin (2013)

involves "looking for resonant narrative threads or patterns or echoes that reverberated across

accounts" (p. 131). This process, Clandinin (2013) admitted, is challenging and involves being

attentive to the three dimensions of place, temporality, and sociality while also attempting to

honor the lives of the narrators. Heeding the recommendation by Clandinin (2013), I sought to

"continue to highlight the temporal, unfolding, contextual nature of the threads rather than the

certainty of the threads as fixed, frozen, or context (life) independent" (p. 143). I was also

guided by, as Patton (2015) has recommended, "analytical principles rather than by rules,"

concluding with "creative synthesis" (p. 47). In the analysis, it was critical to not categorize a

person or concepts but to "describe the person in-depth and detail, holistically, and in context"

(Patton, 2015, p. 64). This secondary level of analysis was described by Rogers (2007) as "listening for the melody of a song" (p. 110).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advised inquirers to look continually for tensions, continuities, and gaps across narrative accounts when conducting a secondary level of analysis. I reread each narrative account several times before highlighting words or phrases of the leaders which indicated tensions, continuities, or gaps within or across accounts. I then created a spreadsheet of these words or short phrases such that I grouped and regrouped them into similar concepts attempting to identify threads that (a) shaped the overall story, (b) helped deepen the understanding of the experience, or (c) revealed the participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Furthermore, I continued to review the narrative accounts to confirm the emergent threads as well as determine if there were other threads I had not previously identified. This process continued until I discovered threads that meaningfully represented the experience of these 3 leaders, individually and across accounts (see Chapter 8, a proposed journal article of this study).

Trustworthiness and Assumptions

Trustworthiness. The quality of the findings of qualitative research are only as good as the researcher's trustworthiness (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). Leavy (2017) asserted that trustworthiness "speaks to the quality of the project, the rigor of the methodology, and whether readers of the research findings feel you have established trustworthiness" (p. 154). Trustworthiness is also demonstrated when a researcher acknowledges the prior roles or experience he has had with the subject matter (Patton, 2015). I sought to be trustworthy by honoring and being true to the inquiry method, the narrators, and their stories. Moreover, I reflected upon and examined how my prior experiences may have influence my thinking.

Rigor is demonstrated in qualitative research through several methods. One method is demonstrated by the researcher going to great lengths to determine if there are other ways to organize the data (Foss & Waters, 2016; Gibbs, 2007). Attempting to explain a phenomenon through other academic lenses also assists in demonstrating rigor (Patton, 2015). In addition, ensuring a complete audit trail is kept describing decisions and rationale is beneficial to safeguarding rigor (Sutton, 2012). This study demonstrated rigor. The transcripts were read numerous times during multiple stages of the analysis to ensure I was receptive to emergent concepts. Rigor was also demonstrated through contemplating how adult development theory may inform the understanding of the formerly abrasive leader's experience. In addition, a detailed research diary was kept throughout the entire research process. In this diary, I wrote personal reflections and described the rationale for decision-making. Rigor was demonstrated throughout this study.

Credibility was demonstrated through prolonged engagement (Clandinin, 2013; Terrell, 2016) and member checking (Sutton, 2012; Terrell, 2016). Each narrator and I, in addition to the participating in three to six inquiries, engaged in numerous email exchanges throughout 4–6 months as we built a collaborative relationship and co-composed each narrative account (Clandinin, 2013). Each narrator's account was not complete until the narrator and I confirmed it represented our experience of inquiry into his experience of moving away from abrasive behavior (Clandinin, 2013). Further demonstration of member checking occurred during the introduction of each inquiry when I briefly summarized what had been discussed at the prior inquiry and sought clarity if there was a misunderstanding.

Assumptions of research design. There were two assumptions with this research design. The first assumption was 3 narrators would provide sufficient field texts for a meaningful

exploratory study on the experience of the formerly abrasive leader. Foss and Waters (2016) advised in qualitative research to not "over collect" and suggested that "the analysis of the data, not the amount of data collection, determines the originality and significance of your study. The analysis is what answers your research questions, not your data" (p. 50). The 3 narrators offered meaningful reflection and inquiry into their developmental experience of moving away from the use of abrasive behavior. Their stories were rich. Additional narrators would have added more stories to inquire into; however, the amount of field texts could have become unmanageable for a solo novice narrative inquirer.

The second assumption was that this design would be appropriate for obtaining answers to the research question. The research question for this study was, How does an organizational leader describe and make sense of the movement away from the use of abrasive behaviors? I sought to understand each leader's experience and his meaning making of the experience. I also desired to understand any narrative threads that may be interwoven within and among the narrative accounts. Clandinin (2013) and Terrell (2016) asserted narrative inquiry is not only interested in the lived experience but also in the meaning making of the life experience. The design of this research aided in the discovery of knowledge about the experience and meaning making of 3 formerly abrasive leaders.

Design Limitations

There were two limitations to this study design. First, the design was highly reliant upon my ability to interpret the field texts. As a novice inquirer, there could be limitations on my interpretive abilities. A more experienced or knowledgeable inquirer may have had other interpretations of the field texts or identified different narrative threads. Second, this study was about the personal experiences of 3 leaders as each leader and I inquired into their stories and co-

composed their narrative accounts. The analysis of the field texts represented the narrators' experiences in their specific contexts. Other narrators may have had other experiences. Likewise, other inquirers may have had other experiences leading them to this inquiry. Thus, the findings are richly particular "yet transferable to other persons and contexts by means of reflective self-inquiry of the audience" (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016, p. 15).

Conclusion

In Chapter 3, I presented the research method and design for my research project, in which I sought to more fully understand how the organizational leader describes and makes sense of the movement away from the use of abrasive behaviors. Because little is known in the extant literature of the voice of the former workplace bully (Branch et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012; Rai & Agarwal, 2015), I used a qualitative design that was beneficial to gathering the "depth of meaning and people's subjective experiences and their meaning-making processes" (Leavy, 2017, p. 124). To further assist in obtaining the deeper essence of the experience, I used the method of narrative inquiry. Narrative research focuses on the exploration and description of the meaning of lived experiences and, as such, is well-suited as a method for gathering field texts on this topic where little is known (Leavy, 2017; Patton, 2015; Terrell, 2016).

This study was designed to provide the narrators and the inquirer with an effective method to inquire into their stories as each leader described and made sense of his movement away from the use of abrasive behaviors. I desired to hear the voice of the formerly abrasive leader and then co-author with him a representative account of his experience and meaning making. The research design and methods presented in Chapter 3 promoted the hearing of those voices and a greater understanding of the experience of movement away from the use of abrasive behavior.

The remaining chapters contain narrative accounts and discussions of my concluded research. I present in Chapter 4 what Clandinin (2013) referred to as narrative beginnings. This is my personal inquiry into my experience with abrasive leaders. Chapters 5–7 include the co-composed narrative accounts of each of the formerly abrasive leaders. Chapter 8 concludes this dissertation with a proposed journal article that offers (a) an analysis across accounts, (b) discussions of the implications for adult development theory and the extant literature of the firsthand accounts of the accused, (c) implications for practice, (d) limitations, (e) future research, and (f) an afterward.

Chapter 4: Narrative Beginnings

Coming to narrative inquiry necessitates that I inquire into who I am in relation to my study. I am not a distant observer but rather an integral part of this research: I am a collaborator with the narrators, as together we inquire into our experiences. In this chapter, I reveal my personal inquiry into what initially propelled me toward this study. I also discuss personal insights I learned through continually reexamining my research experience.

I began my personal inquiry by exploring how I had been influenced by or had influenced abrasive leaders. Immediately, my thoughts went to stories I heard from others. I easily recalled stories told by coworkers and friends who were troubled by interactions they had with abrasive leaders. The stories were the experiences of others more than they were mine. Yet in hearing the coworkers' stories, to some degree, I was brought into their experience. Their stories became our stories. I was profoundly influenced by these destructive stories primarily told to me in my private office or in a back hallway of the workplace.

Reflecting on these stories and the complex dynamics that they entailed, I wondered about other stories in the workplace—the stories I had not heard. As a mediator, I have listened to multiple perspectives when conflicting parties told their stories. Usually, the parties told dramatically different stories. Their experiences were unalike. With the increasing awareness of how differing stories apply to the dynamics of abrasive leadership, I became intrigued with hearing the stories of other parties. I wondered what the abrasive leader might say of his experience.

I was introduced to the concept of abrasive leaders in 2013 when I attended a seminar titled Solving the Problem of Abrasive Leadership. The presenter, Dr. Crawshaw, had over two decades of experience in coaching several hundred executives in developing less destructive

interpersonal management strategies. During this seminar, Dr. Crawshaw presented her theories and experiences about this workplace dynamic and her understanding of leaders who demonstrate abrasion. She also informed the audience that there had been tremendous success in helping the abrasive leader develop less destructive interpersonal strategies. I was intrigued with her message that day. Throughout the next few years, I continued to consider her ideas as I observed destructive interpersonal behavior in the workplace.

Through my literature review, I discovered that the experience of the accused was largely unexplored. Hearing from the accused seemed like a worthy endeavor: It could be significant. However, when reading the academic literature, it became clear that being *accused* did not necessarily mean being *guilty*. While reading the literature I could sense the pain of *the accused* when he felt wrongly accused or unjustly treated through the investigative process. This realization prompted further contemplation and my interest in this research puzzle started to become clearer: I wanted to hear the voice of the organizational leader who had been accused of abrasive behavior and acknowledged the accusation was accurate.

My continued search in the literature also indicated there were leaders who had been successful in changing their behaviors. I became especially intrigued with these leaders. It seemed I discovered the final piece of my desired inquiry: I wanted to listen to the unheard firsthand stories of leaders who had journeyed away from the use of abrasive behaviors. These are the organizational leaders who once used abrasive behaviors. I wondered what formerly abrasive leaders would say of their journey. I was curious how they would make meaning of the experience. What would they say as we, together, inquired into their stories?

The Workplace

Throughout my 20s and mid-30s, I worked in a variety of professions, yet I had never experienced or observed organizational leaders demonstrating abrasive behaviors in the workplace. I was then surprised in my late 30s when I went to work in the insurance industry— on the claims side of the organization—that it was not uncommon to observe, or hear stories of, abrasiveness by organizational leaders.

In the workplace I had historically found it relatively easy to exceed expectations, but that abruptly changed. I recall thinking the quality expectations were absurdly high and the workload impossible. One coworker, when speaking of performance reviews, lamented, "You either get 100% or you fail . . . and no one gets 100%."

In addition to the high work volume and expectations, the electronic filing system permitted constant monitoring and written assessments by management. While this system was designed to be helpful and prevent errors, it was perceived by employees as a place for constant micromanagement and relentless criticism. It was common for competent workers to feel demeaned and disheartened. And, for those workers who reported to an abrasive leader, this disconcerting situation appeared much worse.

Over the course of several years, as I observed this workplace dynamic, I wondered if these leaders would be surprised by how they were perceived by many of the individuals who reported to them. These leaders seemed to be highly competent—maybe even exceptional at some of their tasks. I pondered how these individuals may be in a social setting—someplace far away from the demands of work. I found myself wondering about this baffling dynamic which I had repeatedly observed over 12 years in two different organizations.

I also wondered why other leaders in the organization were, seemingly, either unaware of the dynamic or, if aware, did not effectively intervene. Among those who either reported to the abrasive leader or observed that leader in action, it was believed that other leaders in the organization simply did not care. The harm was deep. It seemed unnecessary. I wondered if, or how, these leaders could change.

I have had challenging managers, but I have not felt bullied by one. I must admit, though, I was tremendously influenced by the stories of my coworkers who felt they had been bullied by an organizational leader. I felt compassion for those who shared their stories with me. Although I value demonstrating compassion to all, I was not very empathetic toward the abrasive leader. This inclination is in the forefront of my mind as I approached my study.

I have discovered it is challenging to tell stories. In only a few words, it is difficult to describe to an outsider the intricacies of the story dynamics and the raw emotions felt by those whose stories I am retelling. In the storytelling by my coworkers, I felt immensely deep emotions. I heard and felt their unrelenting anguish and hopelessness. I wondered if my retelling could provide a meaningful sense of their experiences. Yet even in this consuming self-doubt, I became certain some of these stories needed to be retold. They are part of what brought me to this inquiry. I am hopeful these retold stories of coworkers who reported to an abrasive leader represents and honors the experience of those who felt they were on the receiving end of the leader's behavior.

Coworkers' Stories of Three Abrasive Leaders

Susan. Susan was a conscientious and dedicated leader. In the office she was focused on her work all day every day. She also worked from home, sometimes until 1:00 or 2:00 a.m., placing comments and directives in the electronic files. And, when the incoming claim volume

increased, Susan kicked into high gear substantially increasing file directives. Indeed, she was

diligent in her work. Unfortunately, she had been promoted into a department where she had

limited knowledge and experience.

Company policy instructed managers to be active in a new file at 7 days, yet Susan would

be in a file after 2 to 3 days, giving a laundry list of *required* tasks she wanted completed. Her

direct reports commonly discussed among themselves the unnecessary work Susan directed them

to perform—extra work that other managers would not require of their direct reports. Susan

would then follow up in the file inquiring into her demands and, oftentimes, the lack of those

directives being followed. Most of her direct reports felt it was unfair for the unnecessary tasks

to be required of them—especially when it did not seem there was even sufficient time to

complete the required tasks. Frequently, it was heard, the unessential tasks could take hours to

complete; these hours, the workers believed, could be better spent on required and urgent tasks.

Although many stories were told of Susan's abrasive behavior, one story illustrates the

added challenges in working with Susan. An insured filed a windshield replacement claim. This

is typically a simple loss requiring little knowledge or effort. It is normally resolved by newly

hired adjusters. However, the insured stated the damaged occurred a couple of years prior.

Thus, the claim was moved to a more experienced adjuster: There were a few more elements to

consider. The claim though was still a simple loss that could be resolved quickly.

Susan, however, created a lengthy list of requirements and demanded the adjuster call the

insured a third time to take a detailed recorded statement to specifically ask if the insured got the

license plate number of the gravel truck that the insured had been following 2 years prior. The

adjuster, frustrated with what felt like relentless demands of unnecessary, and in this case silly,

work, was overwhelmed. She had hours of required work on her desk—tasks she felt needed

immediate attention. The worker decided to tend to critical tasks on her desk and not follow

Susan's direction to recontact the insured for a recorded statement.

The adjuster, who characteristically attempted to follow instructions, entered a comment

in the file stating, with the documented information in the file, a returned call and recorded

statement were not needed. Susan, upon reading those comments, loudly reacted in front of

numerous coworkers. She insisted her direction was appropriate and demanded that the worker

not ever challenge her again. Susan then made additional comments in the file about the

adjuster's insubordination.

Although this interaction—one of many—was negative, Susan sometimes seemed to be a

somewhat pleasant person in the workplace. However, most of her direct reports learned to

approach her with caution—even when, maybe especially when, she had provided inaccurate

direction. Many people who reported to Susan left the organization, transferred to another

department, or went out on extended medical leave. Eventually, Susan was moved into another

role where she was not supervising workers. This development was not soon enough for those

who reported to her.

Robert. A second abrasive leader is Robert, who was not a manager but filled an

important leadership role as a technical advisor on complex claims. At the time I first met

Robert, he had been in the industry for over 30 years. We worked together for about 4 years.

Adjusters had differing thoughts about Robert's technical competency with complex claims.

Some workers believed Robert was competent while others did not. What could be agreed upon

was that Robert was difficult.

Robert had an extremely negative way of expressing himself in person as well as in the

electronic files. He made a lot of assumptions and regularly implied in his file directives or

comments that the adjuster was not competent. I recall hearing of one comment in the file: "Adjuster is not prompt with follow-up. If the adjuster had followed up sooner, the injury claim would have been resolved. Now, we will need to pay substantially more for this injury." Another time Robert wrote, "The adjuster's lack of contact drove the claimant to an attorney." Both of these statements were conjecture, highly debatable, and not opinions shared by others familiar with the cases.

Adjusters were rarely authorized to work overtime, even though it was commonly believed by the workers that the assigned work, week after week, could not be completed in 50 hours much less 40 hours. Many adjusters, attempting to keep up with their work, took work home or stayed late without documenting their time or seeking compensation. It was especially difficult for those workers who had worked several hours without pay each week to help reduce the stress they felt when they read Robert's comments in the file indicating they were slacking.

Robert's file notes consistently communicated the adjusters were not adequately performing. It was burdensome to those adjusters who reported to Robert to find numerous negative comments in each electronic file, especially when the adjuster may review 15 to 20 files a day. The constant criticism, micromanagement, and 20/20 hindsight analysis were difficult for nearly everyone who worked with Robert.

In person and over the phone, Robert was argumentative. It seemed he was annoyed he even needed to be conversing with the worker. Experienced workers began questioning their own competency since Robert seemed to challenge most decisions these workers made. One highly experienced adjuster, Jasmine, after 5 years of working with Robert began making daily treks to her manager's office explaining how hard it was to continue to read Robert's negative and sarcastic comments. Jasmine, a coworker of mine, told me, "I don't think I can make an

intelligent decision anymore. I am second-guessing every decision I make." At the time, Jasmine was the most respected and experienced adjuster in the office with over 25 years in the industry. Coworkers frequently sought out Jasmine's expertise on challenging claims. Yet with the constant criticism by Robert, she felt inept in her own work.

To get through the workday, Jasmine informed me that when she reviewed a file, she would force herself to not read Robert's comments. It was, she confided, "too emotionally destructive." After 6 months of daily conversations with her manager, Jasmine gave notice. She was leaving. Robert, upon hearing that Jasmine was exiting, gave her a call and jokingly stated, "I hope you aren't leaving because of me." Jasmine, in telling me of this call, decided to be truthful and responded to him with, "Well, actually, Robert, you are a large part of why I am leaving." Jasmine said the line went quiet. I later heard from Robert that he considered Jasmine to be the best adjuster on his team.

For many workers, it appeared Robert viewed his role as superior to, rather than a partner with, the adjusters. During the 4 years I worked with Robert, numerous workers who were partnered with Robert retired early or, like Jasmine, went to another organization. In addition, numerous coworkers over multiple years filed official HR complaints or spoke with their direct manager about Robert's behavior. It was not until a HR complaint occurred on the eve of a scheduled workplace mediation session (involving Robert and a different employee) that HR stepped in more forcefully. At that point, Robert decided to retire and immediately gave 2 weeks' notice.

Many of those individuals who worked with Robert openly expressed, "It is about time." For years, numerous workers had wondered why "nothing was ever done" by management given the known complaints that had been reported. It could be heard in the hallways, "How can HR

not see what is happening—good workers are continuing to quit or retire early." And, maybe more significantly, it was also frequently heard, "Management just doesn't care." In speaking with Robert following his retirement announcement, he told me he did not believe HR handled the most recent case appropriately, but he decided not to fight it any longer.

Robert, during the years I worked with him, had stage 4 cancer. He died 2 years after retiring. After his death, I was somewhat surprised to read on his Facebook page numerous comments of how much he had positively influenced young people at his church where he was a leader. This was not a side of Robert seen in the workplace.

Sherrie. A third abrasive leader, Sherrie, like Robert, was a technical advisor. A technical advisor does not manage people. Rather, the advisor partners on technical matters with the adjuster who reports to a manager. Sherrie was the technical advisor with many of my direct reports—most of whom were highly experienced and competent adjusters handling complex cases. I was confident in their abilities; they were respected and successful adjusters. Several of them had over 25 years of experience. I knew my direct reports as conscientious people whom I valued and trusted.

Sherrie was new to the organization. She had retired from a national insurance carrier after 35 years with her most recent position being a regional manager over numerous managers in the Pacific Northwest. Sherrie moved to management early in her career, providing her with limited knowledge and experience with complex losses. Since most of my direct reports had extensive technical knowledge, Sherrie's inexperience and lack of knowledge of complex losses became problematic. Unfortunately, her lack of knowledge on complex losses was not known when she was hired.

It did not take long for me to begin to hear complaints about Sherrie's interpersonal behaviors, inaccurate directives in the electronic filing system, and burdensome demands that far exceeded company expectations. Adjusters told me of numerous situations stating, in essence, "I just want to keep you in the loop." However, they insisted, without exception, I not say or do anything since they were fearful of retaliation by Sherrie. They were concerned Sherrie would dramatically increase unnecessary directives. The file comments, it was perceived by the workers, were designed to show evidence of workers' ineptness.

One adjuster told me of a situation where Sherrie disagreed with a coverage decision on a high-exposure claim. Sherrie loudly confronted the adjuster. She publicly questioned the adjuster's competency. The adjuster, also with 35 years of experience, knew her understanding of the complex law was correct—having resolved several other similar losses. When Sherrie's intimidating behavior did not cause the adjuster to acquiesce, Sherrie sarcastically responded, "Then go ahead and handle this according to all your expertise." I heard from the employees who reported to me that sarcastic remarks and intimidating behavior by Sherrie were common.

In another incident, Sherrie walked into an adjuster's office and slammed both of her hands down onto the desk while leaning into the face of the adjuster. I was told that Sherrie loudly demanded the adjuster open the electronic filing system to show her a specific letter she wanted to review. The adjuster, not intimidated by this behavior, informed Sherrie she would locate it and get back to her. Sherrie further leaned in toward the adjuster and again demanded that the letter be immediately shown to her. The adjuster replied that she would locate the letter and then get back to her before noon. When the adjuster informed me of this encounter, she told me she informed Sherrie to not storm into her office again and when the door was closed, she was to knock. Again, this adjuster, upon informing me of this incident, did not want me to say or

do anything in fear of retaliation. The adjuster, a highly competent and valued worker, resigned within 2 months.

I discovered two of my direct reports had previously worked at the same carrier that Sherrie had recently retired from. One adjuster, Marge, had directly reported to Sherrie and the other, John, had a supervisor who reported to Sherrie. Marge, in near panic, confided in me (not long after Sherrie was hired) that she had quit her prior employer specifically because she felt she had been targeted by Sherrie as the next person to be fired. Marge said employees under Sherrie, at the prior company, were regularly placed on action plans and then fired. She said it seemed like Sherrie always had two people on her radar: The next two to get fired.

Marge informed me she did not want to go through the humiliating process of being the next target. When she could not take the stress any longer, she quit that organization prior to securing another job. Marge stated, "Everyone at the other organization was intimidated by Sherrie." Marge further expressed, "When Sherrie said jump, you asked how high." Intimidating behavior was commonly on display. Marge expressed it was not uncommon to see managers coming out of Sherrie's office in tears. John, my other direct-report who had previously worked for Sherrie, was cautious when speaking about her behavior at the other insurance carrier. After a few moments of silent consideration, he quietly offered one word: "unforgiving." My heart sank.

Another Leader: My Dad

After spending time reflecting upon the numerous stories I have been told of abrasive leaders, I explored more deeply my own experiences. I wondered what else may have influenced me into wanting to hear from the leader who journeyed away from the use of abrasive behaviors. My thoughts went to my father.

I know my dad to be a generous man. I discovered (years later) that my dad regularly slipped money to a 16-year-old boy when his parents disowned him after he became a Christian. I remember my dad, in the dead of winter in Fairbanks, Alaska, driving our family many miles in hazardous conditions to a small cabin to deliver fuel and food to a young single mother with three little girls. My dad, as is characteristic of him, also slipped her some money. My dad, one of five siblings, solely, looked after his mother for most of the last 25 years of her life. He even became her primary caretaker for 3 years. My dad as a business owner gravitated to and hired those individuals who seemed to have the most need for employment. My dad also personally lent or gave money to some of his employees in need of extra funds to pay unexpected bills. That is my dad.

I also now know my dad as an abrasive leader. Until a few years ago, I did not know the words to describe many of my experiences with my father. I now understand my introduction to abrasive behavior began with my dad who frequently, as Crawshaw (2010) stated it, "rubs people the wrong way" (p. 59). It is very important to my dad that there is total agreement in methods and words when he is working or speaking with another person. These behaviors are seen in his personal life and work life.

My dad's last business venture was owning a retail candy store. In addition to helping my dad by doing the bookkeeping, I frequently worked in the store during the busy holiday seasons. His overcontrolling behavior could be seen in how, exactly, a person was to stir the caramel popcorn, hold the mop, measure and order candy, approach a customer, or simply where to place the scissors on the counter. It was extremely important to my dad that things be done, as he would say, "Exactly as I show you."

If the caramel popcorn was not stirred exactly to his specifications—including the correct turn of the wrist—my dad would stop whatever he was doing, rush over, move the worker aside, take the scoop out of the person's hand, and do it himself. He would then explain over and over to the worker that it had to be done exactly as he said. It did not matter if another method would produce the same result. He was relentless in his insistence.

One busy day at the store, my dad marched across the floor and interrupted me while I was working with a customer. Dad was forceful in his behavior and his words to me (a mother of teenage children at that time). He physically moved me aside and spoke to the customer as if I had been incompetent in explaining the quality of our product. The customer, an adult male, seemed troubled at the older gentleman's treatment of me and spoke sharply to him—not knowing the older gentleman was my dad. The customer, following a brief yet heated exchange with "my boss," walked out of the store in frustration. My dad, after the customer abruptly left, expressed being baffled at the customer's anger. In observing this interaction between my dad and this customer it was clear to me that Dad, once again, was unaware of his problematic behavior.

As I ponder these personal experiences with my dad, I feel joy, pride, and sorrow. My dad is a good man and would literally give someone the shirt off his back. He is considerate of those in need. He looks after people who face challenges. He has compassion. The example he gifted me with of caring for his mother during her later years inspires me to be a better person. My dad would not have considered doing anything less. Yet there coexists with the joy a sadness.

When my dad pushed me aside at the store, I was dismayed. His intrusion and domination were not needed. Actually, the interruption was detrimental. Nothing beneficial

came from that experience for any of us—not the business, my dad, me, or the customer. It was an unproductive exchange, period. Even though I have had many interactions with my dad where he behaved abrasively, I vividly recall this specific one.

As I reflect on why this specific interaction was clearer than others, I realize that most of my abrasive interactions with my dad had involved family members or coworkers who knew him well—they understood that my dad behaves abrasively, at times. They also knew his goodness. There seemed no need for an apology or explanation. This time was different: I realized for the first time how profoundly unaware my dad was of his conduct. I hurt at his lack of self-awareness. I was embarrassed for him. And, in that moment where he expressed his bafflement, I came to believe that he probably could not change. My hope for change seemed pointless.

My dad is complex: amazingly generous and incredibly abrasive. I believe my experiences with my dad and my desires for his life helped shape my purpose and passion for my study. I had not known of the concept of abrasive leaders until the past few years. I now have a framework for more aptly understanding my dad. I believe being able to see the goodness of my dad alongside his abrasiveness helped me contemplate the dynamic of abrasive leaders.

Adding Complexity

As I inquired into how I fit into this research puzzle of abrasive leaders, I noticed I had mostly told stories of individuals who believed they were recipients of an abrasive leader's behavior. I tell myself that is where my heart lies; I am pulled that direction. But I wonder if coworkers may have ever considered me an abrasive leader.

About 25 years ago, I had a brief exchange with a coworker. After describing to him a proposal for an organizational restructuring project we both knew needed tackled, he exclaimed, "You don't care about people." He further elaborated, "You are a task person: You focus on

tasks not people." At the time, I was surprised by his comment. I believed I cared about people. To me, part of caring for people meant creating a well-designed structure that would replace the current clunky structure that frequently led to confusion, redundancies, inefficiencies and conflict.

I found this brief interaction with my coworker to be baffling. I was surprised by the accusation: "Of course, I care for people," was my immediate thought. "I also care about smooth operations, decrease in conflict, and a reduction of chaos." This accusation had never been made of me before—at least not that I heard. As I approached this study, I came to understand that several attempts with communicating challenges with the abrasive leader may occur before an abrasive leader may actually hear the words and grasp the concept of abrasion. Abrasive leaders typically reject the concept that they are a problem. The problem, to them, is elsewhere.

In allowing my mind to drift back to this confusing incident, I wondered if my coworker was acting as a trusted colleague to me or if there were other motivations. Maybe we just had different approaches. He and I had very different gifts. I recall him telling me he is a dreamer and visionary. And, from my 5 years of working with him, I believe his self-description to be accurate. On the other hand, I am more of a self-acknowledged pragmatist. I delve into the specifics and the practicalities. I tend to focus on reality. He tended to focus on dreaming. A mix of oil and water, it seems. However, as I thought back on this experience, I was quickly reminded of another.

As a new board member for a nonprofit preschool, it only took about 30 minutes of my first board meeting to realize the organization had significant leadership and operational problems. And, although it was not disclosed to me at the time I was solicited to be on the board, that is precisely why I was asked. As someone with a master's degree in conflict

resolution and a work life in organizations, the thought was if someone could help, maybe it could be me. What I soon discovered was that nearly all significant stakeholders were suffering through their involvement with the preschool and no one knew how to improve organizational life.

Five years later, after significant dedication and work from numerous stakeholders, organizational life is much improved: Current stakeholders seem at peace, the board functions appropriately, the organization is fulfilling its purpose, enrollment is at capacity, and there is money in the bank. That is the narrative, in brief, I tell myself. However, I am aware a few individuals tell different narratives. Their experiences were different than mine. Some of the stories are not complementary of my leading through this change. I sometimes wonder about the telling of those stories and if they include me being an abrasive leader.

Reflections: Retold Stories

As I think about these retold stories of my narrative beginnings, all of which come quickly to mind, they sometimes feel heavy and other times not as much. Sometimes the situations seem trivial. However, when I recall how burdened employees felt with the added stress of working with an abrasive leader, and the potentially life-altering decisions they need to make from those encounters, I know the experiences of these workers are critically important. These workers have an added dimension to their job: the constant contemplation of how to work with an abrasive leader.

I regularly observed these workers huddling together during breaks telling their new stories of micromanagement, overreaction, threats, public humiliation, or condescension. Each day seemed to bring new stories to tell and retell and relive. And the storytelling did not stop as

the worker clocked out for the day. The stories were carried home to be told and retold and

relived. Their suffering continued.

Sometimes life in the workplace gets a little crazy. There are expectations, and

accordingly there are pressures. Sometimes people misbehave and do not treat each other well—

and there is never a good excuse for that. What I have learned, however, from these stories and

others, is that many individuals who are subjected to abrasive behaviors suffer. And they may

suffer deeply.

My experience observing and hearing stories of abrasive leaders in organizations causes

me to think that this behavior is senseless, unnecessary, and unproductive. I have seen

competent workers questioning their abilities and feeling like failures. I have seen hardworking,

dedicated, and conscientious workers feeling demoralized when nothing is good enough—or

maybe more descript, everything is not good enough.

These stories, told and retold, and the corresponding reflections illustrate how I am a part

of the puzzle I am studying. I, no doubt, have been influenced by stories of abrasive leaders.

Unknowingly, I may have influenced abrasive leaders. I have been, I came to realize, on the

receiving end of abrasive behavior—from my father. And, regrettably, I may have been the

abrasive leader in some stories that are told and retold. These stories, with their nuances and

particularities, have shaped me and my approach to this puzzle of abrasive leaders.

I have learned through my developing understanding of narrative inquiry that stories

evolve. They change. Or, more accurately, they can change. A hazard of telling or writing

stories is that they can give an illusion of being complete. I only know of the stories as they

were once told to me and as I interpreted them through my own limited vision. I do not know

how these individuals, or their stories, have evolved. I wonder if my coworkers would tell

different stories now. I wonder if Susan and Sherrie are on a journey away from the use of abrasive behavior. In the retelling of stories about me, I wonder if there is room for grace and the possibility of a different ending to our shared experience of long ago.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) reminded inquirers that we engage with others in the midst of their stories while we are also in the midst of our own stories. Our paths cross for a limited time as our stories overlap. Simultaneously, we create new stories. In the next three chapters, I introduce Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy. Each of them and I journeyed together for a brief time while being in the midst of our own developing life story. These narrative accounts represent our experiences as we inquired into their experiences of the journey away from abrasive behaviors.

Chapter 5: A Narrative Account of Vincent

Vincent and I became acquainted through his executive coach, Dr. Lee. I was conducting a study on how a leader describes and make sense of the journey away from the use of abrasive interpersonal behaviors, and Dr. Lee offered to see if any of her clients would be interested in participating in my study. I soon met Vincent, who volunteered to tell me his story.

Vincent and I engaged in six half-hour conversations over 2 months. Living in different parts of the country, we agreed to talk by phone. Our first conversation was on February 7, 2018, as a significant snow event was approaching his state. After a brief half-hour delay, Vincent picked up my call and greeted me by name and thanked me for allowing the call to be postponed. I found Vincent, in our first call, to be congenial with a pleasant voice, sounding younger than I anticipated his age. I quickly discovered that Vincent was easy to speak with, analytical, and reflective.

My home office is a comfortable space where I look out a window onto suburban homes across the street. Each call I initiated to Vincent was from this spot, where I saw the season transform from the coolness of winter to the increasing warmth of spring that brought forth a myriad of colorful flowers.

I recall, prior to my first phone call, I was a bit anxious about my first conversation with my first participant in my first study. I wondered how committed he may be to this study and to the sharing of his experiences. I also wondered how Vincent's story would unfold: Would he share with me the tough parts of the journey? Could he offer insights into his development? I could envision that this might be a difficult story to tell. I was also concerned with my capability as a novice inquirer: Would I have sufficient skills to ask insightful questions? And I wondered if I was capable of telling the richness of Vincent's story.

As with the remaining conversations, the time went by quickly. And I discovered, as we were ending each conversation, I had many more questions than could possibly be asked.

Introducing Vincent

In our first conversation, Vincent gave me some insight into his adult history. I learned that he earned an English degree from an Ivy League university and that immediately following graduation he worked at a large insurance organization for several years. It was there that he, and others, discovered his natural gift in meeting and leading others in the workplace. Within a year, Vincent said, "I was thrust into a position of leading and managing people and I seemed to thrive in that role." Wanting to be better prepared for making business decisions, Vincent attended evening classes at a local university to earn an MBA. Subsequently, Vincent was recruited to a different organization. After 10 years of leading that organization, he was once again recruited. In 1995, at the age of 38 years, Vincent relocated to another state to become the CEO and president of the current organization. Today, after 23 years, he continues to lead in these roles.

On a personal level, I learned from Vincent that he is a self-described "health nut." He said, "I work hard and I work out." When I conducted a brief online search, I discovered Vincent is an avid runner who has competed in numerous races—winning several races in his age category. Vincent disclosed that he values self-improvement, and I sensed from our conversations that he strives to continually learn and improve himself—mentally, emotionally, and physically. Vincent has authored two books for organizational leaders and has been recognized by several organizations for his service to the community. In addition, Vincent briefly and succinctly expressed, "I have a wonderful family."

Vincent described learning early in life of giving back to the community. He said his father lived a life of serving, though "in those days they didn't call it servant-leadership." In one of our last conversations, Vincent recalled the phrase, "Doing well by doing good," and said that phrase described his father. As Vincent remembered his father he said,

> It kind of hit me a few years ago, after he died, but essentially at his wake some mayor would come up and say, "Without your father the YMCA wouldn't have been built." And then someone else would say, "Without your father the Lion's Club would not have thrived." So, I realized that as I was growing up, I modeled his behavior in terms of giving back.

In addition to the early modeling of his father, Vincent spoke of having "good mentors who really made it clear to me that a leader has servant-leadership responsibilities." Many of these ideals, Vincent expressed, are also fundamental to the Baldrige performance excellence standard—a quality standard to which he has been dedicated.

With the early foundation of his father's life and the mentoring he received during his early leadership years, Vincent embraced the importance of authentic servant-leadership. Vincent shared,

> Servant-leadership is all about being an authentic leader. One of the compliments I get is I am the same person in the board room as I am in the mail room. I don't put on airs—so being consistent regardless of the setting, to me, is being authentic.

Throughout our conversations, Vincent frequently expressed the importance of authenticity and servant-leadership. These core ideals seemed intrinsically bound to his personal identity as a leader.

As Vincent spoke, I sensed that part of servant-leadership also included his continued dedication to knowing and being available to his employees. Vincent shared with me a particular practice he adopted early in his leadership career:

> I would get in there at 6:00 a.m. and do all my work, and when people started showing up at 8:30 a.m., basically, my to-do list was done. So, if someone wanted to come in and

talk to me . . . or if I wanted to have a performance talk with someone, I had all of this white space on my calendar.

Reflecting, especially to the early days of leading, Vincent, in addition to describing the importance of being approachable and accessible, also recalled that he was very patient and gentle in working with others. As we talked, Vincent remarked,

> To this day—so, this is many, many, years ago if you think of it—people from the 1980s stay in touch with me and thank me for the mentoring and other ways with how I helped them—and I was a young person myself. . . . To this day, I still get emails from a lot of those folks.

Elaborating on the importance of this interrelatedness, Vincent expressed, "As a leader you serve your employees and if the employees are taken care of. They are happy. They in turn will deliver outstanding external customer service. It is kind of this beautiful circle of life."

It was clear from our conversations that Vincent has a strong commitment to the community. I also discovered how the organization has the same culture of giving back. The organizational website lists numerous awards throughout several years, recognizing community involvement. In addition, demonstrating the value the employees feel for the organization, there are numerous awards for the organization being one of the best places to work in the state as well as in the nation. I sensed from our many conversations that Vincent genuinely believed in the value of serving his employees and the greater community, and this same fundamental belief was purposefully built into the workplace culture. Crediting others, Vincent acknowledged, "We built this organization together."

Throughout our numerous interactions, I perceived Vincent as attentive, mindful, and appreciative. I frequently felt I was the recipient of genuine expressions of encouragement and gratitude. Throughout our journey, he continually offered me as much time as I needed for my study. He regularly extended expressions of support of this study and being willing to help. I

could imagine that if he was offering support and encouragement to me—a researcher, yes, but also a stranger—his coworkers also might have experienced some of those same positive feelings.

"The 18 Months"

After 18 years as the leader of the organization, Vincent expressed, there became "a disconnect in 2014 and some of 2015." There was a shift in in how he led his organization during what he called "the 18 months."

I frequently had the impression that Vincent either met or exceeded expectations. It was, then, not surprising to me when Vincent expressed that the organization historically met all of its annual goals. Nor was it surprising when the board expressed an interest in more challenging goals that Vincent responded with ambitious initiatives. Vincent itemized the most significant large-scale projects of 2014: undertaking major technological advances, becoming paperless, introducing new products, and recontracting with providers. I understood from Vincent that these newly established annual goals, while all of the leaders "felt compelled" to attain them, significantly stretched the capabilities of the human resources of the organization.

About the same time as the implementation of the enhanced organizational goals, Vincent explained that his commitments to the community increased. Vincent had learned, not long after he relocated to this state, that organizational executives were expected to contribute back to the community through being involved as directors on external boards. Vincent explained that this expectation did not exist with the prior two organizations. Vincent then expressed that during this same time of intensified organizational goals that he was also participating on 16 external boards. I was curious how he ended up on so many external boards. When I asked how the external commitment became so high, Vincent revealed,

Well, it is hard, personally, for me to say no, number one. Number two is there is an expectation of the CEO, in what is considered a large company in this state, to get involved. And then, number three, when you get a reputation as someone who can make things happen, you get asked a lot.

During these 18 months, one of Vincent's external commitments was being the chair of

the state board of education which he described as a "huge, huge responsibility." Under his

leadership the state board was weighing the advantages and disadvantages of Common Core—an

emotionally charged topic for many parents and educators. He described the experience as

having some positivity. However, he expressed, "I was bombarded with negativity. I was

having to deal with a lot of angry constituents by virtue of my title—not that I was making any

real policy." Vincent continued,

> I was bombarded with that negativity during this period of time [2014–2015]. In addition, at work I was also getting bombarded because we were recontracting with providers. It is kind of like I was compressed for time and then negativity was thrown at me. It kind of made me into . . . the only thing I can think of is . . . a teapot that is ready to blow.

Vincent spoke of the stress "placed first on myself that spilled over to the lack of

emotional control and a lot of negative, from our cultural perspective, interactions." He stated he

became progressively angry and short with his executive team. He increased his swearing. He

regularly provided individual feedback and critiques during team meetings that were only

appropriate for private performance review sessions. Vincent disclosed, "I was definitely being

aggressive when people didn't meet deadlines and if they made mistakes, they were publicly

berated." He frequently found himself needing to leave for external community commitments

and not having sufficient time to constructively engage with employees or the mounting

challenges that were arising at work. Vincent described himself during these 18 months as "way,

way, way aggressive and vehement when mistakes were made." He acknowledged that during

"the 18 months" he was "spiraling out of control."

Vincent described being aware at the time of the mounting pressures of the lack of time, the challenges of the weighty organizational goals, and the stress of the rising external obligations. He expressed,

> I could see it creeping up. . . . I was seeing myself, almost in my own movie—losing my cool. So, there was some, or a lot of, self-awareness. . . . I could see it, but I didn't do enough, obviously, to make any corrective actions. . . . And, if anything, I increased my external commitments.

Vincent described "the 18 months" as intense.

The Intervention

Vincent began his intervention story by telling me that the vice president of human resources (whom he described as a really good friend and work partner), approached the board chair, saying, "You don't want to lose Vincent and you don't want any of this abrasive behavior to spill out into the community." The board chair and chairs from two subsidiary companies soon met with Vincent about his deleterious conduct and said, "We've got to address it." These exchanges began the intervention process.

Vincent admitted the intervention conversation with the chairs was embarrassing. He acknowledged to them that the destructive behaviors he was accused of were accurate—at least 95% of them. In hearing of this initial contact, I was curious how Vincent responded to the chairs. When asked, Vincent expressed,

> I never was defensive about it. I think one of the reasons why I've been successful overall . . . is I try to do something with feedback. Obviously, this criticism was bad and instead of trying to defend it or give an excuse for why I acted, I just took it all in, acknowledged it, and basically asked, "What do I need to do? What do I need to do to turn around and regain your confidence?"

As Vincent and I continued our conversation, Vincent divulged, "I really love this company and I wanted to stay on as its leader. . . . I was willing to, authentically, do what had to be done."

Vincent explained that the chairs immediately imposed several requirements on him and "they strictly held to those requirements." He had to (a) engage with an executive coach, (b) reduce the number of external board commitments, (c) obtain a physical, (d) provide mental and physical health records, (e) adhere to twice-a-year 360 evaluations, and (f) increase the number of one-on-one dialogues with the chairs.

One of the chairs completed most of the work in searching for an appropriate executive coach. Vincent expressed that it was important to all of them to obtain an executive consultant who (a) is not local and (b) specializes in the field of deleterious executive behavior. Vincent set about completing the other requirements. It took a while. Vincent expressed,

> Essentially, there weren't any health concerns. I was happy to demonstrate there weren't any physical or mental issues. I signed off on all of that stuff. I just really, authentically, wanted to get better. And I really wanted to turn it around.

I was curious how Vincent perceived the support of the chairs. When asked, Vincent replied that the chairs

> were all supportive. They wanted me to address this abrasive behavior. But I got the sense, the authentic sense, that they wanted me to succeed and that they were going to be supportive. Even though they had to give me that hard-hitting feedback together, they also wanted me to succeed. So, their support was really important to me.

Vincent explained that even though he perceived the emotional support from the chairs, there was still an additional consequence. Vincent confided that the extra annual compensation he had previously received, due to his level 5 leadership, would not be funded that year. Although Vincent felt supported by the chairs, there was a financial consequence.

In addition to being embarrassed, Vincent disclosed, during our final conversation, that the intervention was "very scary and humbling." Vincent was fearful of losing his job. He was also fearful he was not going to sufficiently change. I perceived he wondered if it was too late to make corrections. I thought about how humbling it would be to have superiors speak to me

about poor emotional control. I could barely imagine how difficult it was for Vincent to hear

those words from the chairs—his superiors.

Dr. Lee and the Initial 360

The chairs and Vincent, about a month after the intervention, agreed on an executive

coach—one who met the two requirements and seemed to be a "good fit." The coach, Dr. Lee,

flew out to meet with Vincent and, while there, interviewed over 20 people in the organization.

Vincent then explained that the next visit was by phone after Dr. Lee had prepared her

feedback—what he described as a "real hard-hitting 360."

Vincent told of receiving the written report by email almost simultaneous to Dr. Lee's

phone call. During this call, Dr. Lee "literally read the feedback to me, even though I had the

report in front of me. She read it to me, so it would sink in. . . . She, literally, read it to me . . .

literally."

> She first described the positive attributes. Then she went into all of the negative abrasive
> behaviors: the spin cycle of repetitive accusations, the public humiliation, perceived
> threats, lack of emotional control, and so forth. And these comments were all in the
> employees' own words. Dr. Lee would summarize the categories for me, but the
> feedback was all in the words of employees who either worked for me directly or those
> people who work for my direct reports but with whom I have a lot of interaction. So, the
> feedback was from a huge, broad, section of employees. It was obvious that we had to go
> to work on the negative abrasive behaviors. I've always been receptive to feedback. I'm
> totally accountable, so I didn't attempt to try to explain anything away—even if, let's say,
> 3%–5% was sort of "piling on" and not necessarily true. There was no need to pick on
> those things and say that they really didn't happen because, obviously, the vast majority
> was true.

Vincent expressed that he had wanted honest feedback from his employees and believed

that his coworkers "really opened up to Dr. Lee" partially due to her not being from the area. In

providing him with feedback, Vincent said, "Dr. Lee was brutally honest." She "put a mirror

right to my face." Vincent also described Dr. Lee as "very transparent and very clear." She

"documented in living color all of the abrasive behaviors." She communicated to him that the

employees and colleagues still had plenty of good things to say about him, but she also illustrated the plethora of abrasive behaviors. Vincent explained it was only with this initial 360 feedback session that he began to realize "how bad and pervasive the abrasive behavior was." Acknowledging the importance of the 360 feedback, Vincent said,

> just seeing the write-up of the interviews—that was probably the first step in really understanding the depth of impact. Hearing and reading what others were saying about me was when I first realized that not only did my abrasive behavior affect my direct reports but, maybe, everybody in the company. And maybe it was even spilling a little over to the outside.

Vincent, throughout our conversations, did not provide details of specific situations or the exact exchange of words with his coworkers. I wondered if this may be due to the vast amount of intense activity at that time and the possibility that specifics may be forgotten. I also wondered if it could be possible that the focus became to move forward—drawing attention to the future and not the past. I further wondered if some of the stories were better left untold. Vincent, however, during our first conversation revealed that the initial 360 report had a lot of detail in it involving poor emotional control. He also articulated, "I reread it from time-to-time to remember how bad my behavior was."

Vincent described the initial 360 as a "real eye-opener." He discovered, from this initial evaluation that

> while I never intentionally threatened anybody, I think it was perceived. And no one, no one, was ever fired. No one ever walked out, and we still have very little turnover. But my behavior was definitely counter to the culture that I helped create and would want.

Vincent reiterated he was not surprised by the specific remarks of his conduct as much as he was surprised by "the depth of it. . . . It wasn't just the seven people who worked for me directly, it was all 22 people or so that were interviewed. All of them were saying the same stuff."

Hearing from Vincent about the initial 360 feedback, I pondered how challenging it may have been to hear the precise words of fellow employees who told of conduct that was counter to Vincent's, and the organization's, espoused values of servant-leadership and authenticity. Vincent expressed,

> When this abrasive behavior was happening, I felt sort of disingenuous and inauthentic. I was thinking, "Oh my God. How can I correct this?" I already knew it was going to be a challenging journey to turn this around. . . . It was obvious that we had to go to work on the negative abrasive behaviors.

Vincent believed that not only did he need to do that hard work of changing his behavior, but he also had to consistently behave nonabrasively over a lengthy period since "the chairs would be doing regular 360s."

"An Opportunity to Succeed"

Vincent spoke of two very helpful comments he heard from Dr. Lee early in the coaching process. First, Dr. Lee explained that the coaching sessions were confidential: She would not share the reports with anyone. Vincent appreciated that "Dr. Lee could basically tell it like it is and I could receive it as it is." If he wanted to, he could "reveal things to the chairs, but that was totally my call." Vincent said this specific comment from Dr. Lee "created good trust" among him, the chairs, and Dr. Lee. He further stated, "to the best of my knowledge, the only two people who have seen that pretty revealing and rough report is myself and Dr. Lee."

Second, Dr. Lee explained she would not accept a client whose objective was to create documentation for dismissal of the executive. Vincent another time stated it slightly differently: "She would take clients who desired to help the CEO." This comment, Vincent revealed, "really made me think I had some hope of turning this around. . . . I realized I had the opportunity to succeed because they weren't going into this to create documentation so that in 2 months I would be fired."

Becoming Equipped

Vincent explained that the executive coaching process involved numerous conversations with Dr. Lee during the following 9 months. He said during this time he learned "a lot of techniques to improve emotional intelligence." In addition, he learned a lot of helpful people management strategies—especially those that help people become accountable without him losing emotional control. Vincent expressed, "I learned a lot of techniques in terms of how to keep my cool when someone doesn't perform. I still had to point out performance issues—but I learned how to do that more effectively." Vincent also spoke of implementing numerous, what he called, infrastructural changes. From our conversations, it also seemed that he spent a considerable amount of time critically reflecting upon what occurred leading up to, and including, what he labeled as "the 18 months."

Vincent expressed that three infrastructural changes were particular helpful. The first, a requirement of the chairs, as well as a recommendation by Dr. Lee, was to "peel off outside boards" where he could "without it affecting the company." With many of the boards, Vincent said, he was able to not renew his term. There were some situations, though, where Vincent described needing to resign midstream. But for the most part Vincent said he was "able to naturally term off." In those situations where he needed to resign from a board, he was able to accurately say that his chair had asked him to "pare back on the external activities." For Vincent, I learned it was important for him to remain authentic while briefly and accurately explaining the need for his resignations. He was asked by his chair to "pare back" his community commitments.

The second infrastructural change was to establish regular one-on-one meetings with his direct reports so there would be no temptation to engage in individual performance reviews

during team meetings. The third infrastructural change, described by Vincent, was the creation

of white space on his calendar including white space following all appointments. He expressed

that Dr. Lee wanted to make sure he never felt rushed. Should an appointment need to be

extended beyond the scheduled time, or if someone without an appointment needed to talk, they

could be easily accommodated. The second and third infrastructural changes, Vincent reported,

were relatively easy to implement and he immediately began the practices. Or maybe, more

accurately, Vincent returned to using these two infrastructural practices that he had used prior to

"the 18 months."

The Second 360

About 9 months later, Dr. Lee returned to the organization and reinterviewed Vincent's

coworkers. Vincent, when he discussed the pending results of the second 360, expressed,

> I knew that I hadn't done any abrasive behaviors since the egg hit the fan, and I knew that
> I had taken these positive actions. But I also knew from the first report, when the
> abrasive behavior was at its worse, that there were deep issues. I actually wasn't sure
> how the second 360 would turn out. . . . I thought it would be positive, but I also thought
> I would get the stray comment, "Oh God, is Vincent having a bad day today because he is
> quiet?" I thought there would still be some negative comments, since the first series of
> interviews had so much bad stuff in it. I thought it would take more than 9 months of
> good behavior to say I was A+. . . . So, I was hoping, based on my actions, that it would
> be much more positive.

Vincent explained that the results of the first 360 compared to the second 360 "was like night

and day." He also voiced it as "turning from coal to diamond." Yet in spite of the significant

improvement, Vincent expressed,

> There was, here and there, a comment where someone would say, "I thought Vincent was
> about to lose his cool, but he did not," or something like that. It reinforced for me that,
> and I am not using this pejoratively, I was being looked at under a microscope. But,
> again, that was good feedback. I realized that I could not, literally, in this field of
> emotional intelligence, make even one more mistake. So that puts a little bit of pressure
> on.

Vincent described Dr. Lee as "very strategic about compliments. . . . If you get one, it is super authentic." Following the second 360 Dr. Lee remarked to Vincent how much more positive the comments were and that his progress was "amazing." The positive change was also reinforced by a local counselor whom Vincent began seeing following the intervention. Vincent recalled the counselor remarking how he had turned things around. Basically, he said the same thing as Dr. Lee. Vincent expressed, "Getting the positive reinforcement that I was moving in the right direction was helpful."

Reflections

The conversations Vincent and I had begun about 3 years after the second 360. During our conversations, Vincent frequently reflected upon his leadership experiences and his journey away from the use of abrasive behaviors. Each of our conversations included Vincent expressing moments of reflection—from personal insight to the benefits of newly learned skills.

Vincent stated he had no memories prior to "the 18 months" of exhibiting any abrasive behaviors—not at this organization or the others where he had worked. He said,

> I never had any of these emotional outbursts, these spiraling out of control type of things. So I was thinking back, Why was that? If anything, I was less experienced and less mature. Why at a younger age was I much more patient when, if anything, I would think my emotional intelligence wouldn't be as well honed. . . . In looking back, it dawned on me, and in retrospect it is pretty obvious: I didn't have many external board responsibilities at my prior organizations.

Upon that insight, it then made sense, as the chairs required and Dr. Lee suggested, to cycle off these external boards. I sensed from Vincent that there was a high degree of relief that came from understanding that he could immediately begin to create more white space on his calendar. Vincent acknowledged, "Right away, I became more patient. I became more accessible—not for just 5 minutes, but for however long the person wanted." Vincent, however, conceded that whether or not he had white space, he was ultimately "still accountable for being patient."

Clarifying the importance of creating more white space, Vincent asserted that the structural change of adding white space "was huge."

Vincent admitted that he knew during "the 18 months" that he had sometimes behaved abrasively with his executive team and that those behaviors were wrong and unacceptable. And Vincent remembered he publicly apologized to his direct reports four or five times during those 18 months, believing that "if I apologize and try not to let that happen again, then things would be okay." It was not until later that Vincent realized, "If I have to apologize four or five times for doing the same thing, I have to wonder if the apology is even valid." He discovered, "When you've exhibited significant abrasive behavior, you just can't erase it with an apology. Obviously, making a public apology wasn't anywhere near good enough. I had to make some significant changes."

Vincent described himself as being aware of his behavior yet not aware of "how deep the abrasive behavior negatively impacted people." It was not until the executive coaching that he comprehended how deep in the organization the impact of his abrasive behaviors had cascaded. His behavior was not just impacting the executive team of seven; it could possibly be impacting everyone in the organization. With this new insight, Vincent expressed,

> My lack of emotional intelligence was so evident that, even outside of the cloistered room of VPs, people down the flow chart would see that I was upset, and they were affected. I never realized that depth of impact until I got Dr. Lee's report. I knew then how bad and deep it was.

Vincent further explained this insight by saying,

> I am in a pretty visible leadership position and I have learned that the impact I have, both positive and negative, is enormous. People model my behavior. They also get nervous if I get nervous. If I look angry, they get angry or possibly scared. I knew I had responsibilities as a leader, but I didn't realize if someone judged my mood to be negative how it draws down the morale in the company. It seems obvious, but until I read that 360, I didn't realize how someone in the mailroom is looking up to me. Although I am a pretty hands-on CEO and I know everybody, I had a much bigger impact than I realized.

So when there is abrasive behavior, it is not just the seven VPs who work for me directly who see or feel it—it is everybody.

I sensed as Vincent spoke about becoming aware of how his negative behavior was impacting others in the workplace, he did not meet his own personal behavioral expectations and he was troubled by the impact felt throughout the organization.

In addition to learning of the cascading impact Vincent's abrasive behavior had on others at work, he stated he became aware of how others responded to him during "the 18 months." Vincent learned that his coworkers were "walking on eggshells." He explained this by saying,

If I looked like a teapot, ready to use abrasive behaviors, they were cowering in the background, and they wouldn't give me information that they think I might perceive as not positive because I might get angry. It really affected the authenticity of the company because people would shy away from interacting with me if it looked like was having a bad day. They may shy away from me if they thought I couldn't handle, on a particular day, the bad news—even though it used to be one of my greatest strengths. I used to get compliments like, "The worse the news, the more calm Vincent reacted." That used to be my mantra, but obviously for 18 months it wasn't the case. So, abrasive behaviors affect the effectiveness of the company because people avoided me and wouldn't share the honest information in fear of my reaction.

Vincent confided how he was struggling with his personal ideals of, and commitment to, being a servant-leader. He expressed, "Servant-leadership is all about being an authentic leader, and I knew I wasn't delivering on authentic servant-leadership."

Vincent recalled that during this time, the company was still obtaining numerous "best company" awards. However, he expressed, it was "really, only on paper—it wasn't real." Vincent indicated that there was the perception by outsiders that the organization still had a great work environment: "I knew, from an authentic perspective, we should not have been winning those awards. It was really killing me. I was getting these accolades and I didn't deserve them—because I wasn't being authentic." Recognizing this incongruity, Vincent confided, "I didn't feel good about myself."

Vincent described his developing emotional intelligence. It seemed to Vincent, that he was acting as a naturally gifted leader, until "everything went to heck in a handbasket." It was then that he discovered he "didn't have the tools to more effectively handle the arising situations because he had never studied emotional intelligence." He then expressed that emotional intelligence is now "top of mind." Vincent, using a baseball analogy, explained, "You may be lucky with emotional intelligence to be a 300 hitter throughout your whole career but most of us won't be and we will have to mindfully work on developing emotional competency."

I understood this analogy to mean that even the most gifted leaders will, at some time, reach a point where they need additional coaching or help—that the natural giftedness of being a 300 hitter or of being an exceptional organizational leader may, ultimately, reach its limit without help. Vincent described being trained in emotional intelligence permitted him to still be true to his core self—to be authentic—while developing tools to exhibit better self-control.

During our last conversation, as Vincent looked back on "the 18 months," he assessed,

We were just trying to do too much. I am totally 100% accountable, but we were sometimes almost victimized by our success. Because we, year after year, accomplished our goals the board would say you need to create more challenging goals. Ultimately, we created a ton of challenging goals which we all felt compelled to make but it just wasn't humane.

As Vincent reflected on that difficult time, he regularly expressed appreciation of his executive team: "We have really great people who work here," I heard him say several times. I also heard from Vincent that while he is a part of a team, he is fully accountable for his behavior, and now he has a better understanding of the impact his behavior had on others. I sensed he felt the burden that he had placed on others as he become, as he put it, "a human doer as opposed to a human being."

Ironies

As part of reflecting back on the journey, Vincent noted several ironies. Most of these ironies were discussed in our final conversation, after I had obtained a better understanding of his experience. These ironies, it seems, also give insight into Vincent's developing story of the turn away from the use of abrasive behaviors.

Vincent mentioned numerous times he could tell, through the reactions of some of his coworkers, they were occasionally wondering if he was going to lose his composure. While this residual has dramatically lessened, Vincent stated that there are still some incidences where, he believes, people wonder, "Oh my God, is he going to erupt?" Vincent revealed,

> Sometimes it can be disappointing or frustrating that someone thinks that I might be reverting, when it is not even possible—I am not even remotely close to behaving abrasively. But by the same token, it does keep me on the straight and narrow. Even though I wish I didn't have this permanent effect, actually, it helps me keep going . . . keeping me on my game . . . keeping me energized to never use abrasive behavior.

Vincent realized, while he did not want the regular reminder of coworkers wondering if he is going to revert to his prior behavior, those reactions, ironically, instilled in him the desire to stay focused on extinguishing that behavior.

Vincent recognized in his attempt to accomplish work that he had become an "abrasive task master." He said the more he pressed others and the more he relied on behaving abrasively, the worse people performed. Vincent recognized, "Ironically, when I was not behaving abrasively people actually performed better. Actually, they delivered a better work product, more timely, when I was not abrasive." Vincent disclosed that he learned, "When I am patient and gentle (obviously you still have to get the job done), people perform better with meeting deadlines, and they are definitely more creative." Vincent desired increased performance, but many of his chosen methods to motivate workers, he acknowledged, decreased performance.

Thinking of emotions, Vincent stated he also learned that employees would not tell him the raw data if they were afraid. He explained, "If employees are afraid of me exploding in front of them, they will not tell me essential data such as a customer might leave if we don't do X." Vincent learned,

> In a nonabrasive environment, the coworkers will be free to tell you the raw data. And as CEO you can actually swing into action and correct something. But if you are not aware of it because the person is afraid to tell you, then the company isn't going to perform as well.

As the CEO, Vincent needed raw data, so he could make informed decisions. Yet the more fearful employees were of his reaction to possible bad news, the more they had the tendency to not disclose vital data to him.

Vincent confided, "I didn't learn to say no until the egg hit the fan and I was forced to say no." Vincent admitted he had to be required to reduce his external commitments through the demands of the chairs. However, Vincent acknowledged, "It was actually refreshing to reduce my external obligations." Reflecting on this irony, Vincent said, "It should have been easy for me to do it on my own, but I did need that extra finality of the chairs, in effect, forcing me to pare off some boards." Vincent confirmed he was unable to provide himself the relief he needed by removing himself from the external commitments: Relief arrived once the chairs required the action.

Upon considering the differences between his behavior at work and in the community, Vincent stated,

> I was able to maintain emotional control for activities outside of my work family but not inside. . . . I was saving my best for the external world and the board of directors, and I had the worst for my family of employees. I was actually more patient with citizens I didn't even know.

The workplace culture that Vincent had dedicated himself to and helped develop no longer received his best: Ironically, his best was reserved for others.

Continuing with the same idea of the differences between what was experienced at work versus in the community, Vincent agreed that "one of the best places to work . . . kind of wasn't, for a while . . . in spite of getting those awards." He explained, "Probably, to the outside world, the company was still the company and Vincent was still Vincent. But meanwhile, internally, what they didn't know was we were suffering."

Vincent also discussed the irony of being aware but also not being aware. Thinking back, Vincent acknowledged he could see his abrasive behavior with the VPs—it was like him watching himself in his own movie. He said, "I was seeing I was having this effect on my direct reports—I was kind of aware of that." However, Vincent continued, "It wasn't until the Dr. Lee process that I realized how pervasive the effect was for nondirect reports." Vincent further elaborated,

> I was just unaware. Abrasive behavior had never been an issue with me and then when it became an issue, I wasn't really equipped. I was able to see my abrasive behaviors, but until Dr. Lee intervened, I didn't understand the depth of the impact to workers outside the executive team or to the workplace culture. Neither did I take the necessary corrective action.

Vincent expressed, throughout our numerous conversations, of simultaneously being aware yet unaware. I learned though that the 360 report, for Vincent, created in him a level of awareness not previously attained.

Another concept that became evident as Vincent and I spoke of his journey was the irony of going forward meant going backward. For Vincent, this involved reflection of his prior years as a leader—at a much younger age—when the abrasive behavior was not exhibited. The journey, it appeared, meant a returning to some prior ways—a going backward. Vincent said

increasing the white space on his calendar was a huge structural piece for his journey away from

the use of abrasive behaviors. Going backward also included reducing the external board

commitments. Vincent revealed that the changes throughout his journey was like "getting back

to his true self."

About halfway through our conversations, Vincent first introduced the word "recovery"

as part of his journey. He began one sentence by saying, "Since this recovery from abrasive

behavior . . ." The phrase caught me off guard, a little bit. I had not, prior to our conversations,

thought of a journey away from abrasive behaviors as a recovery. Later in the same

conversation, after contemplating this development, I said, "I am just sensing that satisfaction

that would come from, basically, a recovery: You reachieved in a very real sense." Vincent

seemed pleased I was comprehending his journey and that it was a recovery. He had recovered

and was returning to who he had been and how he innately considered himself: an authentic

servant-leader. For Vincent there was a sense of recovery, yet, ironically, the journey continues.

"A Race Without a Finish Line"

Numerous times, Vincent acknowledged the journey away from the use of abrasive

behaviors was hard. He explained,

> I have not raised my voice since the initial meeting with the chairs about 4 years ago.
> But, if I am having a day of being quiet because I am focused on a project, someone who
> may have had an adverse experience with me 5 years ago thinks, "Oh my God.
> Something is up. Is he going back there?" So that is what makes it hard. You can do all
> the right things, but because the 18 months was so intense, it is probably going to be a
> race without a finish line.

Illustrating the complexity of leading following a history of abrasive behavior, Vincent

disclosed,

> Every day is a test of patience. This job is really complex. There are a lot of customer
> and regulatory demands that have to be dealt with, sometimes under really strict
> deadlines, which require me to occasionally push people. And then there is the element

that I can't push too hard due to the whole history thing. It has definitely been sustained, but I view each day as a challenge.

About halfway through our conversations, Vincent spoke of the reality of living with the consequences of his abrasive behavior. He stated,

> I believe I am under a microscope—and that is fine—even if . . . I am tired or just thinking about something, someone may think, "Vincent is going to revert," even though I don't. So, that will always be with me.

Part of the consequences, Vincent said, is knowing "I can never totally erase the past. It is something that will always be in the back of my mind. . . . It is the burden of the past." Vincent learned,

> I can do course corrections. I can do the hard work. I can never slip ever again into abrasive behavior. But I can't affect what is in the brain of someone else. This is not something where I have a checklist and say, "I've checked off seven things." This is truly a lifelong journey.

Part of living with consequences, Vincent discovered, was regaining the trust of his coworkers. He disclosed, "It is really hard to get the trust back of people. . . . I am constantly regaining trust every day."

Dr. Lee

Vincent expressed amazement in how Dr. Lee (whom he described as having an expertise in management) was able to help him change his abrasive behavior and more effectively lead his team and organization. Specifically, he said, "She helped dig me out of this lack of emotional control that I exhibited for about 18 months." Beginning with the feedback of the initial 360, Vincent said, Dr. Lee's coaching prompted him to "make permanent changes. She provided me with a toolkit of ideas and approaches to more effectively coach my direct reports."

Prior to consulting with Dr. Lee, Vincent stated that he had never used an executive coach. However, to this day, about 3 years after the second 360, Vincent continues to have 4–5

conversations a year with Dr. Lee. Normally, four calls are scheduled—about one a quarter. And then, when he feels like "human challenges might drag me down," he may set up an ad hoc call to deal with a specific situation. This rhythm, Vincent explained, works well for him.

With the ongoing coaching conversations, Vincent expressed that he continues to put tools in his toolbox. He said,

> I present situations to her and she presents me with some advice. And I use those techniques. Sometimes they work, and I provide her with feedback. Sometimes the leopards don't change their spots. As a CEO you really can't bounce your ideas off too many people—or really anybody in the organization.

I sensed from our conversations that Vincent greatly valued having regular confidential conversations with Dr. Lee where he could seek her expertise on human management concerns prior to implementing decisions.

From the many discussions Vincent and I had, I sensed (and Vincent confirmed), that he values the professional relationship with Dr. Lee and respects her ability to assist him in more effectively leading his organization. I learned that Vincent, having the help of an external professional who understood the role of emotions and abrasive behavior in the workplace, was essential for him in making and sustaining significant changes. Vincent expressed, "It was not enough to think I could solve it on my own or that an apology would do a good job of fixing the impacts of the abrasive behavior. I needed outside resources to help."

Currently

For Vincent, the journey is better described as a race without a finish line: The race does not end. As Vincent continues his race, I obtained glimpses into some of his recent experiences.

Vincent told me that for the past 20 to 30 years he has always read the 360 reports on all of his managers—even though he does not "make too many judgments solely based on them." Recently, one particular up-and-coming young manager, he noticed, had a couple of comments

that indicated the manager was perceived to have been impatient with a couple of her employees. And, for some reason, this 360 report, Vincent said, "resonated with me." Vincent continued, "I have probably read similar things in the past 20–30 years but had never done anything with it. This time I jumped in using a technique that Dr. Lee gave me—just asking questions."

Vincent learned that the manager was embarrassed to read that she was perceived to be impatient. She admitted to Vincent that when she read the feedback it felt like she had been "punched in the stomach." Vincent noted, "Her reaction was the same as when I was first thinking I was obviously losing my temper: 'Oh my God. This isn't good.'" From that initial conversation, Vincent realized the young manager was receptive to coaching on techniques to improve emotional intelligence and he began sharing some of the techniques he had learned on his journey.

As Vincent spoke about this situation, I was intrigued that he had been reading these reports for decades but had not previously noticed comments that may indicate a manager lacked emotional control. It seemed Vincent, becoming aware of his own abrasive behavior, caused him to be alert to the signs of abrasive behaviors in others. This growing awareness also spurred him to step in and help the manager. Prior to inquiring into this part of his journey, Vincent disclosed, he had not realized he may become a better coach to his managers as a result of his own journey. He appreciated that I shared that observation.

A second situation occurred just prior to our fifth conversation. Vincent had actually written it down to ensure we spoke about it. He said, "Just the other day a VP came in—just out of the blue—and said, 'You know, we have a great, fun group.'" Describing the current situation, Vincent explained,

> Right now, during our VP meetings, there is a lot of great stuff going on. (We just completed board meetings and are taking on a lot of initiates such as Medicaid so there is

a lot of good strategic work going on). . . . The team at this moment, and I think it is sustainable, is really humming.

From Vincent's description it seemed that he and his team have found a good balance of working hard, maintaining emotional intelligence, and sustaining healthy professional relationships.

Vincent stated, "Everybody is still here." All of the current VPs journeyed with Vincent through "the 18 months" and still remain at the organization. Understanding the challenges of that time, I was curious about the journey of mending work relationships. Vincent, "teeing it up," revealed,

> The abrasive behavior was pretty pervasive, but it particularly hurt three people. And the recovery of those relationships took longer though than maybe, I had thought it would. Definitely, it took a lot longer on an individual basis, versus the macro improvement that everybody saw. Part of that was both the employees involved and myself getting that trust together. And now I can say that for those three people we are working hard and having fun. But, for the record, the repairing of relationships definitely took longer than the macro improvement.

Although the relational recovery took longer than anticipated, Vincent expressed, "I can say now in early 2018, we are better than ever. Yeah, I'd say speaking in 2018: Absolutely, we're back." Even while acknowledging this progress, Vincent expressed there remains a small amount of residual for some people—the emotion that sometimes quickly appears if a coworker fears that Vincent will not remain calm. Vincent admitted that residual may always remain a consequence of his actions: The burden of his past behavior.

Vincent commented that the community service and best place to work awards continue to be received. However, obtaining the award now is more meaningful than when the awards were received during "the 18 months." Vincent expressed that he knew "from an authentic perspective we should not have been winning those awards during those 18 months and that is why last year when we got one again, it was so moving because it was more real." It was an authentic award. He further explained, "It is not like the awards weren't meaningful in the past."

Using a sports analogy, Vincent described it as a team who had won multiple championships and the expectation for the current year is another championship. However, this year there are multiple injuries and obstacles. And, in spite of those challenges, the team wins another championship. Winning, that particular year after overcoming the obstacles, Vincent believed, is more meaningful.

Given the positive feedback of the second 360 with Dr. Lee, the Board decided that Dr. Lee's in-depth 360 qualitative reports were no longer needed. However, Vincent explained, that the organization continues with the traditional 360s, the cultural surveys, and the strategic alignment surveys. Vincent expressed that all those surveys have been positive, and the problems seem to have abated.

Vincent expressed he has been "very cautious about stepping back on boards." He is currently active on six boards. He also said he continues with the one-on-one meetings with his VPs. And he never reprimands someone in public if it can be avoided. To assist with the human challenges Vincent expressed that he plans to continue the regular conversations with Dr. Lee. As a reminder of where he was, Vincent, on occasion, rereads the original 360 report so he "can see how bad the abrasive behavior was." He expressed, "I never want to return to that."

And the race, the one without a finish line, continues as Vincent leads his organization.

Chapter 6: A Narrative Account of Brady

I met Brady through his executive coach, Mr. Tabor. Looking for participants for my research study on the leader's journey away from the use of abrasive behaviors, I contacted the owner of an executive coaching organization. The owner then kindly reached out to several of the coaches she had trained to determine if they had clients who might be interested in participating in this study. It was then that Coach Tabor and I communicated. Within a few weeks, I introduced myself and the study to Brady who agreed to spend some time with me talking about his experience in moving away from the use of abrasive behavior.

I quickly learned from Brady, the safety director at a gas and underground utility construction company, that winter is his busiest season of the year. He explained he is currently prepping for the upcoming construction season. This time of year, I learned, is time intensive for Brady. I was immensely appreciative that he was making time to talk with me in spite of an already hectic schedule.

Brady and I live a few time zones away from each other and engaging in phone conversations seemed to make the most sense for us. Our first conversation was scheduled for early March but had to be postponed a week due to a significant weather event where he lived. During that brief initial conversation, we agreed to talk the following week when he was going to be, as he described it, "on the road." Since Brady travels a lot for his job as the safety director, it worked out well for us to talk when he was driving to or from a job site. During the next 2 months, we talked on three different occasions for a total of about 130 minutes. I envisioned he was in a company truck driving down the road. Meanwhile, I was sitting in my home office looking out my window watching the season transform from early to late spring.

When Brady and I first spoke, even though it was fairly brief and only over the phone, I had a few initial observations and impressions. I noticed he has a strong and firm voice. I also noticed he speaks directly, and his words are not sugarcoated. He spoke fast. He was attentive. He was passionate. I was eager to begin our journey as we, together, inquired into his experience.

Introducing Brady

Brady described himself as a family man. The very first words he used to introduce himself were, "I am a father, married, with three kids—two sons and a daughter." Throughout our conversations, it was evident Brady's family is of great importance. As he described it, "When I am home the work hat is off."

Sports, I learned, has been and continues to be an important part of Brady's family life. Brady, the oldest of three brothers, also has two half-brothers. One brother is a really good golfer. Another brother played a lot of football and is now a die-hard fisherman. And with enthusiasm, Brady expressed everyone in his family played soccer—stating he played "right up through college." When I mentioned to Brady in our second conversation that I can picture him as a true competitor, he responded, "Yeah, it's bad. I am worse than anybody." Well, except for his oldest son whom Brady conceded is "probably more competitive than me. He is a little nuts."

Brady shared his family's sporting events and schedule: "My oldest kid is only in two sports, but the youngest kids are in three sports each and it is freakin' mayhem. We don't stop. Every night of the week we have practice." In addition to the sport schedule of the children, Brady told me that he coaches four teams—soccer, baseball, flag football, and basketball. I also learned that Brady's oldest son is a national championship soccer player who practices 5 days a

week on two different teams. At this level of play, I believed, and Brady confirmed, the family

does a lot of traveling: "It is crazy," Brady expressed, when talking of their family sports

schedule.

Brady briefly introduced me to his school and work history. He said he graduated with a

bachelor's in business management with a minor in communication. Following college, Brady

went into outside sales of siding, roofing, and windows. He then explained,

> After about 10 years of outside sales, I didn't really care about the dough, or enjoy
> making it a yes, as much as when I started in sales. So, I decided to walk away from it,
> and I got myself into construction again—which is pretty much what I did all through
> high school.

For about 5 years Brady worked for one of the largest concrete companies in the region. He said

he was made a union foreman within a year. He then decided to "explore construction options

that didn't mess up my body." During this time of contemplation, Brady explained, he had a

pivotal experience that, ultimately, helped him decide to return to school to pursue a second

degree. Brady shared, "My head boss of 3 years slipped on the roof and fell 12 feet and never

woke up. I took it personally and put myself back into school on my own dime and got myself a

safety degree." Brady has now been in construction safety for 12 years. For the past 8 years,

Brady has been in his current leadership position where he oversees all safety compliance,

training, and development.

The Job

Looking at the organization's website, I noticed that safety is emphasized: "Safety . . . it

is not just a corporate goal it is a requirement!" In addition, it is asserted that the safety director

oversees their "industry leading safety program." These two statements among other assertions

on the website indicated to me safety is of great importance. Because the company must meet

numerous state and federal regulations, proper training and qualification testing of the workers is essential.

I learned from Brady that part of his duties as the director of these three departments is to ensure all the construction workers are taking and passing the annual operator qualification tests. He explained,

> One guy could have to go in and take 46 tests. One guy could have to go in and take three tests—and another guy 20 tests. Everybody is different. But there are certain tests which a worker absolutely has to pass in order to move on and, even in order to, work.

Prior to the beginning of each construction season, Brady explained, it takes an immense amount of time to ensure workers are qualified to work. To help Brady with the compliance process, an online third-party was contracted with about 5 years ago. Concurrently, all employees were instructed to obtain a company email address. Brady stated that using company email ensured workers were obtaining compliance information. Hiring the third-party and automating the process, I perceived, was meant to lighten Brady's increasingly heavy workload.

Brady stated he is currently the direct supervisor of five people. He has two safety and compliance officers, a compliance manager, and two training associates. But it was only a few years ago, he had no direct reports. Although, he clarified, that whether he had direct reports, he was "still in charge of everybody." Brady further explained,

> We had superintendents who covered crews but anything that involved safety, compliance, or training. I dealt with it. It didn't matter I had no direct reports—I had everybody—whether the person was in leadership, below leadership, a mechanic, a welder, a saw cutter—whatever the role—I dealt with them all.

I learned, due to his role as safety director, Brady had the responsibility to oversee the safety of all work that was being completed by the organization.

Brady explained the organization, during his first 5 years of employment, had between 70 and 100 employees. During this time, he said,

I was fine— the job was easy. But, then within 1 year we grew to about 200 employees, and we didn't add anybody to my department—I did it all. I was alone. I was doing everything myself. I was completely overwhelmed.

Brady continued, "It was just that over time we grew so much as a company that it was too hard—it got too hard—the growth was too much."

Leading Up to "The Incident"

I heard from Brady that further complications arose, during this time of tremendous growth, because many of the construction workers did not speak English. And, in an effort to streamline communication, the company was trying to "work off emails." However, Brady discovered, "A lot of the workers didn't even have computers, and when I tried to tell them how to put email on their phones, they couldn't get that figured out either." These workers, Brady affirmed, work hard. They will "grab a shovel and they will dig until they are about 60 years old." I sensed, from Brady, a respect for these workers who will day-in and day-out labor hard in a physically demanding job. As Brady spoke, I wondered about the practical challenges of technology, the communication difficulties when workers are not proficient in English, and the obstacles of substantial organizational growth.

"The Incident"

About 2-and-a-half years ago, Brady explained, the company had about 190–200 workers and he was working alone—no one else had yet been hired in his department. He expressed it was winter, the busiest time of year for him, when he is trying to get workers qualified on their operator tests. Brady confided that this time of year is

> so stressful anyway, because it is so important that the right people have the right qualifications . . . and most of the workers fail the first and second time they take the tests. I have to keep rescheduling. It is a complete nightmare.

Although winter is the busiest season for Brady, I learned that the workers are laid off at

that time—there are no underground construction projects. Brady stated, "People were just

hanging around my office giving me shit." He said he was trying to get his qualifications work

completed when one worker

> started complaining about all the things that I didn't do—which were completely false. I
> asked him a simple question, and it was the same question I had asked him before—
> multiple times: "Are you on company email?" And he proceeded to say, "No." And I
> said, "Well, that's your problem. Go up to the"—excuse me, but I said—"Go up to the
> fucking office and get yourself on company email," and I slammed the door on his face.

Brady confided, "I just snapped."

> It was like the workers don't understand how much work is going into this. Meanwhile,
> they are complaining, yet I have it right on the computer that they haven't done what they
> say that they did. The guy flat out said, "No. I studied." Well, okay. And then we went
> on the computer, and there was no record of him studying. Then I asked him about
> company email, and he said, "I'm not even on it."

Brady explained that because the worker was not on company email, he was not

receiving the notifications for the training or the links to the study material. The worker was

going into testing and then blaming the study process for failing—even though the worker never

used the process. Brady explained,

> It had been 2 years since the company email had been set up and this worker had been
> told multiple times to go to the office and get his work email address. We had training
> classes on this and everything. There had been multiple discussions about this person not
> doing what he was supposed to do.

During our discussion of the incident, I sensed Brady's growing frustration with this individual's

complaints and the overwhelming nature of getting the workers qualified before the construction

season began.

The Intervention

Brady discovered a complaint had been filed against him when he got a call from the

human resources manager who said, "We have a problem." Brady soon met with the owner of

the company and the HR manager who is also the company's legal counsel. He explained, "The HR manager did all the talking. She wouldn't tell me who it was. But, obviously, I just knew who it was, and I told her exactly what happened." Brady shared he was told he had to go through a coaching process, or he would be fired.

Brady revealed that his initial reaction was to get defensive. He thought, "What a jerk," of the worker who filed the complaint. However, he acknowledged that it made him feel good to know that the company saw value in him, wanted to keep him around, and offered to incur the coaching expense. Yet he acknowledged, "It made me realize I am on thin ice, too."

When I asked Brady about his willingness to participate in coaching, he said, "I am doing it." He recognized,

> I was forced to do it, but I was still going to do it. There was nothing more than them saying, "This is your decision." I knew I had to do this, or they were going to fire away. So, there was just no option.

The HR manager then reached out to Coach Tabor. And Brady said, "We went from there." Reflecting on the situation, Brady disclosed, "I didn't necessarily know that what I had done was job related . . . a firing offense." Brady described the HR manager as very professional: "She knows what she's doing." Thinking back to the situation, he believed that the HR manager handled it appropriately.

Coach Tabor

Not long after this intervention, Coach Tabor met with Brady in his construction office. Brady explained they met six or eight times over the course of nine to 12, or possibly even 15, months. The meetings, Brady stated, included different people. Sometimes it was just Brady and Coach Tabor. Other times the meetings also included the owner of the company and the HR manager. Sometimes the meetings included Brady, Coach Tabor, and the HR manager.

After hearing a little of Brady's story, I was curious about his first meeting with Coach Tabor. Brady revealed, "From the time I first met Coach Tabor, it was 'Brady, you have a problem here and you have to fix it or otherwise you aren't going to be here.'" Continuing, Brady explained, "Right now, I have a pretty good set up here, so I went to work on it. I bought in because I was told I had to. In the end, I have to support a family. It is what it is." Brady stated that in that first meeting Coach Tabor also explained the process. Brady learned that in the next meeting he and the HR manager would select individuals for the 360 feedback, which was explained to him as a report about his "behavior and attitude and how others felt about the way I portrayed myself." Brady expressed, "I was fine with all that." Brady stated that Coach Tabor informed him that after he interviewed the selected individuals, a third meeting would entail going over the results of the interviews.

After Coach Tabor prepared his 360 report, he met with Brady and presented the results. Brady explained he and Coach Tabor went through the report "line by line." The report began with numerous positive comments that communicated how Brady excels at work. Following that section, there were comments, divided into various categories, where interviewees thought Brady could become more aware of his behavior.

In my first conversation with Brady, he confirmed that he took the 360 report "very seriously." However, Brady also said, "Some of it, though, I'm sorry, I didn't really entertain it." Brady frankly expressed he and Coach Tabor went through "an entire list of shit." Explaining further, Brady said,

> Some of it I didn't even acknowledge, and I flat out told Coach Tabor, "I am not accepting that, and I won't even discuss it." I don't think at any time Coach Tabor thought I wasn't taking it seriously because I was dead set on what I was going to work with and what I wouldn't. I am not sure how much I actually agreed with. I didn't agree with all of it. Some of the things that were said were so far off-base to me, it wasn't even worth me bothering with them.

Brady further stated,

> If I didn't like something, I would just tell Coach Tabor I didn't like it. And if I strictly didn't agree with it, or if the behavior wasn't even there, he would, actually, let me strike it and get it out of there: "Okay. We won't talk about it."

It seemed, as Brady spoke, that Coach Tabor was highly collaborative in the coaching relationship and responded to Brady's concerns that some of the comments may not be true.

From these descriptions and my other interactions with Brady, I sensed that Brady, in addition to being very direct, was concerned about changing those behaviors that needed to be changed. However, I perceived that Brady desired to have an honest and fair assessment and would defend himself against what he thought to be untruthful claims. I heard from Brady that workers will sometimes cut corners on safety concerns and it is his job to recognize and respond to those situations. Because of the nature of his job, being the "safety guy," some individuals, Brady believed, may have simply disliked him or not approved of some of his prior decisions. I heard that Brady believed some of the 360 comments were not true and the 360 process for some workers was a place to vent. Brady revealed, "In the end, I took the initial 360 comments with a grain of salt."

The 360 Feedback

Brady stated in our first conversation that he had not looked at the 360 feedback in about 2 years and that it was, right now, "jumbled" in his head. The report, Brady said, was kept in a drawer at work. Not wanting to get too specific about his memories of the feedback—not wanting to possibly be unfair to himself—he said, "I'll just send the report to you." I was surprised he offered the report to me, but I did not decline the offer. I thought that reading the feedback would give me greater insight into Brady's journey.

Within a few days of our first conversation, I received a copy of Brady's 360 report. As he previously described, the report begins with positive comments in areas where he excels as a leader. Brady's coworkers indicated he has several numerous positive attributes, abilities, and skills. Some of their comments were "a really good guy," "a well-organized person and excellent at planning," "demonstrates great passion for his job and role," "does everything well," "ensures others can do their jobs safely," "good and appropriate sense of humor," "gets along well with others," "good teacher," "obviously a family man," "takes considerable pride in his work," "very direct—clear and precise," "will apologize when he's in the wrong," and "works nonstop to execute his job extremely well. Next to nearly each comment is the handwritten word, "OK." During our second conversation, I asked Brady if he agreed with the comments about where he excels, and he told me he did. He also acknowledged he wrote the handwritten comments throughout the report: They were his initial reactions to the feedback.

The second part of the report included comments where Brady "needs to be more aware of his behavior." There are four categories: He loses patience and control, he raises his voice (but is not abusive), he can be abrupt, and he doesn't delegate work. Believing it would be helpful in understanding Brady's journey, I am including a couple of comments from each of the four categories. Brady's feedback included these comments: "People who lack good manners frustrate him"; "His impulse is to do something himself—and when someone to whom he's delegated doesn't get it, he will become visibly upset and loud"; "Very loud and vocal—he doesn't hold back"; "He can tend to treat staff as disobedient children—do what I say; if that's not forthcoming, he will raise his voice to get his point across"; "He's so busy that he can be abrupt in his rush to get something accomplished either by himself or through others"; "Because he is smart and knows his area of expertise so well, he can appear arrogant by being short with

others, especially those for whom English is a second language or do not have higher levels of education"; "He doesn't think others can do as good a job as he can, so he takes on considerable work"; and "Because he takes on so much work himself, he gets overwhelmed, getting upset—if he delegated more, this would occur less often."

I sensed, from some of the feedback, that coworkers acknowledged Brady's workload was significant and it influenced how he interacted with others. Yet I also perceived a few interviewees seemed to believe that some of Brady's behaviors were brought on himself. Brady, recognizing this as a possibility, in response wrote, "This may be true" on his 360 feedback form.

Because I read the report after initially hearing Brady's general recollections, I had anticipated that there would be numerous comments where he completely disagreed with the 360 interviewee. What I noticed was that there were many handwritten comments where Brady agreed with the statement or acknowledged the statement may be true. I also noticed, with many statements, a context or justification for a behavior was provided by Brady. I can imagine how upsetting it could be to initially read some of this feedback. If I alone were doing the work of several people, as Brady was at that time, I believe I would find it especially challenging not to demonstrate at least some of those behaviors.

Brady and I never discussed the specific comments of the 360 report, which caused me some concern in writing about my perceptions. Yet I also felt compelled to honor his transparency in offering the report to me, believing that many individuals would not likely offer their report. I wondered, if we had spoken about the specifics of the report, what that conversation may have looked like and what else may have been revealed.

The Learning

Brady admitted that prior to working with Coach Tabor, his tone of voice and the way he addressed things could have been a little bit harsh. And he conceded, "I learned from the 360 comments that in the past I could be a little bit abrasive and rough." With this understanding and his dedication to the coaching process, Brady began his journey. During our time together, Brady easily spoke of numerous concepts he learned while working with Coach Tabor. As I listened, I noticed the learning included personal development as well as increasing the number of practical tools for his tool chest. In his sessions with Coach Tabor, Brady disclosed,

> I learned about how I perceive and present myself. And I am developing the ability to take a step back. If I am writing an angry email, I don't send it. . . . I put it in the draft file and then come back the next day and read it. I discovered that 9 times out of 10 I am not going to send the email the next day and I'm going to be happy I didn't.

Furthering this concept, Brady expressed that he has been "learning how to control himself even when angry" stating, "I try not to knee jerk anymore."

Brady said he "learned about eye contact, the way to talk with people, and watching my tone of voice." Even in discipline, Brady acknowledged, "I learned to use a low tone of voice and, you know, direct conversation. It is not a browbeating." I had the impression that Brady discovered, through the coaching process, that many work challenges are behavioral, not necessarily racial or ethnic. And, as Brady described it, there is sometimes a need to take "a little bit of a step back and realize I have to take a different approach with teaching."

When Brady sees people doing "stupid things," he revealed, "I just put my head down, collect myself, and realize what I am going to say before I go talk to them. But it is really hard sometimes." Brady described a situation where a subcontractor had been hired to install an outdoor electric light. When Brady first saw the subcontractor, he was standing on the very top

of an 8-foot step ladder, violating OSHA and OTI standards. Brady recalled thinking, "That is just stupid. Obviously, there is no support—the thing will just turn over."

Brady said that although he has always been cautious about approaching someone when there was an imminent safety concern, he revealed that he has learned "to weigh in differently." Brady continued, "You expect people to do the right thing. But even when someone has made a stupid decision, you gotta respect the individual. It is tough." I sensed from these comments that Brady has learned to consider how to approach or speak with someone who has made an unsafe choice but to do it while showing respect of the individual.

A few times during our conversations, Brady discussed how he had to "gain respect for the workers." He admitted, "I had to realize the workers—maybe, you'd say, the foreign workers—are just regular people too. I am not better than them even though I am in a higher position." Expanding the concept of gaining respect, Brady expressed that another outcome of the coaching is "the way I treat people differently now. I try to treat everyone equally now."

In our discussions, I understood from Brady that equal respect for individuals may also mean treating individuals differently. Without mincing words, Brady frankly explained it as

> taking a look at my audience and trying to actually understand who I am talking to. So if I am talking to a guy who I know has been in the business for 20 years and he is educated—knows what's going on—I may talk differently to him than the laborer who has a shovel in his hand and doesn't have an inkling on how to do anything differently in his life other than to maintain a paycheck.

Stated another way, Brady said he learned how to understand his audience: "It took a situation like this for me to realize, in a leadership role, I have to look at it from the worker's perspective as well."

The coaching process took a while, even though Brady said he immediately changed his behavior with the construction workers. He expressed, "There was no transition. It just

happened." I understood from Brady that tools were learned along the way, but there was an immediate end to abrasive conduct with the construction workers once the intervention occurred.

Brady explained that he had not looked at the 360 reports or any of the other coaching documents in a long time. Because he had not thought about this process or the events in quite a while, some memories have faded. However, upon thinking back on the coaching process, Brady disclosed,

> The only challenging thing was having to listen to what people were saying about me—having to take that—and then trying to understand what I have to do to make myself better. Really, the hardest thing about the whole process was having to listen to that 360 review.

When I asked if there had been a second 360 evaluation conducted several months later, Brady seemed fairly certain a second evaluation was completed but was not sure how it was conducted or what the interviewees may have said.

"The New Boss"

About 8 months after Brady's last meeting with Coach Tabor, Brady revealed, he and his newly hired boss had an "anger episode." He said they nearly got into a physical altercation: "Two people were pulling us apart and I ended up being thrown out of the office." Brady explained, his new boss "put his finger on my chest and I honestly flat out told him, 'You have now taken this out of a business relationship and taken it to a different level.'" Remembering the encounter, Brady said,

> I was standing up for my guys—that is what started it. He was trying to not pay them on overtime and drive time, and they were well in their rights of it. I was trying to show I was backing up my guys, and it got to where he poked me in the chest.

Brady explained his reaction:

> Where I come from, once you've put your hands on someone it is a different story. I am going to defend myself. We were "at it" pretty good. I took a few days off with pay. They just wanted me to cool off. So I called Coach Tabor. I let him know about the

incident, and the one thing that came out of it is, with the company's blessing, I got into anger management for a period of time. I only did six sessions of that. And I felt I didn't really need it anymore.

Throughout our conversations, I perceived that fairness was really important to Brady. I gathered that Brady, standing up to his newly hired boss over an unfair business practice for his employees, would be the right thing to do.

Prior to obtaining the new boss, Brady expressed that he did not have a boss: "I just ran it all myself." He further explained,

I was my own boss for the most part. They asked me to do something and I did it. But no one was really checking up on me or anything like that, so I mean . . . we had an understanding. It was a hard transition to get a boss and the one thing you learn with a boss is whenever they come in, they got to do something to make a name for themselves—stand their ground.

Brady learned through attending the anger management courses that when he becomes angry, a switch is flipped. Brady expressed, "The biggest thing I worked on with anger management was that switch."

Providing an update, Brady shared that his boss apologized for his conduct, and they are now "at a good place." Brady stated he did not "even like talking about the incident because it isn't worth even bringing up. We are so far past this. . . . It is history." Pondering this situation, Brady revealed "a surprising development from the outburst." He disclosed, "My new boss has so much more respect for me and he treats me completely differently." Reflecting on this unanticipated result, Brady simply expressed, "It is wonderful."

Currently

When Brady and I spoke, he thought the organization had about 230 workers, and with his five direct reports, the workload for his department seems reasonable. He said, "I still oversee all of the workers for safety compliance, training, and development, but now I have

people I can delegate tasks to." Brady also expressed, with the implementation of his safety team, "there have been swift, positive turns within my department."

As a result of the coaching, Brady acknowledged he is much more aware of how he interacts with others. And, from what Brady stated, he believed his "behavior is at a good spot." In addition, Brady, although he could not recall the specifics, believed that his new boss, the owner, and the HR manager have all made comments during his employee performance reviews about his positive changes.

When I asked Brady of how this training may have impacted him outside of work, he said,

> I don't yell at my kids anymore. I try to take a different approach. I know I used to talk over my wife. I know I did, but now I don't. But I catch her doing it to me. I also don't raise my voice now at home. And I try to walk away when my wife and I are in an argument.

He then quickly, and humorously, added, "I tell my wife all the time that whenever she is ready, I can set her up with Coach Tabor."

Brady further described what I believed was an unexpected result of the training: He said he now sees "everybody else doing what I use to do. It just pops in my head. It is just like automatic now. I watch it and I just see it. And then I think, they could probably use Coach Tabor." Elaborating, Brady stated, "I am so conscious of it. When someone does it to me, or I see it—I immediately look right at it—I catch it right away." Interestingly, Brady noted, the CEO is one of the worst offenders at speaking over others.

As Brady and I entered our third and final session, I asked him what he considered to be his strongest attributes right now. He replied, "Passion, ability to get my work done, and leadership." Elaborating, Brady said,

> I've gotten to be quite a good leader through all of this training. Whereas, maybe, before I might have considered myself, whether I was leading or not, more of a

follower. Now, I've learned through all this training how to be that leader.

In addition, Brady recognized,

> In general, I have learned to just be a better person. I don't yell at my kids anymore; we have conversations. My wife and I are doing fine—we still yell—for fun, probably. But, you know, the way I handle myself is probably my best attribute.

Yet much as Brady began our first conversation, he expressed, "I think that my biggest attribute is I am a dad, first."

I perceived, throughout our conversations, that Brady, prior to the intervention, was passionate, a hard worker, and a family man. What I sensed, though, in Brady's response to this question about his strongest attributes right now was that he learned through this experience how to be a better leader and a better person. These attributes are now added to the positive attributes he had prior to working with Coach Tabor.

Looking Backward and Forward

During our last conversation, Brady reflected on various aspects of his life and learning. He disclosed,

> My whole life everyone told me I need to lower my voice and not be like I was on the edge of my seat—I have always been kind of jumpy—right on the edge of the seat kid. So, I've tried to change that.

Yet he confided, "I've never really thought I was all bad, either. I like the passion and the aggression."

Brady expressed learning the importance of situational awareness. Speaking briefly of the construction culture he experienced as a teenager, he remarked,

> I grew up in construction. And all it revolved around was guys "busting balls." Let's put it that way. So, you know, a guy that yells at you in the field; it wasn't like you go tell on someone. It was like you work it out later.

From what Brady articulated, it was not understood that a supervisor in construction may interact otherwise with the workers. Coach Tabor introduced him to how "the workers look at you differently once you become a supervisor." He explained he now knows it is important to be aware of

> where you do what and how you present yourself in front of people. It is important to understand the environment you are in—which is something I never did: "Okay, I am walking into an office, right now, so this is where it is strictly professional," or "I am walking in with my team and we are going to shoot the shit for a little while."

He stated, "As a construction worker, I never thought I would have to be more situationally aware—and I definitely wasn't doing it. I learned looking at the environment is a big thing: What environment am I walking into?"

Prior to the coaching with Tabor, Brady stated he had not previously attended any leadership trainings. However, after completing his sessions with Coach Tabor, he participated in leadership training sessions offered through a professional association. In addition, his company developed its own leadership series highlighting many of the elements Brady learned with Coach Tabor. One of the elements taught in the company's leadership training, Brady stated, was how to be the boss of your former peers. The topic of "how you manage to work with your buddy when you are now your buddy's boss" was discussed for an entire day.

Brady revealed that one of the lessons he learned through Coach Tabor is "the way it used to be with your peers isn't the way it is gonna be when you move up." Basically, Brady explained, "There are new expectations and new environments. But back then new leaders weren't really told that in a meeting—unlike now." As I contemplated our discussion on this topic, I gained appreciation for this organization which is purposefully creating training to develop better leaders, and I wondered how much Brady's experience may have had a role in initiating the program.

Brady described himself as "a very competitive guy." When he makes a commitment, he stated, "I give it my all—100%." The coaching process was no exception. Understanding Brady is a passionate, competitive, "all-in" person, I wondered to what he attributed his change. When I asked, Brady responded with,

> The threat. My job was threatened. I am not going to lie. That's what it was. That's what did it. My job was threatened so it forced me. But I am also a guy who goes all in. So I am not going to go in and waste the other guys', or my, time. So, I put the effort in. In the end, my job was threatened. And that was it.

I had also wondered if Brady ever thought he could not meet the expectations of his employer, and he replied,

> No. The only issue was the new boss incident that happened after the coaching process, but I attribute that to a different situation. I knew that once my job was on the line and they told me to do something, I would do it.

Ultimately, Brady said, even with the coaching being a requirement and it being challenging at times to evaluate himself and learn new behaviors, "the experience was very positive, and I took a lot out of it."

I wondered about Brady's thoughts of his placement along the journey: Would he consider himself to be on the journey? Was he near the end? Was the journey just beginning? In response to my question, Brady stated,

> I don't feel like I have more coaching work to do. I feel I have the ability to maintain the new skills and learn from the coaching, but I also feel that I have gotten out of the coaching process what I needed to get out of it and now it is time to move on. I see the abrasive behavior when I start doing it. If I start to regress, I notice it right away.

I understood his comment to mean he did not see the need for continued personal coaching. He now had an awareness and ability to make self-corrections when he saw himself slipping off the path.

In our last conversation, Brady revealed,

I am successful for my age. I own three properties, and I don't have any mortgages. I am doing pretty well. I am doing good. But I think for me, the biggest thing (obviously, there was an issue) was identifying that and then coming up with really being able to see where those issues were. And, more importantly, what really hit home for me, and I've said this more than once, is the ability to see it in other people. It is just there. So, now, I am very conscious of it. I definitely talked over people and that is something I try to not do at all anymore.

Chapter 7: A Narrative Account of Jimmy

While reviewing the workplace bullying literature, I discovered a couple of articles about a program for distressed physicians. Recognizing a connection in the purpose and reported results of this program with my research study and conceptual framework, I contacted a codirector of the program to seek assistance in soliciting a third participant for my study. The codirector quickly offered help, and I soon met Jimmy, who had participated in the program 14 years ago.

Jimmy and I first conversed in late April 2018. During this call, he confirmed he met all of the criteria for the study, and we spoke generally about the research and my need to obtain his informed consent. He was agreeable to promptly returning the signed form and setting up a time for us to talk about his journey. During this call, Jimmy briefly spoke of the importance of reflecting again on that situation, what he called "5604" (pronounced "five-six-oh-four"), stating he believed it would reinforce what he learned.

I found Jimmy to be amenable to many methods of meeting, and we ultimately agreed I would meet him in a couple of weeks at a coffee shop in the city where he resides. We also agreed that meeting 2 days one weekend and then following up in a couple of weeks for another conversation or two would work well for each of us. I was especially pleased that he seemed eager to contribute to this study. I was intrigued to hear from someone who began the journey many years ago. I wondered how his story would unfold.

On a Friday in early May, I flew from my home near Portland, Oregon, to a large city in a different part of the country. Upon my arrival, I drove a couple of hours through a magnificent scenic area to the city where Jimmy lives and practices medicine. After checking into my hotel, I drove by our agreed-upon meeting location—a coffee shop near downtown. Returning to my

hotel, I completed the last of my preparation for our meeting the next morning. I recall being eager to hear from Jimmy. I do not recall being nervous, though I anticipated that I would be because this was my first face-to-face conversation in this study.

The next day, I arrived at the coffee shop about 15 minutes early, at 8:45 a.m. It was a modern-styled shop—something like I would see in the Portland area. There was a sofa with a couple of chairs near a fireplace. There were high and low tables and two bar counters. Several people—mostly younger—were in the coffee shop. Some of them were working on their computers. This is a college town, and I wondered if some of these young people were college students.

The coffee shop was a casual and comfortable setting—a good place for a visit. However, as I looked around, people were scattered around enough that I could not find a place a little removed from other patrons. Jimmy and I would engage in a private conversation that could be easily overheard in this setting, and I had become concerned with where we could sit. I noticed some outdoor tables and chairs and walked outside to see if the temperature was sufficiently comfortable—and fortunately it was.

I ordered an iced chai and sat at one of the high tables looking toward the main entrance. I had seen Jimmy's picture online, and I had informed him of my description: graying shoulder-length hair, glasses, and a periwinkle cardigan. I anticipated we could identify each other. I first noticed Jimmy after he had walked through the main doors and began approaching me. He was tall—about 6'2". His hair was cut short—a common cut nowadays. He was thinner than I recalled from the photos I had seen online.

Jimmy and I approached each other as he reached out his hand first and asked, "Are you Lori?" I could tell I was now beginning to feel a little nervous, and it seemed he may have been

too. I asked if I could buy him a coffee, and he readily agreed. We engaged casually for just a few minutes while his order was prepared. I recall it being a comfortable conversation as we spoke about my drive to this city and that I had been through here once before, many years ago.

After obtaining Jimmy's coffee, we glanced around the coffeehouse. He suggested we take a look outside to see if there were any available tables. As we turned the corner of the building there were four or five unused metal tables with chairs. We took the first table. I mentioned I liked to sit in the sun and his preference was the shade, so the seating worked out well. Upon sitting, Jimmy removed his glasses, which had darkened. I presumed, based on an earlier comment he made, that he removed his glasses so I could more easily see his eyes.

We chatted only a few more minutes before I began to briefly speak of the study and ask if he would agree to letting me record our conversation. Pleased, he agreed to the recording. I proceeded to ask him how much time he had this morning. I did not want to overextend my welcome. Surprisingly, he said he had all day.

Introducing Jimmy

At the beginning of our first conversation, in response to my statement, "Tell me about you and your journey away from the use of abrasive behaviors in the workplace," Jimmy expressed, "I am a physician and an orthopedic surgeon." He explained that he is board certified and has been practicing medicine for 32 years. In describing his work, Jimmy casually expressed, "I do all kinds of complex surgeries and I continue to take call and fix broken things." Jimmy proceeded to briefly introduce me to aspects of his youth, education and medical training, marriage, and various physical activities he enjoys.

Jimmy is one of four children. He has two brothers and a sister. Jimmy mentioned that his father passed away in 1990, but his mother is alive and continues to reside in the state where

he grew up and where much of his family still remains. Growing up, Jimmy said, his father was in the military, so his family lived with his paternal grandparents. Because his grandfather built paper mills, the family moved around to wherever he was working. Jimmy expressed they moved "a lot."

Homelife for Jimmy and his siblings included being raised with fundamentalist Christian beliefs. He recalled there were a lot of rules, and "whippins" were anticipated when the rules were not strictly followed—even up into high school. He told of one occurrence, when he was about 14 years old, where he hid in the boys' locker room following PE class. He did not want others to see the belt marks on his body. Jimmy said, though, he had never felt like he had been abused. During our first conversation, Jimmy stated that many of the rules and the punishments, were, to him, unnecessary. And, as a younger person, he told himself, "I would never take that to my kids," and he told me, "I never did."

Jimmy briefly spoke of his academic career. He attended high school in a small town and after graduation moved to a city with a large university. Following his collegiate commencement, he proceeded to medical school. Jimmy explained that following medical school, he joined the military where he completed his surgery internship. He stated he was a general medical officer for about 2 years before being accepted into the orthopedic residency program. Following residency, Jimmy completed a spine fellowship and then taught residents for a few years as an assistant professor. Jimmy informed me he got out of the military in the late 1990s and proceeded into private practice. Not being finished with his formal education, Jimmy returned to school and earned an MBA about a year ago.

I learned Jimmy has been married for 36 years. He told me he and his wife have known each other since high school and they got married after graduating from college. A short 3

weeks after graduation, and without a honeymoon, Jimmy and his wife were living in a different city, and he began medical school. Their first child, a daughter, was born during Jimmy's sophomore year of medical school, and their second child, a son, was born a few years later. Jimmy stated his wife, a retired school teacher and administrator, currently resided in another state where she helped their daughter with her business. He mentioned he regularly saw his wife, daughter, and the grandchildren. Their son, Jimmy stated, was currently in his last year of medical school and was pursuing a career in an unrelated field of medicine.

Throughout our conversations, Jimmy revealed some of the challenges that he and his wife had had in their marriage. He described their marriage as "up and down—a lot." He said through the good times and bad times, stress had always been a part of their marriage. Jimmy admitted he had "always had a tendency toward negative thoughts" and that his wife would "call me out on that all the time." He further disclosed that he knew he had "always suffered from mood swings." His wife, Jimmy disclosed, had been "telling me for years I should get some help, but I never did." A few years ago, Jimmy wondered if their marriage was going to survive.

Jimmy stated he loved this area of the country. He enjoyed hiking and backpacking and mentioned he had probably gone on 15 multiday hiking trips into a nearby national park. I learned Jimmy had done a significant amount of scuba diving, though not much recently. An outdoors person, Jimmy told me he also used to mountain bike and downhill ski until he was injured in both sports. He then stopped those activities. The area where he resides, he mentioned, includes the vistas he had always longed for and the outdoor activities he enjoys. Jimmy suggested that "being in a place that you like is also important for the journey."

"5604"

Jimmy and I had only briefly begun our initial conversation when he revealed "5604" is a date: May 6, 2004. That day, he expressed, "was the day I got called out by my peers for bad behavior." He described it as "a very emotional day." After leaving the military in the late 1990s, Jimmy joined an orthopedic group as a full partner; he was one of seven or eight partners. Jimmy said he had been at this group for several years when, at the end of the May 2004 partner meeting, the senior partner requested nearly everyone leave the boardroom. The partners and only a couple of other individuals remained. Jimmy remembered the room went quiet. It was then that the senior partner said to Jimmy that they wanted to talk with him.

Before anything else was said, Jimmy recalled immediately becoming defensive. He told me "hairs went up on the back of my neck. My heart rate jacked up a bit. I started to feel anxious." He described it as "my radar screen is blipping something bad is coming my way." Jimmy stated, "Unbeknownst to me, I became a subject of the meeting. I was on the agenda but didn't know I was on the agenda."

Jimmy was told there had been two occurrences of unprofessional behavior reported to the president of the group. Jimmy then proceeded to explain each occurrence to me. The first situation, he disclosed,

> was an inappropriate comment I made in the operating room to one of my female employees who was assisting me with surgery. When I said it, it was just a flippant remark. The comment was actually sexist, in some ways, perhaps. It was certainly demeaning. It was meant as a joke, but it wasn't taken that way. The employee was assisting me put in a drain at the end of surgery (to drain away extra fluids). The comment was basically, "Don't let the drain come out. If it comes out, you'll have to bend-over and I'll have to shove it up your butt." It was meant as a joke and everyone went "ha ha ha." It was meant innocently.

Jimmy then described the second occurrence which happened in the clinic. He said,

It was a particularly busy day before EMR [electronic medical records]. There were stacks of charts and I had to dictate them. (This is in the era of dictation and transcription.) So, at the end of a frustrating and bad day, I shoved out of the way the physician assistant who was working with us. Kind of like, "You're in my space. Get out of my way." It was kind of aggressive, looking back on it. It was an aggressive move. Who knows—some people could consider it an assault in some ways, but it wasn't really. It was "get out of the way" type of thing. (Jimmy demonstrated the sideways motion with his hands.)

Jimmy revealed that being called out by his peers on those two specific behaviors

"elicited a flood of emotion." Even after 14 years, Jimmy seemed to easily recall his reaction.

He told me,

I couldn't even hold my coffee cup. Literally, I couldn't even talk. I think I just got up and left and went to my office and shut the door. I had to cancel my clinic that day. I became so emotional. . . . "How dare you call me out for that!"

Jimmy disclosed, "I wasn't going to harm myself, but it was like it kicked something in my

brain. I wondered 'Am I distressed? Maybe, I am burned out. Maybe, I am disruptive.'"

Jimmy confided that he broke down in his office: "It was such a defining moment." It was then,

in his office, that Jimmy made a conscious decision to make a change. If he did not, he admitted,

"I was going down a bad path."

A year prior to 5604, Jimmy had attended a professional education seminar conducted by

the state malpractice insurance company on the topic of distressed physicians. Jimmy explained

to me that he did not really know why he kept the business card with the hotline phone number

for distressed physicians, but he did. And he made that phone call, acknowledging to himself

that he was distressed. Once Jimmy confirmed with the counselor he was safe and not going to

harm himself, the counselor walked him through the next steps including setting up an intake

appointment at the program. Jimmy recollected that the intake was scheduled within the next 2

weeks. After cancelling the remainder of his appointments for the day, Jimmy left the clinic.

I sensed from our conversation that Jimmy was completely blindsided by the comments made that day by the senior partner. Jimmy confirmed my belief saying the comments about his conduct were "totally out of the blue." Jimmy further explained that he had "never ever been called out or criticized in this way. . . . To be called out on that—for the very first time—was a shock. No question about it." He acknowledged that other than what he and his wife talked about, "No one else had ever brought it up to me. Nobody sat me down and said, 'You know, Jimmy, I am concerned about you.' It wasn't like let's sit down and talk one-on-one. I was unprepared."

In listening to Jimmy, I wondered, prior to 5604, if he had ever really thought again about either of the occurrences. He remarked, that for him, those interactions were "just another day." He had not thought of them again until 5604.

Jimmy expressed, "You don't really ever know how others see you." He elaborated,

> I never intended to be that kind of person. I had never abused anybody. I had never abused my kids. . . . It's not who I am. That's not me. I don't shove people around. I never saw myself as an aggressive person. I actually try to avoid conflict. Making sexually inappropriate comments and jokes, that just isn't me.

Yet Jimmy acknowledged he had demonstrated those unprofessional behaviors to his coworkers. When looking in the mirror, Jimmy stated, "I always saw myself as a hard worker. I do good things and I work well." He further explained,

> I was a star pupil my entire life. I was a military officer—made it to lieutenant colonel. I got my commendation medals and all that stuff—all the signs of a perfectionist—all those things. That is what it takes to be a doctor.

In addition to being the model student and a hard worker, Jimmy said he had always tried to show respect for others. He did not see himself as someone who demonstrated bad behavior to fellow employees: "That isn't me," he reiterated.

Thinking back on the 2 weeks between the time of the occurrence and the intake interview, Jimmy recalled being not only angry but also embarrassed: "Wow, I said something that was inappropriate, and I shoved someone out of the way." Jimmy explained that the strong emotions and "embarrassment lasted for a while—maybe a week or two—it got better. I felt bad about it, but time passes on. The next newspaper article comes out and it shoves that one out of the way."

Jimmy also recalled that after scheduling the intake he felt some trepidation and fear as the scheduled intake meeting was approaching. Time has faded some memories, but Jimmy was fairly sure he wondered, "Should I cancel the intake?"

> I was thinking, "I'm over the initial emotional reaction. I am going to pay attention and I'm not going to do this anymore." But I kept telling myself, "No. I need to go through with this. . . . I made a decision to do something better, so I need to stick with that plan."

Jimmy during this time reasoned, "I am back to normal. I felt bad for a couple of days. I rationalized this and that. . . . I demonized them. . . . I blamed others." He explained, "The brain does all sorts of gyrations to get through crisis." Although Jimmy said he had those initial impulses, he stayed true to his initial commitment. He went to the intake interview.

The Intake

Jimmy drove to the city where the program was located and met with a psychologist for the intake interview. In this meeting, he talked about "what led him there." Jimmy also spoke of completing personality assessments and other psychological profiles. He did not recollect which assessments exactly but thought they were the "usual metric tools of that time." Jimmy explained that his involvement in the program was "totally confidential." He remarked, "If, as a physician, you have mental issues and it becomes known, it stays with you. So, this was all under the radar. . . . I kept it hush-hush. My wife knew."

The Program

About halfway through our first conversation, Jimmy informed me he had kept his program notebook and that he had reviewed everything earlier that morning. He said he had wanted to "rethink about all of this." Jimmy described the program as having an initial 3-day session and then six 1-day follow-up sessions during the next 6 months. The initial 3-day session began at 8:00 a.m. each day and lasted until 5:00 p.m. with a break for lunch. Jimmy described having a couple of hours of homework the first two nights, as well as between sessions. The program was approved for 45 continuing medical education credits, and he recalled it being "fairly expensive." Because Jimmy referred himself to the program, he personally paid the full amount. Most commonly, he believed, the expense of the program was paid by a referring association, frequently a medical group or hospital.

During the initial 3-day session, Jimmy remembered participating in a variety of activities. The tables were arranged in a circle with the leaders and the participants intermingled around the tables. The meetings, he recollected, were "intense and involved self-reflection and interaction in a group therapy dynamic." Jimmy quickly recalled that there were discussions, presentations, role-plays, and a family of origin activity. Early in the session, each participant told his story about what led him there.

I learned from Jimmy that there were six participants in the program—all of them male. The physicians, Jimmy explained, were primarily surgeons or other interventionists who handled complicated, very intense, high-level procedures. Jimmy described the physicians as highly skilled medical doctors who were at the program for a variety of reasons.

The leaders of the program, Jimmy recollected, included a physician (maybe a surgeon), an addiction specialist, a MS social worker, and two psychologists. Jimmy stated most of the

leaders were present the whole time. He remembered they took turns leading various activities.

I understood the leaders and the participants interacted with each other throughout their time

together.

Jimmy acknowledged his emotions were getting back to normal prior to attending the

first session. And he had questioned himself on attending the program: "Why would I want to

feel worse, again?" he wondered. Possibly as anticipated, and later confirmed, Jimmy's

emotions got "shook up" again. Jimmy revealed,

> There were times I was digging deep and looking at myself. It was painful. It was very,
> very painful. My family was not with me. I was in a hotel room. I had homework every
> day. I was looking at family of origin issues: How does how I was brought up affect
> me—my genealogy? What was in my life that led to this?

In compiling, presenting, and analyzing his family of origin through the genogram activity,

Jimmy discovered how deeply influenced he had been by the family of his youth. He revealed,

> There were some levels of abuse in the family. A history of alcoholism, remotely. My
> father's father was an abuser and probably a racist bigot. He grew up in the Deep South.
> There was also a lot of shame and guilt—it was just kind of built in. Looking back at my
> family of origin, psychologically, people probably had issues. That was painful—looking
> back at things when growing up.

As Jimmy spoke, I wanted to understand more closely what he meant by "shame and

guilt." After a few unsuccessful attempts at articulating what I thought he meant by those words,

Jimmy brought clarity by connecting it to him being a perfectionist. Jimmy disclosed, "I would

beat myself up for no really good reason . . . and then that would just drive me."

I also sensed Jimmy felt guilty of rule breaking even though he believed many of the

rules were completely unnecessary. In hearing Jimmy, I perceived during his youth, there was a

lot of feeling guilty. There was a lot of punishment. There was a lot of him beating up himself.

Jimmy provided me with an example illustrating shame he felt during his youth. Jimmy

disclosed he did not have complete bladder control until he was a teenager. He, into his teen

years, sometimes wet the bed. He did not tell anybody at the time. I sensed the shame for him at

that time was immense. He said eventually the bed-wetting stopped. He said he could have had

a urological problem or another type of physical issue, but the shame prevented him from telling

his parents. Jimmy said, growing up, he never spent the night at anyone else's home. He

disclosed, "I didn't want to stay the night elsewhere. What if I had had an accident?" As Jimmy

was telling me this story, I believed I was only slightly beginning to understand the concepts of

shame and guilt and how emotionally powerful the genogram exercise was for him as he

remembered aspects of his youth.

I learned from Jimmy that going through the program he added tools to his toolbox. He

was also encouraged. He recalled learning about triggering events and grounding techniques.

He also learned about anger management skills, assertive communication skills, effective coping

skills, and what drives behavior. Jimmy fondly described one of the psychologists, having an

"aha moment when it came to how I dealt with things." Jimmy explained,

> She provided me with a personal set of tools. It was just five statements that I still
> remember to this day: (1) Listen first before you speak, (2) breathe, (3) behavior not
> character, (4) use mental grounding techniques, and (5) not everyone thinks like you do.

Jimmy explained that the third and fifth statements are the most important for him. He revealed,

> In being called out by my peers, I felt like my core character had been attacked—my
> thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes. I felt, all of a sudden, that I'd been struck a blow. Yet it
> wasn't really me; it was what I was exhibiting to the world—the attitudes and all of those
> types of things.

I learned during our conversations how meaningful it was for Jimmy that this distinction was

made clear for him. He reiterated, in each of our discussions, "Remember it is behavior not

character." This particular phrase seemed to resonate deeply with Jimmy.

Jimmy stated that an important part of this program, the beginning of his journey, was the

reminder of the Stockdale paradox, a quote from Admiral Jim Stockdale. The quote,

paraphrased by Jimmy, is, "Retain the faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties. And at the same time, confront the brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they may be." I heard from Jimmy it was helpful to be reminded to keep the faith that you can prevail when faced with difficult situations. The reminder was encouraging to him. After Jimmy silently reminisced, he disclosed there had been difficulties during the past 14 years. He shared, "I got through them. I didn't lose that faith."

The Next 6 Months

During the next 6 months, Jimmy recalled traveling back to the program for six single-day sessions. He referred to this part of the program as critical. There was a need to determine if the behaviors were changing. He described the initial 3-day session as "the foundation and then the follow-up sessions as building on the infrastructure of behavioral change." Even as influential as the initial session was to Jimmy, he stated, "The most powerful thing happened after the initial 3-day course. It was what they called a 360 assessment." Jimmy asserted, "It opened my eyes."

The first 360, Jimmy believed, was conducted shortly after leaving the initial session of the program and a second one was completed 6 months later. Not recalling the exact specifics, Jimmy thought a third-party organization sent out the evaluations to numerous individuals who were selected to provide him with feedback. In addition to all of the group partners, Jimmy selected a few clinic staff and hospital staff to provide him feedback. It was important, Jimmy said, to "choose people who, I believed, knew me well-enough and who would give me an honest assessment." He continued, saying, "I wanted people who I could trust, and I believed would have integrity."

Jimmy informed me that that 360 evaluation had numerous quantitative questions. He expressed, "They tried to assess those things I did well and those things that were disruptive." Qualitative feedback was also solicited. Jimmy said that he also had to complete the two 360s: "They rate you and you rate yourself." I understood this step permitted him to compare his view of self to how other people perceived him.

I asked Jimmy about the feedback from the initial 360, and he promptly replied he really did not want to read the report: "Why do I want to make myself feel more bad again?" Jimmy said,

> I didn't want to know. It was almost like I have this envelope but I'm going to shove it aside. I didn't want to know. "Yeah, I have an issue. I'm going to fix it." I really didn't want to know. It was painful.

Then Jimmy acknowledged he was supposed to be learning and "this is part of it." He opened the envelope. Jimmy discovered he had rated himself less harshly than the others. He confided, "I didn't think of myself as bad as they did. I saw myself one way and they saw me another way."

Another part of the program, Jimmy stated, was to write down those things he was going to do after leaving each of the group sessions. Jimmy decided right after the initial session, upon returning from a 1-week vacation, he was going to use some of his newly acquired skills to engage in a conversation with the senior partner. As Jimmy told me of his decision, I imagined how the conversation could be easily derailed. Jimmy revealed,

> It was scary. It was scary. I was fresh out of my course. I was nervous—I knew it could devolve into something. It could become a battle. I have this newfound wealth of knowledge and I am a novice in it. I didn't want to be abrasive anymore.

In our conversation, Jimmy could not remember how he framed the invitation to the senior partner. He thought he may have said something like, "You know, I just want to talk about

things—what went on and what's happening." The conversation was at a neutral site and it

lasted 30–40 minutes. He remembered they had a glass of wine together.

I had wondered if Jimmy recalled much of the private conversation he and the senior

partner had. Responding, Jimmy replied,

> I can't remember—other than it was more of an expression of gratitude—thanking him: "You know, I was at a bad spot and you picked that up." I can't remember the exact words I used, but I acknowledged, they did the right thing. . . . It was more of an expression of gratitude for them doing the right thing. I think he expressed how much he actually valued me being a part of the group. I don't remember more than that—just the general positive feeling.

Jimmy elaborated,

> The senior partner is a good person, and I tried to put aside the animosities and "bury the hatchet." That [having the conversation] was probably the hardest thing to do—doing that one-on-one. . . . It was very important for me to do that. That was hard.

Speaking of the importance of that action, Jimmy said,

> I think when you do those difficult things, it makes what you just learned more powerful. You have maybe changed a neuron in your brain—or you wired a new pathway—you went around a bad spot. I had to cement my new behavior in place.

The response by the senior partner, Jimmy perceived as he thought back on the experience, was

relief: "Genuine relief," Jimmy reiterated. He believed the senior partner was relieved: "I did the

right thing."

Jimmy also decided to address everyone in the group practice, which he did about 6

months after the initial sessions in the program. Not recollecting the exact words, Jimmy stated

he said something to the effect of, "You know I haven't been doing right. I haven't been in a

good place, and I've been doing some work on this." Jimmy explained, "Part of that experience

was to apologize and to try and heal any bad things." With this experience, Jimmy recollected,

"I was affirmed by the staff. They loved me. They enjoyed what I did for patients—they saw so

much value in what I brought." Jimmy said,

I acknowledged—thanked them. I expressed gratitude to them. That was the power of it: "Thank you for helping me on my journey," sort of speak—not that I used those terms. It was just kind of like taking out the trash. You know, "garbage in, garbage out." Getting rid of the renters in the brain. It was taking out the trash—that's what it was. I think that is what you have to do. It was cathartic. I think science probably indicates there is some benefit to that—you just have to have the courage to go and do it.

Conversing with the entire organization, Jimmy disclosed, was not as difficult as speaking one-on-one with the senior partner.

About this same time, another 360 assessment was sent to the participants. When Jimmy reviewed the results, he discovered, "The overall scales went up." There was definitely a change: People perceived him differently. In the first 360, Jimmy stated, "I was in the red on a lot of the disruptive behaviors, and I moved into a much higher rating." In addition, he learned that how he rated himself and how others rated him were very close, unlike the first 360. Jimmy even acknowledged he may have even been harder on himself in some areas than others were, again, unlike the first 360.

As I listened to Jimmy, I wondered what he was experiencing emotionally prior to reading the results of the second 360. When asked, Jimmy revealed, "I was afraid. What if I didn't change? What if I am still viewed the same way?" He wondered if it would all be for naught. Jimmy discovered,

It was, actually, very positive to get the second 360 feedback. I made some improvements. Yeah, there are still a few areas here, but there were definitely some positive changes. That was good reinforcement to have.

"A Time to Leave"

Not long after the second 360 and the conversation with the entire organization, Jimmy decided it was time to leave the practice. He stated, "There were things that were never going to change in my practice." Jimmy disclosed that he had been unhappy with the partnership for a while. He did not like the lack of financial transparency by the senior partner and his wife, the

group manager. He was displeased that he was never going to be an equal partner. Lastly, he stated, he did not like that the buy-in to the practice was so high. Jimmy revealed, "I was not really happy where I worked at that time, and if lack of happiness at work would still be a cause of the behaviors, then I needed to change it." He said, "Sometimes a person just needs a change of environment, because sometimes the chance of recrudescing or falling off the wagon can happen. It was a time to leave so my wife and I started the process."

Jimmy informed me that he gave notice to his practice, that he was leaving, on April 1. He said, "They had no idea. I guess I blindsided them as well." Jimmy stated that he ended up at the new group practice about a year after he began the program—almost exactly—13 years ago. The new practice, Jimmy described, was all that he desired: "The transparency was refreshing." Jimmy explained that being transparent meant being fair—fairness, being one of his values: "I believe strongly in everyone being treated fairly so this new practice resonated with me in that way." Jimmy's wife, being a school principal, completed the school year prior to relocating.

Leading

In our second conversation, Jimmy and I discussed his journey of leading at his new practice and the hospital. The day of our second conversation, ironically, was the 14th anniversary of Jimmy being called out by his peers for his bad behavior. This anniversary date did not go unnoticed by either of us.

One of Jimmy's strengths, I learned, is context. Throughout our conversations, Jimmy frequently provided me with greater understanding by explaining the background or circumstances. When I asked Jimmy about becoming medical staff president, he provided me

with the larger context: the progression of his leadership roles at the practice and then the

hospital. He explained,

> As a new member of the group, our CEO perceived that I exhibited some characteristics that indicated maybe I could have a leadership role. So leading started in the group. I was named compliance officer in the group which meant I was making sure everyone was appropriately billing and coding to prevent fraud. Then I was assigned to the executive committee for the practice. And then, at one point, I did my tour for a couple of years as president of our group. So I was getting a little experience.
>
> And then I was approached by the presiding medical staff president at the hospital to see if I would be interested in being the chairman of the department of surgery. And I said, "Yeah. I would like to do that." I was pretty nervous about it, though. I am an introvert, by nature—I know that. So, getting into that situation, was uncomfortable for me. I decided to take that role, though, and by doing that it put me on the medical executive committee at the hospital. All of the department chairs sit on that committee. It is the ruling body, if you will, on the medical staff side of the hospital. It deals with peer reviews, credentialing, privileging, the quality of medical providers, bylaws—all of those things that hospital medical staff have to have. So I was department chairman for a couple of years.
>
> Then another medical staff president thought I would be a good person to be a future medical staff president. So I was then elected by the medical staff and I began my tenure. It is a 3-year track to get to become president: I was secretary-treasurer and then I was vice president, and then I came to the presidency role.

Reflecting on his role as medical staff president, Jimmy said he was honored to be elected by his

peers for this position. He described it is a hard job, but it was rewarding and he was glad he did

it.

I sensed from our conversation that Jimmy did not seek leadership roles. When asked if

he pursued these roles, he replied, "No. I didn't say, 'I want to be medical staff president.'"

Jimmy then connected his response to our discussion of the prior day. He elaborated,

> I saw myself one way, but then there was how others saw me. Well, others had previously seen me pretty negatively—they saw qualities where they thought, "Jimmy shouldn't be that way." Being selected to these leadership roles means that other people now see me in another way—a positive way.

Jimmy suggested it is important to be in tune to how others perceive you, to what others think of you. Jimmy described it as believing

> their perception is a real thing. If you still see yourself one way, and others see you as something different, your belief is, "I'm not the way others see me." Your belief is how you perceive yourself, even when others perceive you quite differently.

I gained insight when Jimmy suggested that we may think higher or lower of ourselves than others perceive us —it goes both ways. If others perceive us in a better or worse light than we consider ourselves, it is beneficial to reexamine how we view ourselves.

When I asked Jimmy to describe himself as a leader, he used the word "reluctant." He is a reluctant leader. He does not necessarily see himself as a leader beyond his surgical staff or a small team. He expressed comfort in leading a small group and reluctance in leading larger groups. Yet he acknowledged other people do perceive him as a leader of larger groups.

The Honoring of a Leader

The year prior to becoming the medical staff president, Jimmy confirmed, he had been named hospital physician of the year. Prior to meeting Jimmy, I had read online of this recognition and had seen a photograph showing the celebration of nurses in the orthopedic department. Jimmy explained the context of the award by saying,

> The entire organization submits names of physicians who exemplify certain qualities and characteristics based on how they deal with patients and that type of thing. There is a committee of previous physician of the year winners who participate and then they go through that list. They determine, from the submitted names, who gets to have the award that year. It is always announced in the month of March on National Physician's Day. I think a lot of hospitals do that. It is a big deal. You are chosen by your peers and the people that you work with. Everybody has their cheering section, so to speak. I don't work with a lot of staff at the hospital. My cheering section was all of the nurses on the entire orthopedic floor. They were great cheerleaders.

Jimmy recalled wondering, when he first arrived in town, if he would ever be able to win that award. Reflecting, Jimmy said,

Probably not, if I hadn't made some change in how I looked at things. So that was a great honor. Although all of us that get that award wonder, "Why me? I am no better than anybody else. I didn't deserve that." But you have to think of it as "I did." In other peoples' eyes they wanted me to have that award.

Making Sense: The Struggles

In our second conversation Jimmy explained that he had two demons he fought on a regular basis: worry and rumination. He confirmed, "I have a tendency to worry a lot because I want to make sure my patients do well." And he later affirmed, "Worrying about patients keeps me out of hot water." Jimmy confided he has had very few complications and his "track record in this area is pretty darn good." I heard in our discussions that there are positive aspects of worry, but I also heard worry can lead to rumination.

Rumination, to Jimmy, is where he "just thinks about failures." As someone who is "hardwired to negativity," he expressed, "It is a constant struggle" to think positively. In response to this hardwiring, Jimmy attempted to defeat the demons through thinking about the positive things he did that day. In essence, he "changes the channel." Otherwise, he expressed, the negativity can lead to wallowing in self-pity. As Jimmy spoke more about worry and rumination, I understood that it is important to him to control them—to know when to bring them out or to rein them in.

Jimmy asserted that worry and rumination is really a fear of failure. He disclosed that the fear of failure is a driver for him. Jimmy explained,

> I took every complication as a personal affront to failure. To me, that's what it was. Worry and rumination is a fear of failure. I would tell myself, "I'm a bad person because I didn't do this correctly" rather than, "Stuff happens. I did the best that I could."

Jimmy described himself as a perfectionist, and I sensed that it may be difficult for Jimmy to accept less than perfection. This thought caused me to wonder if he viewed as failure, anything

he perceived to be less than perfect. As I was thinking about measuring myself up against perfection, I could feel the heaviness of that burden.

Sometimes, Jimmy stated, he continues to have struggles, although the channel is now more quickly changed. He said, "Even to this day, anger, at times, can still stay with me—below the surface. That is one of the things I struggle with—always trying to step away." Jimmy said he also struggles with "appreciating how others perceive the environment," stating that it is important to have an "awareness of others and not just focus on myself."

With a tendency toward narcissism, Jimmy explained, he does not take criticism well. As I listened to his stories, I tried to comprehend the burden of the stresses he has felt over the years and those he continues to feel, as he confronts the brutal facts of his current reality, maintaining the faith he will prevail. Fortunately, Jimmy explained, narcissistic tendencies lessen with age, and consequently he is experiencing better balance.

Making Sense: The Occurrences

In our final conversation, while reflecting on the two called-out behaviors, Jimmy explained the occurrence at the end of surgery

> was just stupid—racist, sexist, oafish. I had a lack of awareness. The comment was inappropriate. The other behavior was a culmination of just relentless stress, frustration, poor coping skills, and negative thoughts—and things that were probably bigger in my head than they really were. I made a mountain out of a molehill, so to speak. My brutal realities, if you will, is that they weren't as realistic as I was projecting them in my mind, and it boiled over in that instant.

Describing his reaction when he pushed the physician's assistant, Jimmy said he was thinking, "Get out of my way. You're in my space. My stack is bigger than yours. I've got to dictate." Jimmy continued, saying,

> I was pissed off. I was mad at the day, perhaps. Maybe that day, I just had some of the worst patients ever. Maybe I had bad coping strategies. Maybe I had an

argument at home the day before. I don't know. There are all those triggers that lead up to that type of thing. It was wrong, wrong, wrong.

Pondering these occurrences, I asked Jimmy how he made sense of engaging in those two behaviors. He initial response was, "Stress. Just stress." After further reflection, he added,

It was just a culmination of stress, innate personality things (mood disorders), and shame and guilt from childhood. I struggled with family and life work balance, not being happy, and economics. I think the occurrences were a culmination of all these things. It wasn't like I wanted to be a consciously abrasive or abusive person . . . a perfect storm, I suppose.

I wondered what Jimmy thought of the two complainants. I also wondered how he responded to them following 5604. Jimmy stated he really liked both coworkers and that "they did good work." He disclosed though that "part of the embarrassment was that I hurt them as individuals." Recognizing it is difficult to recall details from 14 years ago, Jimmy best recollected that he went to them privately and said, "I am very sorry about what I said (or what I did). He confided, "I had to do that. I felt regret—a lot of regret. Part of the healing process was to own up to that. I had to own up to my sins, so to speak. I was asking for forgiveness."

Making Sense: "5604"

Reflecting back on the intervention, Jimmy acknowledged, "It was probably inevitable. It wasn't a matter of if, but when." Jimmy recalled, "I reviewed all the comments on the initial 360. Those behaviors were there. Those signs were there." Admittedly, Jimmy said, "I was not who I should have been. My coworkers saw me as a good person but someone who had gone off the slopes a little bit, so to speak." Jimmy seemed to understand the frustration of his coworkers when he remarked, "After a while, a person wonders, 'How much more of this can I take?' They just got tired of it."

While the signs may have been relatively new at work, possibly a year or two, I learned from Jimmy they had been demonstrated at home for years. Jimmy disclosed, "This is the way I

was at home: sarcastic comments, anger, going off on the handle. All of those types of things.

They were there all along. That is what my wife saw."

When thinking about 5604, and Jimmy's initial reaction to it, he said, "I felt victimized. I

believed my character had been assassinated. The story I first told myself was, 'I am a bad, bad

person.'" I understood that he was also telling himself, "This is unfair" and asking himself,

"Why are they doing this to me?" Jimmy revealed that his strong emotions of fear, anxiety, and

anger from 5604 were "so powerful that it harkened me back to all of those things my wife had

been telling me for all those years: 'You need to see somebody. It would help you.'"

Jimmy frequently spoke about 5604 being an intervention and that his brain was shocked

into thinking differently. He realized how he saw himself was not fully consistent with how

others saw him. This new information, I sensed, deeply impacted him. He admitted, "Shock

therapy works, sometimes. It usually causes an action of some sort." Jimmy said the discussion

at the partner meeting, an "informal conversation, was all it took" for him to take appropriate

action. Reflecting back, Jimmy realized, "My mindset was primed to be able to make that

change. A switch was turned on." Pondering, Jimmy said, "The seed had already been planted.

So 5604, I guess you could say, became the fertilizer." Jimmy deduced, "In order to make a

decision like that there had to be kind of a build up to it in some way. I guess that is the only

way to explain how I came to that self-awareness at that time."

Making Sense: Not Seeing

I was curious how Jimmy made sense of not really "seeing" the abrasive behaviors that

others were noticing. I also wondered if, upon reading the report, he recognized those behaviors

in himself. After pondering these questions, Jimmy revealed,

> I got it. I got it. I had been going around with blinders on most of the time. My world
> was focused on what was in front of me and I lost my peripheral vision. I was not in tune

to the pulse, if you will. That's what got me in trouble. It was a lack of self-awareness, a lack of situational awareness—let's put it that way. For me, I had no situational awareness.

Further reflecting upon not being situationally aware, Jimmy stated,

I was doing my work. I was doing my thing. I had good days and bad days. Who doesn't? I had lacked situational awareness for years. Years. It was just an ingrained behavior, perhaps a reaction, to things in some ways. It didn't take me long. Again, I didn't want to open the envelope, because I didn't want to know [the results of the first 360]. I knew the statements were true. I did all those things.

I learned from Jimmy that the 360 was not only a tool to know how other people see you, it was a "powerful instrument to change," that is, as he says, "if you take it the right way."

Reflections of the Journey

Jimmy disclosed that prior to my contact, he hadn't thought about May 6, 2004, in a while. But he did identify that day as the beginning of his journey. Jimmy stated 5604 is just a shorthand way to remember, "I don't want to be that way ever again." Reflecting back to the difficult beginning of his journey, Jimmy stated, "My group partners did me a favor actually. They did an intervention on me. It was shock therapy which shocked the brain into doing something different in recognizing the need to make a change." I heard from Jimmy that it was the catalyst for prompting him to make a change.

When I asked Jimmy during our first conversation about the immediacy and the difficulty of the journey away from abrasive workplace behavior, Jimmy expressed, "I never did it again. It was done. It was done. To this day, I am very careful. I do not make sexual or racial jokes. I never ever did that again." Inquiring into his assertion, I asked, "There was no more of the joking or pushing?" Jimmy responded, "None. It went away. Never ever again. . . . Those things were not hard to give up."

Jimmy spoke of the benefits of his changes. This process, he stated, "allowed me to maybe develop better communication skills, give me more empathy, and give me better ability to understand both sides of things without me being reactionary and confrontational." I also understood, from Jimmy that he believes he would not have risen to the leadership levels he has if he had not projected these newly developed qualities. On a personal level, Jimmy expressed,

> Having gone through the program, I gained actual insight into my own behaviors and I developed some level of emotional intelligence. The whole thing has just helped me better understand who I was—my evolutionary journey. I had to learn to like myself. I am at a much better place now.

"This whole thing," Jimmy confirmed, "has helped me grow as a person."

Not long after beginning our fourth conversation, I asked Jimmy if anything unexpected happened on his journey. He replied,

> There was nothing unexpected, other than it is arduous. I had to be vigilant all the time. I always had to be constantly monitoring. It takes up a lot of energy. I am wired one way and I knew I had to focus some level of mental energy to keep things on track. Over time it got easier. As I continued to develop these skills, and they become habits, they became more automatic. For a while, it was constant vigilance. Maybe within the first 6 months, I was worried if I said or did something wrong. I always worried. I was always on edge. I was thinking I was doing the right things here, but somebody may not think so. Maybe something is going to come back. I never knew. I was on edge a lot. I don't feel that way, now.

Jimmy continued,

> For me, the journey will always be a struggle because I am struggling with myself—my own values and beliefs. The unexpected thing was how hard it was going to be to continue. That's why the journey analogy is a good one. It never stops, really.

The Next Chapter

Jimmy told me he was entering the fourth quarter of his career and was contemplating his career and living options. In many ways, I sensed, he was again entering a stressful time of

transition and decision-making. I heard questions of contemplation: "Do I move?" "What will the partner's think?" "Am I letting my partners down?" "Will they be angry?" An irony I heard from Jimmy was that he is "experiencing the same thought processes—yet handling it much better." Jimmy shared that his wife expressed he is "holding up pretty well this time." Analyzing the current time of contemplation and his response to it, Jimmy expressed, "I think that just goes to growing as a person and understanding how stress evolves in you."

On a personal level, when thinking of the future, Jimmy expressed,

> I hope to remain married. We've weathered a bad storm. I think there is a good chance that our marriage will continue on. I will continue to work on relationships and retire comfortably. That is pretty much what I want.

Jimmy pondered the possibility that "there may be more of 'ours together' rather than 'me alone.' It was 'me alone' making the decision last time." Adding to these thoughts, Jimmy said,

> My wife and I have lived apart for various reasons—mainly because this place, while she liked living here, it wasn't her "cup of tea." And maybe the next place could possibly be a way to reunite, in a way, and create the final chapters.

Winding down our final conversation, Jimmy asked a question of himself: "How will people remember me?" His response: "I want to be remembered well. I don't want to be remembered as 'that guy.'"

Chapter 8: The Developmental Experience of Three Formerly Abrasive Leaders—

Disruption, Awakening, and Equipping

In late winter and early spring of 2018, three formerly abrasive organizational leaders and I inquired into their stories of the movement away from the use of psychologically aggressive behavior in the workplace. These leaders, following intervention and executive coaching or training, improved their interpersonal workplace behavior and management strategies. In this narrative inquiry, I sought to understand their experience.

This chapter begins with a discussion of how I came to this inquiry, an explanation of the research method, and an introduction to three organizational leaders. Next is a discussion of three narrative threads that emerged through this inquiry: disruption, awakening, and equipping. In the following sections I present implications for theory and practice. Last, I acknowledge limitations, suggest future research, and provide an afterward.

My Introduction to Bullying in the Workplace

My introduction to bullying in the workplace primarily came from hearing stories of coworkers who believed they were on the receiving end of psychologically aggressive behavior by organizational leaders—most commonly their direct supervisor. During the span of more than 10 years, as I spoke with and observed these coworkers, I noticed emotional upheaval. These workers, whom I believed to be highly skilled, were distraught.

The leader placed unnecessary and burdensome demands on them. They believed they had not only the requirements of work, but also the added burden of working with a leader who caused disruption. The leader made work life more difficult. Frequently, I heard stories of intimidation, micromanagement, belittling, excessive demands, and humiliation. These coworkers, my friends, felt disrespected and harassed by their direct supervisor.

Unfortunately, the stress commonly affected these individuals at home. Many coworkers were not successful at leaving their burdens at work. Some coworkers wondered if they should look for another job. Life, however, was complicated. Kids were in school. The spouse liked his job. There were bills to pay. Relocating would be difficult. Contemplating life-changing work and family decisions was stressful. These coworkers were not only suffering at work, they were now suffering at home. Many coworkers believed the situation was hopeless. They felt stuck.

Trying to find relief, many coworkers attempted to transfer to another department. They also spoke with other coworkers on finding solutions. As coworkers talked amongst themselves, they realized when prior issues had been reported to management, nothing changed. Workers eventually concluded, "Leadership doesn't care." Frequently, if an internal job change did not occur, the worker qualified for extended medical leave, voluntarily left the organization, or retired early.

The stories of these coworkers were widely circulated in the workplace and thought of as accurate descriptions of working with a destructive leader. Observing this harmful dynamic, I, and many other workers, constantly wondered why other leaders did not intervene.

An Introduction to Abrasive Leadership

Almost 6 years ago I attended a 1-day training session titled Solving the Problem of Abrasive Leadership. The presenter, Dr. Laura Crawshaw, had over two decades of experience in coaching several hundred executives on developing less destructive interpersonal management strategies. Dr. Crawshaw explained her method uses action research to assist the leader in developing empathy and emotional intelligence.

Dr. Crawshaw defined abrasive behaviors as "any behavior between the executive and coworkers that creates emotional distress sufficient to disrupt organizational functioning" (Crawshaw, 2005, p. 3). Following numerous years of executive coaching, Crawshaw identified the five most commonly demonstrated abrasive behaviors. They are "overcontrol, threats, public humiliation, condescension, and overreaction" (Crawshaw, 2013b, p. 6). I was intrigued with what I heard that day. Maybe there is help for changing what I had been observing in the workplace.

Coming to Inquiry

About 3 years ago, I began reading about psychologically aggressive behavior in the workplace and discovered there are a variety of terms and definitions used to describe misbehavior in the workplace. Although workplace bullying "tend[s] to be the most consistently used term throughout the research community" (Branch et al., 2013, p. 280), a significant amount of research is conducted using the term abusive supervision. While reading through the literature, I discovered that much of what I was reading was what I commonly saw and heard in the workplace. Workers on the receiving end of psychological aggression felt targeted; the actions by the leader seemed deliberate and personal. Coworkers who felt targeted by their leaders were depressed and anxious. Much of what I read in the literature was what I noticed in the stories told and retold at work.

The concept of destructive workplace behavior, a global phenomenon, is studied in numerous disciplines and combinations of disciplines using a variety of conceptual terms. However, the perspective predominantly studied was that of the perceived target using quantitative methods (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018; Samnani, 2013). A call for hearing from the accused perpetrator began with Rayner and Cooper (2003). Subsequently, there have been

numerous calls for qualitative studies seeking the voice of the accused perpetrator (Branch et al., 2013; Rai & Agarwal, 2015; Samnani & Singh, 2012).

Even with the articulated need to hear the voice of the accused, there are only ten studies of that voice (Bloch, 2012; Castle, 2014; Crawshaw, 2005; DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012; McGregor, 2015b; Samenow et al., 2013; Zabrodska et al., 2014). Of these studies, only four researchers explicitly sought the voice of organizational leaders who (a) had been perpetrators of abrasive behavior (Crawshaw, 2005; Harrison, 2014) or (b) had been accused of being a perpetrator of bullying (Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012). And, as of December 2018, there were no published studies of the experience of the leader who went through intervention and training and who no longer had complaints of abrasive behaviors. Through my study, I determined I would seek this distinctive, unheard, and important voice.

I anticipated something may be learned from this hard-to-reach group that could expand the knowledge of abrasive leaders. Maybe in listening to the formerly abrasive leader, I could gain insight into how to assist leaders in developing less destructive management strategies. Consequently, something could be learned about how to reduce suffering in the workplace.

I anticipated there would be stories of personal development from these leaders. Prior to conducting my study, I read numerous works of Robert Kegan and Jack Mezirow—two respected theorists of adult development. From their writings, I identified four-shared concepts I believed would be helpful in understanding the experience of the formerly abrasive leader. These concepts are impetus of change, assumptions, blindness, and meaning making. In addition, I explored how Kegan and Mezirow articulated the concept of emotions within their respective theories.

Narrative Inquiry: Method and Phenomenon

Seeking the firsthand voice of the formerly abrasive leader of his developmental journey, this study had one research question: How does an organizational leader describe and make sense of the movement away from the use of abrasive behavior? I chose narrative inquiry, a "profoundly relational form of inquiry" (Clandinin, 2007, p. xv) that honors individuals and their experiences, as an effective method in generating knowledge from leaders who could be hesitant to speak.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996, 1998, 2000) conceptualized narrative inquiry as method and phenomenon. Built upon Dewey's (1938) experiential theory, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained,

> Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual and social. (p. 20)

Using this method to inquire into the leaders' stories encouraged exploration and collaboration as each leader and I sought to understand and co-compose his experience.

There were three criteria for the participants: (a) the organizational leader attended coaching, training, or intervention sessions due to the use of abrasive behaviors; (b) at least 2 years had passed since the initial session; and (c) a coach or other professional confirmed the leader had no (or few) current reports of abrasive behavior. Potential participants were excluded if they did not speak English or if the leader did not acknowledge his prior use of abrasive behavior.

To locate participants, I reached out to an executive coach who contacted several other coaches. Many of these coaches contacted former clients whom they knew met the criteria for

this study. Most of the potential participants declined to participate. Eventually, through the dedicated help of the initial executive coach and a codirector of a professional development program, three organizational leaders (all male) agreed to inquire into their experiential journey away from the use of abrasive behavior.

The first leader to engage in this inquiry was Vincent.[2] He was the president and CEO of an insurance company. Vincent and I engaged in six 30-minute phone conversations over the course of 2 months. The second leader, Brady, was the safety director at a gas and underground utility construction company. He and I spoke by phone on three occasions spanning 5 weeks for a total of about 130 minutes. The third leader, Jimmy, was an orthopedic surgeon. He and I met in person on 4 days for a total of about 5 hours.

Following the last inquiry session with each participant, I prepared the first draft of his narrative account. The account was shared with each participant where feedback was encouraged, including suggestions for change. The narrative account became a co-composition as we edited and refined the account until we both believed the narrative represented the experience of the leader's journey away from abrasive behavior as well as our time together. Each narrative account came to approximately 25 pages (see Chapters 5–7).

Becoming Acquainted With Three Formerly Abrasive Leaders

Even though I considered myself a longtime observer of human behavior, when this study began, I was a novice inquirer. As someone seeking to learn about an experience that may be difficult to discuss, I wondered if I had sufficient capabilities to inquire into this sensitive area of personal development. I also wondered if these leaders would be reflective, analytical, open, and honest during the inquiry. And if so, would they trust me to co-compose their experience. Upon

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[2]Pseudonyms are used for names of participants.

meeting each participant, I was soon put at ease. These leaders welcomed the inquiry. Cumulatively, the inquiry involved in excess of 10 hours of recorded conversation, 250 pages of transcriptions, 50 pages of field notes, and 75 emails.

I began our inquiry by stating, "Tell me about you and your journey away from the use of abrasive behavior in the workplace." These three leaders shared stories of their personal and work lives. There were stories of aspirations and shortcomings. There were words of grief and words of pride. There were stories of personal struggles. There were also stories of overcoming. There were stories of long ago and yesterday. Each of these stories seemed to have a place in understanding the experience of moving away from using abrasive behavior.

These leaders described themselves as hardworking. They seemed driven to excel. They were also accomplished. At some point in their careers each leader, while working full-time, returned to college to earn a second degree. Vincent obtained an MBA early in his working career so he could be better prepared to lead an organization. Brady returned to school to obtain a safety degree permitting him to be better prepared for his current role. Jimmy, thinking he may be interested in shifting into administration, recently earned an MBA. Furthermore, each leader expressed the need to increase the number of tools in his proverbial toolbox. Increasing knowledge and developing skills to better accomplish their work seemed especially important to these leaders.

I was particularly pleased to sense their graciousness at permitting me a glimpse into who they were, who they are, and who they were becoming. They acknowledged their behaviors were inappropriate and they sought ways to further improve themselves once they began to understand the significance of the problems. There seemed to be a genuine desire and effort at honest self-reflection and inquiry.

Narrative Threads

Narrative inquiry, in addition to presenting co-compositions of individual narrative accounts, explores the presence of narrative threads that are woven throughout and across individual accounts. The experience under study consequently may be more deeply understood by identifying and analyzing resonate threads that are interwoven across time, place, and people. This secondary level of analysis has also been described as "listening for the melody of a song" (Rogers, 2007, p. 110).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advised inquirers to look continually for tensions, continuities, and gaps across narrative accounts. After rereading each account numerous times, I looked for "resonances or echoes that reverberated across accounts" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132). After identifying several concepts that seemed interwoven within and across accounts, I grouped and regrouped similar concepts together as I contemplated narrative threads that (a) shaped the overall story, (b) helped deepen the understanding of the experience, or (c) revealed the participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In addition, I continually revisited the individual accounts and evaluated whether there were other threads I had previously not considered.

There is a hazard in the naming and writing of narrative threads: Complex and very personal experiences may be reduced or oversimplified. In looking for tensions and conflicted possibilities within and across accounts, I was constantly reminded of the complexity of unfolding lives. Understanding the experience for these leaders is more complex and dynamic than these identified threads or the ensuing discussion, three emergent threads were identified: disruption, awakening, and equipping. Below, is an introduction of each narrative thread and the retelling of a sampling of stories or reflections by Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy.

Disruption. During our inquiries I heard stories of mental, behavioral, social, and emotional disruption. For these three leaders, the experiential journey away from abrasive behavior included disruption.

Vincent. Vincent (the CEO and president), told stories of disruption at work when he was no longer able to sufficiently manage the challenges of increased organizational goals and his expanding external board commitments. He described himself as "spiraling out of control" during, what he called, "the 18 months." He felt "compressed for time" with needing to leave work to attend to external responsibilities. He revealed, "It kind of made me into . . . the only thing I can think of is . . . a teapot that is ready to blow." Vincent divulged "the 18 months" was intense.

Vincent was embarrassed when the three board chairs (to whom he was accountable) approached him about his deleterious conduct saying, "We've got to address it." He expressed being fearful of losing his job and that possibly it was too late to make sufficient change. He wondered if he would remain as the leader of the organization he led and helped build during the past nearly 20 years. He said he did not challenge what the board chairs had heard; he immediately acknowledged the vast majority of their comments were true.

Vincent admitted he had used inappropriate behavior in the workplace—including publicly berating employees when expectations were not met. Some employees had felt threatened, although Vincent said that was not his intention. He had caused disruption at work and now his work life was being disrupted. It was clear, Vincent admitted, he had to change his behavior, which had become counter to his prior demonstration of, and his continued desire to be, an authentic servant-leader. Vincent recognized he had been unable to make the needed changes without the intervention and insistence of the board chairs.

Vincent described the executive coach as "very transparent and very clear." She "documented in living color all of the abrasive behaviors." The 360 feedback he received was "hard-hitting," and the coach, "brutally honest." Vincent had not realized, until the 360 how "people up and down the flowchart saw my lack of emotional intelligence." It was made clear to Vincent: He had to change.

Brady. Within a year, Brady (the safety director) explained the organization doubled the number of construction laborers. Brady described the increased organizational growth without any additional help in his department as "too hard." Brady said he was "completely overwhelmed." In listening to Brady, I understood he thought he was trying to accomplish the work that five individuals now complete. He felt stressed with the challenges of meeting deadlines and getting workers qualified. An incident with a worker where Brady "slammed the door on his face" after yelling and swearing at him led to a HR complaint. Explaining, Brady said, "I just snapped."

The owner of the company and the HR manager met with Brady and required he participate in executive coaching to improve his behavior. Brady understood if he chose not to attend, he would be fired. Brady, somewhat surprised at the company's reaction, said, "I didn't necessarily know that what I had done was . . . a firing offense." The organization paid for the coaching, which felt good to Brady. However, Brady realized he was "on thin ice."

There was further disruption for Brady when he and the coach read through the initial 360 report. He said, "I didn't agree with all of it. Some of the things that were said were so far off-base to me, it wasn't even worth me bothering with them." Brady desired a fair assessment and it was challenging for him when he believed a worker was not being truthful. Responding to what Brady received as unfair or inaccurate feedback he said, "I flat out told my coach 'I am not

accepting that, and I won't even discuss it.'" Brady acknowledged the most challenging part of the experience for him was "having to listen to what people were saying about me—having to take that—and then trying to understand what I have to do to make myself better."

Jimmy. Jimmy (the surgeon), easily recalled his reactions to being "called out by his peers" at the end of a monthly partner meeting. The date was May 6, 2004. Jimmy called it "5604." He said,

> I couldn't even hold my coffee cup. Literally, I couldn't even talk. I think I just got up and left and went to my office and shut the door. I had to cancel my clinic that day. I became so emotional. . . . "How dare you call me out for that!"

Jimmy said he broke down in his office. He wondered if he was distressed or, possibly, burned out. Jimmy said, "It was such a defining moment." He revealed, "I had never been called out or criticized in this way . . . to be called out on that—for the very first time—was a shock. No question about it. . . . I was unprepared." To Jimmy, the comments about his conduct "were totally out of the blue."

Realizing he "was going down a bad path," Jimmy privately reached out to an external program for assistance. The multiday 6-month program was emotionally difficult. Jimmy revealed he was "digging deep and looking at myself. It was painful. It was very, very painful." He wondered, "How does how I was brought up affect me? What was in my life that led to this?"

Part of the program included obtaining feedback from coworkers using a 360 assessment. Jimmy recalled he received the results not long after the initial session. He admitted he did not want to read the feedback:

> I didn't want to know [the results]. It was almost like, "I have this envelope but I'm going to shove it aside." I didn't want to know. "Yeah, I have an issue. I'm going to fix it." I really didn't want to know. It was painful.

Jimmy revealed in our last conversation that he knew he had been demonstrating those behaviors communicated to him by his coworkers. He admitted that they were what his wife had been seeing for all those years.

Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy shared stories of intense disruption. Prior to intervention, these three leaders were extremely stressed with workloads and commitments. In addition, Jimmy revealed he also struggled with some innate tendencies that contributed to his dissatisfaction with work and life in general. These three leaders were highly stressed for a year or more before being approached by a superior about their abrasive behavior. Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy, it seemed, had reached their capacity to meet or exceed continued high expectations that they, or the organizations, had placed upon them.

The subsequent intervention, the coaching or training, and the 360 process also entailed disruption. Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy sought to improve themselves, their social interactions, emotional intelligence, and their management strategies. Each leader, in his own unique manner expressed how arduous the journey was as he sought to improve himself. Learning new ways of thinking and doing while also developing emotional intelligence was challenging. There was disruption for these three leaders as they experienced the journey away from abrasive behaviors. They also experienced times of awakening, the second narrative thread.

Awakening. In the literature there is ongoing discussion of whether an accused is aware of his behavior and the impact it has on coworkers. Interestingly, the leaders in this inquiry spoke of being aware yet unaware. They also described partial or growing awareness. The leaders, when reflecting on their experience, frequently discussed an increasing awareness. Pondering the stories of these leaders and their experiences of awareness, I conceptualized their increasing awareness as *awakening*. Awakening, as a narrative thread in this study, means

movement along a continuum; it is becoming more aware. The movement may be swift or not.

Below are stories or reflections from the leaders that illustrate awakening.

Vincent. Reflecting on "the 18 months," Vincent knew his behaviors were "wrong and unacceptable." Thinking of his behavior during this time Vincent expressed,

> I could see it [the abrasive behavior] creeping up . . . I was seeing myself, almost in my own movie—losing my cool . . . so there was some, or a lot of, self-awareness . . . I could see it, but I didn't do enough, obviously, to make any corrective actions.

Vincent acknowledged he was aware his abrasive behavior was destructive. Yet he revealed his initial response to his increasing abrasive behavior was to expand his external commitments. Thinking back to "the 18 months," Vincent divulged he had some level of awareness of his unacceptable behavior yet an unawareness of how his poor behavioral decisions compounded his own workplace difficulties and increased his abrasiveness. Vincent came to understand that being self-aware of his "wrong and unacceptable" behavior without taking effective corrective action was not sufficient.

Vincent told stories of coming into greater awareness of the impact of his behavior. He awakened to how his negative interactions with his VPs affected the morale and efficacy of the entire organization. He also awakened to how his employees would respond to him if they thought he would become angry. Through feedback, Vincent became aware that his employees were

> cowering in the background and they wouldn't give me information that they think I might perceive as not positive because I might get angry. It really affected the authenticity of the company because people would shy away from interacting with me if it looked like I was having a bad day.

Vincent awakened to the detrimental impact he had been having on his coworkers and the organization.

Vincent also described awakening to the depth of personal hurt with some of his VPs. He came to realize the "abrasive behavior was pretty pervasive, but it particularly hurt three people." Vincent came to understand that the mending of those relationship required "rebuilding trust." He also revealed the "repairing of relationships definitely took longer than the macro improvement." Building trust, he came to realize, took time and patience.

Vincent was awakening to the need to develop emotional intelligence. Now, Vincent declared, emotional intelligence is "top of mind."

Brady. Brady awakened to how role dynamics changed once he moved into a leadership position. He learned "the workers look at you differently once you become a supervisor." Brady explained,

> I grew up in construction. And all it revolved around was guys "busting balls." Let's put it that way. So you know a guy that yells at you in the field. It wasn't like you go tell on someone. It was like you work it out later.

Prior to coaching, Brady had not realized that a movement to management, where he wielded greater authority, would change his relationships with the laborers. He learned that workers saw him differently once he became a leader. He was no longer one of the guys "in the field."

With the 360 feedback, Brady began awakening to how he presented himself and how others perceived him. He confided, "I learned from the 360 comments that in the past I could be a little bit abrasive and rough." Prior to coaching, Brady said he never thought about being situationally aware or considering his audience prior to engaging with them. He admitted he had not been aware of the need to consider where the worker "is coming from." He stated, "It took a situation like this for me to realize, in a leadership role, I have to look at it from the worker's perspective as well." Brady's comments indicate an awakening of his emotional and social intelligence.

Brady said he now sees "everybody else doing what I use to do. It just pops in my head. It is just like automatic now. I watch it and I just see it. And then I think, they could probably use my coach." Elaborating, Brady stated, "I am so conscious of it. When someone does it to me, or I see it—I immediately look right at it—I catch it right away." Yet not only does Brady recognize it in others, he notices if he begins to interrupt or speak over another person. During our inquiry into his experience, Brady began a few times to speak over me. Within a few words, he stopped and apologized. Brady expressed surprise at being able to see a behavior that he once did not see in himself or others.

Jimmy. Jimmy went through intervention 14 years prior to our inquiry. Having a personal interest in how the brain works, Jimmy revealed he had spent significant time thinking of, or reflecting upon, his life and the inner workings of his brain. Jimmy shared many stories of awakening to personal insights.

The results of the first 360 indicated Jimmy's coworkers saw him quite differently than he saw himself. Jimmy said he saw himself "better than others did." In essence, individuals rated him as more disruptive than he rated himself. Over time, Jimmy began awakening to the concept of perception and how a person's perception is his reality. Jimmy stated,

> If I still see myself one way and others see me as something different, my belief is I'm not the way others see me. My belief [of who I am] is how I perceive myself, even when others perceive me quite differently.

Awakening to the perception of others gave Jimmy insight into the importance of examining self partially by looking through the eyes of others.

Jimmy, discussing the two reported occurrences of unprofessional conduct, acknowledged he had not thought again of either event until "5604." To him, those events had been "just another day." Although, following his initial responses of anger and embarrassment,

he began awakening to possible causes for the behaviors. The incident at the end of surgery,

Jimmy explained, "was just stupid—racist, sexist, oafish." He came to believe it was caused by

a lack of situational awareness. He had not been picking up on what was going on around him.

The second occurrence involved Jimmy shoving aside a respected coworker. Awakening

to what may have attributed to that situation, Jimmy believed, it

> was a culmination of just relentless stress, frustration, poor coping skills, and negative
> thoughts—and things that were probably bigger in my head than they really were. I made
> a mountain out of a molehill, so to speak. My brutal realities, if you will, is that they
> weren't as realistic as I was projecting them in my mind, and it boiled over in that instant.

Jimmy, awakening to his abrasive behavior admitted his words and behavior in these occurrences

were "wrong, wrong, wrong." Contemplating what had led him to the use of the abrasive

behaviors, Jimmy said,

> It was just a culmination of stress, innate personality things (mood disorders), and shame
> and guilt from childhood. I struggled with family and life work balance, not being happy,
> and economics. I think the occurrences were a culmination of all these things. It wasn't
> like I wanted to be a consciously abrasive or abusive person . . . a perfect storm, I
> suppose.

Over time there was an awakening to his beliefs and thoughts about what contributed to his

abrasive behaviors.

Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy provided stories that indicated they, at the time of their

coaching or training, did not have a strong ability to recognize how their (a) coworkers were

impacted by their behavior, (b) coworkers were perceiving them, and (c) own self-control was

noticeably lacking. Neither did these leaders have a sense of the strong emotions they were

likely evoking in those around them. These three leaders, however, also offered reflections

which illustrated their developing EQ. Their journeys entailed awakening to the importance of

emotional intelligence. And for Vincent emotional intelligence is now "top of mind." Vincent,

Brady, and Jimmy shared stories of events and reflections across time that supported the second

narrative thread of awakening. A third narrative thread that deepened the understanding of the experiential journey of the these formerly abrasive leaders is equipping.

Equipping. These leaders spoke of the importance of learning and developing. As previously mentioned, Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy returned to college to earn additional college degrees to help them be better prepared for future endeavors. Each leader also engaged in counseling or anger management training. These leaders were committed to the executive coaching process. And when the journey became arduous, they persevered. Below are some of their stories and reflections related to this narrative thread of equipping. In some reflections the leaders recalled the importance of feeling encouraged and supported as they were equipping themselves.

Vincent. Vincent believed the board chairs (to whom he was accountable) were supportive of him and wanted him to succeed in changing his behavior. When Vincent first met with the executive coach, she mentioned two comments that strengthened the trust he had in the process and with the board chairs. The coach said (a) she only accepted clients where the superiors wanted to help the CEO, and (b) she would only share the report with him. Having the support of the board chairs provided him relief and encouragement during the equipping process. Vincent believed he had an opportunity to succeed. He felt hope.

Vincent stated the initial coaching process lasted 9 months and involved numerous coaching conversations. During the process, Vincent explained, "I learned a lot of techniques in terms of how to keep my cool when someone doesn't perform. I still had to point out performance issues—but I learned how to do that more effectively." Vincent spoke of immediately implementing infrastructural changes which quickly, and positively, impacted how he interacted with his coworkers. With the infrastructural changes, he expressed, "Right away I

became more patient. I became more accessible."

Several months into the coaching process, a second 360 was completed. Vincent informed me he had not used any abrasive behaviors since the meeting with the board chairs. However, he had been nervous about hearing the results of the second 360. He wondered what his coworkers would say about him. Vincent disclosed,

> [I] knew from the first report, when the abrasive behavior was at its worst, that there were deep issues. I actually wasn't sure how the second 360 would turn out. . . . I thought it would be positive, but I also thought I would get the stray comment, "Oh God, is Vincent having a bad day today because he is quiet?" I thought there would still be some negative comments, since the first series of interviews had so much bad stuff in it. I thought it would take more than 9 months of good behavior to say I was A+. . . . So I was hoping, based on my actions, that it would be much more positive.

Vincent described the difference between the first and second 360 assessments as "night and day." He had made significant progress. He was relieved. This feedback, he disclosed, was valuable to him. He needed the tangible reinforcement he was going in a positive direction.

Seeing the benefit of the coaching experience, Vincent continues conversing with his executive coach. They have four scheduled appointments during the year. And, he disclosed, when "human challenges might drag me down" he sets up an appointment for a specific situation—usually once a year. They have continued this relationship for about 5 years.

Brady. Brady met with his coach six to eight times over the course of about a year. Following their initial visit, the coach conducted the initial 360 assessment. When they met to discuss the 360, Brady explained his coach read the entire report to him "line by line."

The first section of the 360 report included numerous positive comments that communicated how Brady excels at work. Brady said he agreed with those comments. In the second section, there were four categories where Brady "needed to be more aware of his behavior." These categories included the following: he loses patience and control, he raises his

voice (but is not abusive), he can be abrupt, and he doesn't delegate work. Brady wrote his reaction next to each line of the 360. He affirmed many of the statements, where he could become more aware of his behavior, were accurate. However, there were also a few statements in this section where he either (a) questioned the meaning of the comment or (b) completely disagreed with it. The feedback, while difficult for Brady to hear at the time, was helpful for him in beginning to understand how others perceived him. Developing this awareness was an important element to becoming equipped.

Brady easily spoke of numerous concepts he learned while working with his coach. He discussed the learning of practical communication and supervisory skills. He learned the importance of eye contact and "watching my tone of voice." When disciplining a worker, he learned, "It is not a browbeating." He also learned there is sometimes just a need to take "a little bit of a step back and realize I have to take a different approach with teaching." He stated he learned to "just put my head down, collect myself, and realize what I am going to say before I go talk to them." It was really hard sometimes, he acknowledged.

Brady spoke of his personal development. With coaching, Brady stated, "I learned about how I perceive and present myself. And I am developing the ability to take a step back." Furthering this concept, Brady expressed he has been "learning how to control himself even when angry. . . . I try not to knee jerk anymore." He continued, "You expect people to do the right thing. But, even when someone has made a stupid decision, you gotta respect the individual. It is tough." He acknowledged, "The workers are regular people, too. I am no better."

Several months after Brady concluded the training with his coach, Brady had an "anger episode" with his newly hired boss. After taking a few days off with pay, Brady "with the

company's blessing" went through six sessions of anger management training. Brady learned through this training that when he becomes angry a switch is flipped. Brady expressed, "The biggest thing I worked on with anger management was that switch."

Jimmy. Jimmy was one of six surgeons or interventionists who participated in a 6-month program. During the nine full-day sessions, a small team of medical and counseling professionals gave presentations and led small group activities and discussions. Jimmy learned about triggering events and grounding techniques. He learned skills in anger management, assertive communication, and effective coping. Jimmy spoke of learning about what drives behavior and what, in his history, may have led him to this place of being distressed.

Two aspects of the program seemed especially encouraging to Jimmy in this process of becoming equipped. First, Jimmy was encouraged with the reminder of the Stockdale paradox. Admiral Stockdale's statement (paraphrased by Jimmy) is, "Retain the faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties. And at the same time, confront the brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they may be." This quote of Admiral Stockdale was particularly helpful to Jimmy. He needed the reminder to maintain the faith, while facing his current brutal reality. He wanted assurance he would prevail.

Second, Jimmy was encouraged by a personal set of tools—five statements he believed were specifically created for him by one of the program leaders. Jimmy was most helped by two of the five statements: "Remember it is behavior not character" and "Not everyone thinks like you do." When thinking of his initial reaction to "5604," Jimmy explained, "I felt victimized. I believed my character had been assassinated. The story I first told myself was, 'I am a bad, bad person.'" Jimmy further revealed,

> In being called out by my peers, I felt like my core character had been attacked—my
> thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes. I felt, all of a sudden, that I'd been struck a blow. Yet it

wasn't really me; it was what I was exhibiting to the world—the attitudes and all of those types of things.

Jimmy, as he was equipping himself "for something better," was encouraged by these two program elements.

Jimmy described the 360 feedback "as one of the most powerful parts of the program." I heard from Jimmy that the two 360s were a vital part of becoming equipped. The second 360, although he was hesitant to read it, revealed that there were "definitely some positive changes." Jimmy stated he needed the feedback on his behavior. He thought he was making progress, but he was not sure if his coworkers saw change. He needed their feedback to know if he was making sufficient progress. The 360, he stated, is "a powerful tool for change if you let it be."

Jimmy described his developmental journey as "arduous." In addition to being constantly vigilant, he disclosed,

> I always had to be constantly monitoring. It takes up a lot of energy. I am wired one way and I knew I had to focus some level of mental energy to keep things on track. Over time it got easier. As I continued to develop these skills, and they become habits, they became more automatic. For a while, it was constant vigilance. Maybe within the first 6 months, I was worried if I said or did something wrong. I always worried. I was always on edge. I was thinking I was doing the right things here, but somebody may not think so. Maybe something is going to come back. I never knew. I was on edge a lot. I don't feel that way, now.

Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy were committed to equipping themselves. Each leader dedicated himself to a professional process that stretched 6 to 12 months and included multiple 360s. Within this process they learned and practiced improved people management skills. They also learned about emotional intelligence and enhanced their abilities to positively demonstrate their growing emotional competency. They developed new ways of thinking and behaving. Brady and Jimmy questioned some of their natural tendencies, whereas, Vincent returned to more of how he had once been. Each leader mentioned several times during our conversations

how hard the process was. Yet in spite of the challenges, Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy persevered.

The equipping process, however, also involved others. Each leader was approached by a superior(s) who intervened. These leaders also had external coaches or other professionals who aided them in their development. With the 360s each leader had colleagues who offered feedback. And one important role of others in the journey, as explicitly expressed by Vincent and Jimmy, was to offer encouragement and hope. The equipping of these three leaders required the involvement of others.

Implications for Theory: Adult Development

During the past 25 years, Robert Kegan and Jack Mezirow have offered numerous ideas on how adults develop. By considering relevant constructs from their theories, this study provides a unique perspective not found in the workplace bullying, abusive supervision, or abrasive leadership literature. I believed adult development theory could inform the study of the formerly abrasive leader. I also believed the experiences of these leaders could inform adult development theory. The four shared concepts from Kegan and Mezirow are impetus of change, assumptions, blindness, and meaning making. Each concept, as it relates to this inquiry, is briefly introduced with related stories from Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy.

Impetus of change. Kegan and Lahey (2009, 2010) asserted that individuals frequently find themselves with problems where there is a gap between their mental capacity and the complexity of their environment. Kegan (1994) referred to this predicament as being "in over our heads." When an individual reaches the limit of his current thinking and simply trying harder does not help solve problems, the individual may shift to a more complex way of thinking (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Similarly, Mezirow (1990) claimed "anomalies and dilemmas of which

old ways of knowing cannot make sense become catalysts or 'trigger events' that precipitate critical reflection and transformation" (p. 5). Mezirow described these "trigger events" as "disorienting dilemmas" (1990). He further explained that a disorienting dilemma could be either a series of events or an epochal event. Kegan (1994), Kegan and Lahey (2009), and Mezirow (1990) claimed there is an event or series of events which prompt the individual to further reflection or analysis and may encourage change.

Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy experienced disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1990) or the predicament of being "in over our heads" (Kegan, 1994). Vincent stated he had a growing awareness of the inappropriateness of his behavior during what he called "the 18 months." However, he did not change his behavior until the three board chairs approached him demanding change. He said he could not say no to requests for his assistance on external boards until the board chairs required it of him. Neither could he sustain improved behavior with his VPs. Vincent expressed, "I was willing to authentically do what had to be done." He wanted to stay on as the leader of the organization he helped build. When the board chairs approached him, he knew his behavior must change if he were to remain CEO and president.

Brady had been extremely stressed at work. Yet he did not realize his behavior was an issue until he got a phone call from the manager of human resources: "We have a problem," she said. Brady understood from this conversation he would be fired if he did not participate in a coaching process. Brady attributed his change to "the threat." Elaborating he said, "My job was threatened. I am not going to lie. That's what it was. That's what did it. My job was threatened so it forced me."

Jimmy was confronted by the senior partner in front of the other partners in the medical practice. Two coworkers had filed complaints about his behavior. Jimmy wondered, "Am I

distressed? Maybe I am disruptive." He broke down in his office. "It was such a defining

moment," he divulged. He made a conscious choice then to make a change knowing if he did

not, he was "going down a bad path."

Although the situations were different for these leaders, their work lives were disrupted.

They experienced an event or series of events which disoriented their thinking. Jimmy referred

to his intervention as "shock therapy . . . which shocked the brain into doing something different

in recognizing the need to make a change." For each of these leaders the intervention, on a

significant level, was an impetus for change.

Assumptions. Kegan and Lahey (2001, 2009, 2016) and Mezirow (1997a, 1998a, 1998b,

2000) emphasized the importance of individuals recognizing and critically reflecting upon their

assumptions. Kegan suggested assumptions tightly held, whether or not they are true, are

invisible to the individual. To discuss growth, the movement from invisible to visible, Kegan

(1980, 1982, 1994) used a philosophic concept known as the "subject-object relationship."

Development, Kegan (1994, 2009) asserted, occurs when there is movement from subject

(invisible to self) to object (visible to self). Growth occurs only when assumptions become

visible to self.

Mezirow (2009) argued individuals develop habitual ways of thinking from childhood,

and as adults these conscious or unconscious habits of mind need to be critically evaluated. This

evaluation, Mezirow (2000, 2009) suggested, is through critical reflection on the sets of

assumptions which generates habits of mind about concepts such as beliefs, values, behavior,

feelings, experiences, events, and people. Sets of assumptions are broad, generalized, and

orienting dispositions (Mezirow, 2000). A purpose in critically reflecting upon a person's own,

as well as others', sets of assumptions is to "transform problematic frames of reference . . . to

make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change"
(Mezirow, 2000, p. 92). Mezirow (2000) asserted the enhanced frame of reference is thus more
likely to generate truer beliefs and opinions to guide behavior. An enhanced frame of reference
may also lead to a change in identity (Mezirow, 2009).

I did not specifically discuss with Vincent, Brady, or Jimmy their deeply held
assumptions or their inquiry into them. What I noticed from some of their stories was a shift in
some of their thinking, even if the ensuing behavior was similar. Desiring most to honor these
leaders and their experiences, I am cautious as I discuss a few thoughts about my observations
and subsequent reflections on the concept of assumptions.

It seems each leader had assumptions which had become problematic for him and with
coaching developed a more inclusive and open frame of reference to guide his behavior. I will
discuss a few of them below. First, however, I will highlight what I see as a shared assumption.
Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy shared a value assumption which seemed to contribute to their many
successes as well as some of the ensuing difficulties. These leaders had value assumptions with
work and achievement. These leaders had an intense work ethic. They valued being educated
and skilled. They were exceptional and accomplished in their respective professions. They were
driven to excel. Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy were also extremely stressed. Their deeply held
assumptions about being exceptional at work, it seems, had become problematic.

Vincent strived to be an authentic servant-leader. It seemed to be part of his identity.
Prior to "the 18 months" Vincent served his employees. He also served his community. His
service to the community, though, became so significant he was no longer an authentic servant-
leader at work. Instead, he demonstrated abrasive behaviors. Vincent admitted he could not
decline the requests from external boards: He could not say no. He was unable to provide

himself relief. His deeply held beliefs of being authentic, serving his employees, and serving the community with all requests had become untenable.

Brady did not speak much about how he felt about "foreign workers" prior to coaching, but I sensed part of his development involved critical reflection on his beliefs about some of the laborers. Brady mentioned a few times that he had to "gain respect for the workers." He continued, "I had to realize the workers—maybe, you'd say, the foreign workers—are just regular people too. I am not better than them even though I am in a higher position." Brady stated that an outcome of the coaching was "the way I treat people differently now. I try to treat everyone equally now." Brady's comments about his new beliefs indicate his frame of reference is more inclusive and reflective than it once was. Brady's reflection on his assumptions prompted a change in behavior and belief.

Jimmy described himself as a perfectionist. He said, "I always saw myself as a hard worker. I do good things and I work well." Jimmy also described how much he would worry, and his worrying would lead to rumination—constant thoughts of failing. I sensed he worked especially hard to not have any complications at work. Jimmy also told stories of the shame and guilt he felt from childhood. He recalled his childhood included a lot of needless rules and "whippins" were expected when the rules were not followed. Jimmy, it seems, may have had a deep belief that at work, if he strictly follows the rules, he does good things, and he works well, he will not get in trouble for being a "bad, bad, person." Through the professional program Jimmy attended, he had significant opportunities to critically reflect on his life and what brought him to this place in life. It was through a leader in the program that he learned, the intervention was about his behavior and not his inner being, which was what he had assumed.

Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy, upon examining closely held assumptions of their beliefs and values began awakening to a more complex way of knowing.

Blindness. Closely associated with the concept of assumptions is blindness. Kegan (1994) asserted, "Shaping, selecting, and patterning reality in some fashion also means not designing it in some other fashion" (p. 204). Similarly, Mezirow (1990) expressed, "When experience is too strange or threatening to the way we think or learn, we tend to block it out or resort to psychological defense mechanisms to provide a compatible interpretation" (p. 2). Kegan and Mezirow believed being selective in what people are attentive to creates blindness to other aspects of their experiences. This selection, while possibly helpful in the short term to protect a person from extreme anxiety, inhibits the developmental process (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy either discussed or provided examples of blindness.

Vincent had been blind to how employees outside the executive suite were impacted by his abrasive behavior. He had also been blind to his own lack of emotional intelligence. Vincent described how some of the changes he made following the intervention "now seem obvious." Yet he was blind to the need for those changes prior to coaching.

Brady had been blind to his abrasive behavior and its impact upon others in the workplace. Brady admitted he did not realize that swearing at an employee and then slamming the door in his face was a dismissible offense. He had also been blind to how others perceived him in the workplace. He stated he had not considered the need to understand the perspective of coworkers prior to coaching. He admitted he did not ever consider being situationally aware: It was not something he ever thought about.

Similar to Vincent and Brady, Jimmy was blind to how others perceived him in the workplace. With the feedback from the initial 360, Jimmy realized, "I saw myself one way and

they saw me another way." He had rated himself less harshly. Jimmy had also been blind to how the two occurrences had impacted his coworkers. In fact, he said he had not thought about those two occurrences again, not once, not until 5604. They were "just another day." Jimmy concluded he was not situationally aware. He was focused on his work and lost his "peripheral vision."

Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy being in tune with some aspects of their experiences were selectively not in tune with other aspects. There was selective blindness. As with the concept of assumptions, overcoming blindness seems to be part of the narrative theme of awakening.

Meaning making. Kegan (1982, 1994), Kegan and Lahey (2009), and Mezirow (1990) recognized that how people make meaning is central to their theories of how adults develop. Specifically, they asserted that adult development is not the acquisition of additional skills but a transformation of mind (Kegan, 1982, 1994, 2009; Mezirow, 2000, 2003). For Kegan (1982, 1994) and Kegan and Lahey (2009), adult development is a movement toward a more complex way of knowing—a different way of meaning making. Mezirow (2000) asserted that initially individuals make meaning from unconscious habits of mind that are, "for the most part, uncritically acquired in childhood" (p. 1). A change in meaning making occurs when an individual learns within "established frames of references and learns to transform them" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 115).

Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy spoke of new ways of thinking. In essence, their development moved them to a more complex way of knowing. They each looked deeply at their held convictions, beliefs, and attitudes about themselves, others, and their situations. As Vincent thought back on his developmental experience, he came to recognize several ironies. He came to understand that the more he pressed people to perform the less likely they were to perform well.

He also mentioned that he was not able to provide himself relief. Relief came once the board chairs intervened. He spoke of being aware and, simultaneously, not aware. He also mentioned that moving forward meant moving backward, a return to his "true self."

Brady revealed he had to "gain respect for the workers." He admitted, "I had to realize the workers—maybe, you'd say, the foreign workers—are just regular people too. I am not better than them even though I am in a higher position." An outcome of the coaching, he believed was "the way I treat people differently now. I try to treat everyone equally."

Within a couple of weeks of the intervention, Jimmy said he "rationalized this and that. . . . I demonized them. . . . I blamed others." Yet within a couple of months of the intervention, he approached the senior partner to thank him for intervening. Jimmy desired to express gratitude to him by admitting, "I was at a bad spot and you picked that up." Jimmy thanked him for "doing the right thing." Further meaning making was evident when Jimmy provided several illustrations of a strength becoming a weakness. One example he offered is his tendency to worry. As a surgeon, Jimmy suggested, worrying is beneficial—"unless I am unable to change the channel." Carried too far, he recognized, the strength becomes a weakness.

Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy told stories of their youth, some positive and some negative. Each leader demonstrated reflection and analysis of his past as he contemplated who he was, who he is, and who he is becoming. There was a desire to succeed in being "better." Part of developing involved the acquisition of tools. These leaders were equipping themselves for improved ways of being which included a more complex way of knowing.

Emotions. Kegan and Mezirow offered different views about the concept of emotions. Kegan stressed the vital role of emotions in adult development. Kegan and Lahey (2009) expressed adult development as "thinking about our feelings" and "feeling our way to new ways

of thinking" (p. 216). On the other hand, Mezirow's works offered very few emotive words. He emphasized the importance of the transformation of the mind (Dirkx et al., 2006; Mezirow, 1998a). He confirmed, in later life that his perspective transformative theory is a rational, metacognitive theory—it is of the mind (Mezirow, 2003). Although Mezirow (2003) de-emphasized the role of emotions in his early work, he later acknowledged the importance of emotional intelligence to "assess alternative beliefs and participate fully and freely in critical-dialectical discourses" (p. 60).

Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy described numerous strong emotions. I heard expressions of anger, embarrassment, frustration, gratitude, hope, fear, dismay, anxiety, shock, pain, and regret—to name only a few. Vincent disclosed that individuals on the outside of the organization probably were unaware that internally, "we were suffering." Brady spoke of being "overwhelmed" with stress. Getting the workers qualified, he revealed, was "a complete nightmare." Jimmy disclosed, "It is a constant struggle" to think positively. And examining his past was "very painful." The journey away from abrasive behaviors for these leaders was emotionally difficult as they developed their emotional competency. The emotional experience of these leaders seems most consistent with Kegan's (1980, 1994) constructive developmental theory where development involves the head and the heart working together (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Implications for Theory: The Firsthand Accounts of the Accused

The body of firsthand experiential knowledge from the accused is slight. Providing the perspective of the accused are two published qualitative studies (Bloch, 2012; Jenkins et al., 2012) and one mixed-methods study (Jenkins et al., 2011). The remainder of what is known from speaking with the accused largely comes from published doctoral dissertations of, primarily

long-time coaching practitioners. Collectively, what is known from the accused comes from

fewer than 80 individuals who have either (a) been accused of, (b) qualified within the study

parameter of being, or (c) self-reported as the workplace bully. In the academic community, the

voice of the accused is "relatively nonexistent" (Rai & Agarwal, 2015).

The limited firsthand accounts of the accused sought to create theory or examine various

constructs. Three doctoral students sought to create theory (Castle, 2014; Crawshaw, 2005;

McGregor, 2015b). The doctoral students and the scholars explored the firsthand accounts

through theories of cognitive dissonance and cognitive reduction (DeSanti, 2014), emotional

intelligence (Crawshaw, 2005), interaction and emotions (Bloch, 2012), justice and fairness

(Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012), motivation (Castle, 2014), sensemaking (Zabrodska et al., 2014),

systems perspective (Harrison, 2014), and transformative learning theory (Samenow et al.,

2013).

Desiring to hear the voice of an accused, Jenkins et al. (2011, 2012) and McGregor

(2015b) included participants in their studies who may have been found not guilty of the

accusation or who had believed the aggressor was the other person. Admittedly, researchers

have acknowledged it is not always clear who is the aggressor (Einarsen et al., 2013; Hauge et

al., 2009; Jenkins et al., 2012) or if both individuals have engaged with each other as perpetrators

(Hauge et al., 2009). However, it seems reasonable that there are marked experiential

differences from being appropriately accused and being wrongly or falsely accused.

This narrative inquiry focused on hearing a specific voice of leaders who were accused of

abrasive behavior and who acknowledged the accusation was accurate. Additionally, these

leaders, following intervention, moved away from the use of abrasive behaviors. And, at the

time of this study, there were no reports of abrasion. Currently, there are no published studies exploring a leader's successful experience of the movement away from abrasive behavior.

Similar to other firsthand accounts, Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy were ambitious and competent (Crawshaw, 2005; DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014; Samenow et al., 2013). They worked hard and had high expectations of themselves and others (Crawshaw, 2005; DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014; Samenow et al., 2013). They had an intense approach to work (Harrison, 2014). They were also highly stressed with workloads and obtaining results (Crawshaw, 2005; Harrison, 2014; Samenow et al., 2013). Likewise, many of the accused within the extant literature seemed to experience the previously identified narrative threads of disruption, awakening, and equipping.

The literature suggests the accused experienced disruption. Emotionally, the accused experienced emotions of anger, outrage, hurt, embarrassment, disappointment, and devastation, to name only a few. The literature also suggests the accused may feel ostracized or alienated by coworkers (Crawshaw, 2005; McGregor, 2015b). Many of the accused suffered significant emotional harm and were absent from work for several days (DeSanti, 2014; Harrison, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2011). Furthermore, the disruption was felt beyond the workplace as they attempted to make sense of the accusation (Jenkins et al., 2011, 2012; McGregor, 2015b).

The concept of awakening is also discussed within the extant literature. Harrison (2014) described the shift in thinking as "revised mental models about leadership and an increased awareness of their [the participants'] impact on others" (p. iii). Crawshaw (2005) described the three participants in her study as having the blinders removed. These leaders were once blind, but now they see. These ideas are consistent with the narrative theme of awakening.

Last, the literature illustrates the concept of equipping. Some participants sought to improve their leadership abilities, self-awareness, communication skills, or emotional intelligence (Crawshaw, 2005; DeSanti, 2014). With other participants, the organization may have required training or coaching (Crawshaw, 2005; Harrison, 2014). The extant literature of the firsthand accounts of the accused indicates many of them sought to improve themselves by becoming more equipped.

The narrative threads of disruption, awakening, and equipping are found in the extant literature of the firsthand accounts of the accused. Conversely, through my study, I could not confirm some other results discussed in the extant literature. Jenkins et al. (2011) reported many participants (a) had severe mental health problems that required time away from the organization and (b) believed the organization did not provide sufficient feedback to the accused. Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy did not suggest they had severe mental health problems. Neither did they indicate they required time away from the organization. Nor did they accuse or blame the organization for a lack of adequate feedback. What is understood from Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy is that they believed they received feedback at an appropriate time. However, there were indications from Jimmy and Vincent that they had been struggling at times with their behavior for the 18–24 months leading up to their interventions.

This study expands the limited firsthand knowledge of the accused. Specifically, it adds a distinct perspective: The organizational leader who admits to abrasive behavior and who, following intervention and coaching, no longer has complaints of abrasion. While there have been a few published scholarly works seeking the voice of the accused, no other study sought this significant and clearly defined participant's voice of his developmental journey. Inquiring

with these leaders into their stories provides insight (a) into their experiential journey and (b) into how to help other leaders on their journey away from abrasive behaviors.

Implications for Practice

This narrative inquiry into the personal experiences of Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy as they moved away from the use of abrasive behaviors offers several practical implications. I will discuss four. This study implies (a) abrasive leaders need courageous superiors, (b) organizational superiors who choose to intervene can reduce employee suffering, (c) abrasive leaders may develop emotional competency and improved management strategies with professional equipping processes, and (d) abrasive leaders need ongoing feedback and encouragement.

First, this inquiry implies abrasive leaders need courageous superiors. Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy were exceptional contributors in many respects. They worked hard. They exceeded expectations. They were dedicated. These leaders obtained results. However, highly skilled leaders may, unknowingly, cause significant emotional disruption in the workplace. Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy did not intend harm. Furthermore, they were unaware of the harm caused by their behaviors. They were situationally unaware and blinded to how others perceived them. They needed courageous superiors intervening to help them begin to see. Once their superiors required accountability, Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy became committed to changing their behavior. It takes courage for the superior to intervene with an abrasive leader who may possibly be an all-star in some respects but who also causes emotional distress for coworkers.

Second, this inquiry implies organizational leaders who choose to intervene may reduce employee suffering. There has been a significant amount of research during the past two decades on the harm felt by those on the receiving end of psychological aggression in the workplace

(Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Nielsen, Matthiesen, and Einarsen (2010) estimated about 15% of employees (globally) are exposed to some degree of workplace bullying. Many individuals who perceive themselves to be a target of a perpetrator suffer. The harm of psychological aggression in the workplace is not disputed. However, this study illustrates the abrasive leader also suffers. Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy were under immense stress. Vincent's obligations were immense— he felt "bombarded." Brady was "overwhelmed." Jimmy "struggled." Organizational leaders, by intervening help reduce the suffering in the workplace—not only for those employees who feel they are on the receiving end of abrasive behavior but also for the valued yet abrasive leader who was unable to provide himself with needed relief.

Third, this inquiry suggests abrasive leaders may develop emotional competency and improved management strategies with professional equipping processes. Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy, following intervention, began a formal equipping process of either executive coaching or professional development with external organizations who specialized in this area of personal and professional development. It was challenging as they examined themselves, became aware of their assumptions, and began to see what they had once been blind to. Through becoming more equipped they gained increased understanding of interpersonal behavior and emotional intelligence. Equipping themselves was arduous and disrupting. Yet these three leaders persevered and increased their emotional competency and their management strategies.

Fourth, this inquiry indicates abrasive leaders need ongoing feedback and encouragement. Vincent and Jimmy expressed they lacked confidence in their newly developing skills. They believed they were making the needed changes, but they were not certain. The feedback assured them they were moving in a better direction with their coworkers. Vincent and Jimmy explicitly expressed they needed to know they were being perceived more positively by

their coworkers. In addition to the honest and sometimes "brutal" feedback, these leaders needed encouragement and support by their professional executive coaches and superiors. The encouragement provided them hope their behavior could improve as they set out to "be better." Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy enhanced their emotional competency with formal equipping processes and encouragement.

The organizational leader who oversees an abrasive leader can effectively assist by (a) being courageous—the abrasive leader needs his superior to act courageously, (b) intervening to reduce employee suffering—for both the person who interacts with the abrasive leader and the leader himself, (c) offering the leader external professional expertise to provide the abrasive leader the opportunity to develop, and (d) ensuring the leader receives ongoing feedback and encouragement.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to this study. First, the inquiry did not include any female or minority leaders. The narrators were Caucasian males who were between 40 and 65 years of age. The leaders, however, came from a variety of backgrounds, locations, and professions. Second, the inquiry was not a collection of facts. The rich stories and the shared experience were between the inquirer and each narrator at specific times and places. It is possible different stories would be shared at other times or with another inquirer. Third, this inquiry is the personal accounts of Vincent, Brady, and Jimmy. The experiences of these leaders may not represent the experience of other leaders.

Future Research

There is much to learn from the formerly abrasive leader as he describes his movement away from the use of psychologically aggressive behaviors in the workplace. Thus, future

research should continue to seek the rich stories of formerly abrasive leaders using narrative inquiry. The current study was limited to the experience of three Caucasian males within a small age range. Future research should seek to broaden the understanding of this experience through hearing stories from women, individuals of other races, and a wider age range.

Future research should also further explore concepts from the theory of adult development. Many abrasive leaders may be resistant to personal development. Further knowledge is needed on how a disorienting dilemma or an optimal conflict may prompt organizational leaders to make beneficial changes. In addition, examination of deeply held assumptions by formerly abrasive leaders will increase knowledge of what assumptions may hinder or promote development. Exploration of these concepts could provide meaningful insight into how best to assist leaders in their development and may lead to the creation of a model for the process of developing less destructive interpersonal behaviors.

Last, additional research is needed that examines psychological aggression in the workplace from a broader systems perspective. The leaders in this study were under immense stress. Exploration into organizational factors which may contribute to an unhealthy workplace dynamic is needed. Specifically, future research should examine if there are organizational influences which promote a sense of helplessness among superiors and subordinates of an abrasive leader. Another area for inquiry is with the superior who intervened and witnessed beneficial development of the formerly abrasive leader. Understandably, there is a risk when approaching the all-star performer who is also an abrasive leader. Inquiring into the experience of the superior who effectively intervened will provide a glimpse into the thinking, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the superior. In addition, it will increase practical knowledge on how to assist and support leaders who have demonstrated abrasive behavior.

Afterward

When Vincent and I last communicated, he and his executive team were, as he put it, "humming." They were working well, and he believed relationships were back to 100%. He had told me no one from his executive team left the organization he has led for nearly 25 years. I had the impression he believed he had returned to being an authentic servant-leader. The company continues to earn "best place to work" awards. Vincent expressed to me, numerous times, his desire to be available as much as I wanted for this project. To him, it was important people understand there is help—people can "turn this around." There was hope. Yet even with all the positive changes, he revealed, "The journey is a race without a finish line." He was, he stated, "regaining trust every day."

Brady continued to lead the safety department at the underground gas and utility company where he had five direct reports. He no longer felt alone or overwhelmed. The workload was manageable. He had not demonstrated any abrasive behaviors with the construction workers (though he had disclosed he had one anger episode with his new manager a few years ago). Brady expressed that through the coaching process he had learned "how to be a better leader and a better person." He said if he ever needed help, he would call his coach. But he believed he was "at a good place" with his behavior.

Jimmy and his wife decided to move to another part of the country about a year after his intervention, what he called "5604." With his new practice he was asked to fill several different leadership roles. He was then asked to participate in a variety of leadership roles at the hospital. A few years ago, Jimmy was voted by his peers as physician of the year at the hospital. The following year Jimmy became medical staff president. Both of these honors, Jimmy believed, would likely not have been achieved if he "hadn't made some change in how I look at things."

Jimmy revealed, "The whole thing has just helped me better understand who I was—my evolutionary journey. I had to learn to like myself. I am at a much better place now." Although, even with the successes, Jimmy stated, "The journey will always be a struggle, because I am struggling with myself—my own values and beliefs."

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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103

12/08/2017

Lori Tucker

Department of Organizational Leadership

Abilene Christian University

Dear Ms. Tucker

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled How Formerly Abrasive Leaders Describe and Make Sense of the Journey: A Transformative Experience

was approved by expedited review (46.110(b)(1) category 7) on 12/05/2017 for a period of one year (IRB # 17-084). The expiration date for this study is 12/05/2018 . If you intend to continue the study beyond this date, please submit the Continuing Review Form at least 30 days, but no more than 45 days, prior to the expiration date. Upon completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Request Form within 30 days of study completion.

If you wish to make **any** changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel, number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall methodology, please complete the Study Amendment Request Form.

If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Unanticipated Events/Noncompliance Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Additional Approvals/Instructions:

- ***Your study has been granted a <u>Waiver of Consent for screening</u> based on the following justification: Screening is required to identify participants. Risks are minimal and researchers will consent participants once identified. [45 CRF §46.116(d)]***

The following are all responsibilities of the Primary Investigator (PI). Violation of these responsibilities may result in suspension or termination of research by the Institutional Review Board. If the Primary Investigator is a student and fails to fulfil any of these responsibilities, the Faculty Advisor then becomes responsible for completing or upholding any and all of the following:

- If there are any changes in the research (including but not limited to change in location, members of the research team, research procedures, number of participants, target population of participants, compensation, or risk), these changes **must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation**.
- Report any protocol deviations or unanticipated problems to the IRB promptly according to IRB policy.
- Should the research continue past the expiration date, submit a <u>Continuing Review Form</u>, along with a copy of the current consent form and a *new* <u>Signature Assurance Form</u> approximately 30 days before the expiration date.
- When the research is completed, inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. If your study is Expedited or Full Board, submit an <u>Inactivation Request Form</u> and a *new* <u>Signature Assurance Form</u>. If your study is Exempt, Non-Research, or Non-Human Research, email orsp@acu.edu to indicate that the research has finished.
- According to ACU policy, research data must be stored on ACU campus (or electronically) for 3 years from inactivation of the study, in a manner that is secure but accessible should the IRB request access.
- It is the Investigator's responsibility to maintain a general environment of safety for all research participants and all members of the research team. All risks to physical, mental, and emotional well-being as well as any risks to confidentiality should be minimized.

For additional information on the policies and procedures above, please visit the IRB website http://www.acu.edu/community/offices/academic/orsp/human-research/overview.html

or email ▓▓▓▓▓▓ with your questions.

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103

January 29, 2018

Lori Tucker

Department of

ACU Box 22208

Abilene Christian University

Dear   Lori,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that the changes you requested on the Study Amendment Form dated 01/12/2018 for the project titled How Formerly Abrasive Leaders Describe and Make Sense of the Journey: A Transformative Experience
(IRB# 17-084   ) have been approved on 01/29/2018   by expedited review (46.110(b)(2)). The changes requested and approved are summarized below:

Unnecessary exclusion placed in the study removed prior to beginning study.

If you wish to make **any** further changes to this study, please complete a new Study Amendment Request Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103

October 23, 2018

Lori Tucker

Organizational Leadership

Dear Lori,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled
"How Formerly Abrasive Leaders Describe and Make Sense of the Journey: A Transformative Experience"

(IRB# 17-084   )is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Additional Approvals/Instructions:

The following are all responsibilities of the Primary Investigator (PI). Violation of these responsibilities may result in suspension or termination of research by the Institutional Review Board. If the Primary Investigator is a student and fails to fulfil any of these responsibilities, the Faculty Advisor then becomes responsible for completing or upholding any and all of the following:

- If there are any changes in the research (including but not limited to change in location, members of the research team, research procedures, number of participants, target population of participants, compensation, or risk), these changes must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
- Report any protocol deviations or unanticipated problems to the IRB promptly according to IRB policy.
- Should the research continue past the expiration date, submit a Continuing Review Form, along with a copy of the current consent form and a *new* Signature Assurance Form approximately 30 days before the expiration date.
- When the research is completed, inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. If your study is Expedited or Full Board, submit an Inactivation Request Form and a *new* Signature Assurance Form. If your study is Exempt, Non-Research, or Non-Human Research, email orsp@acu.edu to indicate that the research has finished.
- According to ACU policy, research data must be stored on ACU campus (or electronically) for 3 years from inactivation of the study, in a manner that is secure but accessible should the IRB request access.
- It is the Investigator's responsibility to maintain a general environment of safety for all research participants and all members of the research team. All risks to physical, mental, and emotional well-being as well as any risks to confidentiality should be minimized.

For additional information on the policies and procedures above, please visit the IRB website
http://www.acu.edu/community/offices/academic/orsp/human-research/overview.html

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Appendix C: Firsthand Studies of the Experience of the Accused

Authors and location of study	Scholar (with area of study) or scholar-practitioner	Title of article or dissertation	Study design	Aim, purpose, or theories of study	Participants and number of managers if known
Bloch (2012) Denmark	Dept. of Sociology University of Copenhagen	How do Perpetrators Experience Bullying at the Workplace?	Qualitative phenomenological inquiry Interviews	Theories of emotions and interactions	15 self-identified as a bully, bullied "now and then," and spoke of bullying behaviors/1 manager
Castle (2014) USA	Scholar-Practitioner (Dissertation)	The Workplace Bully: A Grounded Theory Study Exploring Motivational Influences of Bullying Behavior at Work	Qualitative Semi-structured interviews	"Understand the motivations of workplace bullies—those who perpetrate negative acts against their colleagues" (p. 4).	7 self-identified or identified by another as being a workplace bully/6 managers
Crawshaw (2005) USA	Scholar-Practitioner (Dissertation)	Coaching Abrasive Executives: Exploring the use of Empathy in Constructing Less Destructive Interpersonal Management Strategies	Action research	Emotional management drawn from emotional intelligence theory. Concepts of threat, anxiety, and defense	3 abrasive leaders
DeSanti (2014) USA	Scholar-Practitioner (Dissertation)	Workplace Bullying, Cognitive Dissonance & Dissonance Reduction: Exploring the Alleged Perpetrator's Experience & Coping	Qualitative phenomenological inquiry Online qualitative questionnaire	Cognitive dissonance and cognitive reduction theories	9 self-identified bullies/unknown number of managers
Harrison (2014) USA and/or Canada	Scholar-Practitioner (Dissertation)	Exploring the Phenomenon of Abrasive Leadership	Qualitative phenomenological inquiry	Systems theory	12 abrasive leaders
Jenkins, Winefield, & Sarris (2011) Australia	School of Psychology University of Adelaide	Consequences of Being Accused of Workplace Bullying: An Exploratory Study	Mixed methods: One-hour interviews with a short survey	Fairness/justice with the complaint process and the subsequent health and career ramifications	24 self-identified managers accused of workplace bullying
Jenkins, Zapf, Winefield, & Sarris (2012) Australia	School of Psychology University of Adelaide and Dept. of Work and Org. Psychology Univ. of Goethe-Frankfurt am Main	Bullying Allegations from the Accused Bully's Perspective	Qualitative phenomenological inquiry	This study aims to "elicit the view, perceptions and attributions of the alleged perpetrator" p. 491.	24 self-identified managers accused of workplace bullying

Authors and location of study	Scholar (with area of study) or scholar-practitioner	Title of article or dissertation	Study design	Aim, purpose, or theories of study	Participants and number of managers if known
McGregor (2015b) UK	Dept. of Management The University of Huddersfield (UK) (Doctoral thesis)	When is a Bully not a Bully?	Qualitative Unstructured interviews	Grounded theory study that led to the development of a theoretical model: Guilty until proven innocent	8 participants/6 managers accused of bullying by a subordinate
Samenow, Worley, Neufeld, Fishel, & Swiggart (2013) USA	Scholar-Practitioners: Three scholars in the field of psychiatry and a program manager and a director Vanderbilt University Medical Center, George Washington University, University of Arkansas	Transformative Learning in a Professional Development Course Aimed at Addressing Disruptive Physician Behavior	Composite Case Study	Mezirow's transformative learning theory used to develop a continuing education program for disruptive physicians	1 composite case study which "highlighted common referral patterns" (p. 118).
Zabrodska, Ellwood, Zaeemdar, & Mudrak (2014) Czech Republic and Australia	Institute of Psychology at the Academy of Sciences in Czech Republic University of Melbourne Macquarie Graduate School of Management	Workplace Bullying as Sensemaking: An Analysis of Target and Actor Perspectives on Initial Hostile Interactions	Qualitative: Collective Biography	Weick's sensemaking theory	7 researchers participated "who labelled themselves as having experienced or engaged in workplace bullying in academic settings" (p. 3).

Appendix D: Introductory Email

Hello, (Contact name).

My name is Lori Tucker and I am a doctoral student of Organizational Leadership emphasizing Conflict Resolution at Abilene Christian University. I would like your assistance in identifying appropriate participants for my doctoral research project. Your help, in identifying receptive and insightful participants for this study, is essential to hearing from those leaders most willing and capable of describing the richness of their journey away from the use of abrasive behaviors.

Study Title.
How Formerly Abrasive Leaders Describe and Make Sense of the Journey: A Transformative Experience.

Study Design.
I am seeking 3-6 organizational leaders as participants in this study. These are leaders who have successfully reduced their use of abrasive behaviors in the workplace. Using narrative inquiry, each participant will be asked to share stories of his/her journey.   I will begin our conversation with*: Tell me about you and your journey away from the use of abrasive behaviors in the work place.* Prior to our last conversation, I will draft a narrative account that represents what I heard from the participant of who s/he was and was becoming. In our last meeting we will co-edit the draft creating the participant's final narrative. I will later conduct analyses of individual narratives as well as the narratives across accounts.

There may be 2-4 sessions over several months with each session lasting approximately 60 minutes.

Study Eligibility Criteria.
The participant:
- attended coaching, training, or intervention due to abrasive behaviors;

- participated in the first coaching or intervention session prior to January 2016;

- has few (or no) current reports of abrasive behavior;

- speaks English; and

- acknowledges there was need for intervention due to abrasive behavior.

Most research on destructive leadership behavior is from the perception of the self-identified victim. Very little research has sought to hear the voice of other stakeholders. This narrative inquiry will hear a neglected voice—the voice of the leader who had, previously, used abrasive behaviors. The voice of these leaders may help researchers and practitioners understand how to better assist leaders on their journey towards improved behaviors.

A Study Information Sheet and the Informed Consent Form are included with this email. They may answer questions you or a potential participant might have of this study. I am eager to begin this research and look forward to your call or email with questions, comments, or participant recommendations. I may be reached at ███████ or by email at ██████████.

With appreciation,

Lori Tucker
Doctoral Student
Abilene Christian University

Appendix E: Study Information Sheet

How Formerly Abrasive Leaders Describe and Make Sense of the Journey:
A Transformative Experience

Study Purpose: The purpose of this study is to more fully understand the lived experience and meaning-making of organizational leaders who acknowledge former use of abrasive behavior and whose behavior was substantially and positively influenced with intervention.

Study Eligibility Criteria:
The participant:
- attended coaching, training, or intervention due to abrasive behaviors;
- first attended coaching or intervention sessions at least two years ago;
- has few (or no) current reports of abrasive behavior;
- speaks English; and
- acknowledges there was need for intervention due to abrasive behavior.

Significance: Why is this study important?
This study:
- explores part of the phenomenon of workplace bullying using concepts from adult development theory;
- listens to a missing voice in the academic literature; and
- provides the potential to reduce workplace suffering.

Research Question: How does the changed leader describe and make sense of the journey away from use of abrasive interpersonal behaviors?

Study Design:
- The researcher is seeking 3-6 participants who will tell their stories related to their journey of development away from the use of abrasive behaviors in the workplace.
- It is anticipated there may be 2-4 sessions during several months. Each session may last 45-60 minutes. The sessions are designed to be flexible and meet the needs of the participant.
- The meetings may occur in person, by "go to meeting", email, or telephone.
- Meeting times, locations, and mediums will be agreed upon by the researcher and the participant. The researcher resides in Oregon and may be able to travel to the participant's location.
- The conversation will be casual. It will be recorded if approved by the participant. The researcher will begin the conversation with this statement: *Tell me about you and your journey away from the use of abrasive behaviors in the work place.* The researcher will have available an interview guide which may be used on occasion. The researcher will also take notes.
- The researcher, prior to the last meeting, will draft a narrative accounting of the journey. During the last meeting the participant and the narrator will co-edit the narrative, so it tells the story of the participant's journey and meaning-making. The participant will be provided

a copy of the final research narrative to ensure the written story reflects the participants journey and meaning-making.

- Participation is voluntary: The participant can decline participation at any time. A consent form will be presented to the participant prior to the study. It must be signed prior to beginning the first research conversation.
- This research project has been approved the Institutional Review Board at Abilene Christian University and follows the strict guidelines for academic research.
- The researcher will guard confidentiality. Participants will remain anonymous as described in the consent form.

Researcher: Lori Tucker   **Contact Information:**
                 Doctoral Student
                 Abilene Christian University   **Research Begins:**   January 2018

Appendix F: Informed Consent

Title of Study: How Formerly Abrasive Leaders Describe and Make Sense of the Journey: A Transformative Experience

You may be eligible to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you, the potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions that you may have regarding the procedures, your involvement, and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as your family doctor or a family member.

Also, please note that your participation is entirely voluntary. You may decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. Please contact the Principal Investigator if you have any questions or concerns regarding this study or if at any time you wish to withdraw. This contact information may be found at the end of this form.

Purpose and Procedures

Purpose of the Research—The purpose of this study is to listen to and analyze the told stories of organizational leaders who moved away from the regular use of abrasive interpersonal behavior.

Expected Duration of participation-- If selected for participation, you will be asked to engage in 2-4 conversations with the investigator over the course of several months. Each visit is anticipated to take 45-60 minutes.

Description of the procedures-- Once you consent to participation in the study, you will be asked to participate in the following study procedures:

- Interviews/Conversations. The conversations, when practical, will occur through face-to-face meetings at a location suggested by you and agreed upon by the investigator. If in-person meetings are not feasible, the conversations may occur through (a) a phone call, (b) an audio-visual platform such as skype or (c) email correspondence. All methods of interaction, meeting locations, and follow-up conversations will be agreed upon by you and the investigator. Given your permission, conversations will be audio-recorded.

  The initial question you will be asked is: Tell me about you and your journey away from the use of abrasive behaviors in the workplace. Following the initial question, and as needed, the investigator will use an interview guide with open-ended questions to facilitate conversation.

- Co-edit Narrative. At the last meeting, you and the investigator will co-edit a narrative draft so that it tells the story of your journey and meaning-making.

- Confirm Narrative. Following the last meeting the investigator will create the final research narrative. You will then be provided a copy of the final research narrative to ensure the written story reflects your journey and meaning-making.

Your participation may be terminated early by the investigator under certain conditions, such as if you no longer meet the eligibility criteria, the investigator believes it is no longer in your best interest to continue participating, you do not follow the instructions provided by the investigator, or the study is discontinued. You will be contacted by the investigator and given further instructions in the event that you are withdrawn from the study.

Risks and Discomforts

There are risks to taking part in a research study. Below is a list of the foreseeable risks, including the seriousness of those risks and how likely they are to occur:
- Psychological discomfort. You may experience minor psychological discomfort at times while telling your story. This risk, given the methods of this study, is not serious and less likely.
- Confidentiality. This study is designed to protect anonymity. The risk, given the methods of this study, are not serious and less likely to occur.

The investigator has taken steps to minimize the risks associated with this study. However, if you experience any problems, you may contact the principal investigator. The investigator and ACU do not have any plan to pay for any injuries or problems you may experience as a result of your participation in this research.

Potential Benefits

There are potential benefits to participating in this study. Similar studies indicate the participants find it beneficial to tell their story to a person who is listening with the purpose of understanding. It is anticipated you may experience this same benefit. In addition, the telling of your story may assist you to further reflect and inquire into your personal journey of change.

The investigator cannot guarantee that you will experience any personal benefits from participating in this study. However, the investigator hopes that the information learned from this study will be of help to organizational leaders, human resource professionals, scholar-practitioners, and scholars.

Provisions for Confidentiality

Information collected about you will be handled in a confidential manner in accordance with the law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the ACU Institutional Review Board (IRB). Aside from these required disclosures, your confidentiality will be protected with: (a) the immediate use of a pseudonym on all documents; (b) electronic data being stored on a password protected computer kept in a home office; (c) all paper data

being secured in a locked safe with the coding key kept in a separate locked safe; (d) back-up data being stored on flash drives and kept in a locked safe; (e) the digital recorder being locked in a safe cabinet with the paper data.

Participation is voluntary. At any time, you may decide not to share information or you may discontinue participating.

Contacts

You may ask any questions that you have at this time. However, if you have additional questions, concerns, or complaints in the future, you may contact the Principal Investigator of this study. The Principal Investigator is Lori Tucker, a doctoral student in Organizational Leadership emphasizing Conflict Resolution, at Abilene Christian University. She may be contacted at ███████████ or ████████████.

If you are unable to reach the Principal Investigator or wish to speak to someone other than the Principal Investigator, you may contact her faculty advisor, ███████████, ██████████ or ███████████

If you have concerns about this study or general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Director of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, ███████████. ████████ may be reached at ███████████

███████████████████████████████
███████████████████

ACU IRB #: 17-084

Date of Approval: 12/05/2017
Date of Expiration: 12/05/2018

Consent Signature Section

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

_____   _____   _____
Printed Name of Participant   Signature of Participant   Date

Lori Tucker_____   _____   _____
Person Obtaining Consent   Signature of Person Obtaining   Date
                                     Consent

Appendix G: Interview Guide

Introductory comments:
Thank you for participating in this study. My hope is that by speaking with valued leaders, like you, who have improved their interpersonal behaviors, that scholars and practitioners can have an enhanced understanding of how to better assist leaders in positive change. As we have previously discussed, I will give you an initial statement to respond to and then we will engage in conversation. I have an interview guide that I may use on occasion and you may notice me taking notes. Do you have questions before we begin?

If I have your permission, I will go ahead and turn on the recorder and follow with a brief introduction.

This is Lori Tucker, a doctoral student at Abilene Christian University. Today's date is_____ and I am speaking with _____. This is our 1ˢᵗ 2ⁿᵈ 3ʳᵈ 4ᵗʰ discussion as part of a study on How Formerly Abrasive Leaders Describe and Make Sense of The Journey: The Transformative Experience. _____ is it okay with you that I am recording our conversation? _____.

Initial Question:
Tell me about you and your journey away from the use of abrasive behaviors in the workplace.

Potential Follow-up Questions:
Prior to understanding a need for intervention
- Explain your introduction to management or leadership.
  - Describe management or leadership training you received.
  - Who most influenced you as a leader and why?
  - What traits inspired you as you watched other leaders?
- How did you view yourself and your *leadership abilities* (*style, approach to leadership*) prior to understanding there was a problem? Provide examples.
  - What did you see as your greatest strengths?
  - Weaknesses?
- Provide a few examples, prior to intervention, that demonstrate the fundamental *beliefs* you had about leading.
  - *Attitudes, values, thoughts*?
- As a leader, how did you motivate subordinates to perform? Provide examples.
  - Describe how these methods were consistent or inconsistent with what you perceived as the organizational culture.
- What did you most *value* in the workplace? (success, power, influence, respect…)
  - What caused you *fear or anxiety*?
- How did you perceive your work relationships prior to intervention?
  - What did you most value?
  - Least value?
- How did you believe *coworkers* (*family, friends*) would describe you?

Becoming aware
- Describe the specific event/circumstance(s) that initiated a need for coaching.
    - What was your understanding of the situation?
    - What was your behavior during the event/circumstance?
    - What were your *thoughts* (*beliefs)* about the situation and your behavior at that time?
    - What *feelings* did you have about the organization, coworkers, and your supervisor at that time?
- Describe prior informal or formal complaints of your conduct.
- What was the process that led you to believe behavior change was needed?
    - How satisfied were you with the process of being informed there was a problem?
    - What aspects of the process could have been better?
    - What offer of help was provided?
    - How receptive were you to the idea of coaching? Explain.
- Explain how you, over time, came to acknowledge the need for change.

The journey
- What was most challenging to you about your development?
    - Did you doubt your ability to change?
    - What was easier than anticipated?
- Provide a few examples of some of the most difficult changes for you (internal, external)
    - Easiest? Why?
- What assumptions about leading and personal development were challenged throughout the journey? How so?
- What *values* (*beliefs, attitudes, opinions, or thoughts*) about leading have changed the most?
    - The least?
    - What remains about the same?
- Who (*or what*) was most influential to you in changing behaviors? (Coaches, self, outside sources, program, superiors, spouse, culture, church…)
    - What impact did your supervisor have in this change?
    - Where did you receive support?
    - Where were the greatest obstacles?
- While on your journey what situations were most tempting to revert to the "old" way of leading?
    - What was your behavior?
    - How did you respond?
    - How do you wish you had responded?
- Describe the response you received from coworkers upon trying new ways of leading.
- Describe any surprising developments along the journey.
- Were you *anxious (fearful, worried, concerned, threatened)* during the journey? If so, how? Provide examples.
- How do you overall describe the movement of your development? (Moments of insight or pushback, plateaus, aha moments, long periods of no growth…)

Current situation
- How have you changed?
- How do you now describe yourself?
- Provide a few examples that demonstrate the fundamental *beliefs, attitudes, values, or thoughts* you now have about leading—specifically those that have changed.
- Provide examples of your current interpersonal behaviors at work—especially those that differ from before coaching.
  - How did coworkers respond?
  - How has the work environment changed with your development?
  - How have supervisors responded to your changes?
  - How has the "bottom line" been impacted?
- How do you currently perceive work relationships?
  - What do you most value?
  - Least value?
  - How have your responses changed since you received coaching?
- What behavioral changes have made the largest difference for you in the workplace (elsewhere)?
- Describe a recent situation when you believed you fell short of your own behavioral expectation.
  - What caused you to believe you fell short?
  - What did you do in response?
- With where you are now, what do you wish you had known sooner about leading others?
- What are your strongest attributes?
- What are you now most fearful of in the workplace?
- How do you believe *coworkers* (*family, friends*) describe you?
- Describe any attempts to mend any prior negative relationships?
- What hopes do you have as you think about your future in leading others?

Making sense of the journey
- What words do you use to describe the journey? Why?
- What was *helpful* (*appreciated/beneficial*) throughout this journey
  - In developing insight ("Aha" moments).
  - In prompting change
- What was not helpful (*hurtful, detrimental*) throughout the journey?
  - Policies
  - Organizational leaders/HR
  - Coworkers
  - Coach
- How has your *change (development, learning, growth)* impacted your relationships outside of work? (Family, community, church…). Provide examples.
- How did participating in the intervention and traveling on this journey benefit (impact) you personally and professionally?
  - Describe positive and detrimental effects.
- In what ways do you think differently about *yourself* (*coworkers, the organization, your family*)? How do you explain the shift in thinking?

- What, throughout this journey, required *courage*? (*leap of faith*)
- To what do you attribute your change?
  - Event (*circumstance/condition*)
  - Individual
  - Faith
- Assumptions
  - What assumptions about leading (organizational life) did you have prior to your journey?
  - Describe these assumptions and your increasing awareness of them
- Blindness
  - Did you experience epiphanies throughout the journey?
    - What were they?
    - How do you explain the "aha" moment?
  - What aspects of leading were not "on your radar" prior to coaching?
  - What have you discovered about leading (and about you) through this process?
- Disorienting dilemma (If relevant)
  - How important was having this significant issue to initiating your growth?
  - How do you "make sense" of not understanding there were problems prior to the "disorienting dilemma?"
- Meaning-making
  - How do you explain "where you were" and "where you are now"?
  - What prompted this change?
  - How do you make sense of your development?

Where are you "going" from here?

Appendix H: Curriculum Vitae

Lori J. Tucker
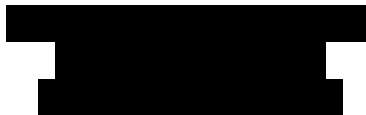
<u>Education</u>

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership   Defended April 11, 2019
Emphasis: Conflict Resolution
Abilene Christian University (Abilene, TX)

Master of Arts   2008
Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation
Abilene Christian University (Abilene, TX)

Bachelor of Science   1988
Major: Physical Education
Minor: Business Administration
Columbia Christian College (Portland, OR)

<u>Doctoral Dissertation</u>

Status: Successful Oral Defense of Dissertation: April 11, 2019
The purpose of my doctoral study was to inquire into the experience and meaning-making of organizational leaders who were positively influenced with intervention and whose complaints of abrasive behaviors were substantially reduced or eliminated.

<u>Teaching Experience</u>

Instructor
Concordia University (Portland, OR)   *2010-2012, 2018-current*
Undergraduate courses: *Ethical Leadership*
                                              Organization and Administration of Exercise & Sports Science
                                              Working with Difficult Colleagues
                                              Effective Communication for Health Care Professionals
                                              Introduction to Business
Graduate courses: *Leading Organizational Change*

Instructor
Marylhurst University (Lake Oswego, OR)   *2011-2012*
Undergraduate course: *Culture, Conflict, & Communication*

On-line Teaching Facilitator
Abilene Christian University (Abilene, TX)   *2009-2011*
Graduate courses: *Communication and Conflict Theory*
                                              Conflict Management Systems Design
                                              Managing Conflict in the Workplace

Instructor
University of Phoenix (Tigard, Hillsboro, Clackamas, OR)　　　　*2009-2011*
Undergraduate courses:　　*Critical Thinking and Problem Solving*
　　　　　　　　　　　　Teamwork, Collaboration, and Conflict Resolution

Assistant Athletic Director
Head Volleyball Coach
Physical Education Instructor
Intramural Director
Cascade College, Portland Campus of Oklahoma Christian University　　　*1994-1997*
Managed the operations of the athletic department. Prepared and oversaw the athletic department budget. Assisted in the hiring and supervision of coaches and student workers. Investigated and analyzed the academic background of athletes to determine eligibility. Created and ensured adherence to the athletic policy handbook. Prepared and taught numerous physical education courses. Recruited and trained numerous student-athletes in the sport of volleyball. Prepared practice plans and created strategies to promote a positive and healthy collegiate player experience. Managed all operations of the volleyball program.

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Doctoral Course Work:
Organizational Leadership

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Theories of Leadership	Self-Assessment in Leadership
Contemporary Issues in Org. Leadership	Human Resource Development
Org. Assessment & Evaluation	Leading Organizational Change
Technical & Financial Resource Dev.	Leadership in Diverse Contexts
Prospectus and Research Courses	Quantitative Analysis
Qualitative & Action Research Analysis	

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Graduate Course Work:
Business

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Managing Conflict in the Workplace	Conflict Management Systems Design
Organizational Behavior	

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Conflict Resolution

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Conflict Theory & Communication	Negotiation: Principles and Practice
Mediation: Principles and Practice	Advanced Mediation: Marital Disputes
Identity, Culture and Conflict	Dispute Resolution and Legal Systems
Ethics and Conflict Resolution	Practical Skills and Theory

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Other Experiences

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Claims Field Operations Manager: Oregon & SW Washington　　　*- July 2016*
Managed all operations of the five field offices throughout Oregon. Provided oversight and supervision of numerous employees. Ensured staff was hired, trained, and effectively managed

to strengthen a collaborative work environment leading to successful resolution of claims. Provided encouragement and support to reinforce a positive work environment. Worked collaboratively with adjusters, agents, technical advisors, and upper-level management to build a strong claims organization.

Mediator
Multnomah County Courts (Portland, OR) *2010-2015*
Facilitated discussions between the plaintiff and defendant with the purpose of assisting communication between the parties so they may reach a mediated agreement prior to trial.

Professional Presentations
Negotiation Skills and Techniques
Mutual of Enumclaw Insurance Company
(Lake Oswego, OR; Kennewick, WA; Puyallup, WA)
This six-hour interactive case-based training was required by all senior-level claims adjusters in five states. This course was designed to further enhance the negotiation skills of the most experienced adjusters through small group discussions of complicated cases and then further discussion of the techniques to successfully resolve those cases.

Connecting in Conflict (Portland, OR) Oct 2008-present
Connecting in Conflict is a ten-hour highly interactive workshop which encourages participants to analyze and strengthen their personal conflict resolution skills by evaluating the dynamics of conflict and reflecting upon prior conflicts which had resulted in undesired outcomes. The goal is to increase awareness and utilization of effective conflict resolution skills.

Certifications
General Civic Court Approved Mediator (Oregon) April 2010
Multnomah County Court Mediation Training (Oregon) Jan. 2010

Memberships
Oregon Mediation Association Since 2008
International Association for Workplace Bullying and Harassment Since 2017
International Leadership Association Since 2019

Community Involvement
Board Member *volunteer*
The Tree of Knowledge Preschool (Gresham, OR) Since 2013
Provide strategic planning through collaborative policymaking and conflict resolution within the organization and among its constituency.

Client Facilitator *volunteer*
CASH Oregon (Portland, OR) Since 2010
Assist elderly or low-income individuals by offering free tax return assistance.