WATER SMOOTHING STONES:

SUBORDINATE RESISTANCE TO WORKPLACE BULLYING

by

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ABSTRACT

Adult bullying at work is a shocking, unbelievable, and, at times, shattering experience both for those targeted and for witnessing colleagues. Although extant literature characterizes bullying targets as unable to defend themselves, this depiction is limited, simplistic, and one-dimensional. This study examines the narratives of 30 workers, some of whom where targeted and all of whom saw others bullied by persons with more organizational authority. Their responses paint a complex picture of power in bullying situations—a picture that reframes the "power-deficient target" into agents who galvanize a variety of resources on their own or others' behalf. In some cases, employees took stock of the situation, decided they would be no part of the abusive workgroup, and resigned. Others initially protested but eventually washed their hands of the situation and took their talents elsewhere. On the other hand, there were cases where bullies were fired, transferred, quit, or failed to secure a coveted promotion due, in part, to employee resistance. When workers protested collectively, they were less likely to be fired and bullies more likely to be negatively sanctioned. Employees accessed a multiplicity of resistance strategies including exodus, collective voice, reverse discourses, subversive (dis)obedience, and direct confrontation. Most opposition occurred in hidden peer transcripts and only on rare occasions emerged into the public transcript. A liminal space for resistance, connecting hidden and public spaces, emerged in their stories. In this liminal, threshold transcript, employees gathered resources and support, bolstered arguments, and firmed up expert (legal, medical, professional) discourses for their defense. These employees wanted organizational decision makers to take action and stop the bullying. In some cases, subordinate resistance *did* move decision makers to action.

Bottom-up change was protracted and corrosive in nature—a pattern only discernable over time through multiple follow-up contacts. The eroding nature of change provided the basis for a conceptual model of bottom-up bully removal starting with individual action and progressing to upper-management interventions. The study suggests a number of implications for theory, methods, and practice. The narratives also open up new avenues for future U.S. bullying research.

This work is dedicated to Elden Sandvik.

who saw in me an ability I had yet to recognize:

The wind beneath my wings.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> I left because two of my executives—the hardest working people in the company, the most honest, the most direct, the most trustworthy, ethical—I can't say enough about their work ethic. And he bullied them, and he bullied them. He'd debase them, and blame them, and debase them, and blame them, and he chipped away at them, and chipped away at them, until they both found other jobs…. It was just *morally wrong*. (Female witness to bullying in the sports fishing industry)

Employees exposed to workplace bullying describe their experiences with metaphors of evil demons, physical wounds, chiseling and chipping away, and broken, torn hearts (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2004). They dread going to work and spend their time and energy planning escapes as well as survival strategies until escape becomes a reality. Targets report being attacked regularly and repeatedly over an extended period of time by others with or for whom they work, in circumstances where they find it difficult to defend themselves (Leymann, 1996b). The experience is demoralizing, humiliating, and unbelievable (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Lewis, 1999; Namie & Namie, 2000a). Workplace bullying is a pattern of persistent of malicious, insulting, or exclusionary discursive and nondiscursive behaviors that targets perceive as intentional efforts to harm, control, or drive them from the workplace. Bullying tends to escalate over time and is linked to hostile work environments. The principal effects include damage or impairment to targets and workgroups and obstruction of organizational goals and processes.

Bullying can alter work tasks and make them difficult or impossible, socially isolate those targeted or stigmatize and discredit people with ridicule, gossip and insults (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Field, 1996; Randall, 2001). Bullies use verbal

aggressiveness such as public shaming, screaming, name-calling, and constant criticism, and similar humiliations and, at times, even physically assault or threaten targets with physical harm (Einarsen, 1999; Randall, 2001). Only bullies' imaginations and the potential for negative organizational or social sanctions limit the catalogue of these negative acts (Crawford, 2001; Randall, 1997). This kind of abuse differs from workplace incivility or conflict due to its unique features of repetition, duration, and escalation. The features, rather than message content, distinguish bullying as a unique phenomenon. Content shifts depending on settings, tasks, and actors, but the characteristic features of bullying produce a discernable pattern over time (Keashly, 1998). Bullying is:

> essentially an aggressive act and an aspect of violence…[;] the study of bullying, because it is an examination of psychological violence, is important. Although the marks cannot be seen in the way we find lacerations on the flesh from a beating, this does not lessen its seriousness. (Crawford, 1999, p. 88)

The harm targets report is heartbreaking and touches all aspects of their lives. Targets suffer psychologically, emotionally, physically, and occupationally as a result of the persistent haranguing—damage that often takes years to heal (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Hirigoyen, 1998; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Namie, 2003a). They may seek statutory protection from bullying but soon realize there is scant legal protection against this form of abuse, because it often falls outside the discrimination-protected worker classifications of sex, race, or disability (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 2002; Yamada, 2000). Targets are not the only ones harmed by bullying. An audience of coworkers live in fear of being the next target (Vartia, 2001). If they get involved, they risk their own positions in the organization. If they do not get involved, "they may feel they stood by and did nothing, the organizational equivalent of watching a mugging on a daily basis"

(Crawford, 2001, p. 26). Employers too suffer when bullying is left unchecked. Organizations lose productivity through increased turnover and absenteeism (Bassman, 1992), face increased risk of employment-related law suits (Markowich, 1993; Matusewitch, 1996), fail to attract top employees, and lose positive public reputations (Hoel, Einarsen, & Cooper, 2003).

Who, What, When, Where, How

Adult bullying at work is antithetical to everyone's interest, most likely even the bully's (Crawford, 2001; Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper, 2002). The issue is devastating to the modern workplace and, as such, requires further academic attention; however, a number of gaps in the extant bullying literature call for additional exploration. In essence, these limitations are analogous to the *who, what, when, where,* and *how* of an investigator's story. In what follows, I summarize these issues, beginning with *who* is currently the subject of study in bullying research.

Who: Current Focus of Analysis in Bullying Research

For the most part, researchers' central unit of analysis has been bullying targets—workers who are defenseless and impotent in the face of stronger bullies (Vartia, 2001). Target reports of an inability to defend against or stop bullying is a ubiquitous hallmark of workplace bullying (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Leymann, 1996b). In fact, the issue of equal strength or mutual action is the principal difference between bullying and interpersonal conflict at work (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003). In interpersonal conflicts, actors are simultaneously antagonists and protagonists. In bullying, there is a clear perpetrator "who is the instigator and who is proactive, and a target who, in essence, cannot respond, or can respond but in a limited manner which does not protect him or her from harm or

stop the actor's behaviors" (Keashly & Nowell, 2003, p. 342). The agency-less target is one who, despite being unfairly treated, is characterized as having no effective recourse. Current research glosses over or omits the ways that targets of bullying defend themselves, despite evidence that resistance and fighting back does occur (Crawford, 2001; Namie & Namie, 2000a; Rayner, 1997). Although a small number of studies examine how targets *cope* with bullying (Hogh & Dofradottir, 2001; Zapf & Gross, 2001), these do not extend to or conceptualize workers' acts of resistance.

The conventional framing of workplace bullying in terms of a powerful-versus-powerless duality masks the resources of power available to workers—resources that they actually report using to defend themselves (Davenport et al., 2002; Namie & Namie, 2000a). Bullying research and popular books examine power derived from the notion of sovereignty (Clegg, 1994), in which the powerful oppress the powerless. The current characterization of power in bullying situations—as a commodity that some possess and others do not—is far too simplistic. Power is better framed as a polymorphous, multifaceted, shifting dialectic in which all actors have access to certain rules and resources of power (Giddens, 1982).

Examining the power dynamics in bullying situations with crystallized (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005), contextualized models of power, such as Foucault (1977; 1982) and Giddens' (1982; 1984) work, could provide new insights into workers' access to resources of power. Moreover, such insights may indicate if and how resistance changes bullying dynamics and organizational systems over time. The mutually constitutive relationship of power and resistance (Foucault, 1982) and the dialectic of control describes how "the seemingly powerless…may be able to influence the activities of those

who appear to hold complete power over them" (Giddens, 1982, p. 32). These features of power and dependence give the dominated a range of resistance powers and diverse avenues through which to direct resistance efforts. In addition to the predominant focus on the power-deficient target, another limitation of current bullying research is that much of it is framed as an individual or dyadic issue.

What: Bullying as Individual or Dyadic

Most bullying research examines bullying as an individual issue or a dyadic interaction between target and bully (for exceptions see, Hoel & Salin, 2003; Salin, 2003). Communication at work, including workplace bullying, is social and often public (Waldron, 2000). Bullying and related stress reactions are not confined to targets, but often affect the entire work unit. When workers suffer at the hands of bullies, their abuse negatively impacts the entire workgroup (Vartia, 1996, 2001) and bullies' actions may serve as a model for others' behavior (Namie, 2003b). Despite the social nature of workplace communication, researchers have done little to explore the communicative nature of bullying in workgroup or the impact of bullying on observers. Vartia's work (1996, 2001) in Scandinavia stands as an exception to this and indicates that bullying is deeply detrimental to observers' mental, emotional, and occupational functioning (Vartia, 2001).

A principal concentration on targets or bully-target dyads conceals the communal impact of bullying and may make it easier to drift toward explanations of individual traits and weaknesses rather than organizational or workgroup dynamics. When the focus is individual workers rather than worker collectivities, bullying can be framed a personality conflict or the product of problem-employees (Crawford, 1999; Keashly & Rogers, 2001;

Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003b). This serves a political function by blaming the victim (Ryan, 1976) and discursively removing organizational responsibility to provide for worker safety (Crawford, 2001). Ryan (1976) notes that "the generic process of blaming the victim is applied to almost every American problem," (p. 8) and workplace bullying seems to be no exception. Examining the impact of bullying on the broader work unit limits overly simplistic blame-casting (Zapf & Gross, 2001), since bullying affects and is affected by all workplace relationships to some degree (Crawford, 1999; Lockhart, 1997; Namie, 2003b). Research is needed that goes beyond the focus on individuals or dyads, and explores bullying as a communal and communicative process. Furthermore, organizational dynamics, norms, and pressures impinge upon organizational actors and can trigger, enable, and even motivate bullying. As such, these dynamics are also important considerations.

When: The Point at Which Researchers Examine Bullying

A further limitation of current research is that most studies are conducted at *one point in time*—whether the study uses quantitative surveys (Hoel & Cooper, 2000a; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2005) qualitative interviews (Keashly, 2001), or focus groups (Tracy et al., 2004). Snap-shot studies are limited, however, in their ability to examine power as a dialectic that is instantiated through actors' micropractices (Giddens, 1984), and if we are interested in how those micropractices reproduce and transform systems over time (Clegg, 1998; Foucault, 1984). Much of what we now understand about bullying comes from "snap-shot" or "slice-of-life" research measuring or examining bullying at one point in time—usually with deeply distressed targets who, at that particular moment, feel an overwhelming sense of powerlessness. Regardless of

targets' sense of impotence, workers have and use power resources—an anecdotal point in published studies.

Crawford's (1999, 2001) consulting work in bullying situations, alludes to workers' cumulative complaints, grievances, and protests against bullying. Organizations hire Crawford in response to building dissent, worker exodus, and other forms of resistance. When organizations hire outside experts to deal with workplace bullying, many employees have already exited, complained, or filed formal grievances (Crawford, 2001; Rains, 2001). The actions that culminate in hiring experts, however, are sketchy, if mentioned at all, in research reports (Crawford, 1997; Namie & Namie, 2000b). The "snap-shot" nature of current bullying research misses subordinate employees' power to change workplace systems—change that usually occurs over time. A somewhat wider-angled, longer view would enhance current understanding of subordinate power, resistance, and the impact of resistance on bullying. Multiple follow-up contacts with bullying-affected workers or longitudinal studies of specific workgroups could remedy this weakness. How bullying is studied provides a limited understanding of power complexities, and where bullying is studied provides little understanding of the phenomenon in the United States.

Where: Bullying Research in the United States

To date, few U.S. researchers study the topic of workplace bullying. Notable exceptions include Davenport, et al. (2002), Keashly (1998; 2001), Lutgen-Sandvik, et al. (2005), Namie (2003b), and Yamada (2000). Bullying, mobbing and employee emotional abuse—terms that all denote the same phenomenon—are more common than racial discrimination or sexual harassment (Rospenda, Richman, Wislar, & Flaherty, 2000) in

the American workplace, but receive far less academic attention. Ten to twenty percent of U.S. workers report being bullied at any given time, and 30% to 50% are bullied sometime during their working careers (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2005). Furthermore, anywhere from 50% to 80% of workers also witness bullying sometime during their work histories (Davenport et al., 2002; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a; Namie, 2003b).

However, workplace bullying is well-researched outside the U.S., particularly in the United Kingdom (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Rayner et al., 2002), Scandinavia (Einarsen, 1999; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Vartia, 1996, 2003), and Germany (Zapf, 1999; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). Through this considerable body of research, we understand workplace bullying as a unique phenomenon with disastrous effects on individuals, workgroups, and organizations (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Hoel et al., 2003). U.S. researchers are just beginning to explore the issue in the American workplace and, as such, workplace bullying is a relatively new term in academic and every day vernacular.

In the U.S., adult bullying is in the linguistic stage of denotative hesitancy (Clair, 1993) in which workers and legal statutes have yet to agree upon a given language to describe the experiences of abuse as *bullying.* Denotative hesitancy is the initial difficulty people undergo when trying to name experiences before there exists a consensual language from which to draw. Once a language community reaches conceptual agreement and adheres to the term and definition—like the term *sexual harassment*—denotative conformity results. Before such conformity occurs, however, the term occurs only tentatively in day-to-day interactions and usually by those impacted by what they are

attempting to describe (Clair, 1993). Preliminary findings of U.S. studies do point to a significant problem for potentially millions of American workers—one that warrants academic attention.

How: Methods and Academic Fields in Workplace Bullying Research

Currently, bullying researchers predominantly examine the topic from a post-positivist perspective (e.g., Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001) and come from the fields of management (e.g., Hoel & Cooper, 2000b; Salin, 2001) and organizational psychology (e.g, Einarsen, 1999; Namie, 2003b; Zapf, 1999). Issues of measurement and documented cause-effect relationships has been important for knowledge development, especially since bullying research is relatively nascent. Initial mobbing research is traced back to Leymann's work only as far as the late 1970s (Leymann, 1996a). The preponderance of the research to date uses quantitative survey methods to develop measures for bullying (Björkqvist, Osterman, & Hjelt-Back, 1994; Einarsen & Hoel, 2001; Leymann, 1990); test relationships among bullying variables (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; M. J. Scott & Stradling, 2001); determine bullying incidence (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Hoel & Cooper, 2000a; Rayner, 1997); assess the individual, organizational, and social antecedents of bullying (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005; Hoel & Salin, 2003; Neuman & Baron, 2003; Zapf & Einarsen, 2003); and determine the impacts of human and organizational impacts of bullying (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Hoel et al., 2003; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Namie, 2003a).

Interpretivist studies, on the other hand, can "flesh out" and compliment this rich body of positivist work. In-depth studies that explore worker experiences with bullying are a powerful approach for filling out and contextualizing quantitative studies. Extensive

conversations from the point of view of those directly impacted afford a glimpse into how people make sense of and respond to the alarming, at times crushing, experience of workplace bullying. Furthermore, interpretive studies are more likely to gain public support since "workplace bullying is taken far more seriously if assessed on a case by case basis" (Crawford, 2001, p. 8). Somehow, dehumanized aggregated data do not have the same impact.

There are a handful of interpretive works exploring personal narratives and case studies (e.g., D. Archer, 1999; Crawford, 1999; Keashly, 2001; Lewis, 1999; O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire, & Smith, 1998; Sheehan, 1996; Tracy et al., 2004) but more is needed, especially in the U.S. workplace. Interpretive studies are poised to examine the process over time—how it begins, escalates, and (possibly) ends. Furthermore, an interpretive approach is best suited to capture the dynamic, communal nature of bullying rather than reduce it to an individual, psychological phenomenon.

Research on workplace bullying, mobbing, and employee abuse also needs to take its place beside the rich tradition of theoretical and conceptual critical organizational communication studies to which it is fundamentally coupled. Critical studies unmask the ways that dominant discourse reifies power and disadvantages certain stakeholder interests in favor of economic interests and technical discourses (e.g, Cheney, 1983; Deetz, 1992, 1998; Mumby, 2001; Mumby & Putnam, 1992; Tracy, 2000; Trethewey, 1997). Deetz (1998) claims that, "research concern[ed] with oppressive work conditions, authority relations, processes of coercion, dominant ideologies, work rules, and various other forms of manipulation and oppression must be continued" (p. 151). However, there is a dearth of communicative studies that explore verbally aggressive or abusive

workplace environments (for exceptions see, Infante & Gorden, 1991; Infante, Myers, & Buerkel, 1994; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003b; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2005; Meares, Oetzel, Derkacs, & Ginossar, 2004; Tracy et al., 2004).

Exposing the overtly abusive, fundamentally aggressive, damaging forms of organizational communication that are the material manifestations of oppressing discourses is a contemporary to critical theorizing. There are fledgling dialogues in organizational communication regarding issues of injustice and mistreatment (Meares et al., 2004), incivility (Sypher, 2004), and workplace bullying (Alberts, 2005; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2005; Tracy et al., 2004), but the communication field has much more to offer. Currently, the predominant disciplines studying workplace bullying research are organizational psychology and business-management—fields with somewhat circumscribed perspectives. The former tends to focus on the individual, psychological subject and the latter on economic business interests.

The critical perspective of organizational communication explicitly questions the political discourses of individualized psychological subjects and economic bottom-lines (Deetz, 1992; Deetz, Tracy, & Simpson, 2000) and is fundamentally concerned with enlightenment and empowerment. Since workplace bullying is a material manifestation of these underlying meanings, we need to examine and expose it in concert with theoretical and conceptual critical work. Research accordingly should be driven by the goal of improving the quality of life for the individuals and groups under investigation—a goal that should always be primary to research as a means of tenure or professional status.

Frey and colleagues (1996) explicitly speak to this as a moral imperative, one from which this research topic emerges and toward which this study strives. Participatory action research shares a similar belief that is embodied in researchers working with community members to build solutions through mutual action (e.g., Gaternby & Humphries, 1996; Sarri & Sarri, 1992). As such, in the implications and conclusion, I explicitly detail the applied potentialities of this research through a discussion of the interview-as-intervention (Varallo, Ray, & Ellis, 1998) and a political act. Moreover, the findings in this study suggest an agenda of workers' resistance that details the organizational dynamics most likely to bring about bullying cessation.

Research Agenda

Taking the preceding together, the purposes of this study are multiple. The primary goals are, first, to continue the tentative dialogue about adult bullying at work in the U.S. workplace, identify it as a serious issue warranting academic attention, and begin to formulate potential solutions. Second, this study explores bullying from the point of view of both targets and witnesses to increase our knowledge about how bullying impacts groups of workers. Third, the study seeks this understanding through an interpretive, in-depth examination that will enhance the current data that emerge from a predominantly positivistic body of research. Fourth, this interpretive study specifically highlights workers' resistance to bullying and explores the implications of resistance for organizational systems and worker empowerment. Finally, as a corollary of explicating workers' resistance, this study counters the characterizations of bullying targets as weak, ineffective, and power-deficient and provides a theoretical lens with which to conceptualize and understand the dialectic of power in bullying dynamics.

The secondary goals of this study include, first, to encourage, contribute to, and sustain the fledgling dialogue among communication scholars regarding aggressive, damaging forms of organizational communication, such as workplace bullying. Bullying research is an empirical extension of the field's current critical and cultural studies. Second, it underscores the importance of applied research as a vehicle for researcher-research participant joint knowledge building and expands the current body of applied studies that draw attention to resistance micropractices. As such, I specifically examine how those practices structurate or change systems over time, including organizational arrangements, relationships, and communication. Finally, this work implicitly reinforces a language with which workers might be able to name their experiences by forwarding and reinforcing the term *workplace bullying* and, as such, attempts to shift this language from a stage of denotative hesitancy to denotative conformity (Clair, 1993), such has occurred with the term *sexual harassment*.

This is an ambitious agenda that cannot be fully realized by any one study. It will, however, move us to a state of new understandings and perceptions about workplace bullying that to some extent address each of these goals. What follows is organized in the following manner: First, I review current literature on workplace bullying and describe, what I call, its *features* and *forms,* and follow this with a brief discussion of current conceptualizations of power and resistance in bullying research. Additionally at the end of this chapter, I summarize the organizational dynamics likely to trigger, enable, and motivate bullying. Second, I examine the theoretical and applied research on power and resistance and present ideas for how this can be used as a conceptual lens through which to understand resistance to bullying at work. Third, I detail the method used in this study

and describe the participants or “co-researchers,” as I have come to see their role. Fourth, I present an analysis of target and witness narratives that highlights their acts of resistance and, where applicable, the changes that occurred as a result of that resistance. I add a second findings chapter exploring the potential for bottom-up bully removal and present a conceptual path-model of this organizational change type. Finally, I conclude with theoretical, methodological, and practical implications and suggest areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2

WORKPLACE BULLYING FEATURES, FORMS, POWER AND ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

Workplace bullying, as a unique phenomenon, is also referred to as *mobbing* (Davenport et al., 2002; Leymann, 1990; Zapf et al., 1996), *harassment* (Björkqvist et al., 1994), *psychological terror* (Leymann, 1996b), *emotional abuse* (Keashly, 1998, 2001), and *victimization* (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). *Mobbing*, a term originating in Swedish research (Leymann, 1990), initially denoted numerous bullies singling out one person, but this distinction has since fallen away (Davenport et al., 2002; Hubert & van Veldhoven, 2001; Niedl, 1996; Zapf, 1999). Over time, the two central terms *bullying* and *mobbing* have come to indicate virtually the same phenomenon. Most literature uses the term *bullying* to label this extreme, persistent form of workplace abuse (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Crawford, 2001; Einarsen, 1999; Field, 1996; Hoel & Cooper, 2000a, 2001; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Namie & Namie, 2000a; Randall, 2001; Rayner et al., 2002; Richards & Daley, 2003; Salin, 2001; Vartia, 2001; Zapf, 2004). Despite the common terminology in international research, the term *workplace bullying* has yet to become widely used by U.S. academics (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2005; Tracy et al., 2004; Yamada, 2000). The following definition is my distillation of the aforementioned body of work and guides this study:

> Workplace bullying is a pattern of persistent, offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or exclusionary discursive and nondiscursive behaviors that targets perceive as intentional efforts to harm, control, or drive them from the workplace. Bullying is often escalatory in nature and linked to hostile work environments. The principal effects are damage or impairment to targets and workgroups and obstruction of organizational goals and processes.

The central characteristics that differentiate workplace bullying from other negative social interactions at work are persistence (Einarsen, 1999; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Salin, 2001, 2003; Zapf, 1999), patterned negative acts (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Keashly & Nowell, 2003; Vartia, 1996, 2003), widespread harm (Davenport et al., 2002; Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Hoel et al., 2003; Namie & Namie, 2000a), and escalation (Davenport et al., 2002; Leymann, 1990; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003b). Furthermore, bullying is linked to extremely hostile work environments (Richards & Daley, 2003; Salin, 2003); these environments are most likely both the medium and the outcome of bullying. That is, bullying is more likely to emerge in hostile work environments and also contributes to such environments (Crawford, 2001; Rains, 2001; Salin, 2001).

Many researchers seek to differentiate workplace bullying from sexual and racial harassment (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Field, 1996; Leymann, 1996b). Adams and Crawford (1992) expressly state that "although some people will insist otherwise, bullying at work is separate from the recognised problems of sexual harassment or racism" (p. 10). Others claim that the key legal issues that "distinguishes sexual harassment from bullying is that…harassment is somehow based on gender…[and that] men and women are treated differently" (Pryor & Fitzgerald, 2003, p. 80). On the other hand, researchers may seek legitimacy for the construct of workplace bullying by closely linking it to racial or sexual harassment (Randall, 2001). For example, Einarsen and colleagues (1994) "argue that sexual and racial harassment represent different aspects of the same problem" (Lee, 2001, p. 208). Lee (2001) argues "however, if sexual

harassment and racial harassment are defined as only types of bullying, this might undermine the specificity and visibility of sexual and racial harassment" (p. 209).

Interactions exist between sexual harassment, racial harassment, and workplace bullying; nevertheless, it seems important not to conflate types of harassment in a way that obscures the distinctive features of each (Lee, 2001). However, exempting sexism or racists factors masks the oftentimes gendered quality of workplace bullying and trivializes or eliminates the non-sexual bullying behaviors that often accompany and underscore experiences of sexual and racial harassment (Lee, 2001). For the purposes of this study, aggressive, repetitive acts of sexual or racial harassment combined with other negative acts in a pattern of targeted hostility are considered a form of workplace bullying. One-time incidents of legally defined sexual and racial harassment, however, are excluded from the operational definitions of workplace bullying.

In what follows, I argue that workplace bullying is centrally a communicative phenomenon that is social and communal. Second I discuss the current state of denotative hesitancy that marks U.S. bullying vernacular. This is followed by a description of what I call the *features* and *forms* of workplace bullying. Finally, I explore the way in which current bullying literature characterizes target agency and the issue of power.

Communicative Issues

The extant bullying literature does little to highlight its communicative dynamics in workgroups. Bullying at work is complicated by characteristics unique to workplace communication. Scholars have argued that negative social interaction at work may have more negative consequences on the individual than negative interactions in other settings

for a variety of reasons (Barling & MacEwen, 1992; Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). To begin with, negative interaction at work is embedded in a situation with potential formal and informal power and status inequalities between the parties that, at times, make it possible to justify workplace negativity as necessary actions for "getting the job done" (Brodsky, 1976).

Furthermore, because daily attendance at work is generally mandatory, most employees cannot easily avoid workplace negativity (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). The quality of worklife also affects the quality of personal lives and overall life satisfaction (Buzzanell & Turner, 2003; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Additionally, to be able to provide for oneself and one's family is a necessary and basic adult obligation as well as a central aspect of identity in high modernity (Giddens, 1991). Finally, communication at work is public. Workers' "emotional reaction[s] seem most profound when…the audience includes one's peers….Public disqualification of this type is equivalent to the 'roundhouse punch' delivered by a heavyweight boxer" (Waldron, 2000, P. 67). Taken together, extant research suggests that bullying is a communal experience, especially when persistent abuse develops into a hostile, aggressive environment impacting all involved. It is deeply disturbing—often with no material means of escape without considerable life upheaval associated with job change. Bullying threatens workers' preferred subject positions (Foucault, 1984), ability to satisfy basic needs (Maslow, 1943), and is easily masked by managerial discourse (Deetz, 1992).

It does appear, however, that bullying is as much about what the workers hear about or see the bully say or do to others, as it is about what the bully directly says or

does to the target (Rayner et al., 2002). The communicative nature of work suggests that bullying can be direct or indirect, that is, it can be actions that negatively impact targets or actions occurring to others in the workgroup (Adams & Crawford, 1992). Direct bullying is what the bully says or does to the target. Indirect bullying, on the other hand, is what the bully says or does behind the target's back and includes a wider range of possibilities such as stigmatizing gossip, innuendo and rumor (Zapf, 1999). Indirect bullying is what employees overhear, witness, or discover through the workplace "grapevine" and includes seeing and hearing second-hand stories of coworker abuse (Randall, 2001). Bullying is not simply what the bully says to the target. It is what the bully says to others about the target, what others see happening to their peers, and the history of past abuse that lives in the stories told at work (Crawford, 2001).

Bullying also includes what workers tell each other in every day interactions that creates fear, dread, and apprehension in the workgroup (Lockhart, 1997). Passing on stories of bullying may even be an aspect of socialization for incoming organizational members framed as subtle and not so subtle warnings. In this sense, employees communicatively reactivate and relive, through workplace stories and histories, the bullying experiences of past workers (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). The buzzing quality of emotional experiences at work (Waldron, 2000) highlights the communal nature of bullying and counters an interpersonal or dyadic picture notion of bullying as simply an exchange between two actors. Although employees discuss and recount episodes of bullying, they often have difficulty naming or labeling these experiences (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003).

Denotative Hesitancy

Workplace bullying has yet to become a regularly utilized term in the U.S. workplace or as a form of mistreatment from which American statutory law provides worker protection (Yamada, 2000). Unlike sexual harassment, which is defined by statutory and case law (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004), bullying is without a specific, unified vernacular and is often relegated to the schoolyard (Hepburn, 1997; Olweus, 2003). The connection to schoolyard bullying can be stigmatizing through association with childishness or weakness. Since people organize, structure, and create their experiences, interactions and realities through language (Spender, 1984), the absence of agreed upon terminology frustrates U.S. workers' efforts to name and make sense of these experiences and may contribute to their reported sense of feeling "crazy" (Tracy et al., 2004). Clair (1993) elaborates this state of "denotative hesitancy" in her examination of sexual harassment narratives.

Like those trying to make sense of sexual harassment before the term was widely accepted, targets of bullying struggle to describe and name their abusive experiences (Keashly, 2001). Denotative hesitancy is the initial difficulty of naming experiences before there exists a consensual language from which to draw. Once a language community reaches conceptual agreement and adheres to the term and definition, denotative conformity results. Before such conformity occurs, the term occurs tentatively in day-to-day interactions by those impacted by what they are attempting to describe (Clair, 1993). Academic research, such as this study, coupled with public press coverage (McQuire, 2004; E. Taylor, 2004) also contribute to eventual denotative conformity.

Given this hesitancy, it is important to review the descriptive and contextualizing features, as well as the various forms of bullying, in detail.

Workplace Bullying as a Unique Phenomenon

Definitions of workplace bullying (or mobbing) vary by author, country and academic discipline, and there is no universally agreed-upon definition (Randall, 1997; Rayner, Sheehan, & Barker, 1999). There are, however, more similarities than differences in present definitions of bullying as a unique phenomenon. Appendix A provides key definitions of bullying and mobbing key author(s). As such, it includes definitions by Stale Einarsen, Denise Salin, Maarit Vartia, and Heinz Leymann from Scandinavia; Charlotte Rayner, Helge Hoel, Cary Cooper, Tim Fields, and Peter Randall from the U.K.; Dieter Zapf from Germany; and Gary and Ruth Namie, Noa Davenport, Ruth Schwartz, Gail Elliot, and Loraleigh Keashly from the U.S. This is a partial rendering of researchers who study workplace bullying, but provides the ways in which the foundational scholars and professionals have framed and defined the issue. Other researchers generally adopt one or more elements of these definitions (Alonzo, 1999; D. Archer, 1999; Lewis, 1999; Lockhart, 1997; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2005; Thomas-Peter, 1997; Tracy et al., 2004). Consequently providing a more extensive list would potentially be more repetitive than revealing. Bullying, as a unique phenomenon, is best understood by exploring what I call its *features* and *forms.*

Features and Forms of Bullying

The features of bullying are its descriptive and contextual characteristics such as frequency and duration that underscore its forms (negative acts). Negative acts may or may not be bullying in the absence of these hallmark features. Overlaying bullying acts

(insults, screaming, gossip, silent treatment) on the descriptive and contextualizing features of bullying (repetition, duration, harm, "crazy making") provides a multi-dimensional image of bullying and differentiates it as a distinctive event. I begin with the descriptive and contextualizing features. Table 1 summarizes these features, which I then proceed to detail.

Table 1
Features of Workplace Bullying

Bullying Features

Descriptive Features	Contextualizing Features
Repetition	Recognizable, difficult to describe pattern
Duration	Duplicitous performances
Escalation	Painting abuse as legitimate management
Harm/Damage	Unpredictable and arbitrary acts
Motivation/intent	Blocked communication networks
Hostile work environment	"Crazy-making"
Power disparity	Issues unique to each workplace

Bullying Descriptive Features

The descriptive features or characteristics of bullying include repetition, duration, escalation, harm, motivation/intent, hostile work environment, and power disparity. Descriptive features provide the first dimensional "layer" of bullying dynamics.

Repetition. Bullying is, for the most part, not a one-time negative interaction or incident—it is repetitive and frequent. The hammering and chipping away inherent to bullying is laced throughout target narratives (Tracy et al., 2004). Bullying is recurrent, persistent, patterned, frequent, repeated, and systematic (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997;

Keashly & Nowell, 2003; Namie & Namie, 2000a; Rayner et al., 2002; Salin, 2003; Vartia, 1996, 2003). It may occur somewhat sporadically or can "take place often… almost on a daily basis" (Leymann, 1996b, p. 168). Targets indicate that the repetitive, patterned nature of negative acts was central to defining their experiences as abusive (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Keashly, 1998; Rayner et al., 2002). This feature fundamentally separates the phenomenon from a single explosive or hostile attack, regardless of how disturbing such an event might be.

Researchers often apply a frequency standard (i.e., at least weekly) to define hostile interactions as bullying (Einarsen, 1999; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Zapf, 1999); however, this may ignore some authentic cases of bullying. Occasionally, bullying is not strictly episodic; a bully may spread a negative rumor about the target that harms or destroys the target's professional reputation or even ability to secure future employment (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2003). Bullies may assign targets to permanently penalizing working conditions (moved to an unheated basement, forced to work without equipment/furniture) that has enduring negative consequences (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Einarsen, 1999). Additionally, one particularly brutal attack may create "the *fear* of repeated aggression" (Randall, 2001, p. 5). To allow for these contingencies, scholars argue that if "the behaviors *or their consequences* are repeated" (Einarsen et al., 2003, pp. 7-8 emphasis added) or there is fear of repeated aggression (Randall, 2001), this may also constitute bullying.

Duration. Duration coupled with repetition stress the persistent nature of bullying and together "have been essential to setting bullying apart from other phenomena such as workplace violence" (Rayner et al., 2002, p. 11). According to Hoel and Cooper (2001),

the “long-term nature of the phenomenon is one of the most salient features of the problem” (p. 4). Moreover, repetition necessarily needs time in which to occur, so duration of some length is intrinsic to the repetitive, patterned and systematic feature of bullying. Abuse left unchecked, coupled with repetition, gives bullying its corrosive nature.

Duration and frequency (persistence) are linked; frequently bullied workers report experiencing abuse for longer periods of time than those who report occasional bullying (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). As with repetition, researchers debate the best way to determine requisite duration that discriminates bullying from less egregious negative acts. Some researchers require a minimum of six months—a duration first articulated in Swedish research (Leymann, 1990). Others consider a six month timeframe somewhat arbitrary (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996) but still agree that bullying is a long-lasting phenomenon (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Rayner et al., 2002; Zapf et al., 1996). Target reports, however, suggest that bullying includes abusive treatment ranging from “occasional exposure to negative behaviors to severe victimization resulting from frequent and long-lasting exposure” (Einarsen et al., 2003, p. 8).

In fact, targets usually report that bullying lasts much longer than six months. German workers reported exposure times of over 12 months (Zapf, 1999; Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2003), Norwegian targets reported an average 18 months (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996), Irish workers reported at least 3.4 years (O'Moore, 2000), and North Americans report an average duration of 23 months (Namie, 2003a). Although bullying can also be short-lived in cases where organizational actors (e.g., upper managers, HR

professionals) interrupt its development and escalation (Crawford, 2001; Hoel & Cooper, 2001), there is little examination of early-intercession.

Escalation. Research links repeated abuse over a long period of time to escalated hostility. Continued abusive interactions become more intense, extreme and personalized the longer they endure (Zapf & Gross, 2001). Bullying is often a developmental process that escalates—either gradually or rapidly—depending on the actors, situation, and setting (Leymann, 1990; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003b). Both the intensity of hostility and the intensity of toxic effects multiply when bullying is unimpeded (Harlos & Pinder, 1999; Leymann, 1996a; Zapf & Gross, 2001).

During the early phases of bullying, targets may have difficulty describing their experience aside from identifying a feeling of unease or heightened discomfort (Adams & Crawford, 1992). Abusive tactics may be "subtle, devious and immensely difficult to confront" (Adams & Crawford, 1992, p. 17). Devious, hidden attacks also make the experience difficult for targeted workers to encode (Leymann, 1996a). In later stages of bullying, however, targets are assailed by more direct aggressive acts, and while they may not have the terminology to label their experiences as *bullying*, they are unmistakably aware of being under attack (Lockhart, 1997). Over time, targets are "isolated and avoided, humiliated in public by excessive criticism or by being made a laughing-stock. In the end both physical and psychological means of violence are used" (Einarsen et al., 2003, p. 14).

Leymann's (1990) extensive work with mobbing victims led him to differentiate four phases of mobbing's escalation: (a) critical incident: a triggering event brings the target to the negative attention of powerful organizational members, (b) mobbing and

stigmatizing: consistent, repetitive manipulation of the target by attacks on reputation, social isolation, criticism, and threats (c) personnel administration: target goes to upper management and is re-victimized by upper management (i.e., branding the target as a troublemaker), and (d) expulsion: target is fired, transferred or quits. In the same vein, expanding on Leymann's developmental model of bullying escalation, Lutgen-Sandvik (2003a) proposed a cyclical model of employee emotional abuse with six stages: (a) initial incident—cycle generation, (b) progressive discipline, (c) turning point, (d) organizational ambivalence, (e) isolation and silencing, and (f) expulsion—cycle regeneration. These models represent general trends, however; specific instances of bullying are as varied and complex as the human actors involved.

Harm. If bullying were innocuous, there would be little reason to research it. But it is exceedingly destructive and is directly linked to impaired physical, mental, and occupational health; deterioration of personal relationships outside of work; and economic jeopardy (Davenport, et al., 2002; Leymann, 1990, 1996; Namie & Namie, 2000; Rayner et al., 2002; Richard & Daley, 2003). The human costs of bullying are heartbreaking, but bullying also impairs organizations and by extension those served by organizational products or services (Bassman, 1992; Hoel et al., 2003; Rayner, et al., 2002; Yamada, 2000). "The overall nature of the effects indicates a deterioration or disabling of the target, the people around him or her, and the organization" (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003, p. 53).This damage is an explicit focus in virtually all bullying literature (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Einarsen et al., 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2005; Rayner & Hoel, 1997; Tracy et al., 2004; Zapf, 2004).

Research associates considerable injury to bullying at work that is long-term, pervasive, and affects all aspects of targets' lives (Einarsen et al., 2003; Field, 1996; Keashly, 1998; Leymann, 1990; Zapf & Gross, 2001). Bullying negatively impacts targets' self-esteem (Leymann, 1990), physical health (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003), cognitive functioning (Brodsky, 1976), occupational functioning (Namie & Namie, 2000a), and emotional health (Tracy et al., 2004). Targets report elevated levels of anxiety (Crawford, 1999) and are at higher risk of alcohol abuse (Richman, Rospenda, Flaherty, & Freels, 2001) and depression (Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003) than are nontargets. Research also links long-term bullying to posttraumatic stress disorder (Leymann, 1990; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Namie, 2003a; M. J. Scott & Stradling, 2001) and suicide or suicidal ideation (Leymann, 1990). Leymann (1990) claimed "about 10% - 15% of the total number of suicides in Sweden each year" (p. 122) were linked to extreme mobbing.

Workplace bullying erodes interpersonal relationships outside of work (Davenport et al., 2002; Hirigoyen, 1998; Wyatt & Hare, 1997), and evidence "points to the potential for damage to those who have witnessed bullying at work" (Rayner et al., 2002, p. 189; Vartia, 1996, 2001, 2003). Coworkers are *secondary* targets of workplace bullying, similar to persons who witness and are psychologically marked by acts of workplace violence and murder (Barling, 1996). When coworkers witness others being bullied, they make the quite logical assumption that they could be targeted in a similar fashion and hypervigilance becomes a permanent feature of worklife (Lockhart, 1997). Fear, emotional exhaustion, and guilt increase the likelihood of staff turnover. Furthermore, witnesses report higher stress levels and intentions to leave than do non-

observers (Keashly, 1998; Rayner, 1997; Vartia, 2001; 2003). Given the destructive results of bullying, many find it difficult to believe this behavior is unintentional.

Intent and motivation. Bullying-affected workers often attribute intention and motivation to bullies' actions, and these attributions are central to workers' subjective judgment that someone is a bully. Researchers avoid the inclusion of intent although bullying is characterized as aggressive, malicious, and malevolent (Davenport et al., 2002; Einarsen et al., 2003; Field, 1996; Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Namie & Namie, 2000a; Randall, 2001; Rayner et al., 2002; Richards & Daley, 2003; Salin, 2003), all of which denote purposive action. When employees are on the receiving end of bullying, they are convinced that bullying is *not accidental* but is intentional behavior motivated by a desire to harm, control or drive them out of the organization (Davenport et al., 2002; Field, 1996; Namie & Namie, 2000a).

Researchers usually exclude intent from definitions of bullying, because it is "normally impossible to verify the presence of intent" (Einarsen et al., 2003, p. 12). The exclusion

> of intent on the part of the bully provided an artificial barrier because of its implications for an operational definition. We were concerned that if the bully denied they intended to bully someone, then bullying would not be seen to have happened. While we would strongly defend this position for the purposes of definition, intent may hold a level of importance for the players in the situation and our general thoughts about bullying. (Rayner et al., 2002, p. 125)

The "players" who are faced with daily aggression, duplicitous behavior, and cruelty have no such concerns (Richard & Daley, 2003). In other words, bullying-affected workers find it impossible to believe that such egregious acts are unintentional. Researchers, on the other hand, allude to the purposive nature of workplace bullying,

recognize that targets attribute intent to bully acts, and that this attribution is central to targets perceptions of bullies as abusive. Researchers explicitly exclude intention, because it complicates scientific measurement, not because they believe intent is absent.

Including intent also problematizes policy and law development. In sexual harassment laws and policies, intent to sexually harass is less important than the *perception* of being sexually harassed and the harmful effects of a hostile work environment (Clair, Chapman, & Kunkel, 1996; S. E. Martin & Jurik, 1996). If intent is included in policy or statutory definitions, the perpetrator has only to say, "I didn't intend to harass the person," and by definition no bullying or sexual harassment would have occurred. The *deniability* dynamic is what Rayner and colleagues (2002) address as their main reason for excluding intent from operationalizations.

The fact is, neither researchers nor targets can know the intentions of bullies, and while their actions are probably motivated, there may be no intent to cause harm (Einarsen et al., 2003). Perpetrators may bully others instrumentally to achieve an end or objective, but do so without the intention to cause harm (Keashly, 1998; Keashly & Nowell, 2003). As noted, although intent may be a problem for operationalization, there is little doubt that attribution of intent is important to whether or not an individual decides to label their experience as bullying (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Leymann, 1996a; Rayner et al., 2002). For those who have been bullied at work and suffered considerable psychological, physiological, or occupational damage as a result, there is a fundamental sense that the abuse was intended (Rayner et al., 2002). Although we may theorize that much of human behavior is motivated, targets and witnesses extrapolate bully motivation from a series of patterned, negative acts across

time. However, like intent, motivation is nearly impossible for researchers or even the "players" to determine. Whether bullying is intentional or not, bullying creates or emerges from hostile workplace dynamics.

Hostile work environment. Only a few descriptions of bullying explicitly include the creation of a hostile work environment (Davenport et al., 2002; Salin, 2003), although it is central to definitions of sexual harassment (S. E. Martin & Jurik, 1996; Miller, 2003). Bullying and its relationship with hostile work environments expands and challenges the primarily interpersonal, psychological characterization of bullying (critiqued in Liefooghe & MacKenzie-Davey, 2001, 2003). Some researchers posit a cause-effect relationship in which bullying constructs the hostile work environment (Davenport et al., 2002; Salin, 2003), but others question the directionality of the relationship and claim that "pathologizing of both victim and bully may act as a distractor for organizational practices" (Liefooghe & MacKenzie-Davey, 2001, p. 377). Taken together, these suggest that bullying may both construct and be constructed by a hostile environment, in which workers live in constant fear of attack.

Power disparity. As I have critiqued at a number of points, current bullying literature characterizes bullies as powerful and targets as power-deficient and bullying as an interaction between these two unequally matched actors (Davenport et al., 2002; Einarsen et al., 2003; Leymann, 1990, 1996a; Rayner et al., 2002; Salin, 2001, 2003; Vartia, 1996, 2003). This power disparity reportedly exists prior to the onset of bullying or arises as a result of ongoing mistreatment and badgering (Keashly & Nowell, 2003). Targets' underscore their feelings of impotence in narratives, case studies, and focus groups (e.g., D. Archer, 1999; Crawford, 1999; Keashly, 2001; Lewis, 1999; O'Moore et

al., 1998; Sheehan, 1996; Tracy et al., 2004), which underscores a perception of their indefensibility and difficulty defending themselves. I might add, however, that even the most "powerful" organizational members often feel impotent. As Morgan (1997) notes, "even chief executives often say that they feel highly constrained, that they have few significant options in decision making, and that the power they wield is more apparent than real" (p. 196). Terminology may also perpetuate the power-deficient characterization.

Use of the term *bullying* may, in and of itself, contribute to the dichotomous depiction of power, since it explicitly incorporates power disparity. Dictionary definitions of a bully as "an aggressive person who intimidates or mistreats weaker people" and bullying as an effort "to intimidate or mistreat a weaker person" may underscore target incapacity (Soukhanov, 2001, p. 186). However, this sovereign, "classic conceptualization of power as zero-sum, as the negation of the power of others" (Clegg, 1993, p. 25) ignores the dialectical character of power alluded to in examinations of bullying targets' coping strategies (Hogh & Dofradottir, 2001; Zapf & Gross, 2001). Workers' inability to *immediately* stop bullying may contribute to their perceptions of powerlessness, but looking only to the present for evidence of power ignores the ways that resistance may contribute to changes across time. I take up this issue further in the next chapter.

Bullying Contextualizing Features

In addition to the descriptive features of power disparity, persistence and intent, targets describe other dynamics that I call the *contextualizing features* of bullying work environments. Contextualizing features provide the second dimensional "layer" of

bullying characteristics and contribute to employees' perceptions of abuse, stigmatization, and hostility. These features, when present and in conjunction with descriptive features, alter the meaning of bullying acts and messages. These include (a) recognizable but difficult to describe patterns, (b) duplicitous performances, (c) conflating abuse with legitimate management, (d) unpredictable and arbitrary acts, (e) blocked communication networks, (f) "crazy-making," and (g) issues unique to each workplace. Bullies' behavior is a complex set of discursive and nondiscursive behaviors that have a discernable pattern to members of an affected workgroup (Keashly, 1998). When targets talk about what has happened, they often state that their experiences cannot be understood outside of the context and pattern (Lewis, 1999; Tracy et al., 2004). Targets often claim that each bullying act, in and of itself, does not adequately capture the ongoing, systematic, cumulative nature of bullying. This kind of mistreatment is comprised of many small, sometime innocuous, but nevertheless relentless abuses stretching over days, weeks, months and even years (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Randall, 2001). An aspect of this discernable pattern is the bully's frequently two-faced performances.

A common feature targets report are bullies' inconsistent, duplicitous performances when powerholders are present and when they are absent (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Namie & Namie, 2000b; Tracy et al., 2004). Employees who witness and experience bullying voice frustration trying to get others to believe them because of the bullies' markedly incommensurate politeness, deference, and respect in the presence of powerholders (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Field, 1996; Lewis, 1999). Furthermore, some bullying managers can explain bullying acts as part of organizing and directing

subordinates' work and thus avoid appearing abusive. For example, seemingly innocuous acts such as employee control and oversight, moving an employee's office, changes in work assignments and goals, or assigning unmanageable workloads might easily be explained away by organizational demands rather than considered as an aspect in an overall pattern of bullying (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Randall, 2001). However, bullies only move the offices or remove the favored projects for workers who are currently being targeted. The arbitrary character of these acts mark them as part of the bullying context.

The bully's behavior and emotional affect are often as unpredictable as their decisions regarding work assignments and goals (Adams & Crawford, 1992). One day the bully might be raging and attacking and the next do something unexpectedly kind and generous (Field, 1996). Although the former is reportedly more common (Randall, 2001), the latter contributes to targets difficulty describing the abuse to upper managers or HR professionals (Crawford, 1999; Namie & Namie, 2000a; Rayner et al., 2002). Moreover, open, day-to-day communication is repeatedly stifled in the face of bullying (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Crawford, 2001; Lockhart, 1997). Bullies commonly pit workers against one another, play favorites that unexpectedly shift, and forbid or punish peer communication networks that might serve as hidden spaces for resistance (Crawford, 2001; Davenport et al., 2002; Field, 1996; Randall, 1997; J. C. Scott, 1990). Dynamics "that scare a bully most are the possibility of more than one person getting together to complain and the increased likelihood of their behavior becoming public" (Crawford, 2001, p. 26). Bullies' efforts to isolate targets and prevent peers from communicating is, at times, successful because "fear of becoming a victim of abuse

keeps other employees silent" (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003b, p. 490). Arbitrary, capricious, unpredictable actions and reactions disrupt workers' ability to predict what may happen from day to day and lead them to feel like they are "losing it" or "going crazy."

The "crazy-making" feature of bullying messages and acts disturbs and distresses those in the workgroup. Bullies say one thing, contradict it later, deny their first statements and then blame the misunderstanding on others. In an experience mirrored by many others, a woman reported that the bully "listened in to my telephone calls, invented complaints from outside contacts which proved to be totally unfounded, and then told me I was a lovely person who was reading too much into his actions" (Adams & Crawford, 1992, p. 10). Targets report feeling crazy—unable to determine illusion for reality—as a result (Namie & Namie, 2000b).

As a final point, depending on organizational or workgroup norms, what is abusive in one setting might not be considered abusive in another (Hoel & Salin, 2003). In some workplaces, it is demeaning to call workers by their first names when the respectful greeting is "Mr./Ms. Smith." In other workgroups, the opposite might be true (Salin, 2003). A number of contextualizing features "set the stage" for whether actors perceive their treatment at work to be abusive. This may mean that bullying can only be determined by those who are targeted and others who witness day-to-day abusive interactions. Identifying bullying is also complicated by the variety of forms in which it appears.

Bullying Form (Negative Acts)

Table 2 summarizes two ways of classifying the forms or types of acts associated with bullying. There is no question that screaming outbursts, profanity, and physical attack are abusive and "violate a standard of appropriate conduct toward others" (Keashly, 1998, p. 104). Other forms of bullying such as work overload or removal of key tasks are not as clear. Rather, these acts take on an ominous meaning only in the presence of other descriptive and contextual features of bullying just described. Bullying can take the form of verbal and nonverbal communication, direct and indirect actions, and active or passive acts (withholding action). What these acts have in common is they comprise a pattern of abusive treatment that badgers, harasses, humiliates, excludes, demoralizes, and undermines targets. In addition to a list of negative acts, bullying is also classified based on its etiology (antecedents) and the topic or aspect of the targets' worklife that is impacted or focused upon during bullying acts. Lists and typologies of negative acts (bullying forms) is in some ways like examining human organs during an autopsy: The life is gone from the subject of interest.

Negative acts may or may not be bullying in the absence of these hallmark features. As noted, bullying forms—negative acts—are best viewed as an overlay underneath which operate the descriptive and contextual features previously outlined. Superimposing negative acts (work overload, innuendo, silent treatment) on the descriptive and contextualizing features of bullying (duplicitous performances, persistence, escalation) provides a multi-dimensional topography that better explains bullying than either do alone. It is by examining *both* features and forms that we best understand the bullying phenomenon, not by solely focusing on lists or types of negative

behaviors. However, reviewing the forms bullying develops appreciation for the manifold ways in which employees can be terrorized at work.

One of the limitations of lists and typologies is that, with the exception of organizational bullying (Liefooghe & MacKenzie-Davey, 2001), most are built on an examination of bullying as interpersonal and psychological (Einarsen, 1999; Leymann, 1996a; Zapf, 1999). This stands to reason since a preponderance of bullying research has been framed by organizational psychologists (e.g., Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Namie & Namie, 2000a; Therani, 2001). However, it is problematic in so much as the dynamic nature of organizational communication is largely absent from these classifications. Readers are left to conjecture whether communicative dynamics are taken-for-granted and transparent, since they are not mentioned, or seen as non-essential.

Bullying others is often marked by the language of contempt (Gottman, 1999; Hochschild, 1983) or "talking-down," and is a manifestation of organizational members' devaluation. Such devaluing and contempt is embedded in rationalized, discursive practices and systems of meaning that stratify people's value based on hierarchical positions and roles within organizations (Deetz, 1992). Additionally, research presents bullying forms as one-way communication in which perpetrators abuse targets who are harmed by the bullying and are either powerless to respond or their responses are absent. Furthermore, except for the occasional coworker who joins in abusing the target, the social nature of workplace interaction and witness responses to bullying are missing from these classifications.

What a review of bullying forms does offer is to highlight the difficulty of identifying bullying through form alone, as well as a glimpse of the potential antecedents

to bullying. The range of bullying forms hints at the difficulty targets experience identifying and reporting such acts as abusive. The forms of bullying, however, are a necessary framing device to understanding targets' difficulty recounting their experiences. Relating bullying is complicated because abuse is not solely linked to a specific *type* of language (i.e., sexual, racial). Additionally, the review of negative act lists and etiological/topical forms of bullying provides examples of what workers see, experience, and respond to through acts of resistance—acts that are the central focus of this study. In Table 2, the first conceptualization for bullying form is a list of 22 negative acts drawn from the most current measure of bullying (Negative Acts Questionnaire-NAQ, Einarsen & Hoel, 2001).

Table 2
Forms of Workplace Bullying

Negative Acts (NAQ)
Hints, signals to quit job
Ignored, excluded or isolated; opinions and views ignored
Faced with hostile reactions when approaching others
Information/resources withheld that affect performance
Given tasks with unreasonable, impossible targets or deadlines
Ordered to do work below level of competence; key responsibilities removed, replaced with trivial, unpleasant tasks
Exposed to unmanageable workload; work excessively monitored
Humiliated or ridiculed in connection with work
False allegations, gossip, rumors, insulting/offensive remarks
Shouted at, targeted with spontaneous anger or rage
Intimidated with threatening behavior (finger-pointing, shoving, blocking the way)
Pressured into not claiming something to which entitled (sick leave, travel)
Excessive teasing and sarcasm, subjected to practical jokes
Persistent criticism of work/effort, repeatedly reminded of errors or mistakes
Threats of violence/physical abuse or physical abuse/attack

Bullying Forms Etiological Classifications	Bullying Forms Topical Classifications
Authoritative	Person-related
Discriminatory	Work-related
Dispute-related	Isolation-related
Displaced	Physical assaults/or threats
Organizational	

Negative acts (NAQ). These items are drawn from the most current bullying measurement tool (NAQ) derived from three distinct sources of information: past measures of negative workplace acts, literature reviews, and targets' accounts of long-duration bullying (Einarsen & Hoel, 2001). The authors specifically frame the acts in behavioral terms that do not specifically refer to "bullying" but rather measure the frequency of specific negative acts—usually during the past six months. A precursor to the NAQ was the *Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorization* (LIPT) consisting of 45 acts such as hostile communication, public humiliation, social isolation, punishing task changes, and violence or threats of violence (Leymann, 1990). Another was Björkqvist and colleagues' (1994) *Work Harassment Scale* (WHS) with 24 negative acts such as being unfairly criticized, shouted at, isolated, and falsely accused. The NAQ incorporates and simplifies these earlier efforts. Lists of negative acts are less informative, however, than are etiological classifications.

Etiological classifications. Etiological approaches classify bullying into two central forms: dispute-related and predatory bullying (Einarsen, 1999); I further differentiate the latter as authoritative, displaced, and discriminatory bullying. Workers also point to the organization as the cause of bullying (organizational bullying), and I include organizational bullying as an etiological form (Liefooghe & MacKenzie-Davey, 2001). The most commonly reported bullying is authoritative and is perpetrated by an abusive manager or owner (Hoel et al., 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003b; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2005; Namie, 2003b; Rayner, 1997). These supervisors are reportedly arbitrary, self-aggrandizing, lacking in empathy, degrading and belittling to subordinates (Einarsen, 1999; Randall, 2001).

In the workgroup of an authoritative bully, many workers are bullied and treated with similar aggression (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Ellis, 2000; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a; Namie, 2003a). Research presents authoritative bullying only in terms of downward communication pressed upon defenseless subordinates. This one-directional characterization fails to account for the complex push-pull of power and control (Clegg, 1994; Foucault, 1977; Giddens, 1984) and subordinate staff's ability "to influence the activities of those who appear to hold complete power over them" (Giddens, 1982, p. 32). Another form of predatory bullying more often occurs between peers.

Displaced-bullying or scapegoating reportedly occurs when certain workers are targets of frustration, pressure, and stress caused by other workplace factors (e.g., layoffs, increased workloads, poor working conditions, abusive supervision). "In situations where stress and frustration are caused by a source that is difficult to define, inaccessible, or too powerful or respected to be attacked, the group may turn its hostility towards a suitable scapegoat" (Einarsen et al., 2003b, p. 18). Displaced-bullying deflects potential retaliation by 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).

Although displaced-bullying hints at the dynamic nature of communication at work, it does not explicitly address the snowballing, "buzzing" nature of social interaction at work (Waldron, 2000). Furthermore, targets are depicted as stationary objects toward which bullies direct attacks rather than humans with agency who resist aggression and fight back when attacked. We should rather assume that "there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective

because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised" (Foucault, 1980, p. 142).

Discriminatory-bullying, the third cause-defined classification, is simply bullying someone out of prejudice. Workers who differ from the rest of the workgroup or "belong to a certain outsider group" (Einarsen et al., 2003b, p. 19) are often more likely to be targeted by bullies. Discriminatory-bullying is common for women in predominantly male professions (Randall, 2001); younger workers in a generally middle-age workgroup (Rayner et al., 2002); workers who differ ethnically, racially, or physically from coworkers; and employees with disabilities (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). Workers who rigidly follow their internal code of ethics or otherwise fail to socialize into workgroup norms may also be targeted (Keashly & Nowell, 2003).

The dynamics of workgroup communication are central to understanding discriminatory-bullying, although current research is, for the most part, silent on this issue. The occurrence of discriminatory-bullying is reported in a nearly transparent fashion; that is, discrimination and discriminatory communication are treated almost as "naturally occurring" rather than socially constructed through group communication, norms, and culture. As in displaced bullying, we should expect that although missing from the literature, a complex web of power relationships exists in workplaces giving all organizational members some access to power resources. How workers access power resources and fight back in the face of discriminatory is currently unknown. In addition to these three forms of predatory bullying, conflict can spark and escalate into bullying.

Dispute-related bullying begins with disagreements and builds over time into extremely escalated interpersonal conflicts, deep seated disagreements or entrenched

arguments (Einarsen, 1999; Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). Although interpersonal struggles and conflicts are a frequent element of human interaction and should not be conflated with bullying, some disputes progress to the aggressive features inherent to bullying. According to current research, the difference between conflicts and bullying is not in what is done or how it is done (Keashly & Nowell, 2003; Leymann, 1996a), but rather the frequency and duration of what is done, and the ability of both parties to defend themselves (Einarsen et al., 2003; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Rayner et al., 2002; Salin, 2001; Vartia, 1996; Zapf, 1999). In extremely escalated conflict, involved actors may begin to objectify opponents, enabling the use of more aggressive, inhuman attacks in which “the total destruction of the opponent is seen as the ultimate goal” (Einarsen et al., 2003, p. 19).

Communication in dispute-related bullying is a taken-for-granted operator that is not directly explored. Some of the communicative dynamics absent from this description are clumsy encoding, flawed decoding, failure to seek feedback, behind-the-scenes ally building, and gossip or "buzzing"(Waldron, 2000) as workers retell what they heard others say about the disagreement. A dynamic often inherent to this communicative synergy, that begins to almost take on a life of its own, is the shifting of workplace alliances as workers begin to believe or see strategic rewards in siding with perpetrators or targets (Davenport et al., 2002; Namie & Namie, 2000a; Tracy et al., 2004). This form of bullying is potentially the one that draws in communication issues and the dialectic nature of power and control at work (Giddens, 1982). Dispute-related bullying eventually wears down target defenses as a result of ongoing conflict. Understanding how this dynamic emerges is key to understanding acts of resistance and the potential for such

resistance to move workplace interactions to fairer, more democratic forms of communication. The current research with a power-deficient target does not provide a space in which this might occur.

In a noticeable departure from predatory and dispute-related forms, organizational bullying is when targets accuse the organization of being abusive rather than individual actors who carry out organizational mandates (Liefooghe & MacKenzie-Davey, 2001, 2003). In organizational-bullying, the practices, policies, and orders from upper management or oversight bodies seed a bullying atmosphere. Organizational-bullying is not generally included in descriptions of workplace bullying, but certain worker groups identify the bully as systemic rather than interpersonal (Liefooghe & MacKenzie-Davey, 2001). These workers report feeling bullied by organizational practices and policies such as corporate downsizing, outsourcing jobs, keeping workers at part-time status to avoid paying benefits and overtime, forcing uncompensated overtime work, paying wages under-the-table, and closing entire plants to relocate for low-cost labor (Liefooghe & MacKenzie-Davey, 2001, 2003).

Liefooghe and MacKenzie-Davey's work stands as an exception to current characterizations of organizations as perpetrators. Research outside of the bullying focus examines the ways that organizational practices are oppressive, exploitive, and over-controlling. For example, statistics and accounting extend surveillance and "measure" productivity (Hopper & Macintosh, 1998). Computerized systems monitor and track call handling time and volume in the telephone sales business (Mulholland, 2004). A number of empirical resistance studies explore how workers and others resist these systems of organizational control and exploitation (e.g., K. L. Ashcraft & Pacanowsky, 1996; D.

Collinson, 1994; D. L. Collinson, 1992; Mulholland, 2004; Murphy, 1998, 2003; Trethewey, 1997). Thus, this body of work provides a rich resource of resistance research. I explore resistance strategies in further detail at the end of the next chapter and mention it here briefly for consideration as an etiological form of bullying. In addition to etiological classifications seeking triggers of bullying, another way scholars classify bullying is by subject matter.

Topical classifications. Whether antecedents of bullying are abused authority or an escalated dispute, the content of bullying appears to cluster around specific aspects of targets' worklife experiences. Based on this organizing schema, bullying is person-related, work-related, isolation-related, or physical assaults and/or threats (Einarsen, 1999; Randall, 2001; Zapf, 1999). Person-related is personal—it attacks the individual's personal life, beliefs, values, personality, or physical characteristics. Some examples include public humiliation, constant criticism and insults, or spreading malicious rumors (Einarsen et al., 2003). The following was witnessed by a coworker and reported in this study:

> Nothing Gary does is right. Ever. Ever. But then he [the bully] goes below the belt. It's always, "You with the silver spoon shoved up your ass, little Lord Fauntleroy." Dick [bully] resents all of this—he resents his [Gary's] educational capabilities, he resents all of this, because he doesn't understand finance, so it makes him very uncomfortable. (female witness in sports fishing industry).

In this scenario, Gary is the accounting vice-president in a sports fishing firm. Gary holds an advanced degree in accounting, is a certified accountant, and comes from a well-to-do background. Don, the owner-bully, has less than a 12th grade education, worked his way up from taking people out fishing when he was an adolescent, and comes from an impoverished background.

Don reportedly resents Gary's credentials and privileged background so "chips away" at him with jibes like "silver spoon shoved up your ass," which is a rendition of the phrase, "born with a silver spoon in his mouth" denoting affluence and privilege. Don accuses Gary of being "little Lord Fauntleroy," an indulged child of royalty. Don reportedly attacks Gary at a personal level due to Don's ignorance and the discomfort his ignorance breeds. This exemplar illustrates how person-related bullying attacks personal, familial, or physical attributes rather than attacking a work product or work-related performance.

Work-related bullying, on the other hand, attacks, interfere with or prevents successful completion of job duties. These acts include, but are not limited to, withholding needed resources, giving unpredictable contradictory orders, assigning meaningless work (Einarsen, 1999; Namie & Namie, 2000b; Randall, 2001; Rayner et al., 2002). The following is an example of work-related bullying couched in other contextualizing features of bullying: persistence and arbitrary, unpredictable behavior:

> She [the bully] was gouging me about another project…; she was just really gouging me, gouging me, gouging me. From one minute to the next, I didn't know what she wanted. "Work on this," and then, "work on that," and "work on this; work on that." I felt like I was going crazy. (female target in state government)

Terry describes an overwhelming sense of impotence in this situation. Her narrative is filled with "reduplication" as a means to explain her feeling of being battered. She repeats "gouging me, gouging me, gouging me" to emphasize the ongoing nature of bullying. Reduplication suggests that "more form is more content" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 187) and is apparent in the "repetition of one or two syllables of a word, or of

the whole word…. In all cases, …more form equals more content…., more of a verb stands for more of the action" (Lakeoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 128).

Everything Terry did resulted in further criticism and innuendo suggesting she was incompetent. Terry believed she understood work directions only to find that what the bully previously ordered was not what the bully currently wanted. The bully's priorities continued to shift along with the stated goals. At the time, Terry was working on three education and training events simultaneously and, on any given day, the bully would push up the priority of an element of one event forcing Terry to abandon her current task. Unfortunately, the next day, the bully would push up the priority on the abandoned task, which meant Terry had to abandon another task. Terry reported feeling like she was losing her mind. She was unable to plan and execute projects, because of micro-management and constantly shifting work goals, yet was ultimately held accountable and blamed for anything that did not work out to the bully's satisfaction. She dejectedly reported, "Nothing I could ever do was right."

In contrast to constant criticism and micro-management, isolation-related bullying separates and segregates targets from the workgroup in conspicuous ways (Einarsen, 1999; Zapf, 1999). This includes omitting them from the invitation list of a work-oriented gathering, ignoring their communication or requests, or giving them the "silent treatment." Targets are excluded from workplace camaraderie, moved to a remote location, and treated as nonexistent, non-human objects. The following exemplifies this type of bullying and the way in which it involved others in the workgroup:

> [He] was isolated with a couple of us other pariah, so to speak, and we had to stand on the other side of the garage by ourselves.… So we wind up isolated in our own workplace away from the general population—almost like solitary

> confinement. The boss wouldn't talk to us; if we needed anything we had to go down to his office. (male target in telecommunications industry)

In this case, Brad, a man in the telecommunications business, attributed the bully's efforts to isolate and exclude him as a way to punish Brad for his defense of a bullied coworker. The bully succeeded in separating Brad and the dissenting group by forcing them to stand on the opposite side of the garage from where the other workers gathered before work, after work, and during breaks. The bullying boss also refused to acknowledge anyone in Brad's "pariah" group while in full view of the other men. The message, according to Brad, was clear: "If you speak up and contradict the boss—who plays favorites—you'll be sorry."

There are also times when bullying involves targets' physical safety; some researchers classify physical attack and threat of attack as a distinct form of bullying (Einarsen, 1999; Zapf, 1999), although it usually accompanies person-related and work-related bullying. Physical bullying, while somewhat more common in school bullying (Olweus, 2003), is rare in adult bullying (Hoel et al., 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2005; Rayner et al., 2002). Although many researchers include physical violence in conceptualizations of bullying (Einarsen, 1999; Leymann, 1996b; Niedl, 1996; Vartia, 2002; Zapf et al., 1996), they also agree that, for the most part, adult bullying is verbal and psychological (Einarsen et al., 2003; Keashly, 2001). At times, however, physical contact such as pushing, shoving, poking, or blocking the way is a form of bullying (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). The following experience was related during this study and illustrates how a bully used both physical intimidation and verbal abuse:

> I witnessed abuse day in, day out. I've seen him get physical. He'll take his finger and poke it in somebody's chest when he wants to get their complete attention.

> I've seen him verbally abuse people all day long, every single day. (male witness in sand and gravel business).

In this job, the bully was verbally aggressive, and he would get into very close proximity of those we was bullying to allegedly intimidate them. The bully, Dirk, punctuated his verbal abuse, criticism, and insults of others with finger jabs to the other person's body. This type of bullying is probably less common because it is an extreme norm violation, even in male work groups (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). Moreover, physical assault is one of the few forms of bullying for which targets have legal protection.

The degradation to which workers are submitted—sometimes on a daily basis—is bizarre and unbelievable. These employees' narratives are filled with emotional pain and disbelief. Privately, they are profoundly ashamed of being victimized and confused at their apparent inability to fight back and protect themselves (Leymann, 1996a; Randall, 1997). The ways that bullying is classified and described, whether through lists of negative acts or classifications of bullying forms, reinforce a one-way conceptualization of bullying as something done to the target who simply "takes it."

Power Representations in Bullying Literature

The preponderance of bullying literature characterizes power as a one-way dynamic in which targets are unable to protect themselves from continued abuse and powerless to stop bullying. Indeed, power disparity between these actors is central to many definitions (Davenport et al., 2002; Keashly, 2001; Leymann, 1996a; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a; Vartia, 1996). This characterization of targets' relative powerlessness emerges from early mobbing and bullying studies (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Leymann, 1990) based on target narratives. Targets report feeling overwhelmed and unable to

prevent or stop bullying once it has started. This sense of powerlessness grows over time as target actions fail to effectively end abuse; this is compounded by the apparent unwillingness of coworkers to become involved and upper-management's ambivalence in dealing with the situation (Davenport et al., 2002; Keashly, 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a).

Protesting bullying or efforts to expose the bully may feel futile according to target reports, but what is interesting is that *despite verbalizing a belief that resistance is fruitless, many continue to fight back* (Namie, 2003a). As noted earlier, targets are not the only organizational members who report feeling constrained and impotent; even CEOs describe feeling powerless (Morgan, 1997). Perceptions of powerlessness should not be confused with failure to act or the absence of resistance. The presence and activation of agency is evident in many targets' efforts to fight back (Namie & Namie, 2000) and inherent to target-advocates' instructions on how to do so (Davenport et al., 2002; Field, 1996; Namie & Namie, 2000a, 2000b; NiCarthy, Gottlieb, & Coffman, 1993; Wyatt & Hare, 1997). Subordinate staff do have access to the rules and resources of power (Giddens, 1982, 1984), even if they do not feel they have such access. What is compelling in target narratives is that they say their decision to "fight back" was empowering and central to feelings of efficacy, power and control in their lives (Namie & Namie, 2000a). This is key to the dialectic nature of abuse and resistance but is currently under-theorized.

Additionally, in some cases, "workplace bullying may be resolved in its early phases by means of organizational interventions or by initiatives from those involved or other concerned parties" (Hoel & Cooper, 2001, p. 4). Bullying intervention and

organizational policies against bullying occur, in part at least, as a result of someone in the organization resisting and speaking out. Some set of actions on the part of targets, witnesses, and concerned others in the workplace resulted in bringing in professionals to investigate and terminate bullying (Crawford, 1999, 2001; Richards & Daley, 2003), even though these actions are predominantly missing from the literature. Such interventions or resultant policies could be considered "traces" that provide evidence of power, even for those who characterize themselves as defenseless. Before moving to the discussion of power and resistance theories in the next chapter, however, it is incumbent upon me to take a small detour.

In the bullying literature reviewed in this chapter, I have outlined the features and forms of bullying. As noted, the current literature examines bullying predominantly as an individual or dyadic interaction. In this study, I explore bullying as a workgroup dynamic. Bullying at work is broader even than workgroups, and I would be remiss if I failed to include the potential organizational dynamics that trigger, enable, or motivate bullying at work. Bullying *is* an individual phenomenon. It is also dyadic and occurs through group communication. Bullying is also an organizational phenomenon. Despite this study's focus on workgroup communication, a comprehensive understanding and effective interventions must examine the problem at all levels. To that end, I mention organizational antecedents and motivators or bullying at this point. I will harken back to these dynamics at the end of chapter six after outlining a model of bottom-up bully removal.

Organizational Factors and Bullying

Much of worker resistance focuses on removing the bullies, but even if bullies have personality characteristics making them prone to aggression, they will not bully others unless the organizational culture rewards, or at least permits, such behaviors (Brodsky, 1976). A number of organizational dynamics can contribute to a bullying environment. Changing demands in organizations may increase the perceived instrumental power of bullying or contribute to a "boiler room" environment that is primed for bullying (Bassman, 1992). Other factors include (a) increased pressures to produce with fewer employees; (b) negative, stressful environments marked by worker role-conflict and strain; (c) organizational cultures that embrace extreme conformity to corporate identification; (d) cultures that accept bullying as an aspect of doing business; and (e) autocratic/authoritarian rather than participatory leadership styles (Hoel & Salin, 2003). The physical environment may also exacerbate aggressive acts. Lack of space or privacy, physically uncomfortable equipment/ accommodations and electronic surveillance may contribute to increased conflicts, some of which may escalate into bullying (Barling, 1996).

Ironically, employee participation programs and self-managed work groups can increase the incidence of bullying among coworkers "because these programs have come into being simultaneously with employment cutbacks, reduced staffing, increased overtime, and thinly concealed threats about job security" (Hodson, 2001, p. 174). Under such team structures, increased employee involvement often means freedom from direct managerial supervision, but can result in oppression from increased peer pressure and concertive control (Barker, 1993; Sewell, 1998). The social controls inherent in peer

criticism or ostracism are potent (Hodson, 2001) and could potentially set the stage for group-bullying.

Salin (2003) provides one of the most extensive examinations of organizational structures and processes that serve as catalysts for bullying. The three types of structures and processes that contribute to bullying are enabling, motivating, and precipitating. Enabling dynamics include "perceived power imbalance" (p. 1218), "low perceived costs" (p. 1220), and "dissatisfaction and frustration…with the working situations and the organizational climate" (pp. 1221-22). Motivating dynamics include "high internal competition and a politicized climate" (p. 1223), and "reward system and expected benefits" for the perpetrator (p. 1224). Some organizational cultures maintain an adversarial and aggressive approach to work and interpersonal relationships that may encourage aggressive communication between colleagues, management, and staff (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). Individuals behave according to prevailing rules and expectations. For example, when bullying is exhibited from the top of the organization down through the ranks, it is likely that bullying tactics also flow downward, thus perpetuating the bullying norm (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). Work environments that support a degree of hostility may potentially legitimate aggressive and bullying communication. Bullies may see their activities as maintaining control over their colleagues and staff in situations where the bully has insufficient work control or high levels of work conflict (Einarsen et al., 1994).

Finally, although motivating factors give reasons for why bullying might flourish in some environments and enabling factors explain why bullying might be rewarded, precipitating factors explain what triggers its occurrence. These include "restructuring,

downsizing, and other crises" (Salin, 2003, p. 1225), organizational changes such as restructuring into self-directed teams, and management or workgroup composition changes (Salin, 2003). The entrance of a new supervisor or owner often marks the onset of bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a; Rayner, 1997). Bullying may be used by managers to deal with competitive and increasingly demanding work situations. It can arise from job insecurity, and a culture in which job insecurity prevails can foster bullying (Lawrence, 2001).

Bullying is a complex, yet devastating, phenomenon in the workplace. Dealing with it requires complex, multiple strategies at the individual, workgroup, and organizational levels. Although the focus of worker resistance in these situations is bully removal—a topic I take up in Chapter Six, this does not mean that removing the bully is the one and only solution or that it is even the most effective solution in the long run. Without assessment of organizational systems as well as intra-group communication, bully removal is, at best, only a partial answer.

CHAPTER 3

THEORIES AND STUDIES OF POWER-RESISTANCE

Resistance: A Serendipitous Subject of Study

As previously noted, employee resistance to bullying emerged from my data in two ways: The first was the way in which participants framed their narratives. Central to participants' narratives was the implicit or explicit question, "What can/did I do about bullying?" Second, multiple follow-up contacts showed that, over time, some affected employee responses changed organizational systems. I had initially launched the research to examine the broader impacts of bullying in an U.S. group of workers and explore bullying beyond the target-only focus of the most extant research (Einarsen, et al., 2003; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2003; Zapf et al., 2003). During the interviews, research participants voiced a deep sense of impotence and the inability to stop the abuse. Nonetheless, what emerged in these stories, particularly where bullying was common knowledge among workers, was evidence that both targets and witnesses did resist and "fight back" through multiple, creative, and resourceful ways. Moreover, research participants spent a considerable portion of the interview describing their actions of protest.

After the interviews, in multiple follow up contacts, participants reported changes in their workplaces that were linked to employee resistance. In nine of the 30 cases, actions culminated into the bully's ultimate removal (discharged, transferred, quit), despite the bully's superior hierarchical position. In another case, collective employee efforts prevented a bully's coveted promotion. The evidence of resistance and "pushing

back" countered the characterizations of powerless or power-deficient targets and thus appreciably piqued my interest. As a consequence of this serendipitous finding and the considerable time participants spent telling me about how they tried to stop bullying in their jobs, I adopted the power/resistance dynamic and bottom-up change as the central foci of this study. In what follows, I examine the power and resistance literature, apply this to the topic of bullying and worker resistance to bullying, and present a theoretical lens through which we might better understand power as a dialectic rather than a commodity in bullying situations.

Bullying-Affected Workers, Power, and Resistance

As already noted, the use of power in situations of workplace bullying is currently characterized in functional terms (French & Raven, 1962) as a "supreme agency to which other wills would bend, as prohibitive" (Clegg, 1993, p. 25). Power has traditionally been presented in terms of a commodity of formal authority or interpersonal influence (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a; Weber, 1947), but this view is problematic. I make the case in this chapter that the sovereign power hypothesis provides little or no room for human agency, contributes to targets' sense of learned helplessness (Crawford, 1999), and fails to account for the presence and impact of subordinate resistance located in participant narratives.

Power as a limited commodity unavailable to targets does little to alleviate pain and suffering, emancipate oppressed and abused workers, or change punitive organizational systems. This one-sided presentation of power in bullying situations reifies power disparity as an inherent and normal dynamic at work. It also has the potential to naturalize a unidirectional perspective of power that is far less dynamic and

fragmented than what essentially occurs in the complexity of human interactions (McPhee, 2004). This view of power also erases the ways in which targets and witnesses *do* access rules and resources of power or diminishes them to such a degree that agency is virtually obliterated.

Because the preponderance of the research is written by target-advocates (e.g., Davenport, et al., 2002; Field, 1996; Namie, 2003a) or academics with a predominantly pro-target positions (e.g., Einarsen, 1999; Rayner et al, 2001; Zapf, 1999), this focus on the relative powerlessness of targets calls on organizational responsibility for intervention. While I agree that organizations are responsible to protect workers from harm, both physical and psychological, coloring targets as powerless victims, particularly in the face of organization's reticence to interrupt bullying, may serve to further sediment the problem. On the other hand, resistance to bullying must be presented in a way that avoids dualistic notions of control and resistance and "resist the attractions of reductionist psychology" (Jermier, Knights, & Nord, 1994, p. 9). In other words, it is important not to downgrade "employee subjectivity and knowledgeability…as the determined outcome of the particular workplace 'rules of the game' or overstate and /or romanticize oppositional practices…[by characterizing] workers…as highly rational, knowledgeable and strategic in their subversive practices" (Collinson, 1994, p. 53). Either perspective is partial and "limited by the tendency to overstate either consent and compliance or dissent and resistance and to separate the later from the former" (Collinson, 1994, p. 53). Furthermore, simplistic explanations of workplace bullying with neat psychological classifications of victim- or bully-personality types (Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000) provide limited avenues of change. Recognizing subjective

characters and roles as expressions of shifting, fragmented identities that are bound to the social, cultural, and organizational discourses that impinge upon them is far more informative and potentially empowering (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005).

Examining and re-theorizing power in workplace bullying provides something that current bullying literature's "commodity" conception of power does not. I concede that power relationships between bullies and targets are often unequally weighted, but at the same time suggest that no absolute power situations exist in modern workplaces (Clegg, 1994; Foucault, 1977; Giddens, 1982). Viewing power relationships as dialectical and shifting highlights spaces of resistance, up to and including resistance that ultimately interrupts current bullying and retards future bullying. To develop a theory of opposition to bullying, I turn to some critical theorists' conceptions of power and its relationship to resistance.

Theories of Power and Resistance

The work of Max Weber, Michel Foucault, Anthony Giddens, and James Scott provide useful frames with which to describe, explain, and potentially predict resistance to workplace bullying. By adapting and applying these theorists' ideas regarding power, control, and resistance, we can construct a nuanced theory of resistance to abuse and coercion at work. This adaptation has the promise of avoiding a characterization of resistance as futile acts reifying dominant ideology, or uncritically celebrating resistance "at the expense of appropriately situating such a resistance in the wider context of capitalism" (Mumby, 1997, p. 346).

I arrange these theorists' ideas in a power-resistance continuum of sorts beginning with Weber's writings that theorizes bureaucratic, legal-rational power as the

nearly absolute power of an “iron cage” (Weber, 1958) to James Scott (1985; 1990) whose work theorizes resistance as inherent to all situations of oppression but as underestimated due to the predominant examination of elite-dominated public transcripts. Between these poles is Foucault’s (1977; 1980) notion of power as polymorphous and mutually constitutive of resistance that some critique as under-theorizing resistance (Giddens, 1981; Hequembourg & Arditi, 1999). Then moving more toward agency/resistance, I examine Giddens’ (1981, 1982, 1984) dialectic of control—a position that has conversely been critiqued for over-theorizing humans’ ability to ‘act otherwise’ (M. S. Archer, 1990; Clegg, 1994; Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994).

Although Weber’s sociological work is not distinctly framed in terms of communication or language, Foucault, Giddens and Scott respectively theorize power and resistance in terms of ideological and historical discourses, discursive and nondiscursive knowledge, and public/hidden transcripts. Weber is important to understanding resistance to bullying, because of his concern with bureaucratic rationalization as a site of social domination.

Rationalization and Bureaucratically-Embedded Power

Much of the bullying research and its characterization of power is implicitly informed by Weber’s rational-legal type of power—a position he claims is a natural outgrowth of bureaucratic organizational forms. He does not theorize resistance and even suggests that “when those subject to bureaucratic control seek to escape the... existing bureaucratic apparatus, this is normally possible only by creating an organization of their own which is equally subject to the process of bureaucratization" (Weber, 1968, p. 224). Although Weber (1958) presents limited potential for human resistance to bureaucratic

organizing, his work informs our understanding of an historically embedded discourse of power in modernity's increasingly rationalized organizational structures.

Weber is primarily known for theorizing the nature of bureaucracy, but it was the potential for bureaucracy to operate as an oppressive system of social domination that most concerned him (Clegg, 1994; Morgan, 1997; Weber, 1947, 1968). He saw the move toward rationalization and hierarchically organized bureaucracies as serious threats to human freedom and the values of liberal democracy, because through bureaucratic control, bureaucrats had the means of subordinating the interests and welfare of the masses (Weber, 1948). In some cases of workplace bullying, hierarchical power mutes affected workers who struggle with a choice between staying silent or speaking up and being accused of insubordination or mental illness (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003b). Workers belief in and adherence to the inviolability of hierarchical position-power demonstrates how rational/bureaucratic discourse can become "lodged in one's subjectivity and consciousness against one's 'real interests'" (Clegg, 1993, p. 25).

Weber (1968) feared that bureaucracy would "reduce every worker to a cog in this bureaucratic machine and, seeing himself in this light, he will merely ask how to transform himself into a somewhat bigger cog" (p. liii). Although he theorized various forms of power (i.e., charismatic, traditional, rational-legal), he also recognized that domination occurs in understated ways such as dominant individuals or small groups imposing their will on others while being *"perceived as having the right to do so"* (Morgan, 1997, p. 304, emphasis in original). For example, workers rarely question the bully's managerial prerogative but rather treat their subordinance and the other's superordinance as naturally occurring. This appears to be the case in bullying situations

as well as in other workgroups (Collinson, 1994). Rational-legal domination most interested Weber, and much of his work was directed toward understanding the processes through which certain forms of domination, such as bureaucratic hierarchical power, come to be viewed as normal, naturally occurring relations of social power and authority.

Weber's concern with rules-based control and consent suggests connections between discourse, power and domination.

> Within this framework, power is conceptualized as rooted in a system of domination, a form of life, that functions as a deep structure system of rationality that provides social actors with an interpretive mechanism through which they make sense of surface structure power relations. (Mumby, 2004, p. 120)

Weber feared that this deep structure of rationality would become even more bureaucratized, an iron cage that limits individual human potential rather than a technological utopia that sets people free. Weber's conception of domination within hierarchical work arrangements depicts resistance to rational-legal bases of power as largely futile. However, the idea that power is embedded in bureaucratic rules that "function as a deep structure of rationality" (Mumby, 2004, p. 120) provides some understanding of workers' reticence to resist supervisory bullying. These deep meanings may even render some subordinates unable to protest.

What Weber contributes to understanding bullying/resistance dynamics is a historically situated theory that was posited in the face of growing systems of bureaucracy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Edwards, 1979). Contemporary workers' beliefs about workplace relations manifest Weber's concern that certain forms of domination will come to be seen as naturally occurring—such as vesting power in organizational positions. For example, employees who challenge the

bureaucratic structure and go outside the “chain of command” to report abuse to upper-managers or corruption to external oversight bodies are often labeled as troublemakers, mentally ill, and problem-employees (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003b; Rothschild & Miethe, 1994). In fact, organizations gather incredible resources to discount, shame, and disgrace those who speak out (Rothschild & Miethe, 1994).

Additionally, Weber’s (1968) examination of the rise of rationality and “rational calculation... [that] reduces every worker to a cog in this bureaucratic machine” (p. 224) explains another difficulty workers face when bullied at work. The fundamentally rationalized systems of bureaucracy, intended to work on the basis of meritocracy, derides the previously valued charismatic, emotion-based, intuitive leadership of pre-bureaucratic entrepreneurial forms of organizing (Kanter, 1993). This derision of emotion in favor of bounded rationality, while critiqued by academics (Mumby & Putnam, 1992), is highly valued in the workplace (Ostell, 1996).

The rationalization of organizing and the notion of the rational subject poses additional challenges to bullied workers. Workplace bullying is a highly disturbing emotionally-laden experience both for those who are targeted and for witnessing coworkers who feel powerless to help (Tracy et al., 2004). When workers report bullying experiences to upper-management or human resources in emotionally tinged narratives, their accounts are more likely to be dismissed (Rayner et al., 2002). Thus, the unchallenged naturalization of bureaucratic power and the implicit or explicit expectation of rational subjects both serve to problematize workers’ acts of resistance against bullying and change efforts. Furthermore, the material realities of bureaucratic worklife reinforce many of Weber’s central concerns.

Power, Resistance and the Ethical Subject

In contrast to Weber's writings that concentrate on rational-legal power in institutionalized systems and predominantly focus on the repressive nature of power, Foucault (1972) emphasizes the polymorphous techniques, procedures, and mechanisms of power, embedded in historically/culturally situated systems of meaning. Foucault (1977) eschews the traditional view of power as repressive in favor of an examination of power as productive. Foucault (1989) claims that the repressive manifestation of power, "...the interdiction, the refusal, the prohibition, far from being essential forms of power, are only its limits: the frustrated or extreme forms of power" (p. 220). It is, however, repressive power that is present in situations of workplace bullying. On the other hand, bullying is also a material manifestation of productive power. Bullies, we might say, are products of organizational discourses of masculinity (e.g., competition) (Acker, 1990; Trethewey, 1999)

Notwithstanding Foucault's extensive theorizing of power as a far broader construct than repressive power, a number of Foucauldian constructs help explain resistance to the repressive power in bullying situations and the difficulties targets face resisting repression. Informative constructs include the taken-for-granted, often nondiscursive rules, mutually constitutive nature of power and resistance, and conscious constituting of an ideal subject position or identity.

Rules and Discursive Formations

Rationalization and bureaucratization in Weber's work are embedded in what Foucault (1972) calls discursive formations: "the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, science,

and possibly formalized systems" (p. 191). The rules governing discursive formations determine, at any given historical/cultural period, (a) what can be talked about, (b) who is allowed to speak, (c) how they are to supposed to speak, and (d) what form of speech is accepted as knowledge or truth (Foucault, 1972). Discourse shapes what people consider knowledge and truth and creates internalized desires for compliance so the rules of a given discursive formation seem voluntary and "natural." Within this system of rules, bureaucratization is one of many symbolic and material "realities" that "can be talked about." Rationality is also the "form of speech" likely to be recognized as valid or truthful. As noted, however, in some cases of workplace bullying, targets' emotional narratives are marked by hypertext—that is, nonlinear discourse made up of pieces or fragments of information (Nelson, 1983)—and may be dismissed as invalid or inappropriate as a result. These rules often work against targets who strive to have their efforts taken seriously and acted upon.

Power and Resistance as Contemporaries

Foucault's conception of power focuses on the *relations* of power, because to Foucault, the important question to ask is, "how" does power work, rather than, "what" is power (Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994). According to Foucault (1989), "power is relations; power is not a thing" (p. 198); it is "a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations" (Foucault, 1980, p. 410). This characterization of power is neither centralized nor appropriated into anyone's hands. Instead power is "employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power" (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). As such, we should expect the even

targets of bullying, despite the power-deficient characterizations, are "simultaneously undergoing and exercising power." This would suggest that, the current power-as-commodity characterization in bullying research provides an inadequate understanding of the complex power relations.

Foucault's (1983) claim that power and resistance are contemporaries, mutually constitutive, and simultaneously present, challenges the view of power as one-side and opens conceptual space for resistance. Despite criticism for under-theorizing human agency (Giddens, 1991; McCarthy, 1994; McNay, 1991), his work hypothesizes the presence of the possibility of resistance in all relations of power and underscores human agency. "We are never trapped by power; we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to precise strategies" (Foucault, 1989, p. 224). For Foucault,

> there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance... exists all the more by being in the same place as power, hence, like power, resistance is multiple. (1980, p. 142).

Particular relations of power may even be understood in terms of the resistant acts they engender, challenge, handle, or endorse (Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994). Resistance "is not anterior to the power which it opposes. It is coextensive with it and its absolute contemporary" (Foucault, 1983, p. 224).

Conceived in this way, power and resistance "each constitutes for the other a kind of *permanent limit*, a point of possible reversal….It would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination which, by definition, are means of escape" (Foucault, 1982, p. 794, emphasis added). Thus any examination of power used to abuse and bullying others is incomplete if it characterizes the subject of bullying only

as “targets” who are stationary receptors of abuse or who, like mechanical ducks in a carnival shooting gallery, move to evade being “hit.” Rather, we should expect a range of insubordination that defies attempts to badger, harass, or humiliate.

This “permanent limit” helps to explain the escalatory nature of bullying in the face of continued attacks and the mutually escalatory power mounted against acts of resistance when such resistance moves into the public transcript. This push-counterpush of power-resistance is particularly salient in the cases of whistleblowers (Miceli & Near, 2002; Rothschild & Miethe, 1994) and bullied workers who file formal grievances or appeals (Zapf & Gross, 2001). Whistleblowing “engenders fierce management retaliation” (Rothschild & Miethe, 1994, p. 264). The more whistleblowers point to systemic problems within the organization rather than one idiosyncratic individual, “the stronger will be efforts to discredit and destroy the whistleblower” (Rothschild & Miethe, 1994, p. 264). Similarly, in a study of strategies targets use to cope with bullying, the bullies perceive targets’ “calling in supervisors, works committee representatives, or the trade union.... as ‘armament of the other party,’ which may lead to rearming on [the bully’s] side” (Zapf & Gross, 2001, p. 518).

In the same vein, as the organization escalates its attack on the whistleblower’s veracity and character, the battle becomes a pitched exchange in which the whistleblower must escalate efforts and show evidence to external agencies in order to reclaim their good name (Rothschild & Miethe, 1994). Likewise, it appears that as bullies’ abusive treatment escalates, so do individual and collective responses such as staff exodus, increased law suits and labor complaints, and work slow down (Rayner, et al., 2002; Zapf & Gross, 2001). The mutually inciting relationship between power and resistance is

a useful way to understand this dynamic and anticipate that as either bullying or resistance to bullying escalates so will its counterpart. Recognizing that subordinate resistance and managerial discourse are unevenly matched is important, however, to avoid overstating and/or romanticizing oppositional practices (Collinson, 1994; Mumby 1997). An embedded, historical system of meaning—deep structure—supports and reifies the discourse of managerialism (Deetz, 1992). As such, subordinate resistance must often "stand by itself" and is oftentimes outflanked (Clegg, 1994). Thus it is important to find the discursive space for resistance in the face of these unequally matched discourses.

Ideal Ethical Subjects and Resistance

One must search within Foucault's dense body of work to find a space that explicitly conceptualizes where human agency is instantiated against an overwhelming tide of discursive or tacit rules in a given discursive formation. On one hand, Foucault (1972) claims that humans often govern their own behavior and become manageable, "docile bodies" through the discursive practices of religious, cultural, social, and historical discourses. Not surprisingly, this position draws critics who question where a potential space for resistance exists. As McNay (1991) notes, "the emphasis that Foucault places on the effects of power upon the body results in a reduction of social agents to passive bodies and cannot explain how individuals may act in an autonomous fashion" (pp. 125-26). Critical communication research extending Foucault's docile bodies principle critiques the embodiment of control and discipline and explores the ways that communication constitutes organizational bodies at work (Nadesan & Trethewey, 2000; Tracy, 2000; Trethewey, 1999).

On the other hand, we find within Foucault's (1984) work examining ethics and the construction of an ethical subjectivity a nuanced theory of resistance—one that is inextricably linked to humans' conscious construction of subject positions. The essential site of resistance appears to reside within the subjective project of the self (Foucault, 1983) and what Trethewey (1997) refers to as "rebelling against the ways in which we are already defined and classified as individuals" (p. 283). The potential space for resistance is in the self-questioning and critique that, in the case of workplace bullying, results from threats to a target's favored subject position—threats that come from bully's accusations or implications that the target is a "bad employee" (Foucault, 1984). Similarly, those who witness others' abuse and fail to take action may experience internal struggle if the failure to act contradicts an ideal ethical self as one for whom justice and fair play are crucial values (Crawford, 2001). As Weedon (1997) aptly notes, "even where…discourses lack the social power to realize their versions of knowledge in institutional practices, they can offer the discursive space from which the individual can resist dominant subject positions" (p. 107).

Key to this study is that multiple, fragmented resistance micro-practices have a transformative potential at the same time as simultaneously highlighting the "inconsistencies faced by agents who attempt to present a coherent identity in opposition to structures of domination" (Hequembourg & Arditi, 1999, p. 663). For Foucault (1984) power works in part "as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses…the multiplicity of power relations" (p. 92). This suggests the potential for individual acts of resistance can and will change organizational systems, especially when work features such as a bullying boss impinge

on workers' mental pictures of their ideal working selves. Numerous micro-practices of resistance should partially modify relations of power across time and contribute to overall transformations in relations of power. If this is the case, then we should expect that in situations of workplace bullying where collective or individual resistance continues over time, some form of organizational change may occur. Giddens (1984) also theorizes change over time through human actions that produce, reproduce, and transform systems.

Agency, Dialectic of Control, and Fateful Moments

Although Foucault theorizes space for resistance internal to his body of work on ethics, subjectivity and power, Giddens (1984) theory of structuration moves a focus of human agency to the forefront. The constructs of human agency, dialectic of control, and fateful moments expand upon Foucault's ideas as a means of understanding resistance to bullying. Human agency suggests that targets as human agents always have some option for action or "acting otherwise." In cases of workplace bullying, targets have and use the ability to make a difference in the situation. They can and do resist workplace bullying in ways that have the potential to redefine power relationships in formal and informal systems. The dialectic of control emphasizes the two-way nature of power and control, and Giddens' notion of *fateful moments* suggests turning points in the progression of bullying where hidden acts of resistance are more likely to move into the public realm.

Human Agency, Power, and Resistance

Giddens (1984) defines power as the ability of actors to make a difference and distinguishes it from domination, "power over" others, or power to get others to do what actors want. He suggests that all human actors have access to power resources and such

access is crucial to human agency. Giddens theorizes (1984) a "logical connection between action and power" (p. 14) arguing that as long as an actor can take action, he or she has agency. This action orientation contends that "in any relationship…in a social system, the most seemingly 'powerless' individuals are able to mobilize resources whereby they carve out 'spaces of control' in respect to their day-to-day lives and in respect of the activities of the more powerful" (Giddens, 1984, p. 16). Workers may have ready-made spaces of control in their agentive powers to carry out, or resist carrying out, organizational, supervisory, and upper-management goals. Despite the idea that workplace bullying psychologically stuns targets (Hirigoyen, 1998), as human actors with agency, we could still expect that targets are "able to deploy…a range of causal powers...[to] influence the activities of their superiors" (Giddens, 1984, p. 16).

Carving out a space of control or taking "action depends on the capability of the individual to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events" (Giddens, 1984, p. 3). Giddens' view of human agency contributes to an expanded perspective of targets' responses to bullying at work. While the basic domain of study in the theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984, 1991) is "social practices ordered across space and time," he gives considerable attention to the recursive nature of human social activities and likens them to "self-reproducing items in nature" (Giddens, 1984, p. 2). Humans use rules and resources, and through action produce, reproduce and transform social structures. This is the well-known *duality of structure* in which structure is both the medium and the outcome of action. Moreover, action not only reproduces structures unchanged but also has a potentially transformative effect (Thompson, 1984).

The actions of knowledgeable agents result from reflexively monitoring "the ongoing flow of social life" (Giddens, 1984, p. 3). Human knowledgeability is both discursive—that which can be articulated—and practical or tacit—that which is known without being articulated. This is similar to Foucault's (1972) discussion of rules in a given discursive formation. While at any point persons can give reasons for their actions—a notion Giddens (1984, 1991) calls rationalization—much of the knowledgeability of daily actions and interactions is practical in nature. For example, bullied workers may agree that arguing with a bullying manager is insubordination but make a case for why insubordination is necessary.

Deference to position, however, is not only reproduced but can be transformed by workers' actions—as evidenced in the improved working conditions for many U.S. workers since the "coalfield wars" of the early 1900s (Soley, 2002). In the ongoing day-to-day quality of work, workers may or may not talk about subordinating themselves to superiors but this uneasy relationship is often a topic in hidden transcripts (Bies & Tripp, 1998; J. C. Scott, 1990). A break in this uneasy power relation, such as in cases of workplace bullying, calls workers' tacit acceptance of supervisory power into question. That is, it is discursively debated and questioned intra- or interpersonally in conversation. At this point, human actors' "ability to do otherwise" may be instantiated.

Dialectic of Control

The dialectic of control, one of many tenets within Giddens' conception of power (McPhee, 2004), is particularly concerned with "power over other agents, or domination" (McPhee, 2004, p. 131). As such, this notion is particularly useful in explaining power dynamics in the face of bullying and abuse. Giddens (1982, p. 42) argues that critical

scholars often fail to “give sufficient weight to the influence of worker resistance.” The dialectic of control describes how “the seemingly powerless…may be able to influence the activities of those who appear to hold complete power over them” (Giddens, 1982, p. 32) and emphasizes the “two-way character of the distributive aspect of power (power as control)” (Giddens, 1984, p. 374). Central to this dialectic is the notion that apparent “powerholders” are dependent on workers to meet organizational goals; workers’ productivity is a reflection of ranking members’ efficacy to internal and external audiences (upper management, business-legal environment, stakeholders).

This relationship of dependence gives subordinate workers a range of resistance powers. Even in “established power relationships,…the less powerful manage resources in such a way as to exert control over the more powerful” (Giddens, 1984, p. 374). For example, Howard and Geist (1995) examine employees responses and ideological positioning during the merger of a large utility. Some workers left, some stayed but privately vowed to resist the change, and others accepted the merger as a “natural” extension of the changing economic environment. Given Giddens’ view of agency and the dialectic nature of power and control in organizations, close examination of bullying situations should locate targets’ acts of resistance that are indicative of this push-pull of power. Through the dialectic of control, we might expect that targets of workplace bullying will take action to regain dignity, balance, and fairness in their jobs.

Fateful Moments

Fateful moments are those in which events culminate to a point where knowledgeable actors are compelled to make serious decisions “that are particularly consequential for their ambitions, and more generally for their future lives” (Giddens,

1991, p. 112). Activities carried out in a person's sphere of work are particularly consequential to the reflexive project of the self (Giddens, 1991), or what Foucault (1989) calls the ethical subject. Workplace bullying may escalate to fateful moments—turning points—for targeted workers when highly negative, hostile communication at work threatens workers' ontological security on a number of levels (e.g., identity, economic stability, social position, etc.).

Working adults spend more of their waking hours at jobs than in any other setting. It is increasingly difficult to separate what a person does and who a person is; "jobs, careers, and identities are so linked in industrialized societies that a person's career corresponds with others' perceptions of that person's worth" (Buzzanell & Turner, 2003, p. 27). As Deetz (1992) aptly notes, "the family and community have changed their basic relations to the work. Increasingly, each is structured around the demands of the workplace. Work extends more deeply into the family [and] people feel the extension" (p. 25). Given the centrality of work to the construction of self-identity and a sense of ontological security, it is not surprising that bullying shakes the very foundations of targets' lives.

These moments differ from the regular day-to-day flow of activities that are, for the most part, inconsequential and "not seen to be particularly fateful for overall goals" (Giddens, 1991, p. 112). When fateful moments emerge from events that cause alarm, such as being the unsought target of workplace bullying, these are the "most challenging situations for the individual to master, [because], the individual…is faced with an altered set of risks and possibilities" (Giddens, 1991, p. 131) in which risks increase due to "the scale of the consequential penalties for getting things wrong" (p. 114). According to

Giddens (1991), decisions or courses of action marked as fateful moments have "an irreversible quality, or at least…it will be difficult thereafter to revert to the old paths" (p. 114).

It is often on the stage of fateful moments where the dialectic of control and acts of resistance are publicly played out—that is, resistance moves from hidden to public transcripts (Scott, 1990). When "some piece of conduct is specifically puzzling or when there is a 'lapse' or fracture" (Giddens, 1984, p. 6), the knowledgeable agent is called "to question routinized habits…even those closely integrated with self-identity" (Giddens, 1991, p. 131). Workplace bullying is one such "piece of conduct" that fractures accepted norms of interaction and threatens ontological security. Initial hostile or aggressive interactions, that may (or may not) mark the onset of workplace bullying, are events that targets examine reflexively and attempt to decipher and decode. In and of themselves, these negative interactions are not fateful moments and responses or resistance occur predominantly in private spaces. Oftentimes, the early responses to rude, aggressive, or unjust interactions do not bring targets to the point of irreversible fateful decisions. Most targets initially choose to take action that is indirect and unlikely to register on the radar of the abuser (i.e., decrease/increase work production, ignore abuse, confide in trusted friends or family members, commiserate with coworkers) (Zapf & Gross, 2001).

However, continued aggressive communication and increasing psychic pain caused by bullying can build to inevitably fateful moments. For those targeted, these moments that have the power to permanently change their current and future professional and personal lives, as is seen in the cases of whistle blowing (Miceli & Near, 2002; Rothschild & Miethe, 1994; Stewart, 1980). As bullying behavior escalates and initial

actions fail to produce the desired change (cessation of abuse), the persistent aggression often pushes targets to resist through more direct, public methods. Public responses often mark a no-turning-back point in which actions are irreversible (e.g., confronting the abuser, filing a formal complaint with human resources or the abuser's superior, quitting the job, filing a lawsuit). Such actions on the part of targets who stay in organizations often stimulate escalated abuse, increased efforts to drive the target out, and progressively detrimental effects on targets' well-being (Leymann, 1996a; Namie & Namie, 2000b; Zapf & Gross, 2001). On the other hand, targets often say that their decision to "fight back" was empowering and central to their feelings of efficacy, power and control in their lives (Namie & Namie, 2000a).

Resistance and Hidden Transcripts

James Scott (1985, 1990) provides an analysis of how feudal serfs and American slaves defy oppression and posits that the majority if such resistance occurs in the hidden transcripts of non-dominant group members rather than in the public transcript. Although he takes as objects of empirical examination humans in far worse situations than workplace bullying, his work is highly informative to understanding the dynamics of resistance in a variety of settings. Central to this work are the notions of public transcripts and hidden transcripts. By public transcripts, Scott (1990) means the "public performance required of those subject to elaborate and systematic forms of social control…[that will] with rare, but significant exceptions…out of prudence, fear, and the desire to curry favor, be shaped to appeal to the expectations of the powerful" (p. 2) Conversely, the hidden transcripts of persons who are subjected and dominated

"characterize discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders" (Scott, 1990, p. 4).

Essential to Scotts' hypothesis is that in the face of grossly unequal relations of power, non-dominant groups "will provide a constant stream of evidence that appears to support [a dominant] ideological hegemony" (Scott, 1990, p. 70). A key error of critical researchers or historians is taking "the 'official transcript' as social fact" (Scott, 1990, p. 87). In the public sphere, while in the presence of dominant group members, non-dominant persons will acquiesce to the will of the dominant, because "subordinates…have good reasons to help sustain those appearances" (Scott, 1990, p. 70). These public acts of submission, however, do not indicate that "subordinate groups endorse the terms of their subordination and are willing, even enthusiastic, partners in that subordination" (Scott, 1990, p. 4). According to Scott,

> domination… produces an official transcript that provides convincing evidence of willing, often enthusiastic complicity. In ordinary circumstances subordinates have a vested interest in avoiding any *explicit* display of insubordination…. They also… have a practical interest in resistance—in minimizing the extractions, labor, and humiliations to which they are subject. The reconciliation of these two objectives… is typically achieved by pursuing precisely those forms of resistance that avoid any open confrontation with the structures of authority being resisted (86). It is for this reason that the official transcript of relations between the dominant and subordinate is filled with formulas of subservient, euphemisms, and uncontested claims to status and legitimacy. (1990, pp. 86-87)

Therefore, using Scott's framework, it becomes premature to assume that organizational members are duped or unaware of the constraints they instantiate through their actions.

If subordinate group resistance is sequestered, we should expect to see the majority of resistance to bullying played out in secret, concealed conversations away from the bully or bully's cohorts. It is in the best interests of these workers to keep their

resistant acts hidden—to avoid detection. The irony of hiding resistance, however, is that the public transcripts, both what is spoken and what is historically recorded, contain little evidence of these activities and thus reinforces the targets' "powerlessness." Even in cases where workers do bring acts of resistance into the public transcript—when subordinate staff file grievances, claims, or lawsuits and win—winning is often stipulated with a gag order. In these cases, plaintiffs receive a financial settlement but only with the stipulation that they will not talk about the case outside the sequestered legal setting (Yamada, 2000).

Organizations also offer financial settlements in lieu of formal court proceedings often coupled with gag orders. As a result, court proceedings that construct both an historical record and statutory case law are missing from the public transcripts of resistance (Yamada, 2000). Additionally, employee files and actions against employees are private information; such privacy practices also contribute to the absence of resistance in public transcripts (Rayner, et al., 2002). For example, there may be an active investigation of a bully's actions and treatment of others, but this is form of discourse has legal ramifications, is protected by privacy laws and cannot be publicly divulged to peripherally involved parties (e.g., complaining targets or witnesses).

In many cases, it is only through the traces resistance leaves behind that we are able to perceive that resistance has occurred (e.g., staff turnover, bully demotion, outside consultants). "Detecting resistance…[is similar to] detecting the passage of subatomic particles by cloud chamber. Only the trail of resistance…would be apparent" (Scott, 1990, p. 87). In bullying research, for example, there are accounts of professional interventions when bullying occurs in organizations (Crawford, 2001). Absent from

these records is the sequence of events leading up to hiring an outside expert who deals with workplace bullying. This sequence is, for the most part, absent or taken for granted but is potentially rich evidence of hidden transcripts that finally surface in the public sphere.

The hidden nature of resistance partially explains the absence of resistance scant in bullying research. Additionally, what researchers *count* as resistance often determines what appears in the public transcript. For example, in cases of bullying, workers often resign and move on to other jobs (e.g., Namie, 2003a; Rayner, 1997; Zapf & Gross, 2001). We may not consider quitting a job as an act of resistance. Yet, turnover rates are often a vital example of "trace" evidence that bullying is present and workers refuse to subject themselves to it. Although, the definitive form of resistance in domestic violence cases is when the woman leaves the batterer (Gondolf, 1988; Hoff, 1990), the same valor is ironically missing when workers quit abusive jobs.

Scott (1990) also explains how much of the sequestered discourse in hidden transcripts is sanitized or re-encoded into the meaning systems of dominant group members before moving to the public transcript. For example, if employees want flextime at work so they can spend more time at home with their families, they will most likely approach decision makers with arguments based on how flextime will increase productivity or benefit to the organization (Hochschild, 1997). As such, hidden transcripts provide a space in which resistance finds acceptance and collective agreement. It is in these hidden spaces that targets and witnesses of bullying check their versions of "reality" with one another to ascertain agreement. When agreement is found, the content of resistance is in a sense rehearsed as it is repeated among group members.

Within the relative safety of the hidden transcript, subordinates find space for fantasies of revenge and confrontation (Bies & Tripp, 1998).

Shared experiences of abuse or oppression build a sense of solidarity and camaraderie among those sequestered as well as building feelings of social support (Forbes & Bell, 1997; Tracy, 2005). The solidarity engendered in hidden transcripts can be the support needed that moves individuals or groups to make public complaints. Because of the nature of power relations, according to Scott's hypothesis, we should expect those public declarations to "conform to the properties of the dominant class" (Scott, 1990, p. 92). "Strategic action always looks upward, for that is frequently the only way in which it can gain a hearing" (Scott, 1990, p. 93). One then might expect to see resistance to bullying presented in terms of managerial imperatives such as productivity, profit/loss, or the organization's public image.

For example, workplace bullying is linked to seriously damaging health outcomes (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; M. J. Scott & Stradling, 2001). Employees who take their complaints to upper-management (i.e., into the public transcript) will most likely avoid framing the complaint with "I'm on two kinds of antidepressants and have developed high blood pressure as a result of the ongoing abuse." Rather, this strategic action should "look upward" and re-encode the message into managerialist language that is "often reflective of productivity or other organizational goals" (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a, p. 476). In this manner, the person on two kinds of antidepressants and high blood pressure medicine is more likely to specify to the effects of bullying in terms of managerial concerns (i.e., turnover rates, absenteeism, lost productivity). Even in its re-

encoded form, taking complaints into the public transcript is a risky endeavor (Rayner et al., 2002).

The movement from hidden to public transcripts is a *fateful moment*, not only for the speaker, but for others who are part of the hidden transcripts of resistance. The "moment when the first public declaration of the hidden transcript is made...., when the dissent of the hidden transcript crosses the threshold to open resistance is always a politically charged occasion" (Scott, 1990, pp. 206-7). This is true both for the complainant and for those witnessing the act, because of the personal danger in breaking the silence. As Scott (1990, p. 6) notes, "when, suddenly, subservience evaporates and is replaced by open defiance we encounter one of those rare and dangerous moments in power relations." Considering Foucault's notion of power and resistance as mutually constitutive and simultaneous, Giddens' dialectic of control, and evidence of mutual escalation in whistleblowers and bullied targets' experiences (Miceli, 2002; Rothschild & Miethe, 1994; Zapf & Gross, 2001), we should expect increased threats to targets when they resist publicly.

What seems important to remember, however, is the rarity in which public declarations occur and the tendency to count only public declarations as "Resistance with a capital R." An additional caveat is to avoid dismissing acts of resistance that operate within the current organizational systems of power relations as forms of self-subordination. "The fact is that the public representations of claims by subordinate groups, *even in situations of conflict*, nearly always have a strategic or dialogic dimension that influences the form they take.... Most protests and challenges...are made in the realistic expectation that the central features of the form of domination will remain

intact" (Scott, 1990, p. 92). Labeling these acts as self-subordination or false consciousness may in and of itself serve as an act of oppression perpetuated by researchers.

A Dialectic Perspective of Power in Workplace Bullying

This review of power, control, and resistance literature suggests four issues that predict, to some extent, what researchers might expect to encounter when studying resistance to abuse at work. These include workers acceptance of hierarchies as "naturally" occurring, resistance as protection of a favored subject position, defiance as an expected counterpart to oppression, and the often hidden nature of resistance in these situations. First, both bullies and targets take for granted the notion that power is embedded in bureaucratic workplace organizing through authority in hierarchical positions. Those who engage in resistance to bullying will most likely accept this as a given at work and strive only to change *mistreatment* and not depose subordinate-superordinate relationships. Although employees may not want the abuse of power in any form, they will make sense of the experience through a meaning system that is generally accepting of their subordinate subject position. Resistance to bullying should cause an internal struggle because fighting back is considered insubordination, even to bullied workers. Under a rational-legal system of workplace domination, insubordination is considered legal grounds for employment termination, and bullying bosses will likely label resistance as such. We should expect this dynamic to act as a deterrent to public forms of resistance unless the system includes avenues of legitimate complaint (e.g., grievance, formal complaints, ombudsman).

Second, when bullying pierces the mantel of workers' ontological security (Giddens, 1991) and threatens ideal subject positions or ethical identities (Foucault, 1984) resistance may instantiate workers capacity for agency and to "act otherwise." By definition, bullying will be highly disturbing and stir employees to resist the "bad employee" subject position, especially where employees' identity is embedded in their work role (Tracy, 2005). Furthermore, if witnesses' preferred identities include being caring, compassionate people who stand up to indignity and injustice, they will take action and frame it as a moral imperative. Moreover, if witnesses fail to stand up to injustice, we might expect evidence of guilt and remorse in their workplace narratives. In the cases of bullying as highly threatening these ideal subject positions, resisting may even take on a crusade-like connotation for some workers who will not leave the job until "justice has been seen to be done" (Hoel et al, 2003, p.149).

Third, given that power and resistance are contemporaries (Foucault, 1982) and that power and control are dialectical (Giddens, 1984), we should expect to see bullying or abusive treatment and resistance to such treatment occurring simultaneously in a mutually agitating relationship. We should also expect that as bullies increase abusive tactics, targets will increase resistance to these tactics, and concomitantly, as resistance increases, so should efforts to control such resistance—usually in the form of escalated bullying. This mutually escalatory spiral will most likely continue until either bully or target are removed from each others' proximity. Given the regenerative nature of workplace bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a), we should expect that if the target is removed another target will soon emerge to take his or her place (Lockhart, 1997).

Finally, the very real risks inherent in public forms of insubordination and resistance suggests that, notwithstanding an occasional, exceptional public form of resistance, we should expect the majority of such resistance to occur in hidden transcripts such as working-to-rule (Fiori, 1999; Jones, 1998; Mulholland, 2004) or revenge fantasies (Bies & Tripp, 1998; Scott, 1990). Working to rule is when employees do only what is required or strictly follow organizational rules, especially when to do so is detrimental to the company. In revenge fantasies, the oppressed imagine a "counterfactual social order" (Scott, 1990, p. 81) in which bullies are painfully punished or killed and get "what is coming to them." The instances that finally emerge into the open—and are thus visible to upper-management—are only the smoke from a fire, the sparked outrage, and the final straw that point toward the presence of chronic bullying and harassment burning under the surface (Rains, 2001). We should expect, given the threat of "going public" that where a few cases of bullying are formally reported, many more are probably taking place (Crawford, 1999; Keashly, 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a; Rains, 2001).

Micro-Practices of Resistance

Empirical studies of resistance have been the subject of academic interest as well as controversy, since defining resistance "entails the inclusion/qualification of some practices and the exclusion/disqualification of others" (Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994, p. 180). Broader examinations of resistance micro-practices illustrate the multiple, disparate, and often fragmented ways that people resist systems of social control. Resistance studied in this manner is "something other than organized protests or sustained mass movements" (Trethewey, 1997, p. 283) that harken to Marxist

revolutions in the working classes (Marx, 1967). Rather, empirical studies “explore how concrete local power-resistance relations [provide] space for individual agency and subjectivity [while at the same time] recognizing the crucial role played by events at the local level that affect both agency and subjectivity” (Jermier, et al., 1994, p. 21).

Much of the early empirical study of resistance has examined and tried to explain the action of blue-collar workers (Braverman, 1974; Burawoy, 1979; Edwards, 1979). This research, influenced by neo-Marxism, has focused on the process through which structures of domination are produced and reproduced by those subordinated rather than on practices of resistance that are determined by researchers to “truly” overcome such subordination (Mumby, 1997). Current studies examine how subordinate groups reproduce the conditions of their own domination (Ashcraft & Pacanowsky, 1996; Tracy 2000) but also explore the multiple and local forms of resistance in context (Hequembourg & Arditi, 1999; Trethewey, 1997; Murphy, 1998, 2002; Mulholland, 2003; Collinson, 1992). These studies have “led to a greater focus on resistance as a dynamic element of organizing processes” (Mumby, 1997, p. 357).

Resistance Strategies

The array of individual and collective forms of resistance is a testament to human ingenuity and the impossibility of organizational control systems to totally subsume worker agency. Women middle managers (D. Martin, 2004) and female flight attendants (Murphy, 1998) tactically employ humor as an unobtrusive challenge to power relations. Female middle managers report using humor to "enact upward resistance" (Martin, 2004, p. 156), while at the same time capitalizing on humor to "test the waters" and ensure their protests "have not crossed an imaginary or illusory, but important, relational line"

(Martin, 2004, p. 156). Flight attendants tasked with serving pilots drinks before flights—a practice that reinforces status markers between the two groups—sarcastically joke with pilots asking if they need "hydrating" before the flight (Murphy, 1998). This practice draws attention to arbitrary valuation of pilots over flight attendants and ridicules this valuation. Some pilots get their own drinks, because they do not want to hear these sarcastic comments.

Humor is not limited to professionals' protests. Trethewey's (1997) study of welfare families indicate that public assistance recipients, who are required to attend weekly meetings or face negative sanctions, turn this rule upon the social worker who reported her upcoming absence. A member of the group inquired if the social worker was then subject to the same sanction. They also made fun of the counseling requirements—a practice that pathologized poverty. This reverse discourse reframed a depiction of welfare recipients as psychologically deficient by laughing at the empty quality of counseling. One woman noted that "a cardboard cut-out of Sigmund Freud would do the job just as well" as the therapist. Clients resisted the idea that professional counselors or therapist had better solutions to their problems than they had.

People who disagree with the rules circumscribing their behavior break those rules. Flight attendants required to spend every night in the training center, signed each other in and out in defiance (Murphy, 1998). Welfare participants missed mandatory meetings in defiance of the requirement to attend meetings in which they saw little value (Trethewey, 1997). Exotic dancers often used "tactics of trickery and deception to maximize their own profits" (Murphy, 2003, p. 322) in opposition to management's stated rules. For example, dancers commonly left half-finish drinks at customers' tables

when they had to go onstage, to "mark their spot." This practice was forbidden by managers who wanted men to continue spending money on other dancers' drinks. Nonetheless, performers marked their spots to increase individual dancer's nightly profits. Dancers also failed to show up for their shifts, providing a variety of reasons, all of which offered the dancer "plausible deniability" for their absence (Murphy, 2003, p. 321). In a similar manner, call-center workers did what they called scammin' (Mulholland, 2003). Since management based the call-center workers' income on call volume, telephone sales workers would perform the sales pitch even when they were only speaking into an answering machine.

As noted, another version of breaking the rules is working-to-rule (Firori, 1999; Jones, 1998, Mulholland, 2003). In these instances, workers do only what is required—a practice similar to performed compliance (Jordan, 2003). Working to rule also includes following delegated rules to the letter with the knowledge that doing so works against organizational goals. For example, call-center workers were given a strict script to which they were mandated to adhere. Callers knew, however, the sales most often occurred when the salesperson and the potential customers "got on" or connected at an interpersonal level (Mulholland, 2003). This necessarily meant deviating from the script. Management negatively sanctioned workers who deviated from the script so telephone sales personnel, despite knowing the script was less likely to result in sales, followed it verbatim.

Cognitively restructuring, or reframing, work identities was a strategy of resistance for temporary workers (Jordan, 2003) and exotic dancers (Murphy, 2003). Tracy (2005) notes that correction officers who strongly identified with their work role

and framed it partially in terms of a commitment to help rehabilitate prisoners, suffered more anxiety due to the contradictions of the job. Officers were expected to "catch" prisoners in illegal acts and the same time treat them with respect. Performed compliance of temporary workers suggests a resistance strategy to circumvent this problem. Temp workers framed their jobs as a performance—as something they *do*, not something they *are.* Some exotic dancers also say that they "perform what the customer wants them to be" (Murphy, 2003, p. 316). In other words, stripping is something they *do* rather than fundamental to their identity. In this way, workers could understand their jobs "as a *performance* of a work role rather than a *crystallized identity*, thus highlighting and maintaining a crucial distinction between the workplace persona and other, non-work personas" (Jordan, 2003, p. 30).

In other settings, the blue-collar workers intentionally distanced themselves from management's efforts to reconceptualizing new organizational culture. The men derided managerial efforts and remained aloof—a series of actions that reinforced their membership in the shop floor group (Collinson, 1992). Collinson (1994) calls this *resistance through distance*, in which the central strategy is maintaining an identity separate from the elite management group. In another situation, a female insurance employee filed a discrimination suit after being denied a promotion. With the assistance of a labor specialist, she demanded the formal evidence upon which the decision was made. This *resistance through persistence* (Collinson, 1994) placed the organization in the defensive role by demanding that the organization substantiate their decision.

This body of work illustrates the likelihood that resistance in modernity is more often fragmented and embedded in specific sites than in the form of “revolutionary class-

consciousness" (Jermier et al., 1994, p. 2). Moreover, resistance is often a sequestered act that occurs predominantly in the hidden transcripts of nondominant groups, such as dancers calling in "sick" despite managerial imperatives to be at work (Murphy, 2003). Furthermore, resistance studies point to the importance of examining individualized sites in order to understand both the complexity and ubiquitousness of resistance in human workplace relations. This necessarily suggests that resistance to bullying will vary based on the specific workplace dynamics.

Although resistance research provides a range of micropractices in-situ, there is scant study of workers' resistance to directly aggressive, oppressive, and abusive treatment in the workplace. Research examines the closely related issues of injustice (e.g., Cropanzano & Randall, 1993; Folger & Baron, 1996; Harlos & Pinder, 1999; Meares et al., 2004), abusive supervision (e.g., Bies & Tripp, 1998; Tepper, 2000; Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002) and coping with bullying (e.g., Hogh & Dofradottir, 2001; Zapf & Gross, 2001). However, none of these specifically examine worker resistance or how such resistance may actually change organizational systems.

A dearth of research specifically studies situations in which workers face and resist "offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or humiliating behaviour, [or] abuse of power or authority" (Richards & Daley, 2003, p. 250). Resistance to overt oppression and abuse in general, and workplace bullying in particular, is curiously overlooked. Exceptions are found in "self-help" books for targets (e.g., Field, 1996; Namie & Namie, 2000a; Wyatt & Hare, 1997). These texts reinforce the power disparity between bully and target, but nonetheless suggest strategies for defense. Although self-help books provide insight into employee responses to unfair treatment, they do not specifically

focus on the complexities of resistance. Neither do they theorize resistance or the dialectical nature of power and control in the face of ongoing badgering and demoralizing attacks that are inherent to the bullying phenomenon.

Workplace Bullying and Resistance

Academic studies on workplace bullying have been comparatively silent on the issue of resistance and have subsequently fallen short of conceptualizing a theory of resistance in these situations. Bullying literature provides scant evidence that people resist, fight back, or formally complain, and even less evidence of a link between resistance and subsequent change. This is potentially the case because of the small numbers of workers who report success in their efforts to stop or prevent bullying. In Zapf and Gross' (2001) study of bullying targets' coping strategies, four of the 21 (19%) people interviewed were successful and "believed that their situation at work had improved again as a result of their coping efforts" (p. 497). In the quantitative component of this same study (Zapf &Gross, 2001), only 6% reported success (9 out of 149). Instead, the majority of targets exited the organizations. Organizational exit, similar to victims of domestic violence leaving the batterer, implies marked courage, strength and resolve. However, past research has not framed organizational escape as successful resistance.

Post-structural theory would suggest that resistance is part of the bullying dynamic, despite only trace evidence of worker complaints, grievances, and protests (Crawford, 1999, 2001; Namie & Namie, 2000a). Although fighting back is implicit in reports of organizational interventions, targets' power in the bullying literature is, for the most part, presented as retarded, ineffective, and frustrated efforts with little or no

chance of bringing about change. This study explores the micro-practices of those faced with bullying in their jobs, whether they are being directly targeted or are witnessing the abuse of others. It also attempts to examine resistance in a way that neither neglects "situating such resistance in the wider context of capitalism and patriarchy" (Mumby, 1997, p. 346) and thus presenting such resistance with a sense of naïve optimism, nor paints these acts as forms of self-subordination that serve to reify current power relations. Either of these paths, I believe, overlooks the complexity of the bullying situation and the potential for organizational changes. The emergent stories of resistance were compelling enough to shift the focus of this study to one that highlights the resistant micro-practices of targets and witnesses and explores the resulting possibility for organizational change. I attempt to do so without romanticizing resistance and its change potential in systems that are embedded in wider contexts of political, cultural, and social meanings (Mumby, 1997). This study specifically explores the two following questions:

Research Questions

I. In what ways do employees publicly or privately resist bullying or the bully?

II. What factors, dynamics, and features of organizational communication appear to culminate into bottom-up bully removal?

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

This study examines workers' responses to adult bullying through a critical-interpretive perspective situated in the belief that people actively construct—through language—multiple, shifting, life narratives. Because bullying at work represents a rupture to what Giddens' (1991, p. 243) calls "ontological security: a sense of continuity and order in events," participants wanted to understand why bullying occurred and what could be done about it (Tracy et al., 2004). The primary research method in this project was in-depth, qualitative interviews with targets of bullying who also saw others bullied, and persons who witnessed coworkers being bullied but were not directly targeted. The analysis, interpretations, and conclusions were developed through inductive interpretation grounded in the study data—data that were generated through my interaction with those whose work lives had been traumatized by workplace bullying. Thus, I present this study and its subsequent findings as one reading, one that specifically seeks to underscore workers' strength, courage, and acts of resistance despite public transcripts (organizational practices and outcomes) that reinforce the futility of such acts.

Epistemological Underpinnings

My methods and analysis are informed by critical, social constructionist, and interpretivist viewpoints. First, the work is critical in that it directly challenges the notion of workers as self-subordinating dupes who have been unwillingly and unwittingly hoodwinked into reconstructing the conditions of their own domination (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). Although there are undoubtedly rules, norms, and meanings within any given discursive formation (Foucault, 1972) that are tacit and therefore operate at a non-

conscious level (Giddens, 1984), in situations of workplace bullying, employees have little confusion that they are being treated in an abusive, aggressive, and unfair manner. Workplace bullying may motivate employees to verbalize tacit knowledge, that in more harmonious workplaces, might never be questioned. Since the majority of resistance to dominant groups occurs in hidden transcripts, interpretations of self-subordination may be in error if such conclusions are based solely on public transcripts created and controlled by dominant groups (Scott, 1990). This study examines one material manifestation of the underlying, often taken-for-granted, relationships of power central to critical organizational communication work (Deetz, 1992). As such, it exposes an overtly abusive, fundamentally aggressive, damaging type of organizational communication linked to these meanings.

Second, it is built upon the belief that language does not necessarily mirror reality—it fundamentally constructs reality as understood by human actors. As people talk about their perceptions of reality, this in turn shapes how they construct their versions of life narratives and identities (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005; Trethewey, 2000). Additionally, the discourse about participants' subjective realities are shaped by larger discourses and systems of meaning (Deetz, 1992). By this I intend "discourse" to indicate "talk and text in social practices" (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 7) and "discourses" to indicate "general and enduring systems for the formation and articulation of ideas in a historically situated time" (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 8).

Finally, I include rather than seclude my own lived experience as an element in data analysis and interpretation, a common feature in applied (Frey, 1998) and participatory action research (Gaternby & Humphries, 1996). What I recognized or

distinguished in research participants' stories, and the conclusions I drew from those stories, are inextricably linked with my own lived experiences. From this perspective, the qualitative interview is a dynamic creation that weaves together the subjectivities of both researcher and participants (Potter, 1996). In what follows, I further describe the study's epistemological underpinnings and the methods of data collection and analysis. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's trustworthiness by examining criteria of credibility, dependability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Rather than an unitary reality existing "out there" to be discovered, this study rests on the assumption that "realities are always under construction by social actors" (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 298) and thus shifting, polymorphic, and unfixed. I agree with Smith and Turner's (1995) mutual assertions that "there are *multiple ways* of… making sense of discourse,…[and] *no final readings"* while also concurring that "certain *continuities* may be realizable." (p. 154). In other words, patterns of human behavior are recognizable in situations of workplace bullying; one such pattern is that people do not passively accept abuse but resist it in a number of ways, mostly hidden from public view. Another pattern is that despite resistance, bullying is exceedingly damaging to people's sense of identity and their beliefs in justice and fair play (Rubin, 1996).

Although each person with whom I spoke narrated a unique perspective, striking similarities emerged in these narratives. The experience of bullying does not occur in a cultural or historical vacuum and is, in many ways, defined by the discourses—systems of meaning and relationships of power—within which employee abuse is nested. The meaning given to bullying and resistance to bullying are constructed by organizational actors "against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language and so forth"

(Schwandt, 2000, p. 197). On the other hand, my interpretation is not the final word on worker resistance and how bullying appears to change over time as a result of resistance. It is only one potential reading among many others that are possible.

Workers' experiences with bullying and what they report do not act as a simple mirrors of their experiences. Rather, these beliefs are mediated in complex ways—many of them through taken-for-granted assumptions about worklife. What being bullied at work means, how it is perceived by targets and witnesses, and how employees resist being mistreated are culturally and historically situated in contradictory discourses. These include the discourses of labor theory (Marx, 1968; Muholland, 2003), managerial rationalism (Deetz, 1992; F. W. Taylor, 1911; Weber, 1947), discipline and resistance (Giddens, 1982; Foucault, 1984), emancipatory and critical texts (Mumby, 2001; Deetz, 1992; Putnam & Mumby, 1992; Scott, 1990), ethical systems of meaning (Barry, 1978; Kant, 1964) and the employer-employee psychological contract (Karen L. Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002; Rousseau, 1995; Rubin, 1996). I suggest that workers makes sense of bullying within these nested discourses and that these systems meanings present conflicting notions of what working should "look like."

As an interpretive researcher, I factor in my experiences, values, and beliefs as systems of meaning that guide the choice of topic and shape my interpretation of workers' experiences. My interpretation, although grounded in scientific university training and education, is mediated by and nested within my lived experiences; as a result I cannot claim to have a "direct grasp of the empirical world" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 197) outside of these lived experiences. My life narrative includes entering my first social work job and witnessing the alarming treatment of staff by a bullying executive

director. It includes my challenges as an agency director grappling with bullying middle managers, suffering subordinates, and the vagaries of employment law. It also includes personal experiences of oppression outside of work. These all color and filter my interpretations; they center me in an advocate's role I perceive as a moral imperative guiding my research. I have not experienced bullying at work, which allowed for some distance and reduced the probability of unconsciously identifying with research participants' painful narratives. On the other hand, I have witnessed and intervened in bullying situations, and that experience provides me with background understanding and contextualization. I have see firsthand the pain employees suffer at the hands of bullies. I also recognize that bullying usually emerges in innocuous ways that are difficult to verbalize. This contrast of exposure without direct targeting uniquely situated me to listen, empathize, and follow fruitful paths of inquiry that opened during the interviews.

I am a linguistic interpreter who, using her best understanding of different languages and lived experiences, deciphers the language of adults faced with bullying into the language of qualitative scientific inquiry. My interpretations of research participants' narratives is itself a co-construction in which our interactions shaped the nature of the stories and the ultimate focus on resistance to bullying. Through this interaction, I came to understand that many workers faced with bullying are fundamentally fighters and survivors rather than victims and targets. Participants appeared to better understand and make sense of what had happened through their talk.

Participants

Research participants were drawn to the study in two ways: (a) conversations with colleagues, allied professionals, friends, and family members and (b) an online link to the research on The Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute's website (WBTI; www.bullyinginstitute.org). Through conversations about the project with my friends and work colleagues, I quickly found the first four research participants. Toward the end of the project, the project transcriptionist introduced me to a bullying target. The other 29 participants found the research through a link on the WBTI website. The Institute hosted a link to my research that link stated: "If you have witnessed bullying and emotional abuse at work and would like to participate in research, click here." This led volunteers to my email address, from which they could send me an electronic message. Within two days of posting the link, over 100 people who had witnessed bullying at work contacted me. All of the people had witnessed others being bullied and many had or were currently being targeted. Approximately a third of those who responded were witnesses and not targets.

In addition to the first four persons from conversations with friends and colleagues, I chose 29 other persons from the 109 emails to interview based on four demographic characteristics: sex, employment in the U.S., at least five years of workplace experience, and witness workplace bullying. For the sex variable, I sought an equal number of males and females. I also wanted to talk to persons who experienced bullying in U.S. workplaces, because the predominance of bullying research examines the phenomenon in countries outside the U.S. (for exceptions see, Keashly, 1998; ;

Namie, 2003; Tracy et al., 2005; Zapf, 2004). I sought workers who had at least five years of working experience; I had previously examined bullying in a younger cohort of entry-level workers (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a) and wanted to expand this investigation to a more seasoned group. Entry-level workers are more likely to be bullied (Rayner et al., 2002) due to their inexperience and be more likely to conflate "tough management" in which a supervisor is brusque or single-minded with abusive treatment (Lewis, 1999).

I also sought people who had *witnessed* bullying—whether or not they had been directly targeted—since the current body of research has predominantly focused only on targets of bullying (for exceptions see Vartia, 1996, 2001). Inherent to the inclusion of witnesses is the assumption that coworkers play an important role in the work experiences of others. Although we currently know little about how coworkers are influenced by, or in turn, influence workplace bullying, a substantial body of literature points to their importance in other organizational processes and relationships (Ashforth & Mael, 1998; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Odden & Sias, 1997; Ray & Miller, 1991; Sias, 1996; Sias & Cahill, 1998; Yager, 1997).

Sample Characteristics and Demographics

In total, I interviewed 37 people. Three transcripts were omitted from data analysis because the experiences did not match the key indicators of bullying identified in the corpus of bullying research (i.e., frequency, duration, harm, etc.). The first had experienced a one-time negative experiences that, while considerably painful, could not be classified as bullying. The second interviewee identified himself as a bully rather than a target during our interview, and the third reported having multiple conflicts with many people at work, none of which were marked by the indicators of frequency or duration.

The core research data emerged from the transcripts of 30 interviews with ten witnesses and 20 witness/targets. Both witnesses and witness/targets were equally distributed by sex. For example, of the 10 witnesses, five were male and five were female. Twenty one were married; three were divorced, and six had never been married. Twenty eight were heterosexual and two were gay/lesbian/bisexual. Interviewees' average age was 39.1 years. Twenty eight were Caucasian, one was Chicano, and one Chicana. As such, the data is racially biased toward Anglo workers. Research participants worked in not-for-profit, for-profit, and government settings, and all worked in different organizations or agencies, states, and industries. Although two were from government agencies, these were in different fields (labor and law enforcement) and states. The smallest organization employed five staff members including the owner; the largest over 5,000 employees spread over five states. Appendix B provides a list of pseudonyms, industry/organizational type, state, and witness/ target status.

Furthermore, four other interviews were specifically conducted for the purposes of *target response* coding saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In other words, I conducted four additional interviews after I had analyzed and developed the central codes/types of resistance from the 30 core interviews that constituted the study's data. These interviews were used for the purpose of determining other forms of resistance that did not appear in the core participants' narratives. When the additional interviews produced no fundamentally different forms of resistance, I felt confident that data saturation had occurred (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I additionally spoke with four professionals who had dealt with bullying either in the course of their jobs (e.g., Equal Employment Opportunity Commission officer) or provided specialized consulting

services that dealt with bullying at work (e.g., Conflict Resolution Services, Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute). These interviews resulted in important substantiating data for upper-management's role in bully removal explored in Chapter 6. The experiences of these professionals were also an aspect of the discourse in which I was positioned during the research process and served as background material.

Sample Representativeness

In order to demonstrate or counter any research claims of transferability, it is necessary to discuss the study sample's representativeness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). That is, I must answer the question, "Do the workers in this sample represent in a general way the experiences, actions, and interactions of other workers who are bullied at work?" Because of a fundamental interest in the broader impacts of bullying, not only on persons who are directly abused and terrorized, but also on those who witness such abuse, I sought a research sample who "witnessed bullying and employee abuse at work." That meant persons involved in this study not only perhaps experienced bullying, but requisitely saw others around them bullied. As such, bullying for these workers was a collective rather than individual experience. Those who were bullied but implicitly exempted from this study because they had not witnessed bullying were workers bullied in isolation.

Considerable research indicates that bullying is more often targeted at many in a workgroup than it is to a single person (Hoel & Cooper, 2001; Keashly, Trott, & MacLean, 1994; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a; Rayner, 1997; Rayner et al., 2002). However, persons who agree bullying has occurred or is occurring, not only to themselves but to others in their jobs, may be more likely to be exposed to communicative circumstances

that enable or encourage collective voice. Collective agreement that workers are being treated in an abusive, aggressive way, workers potentially contributes to discussions about the abuse, gathering support for their interpretations, and thus resisting the abuse, either collectively or individually (Scott, 1990). In workplaces where one person is singly bullied, and others do not appear to corroborate that person's experience, there may be more confusion about what is happening, more fear of speaking out, and potentially less resistance. As such, a higher incidence of resistance may be present in this group of participants than if these people had experienced bullying in isolation.

Regardless of the potential differences among the sample and other workers facing bullying, or the differences among the workers within the sample, my findings suggest that people avoid pain in whatever way works for them. The rare exceptions to this pain-avoidance behavior are persons clinically diagnosed with masochism (Wurmser, 2004)—a condition for which there is no evidence in workplace bullying (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). As pain-avoiding beings, even those who did not participate any active forms of resistance, took a number of steps to protect and distance themselves from the bully's aggression. Those whose actions were not coded as *resistance* were nonetheless agents in their own protection and acts of self-advocacy.

In sum, I possibly heard a greater number of resistance narratives from this sample than might be found in persons who were or felt isolated and alone in the bullying experience. On the other hand, because so much of the bullying research interacts with targets at the apex of their bullying experience (Namie, 2003; Randall, 2000; Rayner, 1997; Tracy et al., 2004) or comes from empirical evidence drawn almost entirely from public rather than private transcripts (Davenport, et al, 2000; Scott, 1990),

extant samples may or may not represent the actions common to workers who are abused, coerced, and threatened on a regular basis. That is, other study samples may also be non-representative. The current sample is, however, poised to examine collective responses to bullying. Because all the research participants witnessed bullying, they had the opportunity to hear corroborating stories, join voices, and work toward organizational change.

Materials

I developed a seven-item, semi-structured Interview Guide (See Appendix C) with follow-up question probes to be used in an unstructured manner, with the intention that respondents' experiences and perceptions would guide the interview process (Mischler, 1986). In most cases, I used the guide for a note taking page only, because research participants seemed eager to narrate their experiences in a mostly chronological manner. I began each interview by simply asking a "grand tour" question (Spradley, 1979) such as, "Why don't we start with you telling me about your job, how long you've worked there, when you began to notice that something was going on at work." This basically asked people to provide a verbal map (Baxter & Babbie, 2004) of their bullying experiences contextually and historically situated in their job and tenure at the organization in question. The people with whom I spoke proceeded with little other guidance from me. I rerouted interview content only in the cases when topics veered far afield for an extended period of time and redirected our conversation in a "now, where were we?" manner.

This open-format afforded time for extended personal narratives and allowed targets and witnesses to tell as much or as little as they desired. I assured those with

whom I spoke that I had nothing else planned, and that this was their time to talk as much or as little as they desired. These in-depth interviews were particularly useful in answering questions about how respondents experienced, dealt with, made sense of and resisted the often disturbing, sometimes shattering, experiences of workplace bullying.

Procedures

During the interviews with research participants, as well as actively listening, I offered emotional and psychological validation along with expert knowledge regarding bullying research. This approach to interviewing was the resulting confluence of my personal experience in the workplace, my past and present professional status, and workers' experiences in bullying environments. The interview style is somewhat similar to Oakley's (cited in Trethewey, 1997) "friendly," non-hierarchical interviewing style, in which the researcher approaches research subjects "as friends rather than as subjects or data" (Trethewey, 1997, p. 286). However, it expands upon the *friendly* model in two fundamental ways unique to this study. First, because of the emotionally painful nature of bullying, I accessed my therapeutic professional experience as a counseling social worker during many of the interviews. Although I did not frame our interviews in terms of a counseling relationship, the emotional issues that emerged during the interviews obliged me to rely on those skills.

Remedial-Pedagogical Interviews

Most targets and witnesses expressed pain, anguish, anger, and grief while retelling their stories. As in Varallo and colleague's (1998) interviews with sexual incest survivors, many of the participants noted that retelling the story "stirred up" emotions they felt they had dealt with and resolved. On the other hand, participants also voiced a

willingness and desire to participate in “hopes that their participation might affect change at a broader level” (Varallo, et al., p. 264). Oftentimes, participants expressed feeling alone in their emotional reactions, even in the face of collective voice and collegial support at work. Due to the interview’s emotional mood, I attempted to provide validating, emotionally supportive responses and feedback. The supportive aspect of these interviews is, what I call, remedial (e.g., Cavanagh, Dobash, Dobash, & Lewis, 2001; Midgley, 2001).

I specifically drew from my background as a social worker when choosing this term and the approach associated with it. I denote the interviews as *remedial* rather than “therapeutic” or “counseling” for two reasons. First, the term *remedial* denotes assistance and support without the patronizing connotation of an expert “who knows” and provides therapy to the research subject (client in social work) “who does not know” and needs counseling. Social workers, rather than viewing human problems as individual pathologies, view people’s lives through a social perspective—one that recognizes that complex, overlapping social systems impinge on individually lived experiences. Second, the term remedial, unlike therapeutic or counseling, avoids implications that someone sick needs to be cured or healed. Instead, my supportive or remedial comments served a *counteractive* function. That is, my emotionally reaffirming comments counteracted the bully’s hurtful, damaging messages.

I made the decision to use a remedial approach consciously, because it seemed unethical to remain silent or attempt emotional detachment in the face of such incredible emotional anguish. I took as a cue, the work of Lofland and Lofland (1995) who examine some of the ethical issues of field work. In particular, they pose the question, “Is it

ethical to see a severe need for help and not respond to it directly?" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p. 63). My intrapersonal answer to this ethical question was "no." I could not, in all clear conscience, remain silent and act as if I did not hear participants' pain and implicit requests for support. As a result of this reflexive process, the interviews were laced with exchanges marked by emotional support and validation. The following illustrates such an exchange between myself (PS) and a target of bullying (CA):

CA: Boy, we sure need to have, I mean, I'm grateful that you're doing this work. Because it is like, I wonder, if it's just me.
PS: Well, I'm grateful that you're talking to me
CA: And it's like, because I think, is it just me?
PS: Right. You wonder, am I just crazy?
CA: Right.
PS: And, did I just bring this on myself?
CA: Well, it's easy to think that way, because you really don't want to share it, because it's so shaming.
PS: Well, not only that, the bully often tries to make you think it's you.
CA: Boy that's for sure. The bully *does* make you think it's you! Then with the lack of support, with co-workers, ah, it's like they're marked.
PS: It's the same kind of stuff that many people say.
CS: Yeah. It does, it does make you feel like, like there's something wrong with you.
PS: And what that means is that it isn't you.
CS: Yes, yes. Yeah, I get that one.

In an earlier exchange during our interview, this person said she thought she "was losing it" and that she "must have done something to" draw the bully's negative attention. I reframed her native language in the form of paraphrased support. In this manner I was able to check for my understanding and reassure her that she was not the only person who experienced these responses (counteracting self-doubt and self-blame). What I added to this exchange is "the bully often tries to make you think it's you" as a common dynamic I had seen firsthand and read about in reports of professional interventions (Crawford, 1999, 2001).

Second, interviews also included an educational or pedagogical aspect in which I shared findings from bullying research. Workplace bullying is as yet linguistically embryonic; U.S. workers and legal statutes have yet to agree upon a given language to describe these experiences as *bullying*, so participants knew little about bullying apart from their unique experiences. The pedagogical aspect of the interviews took the form of reassurance that they were not the only worker or workgroup experiencing bullying ("A recent study indicates this happens to nearly 30% of U.S. workers sometime during their careers."), or that they had not individually brought the bullying upon themselves due to some inherent character weakness or personality flaw ("Research doesn't identify any specific type of person or personality that is more or less likely to be bullied."). In the following excerpt, the pedagogical nature of the interviews is apparent, although in this also, the reader will notice the emotional validation inherent to much of the "educational" parts of my interviews:

DB: Yeah, and, I mean like, is that, I don't know. Do things like that happen? I know they don't happen in the real world like that. I keep thinking if we were like Microsoft or

PS: This happens all over the place. There doesn't really seem to be a specific industry or career where it is more likely except maybe high-end restaurants with temperamental, artistic chefs.

DB: It does? I'm not crazy?

PS: It does. I have talked to people in public assistance offices, lawyers in legal firms, highly paid professionals making half a million dollars a year bullied by the owner CEO.

DB: Yeah?

PS: I've talked to engineers, to professors in universities, to librarians, to school teachers.

DB: Oh my God. It goes on everywhere? I mean, that's so weird. Why would anybody do it?

PS: It doesn't happen in every workplace, but does happen more often than one might think. A recent study indicates this happens to nearly 30% of U.S. workers sometime during their careers and about one out of ten

workers at any given time.

DB: Huh, well, I guess I'm not going crazy. I mean, just knowing what it is, I mean knowing it's *bullying*, that was so powerful.

In this respect, my knowledge of topic and my position as university researcher positioned me as an *expert*. Where relevant to the interview, I shared elements of my experience witnessing workplace bullying in a subordinate role or intervening in bullying situations as an executive. The articulation of my position as a witness to the bullying of coworkers and my experience administratively grappling with bullying middle-managers demonstrated my concern and involvement as researcher with an implicit employee-advocacy perspective. My past research projects (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2005, Tracy et al., 2004) and extensive reading of the workplace bullying literature situated me as a knowledgeable authority on the topic. Another excerpt illustrates both the remedial and pedagogical characteristics of the interviews.

KJ: It been just like crazy, you know, how he has hurt me and hurt others. I thought I was losing it, it's just been so crazy and painful.

PS: Yeah it's so painful; it's so painful.

KJ: I have never [pause], you know, I wish I was articulate, because I would write a book to help people. I wish I could take your classes, because it's on how they communicate. I've been hurting for so long over this, and so many others have left or even went to the hospital, because it's gone on and on for so long.

PS: Yes, the emotional pain is often what causes people such long term damage.

Later in the same interview, the remedial aspect of talking with someone who was bullied is also evident.

KJ: I'm not sure what I did to deserve this. I think I'm just too easy to push around. If I could just stand up to them better, you know, if I was more assertive, but I'm not, and I think that's why I'm getting bullied.

PS: It's common for targets of bullying to blame themselves. People tell me, "I was bullied because I said too much." Or "I was bullied because I

> didn't say enough." The research on this doesn't indicate there is really any one type or one personality type of person who is targeted.

These excerpts illustrate the emotionally counteractive, educational dynamics present in my interviews with research participants. Because I offered empathetic, emotional support as well as current knowledge about workplace bullying as a unique phenomenon, I describe these interactions as *remedial-pedagogical interviews.*

Interview Process

Prior to talking in-depth about their bullying experiences, I explained the potential risks of and benefits of their participation. The central risk was reviving the emotional responses to bullying and experiencing emotional discomfort that might occur as a result. I explained that their participation was at all times voluntary, which meant participants could decide at any point, including during the interview process, to withdraw. I electronically sent them an Informed Consent document that reiterated these issues and included full names, email addresses, and telephone numbers of my PhD advisor and myself (See Appendix D). Participants were instructed to respond electronically with "I (fill in their name) agree to participate in the research described in the attached consent form. The potential risks have been explained to me. I understand I can withdraw at any time."

I informed all the research participants, in the consent form and verbally at the interview onset, that interviews were being recorded. I reiterated in my email and in the beginning of each interview that interviews might retrigger painful memories and to request that we stop should it become too painful for them. Every participant—no exceptions—said that talking about it was painful, but if their story could help others,

they were willing to proceed. One such comment is illustrative of these mixed sentiments: “It makes me so mad to think about it—my blood pressure goes up every time, but if it might help someone else, you know, make it so they don’t have to go through this, I’ll talk about it.”

Channel. I conducted interviews telephonically. Telephone interviews have both been criticized for being impersonal and a “poor substitute for face-to-face meetings” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 186) but praised for the flexibility and comfort they provide for research participants (Sunderland, 1999). In this case, the telephone interview provided the safety of distance for respondents, and decreased the likelihood of my affective facial expressions, cultural background, or bodily presentation altering their narratives (Sunderland, 1999). Since research indicates that targets and witnesses of bullying often feel a sense of shame that they were targeted or failed to defend others they saw targeted (Randall, 2001, Vartia, 2001), the “once-removed” quality of the telephone interview potentially provided a buffering distance for research participants.

In some cases, I sensed the impression of what Lindlof and Taylor (2002) call a “‘strangers passing in the night’ phenomenon [in which targets] disclose private thoughts because they never expect to meet the researcher in person” (p. 186). In other cases, research participants and I formed a mutual, albeit distant, bond that continues to be evidenced through their communication with me since the interview. Participants have communicated with me to provide updates on their situations, let me know a bully had been fired or transferred, or inform me that they left the job. I communicate with them to update them on the research, check on their well-being, and request feedback on my interpretations. It was through these serendipitous exchanges in follow-up

communication that I began to notice the organizational changes that took place, at least in part, as a result of their acts of resistance.

Time, setting and journaling. I conducted the 34 witness and target interviews from July to October, 2004 and offered each person a variety of times and days, encouraging them to choose the day and time that was most convenient for them. Telephonic interviewing effectively eliminated the issue of *where* to carry out the interviews. I scheduled interviews with participants on days I had no obligations within one hour before and two hours after the interview. It was my hope that this would avoid interviewees' sense of feeling rushed by an inadvertent tone in my voice or an unwittingly communicated attitude. By allowing this larger window of time before and after interviews, I also had ample pre-interview time to prepare and post-interview time for journaling my impressions and feelings of the process and de-escalating emotionally. Conducting these emotionally-seeped interviews with people who were or had been in deep pain impacted my emotions. There were times when I felt outraged and other times when I experienced deep sadness and grief. Despite my desire to conduct research with the potential to change workplaces into more humane environments, more than once I experienced an overwhelming sense of impotence. The interviews were, quite frankly, an extremely draining emotional experience.

Journaling assisted in venting those emotional responses as well as recording initial interpretations, impressions, and thoughts. In every case, I recorded these responses immediately after the interview, while the information was still fresh and "raw" and before the information had a chance to cognitively deteriorate. In addition to recording, I also took some notes during the interview on the participants' obvious

paralinguistic cues (yelling, long pauses, crying). For the most part, however, due to the emotional nature of the topic, the interviews took considerable concentration and emotional attention to the person with whom I was talking. By closely attending rather than taking extensive notes, I maintained the thread of participants' thoughts and was able to follow the chronological order of events as they unfolded. In cases where I was unsure of the narrative's development over time, I asked for clarification. In two cases, the narratives were hypertextual, that is they were quite fragmented and jumped back and forth in time. For these I determined chronology through an examination of the transcripts and follow up emails.

Duration. I had initially anticipated the interviews to be approximately 90 minutes in length, and instructed those with whom I spoke only to, "take all the time you wish." As it turned out, calls were much longer; although one lasted only 65 minutes, four lasted nearly three hours, and the others continued for over two hours. On average, it took targets and witnesses about two hours to tell their stories of abuse. Part of this time was spent trying to figure out why they had experienced or witnessed abuse at work—treatment they classified as "insane," "inhuman," and "bizarre." The four saturation interviews were a bit shorter and lasted from 45 to 70 minutes. These narratives may have been briefer because the interviewees were not currently trying to make sense of the situation and had time to construct a cohesive narrative. Furthermore, and the interviews focused solely on resistance strategies and resulting changes. The professional interviews lasted from one to two hours and predominantly dealt with and focused on bullies' actions and responses to intervention. In total, I collected 88.4 research hours of interviews for this study.

Data Transcription, Reduction, and Analysis

I conducted all but the saturation interviews before beginning transcription. Although Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend gathering, analyzing and coding research data concurrently and then ceasing data collection when theoretical categories are saturated, it seemed imperative to speak with people at the point when they *wanted* to talk to someone about their experiences rather than put off interviews for weeks and maybe even months. This decision potentially created more work than if I had strictly followed the grounded approach. On the other hand, extensive interviews broadened my understanding of bullying. Because I had a surplus of data, I was able to appreciate the richness and range of workers' experiences that would not have otherwise been possible with the decision to stop data gathering when conceptual categories reached saturation.

I transcribed 21 of the interviews using Dragon Naturally Speaking voice recognition software in which I listened to a line of the interview, dictated the line, and then corrected dictation errors (2% - 3%). I also added notes demarking paralinguistic cues evident in the interviews such as:

> BJ: "And they said, 'well as long as they don't do this, this, and this, you're not open to any liability.' [Laughs]. I was like, 'okay?' [Chuckles, says with a questioning up-turn at the end of 'okay' denoting disbelief].

Nine interviews were professionally transcribed, and I only transcribed the *resistance* sections of the four saturation interviews directly related to the issues of employee actions and building to organizational changes. After the initial transcriptions were completed, I listened to each of the interviews again while reading what I had previously dictated. Two research assistants helped with this work over the course of four months. This process corrected words I initially misunderstood, corrected transcribers' errors, and

rectified other software dictation-recognition errors. I also added the paralinguistic cues and vocal inflections to the interviews professionally transcribed. The final interview transcripts resulted in 983 single-spaced pages of data. After making a working copy for coding purposes, I saved the originals of each corrected original transcript and placed them in a locked filing cabinet for archival purposes. I removed or changed all identifying information in the working copies (names, companies, locations), printed hard copies, and closely read through them again.

Emergent Findings

The nature of interpretive, qualitative research is necessarily iterative. That is, the "answers" may come before the research questions are formalized or tentative research questions are reframed to speak to the emerging patterns or answers of inductive data. This differs from social scientific approaches that use deductive logic based on an a priori hypothesis that subsequent research questions test. Conversely, interpretive research data can provide an "answer" to which researchers then must iteratively frame or clarify research questions. The latter is what occurred during this study; the initial research focus was to determine if bullying impacted a larger network of workers than simply affecting the targets of abuse, as alluded to in existing studies.

What emerged from the data as a fundamentally more provocative issue was the range of responses to bullying that targets and witnesses reported, particularly in the face of a vast body of bullying research indicating that "inferiority is a key element of bullying…[and] it is impossible for the target to resolve the conflict" (Zapf, 2004, p. 6). In many situations of workplace bullying, targets and witnesses appeared to be extremely resourceful. Although exceedingly fearful of losing their jobs, they nevertheless

participated in a number of resistance strategies. Those who did not resist bullying responded in other ways to protect, distance, or insulate themselves from attack. As a result of this emergent finding, three central coding classifications guided the initial open-coding of the interviews: bully acts, worker responses and organizational results.

Grounded Qualitative Data Analysis

Given the emergent topic of employee responses to bullying, I approached the data from a grounded perspective beginning with open-coding of bullying *acts*, target and witness *response* to bullying, and organizational *results.* After completing the grounded analysis described below, I narrowed the research focus to resistant acts. It was only after arriving at the final types of resistance found in this study that I compared these categories to other studies examining resistance (Ashforth & Mael, 1998; Bies & Tripp, 1998; Clair, 1994; D. Martin, 2004; J. Martin & Meyerson, 1998; Mulholland, 2004; Rothschild & Miethe, 1994; Trethewey, 1997). Additionally, since the dynamics of workplace bullying are potentially more like those of domestic violence, I also reviewed domestic violence survivors' resistance strategies in the face of societal discourses that blame victims for their treatment at the hands of perpetrators (Gondolf, 1988; Hoff, 1990). These comparisons were discussed earlier in a review of the literature and, where applicable, are woven into the findings.

I utilized a grounded approach adapted from Glaser and Strauss (1967) model of generating theory to code bullying acts and target/witness responses to bullying. This method is based in the fundamental principle that patterns or categories of human communication "must fit the situation being researched….[and] must be readily (not forcibly) applicable to and indicated by the data under study" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.

3). By inductively developing patterns of action from the narratives of targets and witnesses of bullying, I strove to avoid a sense of what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call "tacked-on explanation[s] taken from a logically deduced theory" (p. 4). According to these theorists, in the effort to apply a priori research categories to the phenomena under examination, the data are forced into classifications systems from other closely-related phenomena and thus fail to adequately explain the unique characteristics of the phenomenon under investigation. Once I arrived at the final resistance codes in this study, I compared and contrasted those codes to published accounts of opposition in other settings.

Unitizing Data

For the purposes of analysis, the interview transcripts initially needed to be unitized into smaller elements guided by the overall research questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The coded qualitative units during this stage had two characteristics: they were both heuristic and parsimonious. Each unit had to indicate a heuristic value by providing an example of bullying or responses to bullying along with some understanding of the act. Parsimony means that units were the smallest element of data about bullying acts or responses that could stand by themselves. That is, the data codes were "interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which [it occurred]" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 345). My initial work unitizing the data responded to three central questions: (a) What did bullies do? [bully acts], (b) How did employees respond to what bullies did? [worker responses], (b) How did organizations react to target/witness responses? [organizational results].

I unitized all interview transcript data using InVivo qualitative analysis software into groups of three data units: *bully acts, employee responses* and *organizational results.* This unitizing phase of data reduction, in which I coded data with only three heuristic codes resulted in the following number of single-spaced pages per code: 51 *bullying acts,* 56 *responses,* 13 *results*. As noted, these initial InVivo codes were economical and only included sections or slices of data that were the smallest element of data about bullying, responses, or results that could stand by themselves. For example, where a participant reported going to upper-management with coworkers, the actual coded datum was "we walked over to Iris' office and told her 'don't promote this woman'." The research participant described the interaction and its outcome in detail—continued dialogue resulting in a number of further transcript pages.

These subsequent transcript pages covering the detailed descriptions of the bullying act, response, or result are not part of the 51 pages of bullying acts, 56 pages of worker responses, or 13 pages of organizational results. Due to the parsimonious character of the unitized codes, selected transcript elements merely pointed to or indicated more detailed descriptions. I accessed the more detailed descriptions through a transcript word-search when looking for a descriptive findings chapter exemplar. As a result, the 120 pages of unitized codes served as an "index" or "directory" for the nearly 1,000 pages of interview transcripts.

Bully acts. The forms bullying took in this study are comparable to those in published research (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Davenport et al., 2002; Hornstein, 1996; Hoel et al., 2001; Einarsen et al., 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003b; Namie & Namie, 2000a). The bullying act data strengthened what we already know about workplace

bullying (e.g., bully actions, costs, what bullying looks like). The resistance data were new in this study but was, in all cases, narratively linked to bullying acts in a "he-did-this, so I-did-that" chronology. Bullying acts do not take central stage in this study. I do, however, use bullying act exemplars in the findings to contextualize worker acts of resistance. When the subject of resistance emerged through follow-up contacts with research participants, focused analysis shifted to worker responses and organizational results. Appendix E summarizes the bullying forms—negative acts—that participants reported and the initial codes for these acts.

Responses to bullying. I conducted open coding of responses to bullying using an iterative approach adapted from Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method, revising the coding categories until they captured all the data units. Through this iterative process, I developed analytic categories that addressed the meanings and meaning making surrounding target and witness responses that were demonstrated in the transcript data. Open coding began with the unitized data separated based on response-result. In this step, I examined the first *response* unit, created a code label (abbreviation), and wrote a short memo (description) for the code. Lofland and Lofland (1995) refer to this as memoing. The memo basically described what the participant was *doing* and the *reason* for that action, if given. The following example comes from this first cycle of response-unit open coding:

Table 3
Example Open Coding

Response-Unit	Code
Linda quit	EX (exit)
They just weren't happy. So they weren't happy; they got their experience, and they would leave.	EX (exit)
Linda was the first one to leave	EX (exit)
I didn't say anything because I was like well, maybe I was trained wrong.	SLN (silence, "biting my tongue") SB (self-blame, self-doubt)
I pretty much had no contact with her	AVB (avoid bully)

I continued through the unitized response-unit document, maintained a running list of open codes and descriptions on a legal pad, recorded a code abbreviation next to each incident (Glaser & Strauss,1967) and reviewed the previous codes to determine if subsequent response-units were similar to or different from already established codes. If I judged that a new datum was similar to one of the established codes, I labeled it with a the established. For example, *collegial reassurance, talk to peers about bullying,* and *receiving consolation or support* were similar enough to warrant the same code. If I judged that a response-unit was different, I created a new open code. For example, the above excerpt from the open coding process indicates that *exit* was analytically different from *avoiding the bully* or *self-blame*, so I created a new code entitled AVB (avoid bully). I continued through the data in this manner, a process that resulted in 83 codes for target and witness responses.

Resistance and coping responses. Once I completed hand-coding the 83 descriptive responses, I word-processed the list of code abbreviations and descriptions and reduced the data further by classifying each response as either *coping* or *resistance*. A response that served both purposes was coded as *resistance,* because the action or discourse in some way served a resistance function. I coded responses as *coping* when they did not counter or disrupt bullying or erode the bully's base of influence in some private or public way. For example, *praying for relief or bully punishment* was coded as *coping,* while *retaliating or responding in some subversive way* was coded as *resistance.* This data reduction step resulted in 40 codes that satisfied the definition of resistance as *any discursive or nondiscursive act of commission or omission that counters, disrupts, or defies the bully or erodes the bully's material/symbolic base of influence.*

I then examined the 40 resistance codes for redundancies and combined responses I had initially coded as two different acts, but that appeared analytically similar. For example, I initially coded (AOB) *public verbal agreement of others that bully is unfair, cruel, crazy, etc.* and (CK) *expressed collective knowledge, bully is well known among many inside and outside workgroup* as two separate responses. In this step toward larger, conceptual response categories, each maintained its distinct description but the two were grouped together as one code (AOB/CK). After removing redundancies and consolidating similar codes, I analyzed resistance based on semantic relationships (Spradley, 1979; 1980) among oppositional strategies to develop the core categories for strategies that challenged bullies. I examined the data descriptors and asked the simple semantic questions "Is X a kind of Y?" "Is X a way to do Y?" "Is X a place for doing Y?" and so forth. For example, *developing powerful allies* and *using external expert*

information as an element of voice were types of *influential allies.* Additionally, *intentions to leave, threats to quit,* and *quitting* were all classified as varieties of *exit.*

Through this preliminary analysis of semantic relationships among resistance strategies, nine overall conceptual categories emerged including *mutual advocacy, contagious voice, emotive-expression, influential allies, grievance, documentation, regulating communication or actions, confrontation,* and *exit.* I reduced these further by simply examining these forms of resistance through the lens of the semantic relationship, "X as a way of doing Y" By means of this secondary semantic analysis, I determined that *mutual advocacy, contagious voice, and emotive-expression* were all forms of *Collective Voice,* and that *influential allies, grievance, and documentation* were all *Reverse Discourse.* Analyzing and classifying responses based on these fundamental semantic relationships among resistance strategies resulted in five overall categories or forms of employees resistance: (a) exodus, (b) collective voice, (c) reverse discourse, (d) subversive (dis)obedience, and (e) confrontation. See Appendix F for a complete list of the 40 resistance strategies grouped by core categories (forms) of resistance.

Saturation codes. I conducted four additional interviews of targets who had previously mentioned their experiences to in casual conversations about my research topic and had successfully overcome bullying at work. I interviewed three women and one man to determine the detailed progression of change that occurred in their situation. All were over two years from the incidents' resolution. I recorded these interviews and transcribed only those sections directly related to action-sequence that moved to organizational change regarding the bullying workplace. Furthermore, I examined their experiences to determine if the five forms of resistance were conceptually saturated

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this manner, I analyzed these four interviews for evidence of new incidents or forms of resistance that had not emerged from the study's original interview data. No substantive forms of resistance were evident in these saturation interviews that had not already emerged in the previous data. However, in one case, the target filed a law suit against the organization for constructive discharge. This could be classified as a form of *exodus* in combination with *reverse discourse*.

Results (organizational changes). I classified the "results" codes, that is the changes targets and witnesses reported occurring in their organizations due to their responses, simply by determining whether the reported change occurred within the organizational systems or relationships. If the organization's relationship with the bully changed, that is, if upper-management took action that negatively impacted the bully such as the bully was fired, demoted, or transferred to a less desirable post, I classified this as "relationship." If the organizational response was to change the system in some way such as bringing in an outside consultant or sending the bullying to training, it was classified as "system."

Trustworthiness of Analysis and Findings

"Qualitative research…[must be] evaluated based on its trustworthiness." (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 297). Lincoln and Guba (1985) provide criteria by which trustworthiness of qualitative research is established that include credibility, dependability, and transferability. "Credibility basically asks whether the study's conclusions 'ring true' for the people studied." (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 298). My hope was that the people with whom I spoke would read the findings and respond with something like, "Yes, that's sounds right although I hadn't thought of it in those terms."

In order to determine whether or not my analysis of resistance "rang true" for those with whom I spoke, I approached five research participants and asked for their feedback on the "findings" chapter. This feedback, alternately called member validation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) or member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) takes the research findings back to the subjects of study to determine whether "participants recognize them as true or accurate" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 242). Bloor (2001) critiques the idea that members checks "can validate findings," however, agrees that participant feedback "may yield new data which throw a fresh light on the investigation and which provide a spur for deeper and richer analyses" (p. 395).

In this case, the five participants and I had communicated multiple times throughout the project and each had expressed considerable interest in the study's development and subsequent findings. I employed Lindlof and Taylor's (2002) description of member checks to corroborate the study's findings. Member checks simply asks those who participated in the study how they interpret specific phenomena and whether the researcher's finding are in sync with that interpretation. The method centers around the belief that the study's validity is strengthened when the researcher's conclusions correspond to the members' understanding of the phenomena being examined (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). I asked five of the people with whom I spoke if they would review the findings and give me feedback. My request was worded as follows:

> One of the ways qualitative researchers "check" to see if their observations and interpretations coincide with research participants' interpretations, is to ask those who participated to review the findings and give their feedback. I recently completed the rough draft of the research findings chapter and am wondering if you'd be interested in reading it and giving me your feedback. It's about 26 pages double-spaced, so it's not extremely difficult to get through.

All five readily agreed, one emailing back with and emphatic, “YES, I would love to!” This enthusiasm demonstrates the overall nature of the relationships that developed between the research participants and me—one that was marked by mutual respect and their knowledge that I cared about the pain they were suffering at the hands of bullies. The feedback I received from member checks focused on three areas: (a) questions asking why bully actions did not appear in the findings, (b) a sense of surprise that their individual actions and collective interactions had been duplicated by others in other workplaces and that these acts had made a difference, and (c) corrections to details in their stories that I had misconstrued. An example of a correction occurred when a participant corrected a bully’s positional title. Another witness corrected the industry and offered a more generic label for her field.

In many cases, participants appeared to be satisfied with the analysis. As one target told me, “I’m glad to see that others are fighting these guys. It got the bully transferred out of here.” They also noted that, at the time of bullying, they perceived their responses more as survival strategies done for self-protection than individual or collective resistance. Their acts were tinged by what might be characterized as dim hope for change overshadowed by a sense of futility. In later drafts of the findings chapter, I decided that to better understand participants’ acts of protest or opposition, it was imperative to include one summarized narrative and examples of the bullying acts. What was most encouraging regarding the member check feedback was that participants felt empowered by reading about their own actions. As one said, “Wow. You really can’t tell you’re doing any good at all when you feel so beaten down. It’s encouraging to see this from a longer view.”

In addition to credibility, I sought to enhance the dependability of the study's findings by making it possible for an external check to be conducted on the study's process. This external check "should make the process *trackable*," (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 298). In other words, an outsider should be able to see how I went from unitizing data, to open coding, to code reduction, to core semantic categories in the interpretive process. To demonstrate the dependability of this analysis, I have provided excerpts of interview transcripts illustrating, among other things, interview tone and content. I have also provided excerpts of unitized codes and examples of the open coding process. Further, I have provided a detailed recounting of the data reduction processes and how I arrived at the five core categories of worker resistance to bullying. Additionally, the analysis and writing has been a collaborative give-and-take between advising professors and me during the progression of the study.

Another central criterion for trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is transferability. I addressed this issue earlier and in more depth but mention it again in this context to reinforce the importance of determining the trustworthiness of my findings. This study seeks in-depth understanding of workers' responses to bullying and does not seek generalized claims. As mentioned earlier, the findings can be judged based on their level of transferability. To demonstrate this criterion, the findings chapter provides detailed descriptions of target and witness resistance to abuse and terrorizing at work. I have endeavored to provide as "thick" a description (Geertz, 1973) as possible, given the method is qualitative interviews and not an ethnographic method. To further address the criterion of transferability, the findings chapter attempts to "provide

sufficient details so that the reader can make the decision about whether to apply the findings elsewhere to a different context or group" (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 298).

I feel confident that the analysis and interpretation of participants' experiences produced through this study meet the rigors set out for qualitative study. At each step, I proceeded with diligence, patience, and advisory feedback from colleagues and other academics. I maintained contact with a group of research participants for the purposes of following their experiences over time and getting their feedback on my interpretations of our interviews. The results of the present study question the characterization of bullying-affected workers as stationary receptors of abuse (targets), and power as a commodity reserved only for those with hierarchical authority. Rather, the findings reveal that far from passively accepting abuse, employees used a wide range of tactics to resist such abuse and, in some cases, result in the bully's removal or other negative sanction.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS: RESISTANCE TO BULLYING

> "In the workplace, dignity is realized through countless small acts of resistance against abuse and an equally strong drive to take pride in one's daily work" (Hodson, 2001, p. 3)

Workers dealing directly with bullying or watching the abuse of their colleagues responded in multiple ways and, unlike the power-deficient targets characterized in workplace bullying literature, were at times able to change organizational arrangements. Many bullying-affected employees started with constructive strategies to resolve or end bullying, changed their strategies several times, and finally decided to leave the organization if these strategies failed to remove the bully. Research participants often recommended that others in the same situation should also leave and seek social support. Acts of resistance that successfully reduced or removed the threat of bullying were most often a result of collective efforts. However, individual resistance marked by disorganized coaction (Martin & Meyerson, 1998), in which individuals complained without knowledge of others' similar acts, also had a cumulative effect over time that attracted the attention of organizational decision makers.

Collective action usually began in hidden transcripts of subordinate workers and remained in these transcripts for months and, in some cases, years before emerging into liminal or public transcripts. Participants often linked their decisions to take action to conversations they had in hidden peer transcripts. Through peer agreement that bullying was occurring and was fundamentally "wrong" individuals reported drawing the strength to go to HR or upper-management with informal and formal complaints. Worker exodus

occurred in all phases of resistance and provided an evidentiary "trace" of resistance later employed by both individuals and groups as verification of serious problems. Whether individually or collectively, participants report feeling conflicted in their responses to bullying.

Employees try to work within, while at the same time resist, the notion of the "ideal worker, who is…not only obedient but is willing to modify any behaviour which managers might define as deviant…The ideal worker is one who 'doesn't rock the boat'" (Jackson & Carter, 1998, p. 57). Or similarly, the good worker is one who can manage organizationally generated stress by being a "good coper…a good little worker" (Newton, 1995, p. 160). Employees who actively resist bullying are often labeled as trouble-makers—sometimes even mentally ill (Leymann, 1996a)—but still feel compelled to step forward and cry foul (Namie & Namie, 2000b). In these situations, remaining silent, that is being a good worker, directly conflicts with discourses of ethics and morality (Johnson, 2001). Participants' constructed narratives try to make sense of and reconcile the values in these conflicting discourses.

Overview

In what follows, I first provide an abbreviated story of one bullying target to illustrate the developmental and escalatory nature of bullying. I offer a sensitizing definition of resistance that guided my coding and subsequent analysis. I briefly critique the "target" label for bullied workers and present the two general forms of resistance in this study: collective acts and disorganized coaction. I emphasize the risks that workers take when they decide to publicly defy supervisors or other bullying managers and bullies' ability to often outflank employee efforts. I present the proportion of the sample

that carried out acts of resistance and follow this with a discussion of the three types of transcripts present in participants' stories. This is followed by qualifying remarks emphasizing that despite employee resistance, workers are often out-matched by managerial bullies. Their resistance is even more remarkable because of this out-matching. Finally and fundamentally, I detail the various types of resistance in participants' narratives. Although the bullying acts in this study are quite similar to those in past research (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Davenport et al., 2002; Hoel et al., 2001; Einarsen et al., 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a; Namie & Namie, 2000b), I include exemplars of bullying and abusive treatment to contextualize acts of resistance.

To better understand and appreciate the strength and courage it takes to resist bullying, I provide one target's narrative and also include examples of bullying woven throughout the resistance findings. Target experiences provide an impression what bullying "feels like" from worker perspectives. Without this contextualization, one might erroneously characterize research participants with pejorative labels such as "insubordinate," "problem-employee," or "trouble-makers." Equally problematic is examining employees acts of self-defense and labeling them self-subordination—in essence blaming workers for their own victimization at the hands of ruthless organizational members. Victim-blaming does a grave injustice to people who defend themselves and their colleagues to reclaim justice and fair treatment at work. I begin by providing a guiding definition of resistance.

Terry's Bullying Experience

Terry was an experienced education and training specialist, a member of numerous national labor and training consortiums, and a sought-after educator often

invited to speak at conferences and provide specialized training for interested groups. She started working for Leslie, the identified bully, six years before my interview with Terry. Terry explained that she immediately recognized problems with Leslie whose first act as the manager was to hire a friend, Lisa, whom she openly favored over others in the workgroup. Leslie often left work with Lisa to go "shoe-shopping" or have lunch and reportedly shared confidential information about other employees with Lisa. In meetings, Leslie and Lisa exchanged looks and "eye rolling" to deride and mock the input of other team members. Eventually, Lisa and Leslie "got into it," Lisa quit, and another of Terry's coworkers emerged as Leslie's "pet."

Terry explained that whenever staff were away from the office on work-related assignments, they usually came back to a "scathing email." As Terry noted, "It isn't safe to be away, and especially if you're not one of the chosen ones at that time." In one case, Terry was sent to monitor another trainer, because Leslie wanted to fire him. During the trip, he told Terry some of the things Leslie had told him about Terry—"what a horrible person I was and how she didn't like my training style. Yet here he was, the one that was going out to monitor his training because she was trying to terminate him." When he returned to work, "he had the nasty email." Leslie also gossiped to others in the workgroup about Terry, telling them that Terry "thought she was so good but wasn't." Terry's coworkers told her what Leslie said, and when Terry asked Leslie about it, Leslie denied having said anything and then shouted at the coworkers who talked to Terry. Terry eventually transferred to work under Bob, a different mid-level manage, but Leslie continued to "go after" Terry through the manager. Terry explained

> With me, I didn't even have to have her as my boss. I would be out in the field, would come back in, and my boss would come back into my office and say, "Did this happen? Did that happen? Did you do this or did you do that?" I'd ask, "Where's this all coming from?" He'd tell me, "Leslie brought this to my attention." I'm like, "Where is this coming from?" He said, "Terry I don't want you to worry about this stuff, but these are just things that Leslie has brought to my attention, so I have to ask you about them."

In some cases, Bob buffered Leslie's requests. Evidently Leslie often told Bob to call Terry in to work on her day off or call her back into work after Terry had gone home for the day. Over time, however, even Bob stopped trying to defend Terry against the constant onslaught. Terry attributed Bob's behavior to the fact that he was soon retiring. As she explained, "he was going to be retiring in six months. Finally after several months, he just threw up his hands and just gave up."

Leslie continued to move up through the ranks and was eventually promoted to the Assistant Director's position over the entire department with only the Director over her. Once in the position with broader authority, Terry's "situation really deteriorated." Terry perceived Leslie's actions as a campaign to drive Terry from the job. Leslie divulged Terry's private medical information to others in the workgroup. Leslie immediately revoked Terry's purchase card, so Terry had to pay for all the training travel expenses out-of-pocket and be reimbursed. Leslie took away no one else's purchase card. Leslie tried to force Terry to resign from national and state education task forces, but Terry continued through her private consulting business. Terry's continuation "was really a thorn in her side" and was short-lived. Through contract negotiations, rescinding her purchase card, forbidding overnight stays during conferences, and other related tactics, Leslie eventually succeeded in getting Terry off these consortiums.

Over the next two years, Leslie continued to withdraw Terry's key duties; moved Terry's office to a small, hot space across from the restroom; refused to make simple ergonomic accommodations for Terry's carpel tunnel syndrome and back injury; and instituted a surveillance procedure in which Terry had to document her actions every 15 to 30 minutes throughout the day. No one else in the office had to do such documentation; no one else's office was moved; no one else's job was changed and degraded. At an earlier point, Terry informed Leslie of a medical condition and Leslie later used that information to document Terry's lack of fitness for her job. Right before Terry quit, she was answering telephones and opening mail after years of being a high level educator in the system. As she put it, I'd gone from a grade 14 professional position to a grade 7 basically."

The continued onslaught eventually affected Terry's mental and physical health. She sought medical care and began counseling. Her doctor urged her to leave the organization and linked Terry's declining health to being systematically abused. She was on medication, while also attending weekly mental health counseling sessions. When Leslie's tactics failed to drive Terry from the organization, Leslie launched an investigation into Terry's allegedly illicit use of organizational resources for personal reasons. A two-month investigation unearthed one 41 cent personal phone call. Leslie was not deterred, however, and within a few months instigated a second investigation similar to the first. This investigation also uncovered nothing of significance. Terry eventually filed an EEOC suit against Leslie after which, Leslie's attitude and treatment of Terry markedly improved. Terry eventually settled the suit and left. She explained the emotional loss of the job in what follows:

> I think that that is what bothered me the most out of all of this. I loved my job. I could not wait to get to work in the morning, and I hated to go home at night. I loved everyday; I loved every minute . It was so enjoyable for me. I liked what I did; it made me feel good. It made me want to get up in the morning, and that's really hard to find. And I just keep looking at it, and I keep thinking why? Why did that happen? Why? Why did it have to happen? Why was someone so deceitful that they wanted this to come down? I did nothing but make her look good, so why?

So many of these experiences are paralleled in other stories of targets and witnesses. At many points, Terry fought back. She filed a grievance with the union. She went to upper-management with her concerns. She appealed Leslie's decisions to rescind the purchase card and remove Terry from the task force/consortiums. She filed and EEOC suit. Terry resisted the bully's efforts at every step and was cheered by her colleagues. Terry explained that "almost daily they'll [coworkers] tell me how impressed they are with me, how strong I am, and that I keep them going." Despite Terry's inability to change the bully's behavior, she resisted throughout the entire experience. This study's findings suggest that acts of resistance build for a considerable period of time in the hidden transcripts within peer groups (e.g., conversations at lunch, during breaks, over drinks after work, etc.) before emerging as public acts.

Resistance Defined

As such, the guiding definition of resistance in this study is fairly broad. I draw from Trethewey (1997) and Ashforth and Mael's (1998) work and classify resistance as *any discursive or nondiscursive act of commission or omission that counters, disrupts, or defies the bully or erodes the bully's material/symbolic base of influence.* This encompasses the multiple ways in which individuals and collectives refused to bend or concede to harsh treatment and abuse. The definition includes both active and passive

agency, so encompasses deliberately failing to carry out commands, as well as filing formal public complaints. Furthermore, this characterization of resistance speaks to the eroding nature of worker opposition, in which subordinates may not have immediate access to resources for bully removal or reprimand but can, over time, wear away the bully's base of veracity and appreciably diminish the bully's resources of power. This definition, and the varieties of resistance found in participants' narratives by using it as a sensitizing device, explicitly question the current bullying literature's characterization of the powerless, defenseless target.

Challenging the Current "Target" Depiction

The current metaphor of "target" to depict employees who are bullied at work denotes a stationary mark for badgering and humiliation—one that might move to avoid abuse but—that is otherwise passive, deficient, or powerless. The narratives of 30 bullying-affected employees suggests a more complex picture of power in bullying environments, however, and are rich with acts of protest. These stories of bullying illustrate, particularly where bullying was common knowledge rather than an isolated attack on a lone target, that both targets and witnesses resist or "fight back" through multiple, creative, and resourceful micro-practices. Workers are not passive marks or stationary targets for "offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, [and] humiliating" (Richards & Daley, 2003, p. 250) treatment.

The drive for ontological security (Giddens, 1991) and the "space between the position of subject offered by [bullying]…and individual interests" (Weedon, 1997, p. 109) will move affected workers to resist, in sometimes hidden, and other times public, struggles for voice, dignity, and respect. Although workers live within and sometimes

reproduce the relations of coercion and domination inherent to managerial discourse (Deetz, 1992), they also resist, reproduce, and transform these relations through day-to-day micro-practices over time (Giddens, 1982). One of the most visible forms of resistance was to unequivocally withdraw one's labor through resignation. The participants in this study more often acted collectively in defiance of abusive treatment than workers in other published accounts of bullying (Davenport et al., 2002; Namie & Namie, 2000b; Rayner et al., 2002).

Collective Acts and Disorganized Coaction

In workplaces where bullying was an agreed upon phenomenon, resistance was many times a collective endeavor marked by "complexity and defensiveness, fragility and precariousness" (Collinson, 1994, p. 55). Collective efforts were sometimes well-organized and other occurred unexpectedly in an ad hoc manner when workplace tensions reached a "boiling point." In collective actions, employees became aware of others' concurrence with their perceptions that something was terribly wrong and subsequently formulated plans to defend against the bully's abuse and psychological terrorizing. In other cases, resistance was individual and cumulative but emerged as a result of others' concurrence of wrongdoing. In these cases resistance was "fragmented, dispersed, and uncoordinated [acts of] *disorganized coaction* [in which] individuals [were] doing somewhat similar things without explicit coordination" (Martin & Meyerson, 1998, p. 317).

In disorganized coaction, employees resisted independent of their coworkers and, at times, reported being unaware of others' resistance until after upper-management had taken public action against the bully or the bully wordlessly disappeared. Despite being

unaware of each others' struggles, the combined stream of individual opposition to bullying cumulatively constituted a pattern of collective resistance. In these cases, individual complaints built to a critical point where they gained the attention of organizational powerholders and/or persons who monitored the organization's adherence to internal and external formalized systems of power (i.e., labor unions, human resources, legal advisors). Worker exodus—whether an act of resistance, survival, or both—was one of the most visible forms of defiance and provided material evidence detrimental to bullying organizational members.

Risks of Resistance

Whether oppositional acts were carried out individually or in groups, resisting workers faced a number of risks to their employment and reputation. Critical scholars who label workers as self-subordinating based solely on readings of the public transcripts of deference should bear in mind the material risks to workers who openly defy the source of their livelihood. In order to avoid "blaming the victim" (Ryan, 1967) and being another source of systemic oppression, albeit inadvertent, critical scholars must recognize "how low-profile forms of resistance can lead to systematic undermining of the dominant hegemony" (Mumby, 1997, p. 17). Research participant stories were struck through with acts of courage, particularly since these workers resisted authority at great risk to their employment. Any defiance or resistance to employment-linked authority risked workers' income, and by association, the ability to meet basic human needs. One woman explained that after she went to HR and filed a report, she "walked around all day thinking, oh my God, what have I done to myself? I'm going to get fired now, because I opened myself." She continued, saying that despite being extremely frightened,

she took what she believed was morally correct action. It is probable that if these workers had the personal wealth to walk away from wage-based work, they would.

Their resistance is more remarkable since they do not have such wealth and may have little or no other employment options. All the people with whom I spoke said they needed their jobs; some lived in small communities where other work meant driving more than 100 miles from home. Some worked in specialized fields with few options outside of completely retraining for another career. Despite their job embeddedness, many still reported a moral imperative to act, to reclaim their and their colleagues' dignity, and demand an end to the abuse. Kristie explained her feelings in this way:

> I said to Betty, the administrator, I have a responsibility to speak up, and I feel that these people show you a whole other side of themselves than they show us…. I said,…I know they tell you a totally different story, Betty. In time, truth will bear me out, but they're gonna get the department in a lot of trouble. But, if somebody comes to me and says, did you try to do anything? I can say, "You bet I did and I've paid a hell of a price."

This sentiment was present in many stories of those who stood up to bullies. Kristie and others tried to get decision-makers to believe their version of workplace interactions. Bullies, often with direct channels of communication to upper-managers, reported considerably different versions in which the targeted workers were the problem. Kristie went to Betty out of a moral imperative to act—one that she could later claim with pride that she had taken action. Nonetheless, this action was extremely costly for her. Soon afterward, the bully heard about Kristie's conversation with the upper-manager and turned her "attentions" to Kristie.

Given what appear to be overwhelming odds and incredible costs, it is somewhat unbelievable that employees resist at all. Scott (1990) puts a fine point on it by asking,

> how is it that subordinate groups… have so often believed and acted as if their situations were not inevitable when a more judicious historical reading would have concluded that it was?... [what requires explanation is] an understanding of a *misreading* of subordinate groups that seems to exaggerate their own power, the possibilities for emancipation, and to underestimate the power arrayed against them. If the elite-dominated public transcript tends to naturalize domination, it would seem that some countervailing influence manages often to denaturalize domination. (Scott, 1990, p. 79)

Workers are surrounded by discourse that conflicted with the bullied worker subject position and thus provided space for resistance. Workplace bullying violates the norm of civil interaction and elements of the social contract between employee and employer (Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002). In modernity, this contract inherently forbids abusive, humiliating, and demoralizing treatment. Workers can imagine a "counterfactual social order [and] do not appear to have been paralyzed by an elite-fostered discourse intended to convince them that efforts to change the situation are hopeless." (Scott, 1990, 81-82). Potentially, visions of "empowerment, devolved responsibility, and the widespread reversal of repressive workplace… found in popular management books" (Sewell, 1999, p. 397) provide a possibility that, in spite of evidence to the contrary, moved participants in this study to resist bullies in multiple ways.

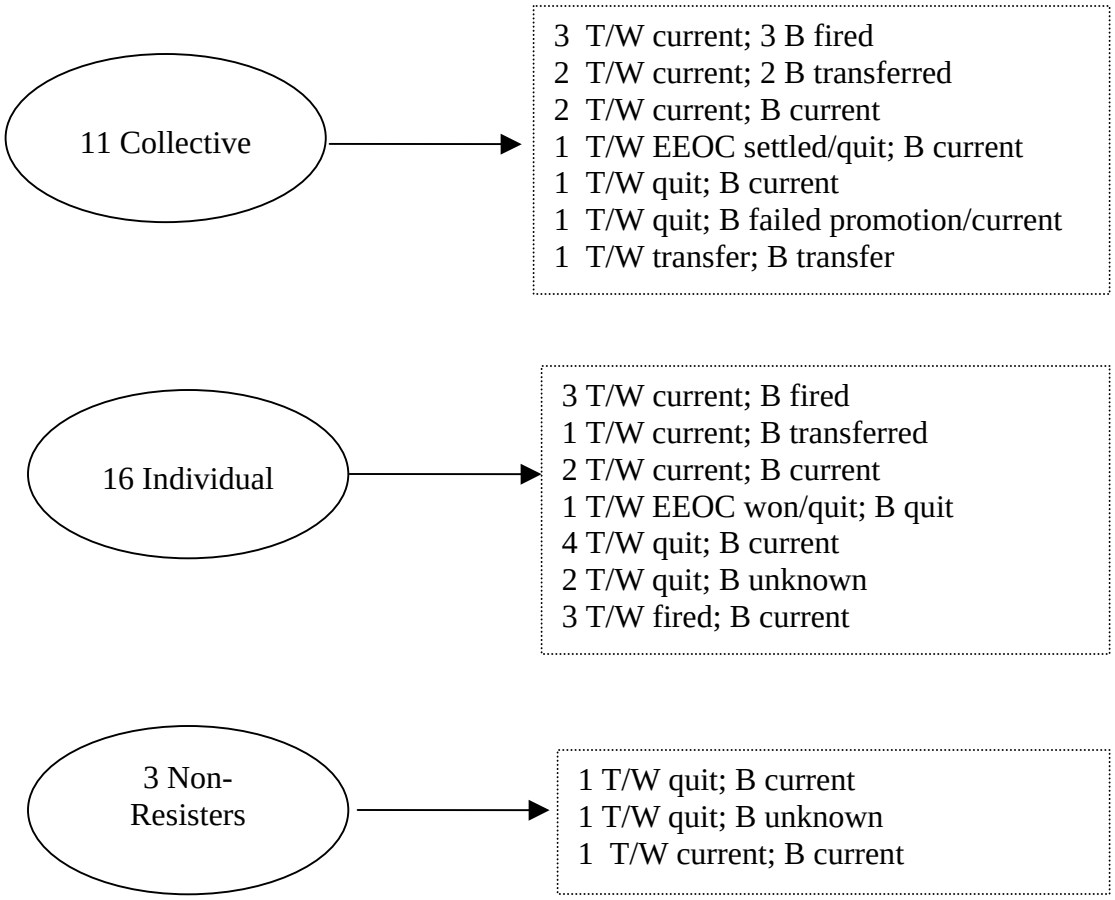
Resistance in Study Sample

In many cases, I classified quitting as an act of resistance and do so for specific reasons. First, experts in life stressors indicate that changes in employment are one of the most stressful experiences of adult life (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Second, participants explicitly stated that quitting was their way of saying, "No. I'm not going to put up with being abused or bullied." Furthermore, the *definitive* form of resistance and empowerment in domestic violence cases is when the victim escapes the batterer (Hoff,

1990; Gondolf, 1988). As such, I classify most decisions to quit as reflective, measured acts of public resistance. Of the three who I classified as non-resisters, two quit their jobs. These women said they would have quit regardless of the bullying, so I did not code their resignations as resistance. The third woman is still at the job and trying to cope. As she told me, “I just keep my head out of the line of fire.”

Thirty bullying-affected employees participated in this study and 11 collectively tried to stop the bullying. Of these eleven, seven are currently at their jobs, two quit, one transferred within the organization, and one filed an EEOC suit, settled with the organization and subsequently quit. Three of the bullies in the collective-resistance situations were fired and three were transferred. One bully failed to secure a promotion but remains on the job. Sixteen of the research participants individually resisted bullying. Six of these people quit their jobs, one filed an EEOC suit, won and then quit, three were fired, and six are still at the job. Three of the bullies in the individual-resistance situations were fired, and one was transferred within the organization. In one case, an employee filed and won an EEOC case and the bully subsequently quit. For those who resisted collectively, in over 54% of the cases, the bully was fired or transferred. None of the collective-resistance employees were fired. For those who resisted individually, 19% of the employees were fired and, in 31% of the cases, the bully was fired, transferred, or quit. Three in the collective group quit (27%), while seven of the individual group quit (44%). Figure 1 depicts the resistance and current case status as of this writing. These data are a subset of the data in Appendix B. (T/W indicates targets/witnesses—research participants; B indicates bully).

Figure 1
Resistance and Case Status



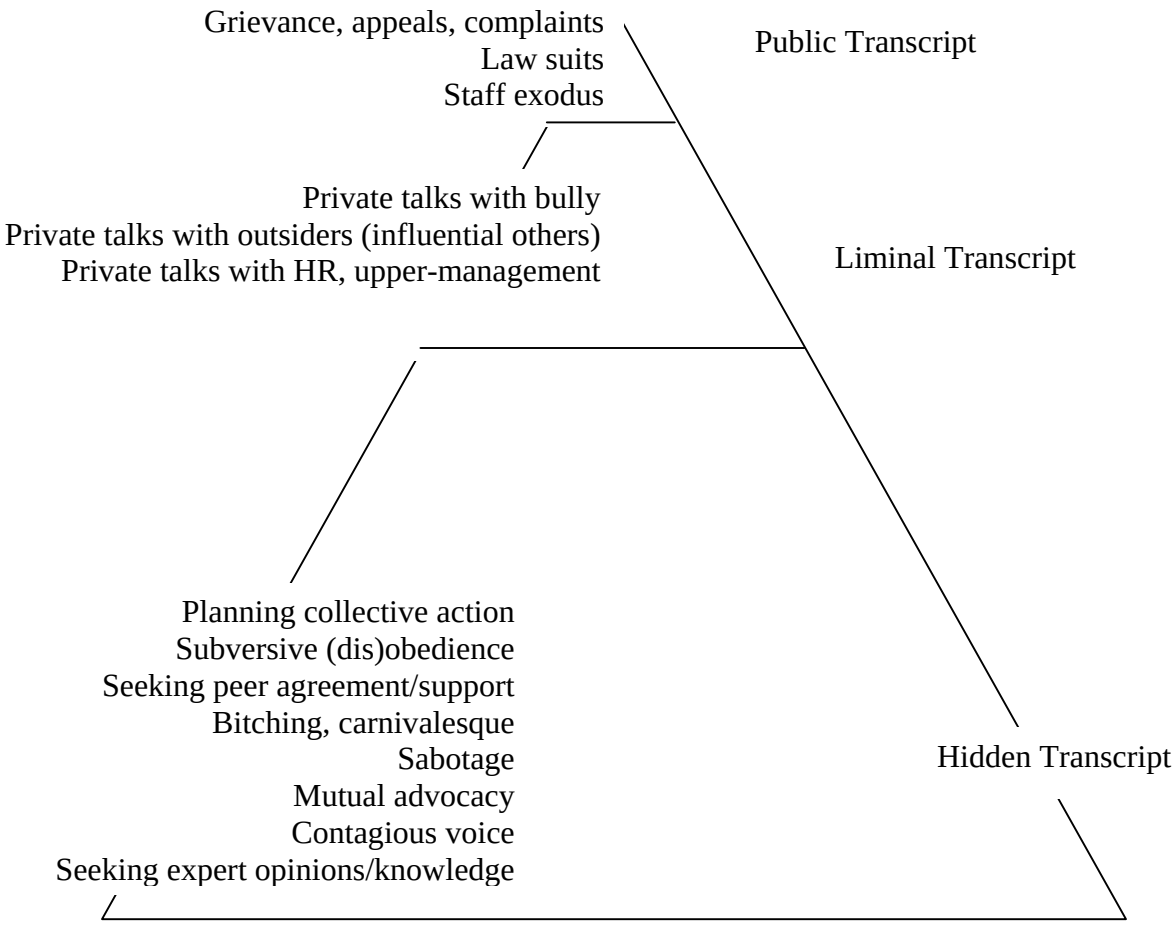
Workers who cooperatively resist may be less likely to lose their jobs through firing; collective knowledge of abuse could buffer collective workers in some manner. Collective resisters also seemed more likely to report organizational actions taken against the bullies. Workers who resisted in groups appeared to remain in their jobs more often than individual resisters. Rayner (1997) found that "where the smaller the number in the group being bullied, the shorter the duration of the bullying" (p. 203). Her conclusion was, "It would appear that people bullied on their own resolve the situation faster than those bullied in groups" (p. 203). On the other hand, workers who have cooperative support and resist as groups may be likely to stay in bullying workplaces because they envision the possibility of change from collective efforts. Collective resistance usually began in private conversations between and among peers at work.

Hidden, Liminal, and Public Transcripts

Research participants repeatedly told me of their efforts to hide their plans of action to stop the bullying. As Diane explained, "Kelly was the only one I trusted who I didn't think would turn on me. We spent a lot of time at lunch and during the trips to—driving to—other clinics trying to figure out, to make some kind of plan to get her off our backs." Initial discussions about abuse and potential remedies took place in private, low-profile conversations of hidden peer transcripts involving only a few trusted coworkers. Subsequent opposition and action plans appeared in, what I call, liminal transcripts involving selected, potentially "safe" others outside the peer network. In some cases, these hidden and liminal exchanges emerged into the public transcript and many others in the workgroup and upper-management became aware of the protest.

Although most resistance appeared to occur in the relative safety of hidden transcripts (Scott, 1990), the public-private nature of resistance suggested what appeared to be a third transcript situated between hidden and public. Participants' experiences suggested a third, liminal space between the private hidden transcripts of subordinate groups and the public transcripts public performances that appealed to the expectations of the dominant group (Scott, 1990). I call this a liminal, semi-public transcript, and it included a few trusted outsiders such as upper-managers and influential experts. In other cases, private conversations with the bully took place in this liminal region. Figure 2 depicts the three levels of resistance transcripts and the resistant acts reported to occur as efforts move into the public transcript.

Figure 2
Resistance in Hidden, Liminal, and Public Transcripts



Three disclosure levels for resistance emerged in participant narratives and provided space for a variety of oppositional practices. Participants reported that considerable complaining, sharing with others, and planning was necessary to encourage taking complaints from hidden and liminal spaces into the public transcripts. Participants accessed expert knowledge, gathered allies, spoke privately to trusted upper-managers, and talked to the bully in these liminal transcripts. Rick, a witness working in city government, described this liminal space.

> I've built up some pretty good support for getting rid of her [bully], because I've talked to a lot of union people who know what's going on here, and a couple legislators know about it. So if I take this further, it's gonna be hard for her to defend herself. I've had lots of talks with the union rep and the guy's a bulldog—a typical anti-management union thug. He loves it, and so, you know, I have him on my side.

Liminal conversations seemed to be a "testing ground" of sorts, and it was only when change efforts carried out in this semi-private arena failed to stop the bullying or contributed to escalated bullying that employees took their complaints public or exited the organization. Resistance usually moved from hidden to liminal to public—if resistance "went public"—but this was not always the case. Sometimes, targets' first strategy was privately talking to bullies or upper-managers, and they did not speak with coworkers until after hearing that coworkers were also suffering.

Qualifying Provisions

To avoid presenting a romantic, non-problematic picture of resistance to aggressive abuse at work, I qualify the following analysis with several provisions. In this study, all but one bully were managers, supervisors or upper-managers. As such, bullies often had access to a broader spectrum of organizational resources, not the least of which

was the unquestioned power of their hierarchical positions. Bullies, targets, and witnesses never questioned this managerial prerogative and bureaucratic power. Bullies also had direct access to upper-managers and were often the only channel of direct communication to those decision-makers. As such, bullies were often able to outflank employees' resistance efforts (Clegg, 1994). Outflanking is a battle strategy in which the nearby party attacks indirectly or from the side.

Bullies reportedly undermined employee power by reframing the meanings of what occurred, breaking the "rules," or changing the goals as the encounter proceeded. Resistance often evoked retaliatory bullying acts that escalated; the more the employees resisted, the more the bullies increased abusive, stigmatizing tactical efforts to regain lost ground. Moreover, when employees decided to fight back, they paid a high price for their resistance and were subjected to escalated abuse, impugned reputations, and insinuations of mental imbalance. Many reported taking antidepressants, undergoing mental health therapy, and visiting medical doctors to deal with deteriorating physical and psychological health. Whether or not this was linked to resistance is unknown, but if resistance increased bullying and bullying is linked to damaged health (Leymann, 1990; M. J. Scott & Stradling, 2001), then resistance may have been a contributing factor.

Resisting workers initially believed their concern would be shared by organizational decision-makers. They found, however, that the organization was reluctant to respond except to turn the attention of their investigation on the reporting worker. In three cases, reporting workers were fired and the bully stayed at the job. In one of those instances, the bully was promoted. In other cases, however, resistance resulted in an ultimate shift in organizational relationships and the bully was discharged,

demoted, transferred or failed to secure a coveted promotion. In what follows, I examine these oppositional practices.

Forms of Resistance

A set of readily applicable categories of worker resistance to bullying does not exist, since the topic is understudied in the U.S. and the current perspective reflects an implicit or explicit agreement that targets are power-deficient. Although there are a few studies on coping with bullying (Hogh & Dofradottir, 2001; Zapf & Gross, 2001), there is little or no research directly examining how bullying-affected workers fight back. Other studies of resistance, although unquestionably informative, do not generally address the level of emotional coercion, terrorizing, and fear present in bullying—dynamics that necessarily alter actors' resistance strategies and tactics.

The present empirical analysis suggests that workers experiences with bullying and their acts of resistance to it are complex and resourceful. Participants reported being scared but protested nonetheless. The range and creativity in participants' narratives was noteworthy, and indeed, "codifying the types of resistant consciousnesses testifies to a remarkable ingenuity and creativity" (Clegg, 1994, pp. 288-89). Bullying-affected worker narratives demonstrated five creative, sometimes fragmented, forms of resistance that included (a) exodus, (b) collective voice, (c) reverse discourse, (d) subversive (dis)obedience, and (e) confrontation. If these strategies were to have a theme song, it would be David Allan Coe's country-western piece, "Take This Job and Shove It," since so many workers and their colleagues exited the organization irrespective of resistance and protest. I include Table 4 that summarizes research participants' pseudonyms,

industries in which bullying occurred, and status at the time of this writing for reference in the following exemplars. Table 4 data are an excerpt of data in Appendix B.

Table 4
Research Participants
Grouped by Collective, Individual and No Resistance

Sex	Pseudonym	T/W	industry	Status
Collective Resistance				
M	Mark	T/W	social services	T/W Current; B Fired
M	Kurt	W	legal profession	W Current ; B Fired
M	Rick	W	city govt	W Current; B Fired
M	Andy	T/W	Insurance	T/W Current ; B Transfer
F	Linda	W	primary ed	W Current; B Transferred
M	Ben	T/W	communications	T/W Current; B Current
F	Kristie	T/W	transportation	T/W Current; B Current
F	Terry	T/W	education & training	T/W Quit; EEO settled; B Current
F	Amy	W	sports fishing	W Quit; B Current
M	Steve	W	dept labor	W Quit; B Failed Promotion (Current)
M	Greg	T/W	police department	T/W Transfer; B Transfer
Individual Resistance				
F	Diane	T/W	nursing	T/W Current ; B Fired
F	Kim	T/W	city economic counsel	T/W Current; B Fired
F	Carmen	T/W	mental health	T/W Current; B Fired
F	Mary	T/W	law enforcement admin	T/W Current; B Transfer
F	Sylvia	T/W	food service	T/W Quit; EEOC won; B Quit
M	David	T/W	IT help technician	T/W Quit; B Current
F	Lucy	T/W	publishing company	T/W Quit; B Current
M	Johnny	W	travel agency	W Quit; B Current
M	Glen	W	mental health	W Quit; B Current
M	Ken	T/W	large retail chain	T/W Quit; B Unknown
M	Dan	W	medical supplies sales	W Quit; B Unknown
M	Brad	T/W	substance abuse treatment	T/W Current; B Current

F	Michelle	W	restaurant facility management	W Current; B Current
M	Lynn	T/W	security	T/W Fired; B Current
F	Shelley	T/W	consulting firm	T/W Fired; B Current
M	Ted	T/W	mining	T/W Fired; B Current

No Resistance

F	Georgia	W	advertising	W Quit; B Current
F	Jane	T/W	hardware retail	T/W Quit; B Unknown
F	Lydia	T/W	electrical retailer	T/W Current; B Current

Key: T/W-bullying target and witness, W-bullying witness; B-bully; Current-person still at the job; Unknown-whereabouts not known at time of research

Exodus

I chose the term *exodus* to underscore the flood of resignations, firings, transfers, requests for transfer, and long-term leave that characterized workgroups where bullying was rampant. Exodus includes physical separation from the job—quitting—but also includes intent to leave, threats to leave, requests for transfers, and transfers. Targets of abuse, and the coworkers who see peer abuse, abandon jobs when bullying is left unchecked (Rayner et al., 2002). Participants reported aiding in each other's exit strategies and sometimes finding their coworker friends other positions. A number of the participants exited immediately upon recognizing the abusive treatment. Others left after months and even years of resistance and efforts to make things right.

The exodus of employees in organizations created a visible, public trace of resistance. Exodus, in this sense, could be considered a type of disorganized coaction (Martin & Meyerson, 1998) that cumulatively eroded the bully's symbolic and material base of influence over time. This erosion occurred whether or not actors' intentions when quitting were to make a defiant statement. Turnover is a "measurable" indicator of workplace dysfunction and most upper-managers understand it as such. Turnover figures also became validating data for those speaking up or filing complaints and, as such, also served as reverse discourse, a strategy detailed in a later section. Turnover was costly for organizations and for bullies when their income was thusly associated, such as was the case with Johnny in the advertising agency. Johnny noted that when valuable agents left due to bullying, the agents usually took advertising clients with them. Staff turnover was ubiquitous in these workplaces.

All interview respondents reported their own and their peers' intent or desire to leave. Worker exodus extended beyond the research participants to narratives about others' fleeing from the hostile environment. Steve, a witness to bullying in a government office, declared, "a year ago I was ready to quit and go to work as a Wal-Mart greeter with a master's degree. Some people left for lower paying jobs." Steve catalogued a litany of coworker health problems for those who were still at the job.

> Tammy has gone on FMLA (family and medical leave) for over ten months. Debbie has had chronic diarrhea for going on two years. Jenny, who was another one of this group [that the bully supervised] before she [the bully] took this other higher level job, was out chronically for probably three or four months of the last year. Kim's been sick an awful lot. Other people in the office—the two receptionists were sick all the time. Anybody that she had a hard-on for, so to speak, got sick, and all this sickness and stress was because of her.

Steve eventually left his job after working there for over 15 years. He was a highly trained, technical specialist in his field and resigned giving his employer three days notice. In an email he told me,

> I thought when [the bully] didn't get the promotion, she'd settle down but they didn't do anything to her, you know, just kinda left her to run amuck and sweet talk the new director. She got him [new director] off to the side and started poisoning him right away on us. When this job came open in [another state office], I grabbed it and left. I'd had enough. I mean, I did everything I could to get them to listen to me about this woman, and nobody did anything except not give her the promotion, but anyway, I spent two days training my replacement for something it took me years to learn and was out of there. Let 'em go down in flames!

Steve's story is interlaced throughout this report, so more of his actions are present elsewhere. However, he worked with others, organized a group of resisters, engaged the union representative, and filed unfair labor complaints. At two points, he went to upper-management and spoke to the bully's boss. Unfortunately in this case, the division lost vast organization knowledge when he left.

In another organization, eight out of 24 people left when the bully was promoted to interim director. Over the period of six months from my first interview with Terry and subsequent follow ups, six others quit for other positions. She finally quit after being bullied for nearly two years, because her physician warned,

> Terry you've got to get out of there; it's a hostile work environment. I can go back to October of 2002 and see how your health has deteriorated. I have your progress documented on a graph and can show you that since October 2002, your condition has steadily deteriorated. I told my doctor, "I can tell you what happened in October 2002. Leslie [the bully] was put in the supervisor's position."

In some cases participants quit in a way they hoped would communicate their dissatisfaction, although they did not necessarily explicitly state this to anyone. Johnny, a man working in a travel agency, reported "I looked around and thought *no fucking way* was I gonna stick around this nut job. I figured the big boss would get the picture if he lost enough of us." On the other hand, Amy, a witness to the brutal bullying of her coworkers, said she wanted her resignation to "send a message to the bully" that she quit because of his abusive treatment of staff.

> He crossed *my* personal line in the sand… so I quit. I just walked in and told him, "I'm out of here." I wanted him alone, because I know him well enough that if he had people with him, it would puff him up and empower him to start yelling and screaming….I had a paper in my hand…and he says, "What's that?" And I said, "That's my resignation." And he said, "*What*?" And I said, "It's my resignation." [And he replied], "What the hell's the matter with you?" Like, 'What's the matter with you *today*?'…And I said, "Don, there's too many inequities here and I've witnessed too much abuse…" [He interrupted], "What *kind* of fucking abuse?! There's something *wrong* with you!" And I said, "That may be your perception, but I am no longer happy here. I'm moving on." And he was shocked, so he said after all of that, "There's something *Goddamn wrong with you*." And I said, "Think what you may. That's the problem. I've seen so many people give their resignation here Don, really good people, and as soon as they give their resignation, you chill them out. They become "persona non grata," and they become invisible, and I'm not prepared to do that. I'm leaving at the end of the day today. Then he hit the roof, so he said, "Consider yourself chilled."

Amy went on to say she doubted whether or not this made much of an impact on him because, “he always blamed these things on the moon or something, menopause or something. It was never his fault.” Nonetheless, her resignation and departing conversation with Don were indicative of her desire to make a statement. At least in this data set, staff exodus was reported as the norm rather than the exception.

Indeed, a witness in facilities management of a large restaurant chain reported that few employees lasted under the bully—most left within twelve months of hire. Additionally, internal candidates within the organization looking for transfers did not apply for these openings, because the bully’s reputation for being “impossible to work for” was well known. The bully listened in on her employees’ phone calls, kept secret files on their activities, barred them from socializing with coworkers, and severely punished anyone who questioned her—eventually finding a way to fire the questioning person. Michelle, the witness with whom I spoke, reported warning away others who were thinking about applying to work for the bully. Another witness in an advertising agency said no one stayed long with the organization.

> It wasn’t a good atmosphere. It was kind of place where you went to get experience and as soon as you got it, you would leave. In that year and a half, from the time that I got hired and from the time that I left, she had a whole new office staff. There was a complete turnover.

Other exit-related strategies included requests for transfer, threats to quit, and indicators of intention to quit (i.e., applying/ interviewing elsewhere, using office computers for job search). Dan, a medical supplies salesperson, witnessed the bully’s political manipulation of others at work for over a year. Then the bully was promoted, and Dan claimed, “the minute that happened, I asked twice to be moved out of her

department and it was granted." Unfortunately, the request was not fulfilled, but Dan told upper-managers and an audience of coworkers why he wanted the transfer. His transfer and conversations with others contributed to the erosion of this bully's symbolic base of influence with the workgroup. Dan's peers continued to exit the organization after witnessing his unsuccessful attempt to transfer, and eventually, Dan quit as well.

In a similar case when a bully was promoted, David, an IT technician, asked if upper-management would restructure the division, placing his unit under the management of a different organizational section. Although the organization actually began working on his request, the bully later convinced upper-management to leave things in the current formation.

Carmen, a mental health nurse in a large HMO, worked for a new bullying nurse manager for a short period of time, before transferring to get away from the bully. Carmen described what it was like when the bully started the job.

> She came in, and she told everybody she was the boss, and we would all now do things her way. And um, she's really intimidating. And if we didn't, we would be brought up on charges of insubordination and, um. Basically, kind of like that. It was, you know, um just intimidating. Right in your face—less than an inch away from your face, where her spit would hit you in the face.

Carmen's transfer was temporary, and she lived in feared of having to go back to work for this woman. The organization, however, decided to fire the bully, in part, because the HMO could not keep nurses in that particular program. Nurses with considerable tenure in the organization would transfer into the program and transfer out as soon as an opening came available. According to Carmen, the HMO fired the bully, because "they figured she was too much of a liability."

When a number of workers voiced intentions to leave collectively, upper-managers appeared more willing to intervene—potentially due to the disruption and cost associated with major staff turnovers. In a nonprofit organization, a group of workers, including four line managers and three support staff, privately approached a board member about the bullying director. The bullying director had been in her position for over eight years. The board of directors had intervened a number of times when employees filed formal complaints, but the director summarily fired each of the complainants within a few days of the grievance.

Excellent staff, trained nurses, nutritionists, and therapists, came and exited quickly when they saw "how crazy she was." The bullying director publicly screamed and raged at staff members, at times sat weeping in the board room for unknown reasons, maintained secret files on many staff members, threw office materials and furniture when she was angry, slammed doors in people's faces, and brooked no argument or discussion regarding her decisions or actions. This particular group of employees decided if things did not change, they had no choice but to find other jobs. They met secretly with a board member stating upfront their intentions to resign, and the board eventually fired the bully.

In Steve's case at the government office, he saw that one of his valued colleagues was planning to quit, so he approached the upper-manager. He explained,

> Patty was ready to quit, and I had to go or, you know, at least I thought she was ready to quit, so that's why I had to call up the administrator at the noon hour and say, "hey we need to talk otherwise you're going to lose more employees."

Coworkers also assisted each other in efforts to find other jobs. Mary witnessed the abuse of a secretary for months and wanted to help. When she heard that one of the

division chiefs was seeking a new secretary, she suggested that the chief consider her friend Sarah. Mary explained,

> My friend Sarah complained about how the colonel [an office bully] was treating her, because he was still being an ass. He knew that she was questioned during the investigation [into his mistreatment of another employee] who filed a grievance. Afterwards, she was just miserable. We thought she was going to freak out. I talked to Nash, who is the division chief of detectives, and I said, "Do you want a secretary? Sarah's talking about going to the chief to request to be moved *somewhere*. What do you think?" And he said, "Well, I don't know her but sure." And I said, "She'd be great." And she thanks me at least twice a week. It's like night and day, now that she's been moved.

Employees talked about wanting to "save" others by taking them along if they quit. Steve explained that he wanted to leave the job but hated to leave Kim, his friend and coworker. The perfect solution would be if he could find himself a job in which he could bring her along.

> I thought, well, I can't leave Kim there, because if I do, then she's all alone there. I mean, you know what would perfect? Maybe I'm dreaming and pied piping, but the perfect thing would be for me to get another job, and me to bring her with me.

"Pied piping" alludes to Robert Browning's' children's story of the Pied Piper of Hamlin who played his musical pipe, first to extract rats and then children from the town. Inherent to this allusion is a desire to protect coworkers and a sense of camaraderie and friendship among bullying-affected workers. This camaraderie was also present in workers' collective voice where colleagues strategized plans to change organizational systems.

Collective Voice

Collective voice is a number of employees talking amongst themselves about the bullying and what they could or should do about stopping the abuse. Eleven participants reported collective efforts to end bullying. These employees gravitated toward and

sought out colleagues to validate their individual perceptions, provide reassurance and support for emotional pain, and brainstorm solutions to stop the bullying. Collective voice in these situations differed subtly from social support which is "connectedness to others through network relationships" (Sass & Mattson, 1999, p. 515). Like social support, collective voice provided connectedness and a buffer for stress, but collective voice had a distinct action-orientation absent in social support. Affected employees talked to each other to find out what they could *do* about the bullying. Collective voice often resulted in strategies to counter, disrupt, and defy bullying and seemed to occur through the reciprocally constitutive dynamics of mutual advocacy and contagious voice. I separate them here for descriptive purposes only.

Mutual Advocacy

Mutual advocacy included sharing collective knowledge about the bully's abuse in a way that drew collegial support from others. Expressions of collective knowledge underscored that the bully's reputation for cruelty and mistreatment was notoriously and widely known inside and outside the workgroup. Mutual advocacy developed from this agreement about the bully and included backing up coworkers, protecting coworkers from the bully, and developing a feeling of worker solidarity. Participants described their experiences of mutual advocacy with metaphors of connectedness, as if they had fought and survived a war. Amy described the bully's treatment of executive staff in what follows:

> Veins would pop out of his head, he'd spit, he'd point, he'd threaten daily, all day long to anyone in his way, every day that I was there. *Every single day*. Oh, yelling! … When the level went up in a conversation where I could start hearing it, and I could see his eyes bulging, his veins and everything, spitting, and pointing his finger. When I could hear what they were saying,…I would get up

> *and just go for a walk* somewhere. That was daily, with many people, all the time. He talked on speakerphone all the time, so he would yell in the speakerphone at his general managers of what ever resort he [the general manager] was at, and always, never alone, never alone. He always had witnesses in the office. And that's something I noticed, he never, very rarely would do anything one-on-one. He always had an entourage of witnesses.

The bully's reputation was widely known in the community as well. Amy explained that people would say to her, "Oh my God, you work for Williams? What the hell are you doing *there*? Are you *crazy*?" To this she reported replying, "Yeah, I work for Don Williams" and went on to say, "It's like a badge of honor to say I worked for this guy and survived." Tim also remarked that he and his colleagues felt "like survivors of a shipwreck," and Lynn claimed he and his coworkers often felt like "war veterans."

Terry, a education and training professional, reported that common knowledge about the bully helped her file a claim with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC officer Terry approached had previously worked under the bully and, as a result, was eager to help Terry file the complaint. Since the officer knew firsthand about the bully's abusive treatment of staff, she was able to help Terry frame the complaint using this as background knowledge. Moreover, this mutual advocacy increased Terry's commitment to filing the complaint and soothed some of her fears. As she put it, "it was comforting for me to know that they knew Leslie [the bully]."

Lynn, a man in the security business, expressed the belief that only those in the situation could really understand. "It's so bizarre—so off the wall—that no one believes it unless they've been there." He found it difficult to convince outsiders but found considerable support from others who also witnessed the bullies' tirades. In Lynn's case, the bullying owner would call people to the fifth floor conference room over the

intercom. Everyone knew that the fifth floor conference room was “where he held court.” According to Lynn, this occurred

> every single day…with just a string of people. The intercom would be going off all the time, “so-and-so to the fifth floor conference room, so-and-so to the fifth floor conference room,” or I’d see people *running,* literally *running,* down the halls. And you'd say, "going to the fifth floor?" And they'd say "yeah." ….You know it's just, it's just *bizarre*! I've used that word over and over and over again about bizarre behavior…He’d *scream,* oh yeah, *screaming*! You’d never know why he called you, so you couldn’t prepare yourself. So you’d stand there with no answers to his questions, and that made him even madder. So his face would get beet-red, and he’d *slam* his hands down, stand up, and start shaking his finger at you, and screaming “Get out of here! Get out of my sight!" Everyone waiting outside heard all of it, and you’d go out and the next person went in for the kill.

In this situation, the bully’s ruthlessness was legendary among employees. Agreement among peers bolstered their confidence, and in one case, encouraged an employee to file a lawsuit for Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress (Yamada, 2000).

Collective knowledge of the bully’s ruthlessness countered the bully’s versions of workplace interactions, usually interpretations that blamed workers for their own mistreatment. Linda, and a number of other teachers in the school where she worked, were aware of the bully’s abuse of others so bolstered one another’s efforts to report the abuse. The mutual advocacy in Linda’s school made it difficult for the bully to turn teachers against one another. In this respect, mutual advocacy disrupted and weakened the bully’s ability to emotionally and psychologically tear down those targeted. Furthermore, teachers in the school defended each other from the bully. Mutual defense countered the bullying dynamics and adulterated the bully’s aggression. In a similar, less direct way, choosing to “do otherwise” to protect coworkers or subordinates from the bully’s abuse disrupted bullying.

Although targets in published accounts commonly decry colleagues' lack of active help (Namie & Namie, 2000a; Rayner, et al., 2002), participants in this study reported defending, not only colleagues, but also subordinates. In cases where workers did not come to their peers' mutual defense, witnessing others reported feeling haunted by the experience. Michelle, a witness in the facility management division of a national restaurant chain, told me a targeted coworker asked for her help. Because Michelle feared becoming a target and potentially losing her job, she remained silent. She explained,

> Shelly [the target] asked us at one point, after she went to human resources…if we would write letters to human resources, and we were *afraid* to, because if we had, we were just opening the door for us to get in trouble, you know? And I felt *really, really* bad about that, because I was definitely on her side. I had told her, and all of us had, we told her, "If they will come and talk to us, we will tell them what we've seen." But they didn't come and ask us – 'they' being the human resources people or the people who are above [the upper-manager]. Nobody asked. And then Shelly asked us to just *go*, and we *didn't*, because we were afraid – we were afraid to march in there, you know. If they had come and asked, we would have but they didn't.

Michelle's experience suggests negative emotional consequences for failing to provide mutual advocacy to colleagues, despite compelling rational reasons to stay quiet. In this case, Michelle lived in a rural part of the southern U.S. and drove over 50 miles to work. The restaurant franchise was the only major employer in the area. Certainly the decision to withhold public voice was constrained by multiple factors. Michelle reiterated, however, at a number of points that she felt guilty about this decision. It was not as if Michelle did nothing, however; she spoke to the upper-manager on more than one occasion about what she witnessed, asking him to intervene. Additionally, she strategized ways to complain about the bully and the upper-manager's failure to take

action by reporting this on the company's annual staff survey. In another situation, protecting others was a moral impetrative.

In a sports fishing business where the bully-owner, Don, publicly humiliated and ridiculed his middle management vice presidents, the managers had an explicit "code of honor." Amy, an administrative assistant and witness, explained this code.

> Don will have a piece of paper in his hand and say, "That's wrong! Goddamn it that's wrong! Goddamn it Karl, can't you control your goddamned department? What the fuck's wrong with this thing? I want I know who did this?" Karl will not [implicate his staff]. He will say, "Don, that's my department. The buck stops here." He'll take it for his staff. That's a given. That's an absolute given. The guy with the highest rank takes it. *Yes*! Under all circumstances, the guy with the highest rank takes it.

For this workgroup, "taking it for their staff" was a code of honor. In the face of a particularly brutish, cruel bully, the managers and vice-presidents, who were subjected to ongoing abuse, determined that protecting their subordinate staff was a fiduciary responsibility. Since these high-level employees earned substantial salaries and had broadly expansive authority over administrative departments and fishing facilities, protecting their subordinates from the bully developed into a matter of honor. This kind of mutual advocacy often emerged from conversations in hidden transcripts.

Steve, a witness in a government agency, reported the lunch time walks he took with his colleague Kim and credits this mutual advocacy for helping them maintain emotional control at work, providing an a channel of release for their frustrations, and eventually building the foundation for formal action against the bully.

> Kim and I take two breaks together every day. We walk a mile and a half on a 20-minute break. It's really just getting away from the building, and we're just *yelling* at each other about what's going on trying to figure out what to do to stop her.

Although Steve noted an intention to action, in some cases “bitching” may defuse other forms of resistance by exhausting emotions solely within the hidden transcripts (Pringle, 1989; Sotirin & Gottfried, 1999). However, it was during these moments away from the bully’s gaze that they were able to plan their collective acts of resistance and regain a preferred sense of personal identity (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005).

Given the potential for building social support and laying the foundation for formal, collective grievances, it was not surprising that bullies reportedly discouraged or forbade collegial relationships. Efforts to block collegial communication appeared to be only be partially successful. Scott (1990) suggests that it is impossible

> to destroy entirely the autonomous social life of subordinate groups that is the indispensable basis for a hidden transcript…. forms of domination not only generate the resentments, appropriations, and humiliations that give… subordinates something to talk about; they are also unable to prevent the creation of an independent social space in which subordinates can talk in comparative safety. (p. 85)

In Steve’s experience, the bully was able to “turn” a few others against him. In one case, the bully alienated a woman with whom Steve had been a long-time friend. He told me that the bullying female supervisor

> would make it so that her people would only talk to *themselves* and not talk to anybody else. She would isolate them, and it really worked! It works to this day. One of the gals who I was friends with for 15 years won’t even talk to me now, because she isolates people and tells them, "These are bad people. You don't want to associate with them."

Later in the interview, Steve countered this comment and said that the bullies efforts to block peer communication were not always successful. Despite the bully’s effort to forbid or punish those who talked to Steve and his group, their collective voice reportedly provided others with the needed courage to join. The potential for collective

voice to disrupt bullying is considerable, and in this case, developed into an informal complaint to upper-management and formal complaints to the union.

Contagious Voice

As was apparent in Steve's case, collective voice was at times contagious. In a manner similar to emotional contagion (Barsade, 2002) in which individuals transfer emotions one to another, workers who spoke to each other in hidden and liminal spaces transferred the courage and willingness to speak out against the bully. Contagious voice grew from hidden transcripts that defined the resistant group as more than "merely a collection of individuals" (Barsade, 2002; p. 644). Speaking out, especially in the hidden transcript or liminal space between hidden and public transcripts, encouraged others to also speak. In Steve's case, a group of determined workers made the decision to take their complaints from the hidden transcripts of "bitching," to the semi-public setting of an upper-manager's office, and then to the public arena of formal grievances of unfair labor practices.

In bullying-affected narratives, it appeared that coworkers lent voice to one another. When one person spoke up, others felt somewhat safer speaking, and diminished others' uncertainty about their perceptions. When someone else reported having the same perception, it lent courage to those in proximity or others who heard of this voice through third parties. For example, Linda, a female elementary school teacher who witnessed bullying, reported that a small group of teachers spoke to a school board member. After that she explained,

> it was like when the little boys who are being sexually abused by the priests, you know, when one of them speaks out all the others come out of the woodwork? Well, it was like that. Once we talked to Bob [school board member], a lot of the

> other teachers got up the courage to join in and say, “hey it’s not okay” you know what I mean? They weren’t so scared anymore.

As noted, employees in bullying environments were often uncertain that what they perceive was really happening and only felt safe enough to speak what others spoke first. Moreover, employees reported a deep sense of fear of retaliation, job loss or becoming entangled in a pitted battle they had little chance of winning. Such was Michelle’s experience when a coworker asked for her help.

Voice-leaders. In cases of contagious voice, my data suggest that there was, what I call, a voice-leader—someone who was less fearful and more willing to take public action than others in the workgroup. Linda was one such leader for the elementary school teachers; Steve was another in the state office where he worked. Greg was a voice leader in a police department. Either someone who had been targeted and vocally resisted bullying or someone who had witnessed others’ abuse and protested among his or her peers were voice-leaders. In Linda and Steve’s cases, they were witnessing voice-leaders with considerable social and occupational capital. In Greg’s case, he had been a target who resisted the abuse in both hidden and public ways. Voice-leaders reported that, at first, their colleagues disbelieved and avoided them, but they attributed this reaction to their peers’ fear of being targeted by association. Eventually, however, many came to agree and identify with the voice-leaders. In these three cases, as the circle of those bullied widened, new targets gravitated to the voice-leaders, as was evident from Linda’s comments. The widening of the complaining group often formed the supportive foundation from which emerged formal and informal complaints.

This was the case for Greg, a new officer transferred in from another police department. At the time he began with the new department, he was recovering from a leg injury, and believed he was targeted because of that injury and his inability to “carry his own weight." He went outside the chain of command to the Chief and complained and over time when others were targeted by the bullying sergeant they tentatively sought him out. Greg described,

> People started coming to me with problems that were going on in the station by the sergeant that was abusing them—abusing them within the station. People would start coming to me and they would say, “Well I know that this is happening to you.” I mean they all knew.

Greg clarified, however, that until he was transferred to work in an office near a powerful police chief, he was unable to help his fellow officers except to provide social support. Nonetheless, once he was in the proximity of an influential outsider, other officers increased their contact with him asking for help. Eventually the bullying sergeant was transferred.

In the cases where a witness was the voice-leader, such as Linda, the non-targeted employee’s indignation and willingness to fight back appeared to provide the foundation for the voice-leader's emergence. In this study, witness voice-leaders appeared to have more social capital (i.e., access to influential allies), occupational capital (i.e., ability to easily secure another job), or economic capital (i.e., actual cash or investments), and somewhat less fear of job loss as a result. For example, Linda reported being “incensed by the way the principal treated some of the second-grade teachers." She had worked in the school district for nearly 20 years, was highly sought after by other schools in the community, and knew a number of members of the school board.

> We were all standing around talking after school one night about this guy [bullying principal], and I just told them this was ridiculous. He just couldn't keep getting away with this kind of stuff. I said if someone was willing to go with me, you know, I'd go talk to Bob, a friend of mine on the school board, and see what I could do. He [bully] wouldn't dare fire me and if he did who cares? I could get another job in a minute.

Linda's comments point to a number of dynamics that appeared in other examples of contagious voice. First, workers shared a sense of outrage at the bully's actions and a belief that he or she should be stopped. Second, someone in the resisting group, oftentimes the voice-leader, knew someone outside the workgroup who served as a resource and bolstered others' confidence in the group's action. Finally, to one degree or another, although not desiring job loss, the involved employees recognized and accepted that losing their jobs was a possibility. Voice-leaders valiantly talked about the possibility, but in Linda and Steve's cases, neither believed it was particularly imminent. As Steve explained when the group was deciding whether or not to go to the administrator, "I thought, what do I have to lose? I have 15 years in. I'd be hard to replace cause I know this stuff backward and forward."

Contagious voice nearly always emerged in peer communication networks that also played "an integral…role in the social support process" (Sass & Mattson, 1999, p. 515). Terry noted after an extended sick leave that she "would not have been able to walk back in that place if it hadn't been for Kristina and Cody [her coworkers]." Although sixteen participants resisted bullying alone and were unaware that others were doing so also, where collaborative support was present, research participants framed peer support as "life-saving," "the thing that got me through," and "my life raft."

Given the power of collective voice to undermine the bully's "version of reality," it was not unexpected that bullies appeared threatened by these cliques and went to great lengths to block and even forbid these networks. Affected employees reported that this control rarely worked, however, and coworkers found creative ways to circumvent the bully's restrictions. Over time, these "resistance networks" expanded as new targets and witnesses join their ranks. Steve explained that he was part of a group labeled as "troublemakers" by the bully and the bully's allies. Despite this negative connotation and explicit directives warning others away from this group, Steve told me,

> In the last year, there's been a group of us, Kim, Jerry, Carla, Tammy. The three or four of us have come together because we're not going to put up with her bullshit anymore. She tries to keep us apart, but she can't do a damn thing about we do on our lunch hours or, you know, breaks. She tries to keep other people away from us, but I had one person come over to me just last week and say, "I want to be a part of your, your little group."

Some employees in bullying environments were willing to speak up and give voice to their concerns when others were also willing to speak out. Employees involved in collective resistance drew courage from the support of their coworkers—courage that often propelled them forward to take action. Both individual and collective efforts accessed formal and informal rules and resources by reframing these as reverse discourse.

Reverse Discourse

In an interesting twist, many of the public acts of resistance reversed the discourse of control that was administratively developed to monitor and direct employees. "While a discourse will offer a preferred form of subjectivity [such as the good employee], its very organization will imply other subject positions and the

possibility of reversal" (Weedon, 1997, p. 106). Drawing from Foucault (1981), this idea posits that "as a first stage in challenging meaning and power, [reverse discourse] enables the production of new, resistant discourses" (Weedon, 1997, p. 106). Reverse discourse used the bully's language and systems of meaning against the bully. Encoding reverse discourse is material evidence that "in practice subordinates have extensive knowledge which…may be used as an important weapon of resistance" (Collinson, 1994, p. 49). This strategy used rules and resources of power relationships, surveillance, or control—often considered the jurisdiction of authority-sanctioned organizational members—as tools turned against abusive authority.

Through turning this power "on its ear" and disarming the repressive properties of bullying, research participant actions demonstrated the ability to augment opposition by using the repressive tools of managerialism to liberating advantages. Participants reversed the discourse of power discursively embedded in organizational or professional position, expert knowledge, and formal systems of recording. Employee opposition reversed discourse by accessing (a) influential others and experts, (b) formal grievance rules, and (c) rational-legal documentation. Scott (1990) underscores "the imaginative capacity of subordinate groups to reverse or negate dominant ideologies" (p. 91). These acts of reverse discourse represented material ways in which public acts of resistance "nearly always have a strategic or dialogic dimension that influences the form they take" (Scott, 1990, p. 92).

Influential Others and Expert Knowledge

Targets and witnesses, either collectively or individually, reported developing or tapping into existing communication networks with influential others to lend power to

their efforts. These weak ties provided useful reinforcement and nonredundant information, that is, information unavailable within the workgroup or by the sole worker (Weick, 1995). For example, Mary explained that “my sister-in-law is a lawyer and said to document everything.” Accessing influential others worked within the discourse and categories of managerialism (e.g., reification of position or expert power) but did so in a manner that shifted the relations of power toward subordinate groups.

Research participants reported accessing internal allies such as union representatives, but also included strategically seeking other internal and external powerholders. Linda’s case with the school board member is an example of seeking an external ally. In a nonprofit substance abuse treatment center, Brad, the treatment director, contacted a board member who was acting as an organizational consultant. The consulting board member had spoken to the abusive executive director but had not talked to Brad regarding the situation. Brad reported,

> He was initially working with her, and he was just about to stop working with us on this. It was kind of like [the consultant said to himself or the board], "Well, I've worked with Janet; we’re all done. Everything’s so much better." And I called him and said, "Are you going to talk to me?" And I’m trying to talk to him and give him some insight about how the program is working, and just the problems that I saw. And since then, he has started getting reinvolved again, and he's got more involved with talking to me.

In this situation, no explicit rules forbade Brad from contacting the consultant. Moreover, he approached the board member in terms of working through organizational problems and in essence drew some of the consultant’s support away from the director. In another nonprofit, line managers contacted a board member clandestinely, asked to visit the board member in her home, and explained their experiences. In both cases, targets strategized efforts to align powerholders and secured influential support.

Targets and witnesses also sought the support of influential organizational superiors within their organizations. They calculated who they could safely talk to in the superior ranks, and if workers had established relationships, they accessed these. In a state social service agency, Rick, a witness voice-leader, approached someone he knew in the grants office that funded the organization. The woman in the grants office was the daughter of a man for whom a Rick had worked in the past, and he used the relationship as a source of credibility. Rick prefaced his comments to the grant administrator with: "Your dad and I go back a long way. If it wasn't for him I wouldn't even be in this job; I wouldn't have this job. You know me; you know I'm a good worker." This encoding illustrates a desire to disassociate from the pejorative "problem-employee" label, especially when soliciting the support of influential others.

Participants also reported accessing expert knowledge as a means of affirming and underscoring their efforts to sway decision makers. In an iterative way, targets and witnesses read about workplace bullying in a New York Times article, searched the topic online, and added this expert knowledge to the evidence for upper-management. Mark, a target in a social service agency, recounted this experience.

> I read a New York Times article. The New York Times article mentioned the research, so I typed in "bullying" and read the stuff and shared it with my coworkers. We all agreed, "Hey this is *exactly* what's happening to us." We shared it with the bosses as well—not the boss who is bullying, but the level up above. I had another friend send it up to upper management and bypass the one level—the woman who was doing it.

Workers used this expert information as one of the strategies to substantiate their own voices of resistance. Mary, a target in a state law enforcement agency, described a similar experience.

> They did a story about workplace bullying in our newspaper, which is how I found out about the bullying—I mean what it was called. I sent it to our personnel manager. I'd been researching, and they'd [legal services for employees] told me, "Yes it involves a work environment, but because it's not sexual in nature," they didn't know what to do about it.

Mary appropriated expert knowledge as a strategy to support her conversations with upper-managers. She was able to extend this knowledge and, through it, determine the level of legal protection she could expect from current statutory law.

Physicians and mental-health professionals who "prescribed" fighting back as an aspect of therapeutic treatment also represented expert knowledge. Sylvia, a wait-person in a high-end restaurant, was under a physician's and mental health counselor's care as a result of the bully's continued attacks. Even though her physician recommended that she quit the job or take an extended leave, both professionals encouraged her to file a suit with the EEOC for discrimination based on a disability linked to excessive workplace stress. Ironically, Sylvia attributed the physical disability to the bullying, as did her physician, and the disability provided the foundation for the discrimination suit, which she ultimately won.

Grievance

In addition to accessing influential, expert others, targets and witnesses reported complaining to upper-management, labor unions, and HR professionals—formal organizational rules and systems tasked with complaints, problem-solving, and grievances. These complaints were more often verbal (informal) than written (formal) and were usually framed in an I-thought-you-should-know format. Diane, a hospital nurse, filed a formal complaint with HR after seeing the bully badgering and publicly

humiliating a colleague whose young son had just died of cancer. She recalled watching the new supervisor screaming at her colleague.

> Grace was a little bit vulnerable because she had lost her son about two…weeks before. He died of cancer, and so we treated him here, and he died. This new manager knew Grace's son had just died. She knew, she didn't care. She had her finger [pointed in] Grace's face less than a quarter of an inch away from her nose. She was just totally bullying her into her face, and Grace just stood there and took it and turned bright red.

Diane was stunned and shaken by the experience and explained, "I couldn't believe anyone could treat another human being in that manner. It was beyond me." Although Diane, too, had been bullied by the nurse manager, witnessing this exchange was the deciding factor that stimulated her to file a formal complaint.

Diane filed an individual formal complaint, although participants reported filing both formal and informal complaints. In another instance, a participant reported speaking out despite her perceptions of being alone. Carmen, a mental health nurse, individually spoke with HR to report the bullying she had witnessed and personally experienced. She did not know at that time that others were also going to HR and giving similar reports. In Carmen's case, a form of cumulative resistance emerged in which multiple individuals complained over time and thus substantiated a pattern of abuse to upper management or HR. This cumulative resistance was difficult for the bully to explain away and upper-managers or HR to ignore. In this case, the bully was eventually fired.

Informal reports, that is, verbal complaints, were more common than formal complaints. In one case, Andy felt targeted and abused by Dale, his boss's supervisor, a man who had been Andy's direct supervisor in the past. Because of a range of problems since Dale's promotion to interim supervisor, the sales division superintendent brought

in an outside consultant. A meeting between the consultant and subordinate staff, without management present, resulted in the following:

> … pages and pages of garbage. The meat of it came down to this: We have management that doesn't know what they're doing, because Dale had no insurance background. He had no management background. He treated people like shit. He's a micro-manager. He divulged personal information on people. He did this on me; he had on other people.

Although participating staff members were promised that what they said would not "leave this room," Andy took the pooled information to the superintendent to substantiate his own experiences. Coworkers' statements validated his perceptions and gave him the courage to go to upper-management and inform the superintendent of the bullying. This case of collective voice, coupled with accessing influential allies through an informal complaint, illustrates the ways in which forms of resistance constitute and are constituted by one another rather than occurring in a more discrete linear fashion. Clear cause-effect relationships may be less important than glimpsing the complex interrelationships among resistance strategies.

Despite research participant narratives indicating that most complaints were informal, some filed formal complaints and grievances. Terry, who was working in education and training, and Sylvia, who worked at a high end restaurant, both filed EEOC complaints. Steve filed an unfair labor practice complaint against the bully in a state government office. Rick, who worked in city government, Carmen, a mental health nurse, and Mark, who worked in social services all filed complaints with HR. The line managers who secretly went to the board member's home wrote and signed personal statements the agency lawyer held in case the director decided to sue the organization.

These formal proceedings underscore the utility of accountable, trackable paperwork documenting abuse, an issue to which I now turn.

Documentation

Central to many of the reporting strategies was keeping records and as an accounting of the abuse. In this way, subordinate staff appropriated documentation—the "retention and control of information or knowledge" (Giddens, 1984, p. 94), usually a resource of management—for the purposes of resistance. In this way, subordinates accessed rules and resources in ways that reversed the current discourse of managerial power. The record-keeping systems developed to control workers' productivity were, more than likely, not intended as tools to empower workers against abusive management. Documentation seemed especially important to targets and witnesses who perceived bullying as systematic. Keeping formal records appeared imperative when bullying was an ongoing, repetitive onslaught of numerous negative acts and messages, each less imperative than the pattern they cumulatively represented. Employees considered record-keeping as a necessary prerequisite for voice, especially in the face of unequal authority or position.

Clair (1993) asserts in her study of sexual harassment victims, that advice to victims to document what occurred, "implies that the victim's word is not good enough when it is 'his' word against 'her' word unless 'her' word has been written down on numerous occasions" (p. 141). In cases of workplace bullying, the bullying supervisor often kept records of interactions also. Research participants perceived the bully's documentation process as a means of driving them from the organization—getting "the goods" on them or their supporters through legitimized progressive discipline practices

(Falcone, 2000). Target and witness documentation "fought fire with fire," turning the organizational systems of control back upon those seeking to oppress subordinate staff. As Collinson (1994) notes, "oppositional practices often draw upon the very forms of control that generate resistance in the first place" (p. 51). Participants reported keeping records for three different, albeit related, reasons: prevention, intervention, and defense. Workers documented occurrences and stored them away to inoculate themselves against future negative potentialities. Brad said he documented everything that occurred, and his advice to others who might find themselves in his position was to

> document everything. Don't tell anybody. I have this little file cabinet. I don't document everything –[laughs sounding a little defeated] but I have oh… a couple of reams of paper [laughs] just notes, just *stuff* in my file cabinet that I just keep. I keep it for a couple reasons. The primary reason is if I ever sit down and have to do a confrontation, I can go back and look at what actually happened. What was said and what day it was said on.

Brad kept records for preventive self-protection—buttressing his position in case of attack or accusation of wrongdoing in the future.

Others maintained detailed accounts to augment their reports to influential others and support their requests for intervention (i.e., bully sanction; target transfer). When David, who worked as an IT specialist, spoke to upper-management seeking help to stop the bullying, he recounted,

> I went back to Larry [upper-manager], and I said this is what's going on, and I had documentation from my schedule of a daily basis of things that had been happening to me, things that have been said, things that have been said to me, things that had been done to me.

Participants also documented retroactively by recreating their actions and interactions in defense of a bully's attack. In Terry's case, when two years of the bully's attacks—including persistent criticism, spreading false rumors, divulging personal health

information, and removal of nearly all key tasks—failed to drive Terry from the organization, the bully accused her of misusing organizational resources for personal use. After the confrontation in the HR office, she said,

> I went back to the office—I only had two days to do it. I had to go back through all my day planners and all my notes, all my emails. I had to show justification of, you know, why, where I was, why I was there um all that kind of stuff.

This investigation continued for nearly two months. In the five years Terry worked at the facility, the investigation unearthed one 41 cent telephone call she made to her daughter in college. Terry deflected the accusations of falsified timecards and long-distance telephone calls by recreating the records of what she did, when, and with whom over a span of years. In Terry's case and numerous others, documentation was a key resource in complaints about and defenses against abuse.

Subversive (Dis)obedience

Most research participants used some work or communication management as form of resistance in their day-to-day tasks. Subversive (dis)obedience is any action or discourse in which targets and witnesses altered their work production or communication patterns in ways that disadvantaged the bully. This strategy included tactics of labor withdrawal (Mulholland, 2003), working-to-rule (Fiori, 1999; Jones, 1998; Mulholland, 2003), resistance through distance (Collinson, 1994), and retaliation and sabotage (Jordan, 2003; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). This repertoire reflected a number of traditional patterns of work opposition.

Labor Withdrawal

When bullies' attacks persisted despite targets' task adjustments (i.e., working harder), employees reported giving up on trying to please the bully. This is analogous to

Mulholland's (2003) study of call center workers who found that regardless of how many calls they logged, management pressed them for increased productivity. Call center workers referred to this as "flogging myself for nothing" (p. 714). Similarly, Greg, a new police officer, reported feeling frustrated and angry at his apparent inability to work hard enough to please the bully. "There's times where you're so beat down by it that you realize that you can't accomplish everything and even if you do, it's not going to be to their satisfaction so you just give up."

More than just giving up efforts to placate bullies, targets deliberately withheld labor, doing "only enough to get by." Kim who worked at a county's economic counsel said, "you start doing just enough to stay out of their sights, you know? Out of their line of vision. Part of me thinks, 'this is what you get, damn it.'" In some cases, value-added efforts such as creativity and independent problem-solving resulted in punishment or humiliation, so workers slowed down, stopped or masked these efforts. In other cases, targets planned and found satisfaction in acts of labor withdrawal. A man in the telecommunications business noted that the more the bully punished the target, the less the target produced.

> It doesn't do anybody any service when you attack or bully an employee. It has a negative effect. Productivity on the job suffers. We do the menial tasks. There's a lot of tasks that are menial. We do those fine—but when it comes times to doing things that are above and beyond, we don't do them anymore.

Constant criticism and pressure from bullies was a marked disadvantage for the bully and the organization. Relentless disparagement incited opposition, rather than consent, and opposition frequently manifested in work slow-down or working to rule.

Working-to-Rule

Doing exactly what is required and nothing more is a well-documented resistance strategy in the workplace (Fiori, 1999; Jones, 1998; Mulholland, 2003). Research participants reported using this tactic as an "okay-you-asked-for-it" response in which the worker followed bully's directives—often perceived as highly controlling and restrictive—to the letter. Mary recounted the following experience at work:

> I have to copy her on everything I do so that she knows I'm not operating outside of my, quote, "span of control," one of her favorite terms. I was out of my office and didn't answer my phone once, and after that, every time I went to the bathroom, every time I left my office, I was to call her secretary and let her know. I had fun with that.

Mary said she "had a good time with it." Every time she went to the bathroom, which was just down the hall from her office, she would call the office secretary, and then she would call her again when she got back to her desk. A few minutes later, when Mary got a drink of water, she called the secretary. She said,

> So if I had to send a fax—the fax machine on my floor is right across the hall from my office—but by God, I was leaving my office, so I'd call the secretary. Carrie [secretary] was ready to kill me. [laughs].

In an environment where failing to follow directions can be insubordination and grounds for firing, doing exactly as directed can prove an effective, yet relatively safe type of resistance. Working to rule also provides workers with plausible deniability. Plausible "deniability happens when one possible interpretation…is both placed in the interaction and denied as meant" (Deetz, 1992, p. 194). In Mary's case, she could merely retort, "I'm just doing what you told me to do," despite knowing her actions intended opposition.

Resistance Through Distance

Targets and witnesses also avoided the bully whenever possible, and when in the bully's presence purposely withheld information to obstruct the bully's efforts at control. Collinson (1994) reports similar strategies from male, blue collar workers who "distance themselves as much as possible both symbolically and physically from managers" (p. 32). The central difference here, is that the shop floor men were not distancing themselves to avoid abuse, humiliation, and demoralizing treatment but rather reaffirming their membership in the shop floor work group. Similar to the men on the shop floor, however, research participants distanced themselves in a way that subverted and masked the action and actor—ostensibly to protect the actor from retaliation. Avoiding detection in bullying situations is particularly salient. Workers hide efforts to subvert bullying through distance, since retaliation could be brutal, demoralizing, and public. When bullies were particularly cruel, workers made themselves unavailable. For example, in the sports fishing business, vice presidents figured out how to "duck." As one witness put it,

> You learn to duck. You learn to just avoid. One of the general managers has gone into a mode where he's learned how to cope with all this, and he just doesn't show up much. You learn not to show up at work too much. You make arrangements to go to meetings. You're just too busy to go to the office, because you're otherwise engaged, and you lie, and you scheme, and you're not there. You lie to him and you say, "Yeah I had a fisheries meeting yesterday. Oh yeah, I had an airplane meeting yesterday. Oh, can't do it…." You just learn to not come to work.

In this workplace, Amy described avoiding the bully as nearly an art form. The vice-presidents prided themselves in the creative ways they could "duck." Ducking, like working to rule provided targets and witnesses with plausible deniability.

Despite bullies' perceived need for control over all organizational or departmental decisions, employees often withheld information from the bully as a means of self-protection and as a form of resistance. Lynn's experience in the security business illustrated both of these dynamics. In this company, upper-level staff earned considerable salaries, what Lynn called "golden handcuffs." He believed that because everyone knew the bully-owner would explode at the slightest provocation, "no one would tell him anything. They knew he'd detonate, and so you learned to just keep your head down and then laugh all the way to the bank." In some cases, avoidance and withholding information was done out of fear, but in many cases he reported a complex reasoning process that included being fearful of an explosive response coupled with a sense of satisfaction knowing something the bully did not know.

Retaliation and Sabotage

Jermier et al. (1994) describe sabotage as "deliberate action or inaction that is intended to damage, destroy or disrupt some aspect of the workplace environment" (p. 18). Although many of the forms of subversive (dis)obedience in this study could partially be explained as devices of retaliation, no targets or witnesses reported personal acts of sabotage. This could be due to the tendency of people to provide socially-desirable responses, or because they actually did not sabotage their employers. Greg noted that sabotaging the bully might be turned against his coworkers, so he determined it would be more harmful to others than it would be for the bully. He noted, "if I thought I could get at this guy without anyone tying it to the guys in the station, I'd stick it to him." A man in the telecommunications business did tell me, however, about his bullied coworkers' sabotage.

> I see a lot of these guys on the street, phone people who work day in and day out. They're doing a public service. They deal with customers a lot, and they're carrying around this burden [the bullying]. And sometimes it causes them to do things that aren't wise like sabotage, back-biting the company, or saying things to customers that they shouldn't say.

Participants did mention sabotage and retaliation desires, however. Fantasies about retaliating against the bully suggested the dangerous potential for unchecked bullying. Amy, in the sports fishing industry, reported that the managerial staff subjected to the bully's attacks developed extreme physical maladies including stress-related hives, excessive sick leave, alcohol and drug use, musculo-skeletal ailments, to name a few. Due to the extremity of harm from the bully's viciousness and terrorizing, when managerial employees met after particularly trying days, the conversation often turned to ways to kill the bully. She went on to express,

> We thought of everything from putting this in it [his tea] -- heart stuff, that stuff, marijuana, this in it -- so we came up with, 'hmmm… an ego-maniac like this guy -- I know, an overdose on Viagra.' That could work! All we did was plot to kill him. That's how we'd sit around and debrief and de-pressurize.

Amy described her concern about this, since she was the person who brought Don his tea. She reported being afraid that someone might poison the tea, and she would be blamed. She explained to protect herself she "made it a point to keep an eye on his teapot….not because I don't want to see him dead, but because I don't want to take the fall for it."

Confrontation

"Acts of … defiance can offer us something of a window on the hidden transcript, but, short of crises, we are apt to see subordinate groups on their best behavior (Scott, 1990, p. 87). Most of the participants were loathe to directly confront bullies, but

there were a few exceptions in which employees questioned the bully's actions early in the bully-target relationship. Given Foucault's (1977, 1982) hypothesis that power and resistance are mutually constitutive, we might expect that bullies would escalate abusive behavior in response to direct resistance. In some cases, confrontation escalated bullying, but confrontation is, nonetheless, a material form of resistance that countered and defied bullying acts. In one case, Terry recounted an early experience with Leslie, a bullying upper-manager, in which Leslie praised Terry for her work and then went to Terry's coworkers and said, "You know she just thinks that she's so good, and she's not. She thinks that she can operate these computers, and she can't." After Terry's coworkers repeated what Leslie said, Terry confronted her and said,

> "Leslie, this is what I heard and this really hurts me that you would say this about me, and that you would, you tell me one thing, and you tell somebody else something else." She denied it; she flat denied it. So the other two people she was telling the opposite thing to, she went right next door to their office, and she said, "We have a mole in our office, and it has to stop!" My situation really deteriorated when she took another step up [was promoted].

Terry noted that her situation deteriorated after Leslie was promoted, but she did not directly link the earlier confrontation and her later targeting. When abuse escalated, however, bullies reportedly found it increasingly difficult to rationalize their behavior to upper-managers and decision makers.

Similarly to Terry, Lydia who worked at the electrical supply store, experienced an early confrontation with her boss, Ben, and called it "one of their first blowups." Lydia recounted,

> One of the things that happened in one of our first blowups was, I'd been at work all week, I'd taken care of everything, and I went—I put in my 40 hours for the week—to take may kids to the center to play ball. I got a phone call from Ben and essentially what he said to me over the phone was, "Before you go out and

> play with your little kids, you need to make sure that all your work is done." I took my kids home and dropped them off and drove the 35 miles over to our office and said, "You may never speak to me that way again." It just infuriated me. It infuriated me because it was so demeaning.

Lydia was shocked by the way the new boss spoke to her and reacted by directly countering what she perceived to be demeaning treatment. Although this did not materially change the dynamic and potentially contributed to its future escalation, there is no question that direct confrontation counters and defies the bully. Lydia was able to maintain a preferred identity as someone who would not take being demeaned. Standing up for herself in this situation was crucial to her self-image.

Participants also reported retorting or returning attack through sarcastic, rude, or caustic comments. Ted, a heavy equipment operator in a sand and gravel company, reported that Dirk, the man who bullied him at work, began targeting him as soon as Ted came on the job.

> From the very beginning when I first came to work there, Dirk was asking me very personal questions, and he would turn around and twist everything that I would say and just harass me verbally. He would harass me about my family and my past or whatever and being from Texas. Stupid things like “there’s no one but steer and queer that come from there.” He’s very, a loud person. I figured he was trying to see if he could push me around, so I just pushed him back, you know? Gave him shit every time he opened his mouth around me.

Ted also occasionally intervened when Dirk started bullying someone else on the job. Ted noted that his confrontations infuriated Dirk more, and to retaliate, Dirk sabotaged Ted’s equipment, putting Ted’s safety in serious jeopardy. In this case, confrontation served to push this bully to more aggressive attacks. At one point, the bully was suspended for threatening the lives of Ted’s family members, but he returned to the job. Despite actions and threats of violence, and much to Ted’s disbelief and astonishment,

Dirk was promoted a few years later. In Ted's case, bullying ended when Dirk suspended Ted for "failing to follow orders;" during the suspension, Ted secured another job. Although Ted did not succeed in changing Dirk's behavior, he nonetheless took a stand and thus secured his preferred identity as someone who "won't just take this kind of crap lying down."

In another case, confrontation became a pattern of interaction in which the target disputed what the bully wanted or directed through planned, rational arguments. Brad, a substance abuse treatment program director with 20 years of experience, worked for a new executive director, Janet. Janet came to the center from the oil industry with no nonprofit or treatment experience. Brad believed he had a better understanding of what would and would not work with the adolescent clients they served. Initially, he tried to convince Janet that her suggestions would not work and provided clinical support for his reasons. Eventually, Janet told the board of directors about their disagreements and accused him of insubordination. In time, Brad suppressed this public transcript and his resistance became passive; he did not follow her directives nor did he argue with her about them. The latter emergent strategy is a form of subversive disobedience in which he disregarded her directives and carried out his job functions in a manner of his own choosing. This opposition was not effective at stopping the bullying, but rather served to provide the bully with material reasons for continued harassment and criticism of Brad's work. Nevertheless, Brad felt empowered by his decision to block her efforts, and withheld labor as one of the only strategies available to him.

A less overt form of confrontation was using humor or parody (D. Martin, 2004; Trethewey, 1997) to deflect bullying attacks, minimize a bully's verbal aggressiveness,

or publicly criticize a bully's actions. In a city government office, the bullying manager, Sandy, publicly accused an employee of fund misappropriation during a team meeting. Rick, another of Sandy's occasional targets, said,

> Sandy looked at Kitty in one of the supervisors meetings, and with her eyes narrowed, pointed her finger at her and said, "This is your fault. It's your fault we're over budget. You are responsible; you're the project manager!" I just started laughing and said, "What are talking about? She can't even go to the bathroom without your approval."

In this instance, Rick used humor to publicly chastise the bully's controlling tactics in which staff members were responsible for processes over which they were given little or no authority. Rick's story was one of the few occasions when bullying-affected workers related using humor to deflect abuse. Humor as resistance was rarely presented in participants' narratives. Some workers talked about private conversations with coworkers in which they made sport of, mimicked, derided, or fantasized about killing the bully. However, these did not reflect acts that countered, disrupted, or defied the bully or acts that eroded the bully's material/symbolic base of influence over time. They did, however, build camaraderie and solidarity.

In sum, these provide a range of resistance strategies. I wish to underscore that while the strategies are analytically autonomous, they interpenetrate each other at a number of junctures. It is difficult to separate, for example, mutual advocacy and contagious voice. There did appear, however, to be a common pattern of resistance in many of these cases. The next chapter examines the ways in which resistance and opposition changed organizational systems—at times resulting in bully removal.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS: ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

I have not defined resistance as action linked to any particular outcome and thus avoided defining certain resistance as successful and others as unsuccessful. Despite this, in multiple follow-up contacts with research participants, I found that organizations had changed, at least in part, due to worker resistance. In subsequent contacts, and in the cases where bullying had occurred in the past, some participants reported that the bullying situation had ended. In six cases, the bullies were fired and in three cases bullies were transferred. In one instance the bully failed to receive a much coveted (reportedly) promotion but continues to terrorize employees. In two other situations, employees filed EEOC suits; one target settled the case and left, the other target won the case, was reinstated, and the bully left soon afterward. In three cases, bullies fired the targets, and in two instances the target transferred to a different department away from the bully. In the remaining cases, the outcome was unknown or the bully was reportedly still at the jobs and abusing others. Appendix B includes the current known status of research participants' cases.

In this chapter, I describe the nature of bottom-up organizational change in bullying workplaces. I follow this discussion with a model of bottom-up organizational change culminating in bully removal. Throughout the model, I provide data from research interviews to support the ideas presented. I augment the section on upper-management features of bully removal with interview data from an EEOC officer, bullying consultants, published research, and my professional experience as an administrator grappling with the issue.

Water Smoothing Stones

Bullying-affected employees respond to abusive treatment in a wide variety of ways, all of which alter and restructure, to some degree, organizational systems and the human relationships within those systems. Evidence in the initial interviews, and organizational developments between the time of those interviews and follow-up contacts, indicated that subordinate resistance changed systems slowly over time. Employee resistance did impact bullying, but the nature of that impact was a slow wearing away at the organizational system. The eroding nature of subordinate resistance is not surprising, since subordinates do not have the authority to quickly remove or formally reprimand bullying supervisors. However, subordinate staff is able to access resources of power and, through numerous micro-practices across time, eventually erode the bully's base of veracity and diminish the bully's resources of power. The key feature of this type of organizational change is its slow, fragmented, but cumulative character. In the same way that water rushing through river and creek beds wears smooth the sharp edges of stones, employee opposition and reactions to bullying wear down the people, workplaces, and work processes that allow or perpetuate workplace bullying. Eventually, the workgroup become so sickened by the negative impact of bullying that missions fail; organizations, departments, and divisions are reorganized; or external, legal pressures force organizational change. Removing the bully is a crucial course of action to immediately stop abuse and start workgroup healing and is the first step in organizational diagnosis of the problem.

Bully Removal

Research indicates that interventions that attempt to change bullies' behavior have little success in permanently stopping the bully's abusive treatment of others (Crawford, 2001; Namie & Namie, 2003a). Target and witness narratives in this study corroborate this and indicate, to a person, that upper-management's intervention targeting change in the bully—sending the bully to sensitivity training, workshops on how to successfully manager people, placing individual mentors with the bully in their day to day work—fail to bring about a substantive, permanent end to mistreatment. Although there might be a short-term change in the bully's negative treatment of others, a professional who coaches bullies explained that, "most often people will, if they're willing to be coached, they'll change for a while, because they realize it's in their own self interest to change, but then under stress, they'll revert back." Published research (Beale, 2001; Crawford, 1999, 2001; Namie, 2003a; Rains, 2001), professional bullying consultants interviewed for this study, and research participant experiences suggest that bully removal is the first step in interrupting worker abuse. Specific dynamics must be present for bully-removal to occur. The convergence of three flows of discursive and nondiscursive acts from individuals, work groups, and upper-management/HR suggests a path-model of the communicative and contextual features that contribute to the bullies' ultimate removal (firing or transfer).

Paths and Features of Bully Removal

In what follows, I reconstruct the bully-removal paths and the constitutive features of those paths by drawing together four streams of data: my professional administrative experience, employee narratives in this study, my background information

interviews with bullying and personnel experts during this research project, and published accounts of professional bullying interventions (Beale, 2001; Crawford, 1997, 1999, 2001; Rains, 2001; Tehrani, 2001). It does appear that bullying is best extinguished by removing the bully in a way that communicates the organization's commitment to worker welfare and safety. Even in bullying environments when the mode of management is aggression, abuse, and harassment and there is more than one bully, removing a central bullying figure can begin moving the organization toward a different culture (Crawford, 1999; Walker, 2001). This often means firing the bully. I note here, however, that removing a bully is one step toward healing a hostile work environment, and upper-managers must conduct further analysis of structural and cultural dynamics that trigger, enable, or, in some cases, even reward bullying.

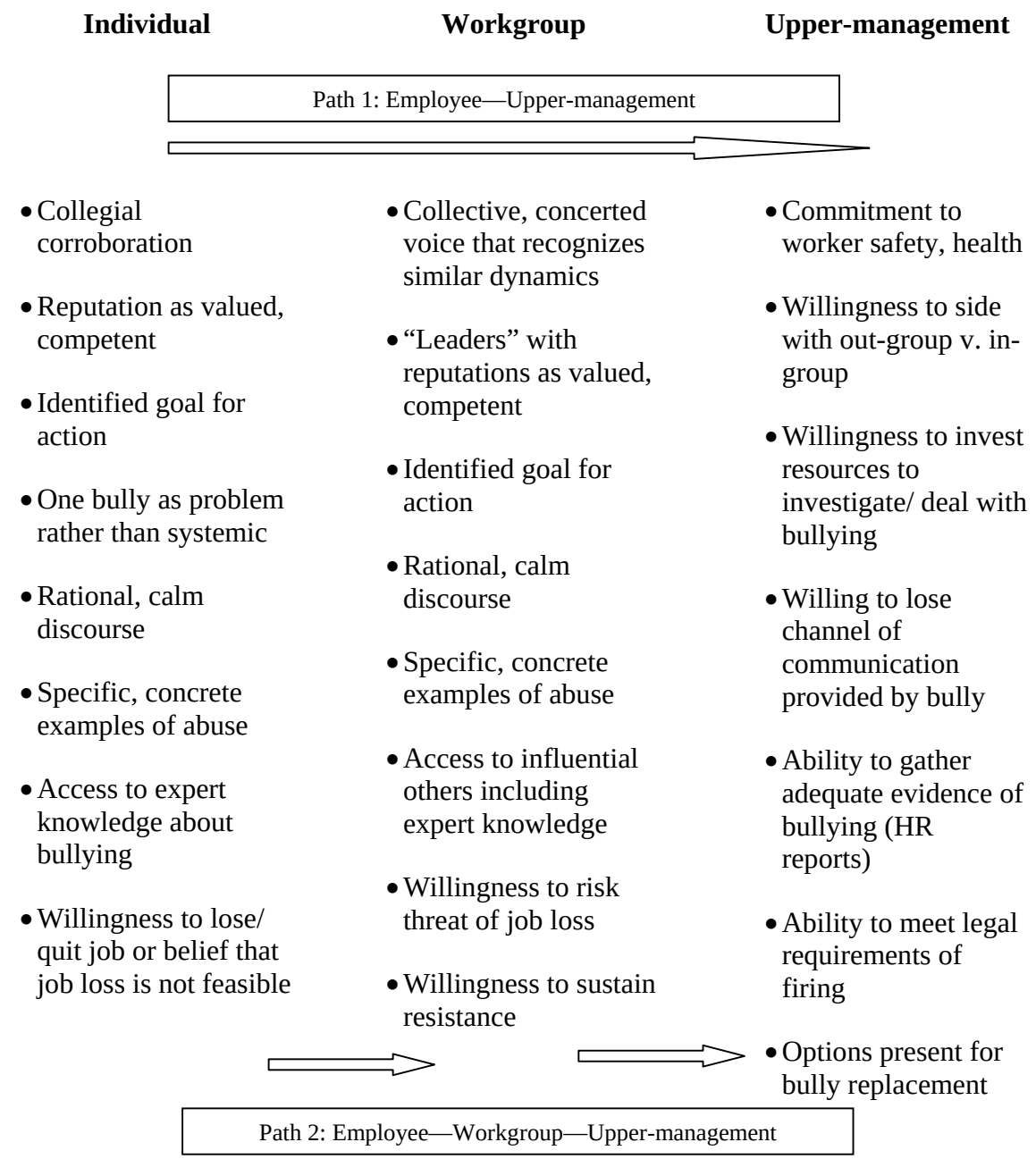
Firing a high or mid-level bullying manager is no simple task. It seldom occurs until serious damage has taken place, many workers have quit or been fired, and a series of eruptions or complaints have taken place (Crawford, 2001). Dynamics leading to bully removal are complex, often fragmented, multiple-layered and occur at individual, workgroup, and upper-management levels. Removing a bullying manager or supervisor occurs only when these three flows converge in a way that provides upper-managers with the legal documentation and substantiation necessary to terminate employment. Bully removal can occur in other, less complex, ways however. For example, new management may enter with a worker-advocacy perspective that will not tolerate bullying. In these situations, managers who fail to assimilate to the worker-friendly mission are swiftly removed (Crawford, 1999; Tehrani, 2001; Walker, 2001). Nonetheless, even new

management requires evidence of mistreatment and often turns to individuals or workgroups for this evidence.

When upper-management removes a bully as a result of subordinate resistance, the process was often protracted. This necessarily takes considerable time to occur. Figure 3 presents a model of two potential paths of bully removal and the constitutive elements at three levels contributing toward that end. Two paths of bottom-up resistance emerge from this study. The first is when an individual worker goes directly to upper-management (or HR) with complaints. The second happens when an individual approaches his or her coworkers and then the small groups of peers (usually two to three) collectively approach someone in upper-management (or HR) in small groups.

Figure 3

Features of Bottom-Up Bully Removal



Individual Features

Initially, individuals talk to and seek corroboration from their colleagues about what they were seeing. Agreement-seeking from coworkers is a communicative dynamic in all the research participants' experiences, whether or not agreement led to acts of resistance. Brad explained, "I wasn't sure if she [bully] was just this way with me and asked Tara about it….She just laughed, and um nodded her head. Now we have this 'Let's Hate the Executive Director Club.'" Brad noted that his interactions with Tara confirmed what he was experiencing and encouraged him to speak to a board member. In cases of resistance, peer agreement in lunch conversations, smoke breaks, and drinks after work, contribute to the resolve to move forward with complaints.

Workers who believe they were valued, perceived as competent, and who have a history of successful organizational contributions are also more likely to take issues to organizational decision makers. In some cases, they believe it is their obligation to do so. Rick, a witness who worked in city government, gave me these "good-employee" credentials: "I've been here for nearly eight years. I have about 800 hours of sick leave and about 150 hours of vacation time. I'm a loyal, dedicated employee." He went on to say that his decision to report the bully "was a major pain in the neck, but I had to do it. I mean, we had a good group before he came, and they were all leaving." In his explanation to me, Rick provided a list of his assets to the division and voiced a commitment to the workgroup.

Furthermore, the decision to take action against a bully appears more effective when the employee's actions work toward an end goal. In this study, end goals varied but included requesting a transfer, blocking the bully's promotion, or removing the bully

(firing or transfer). Participants most often stated that they believed the bully should be fired. Ted remarked, “They should just get rid of this guy.” Andy said, “Dale’s gotta go; that’s all there is to it.” Greg, on the other hand, wanted the chief to transfer him away from the bullying sergeant. Having an end goal proves to be useful in building collegial allies, if and when individual’s action gathered others’ support.

When individual’s efforts target the removal of a single bully those efforts more easily gain an audience with upper-management than when efforts implicate the entire organization. Ted, a target working in the sand and gravel business, thought the entire group of bosses were problems and that they supported one another regardless of how egregious the behavior. Ben, a witness in the telecommunications industry, also noted,

> one of the things that bothered me the most was they…the little cliques of bosses—would take and they would target people who they didn’t like or who they didn’t want to be successful. So, you know, if you’re one of the targets and you’re one of the guys they don’t like, you know, you’re really screwed and it means no school. It means, you know, harass him, follow him. I’ve been followed, I’ve been followed by guys in unmarked cars. They’re all the same if they have it in for you, you know?

Neither Ted nor Ben were able to make progress with their complaints to upper-management. Both men saw the entire system—particularly those in managerial ranks—as corrupt, duplicitous, and untrustworthy. In this study, upper-managers were more likely to disregard claims that the entire system was corrupt and more likely to label protesting workers as “disgruntled employees.” Ben said, “Yeah, they just got sick of listening to me bitchin’ all the time, I guess. I don’t know, but they didn’t want to hear about it.” Whistleblower research suggests similar dynamics in which organizations are more likely to take action to remove one “bad apple” than to admit systemic corruption (Miceli, 2002; Rothschild & Miethe, 1994). This is not too surprising, since it is

potentially easier for upper-management to investigate and deal with one individual than investigate and revamp an organization's culture. In many cases, however, there is a culture of abuse with which organizational decision makers must eventually face.

It appears as though upper-management is also more likely to consider individual complaints (acts of resistance) if complaints conform to the workplace expectation of rational communication. Regardless of how emotional the individual's experience, relating abusive treatment in emotional terms often undermines the dissenting members' claims. Both workers and organizational upper-management have an expectation that workplace communication should be rational. Employees who reportedly broke down and cried, for example, labeled their *own* performance as deficient. A research participant told me about her experience emotionally breaking down.

> We had this meeting; there were five management people, myself and my union rep. I was just hysterical; I could not communicate. I cried, and I cried, and I cried…No wonder they thought I was crazy.

External consultants who specialize in bullying interventions, however, expect to hear emotional narratives and note that this is an earmark of bullying situations (Crawford, 1999, 2001; Namie & Namie, 2000b). In one bullying investigation, Crawford (2001) explains, "What was the evidence that this employee was a bully?.... Every employee who came to the consultation sessions, male and female without exception, broke down and cried in their first meeting" (p. 26). Despite this expectation from consultants, in initial conversations with upper-managers about bullies, employees fair better when they can remain calm. Change efforts require rational dialogue coupled with documented specifics.

Details also prove crucial. Individual complaints about bullying are more effective when the complaints provide specific details such as date, time, actors, and verbatim quotes. Brad said when he spoke to a member of the board, "He asked me for details, and I had them. One of the keys to keeping the detailed stuff is to keep it objective. Just the facts, not what I think about it, but just the facts." Generally speaking, employees say that upper-managers want concrete instances of wrongdoing, and the more often they can provide these, the more receptive the upper-managers were. Kurt, a witness in the legal profession, concurred and noted, "Coming in with a bunch of 'he always does this' and 'he always does that' is useless. Times. Dates. Places. Give me something I can sink my teeth into." Facts prove helpful as do expert opinions and research about bullying as a material issue in the workplace.

Expert knowledge about workplace bullying, and the ability to name and describe what they are seeing and experiencing, contributes to employees gaining upper-management/HR support. Diane, a hospital nurse explained,

> I found out about it [bullying] in a magazine called *Nurse Week*; there was a big article on bully-busting in there. One of the nurses…made photocopies for all twenty of us, and… she handed it to everybody. Because…we all know it's going on, right? So I took this with me to HR when I went in to talk to her [HR staff member] and the HR woman hadn't seen it before.

In Diane's case, the bully was fired. As noted earlier in Mary's situation at public safety, she also read an article about workplace bullying and forwarded it to a number of others at work. The bully in Mary's case was ultimately transferred. External expert knowledge about bullying—in these cases from published articles—seems to bolster employee claims.

Internal knowledge of workplace dynamics is also useful, particularly evidence that bullying negatively impacts the organization. Crucial trace evidence of bullying in many of these cases is staff turnover—a strong "fact" supporting employee complaints. Mark noted, "We have a small program with about 35 people with about 40% to 50% turnover since the bullying started. This made a lot of difference when I tried to tell them [board] we had a problem." Patterns of staff exodus substantiate individual complaints and significantly weaken the bully's symbolic base of influence, because the bully was unable to make a convincing argument that *all* these workers are problem employees. An attorney who professionally mentored bullies said, "In a big organization, a bully who is a few levels down from the top is going to be assessed much more on his financial results than anything else." This suggests that a highly productive bully may never be removed.

In addition to external and internal expert knowledge, individual willingness to risk job loss is a factor in the narratives where bullies are fired. Although none of the dissenting employees want to lose their jobs and all seem fearful of this occurring, the most public forms of resistance come from those for whom job loss is an accepted possibility. Diane was afraid of getting fired but she noted, "You do what you can, and then, you know, if you keep at it, eventually you may get fired." These workers frame their battle as righteous and imperative, even if fighting it means looking for other work. In Diane's case, she went on to say, she "had to do the right thing." In some cases, workers believe their contribution to the organization protect them from job loss and thus voice less fear about speaking up, as noted earlier with Linda and Steve. As might be expected, it is apparent that individuals who gain collegial support have far better chances of being heard than single complainants.

Workgroup Features

Collective, concerted worker voice appears to produce a greater chance of bullying intervention than do individual acts. In these cases, more than one employee agrees that they are witnessing bullying and speak to upper-management about their perceptions. In Linda's case, she went with three other teachers and spoke to a school board member about their concerns. Collective voice also reduces the risk of individuals being singled out and labeled a troublemaker, mentally ill, or a problem-employee. As a bullying consultant noted, "When there is a staff mutiny, these guys [upper-managers] take action." Shared impressions and opinions hold sway in the face of the bully's efforts to deny the claims or shame the complainants, even when concerted voice is only two people. Successful dissenting worker groups often include a voice-leader with considerable social or occupational capital. Capital in this sense included extensive, technical organizational knowledge, expert knowledge, and access to or supports from influential others.

Despite collective action, in some cases, bullies spread pejorative gossip that labeled group members in negative terms ("the troublemakers") to discredit the group's complaint. In Rayner's (1997) survey, when a group of workers made a complaint together, they were likely to be threatened with dismissal. In the case of Steve and his colleagues, management pejoratively labeled them. He reported,

> We haven't isolated ourselves. We've become known as kind of the *troublemakers*, because we said, "wait a minute you can't do this." So a number of us went to the union, and we're now being accused of being troublemakers.

Their efforts, while successful at blocking the bully's bid for a promotion, also classified the group as problem-employees. Resistance always carries this risk.

As with individuals, groups with agreed upon goals are more organized and pointed in their efforts. Most groups report wanting the bully removed—usually in the form of employment termination. Firing is often explicit in the hidden and liminal transcripts but not always communicated in public transcripts. Three research participants reported that setting an initial goal was crucial to their group's success (bully removal). One woman noted that the dissenting group met and clandestinely discussed the end result they wanted. They recounted what the board of directors had done in the past and the failures of these efforts. She said, "It was really hard for any us to say out loud what we really wanted, but in the end we agreed we just wanted her gone! We really hated this woman and thought she was nuts and there was no changing her—we knew that."

For groups as well as individuals, upper-management is more likely to consider rational, calm forms of communicative resistance. As one man told me, "Billie [a targeted coworker] just couldn't keep from crying when she talked about it, so we just, you know, we didn't ask her to come with us to Bill's [upper-manager] office." He went on to emphasize the importance of having specific, concrete examples of the bully's actions: "What, you know, clinched the deal with Bill was our notes, the notes we kept when he, you know, of exactly what happened, you know, the things we'd seen and could testify to the crap he was pulling."

Groups that gain the support of influential allies or experts outside the immediate workgroup also appear to have more voice with upper-management. Supporters include internal and external contacts such as union representatives, lawyers, physicians, mental health counselors, HR professionals, board members, bullying experts, political figures,

and other organizational managers. In some cases, group members go together (usually in twos or threes) to seek the assistance of influential others, usually when an aspect of the outside person's role employee advocacy (i.e., union steward, HR). In most cases, however, group members seek outside support independently and then bring this back to the group as a resource. For example, two participants accessed information from the Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute's website (www.bullyinginstitute.org), shared that with other group members, and used this expert knowledge to support their claims to upper-management. Diane's nursing colleague found an article about bully-busting in *Nurse Week* that provided substantiation for the nurses' complaints.

As with individual efforts, organized groups of workers recognize and accept the risk of potential job loss from taking complaints public. In one case, an informant said, "We were all ready to quit anyway—well most of us were looking for other jobs—if they didn't get rid of this woman, but we were still scared she was going to find out and we'd get fired like the others who'd tried this in the past." In another case, the program managers who secretly approached one of the board members used their threat of leaving as leverage. Group members consciously accepted the risk but, nonetheless, were determined to follow through with the complaint. The group's commitment to carry through is crucial for upper-managers to build cases for firing or transfer.

Upper-Management Features

"There is also a need for courage, with management or the individual being prepared and able to stand their ground" (Crawford, 2001, p. 23). A number of factors contribute to upper-management's willingness to listen and eventually make the difficult decision to intervene in the bully situation. First and foremost is the legal requirement for

evidence that the bully is creating a problem. Documented evidence of the problem contributes to upper-managers' willingness to listen to a employee or an employee group. The EEOC officer reiterated that management needed evidence of a problem beyond someone making one complaint. Evidence was

> the turnover and the performance. You wondered why it was that she couldn't keep the experienced people, and she couldn't keep the new people. Well, then it finally came to someone's attention. She's the problem. She's the problem and, like I say, we finally dealt with her and took care of that problem that way. We put her back to a non-supervisory position, and she's doing well. Doing well. But it took that. And it was apparent, because from one year to the next, they went from being the team of the year to being at the bottom, and you wonder why.

According to professionals who intervene in bullying, upper-managers must distance themselves from the management group in order to listen to subordinate staff (personal communication G. Namie, April 2004). Upper-managers have to break with convention, side with and believe a person or persons in an "out-group" (subordinate staff) over a member of their "in-group" (managerial staff). Upper-management's unwillingness to break with the management in-group obstructs action and, in some cases, grinds resistance to a halt.

At times, upper-managers express an intractable unwillingness to split from the management group. Other senior managers' unwillingness to accept that bullying is present reinforce this unwillingness (Beale, 2001). Participants and consulting professionals note that this unwillingness to go outside the chain of command is often exacerbated because the upper-managers to whom workers are appealing are often the same persons who hired or promoted the bully (Crawford, 1999; Hornstein, 1996). Taking the side of subordinate staff against a member of the management group is

further complicated if the bully is a central communication channel for information about a department. Other management group members can also block intervention efforts.

In a U.K. case, a "director and senior members of personnel wanted the bullying to be investigated. However, the other members of the organization refused to believe bullying existed and the director and personnel professional were isolated" (Crawford, 2001, p. 25). Breaking with the in-group also challenges taken-for-granted assumptions about hierarchical communication, because speaking with subordinate staff implies encouraging and sanctioning communication that was outside the "chain of command." Doing so often results in bullies crying foul. In my experience and in interviews with bullying professionals, as the investigation expands and substantive evidence emerges, bullies claim they were being bullied. However, employee narratives laced with pain are compelling. "It is difficult for senior management to keep an open mind when distressed employees recall their torments at the hands of a bully" (Crawford, 2001, p. 24). Even when subordinate stories emotionally stir upper-managers, investigations take time and energy.

Investigating bullying allegations appears to be time and resource consuming, although leaving bullying unchecked may be more costly (Bassman, 1992). Upper-managers must invest their own time or organizational resources for an outside consultant. Workers express disbelief that upper-managers do not take immediate punitive action considering the abuse they had suffered. Instead, upper-managers concerns focus on due process, legal requirements, organizational liability, and fair treatment. As noted, there has to be evidence that bully is a problem. For example, An EEOC officer with whom I spoke noted that when

> the turnover is significant and then we find out that now we've got to cut this person loose, because they're not accomplishing what they were supposed to anyway because their staff is down 30 to 40 percent. But it takes, in my estimation – my opinion, it takes that level of failure for management to finally get involved and to deal with those bullies.

Upper-managers predominantly work in a legal-rational environment in which protecting the organization from legal liability and reducing its exposure to law suits are paramount. Consideration of legal ramifications of bullying interventions is an overriding concern in interviews with personnel professionals. Gathering the necessary evidence, however, sparks escalated defensive tactics from the bully.

Upper-managers must withstand a constant barrage of defensive rebuttals from the bully. "For management…the issue of truth lies paramount. But whom should [they] believe?" (Crawford, 2001, p. 24). Additionally, upper-managers face the difficulty of protecting reporting workers from further retaliation. Bullies' defensive rebuttals often escalate over time and protecting workers may be impossible without suspending (with pay) or transferring the bully during the investigation (Crawford, 2001; Namie & Namie, 2000a; Rayner, et al., 2001). The following provides a common example of a bully's escalated efforts to "cry foul" in the following:

> With the support of the director, the personnel manager and deputy director stood firm while statements were taken and the bully was told that a formal investigation was taking place. During this process, the bully displayed such deviousness that she managed to undermine her own credibility and categorical denials of allegations of bullying. She contacted potential witnesses, and discussed the situation with her colleagues and outsiders, contrary to the strict confidentiality of the proceedings. She made unfounded allegations to the director about the new deputy director. The bully also presented sick leave notes for stress and depression alleging ill health as the consequence of the action taken. Yet, at the same time, she was attending conferences where colleagues she had bullied were present. Senior management realised that she should never be allowed to return to the organisation. (Crawford, 1999, p. 90)

The bully's efforts at self-defense, especially taken to the extreme, work against the bully and usually substantiate the accusations against him or her.

During the process of investigation, upper-managers lose the information channel the bully formerly provided. Oftentimes the only knowledge upper-management has about the day-to-day operations of a division or department came through the managing staff member, at least until subordinate staff started to complain. I intervened in the abuse of substance abuse treatment counselors and had to suspend the bully during the investigation. During that time, I had little knowledge of what was happening in the program, since the bullying program director to whom I spoke in weekly meetings was absent.

As noted, upper-managers are centrally concerned with meeting the legal requirements of employment termination, particularly when faced with firing someone who, as part of his or her job, had been trained in the legal issues surrounding disciplinary actions and employment termination. To discipline or fire insiders who understand the organizational liabilities, risks, and fears inherent to employee discipline or termination, poses one more challenge to upper-managers. This often means additional time gathering evidence from employees, HR reports, and other potential sources.

Upper-managers must be willing to make decisions about bully removal with less than perfect proof, despite internal investigations or consultants' reports, and some were loathe doing so. "It is not surprising therefore that management and personnel dislike dealing with these cases. Those who have experience in this type of work are aware that it is impossible to get it right for everyone" (Crawford, 2001, p. 27). However, by the

time action is in the investigation stage, upper-managers have considerable investment in ending staff bullying. Upper-managers' know that bully removal, while resource intensive, is only part of the investment they will have to make to restore operations. What looms large on the horizon for these managers is the additional time and resources to replace and train someone to fill the vacant position. Bully removal, however, is only a first step. Bullying often emerges as a result of organizational structures and systems which further complicates effective interventions.

Systemic Considerations

The path-model of bully removal provides an idea of the complexities involved during bullying intervention. In this model, I only present the dynamics of removing a bully to emphasize that in some cases, cumulative resistance over time can result in bully removal. However, removing the bully is only the correct solution if the problem *is* individual, and there are many times when that is not the case. Bullying can also be a symptom of organizational design and internal or external pressures impinging on the organization's mission (Hoel & Salin, 2003; Salin, 2003).

Crawford (2001) describes a case in which bullying was a symptom of the design of the organization and aggression was linked to the organizational role rather than an individual. After ridding itself of the bullying manager, the organization found that the "successor also bullied staff even though they had chosen a totally different personality. In the end, the organization dispensed with the role" (p. 24). I had a similar experience working with a program that monitored drunk driver compliance with court-ordered substance abuse treatment or education. The program had a tradition of using the receptionist as a "whipping post." Whipping the receptionist may have occurred because

this entry-level position required the lowest educational level and experience or because there were little other status markers of differentiation in the program. At any rate, I demoted the first bullying manager and promoted another member as manager. In short order, the second manager was bullying the others, particularly using the position to retaliate against the demoted manager. I finally eliminated the manager's position and restructured the group into a different configuration led by team consensus.

I include this caveat because bullying is a complex issue in workplaces that is not simply a matter of personalities or individual traits. Although bully removal is often the first line of response, especially when bullying has become a sedimented form of interaction, it is not always the only response necessary. "Reconciliation following instances of bullying, while laudable, is unrealistic in many cases. Bullying involves aggression that has got out of hand and the hurt can continue long after the event" (Crawford, 2001, p. 30). For this reason, bullies and targets must be permanently separated in some manner. Beyond bully removal, however, organizations need to "look for any underlying reasons why the problem exists" (Tehrani, 2001, p. 140). It is for this reason that I briefly outlined the organizational factors that trigger, motivate, or enable bullying in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Workers who resist bullying usually want upper-management to change the bully's behavior or remove the bully. Every person with whom I spoke voiced disbelief that bullies were allowed to continue their behavior unchecked and placed the ultimate responsibility to stop bullying at the feet of upper-management. As one woman remarked about upper-manager's surprise when she reported the bullying, "I just couldn't believe that she can't look at a Bureau of 28 people. You have eight people leave and don't know that you have a problem?….You have your blinders on if you can't look at that." (This woman and five others additionally left the organization between the July 2004 interview and the writing of this in April/May 2005.)

This comment reflects the belief that upper-management should not only see, but respond to, bullying by removing the problem: the bully. From the qualitative reconstruction of these cases, when these situations were resolved by higher management decisions, the resolution ultimately separated targets from perpetrators rather than restoring the situation to what it was before bullying began. Even for third-parties (consultants) it was not possible to execute control and restore the situation to what it was prior to the onset of bullying. Consultants' reports support this interpretation and report being unable to find reasonable solutions for the bullying situation except to separate the involved parties (Beale, 2001; Crawford, 2001; Rains, 2001). This suggests that once bullying becomes a sedimented workplace dynamic, it may only be arrested by removing someone from the setting.

Since bully removal is often the goal of bullying-affected workers, researchers may be seduced into determining resistance effectiveness only by workers' ability to have the bullies removed. If resistance success is defined only by the visible removal of bullies, however, a considerable amount of worker protest and opposition is overlooked. Success might better be redefined in these situations as *any* discursive or nondiscursive act of commission or omission that counters, disrupts, or defies the bully or erodes the bully's material/symbolic base of influence. Given the mutually constitutive nature of power and resistance (Foucault, 1980), acts of resistance inherently possess the potential for retaliatory actions that damage professional reputation and, by association, diminish one's prospective livelihood. Action taken to reassert dignity, justice, or a sense of fair play under threat of lost employment and attacks to personal dignity takes incredible courage and strength—including quitting the job. The more public these resistance transcripts become, the more courage they reflect. The target is saying in essence, "I may lose my job, I may be falsely accused of wrongdoing to impeach my character, but I must speak up for what I feel is right."

Implications

In addition to illustrating an innovative range of resistance practices and describing the dynamics necessary for bully removal, this study also puts forward implications for research, methodology, theory and practice.

Implications for Bullying Research

This study suggests a number of research issues regarding workplace bullying and resistance to abusive treatment at work. These include the way in which bullying and

resistance are defined or characterized, and the current examination of bullying as a dyadic interaction.

Limitations of Bullying Definitions

The first implication critiques current definitions of workplace bullying. Given that extant descriptions of bullying underscore the issues of frequency, duration, and power disparity, this characterization restricts studies to abusive interactions only when they display these dynamics. As a result, research fails to sufficiently address cases in which people feel targeted for abuse by intermittent attacks or are bullied for less than six months (Tehrani, 2001). Attacks over only a few weeks or months can pose a serious threat to one's sense of ontological security (Giddens, 1991).

Furthermore, requiring power disparity as a definitional element excludes workers' effective acts of resistance and limits the ability to examine the dynamics most likely to lead to bullying cessation and organizational change. Specifically, if we can only study as *workplace bullying* the interactions in which targets are defined as unable to defend themselves, this constructs a limiting paradox. If bullying is defined only as "powerless versus powerful," it is impossible to study the phenomenon outside of this criteria. If workers resist and successfully stop bullying, the interaction, definitionally speaking, ceases to be *bullying.* At what point is it bullying and can it be bullying without the power differential as conceptualized in current research? The definition of bullying that I suggest as a result of this study provides more flexibility and thus encompass more complex ideas of power and abuse regardless of duration. That definition is as follows:

> Workplace bullying is a pattern of persistent, offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or exclusionary discursive and nondiscursive behaviors that targets perceive as intentional efforts to harm, control, or drive them from the workplace. Bullying is often escalatory in nature and linked to hostile work environments. The principal effects are damage or impairment to targets and workgroups and obstruction of organizational goals and processes.

This definition addresses the egregious nature of abuse, the repetitive feature of bullying, its escalatory nature and also the link to harm and hostile work environments. However, unlike past definitions, it does not explicitly entail a power-deficient target.

Bullying as a Dyadic Interaction

The bulk of bullying research maintains a focus on the dyadic nature of bullying, that is the interactions between the bully and a given target (for an exception see Salin, 2001). This focus has provided an extensive understanding of bullying features, forms, antecedents, and effects (Einarsen, et al., 2003). On the other hand, a strictly dyadic perspective glosses or ignores the social aspects of workplace communication (Farrell & Geist-Martin, 2005). Bully-target communication, rather than occurring in a social vacuum absent of other parties, occurs in the social stage of workplace relations. The current study expands on Vartia's (1996; 2001) examination of bullying in which she included questions directed toward witnessing others within a larger study of bullying targets.

Bullying is a group communication phenomenon rather than a dyadic interaction between bully and target. In workgroups of a bullying supervisor, many workers are bullied either simultaneously or in a turn-taking dynamic (Keashly, 2001; Rayner, 1997). Bullies and upper-managers commonly identify the target as the problem employee rather than recognizing the communal nature of bullying in the working environment

(Namie & Namie, 2000b). When workers see their colleagues bullied and abused they are highly disturbed by the experience. Bullying not only affects the targeted persons; those observing it in their workgroup also report negative effects on their mental and physical health, work performance, and attitudes toward their jobs (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Vartia, 2003). Researchers should also expect to find increased intention to leave, higher stress levels and related sick leave/illness, less job satisfaction, decreased sense of voice, and increased feelings of guilt for failing to help others. As such, future research should include the communicative dynamics of workgroups and the impact of organizational systems and cultures on workgroup communication. At the least, studies must include the witnessing coworkers as well as targets and bullies.

Implications for Resistance Research

The second issue interrogates what is considered *resistance*. If resistance is only defined as acts that immediately alter organizational systems, collective social resistance, or organized groups in the public sphere, this seriously excludes the majority of ways in which people actually resist in everyday workplace micro-practices. Current work focusing on humans' micro-practices of resistance, particularly those with a post-modern perspective that deny a totalized or homogenized view of human resistance in modernity (e.g., Hequembourg & Arditi, 1999; Jordan, 2003; Trethewey, 1997) provide some idea of the depth and breadth of resistance. Furthermore, the act of resignation, particularly given that work provides not only one's livelihood, but also a majority of one's identity, should be forefronted as resistance. As noted earlier, in cases of domestic violence, most helping professionals would strongly advise the victim to enhance her safety at all costs, usually with the implicit hope that the woman safely leaves. In situations of employment,

however, to quit a job is viewed not as an act of resistance but rather a personal failure that is framed as defeat. It seems instead that examining the situation at work, recognizing that people are being treated in egregious ways, and deciding to withdraw one's labor and talents by resignation is the most public of resistance and should be considered as such.

Moreover, narratives of resistance and professional intervention data suggest that it is through these "traces" or evidence of resistance that organizations come to recognize what problems exist. The cumulative impact of turnover is a measurable indicator for organizations. This often stands as the most public of resistance forms and agrees with the most commonly given advice from bullying-affected workers. In this study, I asked witnesses and targets what they would advise others to do if faced with bullying at work; the overwhelming majority said "get out as soon as you can!" This is similar to target responses to the same question in Zapf and Gross' (2001) study of coping strategies. Targets were asked what kind of advice they would give to someone who is in a similar situation; "leaving the organization was the most often recommended strategy, followed by seeking support" (p. 513). This suggests that a prudent decision when faced with a bullying work environment is to exit as quickly as possible.

Implications for Methodology

The study's findings suggest implications for methodological issues in bullying and resistance research. In this project, two methodological issues emerged as salient, both of which were serendipitous. I first critique the usefulness of one-time measures of bullying as accurate characterizations of resistance and power in bullying situations.

Secondly, I suggest that the research interview itself may alter the course of events, or serve as political acts, for employee experiences of bullying.

One-Time Versus Over-Time

Much of what we know about bullying predominantly emerges through "snap-shot" or "slice-of-life" research that measures or examines bullying at one point in time—studies usually conducted with deeply distressed targets who at that moment are experiencing overwhelming feelings of personal powerlessness (Crawford, 1999, 2001; Davenport et al., 2002; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Hoel & Cooper, 1997; Namie, 2003; Tracy et al., 2004). Longitudinal studies of worker experiences provide a richer, textualized picture of the impact of resistance in these situations, since most resistance is unseen by one-time measures. Organizational change does not occur quickly or easily in these situations and acts of resistance, both internal and external to the organization and by exiting the organization, continue for some time before change takes place. As illustrated in the findings, resistance slowly erodes the bully's power, and this process is only evident from talking to the research participants over time. Organizational changes resulting from worker resistance has a "wearing away" effect on workplace bullying. This study suggests that, changes occur slowly, in a manner similar to water smoothing sharp-edged stones.

Follow up contacts with participants revealed both subtle and obvious changes. Through these contacts, I learned that in seven cases, the bully had been fired, transferred or quit. The nature of this change over time is particularly illustrative of Giddens' (1984) idea that structure is instantiated through repetitive practices that extend over time and space. As individuals "act otherwise" in the face of apparent power disparity and thus

"do otherwise" through acts of resistance, structures—whether or not these structures are officially sanctioned—change and transform. Examined in this light, bullies' current access to power resources is only a temporary configuration of the workgroup and organizational structures.

Current research on workplace bullying is discouraging regarding target agency, because people who logon to a bullying website seeking help (Namie, 2003), call bullying hotlines (Randall, 2000), report bullying on a workplace survey (Hoel & Cooper, 2000), or volunteer to participate in an interpretive research study (Tracy et al., 2004), are at the zenith of their abusive situations. At the point of help-seeking, these workers feel the least power and the most overwhelmed by the experience. If research only evaluates bullying based on these "slice in time" or "snap-shot" measures and observations, there is little doubt that the picture will look bleak. If, on the other hand, researchers continue contact with research participants, they can see how resistance changes organizational systems and relationships, as was possible in Trethewey's (1997) study. Similarly, in the current study, worker resistance contributed to system changes over time, whether that resistance was in the form of collective voice, cumulative resignations, formal grievances, or alliances with influential others.

Interview as Intervention

The findings in this study reflect a collaborative project of knowledge building between the participants and myself as a researcher. I have no access to these experiences except through those who were willing to share them with me. On the other hand, I provided them with a supportive, empathetic ear, as well as the most current knowledge on the topic. Through the course of the research project, I developed warm

relationships with many of the participants and as noted, communicated with many of them multiple times between when I collected and analyzed the data and reported it herein. Many of them contacted me to update me on their situations. In other cases I contacted them to find out how they were doing and whether or not their work situations had improved. This contact provided insight into the experiences of bullying-affected workers and how their situations changed over time, in some cases due to participating in the research project.

It seems imperative to recognize that as with an anthropologist's presence in another culture, the qualitative interviewer's presence in the life of research participants alters the dynamics of the situation. Researchers may record something as having happened in the field when the researcher's presence contributed to what occurred. Interpretive researchers understand the final product—the written research report—is a text that weaves together the native and researcher's subjectivities to better understand native's life experiences (Potter, 1996). Interpretive researchers are sensitive to and aware of themselves as mediating the research. Despite believing this on an epistemological level, researchers may or may not have evidence of how or when this mediation occurs.

Through emotional validation, exposure to research findings on bullying, and the affirmation of a common language to label abuse and mistreatment as *bullying*, target and witness perceptions and responses to their work experiences may have been altered. I cannot report the subsequent responses of workers as if the interview had no intervening effect whatsoever, particularly for those still in the bullying environment. The full extent of this effect is unknown but as one woman told me in a follow-up email, "Thank you so

much for offering me the support and encouragement I desperately needed. Speaking with you really helped me commit to a course of action." She spoke during the interview of her plans to file a report with HR. Evidently, she did so and so did a number of others unbeknownst to her. The bully was ultimately removed. This statement suggests that the research interview may serve as a provocative intervention in cases where researchers are studying topics such as workplace bullying, surviving incest, and other traumatic life events. As such, a final follow-up makes sense to inquire about the impact of the interview on the situation. Varallo and colleagues (1998) did this in the study with incest survivors and provided considerable support for the idea that a research interview was also an type of applied communication research.

Interview as Political Act

The interview is also a fundamentally political act. Research participants framed taking part in the interview as a political stand against workplace bullying. Every participant in this study voiced a willingness to verbally recount and relive their experiences, especially if by doing so, it would help others. This mirrors the feelings of incest survivors who have spoken to researchers (Varallo et al., 1998) and said they hoped their participation would help others. Likewise, workers characterized participating in the current study as "spreading the news" about bullying at work. The process of fighting back in the face of bullying politicized some workers, as has been the case for some whistleblowers (Rothschild & Miethe, 1994). One woman told me that "It's just not right what these people do—somebody has to speak up." Another man reported how upsetting talking about it was: "It gets my heart going and it makes me feel, have bad feelings…but if it's beneficial to somebody, you know, it's all right."

Furthermore, one of the participants who provided a member-check follow-up interview told me she sent the draft of my research findings to others in the organization including upper-managers. A long-term employee in a state agency said,

> Somebody's gotta speak up, you know, uncover this cancer that's growing here. So many good people have left and the rest of us want to go and I'm telling you it's downright criminal. I'm just not going to lay down and take it from that bastard anymore. Maybe your research can expose the stuff that's happening behind closed doors in this place.

In this way, participants accessed the research process itself as a channel for speaking out. Future researchers, particularly those with an applied or action agenda might consciously explore the idea of research as political action and present, at least in part, research as a political forum for persons and groups under study. This is especially salient for groups who have little voice in other forums.

Implications for Theory

The acts of resistance found in participants' stories suggest a number of theoretical implications that are grounded in the data and sensitized by the theories of Weber, Foucault, Giddens and Scott. These implications point to a more dynamic characterization of power than is currently afforded in extant bullying literature and critiques the defenseless "target" characterization. Furthermore, this study extends communicative theories of resistance by fostering the concepts of concertive resistance and liminal transcripts.

Theories of Bullying and Resistance

From the qualitative reading of participants' narratives, I suggest a number of reconceptualizations regarding resistance to oppression or abuse at work.

Unquestioned managerial prerogative. The reification of power vested in bureaucratic workplace organizing, that is authority centered in hierarchical positions above others, is a taken-for-granted workplace dynamic. Employees are aware of the formal and informal rules guiding response to authority and agree to these rules—at least to some extent—even in the face of supervisory bullying. Despite the tacit or explicit agreement, however, workers will challenge mistreatment, even if they do not question supervisory prerogative. The employer-employee agreement and relationship continues to be an uneasy balance between the efforts of one to control and the other to maintain personal freedom (Ashforth & Mael, 1998; Clegg, 1994; Giddens, 1982). The tenuous balance of these interests is easily disrupted by mistreatment, exploitation, or contempt. Employees "go along" for a number of reasons, one of which is economic dependency.

Critical scholarship characterizes workers' agreement to organizational power and control as a form of self-subordination (Foucault, 1977; Deetz 1992, 1998; Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Mumby, 1997; Murphy, 2003) but rarely contextualizes this claim with a discussion of people's material requirement for employment to satisfy basic human needs (Maslow, 1943). This attitude is especially salient in Murphy's (2003) study on exotic dancers. At no point in her work does Murphy address the amount of money a woman can earn dancing nude for men, an income that far surpasses what other women earn in "respectable" secretarial, social work, or teaching jobs, for example. In an effort to make the invisible visible, that is, make explicit the tacit rules of behavior historically embedded in discourses, I believe that critical scholarship can become a party to "blaming the victim." If critical scholars develop their observations solely through the public performance of subordinate groups, this is further problematic, since "public

action will provide a constant stream of evidence that appears to support an interpretation of ideological hegemony" (Scott, 1990, p. 70). Organizational communication scholars whose goals are critical (empowerment, enlightenment) should guard carefully that they too do not become part of an oppressive system by conflating public deference to power as misled or myopic acts of self-subordination.

The material risks of public insubordination and resistance suggest that, notwithstanding an occasional, exceptional public form of resistance, workers will carry out the majority of resistance in hidden transcripts (Scott, 1990). The cases that finally emerge into the open and are thus visible to upper-management are most likely the smoke from a fire, the sparked outrage—the final straw, that points toward the presence of chronic bullying and harassment burning under the surface (Rains, 2001). Given the threat of "going public," it should not be at all surprising that the surface performance of employees looks like self-subordination.

Rational, linear discourse. The expectation for rational communication determines, at least to some degree, how bullied (and other) workers must communicate to be heard by decision-makers at work. The requirement for rationalized, linear discourse problematize targets' experiences, because their narratives are emotional and, at times, fragmented. Emotionalized discourse may even be dismissed out of hand as irrational and therefore unreliable and untrue (Mumby & Putnam, 1992; Waldron, 2000). Indeed, upper-managers are probably more likely to hear and attend to the concerns of people who are better able to construct calm, rational, linear narratives of abuse with specific, concrete examples. Emotional experiences may have another avenue for voice, however.

Workers' choices of communication style at work does not have to be either rational or emotional. Setting these up in a dichotomous relationship provides little guidance to employees who have emotional stories to tell. The rational-emotional dichotomy also suggests an either-or relationship as if people cannot or do not experience the two in concert. Organizational communication researchers might bear in mind there are rational ways to tell emotional stories and then search for and highlight those in empirical studies. Emotionally descriptive language at work may not be as disturbing or disconcerting as are uncontrolled emotional outbursts (Waldron & Krone, 1991). Organizational scholars might theoretically and conceptually frame *rational emotionalism* as a form of workplace speech that speaks *of* emotion but not *with* emotion.

In a bullying situation, workers might describe their emotional responses in ways that also speak to upper-management interests. Weiss and Cropanzano's (1996) Affective Events Theory suggests that emotional events, whether positive or negative, remove employee focus from work tasks and, by association, the organization's productivity goals. Furthermore, "negative events produce even stronger reactions than do positive events" (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p. 32) so have the potential to hinder employees' emotional health but also organizational concerns. Rational emotionalism could provide a method of talking about emotionally disturbing workplace events that communicates the emotional elements of those events through calm, measured language. Of course, critical scholars could label this as a masked form of self-subordination. However, if one of the goals critical organizational of research is to improve working

conditions, providing ways to encode emotional experiences into rational dialogue could move us toward that goal.

Communicative Theories of Resistance

In addition to expanding the notions of power and resistance in bullying situations, this study provides two central contributions to communicative studies of resistance: examining concertive resistance as a unique phenomenon and the emergence of liminal transcripts as a space of resistance between hidden and public transcripts.

Concertive resistance. One of the ways that organizations exert control over workers is through unobtrusive practices in which discipline is collaboratively produced as part of identification with a profession or employing organization (J. Martin, Knopoff, & Beckman, 1998; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). Some argue that this is the most effective means of control, because it is based on ideational or ideological values that motivate organizational members (see discussion in Larson & Tompkins, 2005). An aspect of unobtrusive control is a concertive control (e.g., Barker, 1993; Sewell, 1998; Tompkins & Cheney, 1985), considered to be "normative, value-laden premises where control is exercised through identification with organizational core values and is enforced by peers" (Larson & Tompkins, 2005, p. 3). In other words, coworkers internalize organizationally sanctioned values and then pressure their peers, both directly and indirectly, to also act upon those values.

In a manner similar to concertive control, this study suggests that in situations of bullying there is also a communicative force I refer to as *concertive resistance*. This social force may oppose administrative or concertive control based on organizational values to go along and be a good little coper, especially when administrative systems fail

to halt abusive treatment. Concertive resistance can emerge as a counterforce to abusive practices that veer from espoused organizational values such as trust, empowerment, and autonomy (Barley & Kunda, 1992). Individual acts of resistance often focus on labor-related issues and occur through labor withdrawal, working-to-rule, or other forms of resistance through distance. Collective resistance, on the other hand, focuses on organizing to directly address the bullying and abuse.

In concertive resistance, as with concertive control, the locus of power shifts "to the value consensus enforced by employees themselves (Larson & Tompkins, 2005, p. 3). Research participants' narratives suggest at least two conflicting dynamics that complicate concertive resistance. First, the bully usually pressures workers to avoid associating and communicating with resisting individuals or groups and sanctions workers who do so. Second, members of the resisting group pressure other workers to join the resisting group and sanction workers who fail to do so. What this suggests, at least in workgroups with severe dysfunction and abusive staff treatment is that workers are pulled by both dynamics into "no win" situations.

Resisting workers in this study attempted to draw support from their colleagues. When colleagues failed to provide support, targets reported feeling revictimized and abandoned (Rayner et al., 2002). It is not surprising then to see concertive efforts to expand the ranks of the resisting "troops." Targets in this study, and in published research, indicate that their coworkers do not believe their stories or actively join in resistance efforts until the bully also targets those coworkers (Adams & Crawford, 1994; Field, 1996; Namie & Namie, 2000a). This study also suggests that workers may join resistance because they recognize the *potential* for future targeting.

Concertive resistance, that is peer efforts to draw other into the resisting clique, draws on value-based rhetoric. That is, employees enforce concertive resistance through ideational control (Sewell, 1998). Ideational control uses group or human values to discipline others' subjectivities (Foucault, 1977) and "establishes conformity through the creation of a unitary set of values" (Sewell, 1998, p. 408). The tricky part involves maneuvering between two conflicting power dynamics and control efforts: the bully or organization and the worker group. Rather than blurring the distinction between "locally and personally normative and the universally rational" (Sewell, 1998, p. 411) values, concertive resistance emphasizes this distinction. In other words, resisting group members contrast the normative value of taking action because it is the right, moral, or proper thing to do with doing something because the rules say so. Concertive resistance appeals to workers' values of human rights, decency, and justice and challenges workers' who hurt others through their silence and failure to take a stand. Concertive resistance challenges the "I was just following orders" defense and gathers numbers in the resisting group.

Concertive resistance also performs for an audience of powerholders (HR, upper-managers, influential others) but does so in the powerholders' language. Resisting workers translate their concerns (e.g., quality of life issues for workers) into the constructs of managerial discourse (e.g., turnover, productivity, bottom-line) when seeking organizational change or bullying intervention. Translations from hidden to public transcript are a key strategy of concertive resistance. For example, unobtrusive and concertive control occur when managerial interests are internalized by workers and then "pressed upon" coworkers. In concertive resistance, workers' transform their

quality-of life-concerns into the language of managerial interests when crafting their complaints about bullying. Given the slow nature of change that occurs, at least in part, due to subordinate resistance, upper-managers may be subject to a form bottom-up unobtrusive control from concertive resistance. The strategies and tactics of concertive resistance seemed to take shape within a liminal space that emerged in participants' stories.

Liminal transcripts. Participant experiences indicated the presence of what I call *liminal transcripts*—spaces for resistance—that were neither fully hidden nor fully public. Evidence of this liminal or threshold transcript expands Scott's (1990) dual constructs of hidden and public transcripts and suggests there may be a third space between the two. *Liminal,* refers to the threshold of a physiological or psychological response—something that is barely perceptible. I adapt this term because it aptly describes the dynamics I noticed in participants' narratives. This liminal space, or liminal transcript, shares some of the characteristics of the hidden and public transcripts. Initial resistance nearly always occurred in hidden peer transcripts and involved only a few trusted others, usually fellow coworkers. Hidden transcripts provided a kind of "basic training" space in which employees tried out their arguments, looked for and found confirmation, and exchanged suggestions for future action.

Although the majority of initial resistance took place in the relative safety of these hidden transcripts (Scott, 1990), secondary resistance grew from private peer dialogues and then moved into a liminal space before "going public," when that was the case. Liminal transcripts usually involved specifically selected, potentially "safe" others outside the peer network and provided space for private conversations with the upper-

managers, influential experts, physicians, therapists, and so forth. Private conversations with the bully, although potentially not as safe as talks with a therapist, also took place in liminal spaces out of view of other organizational members. In some cases, targets' *first* response to abuse was to speak directly to the bully even before sharing their concern with fellow coworkers. As such, liminal spaces served at least two purposes in this study: (a) to build resources of power and plan public strategies of resistance and (b) express complaints to the bully in a setting that allowed the bully to save face.

The public-private characteristics of resistance transcripts appears less like a dichotomy and more like a continuum. That these liminal spaces emerged in participants' narratives and were not present in Scott's (1990) work was most likely a function of the different subordinate groups studied in this and Scott's work. Scott's (1985, 1990) research focuses on historically oppressed groups, oppressed through practices up to and including murder (serfs, indentured servants, slaves). This study, on the other hand, examined the experiences of workers in modern, capitalistic workplaces albeit under conditions of aggressive mistreatment. Employees in modernity have a wider range of access to resources of power than did indentured servants, slaves or feudal serfs. Human rights, civil rights, and labor law in the U.S. construct a considerably different context in which employees in modernity work. Participants appear to avail themselves of these expert discourses and other types of influential allies in liminal transcripts.

Implications for Practice

This study also proposes issues of concern for organizational upper-managers. Considerable research suggests that there are high organizational costs when bullying is left unchecked (e.g., Bassman, 1992; Davenport et al., 2002; Yamada, 2000). These are

both attitudinal and behavioral and can affect the target, the person accused of bullying and those who witness bullying. The negative effects of workplace bullying ultimately manifest in negative consequences for the organization as a whole and lead to absenteeism, staff turnover, reduced productivity, increased stress on bullied and nonbullied workers, and costs associated with dealing with bullying or dealing with the legal ramifications of bullying (Hoel et al., 2003).

Recognizing the Signs

Resistance and the emotionally laden communication inherent to it should be considered early warning signs. Emotional responses to unfair treatment "act as signaling devices when expected appropriate norms of communication are violated" (Waldron, 2000, p.72) and should not be ignored. Upper-managers must learn to "read the traces" of resistance to bullying, diagnose the problem early, and construct effective interventions. Part of this entails understanding the risk workers take by bringing their complaints into the public transcript, even when that takes the form of private talks that occur behind upper managers' "closed doors." Employees give considerable thought to the decision to go around the bully and speak to the bully's boss. The occurrence of such private talks might be considered a "red flag" for organizations concerned with bullying. For every public occurrence of such resistance, upper-managers should anticipate far more widespread problems, because it takes incredible courage to report bullying to upper-management.

Courses of Potential Action

Prior to instituting any program or intervention, upper-managers will want to gain some idea of the extensiveness of the problem, since most resistance will remain

hidden from persons perceived as powerholders (Scott, 1990). To draw this information from the hidden transcripts, organizations can conduct organization-wide, anonymous surveys and follow those with worker focus groups that flesh out the quantitative findings. All processes must ensure the safety and confidentiality of participating workers. If bullying is uncovered with these methods, there are a number of ways bullying can be ameliorated in organizations. One is to explicitly train HR professionals on how to recognize bullying and protect the reporting worker from harm. If bullying is sedimented and efforts fail to bring about desired results, bullies must be removed. This is often most fairly conducted by impartial, outside professionals who can objectively investigate and suggest a course of action.

Another approach is to institute a system to safely report bullying, such as the "practical listeners" program, in which trained volunteer staff are designated helpers for targeted workers (Rains, 2001). In these programs, peer listeners listen to their coworkers and suggest possible choices of action to resolve the issue. These listeners also provide social support, understanding, and help handling formal procedures, should that be the employee's determined course of action. Having practical listeners in place ensures that there is help available at all times and that such help is *always* confidential.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the study is limited in its scope, its limitations suggest fruitful directions for future research regarding bully types and worker resistance. All persons in this study were bullied by persons with more formal authority. As a result, these findings may have limited transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to bullying among peers or bullying-up from subordinates. Research suggests that the majority of bullies in the U.S.

and U.K. are persons with organizational authority (Lutgen-Sandvik, et al., 2004; Rayner, 1997); however, cases when bullies are peers or subordinates do occur. Resistance to this type of bullying should be further studied, because it is quite likely that the forms and practices of resistance in the face of peer-to-peer bullying is considerably different than how workers resist a superior who can terminate their employment. For instance, extant research suggests the authoritative bullying is more damaging to targets that peer bullying (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). Peer-to-peer bullying and authoritative-bullying may be two different phenomena. A closer examination of the dynamics in different situations would reveal whether the two should conceptually be separated. Currently, bullying research presents these as fundamentally the same phenomenon albeit in different forms.

Furthermore, resistance in this study was an emergent focus that surfaced in multiple conversations with targets and witnesses who reported changes in their workplace. As this focus emerged, other people with whom I discussed the study recounted their experiences of fighting back against workplace bullies. To extend our current understanding of the link between resistance and bullying cessation, future studies need to explicitly examine situations where resistance ended bullying. In this way, we might better discern the paths by which bullying can be interrupted. This interruption may happen early in the development of bullying and, thus, remain unreported in the current literature that expressly applies a bullying duration criterion of at least six months. Another way to explore these paths are through the experiences of professional consultants whose work is intervening in situations of bullying. As noted, trace evidence suggests that worker resistance culminated into consultants being called to

assist the organization. This evidence might be teased out through in-depth interviews with such professionals.

Another limitation of this study, and much of the bullying literature, is giving short-shrift to the gendered aspects of bullying at work. Survey research has demonstrated that both men and women are targets and perpetrators of workplace bullying (Hoel & Cooper, 2000a; Leymann, 1996b; Namie, 2003a). Most researchers do not overtly examine the gendered features of this phenomenon. There are those who expressly distinguish workplace bullying from sexual and racial harassment (e.g., Adams & Crawford, 1992; Leymann, 1996a) and others who claim that sexual and racial harassment are types of workplace bullying (e.g., Einarsen et al., 1994). “In fact, many researchers and activitists appear unsure whether workplace bullying and sexual/racial harassment should be conceptualised separately or together” (Lee, 2001, p. 208).

Lee’s (2001) work stands as a marked exception and brings gender to the forefront. She argues that “an understanding of the specificity of workplace bullying can be retained while developing a recognition of its gendered nature” (p. 210). Workplace bullying may be a function of supervisory discretion and sexism, in which a manager operates with strong opinions of how women and men should work and conduct themselves at work. For example, a man may be bullied because he would rather spend time at home with his family than attaining position or power on the job. Similarly, a woman who speaks her mind, rather than “going along” is neither compliant nor quiet—the latter often expectations of feminity (Lee, 2001). Furthermore, male upper-managers who are loathe to deal with female employees may “delegate” the disciplinary functions to mid-level women (Kanter, 1993). Delgation to female middle managers might explain

the survey findings indicating that women more often bully other women than they do men (e.g., Leymann, 1996b; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003a), Organizations are gendered social constructions, yet most workplace bullying research glosses this issue. Thus, the gendered aspects of bullying dynamics is a rich area for future research.

This study attempts to widen the bullying lens from its current focus on individuals or target-bully dyads to a broader focus on the workgroup. The focus should be widened yet again to include organizational dynamics. As noted, organizational factors play a key part in the triggering, developing, and enabling of bullying at work. The interview data included little, if any, awareness of organizational factors that impinged upon bullying dynamics. In a few instances, participants noted that there were more than one bully on the job, and that bullies seemed to "feed off of each other," but did not mention organizational issues or configurations that may contribute to bullying. The fact that the interviews did not discuss the organization level is probably "normal and natural." If feeling pain or strong emotion, we often want to pin it on an object (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

However, without the organizational level factored into analysis, it is quite simple to maintain the focus on individuals and their psychology that characterizes bullying research. Even herein, I am cognizant of the individualized focus that emerges with a focus on bully removal, despite claims that bully removal is *only the first step* to intervention. A number of approaches may better explore the organizational dynamics and structures involved in bullying environments. First, interviews with targets or witnesses could include explict questions about organizational culture, norms, and structures. Workers probably have considerable knowledge about these dynamics if

researchers “dig a little deeper.” Second, participant-observation within an organization is a rich possibility. Gaining access to a bullying environment might have to be masked as general research about organizational communication, but could nonetheless be conducted ethically under this umbrella. On-site studies allow researchers to see communicative dynamics that may be transparent to those within a system for whom these are “second nature.” Third, indepth interviews with professional consultants might provide us with useful insight. Crawford’s (1997, 1999, 2001) work provides an idea of the complexity involved in professional bullying interventions.

Finally, based upon the theoretical implications discussed earlier, a number of propositions emerge for future exploration or testing.

Proposition 1. Employees will resist mistreatment and the abuse of power but will not question the underlying norm of managerial prerogative.

Proposition 2. Rational, linear accounts of workplace bullying will more likely build a supportive audience of decision maker than will emotional, nonlinear accounts.

Proposition 3. Where there is workplace bullying there will also be resistance, especially where workplace bullying threatens or questions preferred subject positions.

Proposition 4. As resistance to workplace bullying increases, bullying tactics will also increase in retaliation.

Proposition 5. The majority of subordinate resistance will be hidden from organizational decision makers, so any public sign should be considered an indication of far deeper seated problems.

These could be tested or examined through focused attention to resistance in worker narratives, specifically drawing a sample seeking resistance, or focusing interview questions tightly around the issue of opposition, protest, and defiance to abusive treatment at work.

Epilogue

In closing, I feel it imperative to conclude with the potential risks of long-term, unchecked employee bullying and abuse. Workplace bullying and employee abuse have a measurably negative impact on organizations and organizational goals (Yamada, 2000). Direct costs include increased disability and workers' compensation claims, increased medical costs, and costs defending lawsuits for wrongful discharge or constructive discharge (Matusewitch, 1996). Indirect costs include low quality work, reduced productivity, high staff turnover, increased absenteeism, deteriorated customer relationships, and loss of positive public image. A high turnover rate is one of the most frequent consequences and is commonly a sign of organizational infirmity. Even less tangible negative effects are "opportunity costs of lowered employee commitment, such as lack of discretionary effort, commitments outside the job, time spent talking about the problem rather than working, and loss of creativity" (Bassman, 1992, p. 137). Problems go unsolved and can accumulate into crises, because bullying encourages "fixing the blame rather than fixing the problem." (p. 140). Terrorized workers hide mistakes rather than using them as improvement opportunities (Lockhart, 1997) in an environment of "fear and mistrust, resentment, hostility, feelings of humiliation, withdrawal, and play-it-safe strategies" (Bassman, 1992, p. 141). For employees who have been bullied or witnessed bullying of their peers, a kind of goal displacement occurs in which the primary goal becomes self-protection. Workers maintain a constant state of hypervigilance—a perfectly understandable response to constant threat, yet one that is corrosive to workers and workplace health (Bassman, 1992; Lockhart, 1997).

Given these dynamics, workplaces where bullying is left unchecked may breed a frightening potential. Bullying has a high potential to create an impoverished workplace that materializes over time as an indirect result of a series of worker-exit waves. During the crests of the waves, talented employees leave without a fight, or may briefly fight, give up and then decide to leave. In the first wave, the brightest and most talented leave, taking their wealth of occupational capital (skills, technical knowledge, experience, etc.) with them to new employers (Crawford, 2001; Rayner, et al., 2002). This occurs in two ways: first, if a new manager enters the workforce and employees see that abuse and bullying are this manager's approach to working relations, they assess the situation as undesirable and determine they will not invest the energy to fight it (Rayner, 1997). In essence, their departure *is* their act of resistance—their resignation communicates an assessment of the workplace dynamics that is too socially "expensive." The first wave of workers appear to be those who have little invested in the job—what economic theorists call "sunk costs"—and those whose identity disallows being mistreated or devalued. Other workers who have been on the job for a number of years, may believe they have a significant investment in the job, or have a sense that the organization perceives them as valuable assets may stay and attempt to stop the bullying.

Many of these workers become part of a second-wave of workers who may try to stop the bullying but find that their efforts are met with escalating abuse, ambivalence from upper management or both. After fighting what feels like a losing battle and finding themselves on the receiving end of escalated abuse, this second wave may also exit the organization (Adams & Cooper, 1992; Zapf & Gross, 2001). In a third intermittent wave, new employees come in but appear to frequently leave after assessing the negative

workplace dynamics (Bassman, 1992), unless they lack the occupational capital to do so. Unfortunately, these waves can leave behind a less talented, less confident cadre of workers with fewer occupational options and fewer organizationally valued assets (Adams & Cooper, 1992; Randall, 2000). It is possible, too, that these workers have a weaker identity construct and may be more likely to suffer psychological damage as a result of bullying (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). It is also reasonable to expect that some of the people who stay and are subjected to ongoing abuse become frustrated, angry, and vengeful (Folger & Baron, 1996). For example, one of the workgroups in this study reported discussing and fantasizing about the bully's murder. The research participant in this workplace refused to learn first-aid, so she would never be in a position to have to save the bully's life. The building rage in abused workers, erosion of human resources, and resulting increase in work distribution may contribute to a powder-keg atmosphere with the potential for a serious explosion given the right spark. Allen and Lucerno's (1996) study of insider murder is informative here and points to the potentially deadly dynamics of unchecked bullying.

If we take as a given that the group left behind in workplace bullying situations is somewhat occupationally impoverished, they may feel trapped in a job that provides a level of income or other benefits they believe they cannot find elsewhere. These workers report looking for other work and being unable to secure new jobs, or at least to be able to find jobs as good as the one they have (Allen & Lucerno, 1996). If their job is fundamental to their sense of identity, this further contributes to the situation's precariousness. As a result of the waves of employee loss and the reluctance of incoming

workers to stay in what they perceive to be a hostile work environment, the impoverished group is faced with other workplace stressors.

Increased workloads due in part to understaffing or untrained newcomers can compound the atmosphere of fear and dread engendered by bullying. “Exacerbating the sense of inequity experiences by workers who think they have been treated unfairly is the belief that they are powerless to change the adverse outcomes” (Allen & Lucero, 1996, p. 90). If these workers are subsequently singled out for bullying and fired, after tolerating or witnessing bullying over an extended period of time and “sticking it out,” they might justifiably feel impotent and outraged. These dynamics can create an environment conducive to acts of violence, up to an including murder, when impoverished workers feel cornered and hopeless. While my data did not indicate violence as a salient resistance technique, the potential of unrelenting bullying to engender acts of violence does not seem too far a stretch after hearing targets’ narratives of pain, anguish, rage and hopelessness.

Conclusion

Far from targets being powerless in the face of bullying, it appears that employees access a broad range of resources to resist abusive treatment, protect themselves, and support one another. The preponderance of this resistance occurs, however, in the hidden transcripts among coworker groups, in collaboration with associated professionals, and in the privacy of HR offices. What became somewhat clearer through these narratives is that whether or not organizational upper-managers intervene and take action to stop bullying, as is their fiduciary responsibility, organizational actors do not passively accept abuse. In the absence of protection from

organizational systems of authority, workers leave or defend themselves, resulting in an array of unintended consequences, few of which are likely in the organization's best interests.

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APPENDIX A

BULLYING AND MOBBING DEFINITIONS

Appendix A
Bullying and Mobbing Definitions

Term	Definition (Source)
Bullying	
1.	"unwanted, offensive, humiliating, undermining behavior towards an individual or groups of employees. Persistent malicious attacks on personal or professional performance [that] are typically unpredictable, irrational and often unfair. This abuse of power can cause such chronic stress and anxiety that people gradually lose belief in themselves, suffering physical ill health and mental distress as a result" (Rayner et al., 2002, p. xi) "a situation where one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons, in a situation where the target of bullying has difficulty defending him or herself against these actions. We will not refer to a one-off incident as bullying" (Rayner et al., 2002, p. 24) [U.K., Business]
2.	"a pattern of repeated hostile behaviors over an extended period of time; actual or perceived intent to harm on the part of the actor [bully]; one party is unable to defend him/herself; a power imbalance exists between the parties" (Keashly & Nowell, 2003, p. 340) [U.S., psychology]
3.	"the aggressive behavior arising from the deliberate intent to cause physical and psychological distress to others" (Randall, 2001, p. 9) [U.K., psychology]
4.	"To label something bullying (harassment, badgering, niggling, freezing out, offending someone) it has to occur frequently over a period of time, and the person confronted has to have difficulties defending himself/herself. It is not bullying if two parties of approximately equal 'strength' are in conflict or the incidence is an isolated event" (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997, p. 191) "harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (i.e., weekly) and over a period of time (i.e., about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal 'strength' are in conflict" (Einarsen et al., 2003b, p. 15) [Scandinavia, psychology]

5.	"*repeated* and *persistent negative actions* towards one or more *individual(s),* which involve *a perceived power imbalance* and *create a hostile work environment.* Bullying is thus a form of interpersonal aggression or hostile, anti-social behaviour in the workplace" (Salin, 2003, p. 1214, emphasis in original) …In bullying, the targeted person has difficulties defending himself; it is therefore not a conflict between parties of equal strength" (Salin, 2001, p. 431) [Scandinavia, business/management]
6.	"the deliberate, hurtful and repeated mistreatment of a Target (the recipient) by a bully (the perpetrator) that is driven by the bully's desire to control the Target….[C]ontrol is typically a mixture of cruel acts of deliberate humiliation or interference and the withholding of resources and support preventing the target from succeeding at work. The…defining characteristic is that the bully's actions damage the target's health and self-esteem, relations with family and friends, economic livelihood, or some combination of them all." (Namie & Namie, 2000a, p. 3) [U.S., psychology]
7.	"offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or humiliating behaviour, abuse of power or authority which attempts to undermine an individual or group of employees and which may cause them to suffer stress" (cited in Richards & Daley, 2003, p. 250) [UNISON labor union, National Health and Safety, U.K.]
8.	"occurs when one person, typically (but not necessarily) in a position of power, authority, trust, responsibility, management, etc., feels threatened by another person, usually (but not always) a subordinate who is displaying qualities…ability, popularity, knowledge, skill, strength, drive, determination, tenacity, success, etc. The bully…believe[s] that he can never have these qualities which he sees readily in others….Insecurity and lack of confidence cause the bully to desire to control the individual using aggressive physical and psychological strategies" (Field, 1996, p. xxii) [U.K., past target-advocate]
9.	"long-lasting, recurrent, and serious negative actions, and behaviour that is annoying and oppressing. It is not bullying if you are scolded once or somebody shrugs his/her shoulders at you once. Negative behaviour develops into bullying when it becomes continuous and repeated. Often the victim of bullying feels unable to defend him/herself" (Vartia, 1996, p. 205) "a situation in which one or more individuals are subjected to persistent and repetitive negative acts by one or more co-workers, supervisors or subordinates, and the person feels unable to defend him/herself" (Vartia, 2003, p. 11) [Scandinavia, psychology]

Mobbing
10. “hostile and unethical communication which is directed in a systematic way by one or a number of persons mainly toward one individual…These actions take place often (almost every day) and over a long period (at least for six months) and , because of this frequency and duration, result in considerable psychic, psychosomatic and social misery” (Leymann, 1990, p. 120) “social interaction through which one person (seldom more) is attacked by one or more (seldom more than four) individuals almost on a daily basis and for periods of many months, bringing the person into an almost helpless position with potentially high risk of expulsion” (Leymann, 1996b, p. 168) [Scandinavia, psychology]
11. “emotional assault [that] begins when an individual becomes a target of disrespectful and harmful behaviors, innuendo, rumors, and public discrediting; a hostile environment is created in which one individual gathers others to willingly, or unwillingly, participate in continuous malevolent actions to force a person out…[A]ctions escalate into abusive and terrorizing behavior;… victim feels increasingly helpless ….The individual experiences increasing distress, illness and social misery.” (Davenport et al., 2002, p. 33) [U.S. anthropology, business consultancy]

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Appendix B
Research Partisans

Key:

T/W-bullying target and witness, W-bullying witness, B-bully

Current-person still at the job

Case numbers: Digit indicates order of interview in study sequence

NR-no resistance; I-individual resistance, C-collective resistance

Case	Sex	Pseudonym	T/W	industry	state	age	Status
1-NR	F	Georgia	W	advertising	AZ	28	W Quit B Current
2-C	M	Greg	T/W	police department	FL	28	T/W Transfer B Transfer
3-I	M	Ken	T/W	large retail chain	IN	28	T/W Quit B Unknown
4-I	M	Dan	W	medical supplies sales	PA	26	W Quit B Unknown
5-I	M	David	T/W	IT help technician	WI	31	T/W Quit B Current
6-I	F	Lucy	T/W	publishing company	MA	24	T/W Quit B Current
7-I	F	Kim	T/W	Economic counsel	ND	29	T/W Current B Fired
8-NR	F	Jane	T/W	hardware retail (business closed)	WV	31	T/W Quit B Unknown
9-I	M	Lynn	T/W	security	TN	49	T/W Fired B Current
10-C	M	Steve	W	dept labor	MT	46	W Quit B Failed Promotion (Current)
11-I	M	Johnny	W	travel agency	MN	40	W Quit B Current
12-C	F	Terry	T/W	education & training	MO	42	T/W Quit EEO settled B Current
13-C	M	Ben	T/W	communications	NY	43	T/W Current B Current

14-I	F	Carmen	T/W	mental health	KS	38	T/W Current B Fired
15-I	F	Mary	T/W	law enforcement administration	TN	45	T/W Current B Transfer
16-I	F	Michelle	W	restaurant facility management	GA	29	W Current B Current
17-NR	F	Lydia	T/W	electrical retailer	KY	53	T/W Current B Current
18-I	M	Brad	T/W	substance abuse treatment	TX	50	T/W Current B Current
19-C	F	Amy	W	sports fishing	WA	46	W Quit B Current
20-C	M	Kurt	W	legal profession	UT	41	W Current B Fired
21-I	F	Sylvia	T/W	food service	NE	37	T/W Quit EEOC won B Quit
22-C	F	Linda	W	primary ed	MI	38	W Current B Transferred
23-I	F	Diane	T/W	nursing	OR	41	T/W Current B Fired
24-C	M	Rick	W	city govt	OK	51	W Current B Fired
25-I	F	Shelley	T/W	consulting firm	AZ	34	T/W Fired B Current
26-C	M	Mark	T/W	social services	CO	50	T/W Current B Fired
27-I	M	Ted	T/W	mining	VA	44	T/W Fired B Current
28-C	F	Kristie	T/W	transportation	IA	49	T/W Current B Current
29-I	M	Glen	W	mental health	CA	48	W Quit B Current
30-C	M	Andy	T/W	insurance	NC	35	T/W Current B Transfer

Saturation Interviews

31-C	F	Emily	T/W	hotel/ hospitality	AZ	41	B Fired
32-C	F	Vicki	T/W	real estate	AK	39	B Fired
33-C	F	Karla	T/W	nonprofit services	AK	47	B Fired
34-I	M	Ed	W	secondary education	WY	29	RP Quit Won law suit B later fired

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Appendix C
Interview Guide

1. What is the current industry/occupation in which you work?
2. How long have you been at this job?
3. Tell me about what you've seen happening at work.
    a. How did it start?
    b. Why do you think that person was targeted?
    c. Why do you think you haven't been targeted?
4. Impact on work
    a. How has this affected your work and how you communicate at work?
    b. How has it affected the work and communication of others not targeted?
    c. Has it increased/decreased your
        i. Intention to leave
        ii. Stress or comfort level
        iii. Work productivity
        iv. Other?
    d. How has it affected communication with friends and family members?
5. Responses, Public/Hidden transcripts
    a. How do you or others at work talk about what's happening?
    b. What kinds of things do you or others at work talk about privately?
    c. What do you or your coworkers say about the bully when bully not around?
    d. How do you or coworkers act when bully is around?
6. Roles of coworkers
    a. What are your conversations with the target like?
    b. How do others respond to the target?
    c. Is there something you wish you could do but don't see as a possibility?
7. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me that we haven't already talked about?

APPENDIX D

BULLYING RESEARCH CONSENT

Appendix D
Bullying Research Consent

Dear Study Participant,

I am a researcher and PhD Candidate in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University working under the direction of Dr. Sarah J. Tracy. I am requesting your participation in an interview that asks about workplace bullying experiences. I'm conducting this research to determine (a) the impact of witnessing bullying, (b) the kinds of messages affiliated with workplace bullying (c) your reactions to this experience and the involved persons, and (d) other things that happened you believe to be important or related to workplace bullying. I will ask about how the bullying started, progressed, and whether or not you directly experienced bullying. I am also interested in how organizations responded to bullying, the impact of bullying on personal and work relationships, and the impact of bullying on personal health and well-being.

Interviews will be digitally audiotaped and then transcribed, and will last 60-90 minutes. For archival purposes, the audio version and transcription of your interview will be kept indefinitely in a locked office of the researcher. I may also use as data the information you provided via email interactions with my doctoral advisor. Written accounts of the research may be published, but your name will not be used. All identifying information, including names of organizations and other staff members, will be altered in published materials.

The possible risk of being involved in this study is that talking about these issues may be emotionally unpleasant. The possible benefit of your participation in this study is identifying the signs of and behaviors associated with workplace bullying so that we might better manage and/or prevent it in the future.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, or withdraw from the study, I want you to feel absolutely free to do so. If you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the ASU Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through Karol Householder, at (480) 965-6788. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at 480-981-2057 or email me at the psandvik@cox.net, or contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Sarah J. Tracy at 480-965-7709 or email her at Sarah.Tracy@asu.edu.

Sincerely,

Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik ; Hugh Downs School of Human Communication

For electronic consent: By responding to this email consent, I understand that I am giving formal consent to participate in the above study.

_____

Name

_____ _____

Signature Date

APPENDIX E

BULLYING ACTS

Appendix E
Bullying Acts

A. 1. Anti-social affect

B. 2. & 19. Arbitrary/ unpredictable decisions & Inconsistent mood/ affect

C. 3. Blocked communication networks (control)

D. 4. Bottle-necked communication

E. 5. & 35. Bully suspicion & Sense of invulnerability

F. 6. Constrained communication

G. 7. Covert / overt documentation

H. 8-9 Delegation rationing/withdrawal (Work Over-Control)

I. 10. 11. 13. Differential treatment (classism, favoritism, stigmatism)

J. 12. Discretionary targeting

K. 14. Forbidden self-defense

L. 15. - 18. Guarded communication (silencing, spies/henchmen, submission)

M. 19. & 2Arbitrary/ unpredictable decisions & Inconsistent mood/ affect

N. 20. Ineffective/ damaging managerial skills

O. 21.– 23. Nonverbal aggression (aggressive eye contact; silent treatment)

P. 24. “Others” think; other are doing

Q. 25. Patronizing communication

R. 26. Petty punishments (sanctions)

S. 27. Presence/ absence environmental change

T. 28. Pretentiousness

U. 29. – 32. Profound insensitivity (cruelty; disregard for health problems; disregard for others’ feelings; disregard of family issues)

V. 33. Retaliation

W. 34. Rigid nonwork rules/ directives (control)

X. 35. & 5 Bully suspicion & Sense of invulnerability

Y. 36. Undermining (Set up to fail, sabotages, driven out)

Z. 37. Shifted responsibility (blame, credit)

AA. 38. Shifting targets

BB. 39. Surveillance (accountability communication, visual, electronic)

CC. 40. – 51.Verbal aggression (personal criticism; challenging/argumentativeness, gossip, inquisition/summoning, public discipline, shaming, relentless criticism, rudeness, cursing, screaming, silencing, threats)

DD. 52. Vicarious relief

EE. 53. Violence, threat of violence (control)

FF. 54. Workers as property (means)

GG. 55. Excessive careerism

HH. 56. Dependency allies

II. 57. Personal meddling

JJ. 58. Dishonesty (two-faced; one way to powerful others)

KK. 59. & 61 Passive aggression, manipulation

LL. 60. Breach of confidentiality

MM. 61 & 59. Manipulation and passive aggression

NN. 62. Remove/ withhold key resources

APPENDIX F

RESISTANCE CODES

Appendix F
Resistance Codes

Resistance: Any behavior or discourse that counters/disrupts bullying or erodes bully's base of influence; C/R "coping and resistance"

Description	C/ R	Code
COLLECTIVE VOICE		
Mutual Advocacy		
Agreement of others that bully is unfair, cruel, crazy, etc.	R	1. AOB/
Collective knowledge, bully is well known among many inside and outside workgroup		2. CK
Collegial reassurance, talk to peers about bullying, receive consolation/ support	R	3. CR/
Talking with coworkers for support, validation, and advice		4. TTC/
Defending a coworker or a subordinate from the bully	R	5. DCW
Withholding actions that would hurt favored others	R	6. RIO
Contagious Voice		
Contagious collective voice (one person's voice encourages others to speak up)	R	7. CCV/
Target becomes advocate, people start going to the vocal target when they experience abuse		8. TA
Resisting bully's attempts to block naturally occurring communication networks (talking anyway)	R	9. RBN
Sensing satisfaction, moral superiority at fighting the "good" or righteous battle (good versus evil)	R	10. GE
Ridiculing or making fun of the bully (hidden transcript)	R	11. RID/
Experiencing and voicing pleasure or satisfaction at bully's discomfort or misfortunes		12. PBD/
Expressing the urge to violence, desire to hurt the bully, plot to hurt the bully physically		13. UTV
Grapevine bitching, hidden transcripts		14. GB
Raging or responding in angry ways that are hidden from the bully	R	15. RAR/

REVERSE DISCOURSE

Influential Allies		
Developing powerful allies (or naturally occurring powerful allies)	R	16. PA/SS
Selective superior support, figuring out who you can talk to in the superior ranks		
Medical leave or medically-related responses (taking medication, seeing doctor/therapist)	C r	17. MED
Esp, professional advice to “fight” bullying		
Using external expert information as an element of voice		18. EEV
Grievance		
Going to upper management with verbal complaints	R	19. UM
Recommending the firing of the bully to upper managers or others	R	20. RFB
Filing formal complaints against the abuser	R	21. FC
Documentation		
Using retained documentation for the purposes of reporting	R	22. DOC-RPT
Retaining or creating documentation of what's happening, for the purposes of protection	R	23. DOC

RESISTANCE THROUGH DISTANCE		
Calculated voice, encoding strategically to avoid adverse responses	R c	24. CV 25. WHI
Withholding information from the bully to fear of “killing messenger”	C r	
Avoiding bully, avoid talking to bully, purposely withhold information as part of avoidance	R c	26. AVB
Over-adhering to delegated bully's tasks or mandates	R	27. OAD
Using humor to respond/ minimize bully's actions and words	R	28. HUM
Retaliating or responding in some hidden way	R	29. RET
Refusal to comply with bully's directives (covert)	R	30. REF/
Rejecting or failing to respond to directive or improvement feedback (covert)		31. RIF
Minimal work productivity (doing just what is required)	R	32. MWP/
Nothing good enough to deflect abuse, just give up trying to please bully		33. NGE
CONFRONTATION		
Arguing with our disputing what bully says or asks for; constructing and using rational arguments in interaction with bully	R	34. ARG
Direct confrontation with bully about bully's behavior	R	35. CON
Retorting/ returning attack (sarcastic, caustic, rude)	R	36. RTR
Voice (speaking out) regardless/ despite risk	R	37. VRR
Refusal to comply with bully's directives (overt)	R	REF/
Rejecting or failing to respond to directive or improvement feedback (overt)		RIF
Defending a coworker or a subordinate from the bully	R	DCW
EXODUS		
Exit (quit, transfer)	R c	38. EX
Requesting a transfer away from the bully	R c	39. RQT
Intention/ threats to leave (talking about, looking for jobs, interviewing elsewhere)	R	40. ITL

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik was born in Anchorage, AK and received her bachelor of in social work from the University of Alaska Anchorage. She earned a master of public administration from City University in Bellevue WA while serving as the executive director of a nonprofit agency providing advocacy and services to women and children. She was the executive director of a nonprofit substance abuse treatment center in Alaska before moving to Arizona to pursue a doctorate in communication. Dr. Lutgen-Sandvik has accepted a position with the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque as an Assistant Professor of Communication.