Pathways into bullying

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Abstract This paper contributes to the topic of educational integrity by presenting an empirical contribution that develops grounded substantive theory in the field of workplace bullying. Intrinsically there is a strong link between educational integrity and bullying because bullying is a violation of integrity. Educational integrity is underpinned by broad principles of honesty trust, equity, respect, responsibility and inclusion.

The study investigated the process of becoming bullied, being bullied and the consequences for individuals and organisational cultures. Grounded theory (GT) analysis of informants' constructions was based on action. Pathways of dissent and difference characterised by 'standing up' or 'standing out' emerged as reasons for becoming and being bullied. Holding different values and being different from the cultural norms underpinned pathways. Unlike causes, pathways continued and strengthened throughout the bullying or mobbing process.

A concept I have called sham dealing emerged empirically from the GT analyses as a core type of bullying encounter. Instead of fair dealing, sham dealing was experienced. Sham dealing types of managerial actions have the appearance of genuine dealing but are characterised by a deceptive misuse of legitimate process. Sham dealing occurred in workplaces and also within the arena of the formal claims process. Sham dealing is experienced as an additional form of bullying. Empirical evidence of sham dealing explicitly contradicts any premise that managers or leadership within organisations are acting with integrity in dealing with bullying. Targets need to be warned to expect an escalation of bullying, in the form of sham dealing, if they make a complaint about bullying. Currently work-related stress due to bullying is increasing but not being counted. The bullies and their allies are being rewarded. The study findings indicate recognising more bullying claims and reducing the adversarial nature of the formal claims process is the way forward. These are findings from this sample. They may be transferable concepts.

Key Findings

Pathways into bullying
Dissenters - Dissent varied in strength and was commonly related to issues of educational integrity.

Outsiders - Standing out from cultural norms including: difference from expected gender role stereotypes; loners; stigma of a bullied identity; holding professional, caring values and competence.

Being bullied
For participants, the bullying experience was constituted by and culminated in sham dealing types of managerial actions which I have constructed in the analyses as a core type of encounter, emblematic of bullying. Sham dealing was experienced as an additional form of bullying. It was unexpected to targets. Sham dealing managerial actions involve a misuse of legitimate process. Instead of fair dealing, sham dealing had the appearance of dealing legitimately without actually doing so. It was fake dealing. If targets made a formal claim then the arena for sham dealing type of managerial actions became larger. Sham dealing encounters were experienced within the formal claims process.

Bullying cultures
Two types of bullying cultures occur, one in which the bully(ies) is easily identified, characterised by high staff turnover, the other where the bully was not easily pinpointed because he (she) worked through others, with lower staff turnover.

Discussion Question 1 Does this theory offer meaning to those of you who have tacit knowledge? Please can you offer comments as to transferability of findings?

Discussion Question 2 Given that our workplaces reflect society how does globalisation impact on reasons why bullying and educational integrity are raising a groundswell of interest today?

Introduction

Bullying occurs in all sorts of workplaces — and schools and tertiary education organisations have some of the highest prevalences (WorkSafe Week, Melbourne 2009). Given integrity refers to the consistency of decisions with a prescribed set of values, such as honesty, trust, responsibility, dignity, equity and inclusion, bullying is a violation of integrity. This study includes participants from a range of occupations, including some from the educational sector. However the dynamics of bullying are similar across occupational areas. Therefore the findings from this study apply to educational organisations. Workplace bullying is profoundly influenced by the ways people are managed and the ways that work is organised. People concerned with educational integrity need to be aware that bullying is occurring in their organisation. Instead of becoming complicit, integrity needs to be translated into action to stop bullying.

Bullying is considered as an old phenomenon, well known in all cultures, but conversely a new phenomenon because only recently studied in research. Although we believe we are familiar with the concept of bullying and may strongly condemn it, we are unlikely to recognise it when it happens in situ and may underestimate the extent of the social problem. The label 'bullying' conjures up schoolyard bullying and connotations of physical violence. Schoolyard bullying can be direct, physical aggression but also features indirect, aggression such as malicious gossip and social ostracism (Besag, 1989). Therefore school bullying can be verbal, physical or psychological in nature. It is defined as repeated negative actions when someone intentionally inflicts harm in a situation where there is an imbalance of strength or asymmetric power relationship (Olweus, 2003). Our meanings for bullying are anchored in schoolyard bullying.

But pioneer researchers into adult workplace bullying sought to distinguish mobbing from school bullying (Leymann, 1990). The adult workplace phenomenon was first identified as a serious social problem in the 1970s and 1980s under a variety of different labels. As mobbing, it was identified as a workplace problem in Sweden by Leymann in the 1980s. Brodsky in the US (1976) identified the same phenomenon within a wider harassment framework (Brodsky, 1976). Leymann (1996) opted for the label 'mobbing' to distinguish the workplace phenomenon from connotations of 'physical aggression and threat' and emphasised the subtle and sophisticated nature of mobbing. He conceptualized mobbing as an extreme social stressor (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996). Subsequently the Swedish work led to the development of legislation, definitions and guidelines and stimulated research. The early US work did not receive such recognition. Workplace bullying was not a word in use in the US until the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Since then, many constructs have emerged from North America, with different labels, with varying degrees of overlap with bullying, such as workplace aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Neuman & Baron, 1998) and emotional abuse (Keashly, 1998; Keashly & Harvey, 2005), workplace victimisation , workplace incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), social undermining (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002), abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1994), organizational deviance (Bennet & Robertson, 2000; Robinson & Bennet, 1995) and counter-productive behaviour (Martinko & Gundlach, 2002).

In the UK, workplace bullying is the label that was brought into use by Andrea Adams, a BBC journalist (Adams, 1992). Subsequently, research into bullying mushroomed in the UK and Europe and led a global surge of interest in developing anti-bullying policies and guidelines.

In Victoria, Australia, (the site of this study) workplace bullying is the label used and defined in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) regulation in 2003 under an Advisory Standard and Guidelines (Worksafe Victoria, 2003; WorkSafe Victoria, 2007) informed by the Swedish definition and operational legislation.

Different labels and constructs provide insights to the phenomenon of workplace bullying. In this paper I will use the term workplace bullying more generally except where mobbing is referred to by researchers or research participant. Some constructs overlap and others are partially excluded from the umbrella concept of bullying. Specific examples of bullying actions are abusive name calling, micro-managing to the extent of demeaning someone's autonomy, threats of job loss, emotional outbursts of yelling or throwing equipment at someone and subtle acts of condescension such as treating some like air, patronising them without reason, intentionally undermining their work and abusing legitimate process to expel bullied individuals from the workplace. But the social problem is more complex than isolated bullying actions.

Most definitions include the following essential elements. The bullying behaviours must be repeated frequently over a prescribed duration of time, in which hostility escalates, causing harm. Intent on the part of the bully is contentious and therefore not included within the definitions partly because of the difficulties in proving it, yet the overlapping construct of social undermining specifically includes intent to harm (Duffy et al. 2002). Research has drawn attention to an imbalance of power (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Leymann, 1996; Salin 2003) which distinguishes bullying from conflict, for example. Lutgen-Sandvik (2005) offered an additional contextual layer to these descriptive elements by emphasising the duplicitous nature of bullying, the blocked communication networks and despite being perceived as unpredictable to the target, a recognisable pattern of abuse which is characteristic of the phenomenon but difficult to convey (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003, 2005).

The characteristic pattern involves persistent hostility over a period of time which causes harm in a situation in which targets face an increasing power disparity. In these conditions, bullying is extremely serious and destructive. Bullied individuals face severe health consequences and disruption to their working lives. Adverse mental health outcomes include stress symptoms and burnout (Mikkelson & Einarsen, 2001), lowered self-confidence, increased anxiety or fearfulness, depression and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Mikkelson & Einarsen, 2002). Incident depression is nearly five times as likely in

bullied victims compared with non-victims (Kivimaki et al., 2003; Vartia, 2003). Physical adverse health outcomes include psychosomatic illnesses such as insomnia, high blood pressure and heart disease. The risk of heart disease is doubled (Kivimaki, 2003). A common outcome is for bullied individuals to leave their jobs (Djurkovic McCormack & Casimir, 2004; Quine, 1999; Zapf & Gross, 2001) even though other strategies may be attempted prior to exit (Zapf & Gross, 2001). Careers are likely to be disrupted or prematurely terminated. The emotional strain and stress may also impact on those witnessing, bystanders for example (Vartia, 2002), and is likely to impact on relatives and friends of those affected, due to a phenomenon labelled the ripple effect (Hockley, 2004; Lewis & Orford, 2005; Leymann, 1990; Rayner & Hoel, 1997). Therefore bullying can result in erosion of social and financial resources as well as a negative impact on family relationships. Severe financial strain is likely to be experienced. The health consequences can be severe, ongoing and long term. Suicides occur (Leymann, 1990). Disability and poverty can be outcomes for some. These severe consequences impact on all aspects of the lives of those targeted. Bullying affects the futures of individuals, their families, their workplaces and their communities.

The organisational costs incurred as a result of workplace bullying are vast. The indirect cost of bullying for organisations based on calculations of absenteeism, turnover and loss of productivity in the UK has been estimated at 13.75 billion GBP in 2007 based on a prevalence figure of 11% (Giga, Hoel & Lewis, 2008). This figure is in line with the variability of international estimates where prevalence figures of 10% or more are common (Chappell & Di Martino, 2006). According to Hoel and Cooper (2000) between 25-50% of employees will experience bullying at some time in their lifetime (Hoel and Cooper, 2000) indicating bullying is not a marginal problem.

In Australia, direct costs of bullying also occur through formal claims for compensation. There is a national system for claiming worker's compensation due to work related injuries. This is unlike the UK for example where injured employees can pursue legal redress directly. Within Victoria, Australia (the site for this study) provision for legal redress and compensation is made via a state government department, the Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA), which manages the workers'

compensation scheme and manages Victoria's workplace safety system. The responsibilities of VWA are to enforce OHS laws, manage the workers' compensation scheme and help injured workers return to work. WorkSafe Victoria is the health and safety regulator arm of VWA. Compensation and legal redress for bullying are operationalised via statutory authority process and procedures and the employer-insurance investigator-WorkCover relationships.

Bullying was defined in the OHS Advisory Standard and Guidelines introduced into Victoria in 2003 (Worksafe Victoria, 2003). Bullying causes work-related stress. Prior to the introduction of Advisory Standard national compensation claims for work-related mental stress escalated dramatically, with an increase by 83% over the period 1996 to 2004 (Australian Safety and Compensation Council, 2007). Since then, there has been a decline in the incidence of accepted claims nationally (Australian Safety and Compensation Council, 2009). Research indicates that claims for work-related stress caused by job strain are rejected by default, and there is at least ten times more stress related illness due to job strain than accepted claims (Lamontagne, 2009). Bullying claims are even less likely to be accepted than other claims for work-related stress because bullying claims are complex and disputed.

Since the introduction of the OHS regulation in Victoria in 2003, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) identified the Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA) as the most profitable compensation system in Australia, with a profit of AUS$1 billion per year. VWA reduced employers' premiums by 45% in the period 2004-9. According to VTHC, the reduction of employers' premiums was at the expense of providing care for injured workers (Victorian Trades Hall Council, 2008). VTHC posit there is a conflict of interest between the statutory authority's dual roles as an insurer and a regulator. Concerns have been raised in the past that acceptance of claims is biased against individual claimants because of corporate disincentives (McCarthy, 2003).

If claims are not being counted, work-related stress due to bullying is likely to increase. Moreover the situation is likely to get worse because proposed changes to the Accident Compensation Act will make it even more difficult for claims to be counted.

Despite intentions to render workplaces safe from bullying and the extremely high costs attributed to it, bullying continues to happen. Why is this? How can we understand it? Research indicates workplace bullying is complex and multicausal. Threading through the research evidence are individual and structural explanations.

Some research has investigated bullying at the individual level, as an interpersonal or dyadic interaction between perpetrator and target. Individual explanations may find vested political interest because they seem to absolve organisations from responsibility. Point in time surveys have been the predominant form of the research. Perpetrators rarely self-identify so the evidence is sparse. Victims' personalities and mental health factors have been investigated. Given the severe consequences of bullying on victims, these factors are likely to be consequences. Causes cannot be disentangled from effects using cross-sectional research designs. Research does not substantiate bullying as interpersonal conflict or a difficult employee problem. Yet these victim blaming explanations remain as popular myths in society.

Bullying has also been examined at the group level, referred to as the social system by Zapf (1999) including hostility, envy, group pressure and scapegoat exercising social exclusion (Zapf, 1999). More recently, Lutgen-Sandvik (2005) examined bullying as a group problem, and focused on communications dynamics of workgroups and the complexity of power relations. Her study design incorporated the real world context and highlighted the complexity of the social problem. She drew attention to the tension between control and worker resistance (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003, 2005, 2006). In organisations that foster or condone bullying and fail to take responsibility for employees' safety, bullying is likely to be construed as 'disloyalty', 'troublemaking'. The targets are pathologised as the problem instead of the bullies and their allies. Lutgen-Sandvik (2005) stressed the importance of including organisational dynamics in the study of bullying.

Other researchers have focused on the organisational level. Hoel and Salin (2003) hypothesised that organisational antecedents of bullying can be considered under four headings 1) changing nature of work 2) work organisation 3) organisational climate 4) style of leadership.

Hoel and Salin (2003) discussed globalisation, increasing competition, greater pressure, and high frequency of restructuring as features of the changing nature of work. However some research found no evidence of increasing work pressure or pace of work associated with bullying (Vartia, 1996). The second work antecedent, work organisation, emphasised role conflict and ambiguity. Zapf, Knorz & Kulla (1996) found that targets had more requirements for team work than people who were not bullied, suggesting that teamwork may be an antecedent. This is supported by case studies which showed that people whose job involved a high requirement for team work, communication and co-operation were severely targeted (Groeblinghoff & Becker, 1996).

The third work antecedent is organisational culture and climate. This is hard to define but probably includes assumptions, beliefs, values and expectations, values and norms (unwritten rules and beliefs). Archer (1999) explored how bullying was part of the institutional culture in a paramilitary service. He found five themes related to bullying: maintenance of tradition; white male dominance; indoctrination; initiation in which horseplay was accepted; and socialisation (Archer, 1999). Socialisation referred to individuals being picked on because they were somewhat different.

The fourth antecedent is style of leadership. An autocratic style of leadership and way of dealing with conflicts is associated with bullying (Vartia, 1996) Also, a laissez faire style of leadership or abdication of leadership is linked with bullying. Commonly, in bullying situations there is a leadership failure to intervene.

Salin (2003) posited that organisational structures and processes can act as triggers (organisational change), enablers (power imbalances, low perceived costs and dissatisfaction with organisational climate), and motivators (competition and political climate, and rewards). Salin (2003) argued that bullying is a deliberate strategy to enhance perpetrators' organisational standing and is a form of organisational politics (Salin, 2003). Her arguments pointed towards the recognition of larger societal forces as profound influences.

McCarthy (2003) offered an additional layer of meaning by extending the conceptualisation of bullying to include wider cultural, economic, ethical and political standpoints. He posited bullying and violence are normative in current postmodern culture and organisations, underpinned by survival needs for groups against external threats, to establish identity, belonging, norms and compliance (McCarthy 2003). If this is the case, then the meaning of bullying is not shared. Bullying is tacitly practiced as 'normal' workplace behavior by bullies and their allies.

According to Liefooghe & Olafsson (1999) and Leiefooghe & Mackenzie Davey (2001), people have different meanings for bullying. Different workplace experiences lead to people moralising about bullying differently (Lewis, 2003). Therefore the meaning of bullying is socially constructed. Unless bystanders have experienced coercive control and repeated negative acts they may find it hard to believe the severe effects and assume they would show greater resilience than those who became victims. Research investigating responses to bullying found that bystanders anticipated taking a more proactive response than those bullied actually took (Rayner & Hoel, 1997). Lack of understanding about bullying may fuel a propensity to blame the victim or mimimise the problem. Some research has emphasized the importance of distinguishing the severity of different bullying actions in relation to the degree of harm and have shown that emotional abuse is perceived as most harmful (Escartin et al., 2009). Nonetheless, bullying can be trivialized by observers who have not experienced it. Targets of bullying are likely to be denigrated as weak or mentally unsound.

Yet, research has highlighted that targets act resourcefully and creatively to mount resistance to bullying in many ways (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2005). Further, research has shown targets have a specific meaning for bullying. Some qualitative research has explored the use of metaphor to capture unique meaning of the experience and draw attention to how valuable it could be as a diagnostic tool to identify bullying in a workplace and respond appropriately (Tracy & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Failure to capture the unique meaning of experience is an issue that has been identified in other substantive areas. This concern was identified by Foucault (1981): disciplines of study can habitually exclude the voices of those being studied by making them the object for analysis without allowing the in-depth disclosure of their own voice.

Overall the research evidence indicates bullying is an individual, dyadic, group, organisational and societal problem, where the meaning of bullying can be misunderstood and easily obscured by vested interests. Research has offered mainly individual and developing structural explanations (work factors) for bullying but how these interact in real world situations is less clear.

Bullying is a dynamic social process that occurs within a context. It is important to understand the meanings individuals bring to the situation, how individuals themselves experience bullying and how their agency meets structures that 'deal with bullying' in the real world. In addition, given that bullying is now ostensibly being 'dealt with' by the implementation of organisational policies and procedures and formal claims mechanisms, how is this dealing experienced?

The research goal for this study was

> To explore the integrated dynamics of workplace bullying, understood as a social process, from the experiences and observations of those with experience of being bullied and/or witnessing and/or dealing with bullying in situ.

Methods

I interviewed targets of bullying with a view of the importance of understanding bullying using the meanings people brought to it. I selected grounded theory (GT) as a suitable way of approaching the research problem because it involves an evolving research design and a data driven way of explaining and interpreting bullying rather than a theory-driven approach (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

According to a symbolic interactionist perspective, meanings are created and formed through the interactions (Blumer, 1969). My theoretical orientation was based on the premise that social action cannot be understood without investigating the ways the players define, interpret and meet situations in a social context. By grounding the analyses in action, GT analyses gives priority to exploring meanings and social interaction. Developing theory is based on action, interaction and process. GT is an

ideal method to investigate a social process. Validity is built into the GT approach because it is grounded in action in a situated context and develops from the process of constant comparison.

The GT approach was pioneered by Glaser in the 1930's to meet a need to understand what is going on in a substantive area, how to explain and interpret it using the theory generating approach. Glaser (1978) conceptualised GT as a discovery approach to data where the researcher plays an impartial role, agency is conferred by neutral methods and theory emerges from the data. Glaserian GT is based on a positivist perspective where truth is regarded as an objective claim. Over time the development of GT has been refined and there are divergences of views concerning the methodology which have branched into distinctive approaches (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). More recently GT has evolved. For example, Charmaz's (2006) approach is based on a constructivist paradigm where truth is provisional and multiple realities exist. Concepts are interpreted from the interaction of the researcher with the research participants. The product is social constructed abductive theory.

Sample participants

I drew my sample from individuals attending a support group for targets of bullying. The sample was supplemented by snowball sampling in which previously interviewed participants nominated others. Sometimes nominations occurred spontaneously, at other times in response to my prompts or questions. For the study, I interviewed targets, bystanders and stakeholders. This approach offered the potential of gathering rich insights into what was happening in the real world from multiple viewpoints. The sampling occurred over two time periods, 2004-5 and 2007-8. The sampling periods are of interest because the first sampling period was shortly after the OHS Advisory Standard and Guidelines were operationalised in 2003 and the second sampling period occurred before proposed changes to the Accident Compensation Act which are likely to exclude more bullying claims.

I approached the convenor of a local bullying support group to request permission for accessing participants who had experienced workplace bullying. The support group

network is on an electronic mailing list. Group members have the option of meeting face to face approximately once a month; 4 to 10 regularly attend. Periodically, stakeholders attended the group meetings. Stakeholders included lawyers, consultants and trainers who deal with bullying professionally. The stakeholders were invited to attend the group either through the convener or through other members of the support group. The stakeholders were generally there to speak about their professional work which involved dealing with complaints and claims concerning bullying in varying capacities.

For this study 28 participants were interviewed. I initially interviewed targets of bullying. I designated these as the primary participants. I have indicated these participants by the letter P to indicate primary. As analyses proceeded theoretical sampling was directed towards secondary participants (designated S), stakeholders with professional dealings in bullying. Two bystanders/witnesses of bullying were interviewed for following up leads in the theoretical sampling (designated T).

The targets comprised twelve women and four men. Some were married and some were single. Ages ranged from twenties to fifties; predominantly participants were in the middle stages of their careers. Four were employed in the health sector, as doctors, researchers or nurses or personal services assistants. One was a teacher. Four were employed in the public sector as managers, two were involved as information technologists, one worked in finance within the private sector and one worked within the media sector and advertising. One worked in the university sector as a researcher, another in human resources. One worked in retail.

Ten stakeholders and two bystanders were added to the sample as theoretical sampling developed. The stakeholders dealt professionally with bullying. For some, the area of workplace bullying regularly occupied part of the professional work and for others their involvement was more spasmodic, for example, a grievance officer in a workplace where issues related to bullying may have comprised a small part of his professional responsibilities. The stakeholders were added to the sample as secondary participants to deepen theoretical density of the research products.

They included three men and seven women. Involvement spanned the following: conducting training as one of a broad range of management issues, handling

grievances in workplaces, handling legal claims, developing and implementing OHS policy, consulting regarding OHS, Equal Opportunities and workers' compensation, fulfilling a union role in negotiating with employers and in representing employees, counseling and advocacy for injured claimants. Employers of stakeholders included: independent organisations; legal firms; unions; government OHS departments; other government departments; employers' representatives; union officers and grant funded organisations. Two bystanders were interviewed, one male and one female. One worked in higher education, the other in a customer service role in a private organization. Bystanders had witnessed bullying and were not currently dealing professionally with bullying.

These features of the sample do not paint the full picture. For example, in two bullying situations, multiple perspectives were obtained by interviewing dyads: a target and someone they nominated as a bystander or witness. Other distinctions were blurred, for example, some stakeholders also had experience of being bullied in the past which is not surprising because prevalence estimates indicate how common bullying is over the working life. Theoretical sampling is the technique that drove the selection of the sample.

Recruitment

Recruitment was conducted directly from the support group and snowballing from previous interviews. Additional sample participants were sourced from researcher's networks to increase variability, particularly for successful experiences in stopping bullying, additional strategies deployed and different types of bullying experiences. Primary participants were invited to take part if they self-reported themselves as targets of bullying. I visited the support group to recruit participants. I had copies of the participant information sheet available and gave details and explanation of the purpose of the research and details of what involvement entailed for participants. I asked for expressions of interest and contact telephone numbers and followed up by telephone. The face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted at one point in time and scheduled according to mutual convenience. The recruitment, sampling strategy and study design enabled incorporation of prospective and retrospective elements.

As the study proceeded it became evident that primary participants' attempts to deal with their bullying by formal claims took many years because of delays in the formal claims process regulated by the statutory authorities. People were interviewed at different stages of bullying. Sometimes interviews focused on targets' experience of the formal claims process and sometimes on experiences in the bullying workplaces. Given that some of those interviewed were keen to keep me up to date if their circumstances changed, for example concerning the status of a formal claim, my interviewer notes captured this information and these notes were included as a data source. Further, participants gave informed consent for me to follow up and check information obtained during the interview and I also gave them the option of reviewing their transcript. During these contacts participants updated me on their circumstances. Given the time span of the study, the follow up occurred over several years.

Analytical Process

In-depth interviews were conducted at venues selected by the participants. A conversational style of interviewing was adopted to elicit in-depth interviews comprising rich data. The interviews were tape-recorded and lasted between one and three hours. After providing information and discussion of the research, the participants were asked for informed consent. After ensuring participants' comfort and feelings of freedom and safety to talk, the interviews commenced.

In the interest of gathering diverse and rich data and not foreclosing early, broad questions were used to encourage story telling in the context of the interview. For example, 'Can you tell me about your experience?' with follow up probes to elaborate specific experience such as 'Can you give a specific example of that?' as advocated by Charmaz (2006). As the project advanced, the interview questions were informed and shaped from data collected earlier.

In this way collection and analysis guided the developing theoretical concepts of interest and formulation of the sampling as recommended in GT (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). An interview guide was developed which changed over the course of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The interview guide was used loosely, enabling some structure and a focus on emerging concepts but also used flexibly to allow participants to raise issues pertinent to their circumstances at the time.

The sampling started off with purposive selection of participants to achieve rich and varied information. As the study progressed, the sampling followed up on theoretical leads developing from the data analysis. For example, the first respondent described how she had been bullied before and that it was a different type of bullying. After the interview I noted that re-occurrences of bullying and different types of bullying, actions and outcomes were issues to follow. These issues were eventually interpreted in the developing schema of ordered categories. Strauss and Corbin's (1998) paradigm model was used in the final stages of conceptualisation to display the organising scheme of theory development (Appendix 1).

First, from targets' interviews, I constantly compared incidents that targets chose to relate. I adopted a purist Glaserian approach, initially. This approach assumes a neutral researcher and the emergence of concepts by discovery. The concept of encounters emerged as a focusing social unit because it fitted the data well. Targets chose to relate encounters they perceived as emblematic of their bullying experience. According to Lofland et al. (2000) microscopic units of practices and episodes are contained within the larger unit of an encounter. Unlike other thinking units, encounters are bounded social systems maintained by the relations of the people present (Lofland et al., 2000). For this study, Lofland et al.'s definition is applied loosely. Using this thinking unit, in-depth interviews were examined in minute detail and a list of encounters interpreted as emblematic of the dynamics of bullying were tentatively coded. This list of encounters was subjected to constant comparison as more data were collected until eventually it was refined into six encounters. I wrote copious memos based on merged case vignettes constantly comparing encounters. The encounters differed in the ways the power dynamics worked. Encounters varied in properties and dimensions (characteristics). These differences were conceptualised into different kinds of bullying. The encounters by a typology of bullying became the products of the research.

After the encounters emerged, I decided more analysis was needed to understand and interpret the core type of encounter, which I call sham dealing. I decided to do further interpretive analysis using a Charmaz (2006) GT approach. According to Charmaz, a constructivist approach assumes the resultant theory is co-created by the researcher and researched (Charmaz 2006:130). A constructivist approach leads to a plausible account and situates the studied phenomenon by revealing its embedded nature in the context which may be explicit or implicit.

I revisited the transcripts. Using gerunds, I coded targets' experiences and observations. The analysis evolved into a focus on strategies and outcomes. Initial active coding was followed by focusing the coding on interaction and process. This shaped the interpretive frame of the theory. Then, theoretical sampling deepened understanding, by reasoning about experiences, followed by further sampling of experiences from different perspectives (more targets, stakeholders and bystanders). This led to elaboration of categories. Theoretical sensitivity was deepened and properties explained. Relationships and links between categories were clarified. The sampling continued until theoretical sufficiency was reached (Dey, 1999). The substantive theory produced by the Charmaz mode of GT is not fully illustrated in this paper however some of the concepts are referred to. I conducted member-checking with targets at another support group to test, verify and refine findings.

Two of the encounters are described and illustrated in this paper. The first was the stand up/stand out encounter which formed the basis of the pathways concept; the second, was an encounter I called sham dealing which emerged as a core encounter because it linked to the other encounters conceptualised as emblematic of bullying.

Sham dealing is unfair dealing whilst a pretence of fair and genuine dealing is maintained. Sham dealing types of managerial actions are experienced as an additional form of bullying in workplaces and within the larger arena of the formal claims process. Making a complaint of bullying is more likely to escalate rather than stop bullying because of sham dealing. These types of sham dealing actions have the appearance of dealing legitimately but do not. Sham dealing actions occur at the juncture of individual agency with what I have called the 'meso' level structures. The

term 'meso' represents managerial actions at the organisational level. Sham dealing occurs because of a conflict of interest between micro and meso 'protecting self' (Figure 1).
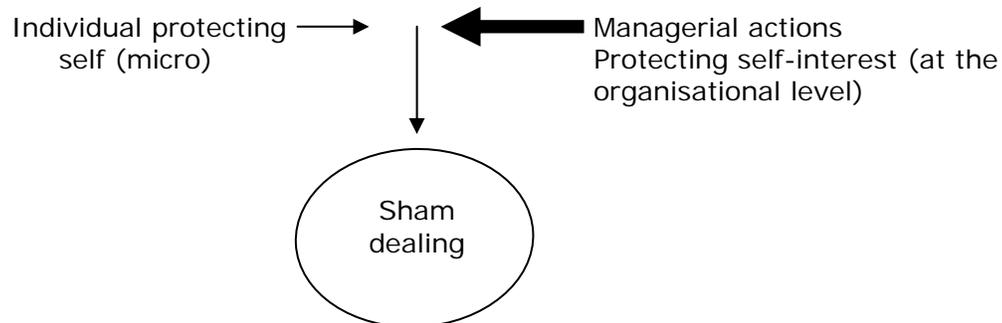
Individual protecting self (micro) ——→

Managerial actions
Protecting self-interest (at the organisational level)

Sham dealing

Figure 1. The dialectical relationship between human agency (protecting self-concept) and the managerial response (protecting self–interest - meso)

Sham dealing was perceived as an additional form of bullying by targets. Sham dealing was acknowledged by some stakeholder participants. Sham dealing was unexpected and perceived as 'out of the ordinary'. As sham dealing occurs individual circumstances change. For dissenters, this was highlighted by a change of pathway as they became stigmatised (different).

In the following sections I am going to describe the pathways using illustrations from the data, followed by illustrations of participants' experiences of being bullied and the concept of sham dealing.

Results

Pathways concept

I interpreted the pathways concept, in part, from the conceptualizing of an encounter, the stand-up/stand-out encounter. This encounter was common in targets' accounts and manifested in two forms. The analysis revealed that making a stand for something or someone was a noted interaction. This encounter could occur at the start of bullying but also at different points during the bullying process. Finally it was conceptualized as an encounter emblematic of bullying. The encounter did not emerge forcefully in all accounts — in some it was very weak — yet was common.

Where the stand-up encounter was absent, targets perceived they were being bullied either from day one or from a specific occurrence of standing out from the norm. This was conceptualized as a difference pathway.

The dissent pathway

I categorized the dissent pathway as standing for broad principles of integrity. Theoretical sampling contributed to the formation of the concept. I sampled those who had experienced bullying more than once and looked for explanations. For example, some targets who had experienced re-occurrences of bullying revealed a values conflict in which they stood for integrity.

P10 (a target) witnessed two of her colleagues being bullied. In the excerpt below she is offering her view of events. I am prompting her by using some common assumptions.

Interviewer: *I'll just put it to you that people may think out there, that people who are bullied attract this sort of situation. They may be lacking and I'll just put a few things to you, communication skills. They may be lacking assertiveness,*

P10: *[laughs] right,*

Interviewer: *So you're shaking your head?*

P10: *No way, no [laughs] … They wouldn't fold over. Sarah and Betty are very strong women who um, who are very strong in their um, wanting to support people who are needing help and assistance and if — whatever they needed to achieve that, they wanted those things to be happening.*

Her response indicates she rebuts my suggestion that these colleagues were bullied because of a lack of assertiveness; rather the opposite is occurring: '*they wouldn't fold over*'. A values construct is illustrated: '*wanting to support people who are needing help*'. Values conflicts have been identified by other research into bullying (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007). In the excerpt, P10 reveals her belief that her bullied co-workers wanted to help others. Similar to all other accounts, witnessing bullying occurred, which signifies bullying as a collective rather than an individualised experience. In this example, bullying was role modelled from the top. After a new

CEO was appointed, the other managers quickly adopted his bullying behaviour. According to Thoms (2008) there is a strong link between ethical integrity of leadership and organisational moral culture particularly when unethical leadership exists (Thoms, 2008). In this instance, unethical leaders role-modelled serial bullying and organisational deviance. Fraud and misappropriation of funds were alluded to in the wider narrative.

Serial bullying occurs when one or more individuals are targeted first and eliminated and then the bully moves on to others. Serial bullying was common. Targets witnessed others or knew of others being bullied although this contrasted with the actual experience which was an isolating one. P10 continues below.

> P10: *Sarah and Betty were sacked — or retrenched on Friday and we were — the staff were told on the Monday and, you know, all this — one of the times where I actually spoke up and I said "why?" and there was some convoluted thing and I said "well why couldn't they have done that, or, ah, whatever", and it was like, "well, because".*
>
> Interviewer: *What do you mean — it was like, because?*
>
> P10: *Um [sighs] he, he (a manager) did not want to get into a conversation about the inequality of what he had just done. He was intent on getting rid of them and um, ah, and he didn't care.*

P10 revealed her belief that equity was at stake, a belief in deliberate intent is revealed. Sarah and Betty subsequently sought legal redress for unfair dismissal and their claims were upheld however that seemed to make little difference to the rate of serial bullying which continued to decimate the employees who remained. P10's dissent was weak, merely asking '*why*'. P10 said that she knew she was likely to be bullied next. A values construct indicative of a lack of sensitivity and respect is illustrated by the manager: '*he didn't care'.* In this organisation, bullying was role modelled by leadership.

According to Astore (2009) lapses in personal and institutional integrity can be systemic and rationalised as necessary. Research into bullying has identified autocratic leadership as a risk factor for bullying (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Lee, 2000)

and highlighted an imbalance between organisational goals (in this instance, fraud) versus employee well-being (Baillien, Neyens and DeWitte, 2008).

A different type of entry to the dissent pathway is described below by P1. She is describing a meeting when she thought the bullying of herself started.

> *There was disagreement over a particular individual — we — we're talking about in the workforce and it was blown up into a situation … there was disagreement over whether that person was a good project manager or not … I was supporting that person.*

Similar to other participants' narratives, unwarranted escalation of minor issues was revealed — '*and it was blown up into a situation*' — suggestive of poor management. In this instance dissent is also weak; the participant was contributing her judgement in the meeting In this instance P1's honesty in revealing her opinion may have been perceived as a threat by her bullying manager. Generally honesty is seen as moral issue but in this situation honesty may have challenged the bully's need for self preservation. Contrary to the bully's judgement P1 is demonstrating pro-social voice and supporting a colleague who she believed was a good project manager. P1's action was positively intended. Prosocial voice can be construed as an example of noble organisational citizenship behaviour because it is oriented towards supporting others, cooperative rather than selfish (Van Dyne, Ang & Botero, 2003). In the excerpt above it entailed a risk that P1 had not expected. She believed the bullying of her started from that point.

P11 revealed she stood for an issue with some similarities to the excerpt above because the issue causing dissent was also related to difference in judgement however unlike P1, P11's strategy for dissent was planned. In this instance the dissent concerned her work role. In her position, she wanted to continue to fulfil two roles she had been involved prior to her bully (a new manager) being appointed and her bullying manager disagreed with her view. She describes:

> *So I was faced with the very difficult dilemma of do I go against his wishes or do I go against what I believe was valuable work, and break a contract within the program with an external agency. This caused me a great deal of angst. Needless to say I continued doing the work outside and in fact what I had to do was invoke my director's line report to get validation that I should continue.*

She solves her dilemma by translating her values into action. In this instance she believed that the work she was involved in was worthwhile. Responsibility is indicated by her reluctance to break a contract which underpinned her dissent. The comment reveals resourcefulness. By enlisting the support of higher line report, the power differential is changed and she continued her work. However her working life became disrupted because she surmised in retrospect she received payback for her action and became bullied. Payback has been identified as a contributing factor in bullying (Branch, 2007).

Unlike some who embarked on the dissent pathway where voicing or dissent concerned cooperative citizenship behaviour or work roles, dissent specifically against the bullying was also revealed. P7 said he had observed and experienced bullying since starting in his position. He describes his stance:

> It was like the start of his (the bully's) downfall because I stood up to him … you know while I am being bullied I am not going to take it passively and when I eventually I fought this guy to a standstill, other people ended basically sticking up to him as well.

In this instance, the language indicates the adversarial nature of the interaction with the bully. The excerpt reveals P7 believed his stand influenced other workers who were also affected by the bullying. Eventually P7's opposition led a collective action which eventually destabilised the bullies but only when higher authority became involved. After several formal complaints, planning and revising his strategy by trial and error to find appropriate union support P7's final complaint was raised to the level of the parent organisation (he was in a satellite organisation). The excerpt reveals a strong position taken specifically against the bullying after embarking into being bullied via a difference pathway. He has moved from the difference to the dissent pathway. His dissent is against the bullying rather than another work related issue.

In this instance, unlike all other participants' stories, the bullying was acknowledged and stopped to some extent. This situation seems to be similar to Lutgen-Sandvik's (2005) finding of contagious collective voice where one individual encourages others to speak up. However, the findings from this study showed collective voice only stopped the bullying if the collective action was endorsed by higher authority. In this

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instance the power relations changed. The parent organization intervened. Although collective action against the bullying was revealed in other narratives, it failed to stop the bullying despite many employees being bullied. For example P11 described how collective resistance manifested in the staff going on strike. However despite the collective action, the bullying continued and those who went on strike were unfairly dismissed.

Targets' narratives indicated that they stood for specific issues. This is illustrated in the excerpt below from P6:

> ... but I actually did take her (the bully, who was the formal leader of the group) to task on the second day, not because she picked on me but because she picked on the little Bangladeshi woman. I was so angry. She was saying really unfair things to this woman, like basically religion has nothing to do with human rights and we should, if women would just give up religion, you know blah blah, saying this to a young Moslem woman and I just kind of put my hand up and interjected "I don't think your comments are helpful and don't think they are respectful of the Moslem women in the room".

In this instance, P6 reveals that she stood for inclusion, equity and respect for religious beliefs. When considering an epidemic such as work-related stress in a social process framework there are some important questions to consider such as why is workplace bullying a concern now when it has been around for centuries? Are there other societal issues which maybe causing a deepening insecurity and being reflected in our workplaces? The increasing diversity in our labour force and the rise in long term employment for women are factors that have escalated over the same time frame. One organisational factor related to increasing aggression within the context of social change is increasing diversity with regard to gender, ethnicity and disability (Baron & Neuman, 1998). Bullying is likely overlap with discrimination in the workplace.

Contrary to common assumptions and some stakeholders' perceptions of bullied targets as weak, most participants perceived that their assertiveness was what occasioned bullying. As shown above, dissent varied. Some participants were assertive in their dissent, for others dissent was less strong or absent. Also the timing of the dissent differed: for some it occurred at the start of the bullying and for others it occurred later when they risked disclosure about bullying. Sometimes,

seemingly minor infringements or issues occasioned the pathway of dissent into bullying; at other times a clear adversarial stance against the bullying was illustrated. Strategic motives underpinned dissent. These motives concerned principles of integrity such as respect, equity, responsibility, caring values and competence.

Where dissent was absent the targets did not think that they stood for anything in particular, however gleaning from their narrative they perceived they may have stood out from the norm or perceived they were in some way targeted from the outset.

The difference pathway

The stand out encounter (difference or outsider pathway)
P2 reveals how he may have stood out from the norm as he surmised in retrospect what contributed to his entry into bullying. He is describing his experience of his appointment process:

> *I suggested that they should fund me to come back for an interview so we could formally establish — so we know who we are, where we are, where we are going, … Yeah they were saying, "Come on they were saying you are one of us you don't need to do that. Why do we have to go through that" I was saying "I would really like to understand where we are going and because I am not from a medical background and I don't have a strong sort of mentor support group" … I don't play the boy's club rules well at all, so that's another fault that I have.*

The excerpt above indicates how closely the two pathways of dissent and difference could intertwine. The excerpt could have been categorised as dissent. P2 wished to negotiate expectations and was standing for transparency of the appointment process. However this excerpt also indicates P2 stood out from the norm of the group because interestingly this male target reveals that his bullies said '*you are one of us*' suggestive of a perception held by his bullies that he belongs to their group. '*Another fault I have*' is indicative of recognising he differed from the norm of the group and attributing this flaw to himself.

He expected transparency and due process during the application procedure so that his role could be discussed within the context of the organisation's goals.

Transparent and accountable recruitment processes may be useful sign for potential employees as to whether an organisation is really practicing the espoused values. In this instance responsibility, honesty, trust and respect underpin 'difference'. P2 differed from the managers in his organisation because of his requirements to follow due process. Unspoken rules are the norm of the culture. An alliance dominates: *'the boy's club'*.

Gender may be a hidden issue in power relations which impacts through accepted practices. Gender spillover theory posits that men are accustomed to dealing with women in traditional subordinate roles and this spills over into workplace. Male dominance theory may be underpinning gendered practices. Gendered expectations of roles may be suggested. Some research has positioned bullying as a gendered phenomenon (Simpson 2004, Salin 2007b; Lee 2002. In common with some other narratives, gender role stereotyping and gendered practices accounted for the difference pathway at the outset. The issue in the excerpt above was an expectation of transparency during the recruitment process to enable clarity about future roles which was over-ridden by the alliance's idiosyncratic rules.

Other issues also distinguished the difference pathway. P15 had received an award for customer service shortly after she was appointed, suggestive of competence. At that stage she remembered *'a look'* from her future bully. She said he was the least congratulatory of all her colleagues and surmised in retrospect that her conscientiousness and competence differed from the norm in the culture. She believed her bully who was a co-worker influenced other workers and managers. Conformity has been identified as one of the organisational cultural factors influencing bullying (Bassman, 1992) with conformity to a norm of mediocrity implicated in mobbing situations (Scutt, 2004).

P12, who was a teacher, reveals the gradual onset of bullying within a bullying culture designated as 'in the background'.

> *… the first year or so I was okay. I was happy with the environment. I was very much respected … there was acknowledgement that I was competent … Also I was very popular with parents, [the] parents liked me, [as did] the children.*

P12 was subsequently given a class who had previously been taught by (her bully) and she observed, ' *... the whole grade was below par'.* And then by the third year, when the participant perceived her own competence was being recognised:

> *I noticed ... the ostracising of me started, particularly this one that I had started off working who was (the bully).*

Interestingly P12 believed she achieved in her position to start with however she surmised in retrospect that the ostracism by the group gathered momentum because of this. She perceived it was instigated by one bully and her comments reveal hints suggestive of envy as underpinning the bullying. These excerpts indicate perceived competence and values constructs underpinning their difference from the norm. A commonality that emerged amongst participants who experienced the difference pathway was that they perceived they were more competent than their bullies. In some instances this was corroborated by accomplishments in their positions prior to the bullying treatment; in others it wasn't revealed so strongly. Research has highlighted internal competition as a motivating factor for bullying and it has been posited by research that if people are perceived to have raised production norms by being too conscientious and hard working they may be bullied because they raise the barriers for others (Neuman & Baron, 1998).

In other scenarios the bullying started from day one. P7 describes his view of his work situation and his relationship with his manager and other higher line managers.

> *... right from the moment I arrived into this department I was subjected to fairly low level harassment.*

He noticed immediately what he called '*fairly low level harassment'*: his manager was not giving him the information he needed for his work and that his equipment kept going missing. The bullying was from day one. He perceived these were deliberate, covert and malicious actions. He also described how he became to expect less than fair treatment because

> *... (the three bullies) all drank together and hung out together and stuff like that and I don't drink, I am pretty much a one drink of Kahlua a year, so I was kind of alienated from that. I was a bit older (than them) so I think that was an issue as well. They really had this cliquey mentality because they had been working for a couple of years and I was a Johnny-come-lately.*

The excerpt suggests that P7 may not have fitted in with group norms. Bullying occurs where there is dissimilarity from norms of likeness (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007). He mentions a '*cliquey mentality'*. This was a common perception, with cliques and empires leading to power plays and ostracism.

In the excerpt below P12 describes the culture of her organisation and her positioning within it.

> *There was an alignment of some work colleagues with others and power groups within those alignments … I noticed then that I wasn't playing the game. I didn't want to play this non inclusive type of game.*

P12 described her feelings about her colleagues at work and how she stood out against the non inclusive power plays of the in-groups. A norm of exclusion is suggested and, similar to P2 above, she does not want to '*play the game'*. The game played is underpinned by unspoken rules of complicity in exclusion. This is the norm of the culture. Neuman and Baron (2003) posit norm violation as one of four factors central to aggression.

Similar issues were raised by other participants. Favouritism and in-groups featured in these types of bullying cultures suggestive that, in some way, those who were bullied were different from group norms and social informal power was shaping norms and controlling work organisation. Competence emerged strongly as one source of difference (in participants' eyes); other types of difference included non-conformity and dissimilarity from group norms. Gendered roles and practices featured. Age difference was mentioned by one target and an unwillingness to join in with in-group exclusive behaviour was mentioned by several.

On the dissent pathway, some risked disclosure of bullying; others described standing for issues, other workers, and values. The underlying theme was dissent in some shape or form. Dissent emerged as one pathway of bullying, such as standing for due process, procedures and competence, advocating fairer and transparent procedures and practices, or proposing a way to tackle a problematic issue at work or simply a reasonable way to conduct their work. Similar to the findings of Lutgen-Sandvik (2005), sometimes targets felt a moral imperative to make a stand against

the abuse, despite the risks. Sometimes a related issue was raised, for example misappropriation of funds, quality of care issues or supporting other workers who were being bullied. Bullying overlapped with whistleblowing for three participants. Fraud and governance issues were described, but the main concern of this research was the bullying.

Difference emerged as the other pathway into being bullied. Conformity to group norms shapes cultures, so non-conformity provoked bullying. A common difference pathway was not joining in with exclusive behaviour on the basis of different values. In many instances an outsider role from traditional gendered roles featured. Vulnerabilities included individuals being loners, individuals already being rumoured about, or the stigma of a prior bullying experience being known. However there was variation with some targets stating they did not know why they may have stood out apart from holding professional and caring values and being competent. Values congruence between employees work values and organisation values have been investigated as a predictor of person-organisation fit. De Cooman et al. (2009) found that attrition and socialisation both played a part in bringing about a closer fit but whether bullying was underlying part of the attrition or socialisation was not discussed. Interestingly, De Cooman et al. (2009) found than individuals' ideological values changed over time towards more reward focus, suggestive that individual values are influenced by context.

The pathways notion was conceived from the emergence of these stand up/stand out encounters which participants believed initiated or escalated their bullying experience. Narratives revealed pathways of dissent and difference as heuristic forms i.e. one individual could be on both pathways at different stages during their bullying experience, even though one type of pathway was usually identified at the start. A participant may start out on the 'difference' pathway but over time if disclosure of bullying is risked then a 'dissenters' pathway is adopted. Likewise if dissent is the major pathway into bullying it is likely that over time a 'difference' pathway is adopted, particularly as a participant becomes discredited and stigmatised with a bullied identity. Strategic motives were behind the dissent and difference pathways and concerned principles of honesty, trust equity, respect, responsibility and inclusiveness. The pathways continued and strengthened throughout the experience

of being bullied, which for some continued after exiting the workplace. Targets revealed that discrediting rumours and stigma followed them after they had left the bullying workplace.

Process of being bullied: Sham dealing

Sham dealing is a term that I have adopted to best explain targets' perceptions of the core type of encounter described in narratives and designated as an additional form of bullying. Dealing is a term used to explain a particular treatment given to or received from somebody. Within the workplace, fair and legitimate dealing of issues and employees is a common assumption. However, in bullying scenarios, the dealing that is experienced is a sham. It is fake dealing although commonly has appearance of dealing appropriately and legitimately without the reality of doing so. Sham dealing is contrary to what individuals expected.

As individuals moved along the pathways of dissent and difference, routines of everyday work and expectations of social interaction at work were disrupted by a sequence of 'out of the ordinary' encounters. A key defining feature of the encounters that emerged from targets' stories was that they were perceived as '*strange', 'weird', 'unexpected', 'odd'* or indicative of something '*funny going on'*, something '*peculiar*' or '*extreme*'. Five 'out of the ordinary' encounters were conceptualised as emblematic of dynamics of bullying. Four of these were conceptualised as Phase 1 of the substantive theory, labelled 'origin of sham dealing'; these preceded the fifth encounter, 'sham dealing'. The substantive theory is displayed as a paradigm model and diagram (Figure 1) in Appendix 2.

Becoming bullied happens unexpectedly to people. Predictable routines of working life and familiarity of expected social interactions at work are dislocated by these encounters. Ontological security is threatened by a repeated onslaught of hostile emotional abuse, coercive control and unpredictable actions. Autonomy is decreased and extreme stress is the result.

Power works in distinct ways within the encounters and is accompanied by various forms of aggression. Foucault conceptualised power as a force not intrinsically good

or bad. Foucault's notions of power technologies were interrogated as theoretical considerations to explore power relations at work during the encounters (Foucault, 1982a, 1982b; Foucault, Gutman, Hutton, & Martin, 1988). Foucault conceived power as a force, which could work productively or repressively. Nonetheless Foucault referred to *"great negative forms of power"* which can be legitimised as discourse, and normalise and discipline populations (Foucault, 1980, p.122).

Foucault conceptualised four technologies of power. The 'power to' technologies determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to domination and technologies of 'self' to permit individuals (by themselves or with others) to effect operations on self. The 'power on' technologies comprise 'power over' production (which transforms and manipulate things in production) and 'power over' signs to position as legitimate or not (see Table 1).

Table 1. Encounters emblematic of bullying by power technologies

Encounter	Actor	Power dynamics Foucault's power technologies
Lording of power	Bully	Technologies of domination and self are practiced for domination and display
Put down	Bully	Technologies of domination are practiced to coercively control, undermine, intimidate or threat
Set up	Bully and allies	Technologies of 'power over' used to position targets as deviant and obstruct work
Turncoat	Bystanders	Technologies of 'power over': regulation by exclusion, stigma and engendered hostility/anger
Sham dealing	Bully and allies	Technologies of domination are practiced to misuse legitimate process. This extends into the formal claims process as 'power over' to manipulate and position claims as illegitimate and claimants as deviant

The encounters varied in their properties and dimensions which manifest as a typology of the different kinds of bullying (out of the scope of this paper, although two types of bullying cultures are described). Sham dealing was conceptualised as a core type of encounter because all kinds of bullying culminated in this encounter. Also, sham dealing is in part constituted by the other encounters because the power works to dominate, control, undermine, manipulate, disrupt, discredit, position as

deviant and engender hostility towards those targeted. The transgressors (the victims) are regulated by exclusion, discrediting rumours and stigma.

Below, I will use illustrations from the data to present the trajectory of encounters which culminates in sham dealing. This is an unusual way of presenting grounded theory, but in this presentation I seek to show how the unique pattern is experienced using illustrations of the encounters using merged vignettes from targets' narratives. This is followed by observations of bullying cultures.

An example of an extreme 'out of the ordinary' lording of power encounter is given in the excerpt below. P10 describes a staff meeting which occurred shortly after a new CEO had been appointed.

> *I think the big thing that really stood out was when the CEO verbally told the staff that, you know, "You'll be sacked immediately if you don't do what I tell you". So, basically attacking us as a group … "if you don't do what I say, you're gonna be in trouble. If you — anybody who joins the union will be in trouble. If anybody speaks about me and the secretary in the same sentence, you'll be immediately dismissed" … I believe that the CEO thinks he's God.*

This lording of power encounter was from the top of the organisation in a public address. It is a grandiose exhibitionist display of power where the audience is obliged to attend. The encounter is generic rather than directed at an individual person, and is an example of overt aggression and a dictatorial, non-consultative approach. In this instance, it emerged as an arbitrary exercise of coercive punitive power and an abuse of legitimate power in public. Threats of dismissal were accompanied by a forcing style, a denial of workers' rights to union membership and other arbitrary and unprofessional sanctions. Foucault's technologies of domination are practiced to control voice and agency. Technologies of 'care of the self' may be revealed by the godlike positioning (Foucault et al., 1988). The encounter reveals an abuse of normal procedures by threats and sanctions. Unlike many examples it was extreme, occurred in public and comprised overt flaunting of status and blatant disregard for due process.

More commonly bullying was covert, less extreme and had the appearance of legitimacy. It was described as insidious and shown to be gradually evolving at different levels within the formal hierarchy sometimes a seemingly benign non

response of normal process, other times a premeditated abuse of formal legitimate process. Hostility was present and manipulation was widespread.

P14 describes her bully in the excerpt below.

> … (the bully) was this wonderful person who seemed to agree with everything that I said, with all my concepts, all my thoughts and … where I believed the (work) would go.

P14 reveals, similar to many participants, that her bully was slick, charming and charismatic, a convincing liar and very plausible to others. Initially, she was flattered and felt good about the bully, however her perception changed. She describes what she observed over time and surmised on reflection:

> He (the bully) would tell lies to different people so that everyone would be warring and he would seem to be the good person fixing everything up.

Engendering disharmony '*to be seen as the good person*' is the motivation attributed to the bully by the participant. The excerpt alludes to a bully who is adept at social manipulation. This may suggest that Foucault's 'care of the self' technologies of power are practiced by bullies to attain desired status in a way which is not easily visible.

An example of a sequence of 'out of the ordinary' encounters which leads towards a trajectory of sham dealing is detailed below. P14 continues to describe her bully's modus operandi in a comment to her about a new member of staff she had just employed:

> (The bully) said to me "She (the new member of her staff,) will hate you in two months" … I'd been in the workforce that long, no one had ever hated me, and I had trained a huge lot of staff….He actually got her to hate me within two months because he stuffed up her commission and he blamed me. Now … I knew what the commission structure was …

The excerpt reveals her perplexity and disbelief because in her prior work experience '*no one had ever hated me*'. This quote is an example of a set up encounter. Technologies of power are used to manipulate social interactions, engender hostility and position the target as the problem.

P14 explains below how she came to understand how her bully implemented his strategy.

So what he (the bully) would do is — I know he would say to me in meetings things like "Oh, that woman, you know, she's no good, you know, she does this, she does that". And I'll say "oh, that's a very unfair" … — and I'm saying "that's not right, that's not what she's like". Now I'm strong enough to know and believe that was the type of person she was, <u>but she wasn't</u>.

The excerpt reveals P14's resistance to unsubstantiated gossip. She acted with integrity. She believed her colleague accepted the bully's version of events concerning commission payments rather than her version. Her colleague turned against her and became very angry with her. This is a turncoat encounter. Turncoat encounters involved the bystanders turning hostile. Engendering disharmony is a feature of bullying. Co-workers were turned against the bullied victims. Manipulation is used. Bystanders become angry and hostile towards the target as they become complicit in the bullying. This encounter is another illustration of the pathos of the problem. Targets face hostility not only from the bully, but as the bullying process escalated, also from bystanders who become complicit.

Subsequently P14 was called to a meeting with the bully and the new staff member which concerned the commission structure. P14 was asked to sign a letter which, according to her, asserted that she was having difficulty managing this member of staff, which escalated into a conflict resolution process and formal disciplinary process concerning her managing style. She continues:

. … (the bully) insisted I sign it and I said "No, I won't sign it" … when I wouldn't sign that letter I spent four hours being yelled at … then he (the bully) would turn charming and would say "Look [name], I'm only doing this in your own best interests. Now what I want you to do, it's obvious that you're finding it very difficult to be a manager, I'd like you to go away and put in writing how bad a time you're having at being a manager, and once you do that then I will help you and everything will be fine".

Her belief was that hostility and false beliefs were fabricated and the disciplinary process unnecessary and unfair. This is an example of an 'out of the ordinary' encounter where covert and overt tactics were used to set the target up to fail. Manipulation and coercion are used. Despite resisting initially, after four hours of

intimidation she eventually signed the document to get respite from the intimidation. Subsequently she became ill with work-related stress.

Whilst off sick P14 rang the owner-employers about the situation at work which was causing her stress.

> *… And I rang them and said "I've had to have had time off, I'm exhausted". I was very nervous and very jittery and I said that he's basically bullied me. They said "no, we believe you're a difficult employee". I said "but he's done all this stuff to me and I'll send you details".*

She is describing her work-related stress in the excerpt above. She believed her manager had influenced the owner-employers before she contacted them. The excerpt reveals the existence of multiple realities, '*we believe you are the difficult employee*', a perception she believed her bully had orchestrated. She was planning to disclose the issues: '*I'll send you details*'. However there was no chance. When the participant went back to work, she was fired. The reason given was that her staff could not work with her. Her reality differed. She knew the disharmony was engendered by the bully. She made a formal claim for unfair dismissal and compensation for work related stress due to bullying. She believed the prior disciplinary procedure influenced the outcome of her claims. Her claims were rejected. Her signature on the letter (obtained under duress) was used as evidence against her claim for bullying. In this way, she incriminated herself by acquiescing to the bullying. Self-incrimination was raised by others as an example of the pathos of the problem of bullying. In common with other narratives a misuse of legitimate process eliminated her from her job. Despite others being similarly affected by bullying and despite the relevant statutory authority having previously prosecuted the organisation for bullying, the bullying continued and P14's claim was rejected.

A formal complaint of work related stress illness due to bullying widens the arena to include employers, government statutory authorities, unions, insurance claims agents, medical authority and the law. These entities combine in their actions to act in a complex mechanism known as the formal claims process. During P14's appeal within the formal claims process she explains her dealings with the insurance compensation agents and statutory authority and their requirements for medical and psychiatric assessments during the formal claim process.

> *… so when they then sent the statements up to the psychologist for him to reassess me they don't send the cover page of the report that said (name) was (the bully's) wife, that (a colleague) took over my job, and that WorkSafe have investigated. They don't send any of that. They just send the report.*

Similar to all others' narratives, the formal claims process was experienced as an additional form of bullying. The excerpt reveals obfuscation. Bias is created by the paper trail of documents set up to mislead. Claimants find themselves situated in a network of tracking documents. Unless they exert resistance to the process and are active in ensuring documents are forwarded by checking and following up, then claims are less likely to be accepted.

This was common experience in the formal claims process. It is an example of sham dealing. Obfuscation tactics to thwart claims are a misuse of legitimate process. She believed missing information in the report sent to the medical assessor intentionally biased the 'independent' medical assessment, as she explains:

> *So he [the medical assessor] then looked at the report and thought well, "I'm the bully".*

Similar to others in the formal claims process she found the process adversarial, degrading and humiliating. Experiencing the formal claims process exacerbated symptoms and worsened the health of the claimants. In the excerpt above, '*they thought I am the bully*' is a counterclaim. She continues

> *So my issue is that if I was supposed to have been that, been a bully, why in any of my disciplinary things wasn't there an issue about bullying? The only time I knew about bullying was when I went to the Unfair Dismissal (Tribunal).*

Intent is suggested by the timing. Victim blaming usually occurred after experiencing stress related illness and disclosing bullying and occurred at all levels, within employment and within the formal claims process (in participants' eyes). She is discredited. Foucault discussed how individuals are made into objects by a process which can divides them within themselves or divide them from others. According to Foucault (1982b) examples of dividing practices are the mad and the sane. In this instance, she is denigrated as the bully and the bullied. Victim blaming involved counter allegations of her being the bully only after she put in a claim for unfair dismissal and bullying. The temporal sequence is important. Similar to others, her experience of the claims process was adversarial and dogged by counterclaims. In

this instance, allegations of her being the bully occurred *after* she had disclosed bullying. She was stigmatized after the onset of her work related illness and as a consequence of disclosure.

Her circumstances have changed from a pathway of dissent to that of difference as she becomes stigmatised. Although, previously the statutory authority had investigated bullying at another site of the organisation and found evidence of bullying, this information was minimized or missing from documents sent to medical assessors. This is an obfuscating tactic. It is a set up and also becomes sham dealing because it is an example of how her formal claim is being managed (dealt with). The 'management' of her claim becomes sham dealing when she is seeking redress for bullying. Her claim was rejected incorrectly.

Claimants were under the intersecting gaze of the medical profession. Claimants were sent for repeated psychiatric assessments to the 'independent' medical assessors referred to as '*hired guns*', who are contracted by the statutory authorities to determine the capacity to return to work and the extent of injury. Foucault discusses the insidious and effective nature of partitioning where disciplinary power is,

> Able at each moment to supervise the conduct of an individual, to assess and judge it. (Foucault 1977:143)

The medical assessors assess the claimants and investigate other causes of stress. This is routine practice. Commonly, medical diagnoses of work related stress illness were invalidated as non-work related. Instead prior emotional or sexual abuse (even when it had never happened) were attributed as causal to the stress-related illness. Claimants perceived the medical assessments were biased towards their employers' version of events. If rejected, some claimants challenged these diagnoses; sometimes decisions were overturned by the medical panel. Some failed to challenge as they were not able to summon the energy and resources to contest the diagnoses, did not know how to, or made a conscious decision to get out of the WorkCover compensation system.

In addition to the gaze of medical authority, claimants were also under the gaze of insurance investigators. A sophisticated process of exclusion and surveillance is at

work within the process. Although eliminated and excluded from work, conversely claimants are under intense scrutiny throughout the claims process. Surveillance is routine. Potential claimants are followed and under video surveillance by the insurance claim agents. P8 mounted a legal challenge to the degree of intrusive surveillance as an infringement of privacy. She and her husband were under video surveillance through the kitchen windows in their own home. P8's challenge was legally upheld. The experience of intrusive surveillance featured in the formal claims process and frightened some claimants so much they hid in their homes with the curtains closed or kept blinds shut. One person arranged to have the interview with me in another location so that she was free from surveillance.

> In discipline it is the subjects who have to be seen. ... It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able to be seen, that maintains the individual in his subjection. (Foucault, 1977 :187)

Exacerbation of symptoms and increased mental illness as a consequence of the experience of the formal claims process were common. A common perception was that biased information was sent to medical assessors and conciliators sometimes leaving out documents or important information about the context, such as that the witness was married to the bully, or that an employee was promoted into the target's job. The concept of an 'independent' witness is complex because of competing moralities (Astore, 2009). Bystanders who remain in employment face disincentives to recognize bullying.

Eventually P14's formal claim was accepted only after her major efforts to appeal and find corroborative evidence. Finally her employers admitted liability in a meeting prior to a court appearance where a settlement was reached. Settlements were always made on the day of the court hearing. She said that she believed her employers admitted liability to avoid the adverse publicity a court appearance might bring.

This series of excerpts suggest that organisational structures and processes can be incorporated in sham dealing. Sham dealing spanned a range of actions. At one end of the spectrum it comprised a non-response or stonewalling to issues of concern. In this sense, sham dealing comprised omission, passivity and indirect tactics. A tactic along the spectrum was obfuscation of due process: in these instances obstructionist

tactics are used to misinform or set up to fail. At the other end of the spectrum sham dealing managerial actions involved an active abuse of legitimate process, with a pre-determined outcome of victim blaming. The sub-categories of sham dealing include:

- Stonewalling (ignoring, denying, refusing contact)
- Obfuscating/thwarting bullying claims
- Skirting around the issue of bullying
- Re-interpreting events/discrediting/victim blaming
- Collusion

Sham dealing actions were perceived as cloaked and deceptive, sometimes with a pretence of legitimate process. The context for the sham dealing changed over time. Initially it occurred in the workplace and may have started from one employee or a group of other employees. Managers, leadership and, in some instances, union representatives were involved. More sham dealing was faced if a formal claim was made.

The context changed progressively over time as the sham dealing moved to include the target and employer within the arena of the formal claims process. Insurance agents under contract to the statutory authorities were implicated. Medical authority was implicated, as were statutory authority personnel involved in the compensation claims process. Claims were usually rejected by default. Claimants were positioned as faking their claims and malingering. Medical and legal errors and inconsistencies arose. The process was subject to many delays. If claimants disputed judgments, the next layer of the process was 'conciliation', a source of deferral of time. In relation to a regime of disciplinary power and control, Foucault described an investment of duration by power (Foucault, 1977). The formal claims process was fraught with different activities, steps and delays. One target is waiting for her legal case to be heard in court nearly ten years after she left the workplace. Inevitably, powerful interests are vested in keeping insurance premiums low, exerting profound influences on the outcomes of formal claims for compensation. According to Lax (2002), corporate designed decisions produce disincentives to recognising work-related injury generally. This is more salient for bullying claims because they are usually disputed claims.

A time that was particularly prone to sham dealing encounters was the period of returning to work after making a claim. Sham dealing resulted in major disruption to working lives. However at the start of becoming bullied an experience of the encounters was perceived as an interruption rather than disruption. An example of first onset towards a trajectory of sham dealing is illustrated in the excerpts below. The first encounter occurred four years into P8's employment. The encounter was between her and her supervisor as she details below:

> *I can pinpoint it because it's burnt in my brain … I was downstairs in my general office and my supervisor came in and she was gesturing with her fingers for me to come over to her. I didn't understand why she was doing that, but she gestured to me to come over and so I went over to her. I stood near her and she moved closer to me. I felt that she had something private she wanted to discuss with me Anyway, as she's talking to me I turned my head slightly down to the left so she could talk softly into my right ear when all of a sudden she said to me "Will you look at me when I'm speaking to you?" but in a very gruff, aggressive manner. If I had've turned my head to face her, we would've touched noses, that's how close she was, and um, I've never been spoken to in that way before and it really concerned me, only as much that I thought "Why did she need to do that?" And from memory what she was saying was of no importance.*

This 'out of the ordinary' put down encounter is characterised by subtlety because it was conducted in private however it was accompanied by some lording tactics — '*gesturing*' — and aggression typified by the harsh tone and invasion of personal space suggested by '*touched noses*'. The demand from the supervisor, '*Will you look at me when I'm speaking to you*?', was perceived with shock because of its 'unexpected nature' which perhaps could be considered appropriate, in a different context, if a parent was disciplining a child, for example. Further P8's question '*why did she need to do that*?' suggests that from her perspective there was no reason for this behaviour. Irrational behaviour by a supervisor constitutes a disruption to expected sophisticated adult social interaction. But, in spite of P8 recognising something hostile and awry she relegated it as '*hiccup*' in her experience of employment. The vividness with which she remembers — '*burnt in my brain*' — indicates the salience of the experience to P8. However, she described how she continued to work and did not mention it to anyone at work, either her staff, or higher line management at that point. As a consequence of this encounter P8 said she was '*wary*'.

P8 reported that two other team leaders (the same level as herself) were experiencing similar behaviour from the supervisor. Eventually they were being undermined to the extent of disconcerting them all. P8 decided to raise the issue with the higher line manager whom she believed she had got on well with for the past four years or so. She describes her actions.

> … I said could we have a private meeting please, so — and he's twisted that later because he said he called the meeting, well I called the meeting. It's amazing how they'll twist things to make themselves look good. Um, but anyway I um — ah, we had a private chat and I said "look I'm really concerned about how she's relating. Um, I am having difficulties relating with her".

This encounter was for her risking disclosure using a measured approach of informal 'voicing' to someone in a higher line position. P8 described how after this meeting all informal spoken communication with her higher line manager ceased. Subsequent events in her narrative illustrated an escalation of sham dealing, eventually leading to a formal claim and years of litigation. The '*twisting later*', she mentions, occurred in a subsequent court appearance during the formal claims process. The excerpts above demonstrate indirect manipulation and omission aspects of sham dealing. The higher line manager disrupted face-to-face communication with her after the meeting which effectively stonewalled the issue of concern. In this sense, sham dealing by the higher line manager comprised an omission of due process. The bullying escalated. More encounters followed. Eventually she became ill.

After a period of sick leave because of her work-related illness she was returning to work one day a week and planning to increase to two days a week back at work. P8 felt that over this period her staff were slightly aloof. However on one particular day she went over to have a chat with her team. She reported that they were very sympathetic about the loss of much of her hair (stress-related) and chatted about how awful it must be to lose one's hair. This was the week where she started on two days per week return to work. The following day after this conversation she was not at work, but went in the day after. Upon her arrival she could not find her staff — they were all absent from their desks. She thought it was '*weird*'. P8 opened her email and found a request from HR management for a meeting at noon that day. Later that morning her staff returned but would not talk to her: they '*ignored*' her.

They became hostile. Before that day she perceived her staff as supportive, for example empathising with her illness and informing her when her supervisor had been snooping in her office and asking questions about her personal life.

Being ignored by her staff signalled to her a disruption of communication that was unexpected and 'out of the ordinary'. It is a turncoat encounter because until this time they were supportive bystanders. P8 rang and emailed to find out what the meeting was about but reported that no one would tell her. Then she rang for union support. She tried about 3 or 4 union delegates who coincidently were all absent from work that day before contacting the industrial officer for her union. Eventually she found out that he was already at her workplace. When she tried to ring him the telephone answered and then went 'dead' after she spoke. She tried ringing again and the call went directly to message bank. She called Human Resources personnel to find out whether she needed union representation for the meeting. She was told "*Oh, no, not this time*". She attended the meeting with a foreboding that something '*bad*' was about to happen. In retrospect she reflects.

> *They didn't want me to come back, because I had done the most disloyal thing a worker can do, under medical instruction I submitted a formal claim. There's been no changing that diagnosis for all the doctors I've seen. So um, so we went into this meeting, and ah, with the HR Manager and the Director—No, the Acting Director, because the Director happened to be away that day too, as was my manager. So they put some poor guy in as the Acting Director and they just gave me this most horrific memorandum — ah, letter you could ever read. It was absolutely terrible. It was all about, you know, that "we received these complaints, and we have them — and then this — and because of the seriousness, there's nothing we — there's nothing we can do but to [?]".*

She was suspended from her employment whilst attempting to return to work after making formal claim for work-related stress due to bullying. She believes her act of making a claim produced this organisational response. Perceiving complaints of bullying as an act of disloyalty has been referred to as an organisational antecedent of bullying. The excerpt reveals hints that there was something contrived about the coincidental absences of some key figures (initially her staff, higher line manager and supervisor, and union officers were all unavailable that day). Conveniently, the person who was put in for the meeting as Acting Director had no prior personal involvement and therefore was less likely than the others to be aware of the relationships and history of the situation. Questions about the purpose of the

meeting were glossed over with a stock phrase '*staffing issues*' (a significant omission indicative of a set up encounter). Lack of knowledge about what the meeting was about contributed to unfairness. The letter referred to in P8's story as '*horrific*' contained formal complaints about her from six out of her ten staff that she believed were orchestrated by the bullying supervisor. She identified this group behaviour as a mobbing experience. This experience had severe ongoing negative consequences for her health and working life.

Mobbing and workplace bullying are terms that have been used interchangeably to describe the same phenomenon. However several targets perceived a difference between bullying and mobbing which are likely to underpin an important theoretical difference. Fair dealing was foreclosed by this mobbing experience. P8 perceived these complaints to be malicious and vexatious. Eventually after an independent external investigation the complaints were subsequently found to be unsubstantiated and did not justify suspension nonetheless P8 was suspended from work that day and escorted from the building. Even though the complaints about her were unproven she was not allowed to return to work for four months and then in a different '*micky mouse*' position. But rather than assisting in a successful return to work for her, management intensified the bullying behaviour.

She suspected in retrospect that her higher line manager and eventually her staff were being manipulated by the supervisor who she perceived was '*pulling the strings*', suggestive of an over use of personal power. She believed that her staff were cajoled or coerced to put in complaints. Similar to other bullying situations, the bullying process entails bystanders becoming complicit and hostile.

Finally an abuse of position power is suggested by the orchestrated suspension which implicates leadership. The union-employer relationship emerged as progressively increasing the power imbalance against her, because despite her being in the process of a claim with union support, official union help at the meeting was not forthcoming. Effectively the power imbalances cumulated. Sham dealing described in these series of excerpts is characterised by a deceptive abuse of legitimate process, with a predetermined outcome and victim blaming. The power imbalances she faced comprised a hidden hierarchy of positioning. Her supervisor influenced her staff, her

higher line manager, leadership, the employer-union relationship. She was outnumbered in the union because her six staff were also union members. Effectively she was mobbed out of the workplace. She describes how she feels several years later,

> *I don't like to refer to myself as a victim, ... It didn't quite fit with, with me, I felt because, I'm a grown up, mature woman, I'm not backwards in coming forwards when I need to ... I stood up for myself. I stood up for my rights.*

P8 reveals that despite the bullying getting some recognition because of her efforts to politicise her positioning and expose the bullying and discrimination within her workplace and the formal claims process, victim-likeness and childishness is part of her social construction of those who get bullied. This was not unusual: many targets did not recognise their experiences as mobbing, bullying or harassment and later when realisation came there was still a belief that as assertive adults they could not be bullied. This excerpt reveals the complexity of the issue. Targets of bullying generally did not believe they could be bullied (until they were) because they held stigmatised notions of who gets bullied which did not fit with their own adult self-concepts. This is an example of dividing practices, the process of turning subjects into objects by a process which can divide them within themselves or divide them from others (Foucault, 1982b).

This mobbing experience robbed her of her work, career and health and disrupted her beliefs about human relations. She experienced sham dealing. Characteristic of sham dealing was an appearance of legitimacy and fairness and appropriate dealing but in reality this was fake dealing. There were many examples of sham dealing in participants' narratives.

An examples of 'skirting around the issue', as a type of sham dealing, are illustrated in the excerpts below. P16 describes,

> *So I went and reported* (the bully) *to the Director ... He said 'What do I see as being a likely way of solving this problem?' I said "maybe if the three of us sit down together and sort out what it is that, you know, that is going wrong" ... And that was my suggestion to overcome the bullying. But it didn't happen...So they booked a conciliation. Yes they said "an independent conciliator". Um But it wasn't, there was no way it was independent ... We had a <u>three hour meeting</u> and every time I brought up bullying and my issue, it was just ignored. And in*

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his report, he only put down what (the bully) *had said. So after three hours I couldn't cope anymore. You know. I was pushing and I was pushing and I was getting nowhere, so I said, look, "I am sorry can we call this to an end". And they said "Ok we can end this if you sign this document. Look, sign the document". I had no idea what I was signing but it was a scribbly piece of paper which I can give you a copy. And nothing came of it. I heard nothing more after that.*

In the excerpt above, similar to many participants, P16 offered her suggestions for resolution which revealed a sophisticated problem solving strategy focusing on an informal means of resolution. Her suggestions for a solution were asked for and then ignored. A formal conciliation was undertaken. For this participant the '*conciliation*' was an example of sham dealing because she was not heard. She was coerced to sign something which she did not understand and then nothing changed. The bullying continued. Similar to many participants she found the mediation and conciliation process to be a sham, a pretence of dealing appropriately. For her, the bullying escalated after the conciliation. Commonly mediation and conciliation meetings were conducted without adhering to principles of justice and respect for due process and are examples of sham dealing whilst maintaining a pretence of real dealing. This example of sham dealing comprised a fake conciliation and was an illustration of a nominal rather than real use of processes and procedures.

Another example of 'skirting around the issue of bullying' is outlined by P9. He describes what happened in the midst of serial bullying from his manager.

> *… the immediate response from (higher line management) when these problems were at their highest was to send him off to the Management School, … [laugh] to which he came back with a piece of paper which virtually said, I now have a piece of paper which says I can conduct this sort of behaviour, and he got worse [laugh].*

The managerial action had the ironic consequence of escalating the bullying. Perhaps no one mentioned the word bullying, so it was not addressed. This was a common organisational response to complaints of bullying. Targets described the implementing of anti-bullying policies and anti-bullying training within their workplaces whilst the bullying of themselves continued from the top of the organisation unimpeded by the presence of such policy, guidelines or training. This types of actions were categorized as skirting around the issue of bullying. There is some evidence of this in the research literature. For example, Salin (2007a)

investigated responses to bullying using the perspectives of personnel managers and found the presence of written anti-harassment or anti-bullying policies had little effect on choice of action, raising questions concerning their effectiveness.

Sham dealing can be built into organisational processes using unspoken rules which contravene contractual agreements. P15 describes her view of how structure and process were implicated within the retail organisation in which she was bullied.

> *The pay system. … Okay, let's say I was contracted to twenty hours a week and … you're supposed to be able to be given a six week roster and if they want to change it, two weeks notice of the change, or by agreement, could be next week that they change a day or two. Well, they never stuck to that. It was always being changed. And this is what they do to everyone to manage their budget and to do what they're told by, as far as head office, regarding shares and profits and things. If you stood up against it and said "look no, I really want to stick to my contract" you were punished again in this rostering system or not being, not receiving training further down the track. Any positive feedback from customers is withheld from you. Any badge handing outs will be held from you. Everyone else gets a birthday card with a movie ticket and you don't. Everyone else gets a new apron and you don't. Everyone else gets a new t-shirt and you don't. All these kinds of things. Everyone else gets asked their opinions about things on the job and you don't.*

P15 believed dissent was punished and describes how the pay system was used to manage the staff, social relations and rewards within the culture. The excerpt reveals how power is being used in this organisation with a perception that leadership and shareholders influence the pay structure which in turn reinforces bullying. Inequities were shaped by unspoken rules which overrode due contractual process concerning the payment structure and roster system in this instance.

A common perception was that bullying cultures displayed poor standards of service and mediocre competence and a lack of innovation. However this may not be recognized or could be hidden by false reputations. The bullying could exist without awareness. In many instances it was likely to be below practical consciousness and attempts to raise it to discursive consciousness came at a price. There was a lot of risk attached to disclosing bullying. The most likely outcome was escalating sham dealing.

Bullying was reinforced by sham dealing types of managerial actions and a consequence drove more sham dealing which escalated bullying. According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, prior action must be studied in how it is formed, and any collective managerial action is temporarily linked with prior action (Blumer, 1969). Previous practice of sham dealing informed future actions to the extent of becoming habitual practice in the culture. Bullying became embedded within organisational cultures.

Changing cultures

Bullying in the Foreground

I have called bullying cultures 'bullying in the foreground' if the bullying is overt and the bully easily pinpointed. Targets who had been part of the organisation for a period of time before a new 'bullying' CEO or manager started observed the changing culture. Staff turnover was high. There was overt demeaning and belittling of employees. Values and habitual practice changed in the organisational culture as bullying became accepted and normalized. Prior cultures were described as happy where employees were proactive and creative. There was a perception that as employees they were there to serve their members and organisations. Individuals felt cared about and knew about their fellow employees.

As bullying escalated, multiple bullies were identified and social relations quickly changed from happy to fractured. Sham dealing became normalized and acceptable. As the bullying became more extreme, lines of communication broke down so that only one way communication featured with dissent disallowed and innovation punished. Several instances of high staff turnover, greater than 50% within the previous year, were revealed. For some organisations this effectively reduced or destroyed any institutional memory of previous regimes. The fractured workplace culture was described as miserable, lacking respect where cronyism and corruption thrived, with rorts, fraud and transcending governance issues were demonstrated and no one put their head *above the parapet'* — a phrase used by several participants. Others described how those who were left would not do *'anything out of the box'* suggestive of punishing or stifling innovation.

Bullying culture in the Background

The second type of bullying culture I term a 'bullying culture in the background'. Covert hostility and manipulation remained hidden from those not affected. The bully was not easily pinpointed so possibilities of dealing were foreclosed. The bully worked through others. Targets perceived they were made the object of scrutiny. Personal issues were made visible, put under scrutiny by looks, comments and judgments in a way which threatened ontological security. Professional abilities were denigrated.

In short, this type of bullying proceeded to make a target psychologically visible. The environment in which individuals are made psychological visible is an insecure one, rather than a secure one where people are accepted and psychologically invisible. The objectifying 'gaze' is based on Foucault's analysis of the disciplinary gaze: a technology of surveillance explained using a Panopticon metaphor (Foucault, 1977). The gaze frames relations of power and looking. The gaze of the 'other' plays a central role which is invasive and perceived by the object of the gaze (target) as violation. Vulnerabilities are exploited in the process of the gaze. Arguably in bullying situations the panopticon is dynamic and diffuse rather than a tangible confined place such as a prison. Nonetheless the objects of the gaze of disciplinary surveillance feel violated by being made visible whilst entrapped in bullying cultures and within the formal claims process. The effect of the 'gaze' is overwhelming. The ultimate consequence is a changed self.

These bullying cultures were characterized by idiosyncratic hierarchies of positioning in which organisational elites, alliances and favouritism thrived. Status inconsistency has been identified as an antecedent to bullying (Heames, Harvey & Treadway, 2006). In this study, the status inconsistency rewarded bullying. Miscommunication fuelled the problem. The communication networks supported the bullies and those who became complicit. Discrediting rumours and exclusion were the main vehicles for regulation of the bullied victims as the transgressors. The bullying remained hidden and masked by stigma and victim blaming if disclosed. Those who had

experienced more than one type of bullying perceived this type caused the most harm.

The bullying was covert and of a 'now and then' frequency leading to a much lower staff turnover. This type of culture was described as including the best and worst aspects of organisational cultures. The freedom enabled some employees to do 'amazing stuff'. The downside was the absence or lassitude from organisational policies and procedures which gave freedom for empires and cliques to thrive. The power relations were idiosyncratic where occupational groups and/or specific roles and/or specific social demographic groups gained ascendancy without accountability or transparency. These higher status groups realized their power through social networks and cultural norms. Research has identified bullying alliances as embedded within informal organisational networks (Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, Wilkes, 2006). Modes of communication which gained primacy were those of gossip, hearsay and rumours.

In contrast with the 'culture in the foreground', these background type of bullying cultures were not miserable, for the majority, most of the time, because those who belonged to the higher status groups had privileged status and more resources. A common perception was these bullying cultures displayed poor standards of service and mediocre competence and stifled innovation by extreme conformity. However this may not be recognized or could be hidden by false reputations. This type of bullying culture could exist without awareness. In many instances it was likely to be below practical consciousness and attempts to raise it to discursive consciousness came at a price. There was a lot of risk attached to disclosing bullying. The most likely outcome was escalating sham dealing. Research has identified retaliation towards voice from lower status (Cortina & Magley, 2003).

Conclusion

The findings draw on the richness of individual experience in a situated context to generate insight into workplace bullying. The encounters render obscure features visible such as the distinctions in the way power works, the different actors involved and the complicity of bystanders.

The findings are broadly consonant with, for example, five major themes comprising bullying put forward by Rayner and Hoel (1997) which include:

1) threats to professional status;
2) threats to personal standing;
3) isolation;
4) overwork and
5) destabilization.

Put-down encounters are comparable to 1 and 2. Set up encounters are related to 3, 4 and 5. Sham dealing encounters are analogous to all the themes in the categorisation put forward by Rayner and Hoel. Unlike the findings from Lutgen-Sandvik's US qualitative study (2005), the findings from this study showed bystanders became complicit as the social process of bullying developed. In the turncoat encounter, power regulates by exclusion and emotion. Bystanders become angry and hostile towards the targets. Also, unlike the USA and UK, co-worker bullying was not uncommon. These issues may suggest there are important cultural differences in the phenomenon.

The findings reveal some of what is obscured in prior research such as power relations legitimising bullying by sham dealing. Empirical evidence of sham dealing explicitly contradicts any premise of fair dealing with bullying. Instead, legitimate authority is misused and is protecting the bullies and those bystanders who become complicit in bullying. People in leadership and managerial positions may not be aware of the participant roles they play because they mistake integrity for something else (Astore, 2009). They may confuse integrity with actions which cover up bullying to protect the organisation.

Sham dealing involves a deceptive abuse of legitimate authority. The abuse occurs in different ways: passive tactics such as stonewalling; obfuscation tactics, through to more active discrediting and victim blaming tactics. Although sham dealing has not been identified in the research literature as an additional form of bullying, some research findings are consonant. Lutgen-Sandvik (2005) found that bullying characteristically featured duplicitous performances, a conflation of abuse with

legitimate management, unpredictable arbitrary acts and was crazy making (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2005)). The misuse of legitimate authority, process and procedures is one of three organisational antecedents of bullying identified empirically in a mixed method study in nursing (Hutchinson, Wilkes, Vickers, & Jackson, 2008). The finding from this study is stronger: the abuse of legitimate authority forms an inherent part of the social problem of bullying. The dealing that occurs is apparent not real. Sham dealing is experienced as an additional form of bullying. Sham dealing also covers up of the problem of workplace bullying.

The misuse of legitimate process extends into a wider arena. Sham dealing managerial actions occurred within the formal claims process. Obfuscation, delaying tactics, misinformation and discrediting the victims were commonplace. Claims were disputed and victims' reality contested. Claims were rejected by default. Some claimants drop out of the formal claims process at this stage. Others contested. If bullying is unchallenged because claims are rejected by default then bullying is likely to increase. Cases of bullying in Victoria, Australia are increasing but not being counted so those that are recorded represent the tip of the iceberg. Research has shown there is at least ten times more work-related stress illness due to job strain than compensation claims (Lamontagne, 2009). The discrepancy is likely to be larger for bullying claims which are disputed and complex. By stemming the flood of claims, bullying is becoming more deeply embedded as normalised workplace behaviour.

Currently, the experience of formal claims process worsens the mental health of claimants because of the adversarial nature of the process. For recovery, stress and PTSD symptoms need safety rather than adversarial action. A return to work after making a claim, although the stated goal of the statutory authority, was not easily achievable. The formal claims process was experienced as degrading, humiliating and lacking fairness. Mental and physical health symptoms worsened. Suicide attempts occurred. Even if claims were accepted, targets did not perceive they received restorative justice or viable compensation. Proposed changes in the Accident Compensation Act will make it even harder for claims to be accepted. Changes put forward advise employers '*reasonable management action*' will avoid work-related stress claims. In our post-modern world '*reasonable management actions*' equates to sham dealing in the guise of legitimate process. Currently, the costs of workplace

bullying are increasingly being shifted from the compensation system to families and the community via the social welfare system and health care system.

The sociological literature is sparse on theoretical links between sham dealing and workplace bullying but research has identified a tension between internal moral authority (within organisations) and external moral authority (society). Katz (1977) used examples of organisational deviance to illustrate how organisations shield members from external morality and in this process organisations drift from legitimate uses to illegitimate cover-ups. Astore (2009) alerts us to a natural tendency to protect the organisation first. Preserving the status quo in the organisation is mistaken for integrity irrespective of any abuse occurring.

Interestingly, organisational cultures changed very rapidly into bullying cultures, particularly if bullying was role modelled or condoned from the top. This finding is consistent with the research literature which identified that ethical leadership is linked with morality of the organisational culture (Thoms, 2008). This suggests that morality (principles of right conduct) is not something inherent in human conduct, but rather most likely the opposite. Morality is something that is socially constructed. In a grounded theory study of schoolchildren, morality was social constructed in terms of being 'nice' or 'mean' (Thornberg, 2009). According to Thornberg, morality in school children is not autonomous, instead requires the higher authority of teachers. Without this higher authority, in the form of unspoken and spoken rules, the schoolchildren in Thornberg's study believed they would act 'mean'. Thornberg (2009) interpreted the dependence on rules as a lack of moral autonomy. It is plausible that a lack of moral autonomy extends into adulthood. Without ethical leadership and sanctions against bullying or real observance of rules, 'mean' behaviour is the default.

Research has identified that bullying is a socially evolving process in which individual and structural factors are linked in some sort of multi-causal explanation but deeper understanding of how the individual and structural factors interact lacks clarity. This study shows how social structure can both enable and constrain actions of individuals on pathways into, during and exiting bullying. Legitimate authority comprises structures that can act to constrain or enable bullying. Used illegitimately, they have drifted towards enabling bullying.

A pathways approach is valuable for illustrating the integrated dynamics of bullying. The pathways embody a key distinction, between dissent and difference. The heuristic nature of the pathways is revealed as people moved from dissent to difference and vice versa. The pathways concept incorporates complexity by allowing for consideration of strategic action (i.e. dissent) and the interaction with social structure, including unspoken rules and resources (primacy of gossip, alliances, stigma). For example, the difference pathway illuminates how the stigma of a bullied identity can facilitate re-occurrences of bullying. The pathways concept shifts the focus from individual demographic factors and fixed personality factors which prevent deeper understanding of the process. Pathways of difference strengthen. Once sham dealing has occurred it is likely to lead to more sham dealing, namely managerial actions to cover up prior sham dealing.

Foucault (1981) described how his attempt to hear the silence of madness led him to turn to the literature in search of madness's authentic voice and develop his reflections on the rules, systems and procedures (discursive practices) assumed a priori. Foucault discussed how discourses are constituted by the social system, and forms of selection, exclusion and domination. He argued discursive rules and discursive practices define the legitimate perspective. The production of a discourse that is too tightly controlled is inherently limiting. It is subject to domination by the forces of selection and exclusion. Targets' voices have been subjected to '*internal procedures of rarefaction*' and to build new discourse it is important to unravel the crux of the problem and fully include their voice. Lax (2002) advocates a worker empowerment approach for addressing work-related injury.

Foucault (1981) developed four methodological principles to unravel the crux of a social problem: the '*secret of its essence*'. The first is the principle of reversal involving an overturning of the dominant discourse. The dominant OHS discourse is the risk management approach. However targets not the bullies and their allies are being perceived as the hazards to be removed. The second is the principle of discontinuity: '*discourses can exclude and be unaware of each other*'. Targets of bullying gain a unique experiential knowledge in the process of dealing with bullying which is constrained by the lack of in-depth disclosure of their own voice. The third

principle is specificity – a new discourse cannot be resolved into a play of pre-existing discourses. The fourth, a principle of exteriority – to analyse the '*external conditions of possibility of a discourse*' to find leverage for change (Foucault, 1981).

Instead of popular myths which position the victims as the problem, the discourse needs to shift. The crux of the problem is the extent of sham dealing. Empirical evidence of sham dealing explicitly contradicts any premise that managers or leadership within organisations are likely to act with integrity in dealing with bullying. Policies are irrelevant if the dealing that occurs is a pretence. Espoused values need to be translated into action based on values of honesty, trust fairness, respect and responsibility. These are findings from this sample. They may be transferable concepts.

The limitations of the study include its generalisability, its small size and potential sources of bias. The study findings are specific to the context. However some qualitative research has recognized that the products of the research, for example in this study, the concept of sham dealing, may make sense to other researchers and practitioners within the bullying industry. If so, generalization can occur by the recognition of a gestalt (Larsson, 2009).

Sources of bias are important to consider as potential limitations. The source of recruitment was mainly from a support group. It is likely that support group attendees have experienced more severe bullying. It is possible that the experience of the group marks these bullied victims as different from who do not attend a support group. In addition, those stakeholders who agreed to participate in the study may differ from the larger population of stakeholders. They may have a different stance towards bullied victims, perhaps perceiving bullying as more salient. Also my interpretation may have created a potential source of bias, which was monitored using a reflexive journal and member checking concepts at another support group.

Another possible limitation was the substantive theory is based on the perspective of targets, not from the perspectives of stakeholders, for example, because they were secondary informants. The research emphasized the target's perspective and then sought to augment the analysis using stakeholder and bystander perspectives. The

lack of a bully's perspective is a problem that has dogged research into workplace bullying generally (Rayner & Cooper, 2003) and is a limitation of this study. In addition, observation was not a method of data collection. Observation of key incidents may have enhanced the theory construction but was not considered feasible.

Recommendations

If sham dealing is generalisable then a recommendation from this study is that targets need to be forewarned that making a complaint about bullying is most likely to escalate the problem. Stakeholders need to be aware of extent sham dealing and the severe risks for those disclosing bullying.

Any definition of the problem needs to be expansive to include sham dealing. A broader socially contextualised understanding, such as the definition for workplace violence proposed by Hearn and Parkin (2001) which specifically includes structures, events, experiences and actions that violate or are considered as violating, is recommended. Examples given by the authors include intimidation, interrogation, surveillance, persecution, subjugation, discrimination and exclusion.

A recommendation from this study is workplace bullying needs to be identified now as a serious public health problem. Leverage for intervention requires political initiative and people power. Anti-bullying policies and procedures implemented by organisations are unlikely to be effective in dealing with the problem because of sham dealing. Changing the Accident Compensation Act to exclude more bullying claims will not solve the problem. Work-related stress due to bullying is increasing but not being counted. Working life is increasingly contributing to the burden of illness in our society. The problem is getting bigger whilst being denied. In accord with LaMontage (2009), study findings indicate recognising more stress claims is the way forward. The formal claims process is adversarial for bullying claims and therefore costly. Reducing the adversarial nature of the claims would be less harmful to claimants and also reduce the financial costs per claim. The savings in costs per claim could be put to better use in paying more claims. The long term benefit would be a reduction of bullying in our workplaces and a decrease in the burden of work related mental and

physical injury and illness in the community.

For social change, values of honesty, trust fairness, respect and responsibility need to be translated into action. Currently these values may be espoused whilst practicing the opposite by sham dealing. Bullying is rewarded in workplaces and targets made the object of scrutiny whilst being excluded and discredited. Bullies and their allies are construing their bullying behaviour as normal. Targets' voice and unique knowledge is positioned as illegitimate. A reversal is required. Currently, bystanders become complicit and may be unaware of their participant roles. These participatory roles act at multiplicity of levels. They are powerful and profound influences. Interventions need to reverse disincentives to the recognition of bullying at a range of influential levels: at the policy level (to reverse disincentives and recognise sham dealing); at the organisational level (to penalise sham dealing) and at the community level (consciousness raising and education about the subtle dynamics and social significance of bullying).

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Appendix 1

Table 1. The Substantive grounded theory

The social process construction model	Elements of the substantive grounded theory
Causal condition	Encounters emblematic of bullying =the origin of sham dealing
Phenomenon	The trajectory of protecting self concept from bullying =Protecting self from sham dealing
Broad situational context	Interactions between bullied individuals and managerial actions by employers and organisations dealing with workplace bullying in Victoria, Australia
Conditions Contextual	Power imbalances • Active abuse of legitimate process • Use of informal social power (favouritism, alliances etc) • Nowhere to go
Intervening	• Organisational willingness and commitment to recognise and understand workplace bullying in its fullest conceptualisation. • Support such as collective action by targets • Type of bullying: visibility and evidence • Power differential for dealing versus sham dealing.
Broad Actions and Interactions strategies	Interactions between the individuals actions for protecting self concept and managerial actions at the meso (organisational level) designed to protect self-interest and avoid allegations and claims of workplace bullying
Consequences	
Individual level	Deteriorating self-health Learning about sham dealing
Meso level	Changing culture into a bullying culture Normalising bullying, practicing sham dealing

Appendix 2

PHASE 1
Origin Sham Dealing

Stops here

Intervening Conditions
•Willingness
•Support
•Visibility
•Power

Contextual Conditions
•Power imbalances

PHASE 2
Individual target response
Protecting Self

PHASE 3
Organisational Action
Protecting Self

PHASE 4
Effects

Individual

Organisational

Learning about
sham dealing

Learning sham dealing
is acceptable

Changing self health
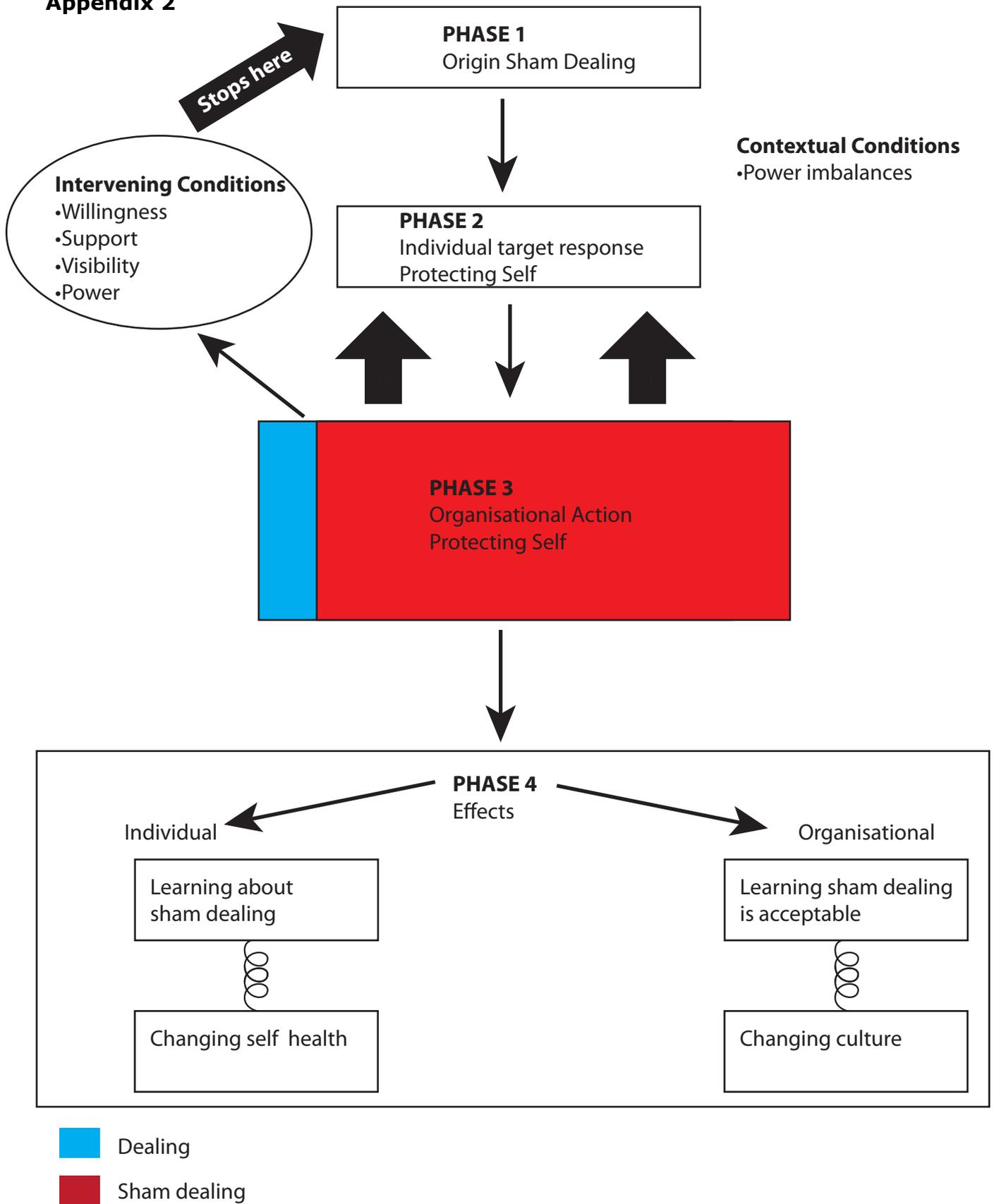
Changing culture

Dealing

Sham dealing

Figure 1 The grounded theory showing the trajectory of sham dealing.