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Reviewing Workplace Bullying: Strengthening Approaches to a Complex Phenomenon

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ABSTRACT

Workplace bullying is a growing problem which is costly for organisations and individual targets. The costs for organisations include loss of productivity and increased insurance costs, as rising stress claims generate rises in premiums. Measuring the costs to individuals or the ethical capital of an organisation is much more difficult but just as important.

This paper seeks to understand the research practices in bullying in order to identify potential needs for research and practice. After examining the nature and extent of workplace bullying, approaches to bullying are surveyed, revealing how different disciplines and professions investigate workplace bullying. The importance of context is considered. It is then argued that, while there is extensive empirical and analytical research in each field of study, new research perspectives (especially in areas such as ethics), closer integration of the different approaches and obtaining a wider audience may reduce the incidence and impact of bullying.

Workplace Bullying: Effective Approaches to a complex phenomenon

A deadly combination of economic rationalism, increasing competition, "downsizing," and the current fashion for tough, dynamic, "macho" management styles have created a culture in which bullying can thrive, producing "toxic" workplaces. Such workplaces perpetuate dysfunction, fear, shame, and embarrassment, intimidating those who dare to speak out and nurturing a silent epidemic. 1.

Workplace bullying is a growing problem which is costly for organisations and individual victims. The costs for organisations, not only come from the loss of productivity but also from insurance costs. As the levels of stress claims rise, increases in payouts occur which in turn generate concomitant rises in premiums. (see e.g. 2)

It is not only in the private sector that bullying is increasing. Evidence suggests that it has become particularly apparent in public sector in recent years. This is perhaps not surprising. Public sector organisations are dealing with multiple pressures and strains as never before. Frequently they are required not only to uphold and advance their traditional service roles, but also to meet increasingly stringent financial and productivity requirements, and even expand their income-generating roles in new and entrepreneurial ways.

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This paper seeks to understand the nature of bullying from the perspectives of scholars and practitioners in different fields in order to identify the strengths and insights of each area of study. It will be argued that while there is extensive empirical and analytical research, an integrated multidisciplinary approach may achieve greater effectiveness in dealing with this costly issue. The paper will begin by first discussing the nature and extent of bullying, followed by a brief overview of the different approaches to bullying. This will identify the strengths and weaknesses of different responses, and highlight the importance of multi-faceted approaches if businesses are to be managed ethically and employees are to be safe.

Defining Bullying: Nature and extent

Regardless of the disciplinary origins of researchers there is great deal of similarity in the definitions of workplace bullying.

For example, Salin specifies

Repeated and persistent negative acts including social isolation, silent treatment, rumours attacking victim's private life or attitudes, excessive criticism or monitoring, withholding information, depriving responsibility, verbal aggression. 3

while in Australia the well-known Griffith research group delineates workplace bullying as

Repeated, unreasonable efforts to humiliate, offend, slander, exclude, show lack of support or threaten recipient …4

and lawyer Joe Catanzariti, draws on state OHS agencies and particularly the NSW Law Society definition of

> Unreasonable and inappropriate workplace behaviour includes bullying, which comprises behaviour that intimidates, offends, degrades, insults or humiliates a worker, possibly in front of co-workers, clients or customers, and which includes physical or psychological behaviour. 6

It is the same with definitions from scholars and practitioners from other disciplines. They vary in the nuances but bullying is seen to encompass a large number of behaviours with the core descriptors of repeated, unreasonable and destructive. Generally researchers follow their definition with a range of examples of bullying behaviours.

Some researchers have sought to identify bullying by exploring the attributes of victims or targets. Thus far this has been of mixed success since it appears that, unlike school bullying, there are few clear and agreed target typologies, except that women are more likely to be targets than men and that targets tend to be non-confrontational and unlikely to 'fight back' 8.. As Namie (2003) has noted of bully targets in the USA "The attribute common to all targets is that they are unwilling or unable to react to unwarranted aggression with aggression … any more than sexual harassment targets invite undesirable assaults."(9 see also 10, 11, 12)

On the other hand, in recent years the focus has turned to some extent to the characteristics of bullies and bullying behaviours which may provide insights for policy-makers. The gender difference is not great - men and women are bullies, and in a majority, but not all, cases bullies are targets' supervisors or managers. Other characteristics are not clear, perhaps because self-reporting of bullying by bullies is rare,

and while co-workers are generally aware of who are the bullies, they are unlikely to report on the bully's attributes. It is notable that while the careers of targets are frequently disrupted or terminated, bullies rarely experience suffer career setbacks because the bully's supervisors have been found to either side with the bully or ignore the evidence.9 As McAvoy and Murtagh have noted, 'tough' management can become a euphemism for bullying. 1

More specifically recent bullying research has sought to explain bullying by the types of behaviours practised by bullies. For example, clinical psychologist Keryl Egan suggests that bullying behaviour moves along a continuum with three clearly identifiable types marking differences in bullying behaviours

The Type 1 bullying behaviour can be portrayed as that of an accidental bully.

> Accidental bullying includes insensitive, aggressive and demanding behaviours which have as their aim some 'higher good' such as getting things done, reaching high standards, beating the competition or the financial survival of the company. Although the person behaving this way may normally relate reasonably well to others, they regard tough, insensitive and driven behaviour as normal in a pressured workplace. The health and well-being of others is either not considered or is secondary to primary business goals. Such people are often shocked when they are made aware of the consequences of their attitudes and actions. (13 and Personal Communication, Egan May 2005)

Type 2, destructive Narcissistic Bullying behaviours, notes Egan, are evident in

Narcissistic bullying is further along the continuum of severity. Such destructive, self-absorbed attitudes and behaviours feature a lack of any form of empathy, blaming, nitpicking, devaluing others, lies, boasting and taking credit for others' work. This kind of bullying, particularly if it is by a leader or manager discourages initiative in staff and frequently is accompanied by chaotic, disorganized work processes. What may start out as simply self-absorbed behaviour may become more vengeful and intentionally harming to others when under pressure. (13 and Personal Communication Egan)

By contrast, the Type 3 Serial bullying behaviours are directed and purposive acts from a serial or sociopathic bully who

the most destructive kind of bullying because it sets about systematically and subtly to subvert the health, well-being and career prospects of others. There is no concern about the organization and self-interest is paramount. These subversive intentions are masked by charm, seduction and deception. They develop their influence network and usually manage upwards very, very effectively. They disable detractors [and promote] favourites, demeaning their subordinates to managers Organisations disrupted by change are particularly susceptible to such people, as they may so convincingly claim certainty and hope. However, it gradually becomes clear that chaos and conflict follow in their wake. It can take up to two years for people to realize what is happening as these bullies are expert at manipulation and at mimicking the values and objectives of the company. When

they finally leave or are dismissed, the organization is in a worse state than before.

(13 and Personal Communication Egan; See also; 14, 15, 16.)

The reason for these lengthy quotes from Egan is to highlight the complex nature of bullying behaviours and processes. It may be that Egan's typology, while highlighting three important varieties of bullying behaviours, is nevertheless oversimplified, since it does not take account of other factors such as gender, race, or the relative status of the bully and the target. In this respect organisations or national institutions which seek to prevent or remove workplace bullying need systems, policies or legislation appropriate to all the varieties of bullying.

The extent of workplace bullying

Before examining varieties of research into bullying, it is useful to clarify the extent to which bullying is a problem for individuals and organisations. Clearly as a generalised phenomenon, bullying has heavy psychosocial costs to the individual, while high turnover, abuse avoidance and protective behaviour and the weaknesses of groupthink will reduce workplace productivity in the longer run. Yet, there are several difficulties with measuring the extent of bullying. This partly reflects what some see as the subjective nature of bullying, depending to a fair extent as it does on self-reporting. Moreover, some researchers believe bullying is greatly under-reported, perhaps for the reasons noted by Egan that targets withdraw believing that they are at fault. In these respects bullying may be likened to other forms of relationship deviance such as domestic violence and racial or sexual harassment insofar as the lack of wider recognition of the nature and extent of the phenomenon limits early recognition or acceptance. Moreover, if

unrecognised, ignored or accepted bullying can become embedded in a workplace culture as spiralling fear and copycat behaviours develop so that under-reporting occurs simply because employees accept it as the norm.17, 3

In a recent UK survey of nurses seventeen per cent reported having been bullied in the previous year, 18 but this is lower than other surveys such as that by Cusack who results showed that not only had 38 per cent had experienced bullying but a higher percentage (42 per cent) had observed co-workers being bullied.19 These latter results are similar to those found in New South Wales nursing where Rutherford and Rissel reported that, taking a broad definition of bullying, fifty per cent had experienced one or more forms of bullying in the previous twelve months.20 Nor is bullying confined to the health sector. A recent survey of bank workers in New Zealand found that 43 per cent of employees had experienced bullying, while in the UK a survey of personnel / human resources managers found that an impressive 87 per cent had experienced bullying.21 In a broad survey of householders in Michigan, USA in 2000 16.7 per cent reported having experienced severe disruption at work from bullying behaviours in the previous year.9

Clearly the evidence of bullying depends on the breadth and specificity of definition, but as Namie notes it can be extrapolated that one in six employees experience bullying in the USA and figures from other surveys suggest this proportion is understated. 9

The quantifiable costs of bullying to individuals cannot be readily measured nor can the ethical costs. However, attempts at estimating costs to organisations provide financial reasons why workplace bullying deserves effective systems and closer monitoring. The Griffith University Study Team for example calculated that at a fifteen per cent prevalence rate in Australian organisations, the costs of bullying including absenteeism,

staff turnover, costs of legal advice and cases, redundancy payouts, and administering grievance procedures and the like was between $17 billion and $36 billion per annum.22 Such costs have been widely replicated and there is clear evidence they are conservative. See e.g. 23, 24

Thus far this paper has shown that workplace bullying is relatively widespread, destructive to individuals and costly to organisations, quite apart from ethical and moral considerations which also deserve further exploration and analysis. Bullying has seemingly grown apace in recent decades, so much so that researchers from a variety of disciplines have investigated workplace bullying and identified approaches to prevent or mitigate its prevalence. This raises the question of why, given the extensive research shown below, the incidence of bullying has not declined. The next section of the paper surveys the research from several different perspectives and then considers why the excellent research and practice extant have not been more widely effective.

Research approaches to workplace bullying

1. The bully professionals and scholars

With growth of awareness and apparent increase in bullying on the one hand and increasing work pressures on the other, a sub-industry of professionals and researchers whose focus of research and practice is with reducing and eliminating bullying has grown since 1980s. These range from self-help groups to well-known organisations and long-time respected scholars. Perhaps the founding father was Heinz Leymann who began a work trauma clinic in Sweden in the 1980s. 25 (see also 9) It was Leymann too who introduced the concept of "mobbing" which other researchers such as Di Martino and

Chappell have noted is growing rapidly in European and Anglophone countries including Australia. 26   For many researchers 'mobbing' and workplace bullying are interchangeable terms (see e.g. 26) while for others bullying is an activity undertaken by one person, while mobbing is seen as

> ganging up on or "mobbing" a targeted employee and subjecting that person to psychological harassment. Mobbing includes constant negative remarks or criticisms, isolating a person from social contacts, and gossiping or spreading false information. In Sweden it is estimated that mobbing is a factor in 10 to 15 per cent of suicides.

Whatever the definition, mobbing and bullying both fit under the behaviours noted earlier of sustained, destructive and unreasonable behaviour, noting that the focus here is on what some researchers call downward mobbing, that led by a target's supervisor or manager.27 Bullying professionals tend to conflate the terms in the main. This perhaps reflects their initial role in counselling targets and in developing programmes for employees to lessen the effects of bullying. In the USA, bully professionals such as Ruth and Gary Namie have counselled several thousand targets and published articles in business journals and popular media alike in order to highlight the effect of bullying, and more recently forms of preventing and treating it. In the UK, bully professional Tim Field developed a large database on bullying, published popular accessible books and provided public seminars and training courses over nearly a decade. 10, 24 In New Zealand, Hayden Olsen and Andrea Needham are well-known for their work treating targets and advising on workplace bullying. 16

The focus of the bully professionals in general has thus been on strategies for actual or potential victims, in terms of fight or flight, and in meeting organisations which are seeking advice on prevention. Such approaches tend to reflect activities such as values driven policies, enforcement procedures and forms of training. While extensive and important, much of the work of the bully professionals has been limited to victims / targets and advising organisations which have an interest in limiting bullying.

2. Unions

It is perhaps not surprising that sections of the trade union movement have begun to take a serious interest in workplace bullying. Unions NSW have begun bullying awareness seminars and campaigns in order to raise the profile of bullying and methods of dealing with it, while other unions have explored ways of including anti-bullying into enterprise agreements and grievance procedures. Other unions have dealt with issues on a case by case basis and in the process developed programmes which might prevent further bullying. The New Zealand Public Sector Union, for example, developed a joint approach with a large local government body after a bully target went to the union. 28 Perhaps the most ambitious project extant is that of UK mega-union Amicus which has embarked on an ambitious and comprehensive collaborative project with several large firms and with the assistance of the UK DTI. The Dignity at Work project is a £1.8 million project to research bullying and then provide support, advice, training and good practice benchmarks, as well as a collaborative voluntary Dignity at Work Charter. Part of the focus of the project is on the business benefits of developing and sustaining a 'dignity at work' organisational culture including reduced turnover, fewer resources

required for grievance handling, reduced sick / stress leave, better relations with customers and an improved image with shareholders and the public.29, 30 At a time when employee access to 'voice' is diminishing such union responses have considerable potential.

3. Legal researchers' approach to bullying

Not surprisingly the focus of much of the legal profession has been on ways of introducing or using legislation to prevent bullying, punish bullies or compensate the targets. For example, Blazey comments that in Australia "regretfully there is no specific remedy for bullying either through statute or common law".31   Nevertheless she identifies some indirect reactive forms of responding especially through some discrimination legislation, common law, and OHS Acts. It is clear that in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, aspects of bullying can be taken up indirectly through occupational health and safety legislation. Acts. As Catanzariti also demonstrates OHS legislation, regulations and guidelines in NSW, Victoria and Western Australia emphasise employers' duty of care to make a workplace wholly safe for employees. 5 6 Indeed, asserts Catanzariti, such a duty of care may now extend to individual directors 'where the employer has failed to take all reasonable steps to prevent it from occurring". He goes on to point out that it is unnecessary to prove an employee has sustained psychological or physical injuries, but only that employees were at risk and employers failed to take reasonable steps to prevent that risk.7 p.17

There are other more specific forms of anti-bullying legislation such as clauses in the Quebec Labour Standards Act and the increasing regulation of 'moral harassment' or

psychological violence (bullying) in Europe. As Shallcross has noted, proving bullying can result in fines exceeding fifteen thousand euros in France. 17

However, as has been evident in other forms of legislation such as that covering prohibition in the USA in 1920s and 1930s or anti-discrimination since the 1970s legislation on its own is not sufficient. From a lawyer's viewpoint

> employers have to take proactive action to prevent bullying in their workplaces or face legal consequences under the law. One of the most effective ways for employers to meet their legal duties is to develop an anti-bullying or harassment prevention plan in consultation with employees …[as] an integral part of the overall approach to safety in the workplace. 6 p.25

Catanzariti then develops an extensive seven point plan Bullying Prevention Plan which is comprehensive, but tends to take an approach which sets out to limit the incidence of bullying rather than enhance organisational strengths. 6 These differing approaches will be considered below, but it is important first to survey bullying and anti-bullying from two other 'disciplinary' perspectives. The next sub-section will explore some of the approaches from psychologists while the last sub-section will consider bullying as an area of research in management and industrial relations.

4. Clinical psychologists and organisational health

It seems likely that most scholarly research and much of the practical research, has been undertaken by psychologists. In part this reflects psychologists' roles in counselling targets. (see e.g. Egan's comment above). As well psychologists have long developed disciplinary processes for quantifying and measuring psychological outcomes, so that to a

fair extent their work is characterised by certainty in measuring change. Traditionally psychologists have taken a medical and individualist approach to bullying – whether dealing with individuals or workplaces, thus referring to goals such as "preventing psychological injury".

By contrast, in more recent work, psychologists such as Peter Cotton and Peter Hart have initiated proactive programmes which draw on the notion of organisational climate as a means to enhance organisational health. For these practitioner scholars, the term organisational climate refers to ten core dimensions of workplace or organisational attributes including

> employee perceptions and evaluations of leadership practices, decision-making processes, working relationships among employees, appraisal and recognition, as well as roles and goals. Organisational climate reflects the way things are done in a particular work environment …[it] reflects the surface features of organisational culture. Climate can be measured and changed in organisational development can be measured and changed in organisational development programs whereas culture is extremely difficult to directly measure and change in a desired direction. 32

Cotton notes what psychologists have found over fifty years of scholarly research and recent practice is that organisational climate reflects leadership styles in particular, as well as role clarity, and employee interaction including feedback and involvement in decision-making.32 (See also 33) Organisational climate impacts on a wide-range of outcomes including "psychological well-being, workers compensation,…. harassment and violence safety behaviours…." in ways that can be measured and not subjective as

qualitative research methods are seen, although there has been some questioning of this in recent years. 34

For Cotton and Hart however, it follows that organisational 'health' is dependent on organisational climate, performance, staff well-being and impacts on and feedback from customers and other stakeholders. They assert that using strategies of prevention, early intervention and injury management, and developing leadership ability, organisational climate and health will be improved. Thus rather than focussing on particular kinds of behaviours such as bullying or harassment, these psychologists are seeking to, and focusing, on climate improvement as a means of dealing with these kinds of deviant behaviour. 32, 33

5. Management and industrial relations

Contrasting with the wealth of research on workplace bullying and the like in the areas of industrial and organisational psychology, research on bullying is relatively rare in those areas which claim the employment relationship as their primary object of study, the scholars and practitioners in management and industrial / employment relations. The lack of research in the fields of management, for example, is surprising given the changing nature of production and work, the concomitant dependence on high quality employees, and the potential direct and indirect financial costs of bullying to organisations under increasingly competitive framework. 36.

The absence of bullying research in the field of study of industrial relations is more curious. Industrial relations deals with the control and administration of work and employment, not only at institutional levels of employer associations and trade unions,

but also at the workplace and individual level. Thus while there has been strong research into individual needs and behaviours such as family friendly polices and harassment, there has been almost no research by industrial relations scholars into workplace bullying.

One useful management source is Salin's overview in *Human Relations* in which she demonstrates how particular enabling, motivating and triggering factors can influence presence of bullying in the workplace. While giving some weight to personal attributes of bullies and targets, Salin's argument is that motivating structures and processes such as internal competition and difficulties of making staff redundant and precipitating processes such as restructuring and other organisational factors feed into such enabling processes and structures such as perceived power imbalance, low perceived costs and dissatisfaction combine to make bullying a likely outcome. Salin concludes her paper identifying two areas that deserve further research. The first is a response to widespread quantitative positivist research, often based on snapshot surveys which leads her to emphasise the need for more qualitative critical studies in workplace bullying which explore developments and patterns of bullying. The second area of needs in bullying research is further studies which explore the extent to which the wider environment may influence the advance or decline of bullying. 3 It is to this latter issue that the next section will turn, first briefly reviewing the pressures on large organisations and then the changing nature of work and work organisation. These are both necessarily brief, but further emphasise the importance of recognising the complexity of bullying.

Public sector and large private sector organisations

There is considerable evidence that public sectors have changed markedly in recent years as globalisation and the business orientation of governments have let to major changes in the public sector. Most notable in the public sector have been new forms of organisation, management and accountability and, as a corollary, multiple demands including tighter budgets and demands to generate new forms of income, while still providing at least some of the traditional services for which they were established. Market place philosophies have changed the power relationships and 'deeply damaged the manager / managed relationships. In many areas of the private sector, too, the need for business to grow has led to diversification and expansion which in a volatile and highly competitive environment have accelerated the complexity of large organisations. 11 Thus public sector and private sector organisations operating in a dynamic external environment have responded with rapid and large changes in production, and concomitantly, major internal structural changes. In turn, such changes have destabilised forms of management and work organisation which formerly created a less inviting environment for most kinds of bullying.37

For example, as Purcell has noted, organisations have tended decentralise toward business unit structures in response to competitive pressures. However, this kind of restructuring has tended to be done poorly with negative effects on workplace culture. Purcell points to Mintzberg's (1979) observation that

> The control system of the divisionalised company drives it to act, at best, socially
> unresponsively, and worst, socially irresponsibly. Forced to concentrate on the

economic consequences of their divisions, [business unit] managers ignore their

social consequences.38

The change management literature is replete with examples of good practice models but

for many reasons organisational change has Mintzberg and others have noted often fails

good practices. 39 Thus the pressure on managers to meet multiple and competing

requirements, the most important of which is clearly signalled as short-term financial

gains which is not conducive to a socially responsible workplace.

Furthermore, the increasing complexity of organisations has tended to engender more

complex management structures, as Hunter has noted. 40 In particular, public sector

organisations with multiple missions (service, quality, entrepreneurial initiatives) are

frequently managed under complex matrix structures in which managerial and non-

managerial employees alike need to meet several and sometimes competing objectives,

with the side effect that transparency, essential if bullying is to be readily identified,

becomes occluded. Such decreasing transparency amplifies the changing organisation

and nature of work.

The changing nature of work

It is axiomatic that the nature of work is changing.41 Here only four aspects clearly

evident in advanced countries will be noted, in order to highlight the importance of

developing anti-bullying structures and processes. Firstly, there is increasing

professionalisation. This professionalisation is not only apparent in the massification of

tertiary education but also in the nature of production with burgeoning growth in service-

type employment as advanced countries scramble to become knowledge economies. Yet

professional work does not parallel former notions of what was done in the professions.

Employees in large and diversified organisations have neither the autonomy nor the income security of those in professions formerly.42 This raises a second element of recent change in the nature of work, increasing demands to perform according to defined, but often changing requirements. The growing importance ascribed to performance appraisals and the need for employees to meet key performance indicators has given supervisors greater control. Allied to these have been greater demands for employees to work longer hours and with greater 'commitment'. Thirdly, with the growth of service work, there has been an increase in emotional labour and emotion work, even for professionals. The requirements of the personal service professions to engage in emotional labour is well known but as stakeholders have increased – the business unit structure for example has re-designated erstwhile colleagues as "customers", so emotional labour, the embedding of required emotional attributes into daily work, has increased.43, 44 In health care and academia, for example, quality requirements demand particular kinds of emotional performance, or its obverse, overt rationality and repression of emotions. The final change in work worth noting here has been increasing individualisation, measured not only in the decline of collectivism and marginalisation of trade unions, but in broader societal norms. Taken together with the demand for evident commitment to an organisation's goals, has meant that employees have less access to 'voice' – if workplace conditions deteriorate, employees have fewer forms of expressing their concerns or dissatisfaction.

Taken with the changing nature of organisations, larger organisations in particular, these elements of the changing nature of work have implications for the effects and nature of

bullying in the workplace, and highlight the need for closer integration of research into bullying from the different perspectives. It is to these we will now turn.

Discussion

That there is a large and burgeoning 'bully' literature is evident in the discussions of the five strands discussed above. These show that how disciplinary foci will direct attention to particular aspects of a phenomenon. For the psychologists the focus is on the individuals and the way they behave and interact in an organisation, whereas for the legal researchers, the ways in which the law operates is of paramount importance. For the unions, the need to protect employees is central whereas the bully professionals and researchers focus closely on bullying itself, so that organisational climate, legislation, and trade unions are not of central concern but rather among the instruments and strategies in bullying, particularly in supporting bullying targets. It seems axiomatic that the different research lenses will provide different perspectives on dealing with bullying but it is important in coming to understanding of why bullying appears to be a growing phenomenon despite this broad research and professional activity.

The comparative lack of bullying research in the human resource management and industrial relations literature, and its relative dearth in organisational studies may indicate part of the reason why bullying is not a broad concern to senior managers. Where other employee issues such as turnover, absenteeism and physical occupational health and safety are quantifiable, the costs and extent of bullying are rather less measurable. As was noted above researchers recognise that it is an under-reported phenomenon. Costs can be imputed if exits, stress leave and the like are estimated but the effects on

productivity and the psychological costs to targets, co-workers and organisational culture are rather more ephemeral. For HRM researchers, investigation of more concrete phenomena is perhaps more rewarding.

It is also the case that much HRM research seeks to develop positive attributes of managers and management rather than tackle negative ones. Thus while there is a considerable literature on employee absenteeism or performance, for example, there is little research which seeks to investigate poor managerial performance.

In this respect it seems possible that managers too, do not read the bullying literature. Considering the titles of some popular titles from the bully professionals and scholarly popularisers - *Bully Bosses*, *Working with Monsters*. These books are aimed primarily at providing coping strategies for targets. Thus while research shows managers can also be targets, the focus on coping is of itself not a managerial strategy. Moreover, titles such as *Bully Bosses* are unlikely to persuade managers to go looking for problems in their organisation. Thus if a phenomenon is not clearly measurable, and appears to target managers as causes of the problem, it seems unlikely that managers will begin to seek further research into the area or even encourage researchers to undertake empirical research in their organisations unless there is an evident and troublesome problem in the organisation. It is the same with academic researchers. As Legge has shown, management and other business science researchers tend to follow areas defined by business or those which fit into the preferred areas of prestigious journals. 45

Allied to these factors the very negativity of bullying is likely to influence the level of calls for research or action into bullying. Roberts has cogently argued that much of the widespread uptake of corporate social responsibility (CSR) reflects the importance of the

public image of firms. In this respect, a business "seeks to manufacture the appearance of its own goodness".46.p.263; see also 47 Thus CSR can be used to bolster the company image whereas the absence of bullying, however measured, is rather less compelling in terms of image.

Even so, as Roberts also notes, organisations can make much of their development of Codes of Ethics and policies, which could potentially include anti-bullying policies. However, it is arguable that such policies are necessary but not sufficient strategies. Many companies have indeed developed anti-bullying policies or Codes. For example, thirty of the thirty-six public universities in Australia have policies or Codes specifically directed at bullying, albeit under many titles. Despite this, anecdotal evidence suggests that there is increasing incidence of all kinds of bullying behaviours. 4 48 49 See also 50 Of themselves then, policies can demonstrate that while organisations are aware of the phenomenon, the (re)presentation of commitment to anti-bullying strategies is vexed.

Yet as has been shown, there are sufficient indications that bullying is extant, growing and, has a negative effect on organisations and individuals. The legal literature demonstrates that there are legal remedies which can be costly to firms in a financial sense, as well as indirectly in potential damage to brands and public opinion. Yet as with much of the other bullying literature, the legal literature can only address the surface, the nature and outcomes of bullying - that which is measured in surveys or is the subject of legal or union action. It is rather more difficult to investigate the undergrowth of structures and culture which enhance and enable the likelihood of bullying.

Thus despite thoroughgoing and widespread research from multi-disciplinary perspectives there are clear gaps in terms of (a) the audience for research and practice, (b)

the location of responsibility for bullying in the organisation (c) the breadth of research, and the extent to which researchers and practitioners from different disciplines share their particular disciplinary insights and knowledge with each other, and (d) the need for a deepening of research from scholars in fields of study beyond the current areas.

Certainly as others have noted, the research agenda needs to be widened to integrate some of the disciplinary research. This is most definitely not an argument against disciplinary research. Perhaps more than traditional areas of study, issues of multidisciplinary concern such as bullying, or CSR or business ethics and governance need to demonstrate rigour precisely because they are less recognised within disciplines. Rather, researchers and professionals need to develop a recognition of other approaches that can contribute to their research, begin to collaborate with researchers from other disciplines, and present research results as widely as possible. This means closer collaboration between academic researchers and professional practitioners, as well as between researchers of different disciplines.

Such collaboration could have a twofold gain. As has been shown, bullying is a complex phenomenon in an increasingly complex and dynamic social and economic environment. There are knowledge gains and synergies to be made from applying multiple research lenses to particular sub-topics or cases. Moreover, if larger theories or generalisations are to be developed, such as better identification of bullying behaviours or standardising evaluations of policies or programmes, then interdisciplinary collaboration will illuminate problem issues in ways that a single disciplinary lens could not. It can also mean that researchers' findings receive wider recognition.

Indeed, widening the audience is essential if the extent of workplace bullying is to be accepted and dealt with. For example, much of the journal research on bullying appears in 'special' issues on workplace bullying, rather than in regular editions. It is clearly important in these times of academic research workloads to obtain apt journal publications, and special editions of journals have become a useful form of presenting special interest research, but the audience too is likely to remain as those already attracted to the area of special interest. If bullying is to receive wider academic and professional interest, and to register with CEOs and senior managers, then collaboration and targeted presentation of research and programme results are needed.

This relates to a further vexed area in bullying which is the location of responsibility. In Europe, workplace bullying has tended to be an occupational health problem, as is evident for example in the use of terms such as psychological violence. In Australia however, bullying policies are frequently found in EEO or Human Resources sites, suggesting that understanding of who 'owns' bullying is not clear, or that the nature, impact and costs of bullying are not clearly understood. Of the thirty Australian universities who have specific bullying policies only two situate these under OHS. Yet as Catanzariti noted above, the strongest legislative remedies are from OHS Acts. Again, by widening debates and highlighting costs and responsibilities, the 'ownership' of bullying prevention could be clarified and perhaps enable greater engagement of senior managers.

Finally, turning to bullying as a research 'site', there is major need for research in disciplines where there has been little research thus far. One important gap, for example, is ethics, as a branch of philosophy, which has much to offer in terms of the links

between ethics and bullying, and also in coming to understand the undergrowth of motives which legitimise or delegitimise bullying. For example, Bauman in exploring morality in organisations notes the ways in which moral responsibility has become diffused and fragmented in modern organisations, so that none takes responsibility for their actions or their effect, nor indeed feels that they can or should take responsibility.51, see esp.pp.119-33 Closer study of such issues in terms of bullying would strengthen the capacity of bullying researchers to understand the undergrowth and develop tactics for re-forming moral responsibility within organisations. see also 52

<u>Conclusion</u>

This paper has explored the nature and extent of workplace bullying. A typology of bullying behaviour demonstrated several kinds of bullying, all of which could be deemed repeated, unreasonable and destructive of the targets. While difficult to quantify or measure consistently, there is clear evidence that bullying is a significant and growing problem which is costly for organisations and damaging to individuals' lives. This is also the conclusion of researchers in bullying who investigate the issue from a variety of disciplinary and professional perspectives, including bully professionals and researchers, trade unions, and scholars and practitioners in law, and psychology. Their research was surveyed to identify the areas on which they focus – the research was shown to be broad ranging and thorough but sometimes fragmented. The rather slighter contribution of management scholars was also considered because, in part, the lesser research in these areas indicates some possible reasons why bullying, while unethical, destructive and costly, has not become an issue of wider concern. The volatile and demanding environment for public and private sector organisations, and the changing nature of work

and employment are suggested to be likely to increase the incidence of workplace bullying. The paper concluded by briefly exploring ways in which this issue could achieve greater recognition and noted that more collaboration between different strands of bullying researchers was necessary. Further research in areas such as ethics, human reousrce management and employment relations is also important as is the need to introduce bullying as a core topic for those studying ethics and management at the tertiary level. With deeper and more collaborative research there would be greater awareness of bullying. Such shifts would enable scholars and professionals to understand more fully the sub-surface features which influence the level and extent of workplace bullying, and the critical need to develop programmed responses to eliminate it from organisations.

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