Workplace Bullying: Causes, Consequences, and Corrections

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Adult bullying at work is shockingly common and enormously destructive. In an in-depth analysis of 148 organizations worldwide, "workplaces evidencing bullying on a relatively routine basis [made] up 49% of the total analyzed" (Hodson, Roscigno, & Lopez, 2006, p. 391). U.S. studies also suggest alarming prevalence rates. During any given 6 to 12 month period, up to 13 percent of workers are bullied on the job; this increases significantly when counting those bullied anytime during their careers (30%, Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007; 37%, Namie, 2007). These numbers translate to millions of workers:

> According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. DOL) 146 million Americans were employed in July 2007. An estimated 54 million Americans have been bullied at work using the 37% rate. (Namie, 2007, para. 4)

This chapter reviews the current literature regarding the history of bullying research, the factors associated with bullying onset, its consequences or effects, and various avenues for prevention and intervention. Following conventions in bullying research, we refer to those bullied as *targets* and bullies as *actors, bullies,* or *perpetrators*.

Workplace bullying is repeated, health-harming mistreatment that takes one or more of the following forms: verbal abuse; offensive conduct and behaviors (including

nonverbal) that are threatening, humiliating or intimidating; or work interference and sabotage that prevent work from getting done. Numerous negative interactions that feel intimidating, insulting, or exclusionary constitute this phenomenon. Targeted workers typically believe it is an intentional effort to harm, control, or drive them from the workplace. There is no question that the experience is deeply traumatic and stigmatizing (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008b) and marks the severe end of the employee-abuse continuum (Namie, 2003b). Bullying can involve persistent supervisory abuse of subordinates (most common), coworkers "ganging up" on colleagues, or, in rare occasions, "bullying up" when subordinates abuse a higher-level organizational member (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003). Table 2.1 outlines the verbal and nonverbal negative acts associated with bullying.

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Emergence of Interest in Workplace Bullying

International Interest

Heinz Leymann (1990), a German physician working in Sweden, began studying adult bullying in the early 1980s and is considered a pioneer in the field. His work with children bullied at school engendered an awareness of similar experiences of his adult patients. Leymann adopted the term "mobbing" from ethologist's descriptions of animal behavior in which a group of smaller animals attacked a single larger animal (Lorenz, 1991, cited in Leymann, 1996). Leymann's

work drew other Scandinavian researchers who initiated studies of workplace aggression, bullying, and mobbing (e.g., Björkqvist, Osterman, & Hjelt-Back, Lutgen-Sandvik & Sypher – 43; 1994; Einarsen, 1999).

A decade later, the topic surfaced in the U.K. In 1990, a freelance journalist named Andrea Adams (1992) brought the issue to public attention in Britain through a series of BBC radio broadcasts; she labeled the phenomenon "bullying." As a result of Adams' work and public concern, interest in and the study of bullying intensified in the U.K (e.g., Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Rayner, 1997). Although Scandinavia and the U.K. continue to lead thought in this area, bullying and mobbing research now includes, among others, scholars and professionals in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the European Union, and Japan (Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2003).

United States' Interest

In the United States the history of adult bullying research has been less straightforward. A U.S. psychiatrist named Carroll Brodsky (1976) conducted one of the first studies of workplace harassment and subsequently published *The Harassed Worker*. Despite the groundbreaking nature of his work, the book stirred little interest at the time. Brodsky's research was revived in the early 1990s when interest surged in Britain, and although out-of-print, the work is still often cited. Around this same time, the study of human aggression expanded to include aggression at work (Spector, 1975), research that was centrally concerned with perpetrators.

In the early 1980s, nursing professor, Helen Cox (1991), began studying verbal abuse in medical settings when it appeared to be driving away gifted nursing students. Around the same time rare but highly visible occurrences of workplace murder sparked a flood of research

that extended into the next two decades (e.g., Allen & Lucerno, 1996; Baron & Neuman, 1998; Chen & Spector, 1992; Neuman & Baron, 1997). Over time academic interest widened to include the study of antecedents to violence, such as perceived injustice, incivility, and mistreatment (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Keashly, 1998; Price Spratlen, 1995). In the late 1990s research with a distinctly target-focus emerged that addressed the issue of employee emotional abuse (synonymous with workplace bullying) (Keashly, 1998). Around the same time Gary and Ruth Namie (2000) published a self-help book on the subject and established the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) to help targets. Interest in U.S. workplace bullying began to flourish in the early 2000s and continues to grow at an exponential rate.

Naming of the Phenomenon

The terms used to describe persistent, primarily psychological, employee abuse vary from author to author, discipline to discipline, and country to country. Especially in the United States, the array of terms is daunting, even for those of us who study the subject. U.S. researchers use labels such as *employee emotional abuse* (Keashly, 1998), *generalized workplace abuse* (Rospenda, Richman, Wislar, & Flaherty, 2000), *mistreatment* (Meares, Oetzel, Derkacs, & Ginossar, 2004), and *perceived victimization* (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000)—to name only a few. The involved disciplines are as far ranging as the terminology and include, but are not limited to, management (Neuman & Baron, 2003), psychology (Keashly & Neuman, 2005), sociology, (Hodson et al., 2006), anthropology (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 2002), and organizational communication (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). Conversely, international research chiefly emerged in psychology and management and, with few exceptions, labels the phenomenon *bullying* or *mobbing*—terms that are, for all intents and purposes, synonymous.

Workplace Bullying as a Distinct Phenomenon

Workplace bullying is a distinct communicative phenomenon that is identified by its characteristic features. These features differentiate bullying from one-time aggressive or discriminatory acts. We catalogue these in what follows.

- *Repetition.* Bullying is recurring and frequent. "Hammering" and "chipping away" is laced throughout target stories and represents abuse that occurs on a nearly daily basis, in one form or another (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Tracy et al., 2006). Repetition differentiates the phenomenon from infrequent negative interactions (Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper, 2002).

- *Duration.* The long-term nature of bullying is a prominent feature giving bullying its corrosive character. Researchers usually adopt the minimum of six months articulated by Leymann (1990), but targets typically report bullying last much longer (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Namie, 2003a).

- *Escalation.* Bullying intensifies over time if left unchecked (Leymann, 1990; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003). During early phases, targets may have difficulty encoding their experience aside from describing feelings of unease or heightened discomfort (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008b). In later stages they lack the language to label the experience *bullying* but are unmistakably aware of being under attack (Einarsen et al., 2003).

- *Harm.* Bullying is exceedingly destructive and is associated with targets' impaired physical, mental, and occupational health; deterioration of personal relationships outside of work; and economic jeopardy. Witnessing coworkers

report increased stress and intent to leave (Lutgen-Sandvik, et al., 2007; Vartia, 2001).

Attributed intent. Targets and witnesses typically believe bullies' actions are purposeful—that perpetrators know exactly what they are doing and even work at it. Although researchers generally omit intent in definitions (discussed in Rayner et al., 2002), persons on the receiving end are *convinced* that bullying is intentional and find it impossible to believe that such egregious acts are inadvertent (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Namie & Namie, 2000).

Hostile work environment. Bullying constitutes, and is constituted by, hostile work environments (Liefooghe & MacKenzie-Davey, 2001; Salin, 2003) marked by pervasive fear and dread of workgroup members. Bullying is both an outcome of and a recursive resource for hostile work environments (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008).

Power disparity. Bullying at work is marked by a difference in power between actors and targets (Einarsen et al., 2003) that exists prior to the onset of bullying (e.g., abusive supervision) or arises as a result of ongoing harassment (e.g., peer-to-peer abuse) (Keashly & Nowell, 2003).

Communication patterning. Bullying is typically a constellation of verbal and nonverbal acts that constitute a discernable, recurring pattern to targets and witnesses (Keashly, 1998). Targets believe their experiences cannot be

understood outside this contextual patterning, which makes bullying difficult to describe straightforwardly (Tracy et al., 2006).

Distorted communication networks. Communication networks are typically blocked or stifled in bullying environments. Open day-to-day communication is risky and, in some cases, even forbidden and punished (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Rayner et al., 2002). The situations "that scare a bully most are the possibility of more than one person getting together to complain and [thus,] ... their behavior becoming public" (Crawford, 2001, p. 26). As becomes apparent, bullying is more than simply a list of negative communication behaviors. It is a complex pattern of negative interactions exacerbated by distinctive descriptive features.

Explanations for Workplace Bullying

The complexity of this communicative phenomenon is rivaled only by the multiplicity of explanations for it. As key researchers note, to fully understand the phenomenon one must "take a broad range of potential causes of bullying into account, which may lie with the organization, the perpetrator (bully), the social psychology of the work group, and also the victim" (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003, p. 166). Global economic environments, as well as social and cultural tradition, also contribute to bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008). We first review an explanatory classification for bullying and then present antecedents categorically (i.e., individual, organizational, social).

Etiological Explanations

Etiological explanations for bullying origins usually include dispute- related bullying (Einarsen, 1999) and three types of predatory-bullying: authoritative-, displaced-, and discriminatory (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2005). Another etiological explanation is organizational-bullying that identifies organizations and organizational systems as the causative forces behind abuse (Liefooghe & MacKenzie-Davey, 2001).

Dispute-related bullying begins with interpersonal disagreements that build into extremely escalated, entrenched conflicts (Einarsen, 1999). Actors may begin to objectify their opponents and "the total destruction of the opponent is seen as the ultimate goal" (Einarsen et al., 2003, p. 19).

Authoritative-bullying is the abuse of power granted through organizational position and is the most commonly reported (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001; Namie, 2003b, 2007; Rayner, 1997). In workgroups of authoritative actors serial bullying usually occurs, in which many workers are bullied, usually one after the other.

Displaced-bullying, or scapegoating, is aggressing "against someone other than the source of strong provocation because aggressing against the source of such provocation is too dangerous" (Neuman & Baron, 2003, p. 197). It occurs when increased frustration or stress caused by workplace factors result in employees taking frustrations out on others.

- *Discriminatory-bullying* is simply abusing someone out of prejudice, usually workers who differ from, or refuse to accept the norms of, the rest of the workgroup (Rayner et al., 2002) or "belong to a certain outsider group" (Einarsen et al., 2003, p. 19).

- *Organizational-bullying* indicts organizational practices that are oppressive, exploitive, and over-controlling as seeding abuse (Liefooghe & MacKenzieDavey, 2001) (e.g., corporate downsizing, outsourcing jobs, forcing uncompensated overtime work, closing entire plants to relocate for low-cost labor).

Individual Antecedents

Most researchers conclude that there is probably no such thing as a "victim" personality and it is equally unlikely that there is a "bully" personality (Rayner et al., 2002; Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). However, researchers have attempted to parse out the individual factors that might increase the likelihood of bullying or being bullied (Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000; Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). We review this literature while counseling caution on the reliance on any simplistic, individual explanations for the phenomenon.

Targets. There appears to be no sex bias in being targeted. Men and women are equally likely to report being bullied at work (Namie, 2007; Rayner, 1997; Zapf et al., 2003). However, organizational position and certain traits or behaviors are linked to being targeted. Organizational position is inversely

associated with being targeted. The higher organizational position, the lower the incidence of bullying; low-status workers are simply more vulnerable (Hodson et al., 2006).

Certain traits, behaviors, or markers are associated with increased risk, but the inconsistency of associated markers fails to convey a reliable picture of targets. For example, appearing too weak, anxious, submissive, unassertive, or conflict-aversive is claimed to provoke aggression in others (Coyne et al., 2000). Conversely, communicating aggressively, rejecting less-ethical group norms, and overachieving are also suggested as antecedents to being targeted (Adams & Crawford, 1992). On one hand, targets are characterized as "literal minded, ... somewhat unsophisticated ... overachiever[s]" (Brodsky, 1976, p.89) who lack social, communication skills, have low self-esteem, and are suspicious of others (Coyne et al., 2000). On the other hand, research identifies employees who are particularly talented, conscientious, and well-liked by others as persons likely to be targeted (Coyne, Chong, Seigne, & Randall, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Namie, 2003a). Plainly, there is no clear marker-cluster that categorizes targets.

Perpetrators. Whether men or women are more likely to be reported as bullies has yet to be resolved. Research findings are mixed; some suggest that bullies seem to be male more often (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Zapf et al., 2003), and others suggest the opposite (Namie, 2003a). There does appear to be a relationship between position and bullying others— supervisors or upper-

managers are identified as abusers in 60 to 80 percent of cases (e.g., Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Namie, 2003a; Rayner, 1997). In a nationally representative survey (Namie, 2007), 72 percent of reported bullies were managers, some of whom had the sponsorship and support of executives, managerial peers, or human resources.

Workplace violence researchers have invested considerable effort in identifying precursors of potentially violent organizational actors. The traits and behaviors associated with such aggression likely play a part in bullying. These include lack of self control, self-reflection, empathy and perspective-taking (Douglas & Martinko, 2001); personal volatility; history or tendency toward depression; Theory X beliefs; Type A personalities; negative affectivity; and unstable, unrealistic high self-esteem (Neuman & Baron, 1998; Tepper, 2000; Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). For example, inflated views of self that are "unstable or heavily dependent on external validation" (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003, p. 168) are particularly vulnerable to being interrogated, contradicted, or censured.

Other alleged markers include lack of social or communicative adeptness (Einarsen, Raknes, & Mattheisen, 1994), growing up around domestic violence, or being a victim of child abuse (Randall, 2001). Alcohol and drug abuse and aggressive behavior in one's personal life may also be predictors of workplace bullying (Douglas & Martinko, 2001). Whatever the constellations of markers, bullies act in ways identified as pathological, power-addicted, and controlling

(Namie & Namie, 2000; Tracy et al., 2006). Bullies are perceived as being good at "managing up" and ingratiating themselves with higher-level persons. As with targets, however, there is little research directly linking any specific personality type to perpetrators of workplace bullying (Rayner et al., 2002).

Organizational Antecedents

When workplaces are chaotic, unpredictable, and marked by high levels job insecurity, role-conflict or strain, workers are far more likely to report being bullied (Hodson et al., 2006; Lawrence, 2001). In chaotic environments, actors may see their activities as maintaining control in situations where the actor has insufficient work control or high levels of work conflict (Einarsen et al., 1994). The physical environment can also exacerbate aggressive acts. Lack of space or privacy, physically uncomfortable equipment and accommodations, and electronic surveillance may increase the risk of bullying (Barling, 1996).

Pressures to increase productivity while decreasing production costs (reduced workforce) can create "boiler room" environments that place "enormous stress on managers and employees and ... [trigger] abusive behaviors in managers" (Bassman, 1992, p. 137). Managers and workers may use bullying instrumentally to deal with these chaotic, demanding situations. Some claim that bullying occurs due to "inadequate transformation of leadership and power in reaction to [global economic] shifts" (Vandekerckhove & Commers, 2003, p. 41). Economic

pressures drive expectations for boosted profitability, but such expectations often occur within structural, procedural, and leadership vacuums.

Generally speaking, two management styles are associated with harassment and bullying: coercive/authoritarian (Hoel & Salin, 2003) and laizzefaire (Di Martino, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003). The former may use bullying to "motivate" workers; the latter typically fails to intervene when workers report being abused. Unfortunately, when most employers are notified about bullying incidents, they either do nothing or worsen the situation by fostering retaliation against the complainant (Keashy, 2001; Namie, 2007).

Some organizational cultures have an adversarial and aggressive approach to working and interpersonal relationships that encourages aggressive communication (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). These climates and professional cultures may reward bullying with promotions, access to leadership, and most importantly, the granting of invariant personal credibility or voice. Bullying seems more prevalent in work cultures that accept aggression as an aspect of doing business (e.g., law enforcement, corrections, legal firms, etc.) (Hoel & Salin, 2003). Wright and Smye (1998) describe three types of culture and associated forms of abuse: *win/lose* or forcing competition among members, *blaming* or making people fearful of stepping out of line, and *sacrificing* everything in workers' lives for their work.

Salin's (2003) overview of the enabling, motivating, and precipitating structures and processes that contribute to bullying is informative. Enabling factors explain why bullying might be rewarded: "perceived power imbalance" (p. 1218), "low perceived costs" (p. 1220), and "dissatisfaction and frustration" (pp. 1221-22). Motivating factors are reasons for why it might flourish: "high internal competition and a politicized climate" (p. 1223) and "reward system and expected benefits" for the perpetrator (p. 1224). Precipitating factors are triggers for its occurrence: "restructuring, downsizing, ... other crises [, and organizational changes]" (p. 1225).

Societal/Cultural Antecedents

Beyond economic globalization and the pressure this creates, other social and cultural belief systems influence employee abuse. Lutgen-Sandvik and McDermott (2008) argue that meaning systems contributing to workplace bullying include the ideological link between work and religion, philosophies of individualism and meritocracy, a reverence for hierarchical power, profit as an ultimate goal, and Theory X notions of workers as lazy and in need of goading.

Related cultural ideologies that might stimulate adult bullying are those that praise power, profit, and position (Du Gay, 1996); devalue human and stakeholder interests (Deetz, 1992); and stigmatize victims or disadvantaged persons (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008b; Ryan, 1976). An important but often unrecognized effect of these value systems is to whom such values confer voice.

Bullied workers (victims) in subordinate positions (low position power) are rarely believed (Keashly, 2001), especially if they have been bullied by a highly productive (profit) or politically astute (position-power) aggressor.

Considerable evidence points to national culture as a key factor in bullying prevalence. Scandinavia has far lower bullying rates than the United States and Britain (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007)—arguably due to low-power distance and feminine/egalitarian norms (Hofstede, 1980). Since bullying is a power-down phenomenon, less power and status differences between people in different positions likely results in less bullying. In feminine and egalitarian cultures with high concern for the quality of interpersonal relations, one might also expect persons to communicate more respectfully.

Consequences: Actors and Organizations

Given the range of antecedents, it becomes clear that bullying is a complex phenomenon. As important as its antecedents, however, are its consequences—for organizations and their members. Although targets suffer the greatest degree of damage, witnessing coworkers are also impaired (LutgenSandvik et al., 2007). What is more, when workers are bullied, there is a deterioration or disabling of the organization (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003).

Targets

Empirical and anecdotal evidence indicate that bullying affects all aspects of targets' lives. Their self-esteem (Price Spratlen, 1995), physical and emotional

health (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002; Rospenda, 2002), and cognitive functioning (Brodsky, 1976) are at risk or damaged. Targets report higher levels of anxiety, depression (Namie, 2003a), alcohol abuse (Richman, Rospenda, Flaherty, & Freels, 2001), and suicidal ideation (Leymann, 1990) than do non- bullied workers. Longitudinal research suggests that perceptions workplace injustice (no doubt experienced by targets) are associated with chronic stress, high blood pressure, and increased risk of coronary heart disease (De Vogli, Ferrie, Chandola, Kivimäki, & Marmot, 2007).

Targets of long-term workplace abuse also experience symptoms of post- traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Namie's (2003a) research found that a third of women and a quarter of men experienced the key symptoms of PTSD: hypervigilance, thought intrusions, avoidance-disassociation. This corresponds with Leymann's (1996) earlier work. Some targets are so damaged that they cannot reintegrate into the workforce, or can do so only after intensive rehabilitation therapy (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996). Being abused at work also impairs relationships outside of work. Although this issue has yet to receive widespread attention, anecdotal evidence suggests disastrous effects on family functioning, relationships, and communication (Jennifer, Cowie, & Anaiadou, 2003; Rayner et al., 2002; Tracy et al., 2006).

Coworkers

Witnesses of bullying, those considered *secondary* targets, are "employees who themselves were not violated but whose perceptions, fears and expectations are changed as a result of being vicariously exposed to violence" (Barling, 1996, p. 35). These workers report increased levels of "destabilizing forces at work, excessive workloads, role ambiguity and work relationship conflict" (Jennifer et al., 2003, p. 495). Non-bullied witnesses report elevated negativity and stress and, in contrast, decreased work satisfaction, when compared to non-exposed workers (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007).

Organizations

The central consequences to organizations include lost productivity, decreased worker commitment and satisfaction, increased operating costs, loss of positive public relations, and, over time, impoverished workforces. Abuse at work, particularly from supervisors, reduces organizational citizenship behaviors—discretionary acts that promote organizational effectiveness (Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). Not surprisingly, facing persistent harassment and humiliation increases absenteeism. Indeed, an EEOC officer explained that one of the key indicators her office used to identify if problems existed in a workgroup was employee use of sick leave (P. Kendall, personal communication 9/27/2007).

Presenteeism can also be a problem in hostile work environments. This term usually means "slack productivity from ailing workers" (Cascio, 2006, p. 245), but can occur when bullied workers fear missing work because of what

might transpire in their absence when they are not there to defend themselves (e.g., rumors, work destruction, key task removal). These workers may be present but are usually not producing at their peak potential, as enormous levels of energy are necessary to cope with, defend against, and make sense of persistent harassment and humiliation (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006).

Organizations most likely also face increased premiums for workers' compensation (Brodsky, 1976) and medical insurance (Bassman, 1992). Law suits associated with bullying (e.g., wrongful or constructive discharge), although rare, are exceedingly costly both in legal fees and staff hours (Rayner et al., 2002). Quite commonly, organizations also suffer loss of positive public images (Bassman, 1992) and find it increasingly difficulty to recruitment staff, especially when word spreads within a specialized group of employees about an employee-abusive organization (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008).

Workplace bullying simply drives away good employees, both targets and witnesses (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Rayner et al., 2002). Turnover and associated recruiting, hiring, and training new employees are directly linked to increased operating expenses. Over time, these organizations can end up with impoverished workforces as a direct result of worker-exit waves. The first exodus wave includes those with high occupational capital (e.g., skills, technical knowledge, experience). A second wave leaves when hope of change is lost, and the third wave includes new employees who enter and then leave shortly afterward, once

they recognize the negative dynamics. Unfortunately, employee exodus usually leaves behind a less talented, less confident cadre of workers with fewer occupational options and fewer organizationally valued assets (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2005).

Prevention and Intervention: Constructive Ways of Organizing

Given the destruction wrought by bullying, it is important to examine approaches to prevention and intervention. No single response is likely to resolve workplace bullying, especially if aggressive interactions have become sedimented and widespread harm has occurred. We present those with the most potential for positive organizing in what follows.

Individual Responses

Individual responses suggest that accountability for bullying resides in the targeted individual, which simply is not the case. What is more, individual efforts to stop bullying are usually less than successful (Keashly, 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik, Alberts, & Tracy, 2008). Nonetheless, those targeted are keen to know what they can do to stop abuse. We discuss a number of potential approaches targets may take, including how coworkers can help in these situations.

Being able to name abuse "workplace bullying" is an important first step to understanding what is occurring and what to do about it (Namie, 2006). Information about bullying (e.g., research articles, books) coupled with being able to name bullying as a distinct phenomenon also bolsters employee claims to upper-management and HR (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Certainly, confronting actors is a possibility. Rayner et al. (2002) claim that if done early, before abuse is entrenched, speaking with bullies can effectively alter negative communication

patterns. Such an approach can be risky, however; many targets report that abuse escalates after such conversations (Lutgen-Sandvik).

Targeted workers may also decide to file formal or informal complaints to unions, EEOC, the bully's boss, or attorneys (Macintosh, 2006). When making reports to organizational authorities, detailed documentation (e.g., dates, times, events) can be useful, since authorities typically need formal evidence of wrongdoing (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Targeted workers may also consider filing lawsuits against employers. Although there is no legal protection against bullying in the United States, some workers find grounds for sexual harassment, racial discrimination, constructive discharge, or wrongful termination cases (Davenport et al., 2002).

Ensuring self-care and social support is especially important. This may mean taking time off, trying not to take the experience personally, and spending time with trusted others (Namie & Namie, 2000). Gaining peer support is easier if other organizational members understand bullying and know that it is occurring. Informally educating peers can be done by distributing articles and talking about bullying in a manner that protects vulnerable persons (Macintosh, 2006). If and when individual tactics fail, which is often the case, workers commonly choose to

quit or transfer. In fact, when asked what others facing bullying should do, targets most frequent

recommendation is leaving the organization (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Zapf & Gross, 2001).

Although leaving does not change organizational dynamics, we believe this response is

empowering and positive—analogous to domestic violence victims leaving their perpetrators.

Coworkers can be very helpful for supporting targets' stories and breaking the bullying

cycle (Macintosh, 2006); concerted voice simply increases believability (Lutgen-Sandvik,

2006). Collective voice also reduces some of the risk of being labeled troublemakers, mentally

ill, or problem-employees. Non- targeted workgroup members may not be as stigmatized,

since they lack the victim label. But even with collective resistance, there is the risk of being

pejoratively branded when speaking out against abuse and oppression (LutgenSandvik).

What Stops Bullying—A Reality Check

In this section, we discussed several options for individual action. However, the WBI-

Zogby Survey (Namie, 2007) sheds light on two important aspects of targets' efficacy in dealing

with bullying. The respondents who either experienced or witnessed bullying tell us what bullied

targets did: 40 percent took no action, 37 percent informally reported to the organization (e.g.,

bully's boss or HR), 19 percent filed formal internal or external complaints, and 3 percent filed

individual or joined class-action lawsuits. When we describe bullying as a silent

epidemic (Namie & Namie, 2004), it is due to the relatively low rate of formal action taken by targets—usually out of fear the things will get worse.

We began this section reproving targets' practical responsibility to stop the bullying. The WBI-Zobgy Survey (Namie, 2007) supports this claim. Of those targeted for which the bullying had stopped, 40 percent quit their jobs, 24 percent were involuntarily terminated, and 13 percent changed jobs in their current organizations. Bullies were negatively sanctioned in 23 percent of cases; however, this is likely an inflated artifact of questionnaire wording that used the term "harasser" to identify the bully. Indeed harassers who commit illegal acts are more likely to be terminated and negatively sanctioned. As such, we move on to more fruitful organizational responses.

Organizational Responses

Bullying is clearly an organizational, not an individual, problem. Executive decisions collectively create and sustain working environments. Employers unilaterally establish work conditions except when constrained by the rare collective bargaining agreements (only 7.5% of the private sector is unionized). Solving the problem is not only an organization-wide responsibility but successful efforts require the total commitment of top-level organizational leadership, involvement of middle-management, and engagement of employees (Tehrani, 2001). Short-term approaches such as identifying lone perpetrators while ignoring initiating and maintaining factors ultimately fails to produce

meaningful, lasting change. The following outlines organizational responses for more constructive ways of organizing.

Top-level commitment. We cannot overstate the importance of top-level commitment to dignity for all workers. The communication behavior of persons perceived as representatives of the organization, and all that their communication implies, will set the tone for other organizational members' interactions. "Employees will quickly become cynical when ... exhort[ed] ... to behave in a way that bears little relationship to the action behaviors of the managers they observe in their daily life" (Tehrani, 2001, p. 136).

In the Namies' work with organizations, when top managers do commit to stopping bullying, some of the reasons include a CEO's desire to leave a personal legacy, the begrudging severance of a long-term friendship between sponsor and bully, response to patient/client endangerment complaints by ethical practitioners, and a newfound intolerance of emotional tirades by a partner in a professional practice. Surprisingly, the commitment is rarely based on financial or employee- protection reasons, despite considerable evidence that workplace bullying costs organizations dearly.

Member engagement. Although top-level commitment is crucial, a solely top-down approach is unlikely to fundamentally change a communication climate. Members at all levels and functional areas need to be involved and engaged in assessing the current communication climate, determining areas for improvement,

and implementing changes. One effective approach to spearhead the effort is creating a cross-level, cross-functional team (or a number of them depending on organizational size) to work collaboratively with external researchers or experts (for an outstanding example, see Keashly & Neuman, 2005, and Keashly & Neuman, this volume). Together team(s) identify problems and outline potential solutions.

An important group to include are middle managers who "have the greatest opportunity to demonstrate that a culture that respects the dignity of individual employees is possible" (Tehrani, 2001, p, 137). If middle managers are entrenched in an aggressive, autocratic style of supervision, they may be highly suspicious of changes that appear to strip them of power. Upper management must provide adequate training and encouragement to assist middle managers in the shift from their current style to a style that is conducive to creating a dignity- based climate. A core element of such training is interpersonal communication skills—an area that is often most challenging during the transition. In what follows, we outline the core elements of an organizational approach.

Organization-wide assessment and planning. Chances are, organizations are not aware of the extent to which workers may be bullied because, as we noted earlier, the phenomenon is woefully under-reported (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Namie, 2007). Assessments identify the presence (or absence) of bullying, but also identify the types of bullying (if present) in each workgroup, so that action

plans can be tailored, as one-size-fits-all approaches rarely succeed (Tehrani, 2001). Assessment usually includes anonymous surveys followed by worker interviews or focus groups to flesh out the quantitative findings. Academics are extremely useful for developing assessment measures, conducting confidential interviews, and analyzing resultant data. From the assessment, cross-functional teams can develop action plans relative to the presenting dynamics.

Implementation and follow-up evaluation. Based on the action plan, organizations then move to implementation of solutions. At the very least, respectful communication climates should include creating equitable reward systems, valuing diversity in people and ways of working, and promoting employee-level control over tasks (Tehrani, 2001). The range of intervention and prevention efforts is potentially unlimited. We address some possibilities in the concluding portion of this section. Based on the success criteria developed during the assessment and plan-development phases, organizations will want to evaluate the results measured against outlined objectives and hoped-for benefits. If interventions fail to achieve desired ends, teams should return to earlier problem- solving steps (i.e., clarify problems) or choose another course of action.

Certainly as important as any other aspect of creating respectful climates, is rewarding desirable behavior and doing so publicly. Organizational members will, in most cases, do what is rewarded, especially if rewards are meaningful. As Noreen Tehrani (2001) explains:

The importance of recognition cannot be overestimated in the achievement of

excellence. Organisations that use reward as an incentive ... [are] particularly

successful.... Recognition is particularly important to achieve changes in culture.... [and]

does not have to be financial to be effective, indeed a financial reward can be

counterproductive. A number of organisations used the presentation of certificates or

medals ... as an effective sign of recognition.... Recognition can also be achieved in the

appraisal process where appropriate objectives are set to assess the levels of respect

shown to colleagues and teams. (pp. 148, 15 1)

Organizations will also want to consciously shift reward systems away from any type of direct

or indirect championing of aggressive communication—even ignoring such behavior in

hopes that it will go away (see Pearson, 1998).

Unfortunately, an aspect of developing a feedback system also includes a system of

negative sanctions for those who fail to treat others with respect. If and when abuse occurs,

failure to intervene will doom efforts to build climates marked by dignity (De Vogli et al.,

2007). At times, firm management and negative sanctions (including employment

termination) will be required to communicate to the entire workforce that bullying will not

be tolerated (Crawford, 2001). This is typically one of the most difficult tasks upper-managers

face when trying to create respectful workplaces because it involves confrontation—

interactions that are rarely pleasant.

Prevention and Intervention Efforts

When an organization fully implements and sustains an anti-bullying initiative, it restores its focus on mission, a focus often lacking in employee- abusive workplaces. In what follows we provide elements that could comprise an anti-bullying initiative. We give particular attention to policy issues in what follows; this is grounded in the Namies' extensive work with organizations seeking to redress the issue. Additionally, we review other approaches proposed in bullying research.

Anti-bullying policies. Organizations may wish to create an explicit anti- bullying policy. A stand-alone policy communicates the seriousness of the problem and the depth of leadership's commitment to its correction and prevention. Anti-bullying provisions could also supplement existing anti- harassment or violence prevention policies since bullying is a different (albeit legal) form of harassment and a sub-lethal, non-physical form of violence.

Policies should precisely declare the unacceptability of bullying but avoid communicating or expecting "zero tolerance," since at first, multiple offenses may need to be allowed (although not ignored) because changing the climate requires relearning by everyone. Most organizational members will abandon abusive tactics when the consequences for harming others outweigh the personal rewards. Operant learning, principles apply—using consequences to reform behavior. With multiple confirmed violations, however, the penalties should grow increasingly

severe. Constraint of unacceptable conduct should be the organization's goal. As noted, in some cases, upper-management will have to terminate the employment of intractable, repeat offenders who are unwilling or unable to change.

Policies should define bullying; "a definition is crucial as it enables all staff ... to understand what the organization terms 'workplace bullying'" (Richards & Daley, 2003, p. 250). Most policies also list omnibus categories and a limited set of examples. For instance, organizations might summarize the breadth of misbehavior encoded in the Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001) with the following categories: verbal abuse; threatening, intimidating or humiliating communication and behavior; and work obstruction that undermines legitimate organizational interests. As with assessment teams, including a representative stakeholder group to collaboratively write both the policy and enforcement procedures is imperative. Internal groups—non- supervisory staff, unions, supervisors, senior management, governing boards, legal counsel, and human resources—should be a part of the development process.

Enforcement of policies, even when executives are confirmed violators, is the employer's chance to show a genuine desire to change the culture and climate of aggression. Procedures must be designed to be fair and credible to employees, especially those who have been bullied. Unenforced policies promote employee cynicism, and informal employee communication networks will swiftly transmit

news of disingenuous investigations of alleged policy violations. Trained peer fact-finders, practical listeners, or external investigators can be effective at overcoming employee doubts.

Policies should include methods for handling informal complaints as a first stage of policy invocation. When employers provide an opportunity to speak in confidence and without fear of reprisal, many potential formal complaints are precluded. There is power in providing for individual voice and an opportunity "just to be heard." Formal action may follow but only if the individual chooses. Confidential ombudspersons or practical listeners can provide this informal service.

The formal complaint process should be relatively quick to optimize value for participants, witnesses, and the organization. Witnesses and involved parties should be informed of the decision—complaint was upheld or not upheld. In current human resources investigations, for the sake of the offender's confidentiality, affected coworkers and even complainants never learn outcomes. Cynicism and distrust become employees' perceptions by default because the are "left in the dark." To have the new anti-bullying policy transform the culture, participants in the fact-finding procedures need to be informed of results in a way that is respectful to all involved.

For policies to be effective, they "need to be backed by designated groups who are responsible for the sensitive dissemination and maintenance of the

policy" (Crawford, 2001, p. 25). Upon creation and implementation of the new policy and enforcement procedures, employees at all levels need to be made aware of its goals and provisions. Mandatory education, as practiced by many employers for anti-discrimination and sexual harassment, conveys the organization's commitment to stopping bullying. Ideally, handouts, brochures, flyers, and posters mounted permanently in prominent places accompany training. Training should also be repeated at designated intervals (e.g., annually).

External investigators. When workers report bullying, organizations might bring in external investigators to assist in investigation and policy implementation. External experts are warranted in cases where organizational members have little experience or expertise dealing with bullying, where alleged perpetrators hold senior management positions, and when the authority of an external person may be helpful during, or dealing with the aftermath of, the investigation (Merchant & Hoel, 2003). Investigations can be fairly conducted by impartial, outside professionals who specialize in workplace bullying and aggression interventions. These experts can also teach upper-manager how to more effectively deal with similar situations should they arise in the future.

Training. In addition to policy training, organizations will want to provide ongoing, organization-wide training on both bullying and respectful communication (Keashly & Neuman, 2005). As an element of hands-on training, some organizations have "bullying drills... similar to fire drills" to prepare them

with appropriate responses in the event that bullying occurs (Macintosh, 2006, p. 675). Training

must include human resources or employee assistance program professionals and focus on

recognizing bullying and protecting reporting workers from harm. Managers, in particular,

need to recognize the warning signs of bullying and respond swiftly to complaints, so they can

intervene early when intervention is most effective (Rayner et al., 2002). Furthermore,

managers should be encouraged to develop a more compassionate, caring management style

that includes developing and using emotional intelligence skills.

Restorative interventions. Organizations may want to provide support for bullied

individuals and affected work teams. Coworker witnesses are often vicariously affected by

seeing the suffering of a peer and being helpless to make it stop (Vartia, 2001). Developing

target and witness-oriented support is an important aspect of dealing with bullying.

Organizations might provide confidential support for targets by persons other than those

whose first loyalty is to the employer (e.g., HR, EAPs). (Workers should understand that the

primary loyalties of HR and EAPs are typically to the employing organization rather than the

suffering employee.) A good example of such confidential support is the *practical listeners*

(Rains, 2001) program implemented by the U.K.'s postal service. In this program, trained

volunteer peer staff members provide social support, validate targets' experiences, listen

nonjudgmentally, suggest possible choices of action, help handling *Pre-employment screening*.

Pre-employment screening might be another adopted element of an anti-bullying effort (Bulatao

& VanderBos, 1996). Unless organizations use proven psychological testing and professionals

to administer and evaluate test results, however, such testing strategies alone may fail to

"screen-out" undesirable workers (Babiak & Hare, 2006). Interviewing techniques, such as behavioral interviewing, can also help discriminate among candidates. Referencing checking beyond persons candidates supply is also a promising strategy.

Multi-rater evaluation systems. Multi-rater systems, such as 360° evaluations, can provide a more comprehensive picture of individual behavior (Tehrani, 2001). These can also reduce the possibility of aggressive workers receiving positive evaluations since it is not unusual for managers who supervise bullies to fear them and thus fail to honestly evaluate their performance (Pearson, 1998). What is more, multi-rater systems can include confidential staff evaluation of supervisors—a communicative channel that has the added benefit of identifying supervisory bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008).

Societal-Level Responses

Although cultural norms are the slowest to change, such norms have a profound impact on human communication behavior. We examine two societal- level responses to bullying.

Statutory protection. As noted, discounting of the problem can be partially explained by lack of statutory protection against bullying. Nearly all organizations produce enforceable anti-discrimination policies to ensure legal compliance; however, only one-fifth of bullying incidents meet the legal criteria for a potential discrimination violation (Namie, 2007). That is, bullying is four times more frequent than illegal discrimination and harassment, but employers can ignore it with little risk of liability because U.S. statutes provide no legal protection against being bullied at work. Thus, organizations may have little impetus to intervene in these situations.

Moreover, courts are typically reluctant to pass judgments that limit commerce (i.e., find in favor of plaintiff employees) (Yamada, 2000). For this reason, between 2003 and 2007, advocacy groups pressed legislators in 13 U.S. states to introduce some version of anti-bullying workplace legislation written and disseminated by the Workplace Bullying Institute's Legislative Campaign (Namie, 2006; Yamada, 2000). Currently no state has yet passed a law, although internationally there are good models for such statutory protection. For example, two Canadian provinces have addressed bullying (psychological harassment) in different ways. Quebec implemented an anti-bullying law in June 2004, and

Saskatchewan revised the Health and Safety Code in October 2007 to prohibit bullying of employees by codifying bullying as an occupational health hazard. Ireland also prohibits bullying through workplace health and safety codes, and worker protections exist in Scandinavia.

Public health campaigns. Longitudinal medical research provides convincing proof that bullying and injustice at work are detrimental to worker health (Elovainio et al., 2006). As such, public health campaigns are an important societal-level response to the risks bullying poses. In this respect, organizational and health communication scholars could join expertise. Indeed, a key challenge facing health and organization communication academics is how to mobilize the power of mass communication to empower organizations to adopt healthy behaviors, to direct policy makers' attention to important health communication issues, and to frame those issues for public debate and resolution.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have reviewed the issue of workplace bullying: its causes, consequences, and potential corrections. The human and institutional losses associated with bullying are inexcusable, since it is completely preventable. Despite certain capital-labor ideologies that dehumanize workers and posit that increased pressure increases productivity, there is no evidence that bullying nets any substantive gains for organizations. Quite the contrary—workplace bullying is counter to the best interests of organizations and their stakeholders. There is

considerable evidence that bullying affects millions of U.S. workers. As such, it deserves

concerted attention by researchers, practitioners, and public policy makers.

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