Human resource professionals (HRPs) are integral actors in bullying situations because targets of bullying often seek them out for advice and action when bullying occurs. Workplace bullying (WB) can be seen as one of the “toxins,” or communication-based, emotionally charged situations, HR has to address in the workplace. Yet, there is little research dedicated to understanding the HRP’s viewpoint or role in these situations. The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of how HRPs understood their roles in bullying situations and how they perceived important others (the target and management) understood their roles. Grounded theory data analysis procedures helped to uncover a progressive model of the HRP role and complications in the execution of the role due to contradictory role expectations of targets and mgmt.

Dr. Renee L. Cowan received her B.S. in Communication Studies from the University of Texas at Austin and her M.A. from Texas State University — San Marcos. She received her Ph.D. from Texas A&M University with an emphasis in Organizational Communication. Dr. Cowan employs qualitative, rhetorical, and quantitative methods to investigate contemporary organizational issues including; work/life issues, workplace bullying, and issues associated with the use of communication technologies in organizations (electronic mail and weblogs).