

Running head: WORKPLACE BULLYING

Workplace Bullying: Academic Administrators' Intervention Strategies

Sue L. Theiss, Lynne M. Webb, and Patricia Amason

University of Arkansas`

Please cite to this paper in the following manner:

Theiss, S. L., Webb, L. M., & Amason, P. (2012). Workplace bullying: Academic administrators' intervention strategies. Western States Communication Association, Albuquerque, NM, February.

Lynne M. Webb
University of Arkansas
Dept. of Communication
417 Kimpel Hall
Fayetteville, AR 72701
479-575-5956
LynneWebb320@cs.com

Sue Theiss
University of Arkansas
University Ombuds Office
603 Arkansas Union
Fayetteville, AR 72701
479-575-4831
stheiss@cox.net

Patricia Amason
University of Arkansas
Dept. of Communication
417 Kimpel Hall
Fayetteville, AR 72701
479-575-5959
pamason@uark.edu

This research report is based on the first author's MA Thesis, directed by the second author. Ms. Theiss (MA, 2007, University of Arkansas) is the Director of the Ombuds Office at the University of Arkansas. Ms. Webb (PhD, 1980, University of Oregon) is Professor in Communication, University of Arkansas. Ms. Amason (PhD, 1993, Purdue University) is an Associate Professor and Associate Chair, Department of Communication, University of Arkansas. The authors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of Mr. Robert H. Wicks (PhD, 1987, Michigan State University) who served as a member of Ms. Theiss' thesis committee and Ms. Randi R. Cruz (BA, 2012, University of Arkansas) who provided editorial assistance in the preparation of this essay.

Workplace Bullying: Academic Administrators' Intervention Strategies

Abstract

Thematic analysis of fifteen interviews with academic administrators revealed details of their interactions with perpetrators and victims of bullying. Administrators voiced complex understandings of bullying describing both its conditions and behaviors (direct and indirect). They expressed wide-spread agreement about the initial intervention strategies (early intervention, assessment, consider unique circumstances, creating a safe environment, provide education and coaching, provide structure and follow-through). Depending on the institution's policies and the support of higher-level administrators, follow-up strategies included collaborative strategies (re-assess situation, additional coaching) or dominate strategies (progressive discipline, reassignment, dismissal, use of formal processes).

Key words: academic workplace, bullying, conflict resolution strategies.

Workplace Bullying: Academic Administrators' Intervention Strategies

Bullying in our schools and workplaces has received international attention in both the popular press and scholarly venues. Attention has focused largely on understanding bullies and their victims (Cowan, 2009; Einarsen, 1999; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2007; Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2002; Namie and Namie 2009; Rayner and Keashly, 2005). Recent research reveals that ongoing exposure to workplace bullying can lead to turnover, lowered productivity, group disputes, and negative health outcomes (Brousse et al., 2008; Meares, Oetzel, Torres, Derkacs, and Ginossar, 2004; Namie, 2000; O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, and Glew, 1996; Pearson, 1993). Lack of managerial intervention can perpetuate bullying (Namie and Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). Conversely, managerial intervention can ameliorate the impact of bullying, especially when managers intervene to break the cycle of abuse and actively discourage bullying (Chedelin and Lucas, 2004; Cleary, Hunt, Walter, and Robertson, 2009; Ferris, 2004).

To further examine managerial intervention, our research project examined managers' perspectives of workplace bullying in a unique organizational setting, higher education, where power differentials between personnel can be substantial and relationships can be complex (e.g., a colleague may be a former professor). Consistent with previous studies examining workplace conflict (Keaveney, 2008; Leung, 2010), our research was grounded in Sillars and Parry's (1982) Conflict Attribution Theory and Bandura's (2001) Social Cognition Theory.

Bullying Behaviors and Consequences

"Bullying occurs when someone [or group] is systematically subjected to aggressive behaviors" which lead, either intentionally or unintentionally, to a stigmatization and victimization of the target (Einarsen, 1999, p. 16). When bullied, the victim perceives him or herself as the target of unwanted, ongoing, aggressive communication. Einarsen posited that

abuse related to workplace bullying seems “mostly to be of a verbal nature and seldom includes physical violence” (1999, p. 18). While most forms of verbal aggression do not lead to physical violence, acts of physical aggression typically are preceded by unresolved verbal violence or indirect aggression (Infante, 1996).

Types of Bullying

Namie and Namie (2009) identify four types of bullies. *Chronic* bullies employ aggressive, dominating, and coercive strategies in most interactions within and outside of work. Bullying is the way they communicate with almost everyone and/or whenever they do not get their way. *Opportunist* bullies “suspend” their aggressive behaviors outside work but believe careers are built with political gamesmanship. In a competitive work environment, these bullies are willing to succeed at the expense of their targets. If the opportunist’s behaviors are reinforced by the organization, the bully is likely to continue to use them. *Accidental* bullies unintentionally take actions that victimize recipients, but typically retreat and/or apologize when confronted. These individuals fail to realize that others interpret their behavior negatively, are genuinely surprised, and sometimes regretful, when they learn about the interpretations. *Substance-Abusing* bullies do not act rationally or logically, as they are “under the influence” of chemicals that interfere with their awareness, sensations and perceptions; they exhibit aggressive behaviors beyond reason, logic, or their own control.

Einarsen (1999) introduced two additional types of work-place bullies. *Dispute-related* bullying (Einarsen, 1999, Namie and Namie, 2009) involves an escalated conflict. The bully employs coercive or aggressive conflict strategies in an ongoing dispute. *Predatory* bullying occurs when the organizational culture allows bullying as an interaction style. For example, a tenured physician in a medical school may verbally abuse residents because he/she was treated

the same way as a resident, and the practice is commonly accepted. Predatory bullying tends to be more prevalent in rule-oriented and bureaucratic organizations (Ferris, 2004).

Referrals to processes and personnel who do not understand the power differences at play between a bully and victim can result in reinforcing the bully's power, and thus further institutionalizing bullying behaviors. Conversely, management can discourage bullying. In cases involving *substance-abusing* or *chronic* bullies, supervisors and the organization can establish clear boundaries and consequences, including discontinued employment if the bullying behaviors do not change. In cases of *dispute-related* or *accidental* bullying, the abuser can be introduced to positive conflict resolution skills. When *predatory* and *opportunistic* bullying occurs, the organization can take action to discourage and *not* reinforce bullying behaviors. When an organization permits an employee to exert more influence over another than is necessary or appropriate for the scope of his/her position, then the likelihood of reaching mutually beneficial resolutions and repairing relationships decreases (Folger, Poole, and Stutman, 2005).

Issues of Power

In a study that examined target age, Lutgen-Sandvik (2007) determined that younger employees experience higher rates of targeting by bullies. Older workers reported colleague/peer bullying more frequently, while young employees received more verbal abuse from supervisors and were less likely to report abuse and more likely to leave the organization.

The 2003 Report on Abusive Workplaces (Namie, 2003) found that 71% of bullies had a higher rank in the organization than their targets. Survey respondents identified higher level managers as exhibiting behaviors that assist the bully in 24% of the cases. For example, if a supervisor who has been bullying an employee convinces upper-level management that the employee (the target) has performance problems, then an upper-level manager might assist the

bully by supporting and enforcing disciplinary actions requested by the supervisor (the bully). In this way, managerial intervention can play a primary role in positively or negatively affecting the outcomes of bullying situations.

The Stages of Bullying

Einarsen (1999) identifies four-stages of bullying: (a) aggressive behavior, (b) bullying (c) stigmatization, and (d) severe trauma. Coworkers are brought into the cycle when the target begins to recognize that aggressive behaviors toward him/her have become frequent. This is the point at which *aggressive behavior* becomes *bullying*. Soon the victim has difficulty defending him or herself and the stage is set for the move from *bullying* to *stigmatization*. The related stress of the situation eventually may cause performance problems for the target, which the bully then brings to others' attention. By highlighting the victim's weaknesses and performance problems, the bully can mislead bystanders, culminating in *stigmatization* of the victim.

At stigmatization, the manager typically is asked to intervene at the request of the bully, the target, and/or the bystanders. The victim's inabilities become the focus of the bully, and typically of the intervener. The manager then pays less attention to the bully's aggressive acts, as the focus moves away from the bully to the target. In some situations, a target might believe that he or she has done something to instigate the actions of the bully or may worry that others perceive him/her as timid, thin-skinned, or deserving of the bullying (Keashly and Harvey, 2005). In reality, many targets are well educated, refuse to be subservient, and/or exhibit exceptional knowledge, communication skills, or ability to establish effective relationships with others, which the bully finds threatening (Namie and Namie, 2009). "When stepping into the case, upper management or personnel administration tend to accept the prejudices produced by

the [bullies], thus blaming the victim” (Einarsen, 1999, p. 20). If managers cannot address the situation without further victimizing the target, the target may experience severe trauma.

Costs and Consequences

Rayner and Keashly (2005) identified three areas of organizational costs related to bullying: replacing staff, the time associated with staff coping with bullying, and the related administrative costs of mistreatment, including litigation. Additional cost of mistreatment can include victims’ increased absences and illnesses, poor and lowered productivity, as well as low workplace morale (Meares et al., 2004; Namie, 2000; O’Leary-Kelly, 1996; Pearson, 1993). Serious physical and acute mental health problems associated with bullying are well documented (Hallberg and Strandmark, 2006; Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2002; Namie, 2003); they range from anxiety and depression to thoughts of suicide (Brousse et al., 2008; Hallberg and Strandmark, 2006; Nielsen, Matthiesen, and Einarsen, 2008). Recent studies also suggest extreme bullying can lead to severe trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Hogh, Mikkelsen, and Hansen, 2011). While health effects can vary, a review of current research reflects a strong correlation between job stressors (such as bullying) and depression (Schwickerath and Zapf, 2011, p. 398).

The Importance and Impact of Effective Managerial Intervention

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the organization occurs when those with the most power to influence a change in bullying patterns do not understand that bullying is occurring or how to address it. When recognized, a manager may have difficulty acting upon an accusation of bullying because the tactics typically used by bullies are not illegal or clear violations of organizational policies. Furthermore, targets of bullying often find it difficult to effectively communicate their experiences in ways that allow managers to understand fully the implications of the bullying (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, and Alberts, 2006). Moreover, when aggressive

employees bully others, they typically have accomplices, and bullying can progress quickly, becoming a team issue (Namie and Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010).

Few organizational policies and managerial interventions address bullying effectively (Vartia and Leka, 2011) and specific anti-bullying policies are needed (Djurkovic, McCormack, and Casimir, 2006). Some targets looking for vindication do not find justice through standard grievance policies and procedures (Cowan, 2009). Civil Rights and worker protection laws are not sufficient to manage workplace bullying; ethical standards and training are needed (LaVan and Martin, 2008). “Even when bullying or harassment is not a civil rights violation, schools should still seek to prevent it in order to protect students from the physical and emotional harms that it may cause” (US Department of Education, 2010, p. 2).

Institutional climate can exacerbate bullying (Cleary, Hunt, Walter, and Robertson, 2009; Garling, 2008). Organizational tolerance of bullying is communicated through policies, norms, values, and managerial responses. Conversely, successful intervention is often multifaceted and long-term. Many forms of reprisal cannot effectively be prevented or addressed through formal channels, as many forms of retaliation are covert and cannot be addressed through enforcement of policies or rights-based procedures (Rowe, 1996).

The Unique Environment of Higher Education.

Institutions of higher education provide a unique organizational context for bullying. Universities and colleges value academic freedom, which encourages the sharing of diverse perspectives and sound arguments to defend those ideas. Tenure confirms recognition of high achievement and establishes positional power. Collegiality is emphasized to encourage collaboration in research and curriculum development, but a strong norm of collegiality can discourage negative feedback. Student employees are hired to both further their education and

provide applicable work experience. The power difference between typically younger student employees and experienced older workers creates a substantial power imbalance. The above described organizational characteristics promote academic excellence but also allow conflict resolution via conflict avoidance, abuses of power, and verbal aggression.

Applied Theory

Bandura (2001) noted that nearly all social behaviors are learned through interactions with others, observing others' actions, and noting the consequences of those actions. Thus, witnessing bullying could affect perceptions of workplace conflict. At the same time, how the bully and his/her target perceive the organizational culture could influence the conflict resolution strategies (CRS) they use. The cycle of abuse can be continued by creation of a social reality that allows bullying or views bullying as an acceptable means for resolving disputes. "Emotionally abusive behaviors are more likely to occur in a societal context that is either tolerant of such behavior or does not define it as problematic" (Keashly and Harvey, 2005, p. 212).

Sillars and Parry's Attribution Theory suggests that interactants develop individual theories about why they are in conflict with others, based on their interpretation of others' behaviors. Selections of CRS are affected by the parceling of blame (Sillars and Parry, 1982). Sillars and Parry (1982) identified three common CRS: avoidance (not addressing conflict or minimizing its importance); competition (attempting to win in a conflict); and cooperation (coming to a mutual agreement). Although managers want to address employee conflicts effectively (Brotheridge and Long, 2007), Folger et al. (2005) noted that managers may not be able to use a preferred conflict style in cases of bullying, if the organization's structure and culture prevent that style from being effective. For example, a structure with only rights-based

systems, such as grievance procedure, requires documented steps and a designated individual making final decisions, thus inhibiting managers from facilitating cooperation among coworkers.

Purpose and Research Questions

Our study examined bullying in the unique organizational context of higher education. Given the convention in higher education of calling managers “administrators,” we hereafter use the term “administrator” to reference any employee of an institution of higher learning who directly supervises other employees. The purpose of this study was to assess administrators’ perspectives of bullying by gathering reports of their interactions with parties involved in cases of bullying. To this end, we posed three research questions:

RQ1: What do administrators report perceiving as “bullying”? How do they define it?

RQ2: What CRS do administrators report using when intervening in cases of bullying?

RQ3: How do administrators CRS change across stages of the bullying process?

Method

“In the early stages of researching a phenomenon, we know too little to be able to use traditional attitude scales. It may be important to conduct interviews, to hold focus groups, or to use other more qualitative or interpretative methods of inquiry” (Williams and Monge, 2001, p. 8). Given that we conducted the first study of bullying in higher education from an administrative perspective, we elected to employ a qualitative methodology, specifically telephone interviewing.

Participants

We recruited 15 participants from U. S. universities and colleges outside of the authors’ institution. The sample included program directors (13%), department chairs (27%) as well as deans (47%) and vice-presidents (13%). Their employers included universities in Arizona,

Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, and Washington as well as community colleges in Arkansas, Florida, and Kansas. One-third of the participants were from community colleges, and two-thirds from universities. Longevity in management positions ranged from 2.5 to 34 years. Tenure status was split fairly evenly (47% tenured; 53% non-tenured). Although 33% reported supervising staff only, most participants (87%) reported supervising both faculty and staff.

The majority of participants were age 50 or older (73%), but others were 40-49 years old (27%). They reported their highest level of education as doctoral degrees (80%) and masters' degrees (20%). Twelve were male; three were female. Participants reported the following ethnicities: 80% Caucasian/white, 13% African American/black, 7% Asian/Pacific Islander.

Instruments

Written Questionnaire. A brief questionnaire gathered demographic information used to describe the sample (e.g., biological sex, age, ethnicity).

Interviewer Protocol. We developed an original interview protocol that addressed the research questions. Following the procedure used in Meares et al.'s (2004) study examining mistreatment in the workplace from the employees' perspectives within a large "research and development" organization, our protocol consisted of three parts: (1) The initial questions captured the participants' definitions of bullying. Specifically, participants were asked to provide, and reflect on, a witnessed (or hypothetical) situation of bullying as well as the CRS they used to intervene (or not intervene). (2) The interviewer provided scenarios that portrayed clear changes in stages of bullying, and asked what CRS the participant might use to intervene (or not intervene) in the situation provided. (3) Questions were asked to assess what the participant saw as his/her roles and related goals in each of the provided bullying scenario.

Contact Summary Form. The interviewer employed a contact summary form to document and categorize interview responses. Here she recorded descriptions of participants' definitions of bullying, summaries of their recounting of previous experiences with bullying, and their perceptions of their roles and goals during cases of bullying.

Procedures

The interviewing process was pre-tested with three participants from the research population. After three minor changes in the interview protocol, we proceeded to data collection. Participants were recruited in three ways: the first author asked her professional contacts at numerous institutions to recommend colleagues who might serve as participants; a recruitment notice was posted on websites for higher education administrators; and initial interviewees were asked to recommend colleagues who might participate in the study, thus "snow-balling" the sample. When an interested potential interviewee was identified through e-mailed correspondence, a formal recruitment letter was e-mailed as an attachment. The letter provided an overview of the project, assurance of confidentiality, and contact information to schedule the interview. If a potential participant agreed to participate, a consent form and demographic questionnaire were forwarded for completion and returned by fax before the interview.

The interviewer was a Caucasian female, in her 40's, with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and training in active listening and inquiry techniques. She asked questions contiguously to avoid interrupting the flow of the dialogue. She asked probing questions, as needed, to encourage participants to share clear and detailed information. During the interviews, the interviewer maintained rapport with caution, remaining neutral, and refrained from leading the participant to specific answers (Hirsch, Miller, and Kline, 1977).

Analysis

Recorded interviews were transcribed, yielding 85 typed, single-spaced pages, containing 3,505 lines of data. The interviewer and a second coder (a female, Caucasian graduate student in her 40's, studying counselor education) subjected the data to thematic analysis using Owen's (1984) criteria for interpreting themes: recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. We operationalized recurrence as statements from at least two participants with the same meaning (but potentially using different words). Repetition occurred when at least two participants used the same words to convey the same meaning. Forcefulness occurred when at least two participants stressed an issue by using dramatic language, vivid imagery, or vocal inflection.

Each coder highlighted key concepts found in each interview and then summarized patterns in separate notes. The coders met to compare observations and identify common themes. There were no disagreements regarding the common themes. The interviewer later used a separate contact summary form to document and code interview responses using Miles and Huberman's (1994) pattern coding methods. The interviewer then reviewed all transcripts for negative evidence of the initial findings. Next, a review of all transcripts and notes occurred to outline the themes found in support of attribution and social cognition theories. A final review of all data, themes, and tables occurred to look for multi-dimensional patterns. In summary, the interviewer fully examined the data five separate times; the second coder examined the transcripts one time, for a total of six complete reviews of the 85-page transcript.

Results

RQ1: What do administrators report perceiving as "bullying"? How do they define it?

One participant defined bullying as "one person trying to impose their will on another person in direct contradiction to the interests and desires of that other person." Another said, "I see bullying as a form of harassment in a way--someone dominating or someone having power over

someone else and exercising that power, regardless of how small the incident may be, but they are exercising that power in the moment or controlling the other person.” These definitions provide good summations of the effects of the bullying behaviors and conditions identified across the interviews.

Indeed, participants defined bullying in terms of *Behaviors* and *Conditions*: *Direct Behaviors* (Verbal assaults, Retaliation, Threats, Altering job assignments, Physical intimidation) and *Indirect Behaviors* (Inappropriately influencing others’ actions, Denial of behavior and/or redirecting blame) as well as five *Conditions* (*Repeated aggressive behaviors, Collateral impact, Abuse of Power, Structure that inhibits resolution* and *Lengthy resolution process*). Tables 1 and 2 display descriptions and examples of these themes.

RQ2: What CRS do administrators report using when intervening in cases of bullying?

The participants’ unanimity of responses on CRS was striking: All participants perceived bullying as a serious issue, and one of duty to intervene. All participants described *Collaborative* strategies to initially address cases of bullying. Virtually all participants identified the same six CRS, as displayed in Table 3:

- *Early Intervention*
- *Create a safe environment*
- *Initial assessment* (of both the *Individuals* involved – bully and target, and *Team* members, including coworkers and committee members)
- *Consider Policies, Unique Circumstances, Available Resources*
- *Provide Education and Coaching*
- *Provide Structure and Follow Through.*

Table 1
Behaviors that Define Bullying

Direct Behaviors	<i>N</i>	Descriptions/Examples
Verbal assaults	11	Temper tantrums, verbal harassment, derogatory comments about ethnic groups, criticism, quieting junior faculty, rudeness, threats, intimidating statements, embarrassing comments about victim, condescending, interrupting, silent treatment, speak sternly, negative comments about victims in public, discredit or ignore target's ideas, disruptive comments, get aggressive with those who disagree with them, discredit victim's program, character defamation
Threats	8	Threaten to sue, threaten consequences, sabotage victims' plans, make demands, threaten to prevent from getting a job, bring attorneys to meetings, marshal powerful resources, do it their way "or else", apply pressure
Retaliation	6	Ended GA position, changed evaluation from positive to negative, filed grievance against the target, bullied administrators that tried to help, removed from grant, accused target of scientific misconduct, excluded target from the team, withheld letter of recommendation, withheld information
Altering job assignments	5	Assigned demeaning activities, removed from grant activity, excluded from others, harder on one employee than another, withholding assistance
Physical Intimidation	3	Individual was visually and physically intimidating, used threatening stance, standing up during staff meetings, wagging finger in the face of others, raised voice, won't look you in the eye when speaking
Indirect Behaviors	<i>N</i>	Descriptions/Examples
Inappropriately influencing others' actions	12	Create fear of repercussion, initiate investigation of an assisting chair, soliciting letters demanding chair be fired, people leave their positions, limit another's ability to act independently, restrict target from talking to others/ inhibit dialogue, prevent junior faculty from development opportunities, members of committee influencing each others' behaviors against a junior faculty, using closed questions, supervisor not being available to subordinate, sabotage meetings, interrupt or talk out of turn, express own opinion as the group's view, recruit support from others, cause people to "cave in" along the way, attempting to take funding from target's program, undermine program, keep others from succeeding, exclusion, victims and administrators sometimes feel desire to "push back"
Denial of behavior and/or Redirecting blame	3	Bully adamantly upholds his right in defense of actions, delay processes helping targets, discredit the victim to others, project self as more credible than others, file counter grievances against the target or administrators

Table 2

Conditions that Define Bullying

Conditions	<i>N</i>	Descriptions/Examples
Repeated aggressive behaviors	15	Acts as aggressor towards everyone, aggressive towards the same individual multiple times, has a history of aggressive behavior, aggressive behaviors are repeated
Collateral impact	15	Others who view bully's acts are afraid to address them, people leave while administrators are trying to address long-term cases, aggression occurs in a public setting, intimidation of men in public, people taking sides, supervisor doesn't see the bullying behaviors, history of behaviors seen as ruining careers
Abuse of power	14	Positional status (tenured, supervisory, length of employment), group bullying, male gender, senior age, alliances with administrators, power over bystanders (target's/bystander's spouse is a student of the bully), imbalance of power created, abuse of "free speech rights", protected minority status, presence of attorneys
Structure that inhibits resolution	7	Bully files formal grievances against victim or administrator trying to help, hard to remove faculty, HR not viewed as helpful at institutions where limited to acting on sexual or racial harassment, structure doesn't support addressing cases of bullying, use position within organization to get what they want, committee structure supported senior/tenured faculty aggression, intervention needed at multiple levels, structure supports tenured professor over junior faculty, bullying is more easily addressed/experienced less) in community colleges without tenure
Lengthy resolution process	6	Cases involving tenured faculty take one or more years to resolve

Table 3
Reported Initial Strategies for Intervention

Collaborative Strategies	N	Descriptions/Examples
1. Early intervention	15	Address problem when brought to administrator's attention, address before problem escalation, monitor from beginning, don't ignore or dismiss, reduce power imbalance, intervene before recruitment (prevention)
2. Create a safe environment	9	Address individually first, "keep everyone safe," do not re-harm the victim, provide conducive environment for employees
3. Initial Assessment		
<i>a. Individuals</i>	15	Talk to both individuals, ask questions, collect data/facts, move discussion from a "public to private" place, investigate, substantiate/verify information, obtain documentation
<i>b. Team</i>	11	Visit with affected team members, get support from team, use transparency, create civility policy with team input, consider those "taking sides," substantiate information with bystanders
4. Consider policies, unique circumstances, and resources	15	Address with higher administration when needed, use Ombuds or other neutral 3 rd party (i.e. HR), consider status of employees, know policies, consider history of employees, may use multiple strategies depending on circumstances, consider power issues, what is a fair process, consider what's been done/tried to date, review documentation, check employee references
5. Provide education and coaching	15	Try reasoning, encourage appropriate behavior, use situation as a teaching opportunity, mediate/bring parties together, reiterate civility policy, transformative discussions, move towards common ground, give options, negotiate options, encourage direct communication between parties, address issues that affect group climate, provide workshops/ethics training, encourage documentation, hold aggressor responsible for actions, inform of policies
6. Provide structure and follow through	12	Establish boundaries to prevent situation from escalating, address affected group, clarify boundaries, create shared expectations for behaviors, give options, create a quality environment, monitor situation, inform of actions to be taken, establish group climate, discourage triangulation, prevent parties from meeting alone until issue is resolved, clearly state anti-bullying policies, establish remediation plan, schedule follow-up meetings, document through evaluation process, be a role model

While nine participants specifically stated the importance of creating a safe environment for dialogue to take place, the remaining six implied that they also provided a safe environment by meeting individually with the perceived bully and target to assess perspectives and gather facts. While the primary administrative focus was on the bully and victim, eleven participants also reported involving coworkers in the resolution process.

RQ3: How do administrators' CRS change across stages of the bullying process?"

While the participants demonstrated awareness of the staging of bullying, they did NOT report engaging in a second intervention at particular stages, but instead engaged in a “second stage of intervention” when and if prompted to do so by the effectiveness of their first intervention. When they perceived that initial collaborative strategies did not work, and a case of bullying continued to progress or escalate, then ten participants reported *Re-assessing the situation*, and, depending upon the current conditions and climate, they would either provide *Additional coaching* or move toward more *Dominant strategies*. The remaining participants reported immediately moving to *Dominant Strategies* including *Use of Formal Processes, Re-Assignment, Dismissal, or other Consequence*. Table 4 provides descriptions and examples of the four CRS themes.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

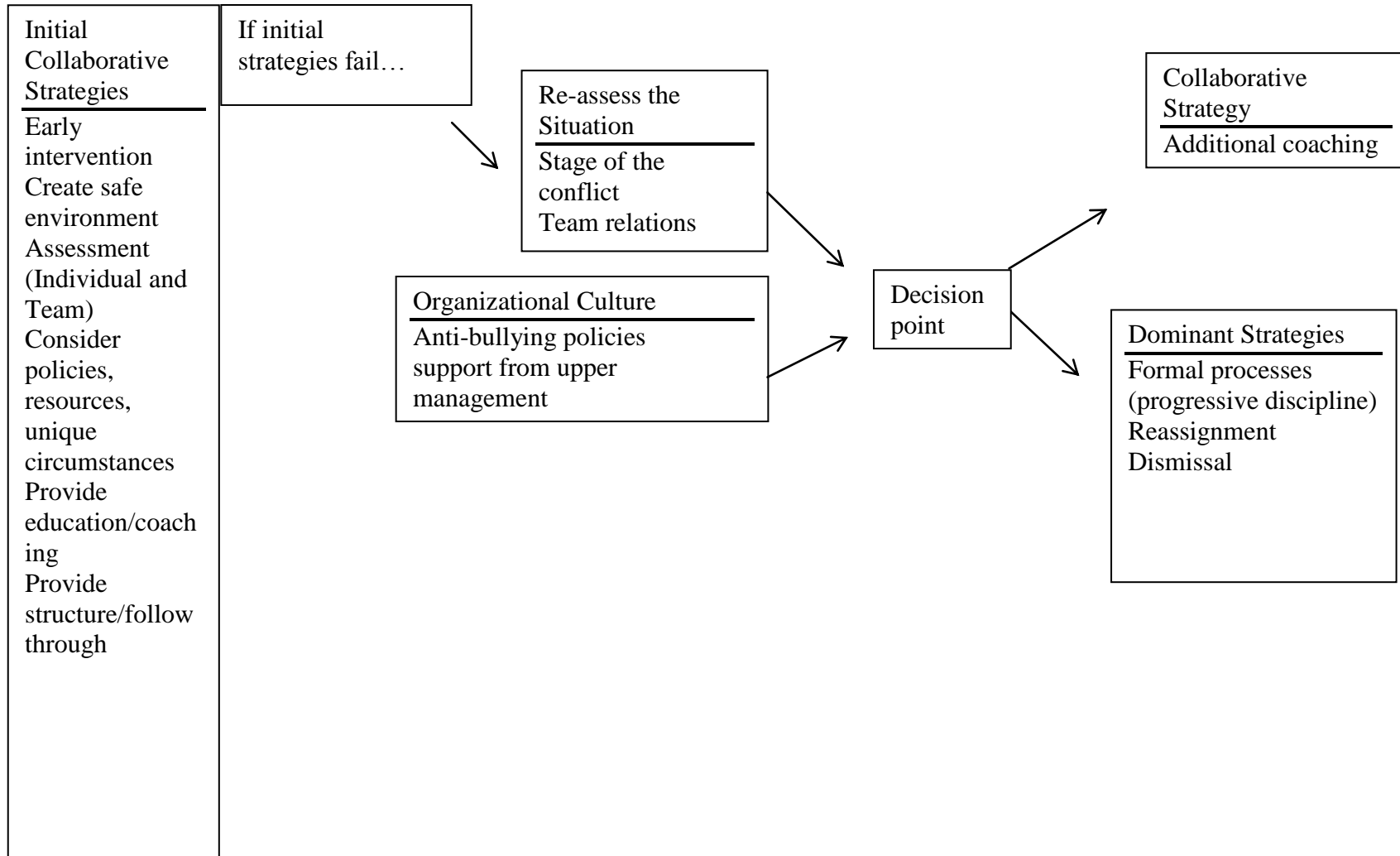
Participants recognized bullying via behaviors and conditions. They reported intervening initially using a set of six collaborative strategies. When and if the bullying continued, the participants reported reassessing the situation and then either providing additional coaching or employing dominant strategies such as progressive discipline. Figure 1 provides a pictorial representation of the findings.

Table 4

Next-Step Strategies for Intervention

Collaborative Strategies	<i>N</i>	Descriptions/Examples
Re-Assess the situation	10	Continue dialogue, consider group effect on long-term environment, consider fair process, assess along the way; if changes don't occur, move towards progressive discipline; if informal collaboration doesn't work, move towards structured university process
Additional coaching	8	Continue coaching with individuals and/or team, monitor through planned meetings, create "feedback loop," prevent future conflicts from arising, give warning, try to negotiate solution, utilize third party resources, refer to hotline
Dominant Strategies	<i>N</i>	Descriptions/Examples
Use formal processes	9	Use progressive discipline if situation doesn't improve, process through HR, use structured university process, if informal options don't work; may refer to Affirmative Action, get support at the institutional level, invoke probationary contract
Re-Assignment, dismissal, or other consequence	5	Move the target or aggressor to another project or department, dismiss, or impose other consequences

Figure 1: *Progress of Administrators' Strategies in Cases of Bullying*



Interpretation of Findings

Bullying Defined. Participants' descriptions of bullying behaviors they had observed provided further support for previously published definitions of bullying behaviors (Einarsen, 1999; Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, and Alberts, 2006; Namie and Namie, 2009; Rayner and Keashly, 2005; Sweet, 2005; White, 2004). However, the participants' views differed from previously reported findings in three important ways, as described below.

First, while Einarsen's (1999) definition offers repetition as the basis for bullying, our data indicates that individuals and groups can perceive themselves as bullied when targeted with *only one* act of aggression. If a victim previously witnessed a bully acting aggressively towards others, then he or she may perceive the self as being bullied during the first act of aggression directed at him or her. This finding was consistent with Lutgen-Sandvik's observation that "communication at work, including workplace bullying, is always social and public" (2006, p. 426). In sum, the observation of repeated acts of aggression, whether personally received or witnessed towards others, can facilitate the identification of a conflict as a case of bullying as opposed to an isolated conflict or act of aggression.

Second, in addition to repetition, most published definitions of bullying rely on descriptions of aggressive behaviors. For example, Einarsen stated "Bullying occurs when someone [or group] is systematically subjected to aggressive behaviors" (1999, p. 16). Our participants defined bullying in terms of the bully's behaviors *and the conditions surrounding the conflicts*. The conditions they identified provide insight into their view of bullying as a group or team phenomenon and offer evidence of complex perceptions of bullying, describing it in terms of its collateral damage to the team as well as its obvious behavioral manifestations.

Third, the participants revealed their complex perceptions by identifying bullying behaviors as direct, *indirect*, or *both*. For example, if tenured Professor A files a grievance against untenured Professor B, Professor B will undergo an investigation, which will impact Professor B's time and allocation of duties, and likely cause stress. Indirectly, this grievance will communicate to administrators and coworkers that Professor B's performance or ethics are being questioned and may affect a review committee's ability to provide a fair and unbiased tenure evaluation, as well as potentially limit Professor B's equal access to institutional support. Colleagues also may be affected. For example, another professor who witnessed Professor B's experience may become fearful that others in positions of power may retaliate in the same manner towards him or her. This repercussion phenomenon further extends the impact of bullying, as the bully's acts, as viewed by bystanders, can influence the viewers' subsequent decisions and behaviors. Such influence exemplifies social cognition theory, in that the social environment influences how individuals process observed social behavior (Bandura, 2001), and in turn the choices they make.

Conflict Resolution Strategies Used by Administrators

The results indicate that administrators unanimously initially enacted collaborative strategies, perhaps reflecting higher education's emphasis on collaboration. Further, our participants in various administrative posts at various institutions in various states achieved unanimously agreement on four CRS and near-unanimous agreement on two CRS (see Table 3). Such wide-spread agreement among diverse participants is rare in social science and may indicate that a finite set of initial strategies exist for addressing bullying in the academy.

In *dispute-related* or *accidental* bullying, participant reported suggested that early coaching and effective communication of behavioral expectations can end the bully's aggression.

In cases of *predatory* or *opportunist* bullies, results of this study reveal that administrators and organizations must take steps to enact an organizational climate that balances power, provides a fair process to all parties, and fails to permit continued acts of aggression (such as retaliation).

When and if initial collaborative intervention proved ineffective, participants reported re-assessing the situation and then deciding between two primary courses of action: either additional coaching or moving directly to dominant strategies. Participants stated the choice of collaborative versus dominant strategies depended on the stage of the conflict, relational conditions between team members, as well as effectiveness of the available support structure.

In sum, our results indicate that administrators behave proactively in cases of bullying to create a safe and open dialogue to collect facts, are aware of the stages of bullying, consider relational conditions amongst the work group, and work within their organizational structure and its policies. This finding is consistent with Cheldelin and Lucas's (2004) assertion that academic administrators can prevent employees from enduring repeated abuse via intervention.

Why then does bullying exist today in the academic workplace? Power and effectiveness of third party resources within an organization's structure influence administrators' ability to employ dominant strategies and force bullies to alter their behaviors. Most *university* participants reported that they do not have adequate policies in place to address bullying. Furthermore, they said that when Human Resource Offices provide coaching, but have no final authority to impose consequences (particularly in cases involving tenured faculty), these offices and staff are perceived as powerless and ineffective. Participants reported that cases involving tenured faculty were either not resolved, or took years to resolve, when administrators at the highest level (including deans, provosts, and if necessary, presidents, and chancellors) did not intervene quickly and effectively. In such cases, participants reported that tenured faculty continued to use

defensive behaviors (Ashforth and Lee, 1990), including counter-grievances and attorneys to defend themselves against accusations of bullying. The participants reported that enormous organizational costs (time, turnover, absenteeism) accompany these long-term cases of bullying. In sum, the data indicate that administrators at the highest level must be willing to support the actions of intervening deans, chairs, and directors, for intervention to prove successful.

Theoretical Implications.

Two theories guided our thinking: (1) Attribution Theory and (2) Social Cognitive Theory. The findings of this study are consistent with both theories. As Sillars and Parry's Attribution Theory suggested (Sillars and Parry, 1982), individuals, including administrators, develop theories about why employees are in conflict with each other. Participants' stories of bullying demonstrated that administrators collect information upon which they base their theories of attribution, and then chose their CRS accordingly.

As suggested by Social Cognitive Theory, the influence of organizational culture and administrators' strategies were reciprocal and at play in reported cases of bullying. Moreover, participants reported that the power structure within the organization and amongst its employees influenced the dynamics of bullying processes and resolution.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although the participants were diverse in many ways and consistent themes emerged, the sample size was small and we did not employ random sampling. Thus, the representativeness of the sample remains unknown. Recruitment efforts resulted in a sample of administrators who viewed bullying as an important issue. While such a purposeful sample enabled identification of intervention strategies, this study may not capture the perceptions of all administrators. Future research could examine multiple levels of management within the same academic organizations

and solicit perspectives from both administrators who are concerned about issues of bullying as well as those who care less about the topic. Recommendations then could be made regarding best practices for developing structure and policy that support all levels of managerial competency in academia. Finally, our results provide initial indications that factors of organizational culture, such as tenure of the parties and potential support from upper-level management, may be important in determining the outcomes in bullying cases. While we are not the first authors to notice a relationship between bullying and organizational culture (e.g., O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1996), the interface between bullying and *academic* organizational cultural remains largely unexplored and is worthy of further research.

Conclusion

We offer the first study examining academic managers' CRS in cases of bullying. The findings contribute to research on work-place bullying in five ways: (1) The study clarifies the definition of bullying provided by Einarsen (1999), allowing a target to receive *only one* act of aggression and perceive the act as bullying, *if* they have observed the bully repeatedly acting aggressively towards others. (2) The study revealed, among at least one sample of administrators, a complex understanding of bullying as involving both conditions and behaviors (direct and indirect). (3) The study identified wide-spread agreement about six initial CRS used by administrators who perceive intervening in cases of bullying as a required duty of their role. (4) When and if initial intervention fails, administrators tend to reassess. Then, depending on their assessment of the bullying situation, the organizational culture, and the support they are likely to receive from upper-level management, they either (a) provide additional coaching or (b) employ dominant strategies such as formal processes, re-assignment, dismissal, or other consequence. (5) Finally, we offer recommendations for future research.

References

- Ashforth, B. E., and Lee, R. T. (1990), "Defensive behaviors in organizations: A preliminary model", *Human Relations*, Vol. 22, pp. 621-648.
- Bandura, A. (2001), "Social cognitive theory of mass communication", *Media Psychology*, Vol. 3, pp. 265-299.
- Brodsky, C. M. (1976), *The harassed worker*, D. C. Heath, Oxford, England.
- Brotheridge, C. M., and Long, S. (2007), "The 'real-world' challenges of managers: implications for management education", *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 26, pp. 832 – 842.
- Brousse, G., Fontana, K., Ouchchane, L., Boisson, C., Gerbaud, L., Bourguet, D., Schmitt, A., Llorca, P.M., and Chamoux, A. (2008), "Psychopathological features of a patient population of targets of workplace bullying", *Occupational Medicine*, Vol. 58 No. 2, pp. 122-128.
- Cheldelin, S. I., and Lucas, A. F. (2004), *Academic administrator's guide to conflict resolution*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Cleary, M., Hunt, G.E., Walter, G., and Robertson, M. (2009), "Dealing with bullying in the workplace: Toward zero tolerance", *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing*, Vol. 47 No. 12, pp. 34-41.
- Cowan, R. L. (2009), "'Rocking the boat' and 'continuing to fight': Un/productive justice episodes and the problem of workplace bullying", *Human Communication*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 283-302.
- Djurkovic, N., McCormack, D., and Casimir, G. (2006), "Neuroticism and the psychosomatic model of workplace bullying", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 21, pp. 73-88.

- Einarsen, S. (1999), "The nature and causes of bullying at work", *International Journal of Manpower, Norway*, Vol. 20, pp. 16-31.
- Ferris, P. (2004), "A preliminary typology of organizational response to allegations of workplace bullying: See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil", *British Journal of Guidance & Counseling*, Vol. 32, pp. 389-395.
- Folger, J. P., Poole, M. S., and Stutman, R. K. (2005), *Working through conflict: Strategies for relationships, groups, and organizations*, Pearson Education, Boston, MA.
- Garling, P. (2008, November), "Bullying & workplace culture: Final report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into acute care services in NSW public hospitals", pp. 399-425, available at: <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/acsinquiry> (accessed 15 April 2010).
- Hallberg, L.R.M. and Strandmark, M. K. (2006), "Health consequences of workplace bullying: Experiences from the perspective of employees in the public service sector", *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 109-119.
- Hirsch, P. M., Miller, P. V., and Kline, F. B. (1977), "Strategies for communication research", *Annual Review of Communication Research*, Vol. 6, pp. 127-151.
- Hogh, A., Mikkelsen, E.G., and Hansen, A.M. (2011), "Individual consequences of workplace bullying/mobbing", in S. Einarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, and C. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and harassment in the Workplace*, CRC Press, Taylor Francis Group, Boca Raton, FL, pp. 107-128.
- Infante, D. A. (1988), *Arguing constructively*, Waveland, Prospect Heights, Ill,

- Keashly, L., and Harvey, S. (2005), "Emotional abuse in the workplace", in S. Fox (Ed.), *Counterproductive work behavior: Investigations of actors and targets*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, pp. 201-236.
- Keaveney, S. M. (2008), "The blame game: An attributional theory approach to marketer-engineer conflict in high-technology companies", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 37, pp. 653-663.
- LaVan, H. and Martin, W.M. (2008), "Bullying in the U.S. workplace: Normative and process-oriented ethical approaches", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 83, pp. 147-165.
- Leung, Y. F. (2010), "Conflict management and emotional intelligence", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Southern Cross University, Australia.
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P. (2007), "'...But words will never hurt me,' Abuse and bullying at work: A comparison between two worker samples", *Ohio Communication Journal*, Vol. 45, pp. 81-105.
- Mearns, M. M., Oetzel, J.G., Torres, A., Derkacs, D., and Ginossar, T. (2004), "Employee mistreatment and muted voices in the culturally diverse workplace", *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 32, pp. 4-27.
- Mikkelsen, E. G., and Einarsen, S. (2002), "Relationships between exposure to bullying at work and psychological and psychosomatic health complaints: The role of site negative affectivity and generalized self-efficacy", *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 43, pp. 297-405.
- Miles, M. B., and Huberman, A. M. (1994), *Qualitative data analysis*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

- Namie, G. (2003), "2003 Report on abusive workplaces: The Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute", available at: <http://www.bullyinginstitute.org> (accessed 20 May 2005).
- Namie, G. (2000), "U.S. Hostile workplace survey 2000: The Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute", available at: <http://www.bullyinginstitute.org> (accessed 20 May 2005).
- Namie, G. and Lutgen-Sandvik, P.E. (2010), "Active and passive accomplices: The communal character of workplace bullying", *International Journal of Communication*, Vol. 4, pp. 343-373.
- Namie G., and Namie, R., (2009), *The bully at work: What you can do to stop the hurt and reclaim your dignity on the job* (2nd ed.), Sourcebooks, Naperville, IL.
- Nielsen, M. B., Matthiesen, S.B., and Einarsen, S. (2008), "Sense of coherence as a protective mechanism among targets of workplace bullying", *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 128-136.
- O'Leary-Kelly, A., Griffin, R. W., and Glew, D. J. (1996), "Organization-motivated aggression: A research framework", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 21, pp. 225-253.
- Owen, W. F. (1984), "Interpretive themes in relational communication", *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol. 70, pp. 274-278.
- Pearson, B. (1993), "Harassment and intimidation of staff in the university workplace", *UCI Ombudsman: The Journal*, available at: <http://www.ombuds.uci.edu/JOURNALS/1993/harassment.html> (accessed 14 July 1999).
- Rayner, C., and Keashly, L. (2005), "Bullying at work: A perspective from Britain and North America", in S. Fox & P. E. Spector (Eds.), *Counterproductive Work Behavior: Investigations of Actors and Targets*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, pp. 271-296.

- Rowe, M. (1996), "Dealing with harassment: A systems approach", *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Perspective, Frontiers, and Response Strategies, Women and Work*, Vol. 5, pp. 247-271.
- Schwickerath, J. and Zapf, D. (2011), "Inpatient treatment of bullying victims", in S. Einsarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, and C. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and harassment in the Workplace*, CRC Press, Taylor Francis Group, Boca Raton, FL, pp.397-421.
- Sillars, A. L., and Parry, D. (1982), "Stress, cognition, and communication in interpersonal conflicts", *Communication Research*, Vol. 9, pp. 201-226.
- Sweet, M. (2005), "Beating bullying", *Australian Nursing Journal*, Vol. 12, pp. 16-19.
- Tracy, S. J., Lutgen-Sandvik, P., and Alberts J. K. (2006), "Nightmares, demons, and slaves: Exploring the painful metaphors of workplace bullying", *Management Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 20, pp. 148-185.
- United States Department of Education (2010, October 26), "Dear colleague letter: Harassment and bullying", available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.html> (accessed 30 November 2010).
- Vartia, M. and Leka, S. (2011), "Interventions for the prevention and management of bullying at work", in S. Einsarsen, H. Hoel, D. Zapf, and C. Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and harassment in the workplace*, CRC Press, Taylor Francis Group, Boca Raton, FL, pp.359-379.
- White, S. (2004), "A psychodynamic perspective of workplace bullying: Containment, boundaries and a futile search for recognition", *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, Vol. 32, pp. 269-280.
- Williams, F., and Monge, P. (2001), *Reasoning with statistics*, Thomson Wadsworth, Belmont, CA.