

Bullying and Psychological Aggression in the Workplace



Professional Development Day 2008

Beginning in 2003, the President's Commission on the Status of Women began hearing concerns about workplace bullying from campus employees.

After much deliberation and a proposal for strategic priority funding, the Commission was given strategic priority funding to conduct a survey to determine how prevalent the issue really is on our campus.

A steering committee was formed to oversee the project, and 2 national experts in this field were hired to design and implement the survey. We sent the survey to all employees in November and December 2007.

We will see initial results this semester.



Let's Talk About

- The **concept** of workplace bullying
- Why we should **care** about bullying
- What you can **do** about bullying



The Concept

- Definition of workplace bullying
- What bullying looks like
- Where bullying happens



The Concept

Definition of Workplace Bullying

"... all those **repeated** actions and practices that are directed to one or more workers, which are **unwanted** by the victim, which may be done deliberately or unconsciously, ... cause **humiliation, offense, and distress**, and that may **interfere with job performance** and/or cause an unpleasant working environment."

-Einarsen, 1999

This is one of many definitions of workplace bullying that you could find in scholarly and popular literature. This is the one that is being used by the researchers who developed our campus survey on bullying.



The Concept

Important Components of the Definition

- Repeated
- Enduring
- Unwanted
- Causes harm
- Interferes with work

Repeating and enduring are the hardest ones for people to associate with bullying.



The Concept

Important Distinctions

- Sexual harassment
- Discrimination

Sexual harassment is directed at a person because of that person's gender.

Discrimination is unequal treatment based on that person's membership in a group (religious, racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, age).

Bullying is "status-blind." – (David Yamada's phrase)

Having said that – there is some overlap. Several studies have found a greater % of women in the target group, whether the bully was a man or a woman. I just read a case study about a woman who reported sexual harassment in the workplace to no avail – but a more in-depth look at her case shows there was a lot more going on than sexual harassment – she was being bullied – everything that was happening to her was not about her gender.

This can be hard to sort out. Some studies show that envy plays a big role in selection of a target – regardless of gender or protected status – while others claim that envy plays a role in combination with gender or status – meaning i.e. a competent woman is more threatening than a competent man = envy = bullying



The Concept

Some Commonly Used Terms

Bullying	Perpetrator
Mobbing	Bully
Harassment	Victim
Abuse	Target
Incivility	Hostile environment
Psychological aggression	Workplace environment

The first column is a list of words used somewhat synonymously to describe the process.

The second column is a list of words describing the people and the place.

The last term, workplace environment, is the one we use here to label our policy that addresses bullying.



The Concept

What Bullying Looks Like

- Threat to professional status
- Threat to personal standing
- Social isolation
- Overwork
- Destabilization
- Obstructionism

When we think about what bullying looks like, one way to do it is to think in terms of these categories.



The Concept

Threat to Professional Status

- Constant criticism
- Damaging rumors
- Belittling your opinions
- Undermining your authority
- Assigning meaningless tasks
- Excluding/ignoring your views
- Public professional humiliation
- Accusations regarding lack of effort
- Unreasonable/inappropriate monitoring

Listed here are some examples of behaviors that would fall in the first category, Threat to Professional Status.



The Concept

Threat to Personal Standing

- Intimidating
- Insulting and name calling
- Criticizing in front of others
- Questioning your judgment
- Spreading untrue rumors/gossip
- Devaluing with reference to age or other characteristics/attributes



The Concept

Social Isolation

- Physical or social isolation
- Withholding information
- Preventing access to opportunities

Overwork

- Undue pressure
- Impossible deadlines
- Unnecessary disruptions

Social Isolation and Overwork include these kinds of behaviors.

Just a note on social isolation, in case you are thinking that sounds like junior high.

Cross-culturally, social isolation is extreme punishment for a group member. This is true whether your tribe members all turn their backs on you and behave as if you don't exist, or your classmates are all "mean girls", or your co-workers exclude you.



The Concept

Destabilization

- Failure to give credit
- Meaningless tasks
- Removal of responsibility
- Repeated reminders of blunders
- Setting you up for failure



The Concept

Obstructionism

- Causing others to delay actions
- Impeding your ability to perform
- Interfering with/blocking your work
- Refusing to provide resources and support
- Repeatedly failing to return phone calls and e-mail



The Concept

Organizational Risk Factors

Large	Organizational change
Hierarchical	Restructuring
Authoritarian	Downsizing
Insecure leadership	Layoffs
Role conflict	Budget cuts
Poorly managed	Pay cuts
Poorly organized	

- Ferris; Leymann; Bauman & Baron

Certain characteristics or events can make an organization at greater risk of workplace bullying.

Look at the left column of organizational characteristics and think about how many of these are prevalent in higher education workplaces.

A note on “insecure leadership” – this doesn’t mean that if leaders are personally insecure we are at greater risk. It means leadership in terms of longevity – there is a lot of turnover in the leadership – not a stable crew.

Role conflict refers to a lack of clarity regarding who you report to, what your role in the org is, and what you should be doing. Nature of the beast in certain positions -

The list of events on the right are also good for increasing your risk – all are basically about change.



The Concept

Organizational Risk Factors

- Precipitators
- Enablers
- Motivators

- Salin

Precipitators – set the stage

Restructuring and crises

Other organizational changes

Changes in management / composition of work group

Enablers - allow

Perceived power imbalance

Low perceived costs

Dissatisfaction and frustration

Motivators - encourage

Internal competition

Reward system and expected benefits

Bureaucracy and difficulties to lay off employees



The Concept

Organizational Risk Factors

"Academe is the perfect petri dish for the culture of mobbing." – Kenneth Westhues

I have been talking mostly about bullying in the workplace – any workplace. It is my contention that higher education institutions have a number of inherent characteristics that place them at greater risk for bullying behavior.

This quote is from a Canadian sociologist, Ken Westhues.

This simple quote summarizes the five books Westhues has written about case studies of bullying in higher education institutions. His books focus on faculty bullying.

We know that bullying occurs at all levels in higher education. While faculty do experience it, the prevalence seems even higher for people in support positions.

Leymann study – found that university employees were over-represented in the victim group.



Why We Should Care About Workplace Bullying and Psychological Aggression



Why We Should Care

- Individual consequences
- Organizational consequences

Workplace bullying and psychological aggression can have negative consequences for the individuals involved, and also for the organization that allows it to happen.



Why We Should Care

Individual Consequences

Mental Health	Performance problems
Physical Health	inability to concentrate
Relationships	ruminations
Career	risk-averse behavior
Financial	cognitive & emotional impairment

Mental and physical health – depression, PTSD, psychological stress, anxiety, sleep disorders, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, nausea, vomiting, migraines, cardio problems, high blood pressure, substance abuse, ulcers, musculoskeletal pain. All of these are reflected in the literature as conditions that can develop as a result of being bullied.

Relationships – relationships suffer, target has anger/irritability/depression and is stressed which carries over to interactions with family and friends, spillover effect, some are afraid to tell partner why they are having problems for fear of further isolation, some victims report increased aggression and conflict at home.

Career/Financial – lose confidence, lose creativity, performance suffers, no promotions, health suffers so you take more sick leave, denied info and resources so performance suffers, because health suffers performance suffers, lose innovation, risk of being fired, lose income, need counseling (costs \$), 70% leave job voluntarily or involuntarily and lose income.



Why We Should Care

Organizational Consequences

Poor work quality	Turnover
Poor work quantity	Absenteeism
Organization quality	EEO actions
Financial liability	Workers comp claims

Organizational consequences are too costly to ignore. Some examples are:

Poor work quality – low creativity and innovation, decrease in loyalty

Poor work quantity – and timeliness

Org quality – reputation is affected – people are mobile in HE.

Financial liability - high cost of litigation (lawyers and awarded damages).

Increase in EEO and AA actions – some belong there – some have no other place to go.

Workers comp claims – is where the research all started in the US (Brodsky); it was then labeled and studied by Loreleigh Keashly.

Potential for escalation into violence (rare).



This is a graphic from a study of veterans' centers done by our survey consultants, Loraleigh Keashly and Joel Neuman.

Basically, it shows us how work climate affects our aggression levels, stress levels and satisfaction levels.

Work climate is defined by these areas in the pink bubbles.

What they found is that if you can improve the work climate (as defined by these areas), you decrease aggression, you decrease stress, and you increase job satisfaction.



Why We Should Care

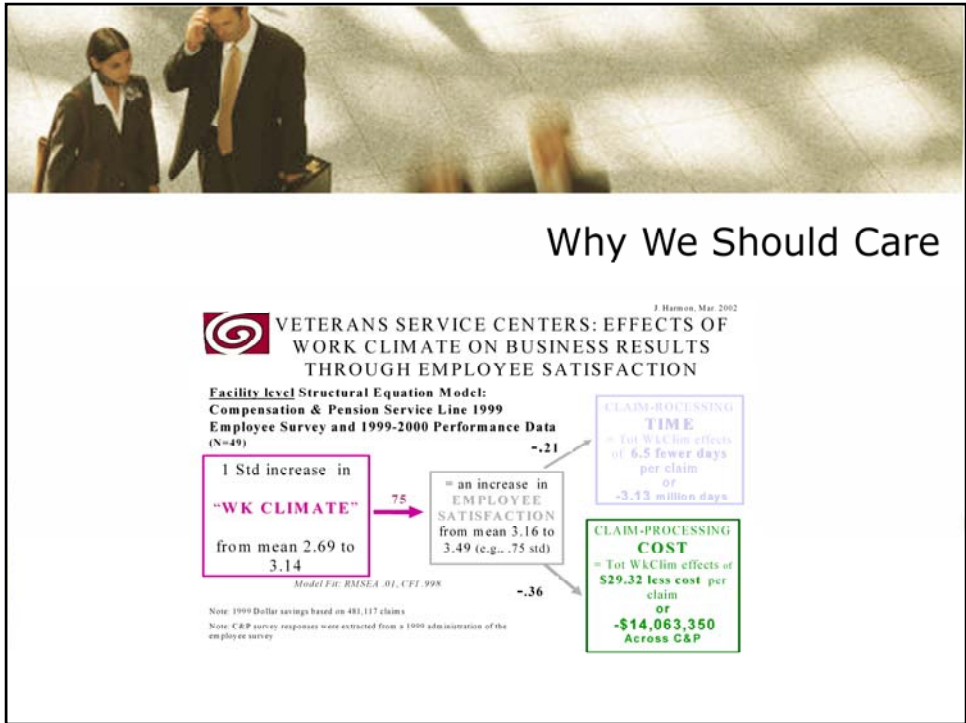


VETERANS MEDICAL CENTERS: EFFECTS OF WORK CLIMATE ON BUSINESS RESULTS THROUGH EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Facility-Level Structural Equation Model: 1997 Employee Survey and 1997-1998 Cost-Efficiency Data (N=147 facilities)



This graph shows us that improving the work climate, which increases employee satisfaction, ultimately decreases the cost of doing business.



And finally, this graphic shows that improving the work climate not only increases employee satisfaction and decreases cost, it also decreases the amount of time it takes to get the job done.



Why We Should Care

Organizations allowing workplace bullying effectively engage in “a process of adverse selection in which the best and brightest may be let go at the expense of the most aggressive and uncivil.”

-Glendinning, 2001

Brain drain.



Why We Should Care

"Having confronted the story, we would much prefer to disbelieve, treating it as the product of a diseased mind, perhaps. And there are those today who... are trying to persuade the world that the story is not true, urging us to treat it as the product of diseased minds, indeed.

They are committing the greatest indignity human beings can inflict on one another, telling people who have suffered excruciating pain and loss that their pain and loss were illusions."

-Robert McAfee Brown

People are hurt by workplace bullying. How do we respond to the suffering of others?

a quote from the preface to the 1986 edition of Elie Wiesel's *Night*. Ken Westhues prefaced one of his books with this quote. I will read it to you.

This quote reminded me of a study about how organizations respond to workplace bullying.



Why We Should Care

See No Evil
Hear No Evil
Speak No Evil

Ferris, P. (2004). A preliminary typology of organisational responses to allegations of workplace bullying: see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. *British Journal of Guidance & Counseling*, 32(3), 389-395

Study of how organizations respond to workplace bullying: the author categorized the organizations she studied into 3 categories.

See No Evil – bullying is the norm. Deal with it or get out. Bullying is an acceptable way to get ahead. Highly competitive orgs. Victims are not surprised.

Hear No Evil – these orgs have articulated values. They are the ones who have policies about how nice they are to each other. They have posters to tell everyone what they value – and that they value you as an employee. Until you report bullying. Then you are a problem. You have a difficult personality. You need to learn to get along with people. This is why that last quote reminded me of the study. **The victims who work for these employers experience the greatest degree of trauma – because they are told the bullying is not real – and that their trauma is their own fault. These people feel betrayed** because the organization said they were about respecting and protecting people. These orgs tend to be...

Speak No Evil – these orgs get it right – and tend to be the ones who have been sued.



Why We Should Care

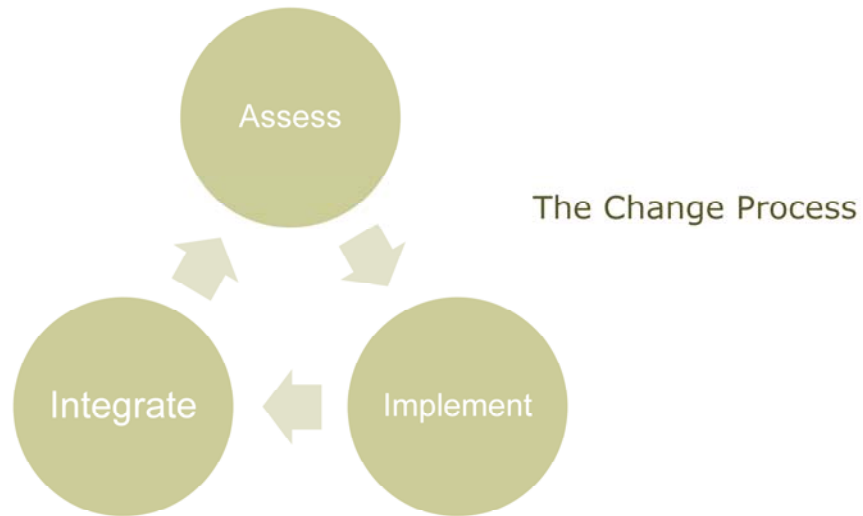
It's the right thing to do.

I think this is the best reason to care about workplace bullying.



What We Can Do About Workplace Bullying and Psychological Aggression

What You Can Do About It



One way to think about the change process is to assess your current status, implement strategies for improvement, then integrate the new way into your culture. Then you start the cycle all over again.

Right now, we are in the assessment stage when it comes to workplace bullying.

What You Can
Do About It



ASSESS

Our campus is currently in the assessment phase. With the bullying survey, and also with the creation of the great-place-to-work group, we are looking at our campus culture to determine what we need to work on.

What You Can Do About It



ASSESS: Our Survey

Designed & administered by experienced work environment researchers

CONFIDENTIAL – responses went directly to the researchers

All employees (including student employees) surveyed

Representative campus steering committee

Raw data is controlled and maintained by Drs. Keashly and Neuman and will not be shared with the campus or released to any other parties beyond their research team

Researchers conduct data analyses

What You Can Do About It



Contact Our Consultants

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Assess

The consultants we used for our workplace bullying survey are incredible researchers. They are both current faculty members at the institutions you see listed here. If any of you want to contact our consultants for any reason, they are willing to talk and to keep it confidential. The information you see here is listed on the President's Commission on the Status of Women website.

What You Can Do About It



Contact Steering Committee Members

Linda Duckett (AA)	Kelly Meier (Co-chair)
Maria Baxter-Nuamah (ASF)	Ellen Mrja (IFO)
Janet Cherrington-Cuore (IFO)	Valerie Roberts (AFSCME)
Jim Dickey (MGEC)	Deirdre Rosenfeld (CSW)
Sara Granberg-Rademacker (CSW)	Susan Taylor (Co-chair)
Deb Jesseman (IFO)	Barry Wilkins (MMA)
Lori Lamb (Co-chair)	Melva Wojahn (AFSCME)
Sandra Loerts (former CSW Chair)	Laurie Woodward (ASF)
Luda Lindahl (MAPE)	Judith Ziemke (AFSCME)
Jackie Frederick (Student)	

Assess

You may also speak with any representative on the survey steering committee. This information is also on the Commission's website.

What You Can
Do About It



Implement

The implement phase on our campus will come after we receive initial data results from our consultants, and they have discussions with groups here about how to move forward with recommendations.

What You Can Do About It



IMPLEMENT: What Will Happen with the Results?

Researchers report results to all campus stakeholders

Researchers work with stakeholders to make sense of the data

Researchers provide recommendations for our campus with our input

Our campus implements recommendations that address important issues and make sense for us

What You Can Do About It



What else can you do now if you are a target?

If you are a supervisor dealing with a bullying situation?

What You Can Do About It



Come to survey data reporting sessions
this semester.

Whether you took the survey on our campus or not, you can still be involved in how we address bullying on our campus. Come to the feedback sessions with our consultants this semester when they present initial data findings. They will ask for your feedback on the results – does the data make sense? Why? Why not? What needs to be addressed? Would this type of recommendation work? Why or why not?

What You Can Do About It



Stop, Drop and Roll

What You Can Do About It



STOP..

believing that you are the problem.

questioning your competence.

suffering in silence.

When you are a target of a bully or bullies, it is easy to quickly lose confidence and start questioning yourself. You might start wondering “what’s wrong with me” “why is everyone ganging up on me like this?”. “I used to be good at my job – everybody said so – what happened?”

It might be very hard to sit back and say “I am not the problem” “I will not be shamed or bullied into silence” or “I am a competent person”. But this is where you need to start. You have to realize that the problem lies outside of you and that you can do some things to address it.

It is much easier to address a problem when you can recognize it, label it, and talk about it.

What You Can Do About It



DROP..

a line – document everything.

the isolation – see a counselor / seek allies.

the pain – take a time out from work if at all possible.

the idea that this is the only job for you.

This first point about documentation is so important for both targets and supervisors.

If you are a target, you need to write down everything that happens to you – who, when, where, what. Don't rely on your memory. This information will be critical as you describe or report your situation to those who can help you. It might also help you keep track of patterns, or how long it has been happening.

If you are a supervisor – you should be keeping documentation on what is reported, and what you did in good faith to address the problem. Why? You can show the things you have done to deal with an issue if there's ever a question about whether you responded. You can track for yourself how long a situation with a particular employee has been an issue. You can document for progressive discipline if it gets to that.

What You Can Do About It



ROLL...

- educate yourself about workplace bullying.
- educate your supervisor about workplace bullying.
- use the workplace environment policy and employee complaint procedure.
- use articulated values and priorities.
- prove that it is too costly to keep the bully.
- talk to others who may be in a similar situation.
- if you witness bullying – intervene...

Educate yourself – this goes for victims and supervisors.

Educate your supervisor – this goes for victims and supervisors.

Intervene – if in a meeting you see someone disregard someone's opinion – sigh loudly, mumble comment, roll eyes – you can acknowledge the person who spoke and say you would like to hear more about what they were saying.

What You Can Do About It



Legal Action?

Not illegal (unless you are in protected class)

U.S. workplace bullying legislation introduced (states)

Emotional distress and other liabilities

Can someone who is being bullied take legal action?

Not illegal unless you are in a protected class.

If you are, and you feel you can link your treatment to your membership in that group, you may be able to take legal action under one of these laws.

Civil Rights Act

Sexual Harassment Laws

Americans with Disabilities Act

US Legislation – Yamada – 9 states – none yet passed.

There are some torts that people have used to successfully sue their employers.

Torts are wrongful acts intended to inflict harm.

IIED – intentional infliction of emotional distress.

What You Can Do About It



Proactive Protection for All

- Effective policies and procedures
- Articulated code of conduct
- Education for all employees
- Effective reporting mechanism
- Administrative action
- Zero tolerance culture

What are some things we could do as an organization?

If you are a target, you want these kinds of things in place at work. If you are a supervisor or administrator, you want these kinds of things in place at work.

Good policies include these components:

Code of conduct is formal statement of how this org expects people to treat each other – is the same for all

Education is power

Effective reporting mechanism – is trusted and used – might need to be anonymous

Administrative action – should be seen, not just heard – consistent with all employees

Zero tolerance = everybody gives the message that bullying is not valued, rewarded, or tolerated.

What You Can
Do About It



Integrate

Zero tolerance of bullying must become part of the culture

Policies are important to have in place. BUT they are worthless if a bullying culture continues and is permitted.

What You Can Do About It



INTEGRATE: A Respectful Workplace Environment

If you permit it, you promote it.

Good policies alone are not effective.
They must be enforced consistently.

Education is power. Integrate it into the culture.

Engage in zero tolerance of bullying.

Zero tolerance – address the problem. Give people replacement behaviors. If they choose not to use them – progressive discipline up to termination. This not only removes a bully unwilling to change – it also give a signal to other bullies that we don't tolerate it here – and it gives a signal to targets that we are serious about addressing the problem. We are not like those organizations who say “we respect you – we will protect you” and then don't. That message is perhaps the most important one, because it can help victims move forward.

What You Can Do About It



INTEGRATE: A Respectful Workplace Environment

"I want to ensure that we have the most positive work environment possible..."

I'd like to thank all of the committee members for their thorough and conscientious work. Their efforts – and yours – will make Minnesota State Mankato a better place for students, faculty and staff."

- President Richard Davenport

Once we have implemented any recommendations to improve our campus environment, we want our positive strategies to become integrated into the culture. This must be supported by top administration in order for it to happen. Dr. Davenport has indicated his full support for this project, and for making our campus a great place to work.

What You Can
Do About It



Questions?