BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE: DEFINITION, PREVALENCE,
ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES
Stig Berge Matthiesen and Ståle Einarsen*

ABSTRACT. This article examines the phenomenon and concept of bullying in the workplace. Workplace bullying is a form of interpersonal aggression that can be both flagrant and subtle, but is mainly characterized by its persistency and long term duration. The relationships between bullying and related concepts such as workplace aggression and interpersonal conflict are discussed. With reference to previous empirical research as well as theoretical contributions, an attempt is made to clarify some important aspects about the phenomenon, such as various subtypes of workplace bullying. Empirical findings on prevalence, antecedents and outcome factors are outlined and reviewed. The paper also discusses the dose-response perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace bullying has received increasing attention in the scholarly literature during the last 10 years. Yet, the term workplace bullying has almost entirely been applied by European researchers, with some few exceptions (Keashly, 1998; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007). The first aim of this paper is to give a broad presentation of the concept, and to link it to two closely associated concepts (workplace aggression and interpersonal social conflict). The second aim will be to scrutinize different types of behavior or social situations which may cause someone to feel subjected

* Stig Berge Matthiesen, Ph.D., and Ståle Einarsen, Ph.D., are professors at Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen, Norway, and members of the Bergen Bullying Research Group. Matthiesen's research interests are linked to whistleblowing and ethical leadership, in addition to workplace bullying. Ståle Einarsen's interests are workplace bullying, destructive leadership and creativity in organizations. E-mail: stig@uib.no

Copyright © 2010 by Pracademics Press
BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE: DEFINITION, PREVALENCE, ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES

203

to workplace bullying, as well as to present an overview of the prevalence of bullying behaviors. Research findings indicate that workplace bullying may vary considerably across countries. Therefore, we aim to examine prevalence numbers across national borders.

Bullying can be seen as interplay between various psychosocial, cultural and individual factors. Thus, the third aim of this paper will be to outline those psychosocial, cultural and individual characteristics that previous studies have suggested as antecedent factors of workplace bullying. It is, of course, a highly unpleasant and even devastating experience to face bullying in a daily work situation. Bullying may hit the target in different ways. However, the organization and organizational life in general may also be negatively affected. The fourth aim will therefore be to present knowledge on the individual and organizational effects associated with workplace bullying. Lastly, we introduce a dose-response perspective to explain how negative social incidents may develop into workplace bullying.

The Rise in Interest

The person usually referred to as the first researcher on workplace bullying is the American psychiatrist Carroll Brodsky (1976). In his pioneering book, entitled "The Harassed Worker", Brodsky described the fate and stories of many people being exposed to systematic, long term harassment in their workplace, usually with colleagues or superiors in the role as perpetrators. However, for more than a decade, Brodsky's book was followed by limited research, spurring little interest at the time. Then, by the end of the 1980s, a growing awareness of bullying and non-sexual harassment in the workplace emerged, especially in Northern-Europe and Australia (Einarsen, 1999; Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999). The interest resulted early in some books published in Scandinavian languages (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen, & Hellesøy, 1994, 1996; Kile, 1990; Leymann, 1987a; Thylefors, 1987), as well as some empirical papers (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Leymann, 1990a; Matthiesen, Raknes, & Rokkum, 1989).

The Scandinavian countries have traditionally had a strong orientation towards democracy (Heiret, Korsnes, Venneslan, & Bjørnson, 2003). Countries like Norway, Sweden and Denmark have also been found to have a low level of power distance as well as a feminine orientation (Hofstede, 1980), which means that the "leader
- subordinate” relationship probably is more informal than in most other countries in the world. An orientation towards democracy, with low power distance, can be seen as a possible explanation why the research interest in workplace bullying had its onset in Scandinavian countries. Workplace bullying can be seen as the very antithesis to sought after democratic values in the Scandinavian countries, a low “power distance” preferably combined with relaxed, informal communication expressed in a friendly way. Contrary to this, workplace bullying often means that power is misused, and exerted in a exceeding or aggressive way. From the North of Europe, the research spread to the UK (e.g. Hoel & Cooper, 2000), Germany and its neighboring countries (Niedl, 1996; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996), and to Australia (McCarthy & Barker, 2000; Sheehan, 1999). Only recently, bullying has also become a subject of systematic research in the US (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007; Rayner & Keashly, 2005), although some pioneering work was done early on using concepts such as emotional abuse (Keashly, 1998), workplace deviance (Robinson & Bennett, 1995) and generalized workplace abuse (Richman, Rospenda, Nawyn, & Flaherty, 1997).

DESCRIPTION AND DEFINITION

Clarifying the Concept

The first aim of the present paper is to clarify the concept of workplace bullying. Brodsky (1976), in his pioneering book, coined workplace harassment as persistent attempts on the part of one or more persons to annoy, wear down, frustrate or elicit a reaction in another. Harassment denotes continual behavior that provokes, presses, frightens, humiliates or in some other way creates unpleasantness in the recipient. The Scandinavian term for bullying, "mobbing", was initially borrowed from the English word "mob" and was originally applied to describe animal aggression and herd behavior and introduced as a concept in Scandinavia in the late 1960s by the school psychologist Peter-Paul Heinemann (1972).

Heinemann applied the term to characterize a specific type of aggression among school children, where a “mob” or group of pupils was attacking a specific target. It should be noted that the term "mobbing" was employed in Scandinavia for more than 10 years, denoting aggressive childhood behavior (see, e.g. Munthe, 1989), before the concept was borrowed to also describe a special kind of
aggressive behavior in the workplace. Heinz Leymann, a Swedish family therapist, systematically began investigating direct and indirect forms of conflict usually of non-violent character in the workplace in the mid-1980s (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005). Internationally, the term "mobbing" was later adopted by German-speaking countries, the Netherlands, as well as some Mediterranean countries, whereas "bullying" became the preferred term in English-speaking countries. In the US, concepts such as "emotional abuse in the workplace" (Keashly, 1998) and the aforementioned "workplace harassment" (Brodsky, 1976) have been in use, seemingly as synonyms for bullying. It should be underlined that the present paper will concentrate upon European perspectives on workplace bullying (see Keashly and Jagatic, 2003, for an overview of US research).

Although different concepts are in use, they all seem to refer to the same underlying phenomenon: One or more employees systematically and over a long period of time perceiving to be on the receiving end of direct or indirect aggression in the workplace, in a situation in which the person(s) exposed to the treatment has difficulty in defending themselves against this treatment (Einarsen, 2000). For instance, Björkquist defined bullying as "repeated activities, with the aim of bringing mental (but sometimes also physical) pain, and directed toward one or more individuals who, for one reason or another, are not able to defend themselves" (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt Bäck, 1994, p. 174). Following Hadjifotiou (1983), Einarsen and Raknes (1997) defined bullying as all those repeated actions and practices that are directed to one or more workers, which are unwanted by the victim, which may be done deliberately or unconsciously, but clearly cause humiliation, offence and distress, and that may interfere with job performance and/or cause an unpleasant working environment.

The Einarsen and Raknes (1997) definition emphasizes the two main features of most definitions of bullying at work: repeated and enduring aggressive behaviors that are intended to be hostile and/or perceived as hostile by the recipient. What has gradually become the most common definition of bullying focuses on negative actions occurring repeatedly over a certain period of time, and from which the persons affected find it difficult to protect themselves (Einarsen, 1996; Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994). This definition of workplace bullying also resembles definitions used in research on
bullying in schools (see, e.g. Olweus, 1978; Olweus, 1993), and can be fully formulated as follows:

   Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone, or negatively affecting someone’s work. 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 (e.g. weekly) and over a period of time (e.g. 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, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003a, p. 15).

   A recent review study by Aquino & Thau (2009) uses the term "workplace victimization". According to Aquino and Thau, workplace victimization occurs when an employee's wellbeing is harmed by one or more members of the organization. Psychological or physiological needs are unmet or thwarted. Needs not fulfilled due to victimization may be e.g. sense of belonging, a feeling that one is a worthy individual, believing that one has the ability to predict and to cognitively control one's environment, and being able to thrust others.

   Leymann (1990b) claims that to be characterized as a victim of bullying, a person must suffer episodes at least weekly for a period of six months. However, and as pinpointed in the above definition, bullying seems to develop gradually through an escalating process, the core being the victim’s experience of being exposed to systematic, continuous and partly intentional aggression in a situation (in this case, the workplace) in which such behavior should not occur (Keashly, 1998).

   A central feature of bullying is the imbalance of power between the parties, as the persons targeted find it difficult to protect and guard against ever more frequent and harsh treatment (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). Consequently, it is not regarded as bullying if two more or less equally “strong” persons come into conflict, or when only an isolated instance has occurred. Typically, targets of bullying find it difficult to defend or protect themselves against the behavior, as their opportunity for retaliation is more or less ruled out (Zapf & Einarsen,
Imbalance of power in the context of bullying means that the person concerned has little control or few possibilities to retaliate in kind. A work situation characterized by low control combined with high strain has been found to be particularly stressful (Karasek & Theorell, 1990), and may thus explain the severe health damage often observed in the targets (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005).

Based upon clinical contacts with bullying victims (Einarsen, Raknes & Matthiesen, 1994; Matthiesen, Aasen, Holst, & Einarsen, 2003), we would also suggest some additional facets to the aforementioned definition in that the exposed individuals typically a) perceive the bullying to be intentional and directed against them, b) lack opportunities to evade it, c) lack adequate social support that could act as a “buffer”, d) experience the bullying sanctions as unfair or out of place (over-dimensioned), e) are personally or socially vulnerable and f) feel extremely insulted, humiliated or ashamed by the treatment. In a study of experienced emotions in leader-subordinate relationships, Glasø and Einarsen (2006) found that feelings of violation, including specific feelings such as resentment and humiliation, were one out four basic emotional dimensions in such work-related relationships. Hence, such feelings are at the cornerstone of abusive relationships at work involving power imbalances, as well as a potential feeling in all leader-subordinate relationships.

More about the Synonymous Concepts of Bullying and Mobbing

As stated above, different labels, such as bullying or harassment, have been applied, of which all are used to signify severe, repeated and systematic non-sexual harassment at work. Generally, bullying seems to be the preferred label in English-speaking countries (in Europe), whereas mobbing is the label or term most commonly applied in Central Europe and Scandinavia. For most parts these two concepts seems to be highly overlapping with researchers who use mobbing in their native language, yet publish in English using the term bullying. According to Zapf and Einarsen (2005), however, it is not only pure national linguistic preferences which differentiate between the concepts of bullying and mobbing. Some researchers who prefer the term "bullying" often focus on the bully or the behavior of bullies, whereas the "mobbing" research focuses on the targets and the victimization process leading to very severe cases of
mistreatment. An example of the "bully" orientation is the influential book written by Adams (1992), presenting many illustrations of the bully "in action".

Among the Scandinavian workplace researchers, however, the primary concern has been the experiences of the targets, and their reports of being severely victimized with focus on their reduced subjective health and well-being (e.g. Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994; Mikkelsen, 2001). According to Leymann (1996), the choice of the term "mobbing" in preference to "bullying" was a conscious decision, reflecting the fact that the phenomena among adults often refer to subtle, less direct forms of aggression as opposed to more physical forms of aggression that may be associated with the term "bullying". Yet, even among those who uses the term bullying, empirical evidence suggests that the behaviors involved are more often of a verbal, passive and indirect nature (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003b; Keashly & Harvey, 2005).

The acting out bully, behaving in a rude and dominant manner, loudly speaking or demanding, the stereotype of the perpetrator expressing overt tyrannical behavior, is probably not the typical bullying case, at least as seen in many European countries. Hence, albeit the focus may be on either the target or the perpetrator or both, for all practical purposes the concepts used in this field refer to the same underlying phenomenon. Furthermore, most research in this field is more about a particular phenomenon that has been largely ignored, than about a specific coherent theory (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005). Even so, it may be the case that the more subtle terms like emotional abuse (Keashly & Harvey, 2005) and mobbing (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005) make them more suitable concepts than is the term bullying in terms of establishing an overarching concept to embrace this special subtype of interpersonal conflict and aggression. Yet, “bullying” is used by far in most studies published in peer-review journals.

**BULLYING AND RELATED CONSTRUCTS**

Although research on bullying in the workplace has established itself as an important research field in its own right (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002b), the concept of bullying is clearly related to a host of concepts within the broader fields of stress, aggression and social conflicts at work (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005). Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, and
Alberts (2007) even place workplace bullying within the broad body of research that examines harmful communication and behavior at work, identifying the following superordinate phenomena with a relevance: counterproductive workplace behavior, organizational injustice, organizational misbehavior, workplace deviance, antisocial work behaviors, workplace violence, in addition to workplace aggression. Workplace bullying may also be considered to be an intermediate phenomenon, along with social undermining, emotional abuse, and workplace mistreatment. Here, we will link workplace bullying to two overarching constructs: namely the concepts of aggression and social conflict.

**Bullying and Workplace Aggression**

Bullying can be regarded as a subtype of aggression (Neuman & Baron, 2005). Aggression is any form of behavior directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment (Baron, 1977). Clearly, targets of bullying are motivated to avoid aggressive bullying behavior from the perpetrators. Aggressive behavior is goal-directed and intentional in nature, and can be direct or indirect of type (Neuman & Baron, 2005).

Hence, bullying can be seen as a situation where persistent aggression is targeted towards one who is unable to defend oneself against this behavior. Yet, the inclusion of intent differentiates workplace aggression from bullying as intent is generally not considered an essential element in bullying research (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005) with some few exceptions (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt Bäck, 1994). First of all, it is normally impossible to verify the presence of intent (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt Bäck, 1994; Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999; Zapf & Einarsen, 2005), as indicated by research in the sexual harassment field (Pryor & Fitzgerald, 2003). Furthermore, a distinction between (1) the intent to act, (2) the intent to harm, (3) intent to victimize, and (4) the intent to be systematic and repeated, may explain why definitions of bullying exclude intent. While the former is probably present in most situations, the latter kinds of intent are probably seldom present in actual bullying cases.

The behaviors of the perpetrator may of course be conscious and deliberate. Still, the perpetrator may not intend to cause harm or at least not be willing to admit such an intent (Hoel, 2002). However, the involved behaviors may still be considered instrumental in the
sense that they are portrayed in order to achieve certain goals or objectives. Even more, the behaviors may reasonable cause someone to feel bullied, even if this intent was not there on behalf of the perpetrator. Situations where someone offends, provokes or otherwise angers another person may be perceived and interpreted quite differently by the two participants (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990). Thus, a more important question to ask than the one about intent would be to ask to what extent is the bully aware of his or her behavior? How does the bully interpret and justify this behavior? Yet, as mentioned earlier, perceptions of such intents are probably crucial to the subjective perceptions made by the targets.

Bullying and Interpersonal Social Conflict

Many authors have related bullying to the broader concept of conflicts (e.g. Zapf & Gross, 2001), viewing bullying as a certain subset of conflicts (Zapf & Gross, 2001). Based on the Dutch researcher Evert van de Vliert’s (1998) definition of conflict as "Two individuals, an individual and a group, or two groups, are said to be in conflict when and to the extent that at least one of the parties feels it is being obstructed or irritated by the other" (p. 351), bullying would clearly fall under such a rubric. Van de Vliert contends that important aspects covered in this definition are (a) conflicts are subjective experiences (they do not necessarily have an objective basis), (b) the frustration may be cognitive or affective, or both (e.g. blocked goals, feelings of hostility), (c) the frustration is blamed on another individual or group, (d) the magnitude of the frustration may vary (conflicts escalate or de-escalate across a time dimension), (e) the frustration is not necessarily coupled with particular conflict behavior towards the other party, and (f) the conflict can be one-sided (e.g. when only one party feels frustrated or attributes the frustration to the other).

Conflict can also be perceived as a divergence of interest between individuals or groups - a belief on the part of these entities that their current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). In certain cases conflicts can poison the social climate and escalate into serious personal conflicts and internal office war (van de Vliert, 1998). According to Zapf, Knorz and Kulla (1996), the bullying process may start between two equal parties as an interpersonal conflict, but their relative strength may alter in the
course of time, as is the case when conflicts arise between leaders and subordinates. If the victim is forced into an inferior position in which it is difficult to defend oneself, a conflict may turn into bullying. In such cases, the total destruction of the opponent seems to be the aim of the parties (Einarsen, Matthiesen, & Mikkelsen, 2000; Glasl, 1980). Denial of the human qualities of the opponent opens the potential for manipulation, revenge, elimination and destruction. Such denial may be a core reason why workplace bullying in some instances may last for several years, even if the mental health of one of the conflicting parties deteriorates dramatically (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002b). In other cases, power imbalance exists as a precondition between the parties, possibly changing a conflict into bullying.

The van de Vliert (1998) definition of conflict earlier share many similarities with this article’s definition of bullying; the subjective experience is crucial and both cognitive and affective elements may be part of the experience of bullying as well as other types of conflict. The target of bullying typically blames the perpetrator for the bullying behavior, which is felt to be unjust and improper conduct. Like other types of conflicts, the bullying conflict can be one-sided. The bully can, for example reject that there is any conflict or bullying taking place whatsoever. The distinction between single incidents and enduring hostile interaction is, however, important when workplace bullying is compared with interpersonal conflicts in general (Keashly, 1998). While escalation is a key concept of the conflict literature (e.g. Thomas, 1976; van de Vliert, 1998), it has only more recently made its way into the research literature on workplace aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003a; Thomas, 1976; van de Vliert, 1998). Discussions of escalation have implicit assumptions of dynamic interaction between actor(s) and a target, mutuality of these actions and increasing severity of behavior (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003a), a process that also have been described in relation to bullying (Einarsen, 1999, 2000).

Yet, Keashly and Jagatic (2003b) caution against seeing bullying as only a kind of conflict, as this may underscore the seriousness, unethical and counterproductive aspects of the bullying. Their main argument for such a warning is based on the fact that conflict may be seen as inherent in social interaction, whereas bullying must be seen as deviant and unacceptable behavior, never to be minimized or
normalized. Secondly, to merely label bullying as a conflict may create a sense of shared responsibility and accountability among the parties, and as something that the target must endure or be able to manage. Hence, to label bullying as a conflict without important qualifications may indeed be disastrous for the target, potentially causing even more distress, shame and a diminished sense of self-esteem and competence. Yet, according to Keashly and Jagatic, a conflict perspective may still have much to offer in the understanding of processes involved in bullying, as well as in its handling or management.

**BEHAVIORS AND SOCIAL SITUATIONS CATEGORIZED**

Another important aim of the present paper is, as previously stated, to scrutinize different types of behavior or social situations that may cause workplace bullying. Many kinds of situations may involve behaviors and experiences of being bullied. Einarsen (1999), first of all, make a distinction between 1) work-related actions that make it difficult for victims to carry out their work or involve taking away some or all of their responsibilities, and 2) actions that are primarily person-related. When it comes to person-related bullying, Einarsen differentiates between dispute-based bullying and bullying of a "predatory" type. Social exclusion, spreading rumors, libels, ignoring opinions, teasing/insolence, and undesired sexual approaches are all examples of person-related bullying. Based upon empirical and theoretical evidence, Zapf (1999) broadens the categorization of bullying to five types. These five are (1) work-related bullying (changed or difficult to manage work tasks), (2) social isolation (exclusion from daily communication, or from daily events), (3) personal attacks (ridicule, insulting remarks), (4) verbal threats (criticism, telling-off, humiliation in front of others) and (5) spreading rumors (attack on social reputation).

Bullying in the form of social exclusion involves being ignored, frozen out or excluded from social relationships. Organizational exclusion means that one feels superfluous, passed over or demoted within the organization, based on illegitimate actions by others. A typical event here is "being sent to Coventry". Being exceedingly blamed for poor work performance may take many forms, (e.g. that one is unfairly criticized for one's work, that one's professional competence is brought into doubt, or that one's efforts are ridiculed).
In other cases, the work of the victim may be checked or monitored unnecessarily. Hurtful jokes and teasing are matters of both unsuccessful attempts at humoring, and of more direct public ridicule.

Activities that comprise bullying may well involve most people at work from time to time (Leymann, 1990a). Single occurrences of such negative encounters may in themselves be common in working life, and are more or less harmless. However, to the extent that they are systematically, exceedingly or continuously aimed at a particular person, and to the extent that the victim feels defenseless against the actions or against the persons performing them, these occurrences may become acts of bullying and create a situation capable of threatening the targets’s physical and psychological health (Einarsen, Matthiesen & Mikkelsen, 2000). Although single acts of aggression and harassment do occur frequently in everyday interaction, research clearly show that they are associated with severe health problems when occurring on a regular basis (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Leymann, 1987b). The extent or quantity of humiliating or aggressive acts required before one feels bullied probably differs from person to person, due to individual differences in vulnerability. Another important aspect is probably the extent to which they are seen as unfair and illegitimate.

Workplace bullying is a negative social transaction in the workplace with one of its core features being that the target is humiliated and victimized by exposure to frequent unwanted negative acts over a long period of time by other organizational members. Hence, bullying may occur in a range of different situations and settings and with many different kinds of origins and precursors. Table I shows nine such subtypes of bullying.

Einarsen (1999) has differentiated between cases of bullying that are dispute-related in nature and cases that appear to be of a predatory kind. In cases of predatory bullying, the target has personally done nothing provocative that may reasonably justify the behavior of the bully, but is more or less accidentally in a situation where a predator demonstrates power or exploits an accidental target into compliance. A highly aggressive boss may be an example of such bullying. Dispute-related bullying has developed from an interpersonal conflict, often involving social control reactions to perceived wrong-doing. Two
TABLE 1

Some Subtypes of Workplace Bullying

| 1. Dispute-related bullying |
| 2. Predatory bullying       |
| 3. Scapegoating            |
| 4. Sexual harassment       |
| 5. Humor-oriented bullying |
| 6. Work-related stalking   |
| 7. Bullying of workplace newcomers |
| 8. The judicial derelicts (secondary bullying) |
| 9. Retaliation from whistleblowing |

studies (Leymann, 1990a; Zapf & Gross, 2001) have shown how bullying cases typically are triggered by a work-related conflict, where the social climate between the conflicting parties have gone sour, escalated into a harsh personified conflicts, where the total destruction of the opponent is seen as a legitimate action by the parties. In highly escalated conflicts both parties may deny the opponent's human value, thus clearing the way for manipulation, retaliation, elimination and destruction (van de Vliert, 1998). If one of the parties acquires a disadvantaged position in this struggle, he or she may become a target of bullying (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt Bäck, 1994).

Two early works, previously mentioned, points out that scapegoating is a particular type of work harassment, where frustration is displaced on an available target which is seen to "deserve" it (Brodsky, 1976; Thylefors, 1987). Here, the target may be bullied by being an easy target of frustration and stress ventilated against a scapegoat. In situations where stress and frustration are caused by a source which is either indefinable, inaccessible, respected or too powerful to be attacked, the group may turn its hostility towards a person who is less powerful than themselves, using this person as a scapegoat, creating a situation that will fall under the rubric of bullying.

Although a field of research in itself, it may also be argued that sexual harassment (for a review, see Pryor & Fitzgerald, 2003) may be seen as a subtype of work harassment, where a target, in many cases a younger female worker is exposed to repeated and unwanted sexual attention by a more powerful and often older co-worker or
superior. In addition, the target feels threatened by the unwelcome sexual attention. This attention may also be combined with threats about future job prospects, in order to coerce the target to subjugation, or may in itself act to create a hostile work environment.

_Humor-oriented bullying_ is the fifth category presented in the table. In many workplaces, ridiculing, teasing or interpersonal humor may be widespread between colleagues. Matthiesen and Einarsen (2002) contend that such people-oriented humor played out between equals (i.e. work colleagues within the same in-group) may create job satisfaction or work commitment. Humor can be symmetrical, in that employees tease one another. However, if such person-oriented humor is directed towards someone in an out-group position, the individual may come to experience it as bullying. Here, the jokes or humorous behavior may be imbalanced or asymmetrical. The consequence can be that the person subjected to teasing perceives it as aggressive, and in the long run as bullying. The target is the targets of jokes, but none of the jokes are repaid or in other ways indicate a reciprocal relationship with mutual respect.

_Work related stalking_ may be another form of bullying, again involving behaviors that if considered individually may seem inoffensive and not particularly threatening to the uninvolved observer, such as sending letters or gifts, making telephone calls, or waiting outside a person's home or workplace (Purcell, Pathe, & Mullen, 2004). Stalking can be defined as a course of conduct in which one individual inflicts upon another repeated unwanted intrusions and communications, to such an extent that the victim fears for his safety (Pathe & Mullen, 1997), in this case against an employee or another organizational member. Most episodes of stalking covered by the media seem to consist of rejected an ex-partner after separation or divorce, bombarding or terrorizing a former wife or husband with telephone calls, mobile phone text messages, or e-mails. Yet, celebrities, pop stars or sports heroes, may also be exposed to stalking because of their fame and role in working life, as may ordinary workers. In Norway, a tourist bus driver was stalked for years by one of the accompanying female tourists he met in his job. The male driver was terrorized with thousands of letters and telephone calls and stalked day and night. The stalker was finally imprisoned due to the vast number of bullying episodes that she initiated, despite several warnings.
Bullying of workplace newcomers, or rite de passage bullying, comprises an old type of workplace bullying, known for centuries, especially occurring within shipping, military service, or numerous tribe societies (Brodsky, 1976). In such cases, newcomers in the workplace are met with intimidating behavior as a kind of hazing. This conduct can of course be regarded as a cultural tradition, in which the new person is “tested.” Yet, the rites may be so intense or so long lasting that they may qualify to be perceived as bullying. An old sailor once told us a story about a young colleague who on his first voyage was unable to handle or endure the humiliating and frequent rites de passage he was faced with as a new sailor. The outcome in this case was fatal; he ended up drowning himself.

Judicial derelicts may take place when an individual perceives himself to be bullied, but not by a specific, single person or group. Instead, the victim feels bullied by a system, be it various bureaucrats and their decisions or the legal system itself. We often meet people who after being exposed to bullying at work are fighting a hopeless case for justice or support from the organization or from the authorities, finding themselves target of aggression and passive obstruction from a wide range of people or roles thought to be places of rescue. This judicial derelict bullying can sometimes be the consequence of what Einarsen, Matthiesen and Mikkelsen (1999) labeled as secondary bullying. The term secondary bullying means that the target of bullying feels ignored by the employer, health and safety authorities, or even the labor union, when he or she makes a complaint about bullying. Thus, if a person feels subjected to bullying in his workplace, and then tries to stop this, asking for assistance from such authorities, secondary bullying may arise. Thus, when the targets of secondary bullying try to stop the perceived injustice, or when they seek redress afterwards, they are met with a lack of concern or even obstruction from the authority that was expected to be helpful.

The last kind of bullying listed in Table 1 arises as retaliatory acts after whistleblowing. Near and Miceli (1996) define whistleblowing as an act that takes place when an employee is witnessing wrongdoing at the work place (e.g. unethical conduct, corruption, violence or bullying against others, or criminal acts) from a fellow employee or a superior (or a group of employees or superiors). A restrict version of the aforementioned definition excludes voices of concern about
misconduct directed against the person himself/ herself (cf. Bjørkelo, Einarsen & Matthiesen, 2010). The whistleblower tries to stop the wrongdoing by informing someone who would be expected to stop the wrongdoing. The whistleblower may voice concern internally (e.g. to a superior within the company), but may also do it externally (e.g. informing the rightful authorities, revealing the case in the media informing a local nature conservation association). Sometimes such whistleblowing leads to a victimization process where the organization or its members “shoot the messenger”, that is retaliate against the person that exposed the wrongdoing. Whistleblowing was the second most frequent reason given for workplace bullying in a Norwegian survey conducted among a group of severely affected targets (n= 221, own unpublished data), when they were asked to rank reasons why they were targeted for bullying. A typical mode of punishing or sanctioning whistleblower is ostracism, to completely isolate the person from others or from work tasks (Miethe, 1999). Many whistleblowers are simply sacked from their jobs, or their work contracts are not renewed. They may even experience that rumors about this “disloyal” worker are spread around widely, including in other companies, making it difficult for the person to obtain another job (Miceli & Near, 2005).

Bullying can be seen as a subset of the overarching term “workplace aggression”, as previously mentioned. According to Buss (1961), aggressive behavior in general could be conceptualized along three dimensions: physical-verbal, active-passive, and direct-indirect. These dimensions can be divided into eight subtypes of behavior, as outlined by Keashly and Jagatic (2003a). Table 2 gives an overview of these types of behavior of which bullying can take any form. Table 2 shows the most likely placement of the bullying categories listed in Table 1. Person-related bullying of the predatory type is quite frequently verbal, active, and direct. Whistleblowers facing retaliation, for instance, are commonly met with the "silent treatment" or social exclusion from work groups (can be seen as verbal, passive, direct type of aggression, cf. also Miethe [1999]). The aggressive content may of course vary across bullying cases. Thus, the suggested Buss categorization may also be different, when specific case stories are examined.

Although bullying may come in many shapes and forms, the behaviors involved seem mostly to be of a verbal nature and only seldom
TABLE 2
Conceptualization of Various Types of Workplace Bullying along Three Dimensions of Aggression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active - Passive</th>
<th>Direct - Indirect</th>
<th>Examples of Negative Acts</th>
<th>Types of workplace bullying listed in Table 1, proposed to occur most likely with these Buss dimension features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Direct</td>
<td>Insulting jokes, ridiculing, being yelled at, personal attacks, verbal threats</td>
<td>Person related bullying (predatory) Sexual harassment, humor-oriented bullying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Indirect</td>
<td>Unfair treatment, being subjected to false accusations, spreading rumors</td>
<td>Person related bullying (dispute based)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Direct</td>
<td>Ostracism, expressing silent treatment, having your contributions ignored</td>
<td>Whistleblowing retaliation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Indirect</td>
<td>Being given little or no feedback, deliberately excluded, social isolation</td>
<td>Work related bullying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Direct</td>
<td>Sexual harassment with direct contact, hitting, slapping, physical assaulted</td>
<td>Work related stalking Bullying of workplace newcomers Sexual harassment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Indirect</td>
<td>Deliberately assigned work overload, destruction of property, removal of meaningful work</td>
<td>Work related bullying Juridical derelicts Whistleblowing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Indirect</td>
<td></td>
<td>Work related bullying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Modified after Buss (1961) and Keashly and Jagatic (2003a).

include physical violence (Keashly, 1998). Yet sexual harassment, stalking and rite de passage may also be of a physical kind. Overall, several studies have documented that the most common aggressive behavior among adults is verbal behavior, indirect and passive (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003a; Neuman & Baron, 1997). In line with these findings, a study of 138 Norwegian bullying victims identified three main types of bullying on the basis of how the victims themselves felt they were being bullied: (a) being blamed for poor work performance, (b) being hurt by teasing, jokes and ridicule and
PREVALENCE OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

The third aim this paper addresses is to examine prevalence numbers of bullying across national borders. Most studies conducted since the onset of workplace bullying research have applied a prospective survey approach (e.g. Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Vartia, 1996; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). Bullying has generally been included as one of several topics in general organizational study questionnaires. Longitudinal studies are so far scarce.

The prevalence of bullying varies greatly, with figures ranging from 1% at the lowest level to above 50% at the highest level, dependent upon the applied measurement strategy, occupation or sector, as well as country (Martino, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003). A meta study undertaken in Norway in 1996, in which 14 sub-samples were summarized to encompass 7,118 subjects in total, demonstrated that 8.6 percent reported being bullied during the last six months (Einarsen, 1996). Specifically, 1.2% were bullied weekly, 3.4% "now and then" and 4% once or twice. A decade later, the prevalence numbers of workplace bullying seemed to be considerably reduced in Norway. A national representative study, with 2,539 respondents participating, revealed that 4.6% of the employees reported being exposed to workplace bullying (Einarsen et al., 2007). In the new study ten years later, 0.6% was bullied weekly, 1.3% "now and then", and 2.5% once or twice. In other words, for a period of around 10 years, the prevalence of bullying in Norway has apparently undergone a nearly 50% reduction.

Quine (1999) in a 1,100 person study of UK National Health Service employees revealed a prevalence rate of 38%. O’Moore (2000, referred in Martino, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003) in a 1,009 person random Irish national sample found a prevalence rate of 17%, whereas a 2,410 representative Spanish sample revealed an occurrence of 16% (Piñual & Zabala, 2002, referred in Martino, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003). Correspondingly, British studies have found that about 30% of employees report that they are faced with negative behavior directed against them as often as weekly and for a time period of 6 months or more, and half of these also label themselves...
as bullied (Rayner & Keashly, 2005). In a large scale UK study by Hoel, Cooper and Faragher (2001) some 10% were considered self-labelled victims of bullying. These prevalence numbers seem extremely high. If bullying exists at such a level, one may ask whether the organization or department is able to continue functioning under such extreme social stress (cf. Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2002).

However, the observed prevalence rates of bullying seem to be highly influenced by the research strategy applied. Where bullying is measured by means of a precise definition and refer to a regular experience on a weekly basis for a period of 6 months, less than 5% of the population is normally found to be bullied (Martino, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003; Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2003). Also, when using a single item methodology (see Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Salin, 2001) where respondents are asked to self label as a victim after being presented with a strict definition, a prevalence of 3% to 7% is most typical (Zapf et al., 2003). In a study of 745 Norwegian assistant nurses, 3% reported being bullied at present, whereas 8% had previous experiences as victims (Einarsen, Matthiesen, & Skogstad, 1998).

Leymann and Tallgren (1989) who defined bullying as the exposure to one out of 45 predefined negative acts on a weekly basis for more than six months, found that 4% of the employees of a Swedish steelmaking company were targets of bullying at work, in a representative Swedish sample of employees (n= 2,438). Leymann (1992) found the incidence rate of bullying to be as low as 4%. According to Martino, Hoel, and Cooper (2003), a representative German sample (n= 1,317) also had a prevalence level varying between 3% and 6%. An American study with 403 employees revealed a 9.4% prevalence rate (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007). Bullying frequencies between 8% and 10% have been reported repeatedly, when less restricted frequency criteria, such as less often than weekly have been included in the prevalence estimates (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Zapf et al., 2003). Hence, Keashly and Jagatic (2003a) conclude that the lack of common terminology and well-developed methodology make it difficult to determine the exact prevalence of workplace bullying.

A forthcoming meta-study of workplace bullying across countries applied 102 prevalence estimates of bullying from 86 independent samples with 130, 000 respondents altogether (Nielsen, Matthiesen
& Einarsen, in press). At an average, the statistically independent samples provided a prevalence rate of workplace bullying of 14.6%, when the phenomenon of bullying is mapped across countries. It should be added, however, that the prevalence rate for studies without a definition of bullying addressed to the victims was found to be 18.1%. The rates were consistently lower when the respondents of survey studies, be it convenient sample studies or representative studies of various workforces, were given an established definition of workplace bullying, such as the previously referred to Einarsen et al. (2003, 2010) definition. When a bullying definition was addressed, 11.3% of those taking part in the studies exploring workplace bullying were exposed to this kind of negative conduct.

Theoretically, bullying is a long lasting process consisting of recurring negative acts. Large representative samples in Sweden (Leymann, 1996) and Norway (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996) have also found the average duration of bullying to be rather long-lasting, varying between 15 and 18 months (Zapf et al., 2003). The Norwegian national representative study found that a considerable amount of the bullying incidents, 4 in 10 cases, had lasted for more than 1 year (Einarsen et al., 2007). A British study revealed that 39% of the targets had been bullied for more than two years (Hoel & Cooper, 2000), while 67% of the sample had been bullied for more than 1 year (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001). A Finnish study found a mean duration of 2.7 years (Salin, 2001).

In most studies the targets of bullying are about one-third men and two-thirds women (Zapf, et al., 2003). However, gender differences in the Scandinavian countries regarding prevalence of bullying are only minor (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994). However, Vartia (2003), for example, refers to a Finnish study among police officers, where females consist of the minority. In this study, 8% male and 14% female police officers were subjected to workplace bullying. Likewise, in a random sample of 6,485 Norwegian assistant nurses organized in the Norwegian Union of Health - and Social Workers, 10.2% men and 4.3% women reported that they had been exposed to bullying at work during the previous six months after adjustments for a series of background factors (Eriksen & Einarsen, 2004). In this sample, men comprised no more than 3% of the workforce. Thus, the Vartia (2003) and Eriksen and Einarsen (2004) studies indicate that gender minority may be a particular risk factor.
ANTECEDENTS OF WORKPLACE BULLYING

The fourth aim of this paper will be to outline some psychosocial, cultural and individual characteristics that previous studies have suggested as antecedent factors of workplace bullying. What triggers workplace bullying? Very simplified, the bullying process can be described by the following model:

Yet, workplace bullying can be seen as part of a more complex psychosocial interaction, with multiple antecedents and consequences on many levels. Figure 1 (borrowed from Einarsen et al., 2003a) illustrates the complexity of the phenomenon. The figure portrays, among others, that organizational action factors such as bullying policies, support and tolerance, as well individual factors as propensity to bully and individual pre-dispositions of targets, may play crucial roles in the ongoing process of workplace bullying. However, the causal factors and the antecedents of bullying have so far been investigated only to a limited degree. Also, controversies have emerged regarding the causes of bullying (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005), especially related to the issue of target and perpetrator personality as a risk factor for exposure to bullying. Yet, a few dominating explanatory models can be differentiated and will be presented in the following.

Individual Antecedents: Targets

Exposure to bullying has been linked to individual factors such as a sensitive personality (cf. Box D and F in Figure 1). The relevance of the personality of the target was demonstrated in a victim study of 221 members of two bullying associations (Nielsen, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2008). Here, it was found that sense of coherence, a personality factor that reflects how coherent and meaningful one perceives the world in general and life situation in particular, offered protective benefits to targets exposed to low levels of bullying. However, when the bullying exposure had terminated, a high sense of
FIGURE 1
A Comprehensive, Multifaceted Model of Bullying

Notes: Adapted from Einarsen et al. (2003a).
coherence decreased the vulnerability to be affected with subsequent mental problems. Coyne, Seigne and Randall (2000) revealed that targets seem to be highly conscientious, more traditional, rigid, and moralistic than the non-targets. Such qualities may collide with group norms (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003), causing frustration among colleagues who may respond with aggressive behavior.

Based on interviews with American targets of bullying, Brodsky (1976) claimed that many targets are of a humorless nature, which may render them susceptible to bullying, especially when meeting an artless teaser or when working in a team characterized by “humor gone sour.” A study (Glasø, Matthiesen, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2007), with 72 victims who were matched with a control group, revealed significant differences on four out of five personality dimensions. Victims tended to be more neurotic and less agreeable, conscientious and extraverted than non-victims. However, cluster-analysis split the targets into two groups. One sub-sample which comprised 64% of the victim group did not differ from non-victims as far as personality was concerned. It was actually a group consisting of merely 36% of the victims that was found to have a personality profile with the above mentioned characteristics. These findings may indicate that some targets possess a personality style or vulnerability that causes them to be more prone to bullying, while simultaneously indicating that there is no such thing as a general victim profile.

A widespread assumption among the public and in the media has been that many victims of bullying cause their own misfortune, by acting in a provocative or conflict-escalating way, or with what Zapf and Einarsen (2005) denote "querulous behavior". However, Zapf and Einarsen also conclude that there is no such thing as a target personality that can explain bullying in general. This assumption was also supported by another study by the present authors among 85 Norwegian targets of bullying using a comprehensive measure of personality called the MMPI-2 (MMPI= Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory). Similarly, this study revealed that there is probably more than one target profile (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001). One group, labeled the “seriously affected”, reported a range of emotional and psychological problems although they reported a relatively low exposure to specific bullying behaviors, a result indicating that personality is of importance in determining how bullying is experienced and how it is dealt with. These targets were
depressive, anxious, suspicious, uncertain of themselves, and
troubled by confused thoughts.

A second group, referred to as the “disappointed and depressed”,
were depressed and somewhat suspicious of the outside world. The
third group called the “common group” portrayed a quite normal
personality, in spite of having experienced a large number of specific
bullying behaviors. Such results may indicate that a specific
vulnerability/hardiness factor may exist among some but not all
targets of bullying at work where those already suffering from mental
problems may more likely suffer long-term consequences in the wake
of bullying. Persons with psychological problems, low self-confidence
and a high degree of anxiety in social situations may also be more
likely than others to feel bullied and harassed, and they may find it
more difficult to defend themselves when exposed to the aggression
of other people. Yet, “victim blaming” is obviously not justified by such
results, at least not due to the fact that exposure to bullying may also
alter the personality of those exposed.

In addition to the personality issue, social or ethnic background
may play a crucial role concerning the risk of being exposed to
workplace bullying. For instance, in a Welsh study (n=247), it was
found that ethnic minority respondents were more likely to label
themselves as suffering from bullying behavior, than were their white
counterparts (Lewis & Gunn, 2007). They were consistently exposed
to more negative acts in their daily work. For instance, the ethnic
minority respondents were given more tasks or jobs which were
demeaning to them, they were more subject of practical jokes, and
their felt that they were ignored or excluded at work by their
colleagues. As mentioned previously, Eriksen and Einarsen (2004)
showed that belonging to a gender-minority at the workplace may
represent a strong risk factor with regards to the exposure to bullying.

**Individual Antecedents: Perpetrator**

A rather popular view is that these kinds of behaviors are deeply
rooted within the personality structure of the office or shop-floor bully.
However, not much empirical evidence exists for this notion (cf. box B
and C in Figure 1). Yet, a study by the present authors based on a
sample of 2200 Norwegian workers showed that self-reported bullies
described themselves as being high on aggressiveness and low on
self-esteem, the latter being particularly true for a group of offenders
who also claimed to be a target of bullying (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007). These perpetrators, labeled as provocative targets, were also found to be low on social competence and high on social anxiety. In summarizing the empirical findings of perpetrators, Zapf and Einarsen (2003) suggest three types of explanations, namely bullying due to protection of self-esteem, bullying due to lack of social competencies, and bullying due to micropolitical behavior, where the first two are considered individual antecedents. Protecting and enhancing one's self-esteem is considered a basic motive in individuals, something that will modify and govern one's behavior (Brockner, 1988).

Environmental Factors

A dominating explanatory framework of bullying in the early Nordic research on bullying was related to the psychosocial work environment (see Boxes A and E of Figure 1). The basis of the work environment hypothesis first put forward by Leymann (1990a; 1993) is that the stress and frustration caused by a negative psychosocial environment may lead to bullying of an exposed target, especially if management does not handle the situation in a firm and just way (cf. box A in Figure 1). Zapf (1999) provided support for the view that bullying is associated with a negative work environment, comparing targets of bullying with a control group of non-victimized individuals. Targets assessed their environment more negatively than the control group on all features related to quality of work environment, including the work environment quality that existed prior to the onset of bullying.

A range of studies have shown workplace bullying to be related to role conflicts and role ambiguity, reduced work control, a heavy work load, organizational restructuring, change of management, "destructive management" styles, organizational climate, and interpersonal conflicts (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt Bäck, 1994; Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994; Vartia, 2003; Zapf, 1999). A study among 30 Irish victims of bullying found their workplace to be a highly stressful and competitive environment, troubled with interpersonal conflicts and a lack of a friendly and supportive atmosphere, undergoing organizational changes and managed through an authoritarian leadership style (Seigne, 1998). Targets of bullying have also reported that their
superiors are autocratic, and the environment competitive, strained and stressful (O’Moore, Seigne, McGuire, & Smith, 1998).

Having a weak superior, competition for tasks, status or advancement, or competition for the supervisor's favor are other perceived reasons for bullying among targets (Einarsen, 2000; Zapf & Einarsen, 2005). The link between leadership, role conflict and bullying seem to be important. In a national representative Norwegian study, role conflict, interpersonal conflicts and destructive forms of leadership behavior were strongly related to workplace bullying (Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2007). A low quality work environment and increased role conflicts, as well as dissatisfaction with the social climate and leadership at the workplace, have also been reported by observers of bullying (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994). Leymann (1993) claimed that four factors are prominent in eliciting bullying at work. These were 1) deficiencies in work design, 2) deficiencies in leadership behavior, 3) a socially exposed position of the victim, and 4) a low moral standard in the department.

The social-interaction approach to aggression (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993) is another model that spells out environmental factors as antecedents of bullying (Vartia, 2003). The social-interactionist perspective argues that situational or external factors may affect bullying indirectly by eliciting rule and norm-violating behavior (cf. box E and G in Figure 1). This approach maintains that stressful events affect aggression indirectly through their effect on the target's behavior. Stressful events may cause people to behave in ways that make others attack them. In a bullying situation, a person who is distressed by an unsatisfactory or stressful work situation may irritate others, with provoked aggressive or hostile behavior as a result. Bullying may here be seen as an intentional response to such behavior and an instrument for social control (Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999). In addition, certain perceptions of injustice may play an important role in bullying acting as an additional antecedent, as proposed by Dieter Zapf (2004).

Neuman and Baron (2003) delineate between "unjust" situations that (a) violate norms, (b) produce frustration and stress, (c) induce negative affect, and (d) assault the individual’s dignity and self-worth. All those kinds of felt injustice may be precursors of bullying. Formal norms may be violated when people are treated differently. Individuals may perceive that they have been unfairly benefited or
have been unfairly disadvantaged. If this happens repeatedly, they may feel subjected to bullying. Lack of distributive justice for some period of time, e.g. related to downsizing (who should be the "layoffs" or "survivors" after organizational re-structuring), career promotion (feeling "parked" in one's job without understanding or accepting "why"), wage increase (witnessing that colleagues receive frequent pay increases, contrary to one's own situation) may attack the worker's dignity and self-worth, and a feeling of being bullied may arise. In addition, Neuman and Baron (1997) also found that individuals who reported that they had been treated unfairly by their supervisors were significantly more likely than those who not were treated unfairly to indicate that they engaged in some form of workplace aggression.

The organizational culture may also comprise an important precursor of workplace bullying. Organizational culture is a multifaceted concept, based on the assumptions, beliefs, values and expectations that members take for granted and have come to share (Schein, 1985). Culture tends to manifest itself at the group level, with specific norms and rules for the behavior of group members (Hoel & Salin, 2003). Values and norms within the organizational culture, for instance a general low level of mutual support and understanding, may foster bullying. The organizational culture may permit hostile work behavior like bullying, what Brodsky (1976) refers to as a "sense of permission to harass". Brodsky even claimed that workplace harassment may be the result of a general belief in industrial society that workers are most productive when subjected to the goad or fear of harassment. This notion implies that harassment is viewed as something functional by the management, and perhaps necessary to achieve productivity and acceptable performance from employees. Brodsky proposed that harassment at work cannot occur without the direct or indirect agreement of management.

One of the targets of bullying interviewed by Einarsen, Raknes, and Matthiesen (1994) and associates admitted that he was severely punished in his job as a middle manager, due to his lack of ability to "act like Hitler" against his subordinates. Keashly and Jagatic (2003a) found that higher rates of emotionally abusive behaviors were reported in organizations in which respondents perceived that employee involvement was not facilitated, morale was low, teamwork was not encouraged, and supervision was vague.
Andersson and Pearson (1999) use the term "incivility spiral" to describe how bullying may evolve in such situations.

The incivility spiral, which may be a part of a destructive organizational culture, may culminate with bullying. This can be the outcome, if repeated episodes of uncivil or rude behavior have been allowed to unfold, especially if the episodes systematically have been directed against one person, a scapegoat (cf. Thylefors, 1987). An illustrative example of organizational cultures that may allow bullying is the luxury restaurant kitchen. Here the chef is often viewed as an artist, whose bullying and abusive behavior can be understood as idiosyncratic behavior born out of artistry and creativity (Johns & Menzel, 1999). The bullying and abusive chef is excused, since the raw materials are refined into top class gourmet food. Everyone around has to adapt to this kind of demanding, oppressive behavior from the talented chef artist. Thus, the norms and values within an organization as well as the type and quality of the organizational communication patterns may constitute some of the essence of the bullying problem. Yet, a recent study has shown that bullying in restaurant is not conducive to creativity and quality within a specific restaurant (Mathisen, Einarsen & Mykletun, 2008).

Summarizing, bullying is clearly to be regarded as a multifaceted phenomenon with causes to be found on different explanatory levels (see also Einarsenet al., 2003a; Rayner & Keashly, 2005). Probably, the antecedents of workplace bullying may be found in combinations of organizational and individual antecedents.

OUTCOMES OF BULLYING

The fifth aim of this paper is to present and discuss outcome effects associated with workplace bullying (cf. box H, I and J of Figure 1). A host of research shows that workplace bullying produces a range of detrimental consequences for both the target of bullying as well as for the organization, in line with findings in stress research. From the first, research on workplace bullying, attention has primarily been focused on the negative effects the experience has on targets (Hoel, Einarsen, & Cooper, 2003). However, a "ripple effect" have also been observed in bullying (Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999), as several studies have found that observers of bullying reported higher levels of generalized stress and lower job satisfaction than those who had not observed bullying take place (Einarsen, Raknes, &
Matthiesen, 1994; Vartia, 2003). Still, most research has addressed the targets of bullying, and the negative impact on their health and well-being. For instance, Quine (2001) found that nurses who had been bullied reported significantly lower levels of job satisfaction and significantly higher levels of anxiety and depression. Still, the organizational perspective and organizational consequences of workplace bullying have to a small extent been investigated. Furthermore, since most all workplace bullying research so far has been based on cross-sectional and not longitudinal designs, the cause and effect relationships in this respect are not yet certain.

Individual Outcomes

By far, the most systematically researched relationship in this domain is the relationship between exposure to bullying and psychological strain (Keashly & Harvey, 2005). As with other forms of social stress, bullying is likely to manifest itself behaviorally as well as attitudinally. To be a victim of intentional and systematic psychological harm by another person seems to produce severe emotional reactions such as fear, anxiety, helplessness, depression and shock (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002a). Victimization, in this case exposure to intense bullying at work, has been shown to alter the individuals' perceptions of their work-environment and life in general to one of threat, danger, insecurity and self-questioning (cf. Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Pervasive emotional, psychosomatic, and psychiatric problems are therefore seen in those exposed to bullying (Leymann, 1990a). The reactions are found to be especially pronounced if the perpetrator is in a position of power or the situation is unavoidable or inescapable (Einarsen, 1999; Niedl, 1996). Hence, the results in this field indicate that workplaces seem to be settings where people are especially vulnerable if they are facing aggression, abuse, or harassment (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997).

About 100 targets of harassment by stalking were interviewed in order to assess the impact of the experience on their psychological, social, and interpersonal functioning (Pathe & Mullen, 1997). Increased levels of anxiety were reported by 83%. The majority of the targets had been subjected to multiple forms of harassment such as being followed, repeatedly approached, and bombarded with letters and telephone calls during periods varying from 1 month to 20 years. Threats were received by 58% and 34% were physically or sexually
assaulted. Many targets of long term bullying at work also report symptoms indicating that they suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder – (PTSD) (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002a). In one study (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004), about 80% of the targets of bullying reported post-traumatic symptoms equivalent with those suggested for PTSD. The literature on post-traumatic stress focuses primarily on factors such as life-threatening menaces, object loss and physical harm as the main risk elements in development of PTSD (Davidson & Foa, 1993). A study of post-traumatic stress among women abused by their husbands concluded that psychological abuse, even in rather subtle forms, seems to produce clear cut symptoms of PTSD (Vitanza, Vogel, & Marshall, 1995). On the basis of case studies, Scott and Stradling (1994) argued that enduring psychosocial stress in the absence of one single acute and dramatic trauma may produce full symptomatology of PTSD.

In a Finnish study of 350 University employees, 19 persons subjected to victimization by harassment were interviewed in a follow-up study (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt Bäck, 1994). They reported high levels of insomnia, various nervous symptoms such as anxiety, depression, aggression, melancholy, apathy, lack of concentration, and socio-phobia, leading the authors to conclude that these victims portrayed symptoms reminiscent of posttraumatic stress disorder. In his 1992 report, the Swedish psychologist Heinz Leymann (1992) argued that PTSD probably was the correct diagnosis for approximately 95% of a representative sample of 350 targets of long-term bullying at work. A Swedish study of PTSD in a group of 64 victims attending a rehabilitation program for victims of bullying at work revealed that most of these victims were troubled with intrusive thoughts and avoidance reactions (Leymann & Gustavson, 1996). A Danish study of 118 targets of severe bullying revealed that 76% portrayed symptoms indicating posttraumatic stress disorder (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002a).

According to Janoff-Bulman (1992), post-traumatic stress following victimization is largely due to the shattering of the basic assumptions that victims hold about themselves and the world, including assumptions creating a sense of personal invulnerability. The sense of invulnerability is tied to the three core beliefs: (a) the world is benevolent, b) the world is meaningful, and c) the self is
worthy. The just world hypothesis (Lerner, 1980), our need to believe that we live in a world where people get what they deserve and deserve what they get, is threatened by the experience of being bullied. The belief in a just world and the three core beliefs enable the individual to confront the physical and social environment as if it were stable, orderly, coherent, safe and friendly. A traumatic event presents information that is incompatible with these existing mental models or schemas (Horowitz, 1975).

This incongruity gives rise to stress responses, requiring reappraisal and revision of the schemas. The person tends to use avoidance strategies in order to ward off distressing thoughts, images, and feelings caused by the incident, thus giving the control system tolerable doses of information. Phases of intrusion and avoidance occur as the person attempts to process or “work through” the experience (Horowitz, 1975). The target may repeatedly re-experience the most humiliating or frustrating aggressive events, or the person may systematically avoid certain work situations, be it lunch breaks, meetings or other people while at work. The target can even find it difficult to approach or pass a former workplace, as described in one case (Einarsen & Hellesøy, 1998).

In a theoretical framework of trauma at work, Williams (1993) argues that individual variables in personality and coping styles may have some overlap with PTSD, in regard to emotional distress. Although the causal relationship between individual differences and victimization from bullying is a debatable one (Einarsen, 1999, 2000; Leymann, 1990a, 1996), targets of bullying at work do differ from non-targets on a range of factors (see Figure 1, box F). For instance, Vartia (1996) found a high level of negative affectivity among a group of Finnish victims of bullying at work, while Zapf (1999) found German victims of bullying to be high on negative and low on positive affectivity when compared to a control group. Experiences of negative social interactions in general seem to be associated with increases in negative affectivity as well as low self-esteem and many dysfunctional attitudes (Lakey, Tardiff, & Drew, 1994).

Whereas Zapf (1999) argues that these characteristics may have caused bullying in the first place, Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002a) claim that negative affectivity acts as a mediator and thus accounts for the relation between the victimization and symptomatology by explaining how bullying takes on a psychological meaning. In a study
of battered women, the relationship between abuse and PTSD depended to a certain degree on vulnerability factors of psychological dysfunctions such as cognitive failure and private self-consciousness (Saunders, 1994). The former is defined as the tendency to have perception and memory failures as well as engaging in misdirected action, while the latter refers to people who tend to focus on their own perceptions, feelings, and thoughts. Both concepts are considered to be produced by the excessive worry and anxiety caused by a highly threatening situation. Therefore, they may be seen as partial mediators of the relationship between the experience of abuse and the evolving post traumatic stress symptoms. Nevertheless, more research is needed within this area before firm conclusions are drawn.

**Organizational Outcomes**

Less attention has been paid to the potential organizational outcomes although the costs of bullying are hypothesized to be related to increased absenteeism and turnover, as well as reduced productivity for both targets and work groups (Hoel, Einarsen, & Cooper, 2003). Turnover has to date been the organizational outcome that has received most attention in research, with studies revealing greater intention to leave the organization for both targets and observers of bullying (Hoel, Einarsen, & Cooper, 2003; Quine, 1999), causing Rayner and Keashly (2005) to estimate the replacement costs relating to bullying in an organization with 1,000 employees to be in the area of $750,000.

In studies exploring the association between bullying and sickness absenteeism, relationships have normally been found to be relatively weak (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Vartia, 2003). However, a Finnish study among hospital staff demonstrated that risk of medically certified sickness absence was 51%, or 1.5 times higher for those who had been bullied, compared to the others in the study sample (Kivimäki, Eloainio, & Vahtera, 2000). In a study of Norwegian trade union members (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994), 27% agreed with "bullying at my workplace reduces our efficiency". Increased health problems resulting from exposure to bullying may also de-motivate employees with gradually reduced job satisfaction as a consequence and with increased absence and lowered productivity as possible long-term results (Hoel, Einarsen, &
Cooper, 2003). In a study of bullying at two Finnish hospitals, Kivimäki, Eloavainio, and Vahtera (2000) estimated that the annual cost of absence, from bullying alone, accounted for about £125,000. Correspondingly, Sheehan et al. (2001, referred in Hoel, Einarsen & Cooper, 2003) calculated bullying costs of $0.6 to $3.6 million per year for an Australian business with 1,000 employees. Thus, workplace bullying costs organizations and the society billions of dollars, pounds, or Euros, in Australia, US, or other industrialized countries. However extensive research is required within this field.

It seems to be a well established notion that the subjective experience of being bullied is the crucial aspect (Einarsen et al., 2003a; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). Bullying occurs as long as the target experiences it as such, even if the perpetrator had no intent to perform bullying, or (showing low empathy) does not realize that such an experience may be the outcome of one's own behavior. Thus, an aggressive person, with low social skills and a limited conception of how others may perceive the expression of anger or hostility can be labeled as a bully. Additionally, a target may misinterpret or exaggerate the intent of the perpetrator. A vulnerable person—for instance, an individual who has experienced a range of bullying episodes in the past in previous jobs, or in childhood—would be more prone to attribute intentional negative acts of bullying. The target may well feel subjected to bullying even if he or she is uncertain whether the perpetrator actually intended to bully (cf. Jones & Davis, 1965).

**DOSE-RESPONSE PERSPECTIVE**

The last aim of this paper is to present the dose-response perspective. How much harassment or negative acts must occur before an individual experiences it as bullying? In this respect, workplace bullying may be understood in terms of a dose-response perspective. According to this, a person must be exposed to a certain amount of bullying episodes (dose), before the feeling of being victimized sets in (response). The dose-response perspective is well-known within medicine and epidemiology. A significant dose-response relationship was for instance observed between career solvent exposure, blood lead level, and subsequent personality disturbance symptoms among house painters (Condray, Morrow, Steinhauer, Hodgson, & Kelley, 2000). Another study demonstrated a dose-response association between exposure to sexual assaults, and
subsequent manifestations of health problems, as arthritis, in a population-based study of older adults (Stein & Barrett-Connor, 2000). Correspondingly, scores of adverse childhood experiences were found to have a strong dose-response, graded relationship to the probability of lifetime as well as to recent depressive disorders, with an increased odds ratio probability of about 2.5 (that is, 2.5 times higher risk for depression), as compared to a control group (Chapman et al., 2004).

The dose-response perspective is not applied empirically within the “at work bullying” research field. Thus, little is known about the “dose” of bullying episodes that is prerequisite for the unique and subjective feeling of being bullied. How many bullying episodes that must take place before the onset of the unique feeling of being bullied will most likely vary from person to person. Distinctive individual features, such as former work experience, personal vulnerability, childhood experiences, age, or educational level represent but a few of the conditions that may interfere with the feeling of being exposed to bullying. What kind of personal factors that may lower or increase the dose-response ratio has still not been investigated. However, a dose-response perspective may be implicit in the judicial view of what comprises workplace bullying. When a person is exposed to a certain amount of insulting episodes during a specific period of time may be regarded as bullying.

CONCLUSION

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has recognized workplace bullying in the broader context of violence at work. In a 2000 monograph, it was observed that workplace bullying “by itself may be relatively minor but which cumulatively can become a very serious form of violence” (Yamada, 2003, p. 400). Workplace bullying is a complex multi-causal phenomenon with severe negative impact on those affected. Different conceptualizations do exist, and the construct is closely linked to the overarching concept of workplace aggression, and also to the concept of interpersonal social conflict. Bullying seems to be more widespread in some nations than others; many different antecedent factors may cause workplace bullying, in particular role stressors and destructive leadership; bullying may lead to deteriorated health for targets. Workplace bullying may also hit the organization in various negative ways.
Increased turnover, a poor level of job satisfaction and reduced productivity among those involved comprise only some of many possible outcomes of bullying.

Workplace bullying is neither the product of chance nor of destiny. Instead, it should be understood as an interplay between individuals in their daily work (Einarsen, Matthiesen, & Mikkelsen, 2000). Personal factors alone cannot, nor can situational or contextual factors, explain the multiplicity of the phenomenon. Solid research based information on the causes and consequences of workplace bullying are needed to develop sound interventions and preventive strategies. Unfortunately, the workplace bullying research field is still in short supply when it comes to longitudinal studies and studies on the effects of intervention. Thus, in forthcoming years, longitudinal studies should supplement prospective studies. Similarly, Hoel, Rayner and Cooper (1999) suggest that quantitative approaches should accompany qualitative research such as case studies, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. These research practices might reveal more subtle processes involved in workplace bullying, than can be revealed by survey studies alone.

REFERENCES


Health Consequences of Workplace Bullying]. Oslo, Norway: Norsk Lægeforening.


BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE: DEFINITION, PREVALENCE, ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES

*Health Injurious Interaction at the Work Place*. Bergen, Norway: Sigma Forlag.


Hoel, H. (2002). Bullying at Work in Great Britain. Manchester, UK: University of Manchester, Institute of Science and Technology


Cooper (Eds.), *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace* (pp. 79-100). London, UK: Taylor & Francis.


