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Office Bullying: A Literature Review

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Anne works as a research associate. She is always told by her manager that she cannot go home before he does everyday because "he always needs her help after regular working hours." Additionally, her manager is constantly criticizing Anne's work for any big or small mistake. As a result, Anne experiences heavy stress at work during the day and leaves work later than most staff.

John is a newly recruited associate. As he starts working in the new department, his seasoned coworker is worried that the interesting parts of her job would be taken away by John. Therefore, she never gives John any support at work and constantly puts John in awkward situations. John is faced with a hostile working environment everyday.

Workplace environments are often fraught with challenges. In the past three decades, issues like racial discrimination and sexual harassment have received substantial social and political attention. However, they are not the only causes of workplace conflicts. In fact, a pioneering work on workplace stress and harassment in 1976 identified workplace issues such as name calling, scapegoating, physical abuse and work pressure. Thirty years on, these issues are no less severe and prevalent in the workplace, but have generally received little attention.

As the cases presented above demonstrate, many employees are struggling in a hostile working environment, but not one featured by the conventionally well-defined categories of workplace conflicts—those with sexual or racial connotations. Oftentimes, people in situations such as Anne's and John's find it difficult to tell their sufferings, not to mention deal with them effectively. Because of these reasons, Human Resources Magazine labeled this type of persistent hostility as "one of the most insidious and destructive problems" in the workplace, "yet also one of the least documented."[1]

Today, the efforts to deal with the constant aggression millions of employees face at work have gained momentum. Researchers and activists have formally named this workplace phenomenon "office bullying". Academic interest in this subject has led to the publication of dozens of monographs and journal articles. Labor rights advocacy groups have been campaigning hard to promote an anti-bullying agenda in the workplace through public media, community training and lobbying for legislation. As people's consciousness increases, the previously untold story of bullying at the workplace will likely become more pronounced to both individuals and organizations.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the office bullying phenomenon to readers through reviewing and summarizing existing studies on this subject. It will focus on explaining the definition of office bullying, its nature, characteristics, causes and consequences, and most importantly, what options individuals and organizations have to cope with this workplace issue. To make the review more relevant, the paper will also

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[1] Yandrick, Rudy M. 1999. Lurking in the Shadows, *HR Magazine*, Oct, pp. 8-9.

present a preliminary assessment of the office bullying issue in the World Bank Group (hereinafter referred to as "the Bank"). It will discuss the status quo of the bullying phenomenon in the Bank, existing regulations and mechanisms to deal with the issue, and potential challenges the Bank would face should it decide to systemically address the issue of bullying.

By introducing the term office bullying in a comprehensive manner, this paper hopes to serve as a starting point for further study and policy discussion on how to incorporate anti-bullying into the existing agenda of creating a respectful workplace at the Bank. This study is conducted through literature review, document research, and interviews with key staff members from relevant Bank units including the CRS units, the Staff Association, the Human Resources Department, the Health Department, and the Department of Institutional Integrity. This study also benefits tremendously from discussions with several Bank staff members at different levels from different units. Due to limited time and scale of study, it goes without saying that further studies are needed to explore in a detailed manner the extent of the bullying phenomenon in the Bank and identify feasible solutions.

Defining Office Bullying

Bullying in the workplace had existed for a long time before it was first identified and conceptualized by European scholars. In 1982, Heinz Leymann, a German psychologist, first pinpointed the phenomenon of bullying at the workplace by calling it "mobbing."[2] Following Leymann's initial work, a whole generation of researchers has performed a great deal of research on this topic, especially in Norway, Finland and Germany.

In the United States, despite Brodsky's pioneering work in 1976 on workplace stress and harassment, the research on office bullying started much later. In fact, in the United States, for more than one decade after Brodsky's study, there was no academic work on the issue of office bullying. Researchers in North America were much less active in researching this topic than their European counterparts until the early 1990s when the issue began to attract scholarly attention. Since then, the subject has been explored in a number of different disciplines including organization studies, management science, sociology, public health and education.

Because of the involvement of researchers from multiple disciplines and the evolving nature of academic research, finding a commonly accepted definition of office bullying is difficult. Various studies have formulated different definitions, in many cases, under different names. Table-I is a list of selected definitions of the bullying phenomenon at the workplace.

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[2] Leymann, H., & Gustafsson, B. (1984). *Psychological Violence at Work Places: Two Explorative Studies.* Stockholm: The National Board of Occupational Safety and Health. Many scholars, mostly in Europe, seem to use "mobbing" and "bullying" interchangeably. To many, both terms seem refer to similar type of phenomenon. The differences will be discussed later.

Table I - Selected Definitions of Office Bullying

Harassment (Brodsky, 1976)
"involves repeated and persistent attempts by one person to torment, wear down, frustrate, or get a reaction from another. It is behavior that persistently provokes, pressures, frightens, intimidates or otherwise discomforts another person."

Mobbing (Leymann, 1984)
is "psychological terror involving hostile and unethical communication directed in a systematic way by one or a few individuals mainly towards one individual."

Workplace Mistreatment (Lois Price Pratlen, 1995)
is "a behavior or situations—without sexual or racial connotations—which the recipient perceives to be unwelcome, unwanted, unreasonable, inappropriate, excessive, or a violation of human rights."

Emotional Abuse (Loraleigh Keashly, 1998)
is "hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors that are not explicitly tied to sexual or racial content yet are directed at gaining compliance from others."

Workplace Aggression (Baron and Neuman, 1996)
is "efforts by individuals to harm others with whom they work, or have worked, or the organizations in which they are currently, or were previously, employed. This harm-doing is intentional and includes psychological as well as physical injury."

Bullying (Tim Field, 1996)
is "continual and relentless attack on other people's self-confidence and self-esteem."

Workplace Bullying (Namie and Namie, 2000)
is "the repeated, malicious, health-endangering mistreatment of one employee (the Target) by one or more employees (the bully, bullies). The mistreatment is psychological violence, a mix of verbal and strategic assaults to prevent the Target from performing work well."

Workplace Bullying (International Labor Organization, 2000)
"constitutes offensive behavior through vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or groups of employees. Such persistently negative attacks on their personal and professional performance are typically unpredictable, irrational and unfair. "

A detailed look into each definition on this non-exhaustive but already long list reveals that several key components are shared by most researchers in identifying the bullying phenomenon. Understanding these common elements would help readers make a fair judgment when bullying behaviors emerge.

First, bullying constitutes a long list of aggressive behaviors, both overt and covert (for lists sample of behavior, see Table II). As mentioned above, office bullying behaviors are not related to sex or race. It can include many forms of overt and direct hostile actions, such as verbal abuse, intimidation, demeaning, coercion, isolation, public dressing-down, undermining one's authority in front of peers, etc. While some researchers maintain that bullying may eventually escalate into physical violence, most believe that bullying behaviors are generally non-physical.[3]

Other forms of bullying behaviors are more subtle and less easy to discern and document, such as setting inconsistent or unrealistic work targets, giving little feedback on performance, interfering with work activities, reducing responsibility, limiting communication, pulling the target out of his or her area of expertise, among others. With technological progress, researchers have identified that some bullying actions are conducted through high-tech means, such as E-mail.[4] In many cases, it is such covert behaviors that make bullying difficult to identify and address. In fact, many of these subtle behaviors may seem fairly common in daily life and may not be drastically different from punitive management tactics.Yet, as will be addressed below, if they occur on a regular and frequent basis at the workplace, they become harmful and are considered office bullying.

Table II. Lists of Top Ten Bullying Behaviors

List I*	List II^
Blamed for "errors"	Glared at in a hostile manner
Unreasonable job demands	Treated in a rude/disrespectful manner
Criticism of ability	Interfered with work activities
Inconsistent compliance with rules	Given the silent treatment
Threatens job loss	Given little/no feedback about performance
Insults and puts-down	Not given praise to which felt entitled
Discounting/denial of accomplishments	Failed to give needed information
Exclusion, "icing out"	Delayed actions on matters of importance
Yelling, screaming	Lied to
Stealing credit	Prevented from expressing self

* Source: Namie and Namie, 2000, p. 18.
^ Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2003, Workplace Stress and Aggression Project, cited in Keashly and Burnazi, 2004.

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[3] Loraleigh Keashly, 1998. Emotional Abuse in the Workplace: Conceptual and Empirical Issues, In *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, Vol. 1 (1) pp. 85-117.
[4] Hornstein, Harvey. 1996. *Brutal Bosses and Their Prey: How to Identify and Overcome Abuse in the Workplace*. New York: Riverhead Books. pp. 83-100.

Second, the aggressive bullying behaviors take place on a frequent basis and over an extended period of time. One statistical definition observes that bullying behavior happens at least once a week and lasts at least six months.[5] One cross-country survey in Norway and Sweden shows the average duration of bullying is 15 to 18 months.[6]

Some argue that the persistence, repetition and continuation are in fact the defining features of bullying that distinguish it from one-time, occasional or temporal workplace conflicts.[7] Others believe that bullying is about a hostile relationship rather than a series of hostile events.[8] In other words, it may not be the bullying action itself that makes the victims suffer, but the persistency, frequency, and other situational factor concerning power relations that cause much anxiety and suffering for victims.[9] Particularly, for those bullying behaviors that may look like simple annoyances, it is their persistence and the cumulative effects that make them destructive. In many ways, bullying is like a chronic disease causing long-lasting pain until victims are torn.

Third, bullying may follow an escalatory pattern over time—moving from less to more severe behavior. Field separates the bullying process into two phases—(1) subjugation and control, and (2) destruction and elimination.[10] Einarsen identifies four phases of bullying: aggressive behavior, bullying, stigmatization and severe trauma. According to him, bullying tends to start with a situation where rather subtle aggressive behaviors begin to be directed against one or more persons. Then, when the victim begins to feel the effects of the bullying, he or she has problems in defending him/herself. The bully often takes advantage of his or her powerful position to intensify aggression and make the victim be seen as the problem of the organization. As a result, the mental and physically health of the victim is affected dramatically.[11]

Fourth, bullying causes psychological and physical harm, and is unwanted by victims. Bully victims often feel offended, humiliated and intimidated, which results in harmful psychological stress. A variety of labels used to describe bullying such as psychological violence, psychological terror and emotional abuse all point to the negative psychological impact bullying can cause. Although bullying usually does not involve physical violence, studies have found that the psychological stress caused by bullying could lead to physical

[5] Leymann, Heinz, 1996. The Content and Development of Mobbing at Work. In *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5 (2), pp. 166-184. p. 168.

[6] Zapf, Dieter, Stale Einarsen, Helge Hoel and Maarit Vartia. 2003. Empirical Findings on Bullying in the Workplace, In Stale Einarsen, Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf and Cary Cooper, eds. *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace: International Perspectives in Research and Practice*. London and New York: Taylor & Francis. pp. 109-110.

[7] Ibid. p. 169.

[8] Keashly Loraleigh and Laurela Burnazi, 2004, Persistent Hostility at Work, *Perspectives on Work*, Winter, pp. 37-39.

[9] Leymann, H. 1990. "Mobbing and Psychological Terror at Workplaces," *Violence and Victims*, Vol. 5, pp. 119-126.

[10] Field, Tim. 1996. *Bully in Sight: How to Predict, Resist, Challenge and Combat Workplace Bullying*. Wantage: Success Unlimited. p. 40.

[11] Einarsen, S. Rakknes, B.I.and Matthiesen, S.M. 1994. Bullying and Harassment at Work and their Relationships to Work Environment Quality—An Exploratory Study, In *European Work and Organizational Psychologist*, vol. 4, pp. 381-401

weakness.[12] The negative consequences of bullying to individual victims and the whole organization will be addressed in detail later.

Fifth, bullying transcends gender, age, race or profession—meaning it can happen to anyone. It can happen among staff members, between staff and managers, and even between managers. However, many researches have pointed out that a power relationship, be it real or perceived, is always connected to bullying cases.[13] One survey of 1,335 respondents shows that the vast majority (81%) of bullies are people in positions of authority or perceived power. While women and men are equally likely to be bullies, women are the preferred target of bullying (84%).[14]

Bullying may happen between two individuals, between one individual and several others, or between two groups. Some researchers use the number of individuals involved to make a distinction between "bullying" and "mobbing". Davenport notes that bullying invokes individual acts of aggression while mobbing happens when a group of people gang up on a single individual.[15] Yet, Leymann pinpointed that "bullying" has physical connotation whereas "mobbing" is more sophisticated.[16]

The characterizations so far seem to suggest that bullying is an objective and observable phenomenon. There seem to be a whole set of standards that can be applied to make a judgment whether bullying takes place. But a careful review reveals that the definition of bullying has a subjective component. Most studies on bullying have been conducted based on self-reports from victims.[17] In other words, the answer to whether a bullying case has taken place depends on the feeling of victims in most cases. In light of this, Einarsen's explanation catches the subjectivity in understanding bullying. According to him, "bullying emerges when one or several individuals persistently over a period of time perceive themselves to be on the receiving end of negative actions from one or several persons."[18]

Some researchers try to make a distinction between subjective and objective bullying by introducing confirmative statements from co-workers or an independent third party.[19] However, in most cases, the subjective perception and objective judgment of bullying coexist and overlap. The subjective nature of the bullying concept deserves particular attention as it makes understanding bullying subject to the influence of individual personality, resilience, and cultural background.

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[12] Leymann H. and Gustafsson A., 1996, Mobbing at Work and the Development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 5. pp. 251-276.
[13] Einarsen, Stale, 1999, The Nature and Causes of Bullying at Work, In *International Journal of Manpower*, vol. 20, issue 1/2, pp. 16-25. p. 17.
[14] Namie, Gary, U.S. Hostile Workplace Survey 2000, The Workplace Bullying and Trauma Institute.
[15] Davenport, N., Distler Swartz, R. & Pursell Elliott, G. 1999. *Mobbing: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace*. Aimes, Iowa: Civil Society Publishing.
[16] Leymann. 1996. p. 167.
[17] Einarsen. 1999. pp. 16-25.
[18] Einarsen et al, 1994, p.20
[19] Brodsky. 1976.

Causes of Bullying

Empirical investigations on the causes of office bullying have mainly addressed the issue from four aspects: the individual personalities of the bully and of the victim, the role of the organization, and some situational factors. While researchers and activists may disagree over the *real* cause for bullying, it is necessary to note that any one-sided or monolithic explanation is unlikely to accurately and adequately address each bullying case. One cause may play a big role in some cases but in not others. In the end, one has to look at the broad picture as each bullying case may be driven by a combination of individual, organizational and situational factors.

Personality of the Bully

People generally believe that the main cause of bullying lies with the perpetrator—the bully. This is not surprising because most studies are based on examination of bullying victims, creating an inclination to adopt the victims' perspective. In one interview study, all bullying victims blame the difficult personality of the bully.[20]

Indeed, much research pinpoints the bully's individual personality as causing workplace bullying. Psychiatrist Scott Peck uses the term "evil personality" to explain why bullies use their power "to destroy the spiritual growth of others for the purpose of defending and preserving the integrity of their own sick selves."[21] Similarly, Lubit points to the personal deficiency of the bullies and argues that bullies are in fact disturbed individuals—they are power-hungry, enjoy hurting innocent people and lack normal inhibitions and empathy. Their central aim is simply to intimidate and hurt others.[22] Similarly, most labor rights activists hold that the essential cause of bullying behavior has nothing to do with the external environment such as the uncontrollable work-related stress.[23] They believe that bullies abuse their power knowingly and deliberately.[24]

Many empirical studies on the case of bully have pointed to the innate enduring and malignant forces inside the bullies as the origin of the aggression. The personality deficiency of the bully takes different forms.

Hornstein categorizes bullies into three groups which he labels Conquerors, Performers, and Manipulators.[25] (1) Conquerors bully others for the feeling of power they derive from subjugating others. These bullies are power-obsessed, outwardly angry and aggressive people.[26] The underlying cause for their behavior is a desire to dominate,

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[20] Seigne, E. 1998. Bullying at Work in Ireland. In C. Rayner, M. Sheehan and M. Barker. eds. *Bullying at Work: 1998 Research Update Conference: Proceedings*. Stafford: Stafford University.

[21] Peck, M. Scott. 1998. *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*. New York: Touchstone. p. 119.

[22] Lubit, Roy. 2004. *Coping with Toxic Managers, Subordinates…and Other Difficult People*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Financial Times Press. p. 117.

[23] Hornstein. 1996 p. 50.

[24] Horn, Sam. 2002. *Take the Bully by the Horns: Stop Unethical, Uncoorperative, or Unpleasant People from Running and Ruining Your Life*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

[25] Hornstein. 1996. pp. 51-60.

[26] Lubit. 2004. p. 97.

subjugate and eliminate.[27] (2) Performers use humiliation, degrading and public assaults to belittle others and promote themselves. Oftentimes, these bullies are driven by envy, jealousy and aspirations to appear to be more capable especially in front of their supervisors. (3) Manipulators are self-centered and narcissistic people who only care about their own needs and feelings.[28] Narcissism brings a lack of empathy for others' feelings and lack of respect for others' rights. Narcissistic people are prone to rage when their sense of being superior to others is being challenged. [29] Because of their remorselessness, bullies do not feel any sense of moral obligation that would cause them to examine their own behavior. They do not care about the pain they are causing because of their arrogance and self-centeredness. They probably do not perceive their behavior and its impacts.

In a review of empirical studies, Zapf and Einarsen summarize another three types of bullying based on the perpetrator's characteristics. [30] (1) Protection of self-esteem. Bullies normally have high-level of self-esteem and egotism. When their sense of superiority is questioned, they easily become aggressive. Even when they are not challenged, their over-high self-esteem may lead to perfectionism, arrogance and tyrannical behavior.[31] (2) Lack of social competencies. Bullies often do not have social competence such as emotional control, self-reflection and perspective-taking to digest their own anger or frustration except leash them at their bullying targets. (3) Micro-political behavior. In this case, bully harasses other in order to protecting one's perceived interest and improving one's position within an organization.[32]

Despite bullies' aggressiveness, psychiatrists point out that bullies are in fact inadequate, defective and poorly developed people.[33] Underneath a harsh exterior, the inner side of a bully constantly feels uncertain and inferior to others. They hate others being more capable, popular and successful. Because of envy, competition concerns status and job positions, they make others feel miserable in order to make themselves feel better.[34]

One psychologist has noted that bullies may not realize that they are abusive. As Leymann points out, many bullies have some or all of the features of a personality disorder.[35] Given this, some researchers propose that there are intended and unintended

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[27] Tim Field, 1996, *Bully in Sight: How to Predict, Resist, Challenge and Combat Workplace Bullying*, Oxfordshire: Success Unlimited. p. 33.

[28] Hornstein, 1996. p. 50.

[29] Lubit. 2004. pp. 93-94.

[30] Zapf, Dieter and Einarsen, Stale. 2003. Individual Antecedents of Bullying: Victims and perpetrators. In Stale Einarsen, Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf and Cary Cooper, eds. *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace: International Perspectives in Research and Practice*. London and New York: Taylor & Francis. pp. 168-172.

[31] Ashforth, B. 1994. Petty Tyranny in Organizations. *Human Relations*, no. 47. pp. 755-778.

[32] Zapf and Einarsen. 2003. pp. 168-174.

[33] Namie, Gary and Ruth Namie. 2000. *The Bully at Work: What You Can Do to Stop the Hurt and Reclaim Your Dignity on the Job*. Naperville, IL: Soucebooks, Inc. p. 14.

[34] Bjorkqvist K., Osterman, K. and Hjelt-Back, M. 1994. Aggression Among University Employees, *Aggressive Behavior*, vol. 20, pp. 27-33.

[35] Leymann, H. 1993. *Mobbing: Psychoterror in the Workplace and How One can Defend Oneself*. Reinbeck: Rowohlt.

bullies. However, the unintended bullying idea is rejected by most students of the subject who believe that bullies act knowingly and deliberately.

Personality of the Victim

Most people tend to regard the bullying victim as an innocent individual who becomes the target simply because he or she appeared at the wrong place at a wrong time. While this may be true, studies have identified some common features among bullying victims. It is important to note that this does not necessarily mean victims are partially responsible for the bullying themselves; some studies suggest that personality characteristics of victims seem to be related to the exposure to bullying.[36] It is interesting to note that in one survey, some victims in fact believed that their own personalities contributed to the occurrence of bullying.[37]

Summarizing the empirical studies, bullies generally target at two types of people: (1) those perceived to be weak and vulnerable; and (2) those who appear to be professionally skillful and competent.

Studies show that bullies tend to go after those they perceive as the most vulnerable. The vulnerabilities come from a dependency on the target part.[38] This dependency is based on various underlying social causes (hierarchical position, power relations, and group membership), economic concerns (job security, income level) or psychological factors (personality).[39] Because of one or several of these vulnerabilities, these targets are unable to defend themselves against bullying behavior. The Namies discover that in the eyes of bullies, the vulnerability of a potential target is demonstrated through words, action, or a previous traumatic experience.[40]

In terms of personality, researchers have revealed that bullying victims show some different features from their colleagues who are not bullied. Bully victims are often perceived as oversensitive, suspicious and easier to become angry. They are more susceptible to depression, psychological as well as physical stress.[41] Einarsen's survey shows that low self-esteem, shyness and lack of conflict management skills are some of the common features admittedly shared by victims.[42] As a result, some researchers claim that these are the personalities that more likely to provoke aggression from bullies.[43] However, others disagree, arguing these personality deficiencies among victims are in fact the consequence, rather than a cause, of bullying.[44]

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[36] Mikkelsen, E. G. and Einarsen, S. 2002. Relationships between Exposure to Bullying at Work and Psychological and Psychosomatic Health Complaints: The Role of State Negative Affectivity and Generalized Self Efficacy. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*.
[37] Einarsen et al, 1994.
[38] Niedl, K. 1995. *Mobbing/Bullying at Work*. Munich: Hampp.
[39] Zapf and Einarsen. 2003. p. 174.
[40] Namie and Namie, 2003. pp. 44-46.
[41] Leymann, H. and Gustafsson, A. 1996. "Mobbing at Work and the Development of Post-traumatic Stress Disorders," in *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 5, pp. 251-276.
[42] Einarsen et al, 1994.
[43] Einarsen et al, 1994,
[44] Laymann and Gustafsson. 1996.

The dependency and introvert personalities of victims put constraints on their reaction to bullying behavior. The bullied employees tend to keep silent and non-confrontational as they do not want to act as the "trouble-maker". They also tend to deny or downplay the fact that they are being bullied because they do not want to appear to be weak. Some try to rationalize or find a reason to justify their misery.[45] The self-constraints they put on themselves in turn encourage the extension of bullying behavior.

Frequently, bullying also happens to professionally competent employees. Ironically and unfortunately, a number of observers note that many bullying victims share some positive features as being competent and ethical professionals. These high-performing characteristics include being competent at work, having good working relationships with peers, being more experienced than most employees, being active and independent at work, and no involvement in office politics.[46] In most of these cases, bullying appears to be motivated by bullies' being jealous and envious of target's social and professional skills.

This observation however does not mean that professional competence necessarily attracts bullies. Neither does it mean people should not act competently at their work in order to avoid the bullies. Instead, it suggests that bully victims do not deserve the misery they suffer, and the argument that victims are responsible, at least partially, for bullying is unfounded.[47] In fact, many people like Leymann reject the proposition that individual characteristics of the victim play any part in the development of bullying.[48]

Organizational Explanation
Recent studies have given more attention to organizational-level explanation for bullying. Moving beyond individual level explanations, some argue that bullying is caused by organizational culture and climate rather than personal deficiency.[49] Keashly claims that bullying is essentially a systemic issue rather than an interpersonal one.[50] In other words, the physical and social environment often plays a more significant role than personal factors in causing and exacerbating aggression.

Leymann categorically claims that the main causes of bullying are (1) the structure of work and (2) the quality of leadership behavior.[51] Various survey studies have identified a list of organizational psycho-social factors at the workplace that contribute to bullying behaviors. (See Table III)

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[45] Namie and Namie, 2003. pp. 47-28.
[46] Futterman, Susan. 2004. *When You Work For a Bully: Assessing Your Options and Taking Action.* Montvale, NJ: Croce Publishing Group, LLC. p. 32.
[47] Namie and Namie. 2003. p. 13.
[48] Leymann. 1996.
[49] Neuman, Joel, 2004. The Role of the Workplace in Workplace Bullying. In *Perspectives on Work*, winter, pp. 40-44.
[50] Keashly and Burnazi, 2004. p. 38.
[51] Leymann. 1996, pp. 165-184.

Table III: List of Organizational Factors Contributing to Bullying[52]

A highly stressful and competitive environment
High level of interpersonal conflicts/role conflict
An absence of a friendly and supportive atmosphere
An authoritarian leadership style/ lack of constructive leadership
Lack of monitoring
Poor information flow
Lack of discussions about goals and tasks
Organizational changes

In general, researchers have found that an organization with stereotyped hierarchical power structure is more likely to invite bullying behavior. In a hierarchy, it is very tempting and easy for people in positions of authority to exercise their power against their subordinates as their "divine right". Whoever reports to them is seen as automatically inferior. This mentality may intensify in a stressful and demanding environment.[53] Some hierarchical organizations have a tradition of bullying. It is reported that in many hospitals, doctors tend to bully medical students in their residency.

In addition to the overall structure, the presence of policies regarding workplace conduct, the quality of implementation, and the behavior of the management shape employees' perception of organizational tolerance for hostile behaviors. An organization that does not possess the policy, institutional arrangement and credibility to fight against workplace misbehavior imposes little inhibition on aggression. Lack of attention from senior management and Human Resources and other relevant departments fails to discourage the bullying behavior, creating the perception among employees that "it is just the way it is here".

Leadership style and effectiveness is another major variable in influencing the occurrence of bullying. An autocratic leadership and an authoritarian way of settling disagreements or conflicts create an friendly environment conducive to bullying.[54] Low satisfaction with leadership is often found to be strongly associated with bullying too.[55] Without doubt, if the leadership itself is a perpetrator of bullying, its impact on the whole organization would certainly be detrimental.

The attitude and behavior of coworkers is another important indicator of an organization's culture. Bullying often requires silent acceptance of bystanders. Onlookers

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[52] Seigne, E. 1998, "Bullying at Work in Ireland", in Rayner, C., Sheehan, M. and Barker, M. (eds.) Bullying at Work. Staffordshire University.; Vartia, M. 1996. The Sources of Bullying—Psychological Work Environment and Organizational Climate, European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, vol. 5, pp. 203-214.; Sheehan, M. 1998. Restructuring: Rhetoric versus Eeality, in McCarthy, P., Sheehan, M., Wilkie, S. and Wilkie, W. (eds.) Bullying: Causes, Costs and Curses, Beyond Bullying Association, Nathan, Australia, pp. 153-166.; and Einarsen et al, 1994

[53] Hornstein. 1996. p. 40.

[54] Vartia, 1996.

[55] Einarsen et. al. 1994.

may stay mute while witnessing bullying for a variety of reasons. Some fear that speaking up will lead the bully to turn on them. Others may potentially benefit from other people's misery in terms of work performance review and promotion, etc. Others do not believe that terrible treatment would happen to innocent people for no reason—the victim must be blamed for something he/she has done. The apathy and inaction of coworkers emboldens bullies' aggression.

A few other studies have also identified the linkage between organizational changes and office bullying. Because changes cause uncertainty and stress, an organization that is under structural change like downsizing or mergers is more likely to foster bullying phenomenon.[56]

Situational Factors
In addition to factors of personalities and organizational structure, bullying takes place under different contexts. Researchers have identified several factors that can be called situational factors, to further clarify the different circumstances under which bullying happens. While these situational factors may not be the fundamental causes of bullying, understanding them helps explaining some of the immediate reasons for individual bullying cases and contributes to identifying possible solutions.

Einarsen's categorization of bullying puts individual cases into a broader context. He divides bullying into two categories: *predatory* bullying and *dispute-related* bullying.[57] According to him, predatory bullying occurs when the victim has done nothing provocative that may reasonably justify the bullying behavior. In this case, it is the personality of the bully to demonstrate power and/or the hostile institutional culture that generate bullying. Dispute-related bullying happens as the result of the escalation of an interpersonal conflict. It develops out of grievances and involves hostile reactions to perceived wrong-doing. Leymann also claims that a bullying case is typically triggered by a work-related conflict.[58]

The Namies findings differ from Einarsen's categorization. They believe that people become bullies through at least three paths: through personality development, by reading cues in a competitive political environment, and by accident.[59] Accordingly, the Namies divide the bullies into three major categories: (1) the chronic bullies—those who bully because of their personality development, (2) the opportunist bullies—those who choose to bully as part of their tactics to prevail in office politics, and (3) the accidental bullies—those who are benign and are truly unaware of effect of their actions on other people. An additional threatening type of bully is (4) the substance abusing bullies, when drug and alcohol abusers lose control over their actions.

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[56] Sheehan, M. 1998. Restructuring: Rhetoric versus Eeality, in McCarthy, P., Sheehan, M., Wilkie, S. and Wilkie, W. eds. *Bullying: Causes, Costs and Curses*, Beyond Bullying Association, Nathan, Australia, pp. 153-166.
[57] Einarsen, 1999.
[58] Leymann. 1996.
[59] Namie and Namie, 2003, p. 14.

Similar categorization is also applied by Keryl Egan, a clinical psychologist. She lists three types of bullying: (1) accidental bully happens because the bully is under stress; (2) destructive bully takes place when the bully lashes out when challenged; and (3) psychotic bully because they can.[60]

The Consequences of Office Bullying

Office bullying is a pervasive problem across the world. In recent years, various surveys have witnessed a sharp rise in the number of reported bullying cases. A European Foundation survey in 2000 recorded that more than 13 million employees were reported to have experienced bullying at the workplace.[61] In America, Hornstein estimates in his book that as many as 20 million employees face workplace abuse on a daily basis.[62] One recent study shows that 35 to 50 percent of U.S. workers "experience one negative act at least weekly" during any 6 to 12 month period.[63] Outside of advanced economies, an ILO report published in 2006 pointed out that for the first time, issues like bullying and mobbing are being identified as a worrying phenomenon at the workplace in developing countries as well.[64]

Bullying burdens both individuals and organizations. Various studies have shown that bullying undermines individual wellbeing and organizational function, and its pervasiveness also incurs a further burden to the society as a whole. Despite the methodological challenges faced by various studies in quantifying the costs, the message shared by multiple studies is clear that a bullying-free work environment would save huge unnecessary costs.

Impact on the Victim

For the victim, exposure to bullying at work has been classified as a significant source of stress at work that is more devastating than all other work-related stress added together.[65] The Namies claim that bullying generates damages to victim's emotional and psychological health, physical health, social relations and economic and financial wellbeing.[66]

Researchers generally agree that systematic and prolonged bullying behavior at work is highly injurious to the victim's health. Studies conducted in multiple states point to a high correlation between office bullying and depression, stress, and a range of psychological, emotional and physical disorders.[67] Suffering from constant aggression,

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[60] Doyle, Phil. 2004. No Bully for You. *Workers Online*.
http://workers.labor.net.au/features/200410/b_tradeunion_summit.html.
[61] European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2001. *Third Survey on Working Conditions in Europe*. Dublin. http://fr.eurofound.eu.int/publications/files/EF02109EN.pdf.
[62] Hornstein. 1996.
[63] Gary Kranz. 2007. "Brutes at Work: Bullies Threaten U.S. Workplaces". *Workforce Management*. June 26. http://www.workforce.com/section/quick_takes/49710_1.html.
[64] Chappell, Duncan and Vittorio Di Martino. 2006. *Violence at Work*, 3rd edition. International Labor Organization. P. 58.
[65] Wilson, C.B. 1991. US Business Suffer From Workplace Trauma. *Personnel Journal*, July, pp. 47-50.
[66] Namie and Namie, 2003. p. 56-57.
[67] Futterman. 2004. p. 38.

victims may experience a gradual escalation of stress—alarm, resistance and exhaustion. The cumulative effects often become worse as time goes on. Davenport et al identify a list of symptoms at three different levels that bullying incurs. (See Table IV)

Table IV. Three Levels of Symptoms of Bullying's Impact*

First Level	Second Level	Third Level
Crying	High blood pressure	Severe depression
Occasional sleep difficulties	Persistent sleep difficulties	Panic attacks
Irritability	Gastro-intestinal problems	Heart attacks
Lack of concentration	Concentration difficulties	Severe physical illness
	Excessive weight gain or loss	Accidents
	Depression	Suicide attempts
	Alcohol or drug abuse	Violence directed at third parties
	Avoidance of the workplace	
	Uncharacteristic fearfulness	

* Davernport et al. 1999. p. 89-93.

Bullying undermines victim's self-esteem and confidence. After a sustained period of bullying, people cease to believe in themselves, their abilities and even their right to be treated fairly. Many victims suffer from anxiety or depression. As the victims' self-confidence disintegrates, they are filled with a sense of shame and inadequacy, and they may begin to accept the unjustifiable treatment.[68]

Bullying affects people's ability to perform at work. Bullying victims usually have a strong commitment to their work. They feel confused, isolated and paranoid when they are faced with bullying.[69] They become preoccupied with the problem and have difficulty handling their work and life. Their organizational commitment and engagement decrease. As a result, their quality of sleep and ability to concentrate would deteriorate and affect their performance at work.

Constant high levels of stress and anxiety foster depression and anger, and may cause long-term physical complications and illness. The physical symptoms vary depending on the resilience of the target and the intensity and duration of the bullying. They include impairment of the immune system, high blood pressure, skin problems, among others.[70]

The psychological stress and depression can become debilitating. Victims often cannot comfortably express their internal anger and release their pressure. Such individuals may harm themselves by abusing alcohol, drugs or even by attempting suicide. One study in Norway concludes that as many as 40 percent of the most frequently bullied victims

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[68] Lubit. 2004. p. 110.
[69] Davenport, 1999. p. 82. and Field. 1996. p. 124.
[70] Futterman. 2004. p. 42-43.

admitted to having contemplated suicide at some stage.[71] An ILO report found that victims of severe bullying in the workplace are more likely to suffer from PTSD than victims involved in traumatic disasters.[72] Others may turn their anger outward and engage in activities that may hurt third parties such as family members.[73]

Cost to Organizations

Bullying not only brings about misery to individual victims. It also generates a negative impact on the organization. Studies have generally agreed that bullying generates a large cost to the organization in both economic and non-economic terms, even though the linkage is supported primarily by anecdotal evidence.[74] The destructive impact on the organization includes reduced productivity, increased costs, destroyed morale, dysfunction of human resources and damage to social capital.

First and foremost, studies have demonstrated a positive connection between increased workplace aggression and a decrease in organizational productivity. Increased incidence of bullying often leads to poor employee performance. As addressed earlier, due to psychological stress, physical weakness and decreased morale, bullying victims have difficulties in concentrating on their job and performing their tasks, which directly impairs productivity of the whole organization.[75]

While the productivity decreases because of bullying, the organizational cost of production increases. The increased cost comes from sickness absenteeism, increased turnover rates, internal transfer and training, replacement costs, premature retirement and other grievance, compensation and litigation costs. In 2002, a Canadian Respectful Workplace Project survey found that 18% of the respondents have used sick leave as a response to workplace conflict.[76] In another survey study, about one in four bullied respondents reported having left their job due to bullying.[77]

Third, the adverse consequence of bullying on victims appears to extend to witnesses or bystanders, where a 'climate of fear' produces similar reactions.[78] Vartia's study found that observers of bullying reported higher levels of generalized stress than those who had not.[79] Under the "climate of fear", one study shows that one in five witnesses stated they had considered leaving their jobs.[80] It is clear that bullying brings down the morale of the whole organization and reduces motivation and commitment of all employees concerned.

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[71] Einarsen, et al. 1994.

[72] Hoel, Helge, Sparks, Kate and Cooper, Cary. 2002. *The Cost of Violence/Stress at Work and the Benefits of a Violence/Stress-Free Working Environment*. Report Commissioned by the International Labor Organization (ILO), Geneva.

[73] Futterman. 2004. p. 43.

[74] Hoel, Einarsen and Cooper, 2003. p. 150.

[75] Ibid. pp. 150-151.

[76] Cited in Futterman. 2004. p. 193.

[77] Rayner, C. 1997. The Incidence of Workplace Bullying. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*. No. 7. pp. 249-255.

[78] Hoel et al. 2002. p. 4.

[79] Vartia, M. 2001. Consequences of Workplace Bullying with respect to Well-being of its Targets and the Observers of Bullying. Scandinavian Journal of Work. *Environment and Health*. 27. pp. 63-69.

[80] Rayner. C. 1999. *Workplace Bullying*. PhD Thesis, UMIST.

Finally, organizations may suffer an intangible cost of potential public loss of goodwill. The loss of social reputation and capital may adversely affect the image of the organization, and may consequently drive potential clients and hinder the organization's function in areas such as public relations and recruitment.

How to Deal with Bullying
Studies on the nature of office bullying far exceeds those on employee and organization's responses to this issue. A number of authors have proposed different options for individuals and organizations to cope with bullying. However, their proposals are less sophisticated than their analysis of the bullying subject itself. Part of this is due to the separation between the work of researchers and activists and the practice of individuals and organizations. It is also because of the difficulty in carrying out longevity studies testing the effectiveness of the proposed strategies and the situational variables that would affect their implementation.

Options for Victims
Researchers and professional counselors have suggested a variety of strategies individual victims can adopt to remedy their injury and reverse their misery. Hornstein names these efforts as the "Change-the-Victims" approach.[81] Suggested tactics under this approach involve limiting physical contacts with the bullies, emotion-focused therapy, self-adjustment, and resorting to support from family, friends and colleagues. Daverport's suggestions emphasize self-help survival strategies to grieve, to divert attention to other parts of the victim's life, to release anger and anxiety in a peaceful way, to be more optimistic by using more humor, and eventually to re-build self-esteem and move on.[82]

The Namies suggest that family and friends are the first group of people that can help bullying victims. They can give support, show empathy and share personal experiences. Conversely, lack of understanding from family and friends would be a big blow to victims. Victims can also seek help from professional therapists, counseling services, worker unions, and legal services.[83] Daverport et al also agrees that family and friends are an integral part of the therapy process.[84] While external support is important, the Namies argue that the key step for victims is to be bully-proof to stop the hurt. Specifically, it includes assessing the bully's impact, establishing and protecting individual boundaries, stopping self-blaming, controlling destructive emotions and anger, and declaring needs and wants.[85]

By the same token, Lubit also puts forward an "Emotional Intelligence Approach" for victims to deal with bullies. According to him, since the primary motivation of bullies is to see the pain of victims, bullying victims are encouraged to "stay out of their way and do not let bullies see that you are intimidated," through what he calls an "integrated game

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[81] Hornstein. 1996. pp. 117-120.
[82] Daverport et al. 1999. pp. 98-112.
[83] Namie and Namie, 2003. pp. 116-128.
[84] Daverport et al. 1999. pp. 121-129.
[85] Ibid. pp. 131-207.

plan."[86] To decrease the bully's desire to engage in bullying, Lubit suggests that victims should remain as calm and unperturbed as one can when under attack. Victims are advised to identify the patterns of the aggressive behavior of the bullies and avoid the bullies during the times of explosion. Victims should put in extra effort on the work that triggers bullying and sometimes even help bullies attain their goals to avoid being harassed. To strengthen individual capability against potential attacks, he proposes that victims should seek allies among colleagues and foster a relationship with a powerful mentor who can provide needed political and emotional support to sustain victims' self-esteem. Lubit warns that threatening or retaliation against bullies should be avoided as it could provoke the bully and escalate the problem.[87]

In contrast to coping strategies that emphasize self-adjustment, a number of activists on workplace civility advocate that the only effective way to deal with bullies is to stand up to them. They believe silence emboldens bullies, and bullies are responsible for fixing the problem.[88] Several books intended as "survival guides" for victims to cope with bullies propose a series of tactics individuals can use to fight back.

Sam Horn, in what she termed the "28 ways to lose your bully", suggests an "aggression" approach to strike back against the bullies. In her words, the only effective "weapon" for victims is to "out-bully" the bullies. Given verbal abuse is commonly used by bullies, Horn encourages victims to use verbal weapons—become a "verbal samurai"—to take command of the situation and to stop the attack. According to her, victims need to be confident, courageous, wise and proactive to rescue themselves. Horn also cautions that victims need to properly handle anger, and be prepared financially and professionally.[89]

The Namies advocate a cautious approach of adopting a confrontational stance. They recommend victims to think thoroughly about the potential costs before embarking on a legal fight or informal campaign. To them, the choice to confront the bully is driven by a moral high ground for fairness and justice and a sense of regaining dignity. The Namies identify three ways to fight back against bullies, including using the internal grievance system, hiring an attorney to file a legal case, and mounting an internal and informal campaign. Judging the internal grievance system as not employee-friendly, the Namies propose taking individual actions to launch an informal campaign to confront the bully. In what is labeled as "8 steps to topple tyrants," their strategy includes (1) soliciting support from family and friends, (2) consulting a physician or therapist, (3) soliciting witness statements, (4) confronting the bully, (5) filing an internal complaint, (6) preparing the case against the bully in terms of evidence, financial resources and mental readiness, (7) presenting a case to senior managers, tribunal and other parties, and (8) taking the case public.[90]

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[86] Lubit. 2004. p. 98.
[87] Lubit. 2004. pp. 109-119.
[88] Horn. 2002
[89] Horn 2002.
[90] Namie and Namie, 2003. pp. 225-266.

Several authors have talked about taking legal actions against bullies. In fact, legal ordinances on bullying have only been introduced in Nordic countries, the UK, France, part of Australia, and part of Canada. The Namies warn that rarely bullying cases can be solved through legal channels in the Untied States. According to them, "the least helpful source for bullying victims is the court," as the law is attentive to harassment or discrimination only when it relates to gender and race.[91] Because of the lack of legal clarity, authors are generally cautious in advocating using public legal channels to resolve bullying cases.[92] The Namies are now one of the leading advocates in pushing for legislation on bullying in various legislative bodies.

In addition to self-adjustment and confrontation, a third approach suggested by some other authors aims at leaving the job with dignity and seeking new opportunities with self-confidence. In the book *When You Work for A Bully*, Futterman contends that the critical question faced by victims is "should I stay or should I go." This judgment is justified by various survey findings. For example, the Namies' survey shows that 93% of bully victims in fact change their jobs in order to stop suffering.[93] To Futterman, the chance to alter a bully's behavior, even through fighting, is rare. Even if the victim decides to stay, an exit strategy is still necessary in terms of finance and career options. Futterman proposes that an exit strategy is composed of clear agenda-setting, documenting evidences, gathering support from various groups of people, maximizing financial resources, considering legal options, setting goals for a new job, and explaining your experience to prospective new employees.[94]

Options for Organizations

Just as many people believe organizations are the cause of bullying, they are also convinced that organizations should play a larger role in preventing and dealing with office bullying. Oftentimes, individual efforts are largely ineffective in altering the hostile working environment. Besides, many victims rely on organizations to address the bullying issue. Studies focusing on organizations have argued that organization-wide initiatives are necessary, and more effective and lasting to deal with office bullying.

To deal with existing bullying cases, Hornstein proposes a "Change-the-Abusers" approach. The assumption is that bullies would change their abusive behavior with proper institutional monitoring and incentives.[95] This can be accomplished, according to some, through three ways: (1) talking directly to bullies about the consequences of their behavior, (2) training bullies on how to treat others fairly at the workplace, and (3) implementing performance evaluation and appraisal mechanism to discourage bullying behaviors, such as the 360-degree feedback system.[96]

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[91] Namie and Namie, 2003. pp. 103-111.
[92] See Daverport et al. 1999. pp. 112-115.
[93] Namie and Namie, 2003, p. 267.
[94] Futterman. 2004.
[95] Hornstein, 2006, pp. 121-126.
[96] Hornstein. 2006.

The organization needs to demonstrate in visible and continuous ways that senior management is committed to addressing and eradicating the bullying phenomenon. Studies have uncovered that the majority of employees who are bullied do not bring the issue to the attention of management. Because of the power relationship involved, the reluctance to report bullying appears linked to the belief that nothing will be done and the fear of retaliation if something is to be done. The lack of organizational support further enables bullying behavior to persist.

Organizations need to demonstrate enough will and credibility to fight against bullying through taking concrete actions. These actions include (1) developing an anti-bullying policy, (2) establishing policy implementation and monitoring mechanism, and (3) investigating complaints and taking immediate actions including putting bullies into discipline.

Developing an anti-bullying policy is the first step. Policy makes a clear statement on an organization's expectation about its culture and working relations among its employees. It makes clear what is considered acceptable and what is not. [97] Naming an issue is the primary step to address an issue.[98] Detailed technicalities aside, the policy should at least address the following issues: statement of commitment, definitions of bullying, duties of managers and HR officers, complaints procedure, and training and information.[99]

Policy needs to be followed by institution building and concrete implementation and monitoring measures. A central unit (such as worker union) has to be established and defined to be responsible for receiving complaints and educating staff. Richards and Daley also recommend introducing a Contract Officer as a supplement and a neutral party to deal with complaints and offer advice to employees who believe they are bullied.[100] Monitoring is necessary to assess the effectiveness of the policy. It also shows continued commitment and promotes an atmosphere of zero tolerance towards bullying in the organization.[101]

Finally, an investigation process is a necessary response to a bullying complaint. Any organization may have a choice between using internal resources and resorting to external expertise. No matter which option it chooses, the organization needs to set ground rules for investigations and clarify the administration of investigations. The organization needs to pay particular attention to contentious issues such as ensuring objectivity, handling malicious complaints and protecting the investigator.[102]

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[97] Richards. Jon and Hope Daley. 2003. Bullying Policy: Development, Implementation and Monitoring. In Stale Einarsen, Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf and Cary Cooper, eds. *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace: International Perspectives in Research and Practice*. London and New York: Taylor & Francis. p. 247.

[98] Daverport, et al. 1999. pp. 141-145.

[99] Richards and Daley. 2003. pp. 249-257.

[100] Richards and Daley. 2003. pp. 251-252.

[101] Richards and Daley. 2003. p. 257.

[102] Merchant, Vicki, and Helge Hoel. 2003. Investigating Complaints of Bullying. In Stale Einarsen, Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf and Cary Cooper, eds. *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace: International Perspectives in Research and Practice*. London and New York: Taylor & Francis. p. 259-269.

Investigations need to be followed by clear judgments and then actions. If the problem originates from depression, stress or deficiencies in social skills, or simply unawareness of the organizational policy and culture, the issue may be solved relatively quickly through training, coaching and therapy. For those "real" bullies acting out of their innate desire to hurt others, it is imperative for human resources (HR) and senior management to remove them from their management positions. Additionally, the organization needs to be responsive to the early warning signals and actively reach out to staff members to identify potential bullying cases and resolve them at early stages.

In this organizational approach to deal with bullying, many researchers recognize the key role played by HR and Senior Management. Lubit highlights the importance of HR and senior management's action in identifying bullies, assessing the causes, and taking immediate actions.[103]

Additionally, several authors emphasize the role played by coworkers. Lubit believes that bullying victims can often be empowered if they are supported by their coworkers. If coworkers can join the victims in confronting the bully, the group action is more likely to be effective than doing it single-handedly.[104] Therefore, organizations should encourage staff to help each other to fight against bullies. To accomplish this, Daverport's work suggests that enhancing the awareness of employees about bullying is significant in preventing its occurrence.[105]

Despite the competent role organizations may play in fighting against bullying in theory, the facts seem to tell a different story. One survey shows that the human resources department is often supportive of the bully by reacting negatively to the target (32%) or by doing nothing (51%). According to the same survey data by Namie, 82% of those who reported being bullies in fact lost their jobs. It is clear that there is a long way for HR and management to gather enough will and resources to address the issue.

Dissatisfied with the weak and often contradictory role played by HR and management, another group of researchers and activists suggest a revolutionary "Change-the-System" approach to fundamentally change a hostile work environment to eradicate the bullying phenomenon. They argue that without improving organizational culture, it is impossible to change people's attitude and habits at the workplace. Bullying behavior is fostered by an often autocratic and hierarchical culture. So long as the structure of the workplace does not change into one that encourages cooperation, justice and a sense of community, bullying cannot be eradicated.[106]

Some people have advocated that the fundamental nature of human interaction within an organization must change if office bullying is to end. The traditional work arrangement that uses top-down decision-making structure and channel of communication, and grants

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[103] Lubit. 2004. p. 115.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Daverport, et al. 1999. pp. 141-145.
[106] Hornstein. 1996. pp.126.

little autonomy to subordinates needs to be transformed into a new organization with a culture that is featured by "flattened hierarchies," "seamless organizations," and "self-managed teams."[107] Under this new organizational culture, employees at all levels will enjoy equal opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns. Without such a change in the organizational culture, in which employees feel they are trusted, respected, treated with dignity and heard, given some control over their jobs and opportunities to excel, bullying and other power abuses will remain a problem.[108]

Office Bullying and the World Bank Group
How relevant is the bullying phenomenon to the working environment in the Bank? Given that the Bank is an international development organization with an institutional tradition that promotes and reveres politeness and multiculturalism, one would expect Bank staff members to respect each other both professionally and personally. This is largely true. However, the Bank is not immune from the bullying issue.

In fact, anecdotal information collected from conversations with Bank staff members reveals that bullying is a serious issue in the Bank at best. The experience of the Ombuds Services indicates that many of the harassment behaviors existing in the Bank fall squarely into the category of office bullying. Interviews with several managers, associates and Administrative and Client Support (ACS) staff working at several regional and functional units in Washington headquarters show that most interviewees have reportedly experienced or witnessed some kind of persistent aggression in the office.[109]

In the Bank, bullying happens to staff at all different positions—between managers and staff, between old and new managers, between well-seasoned staff and new associates, and between ACS staff members. (The stories of Anne and John in the beginning of the paper are in fact real cases in the Bank.) While most cases show staff in a weak position being bullied by people in the position of authority, there are also cases where associates or ACS staff turns around to bully their managers.

Bullying is around every corner of the Bank. It happens in the Bank headquarters in Washington where 65% of total Bank employees are based. The problem may even be more severe outside Washington where the gulf between international staff and local staff creates different patterns of bullying. In the end, one staff member claims that "every staff has experienced some kind of bullying at one point of their career in the Bank."

During interviews within the World Bank Group, staff members working on conflict resolution issues all expressed serious concerns over office bullying.[110] Their worries originate from their professional experience and their daily interaction with their clients

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[107] Hornstein, Harvey, 1996, p. 127.
[108] Futterman, Susan. 2004. p. 196.
[109] The interviews and conversations were conducted with randomly-selected individual Bank staff. The information extracted from their responses may not be an accurate reflection of the entire Bank staff because of the small sample of interviewees and the insufficient or different understanding each individual may have of bullying.
[110] The response from Bank staff working on conflict resolution may be biased because of the nature their work in dealing with conflicting issues and/or their institutional interests.

or visitors. The Ethics Office reported an increase of "general harassment" cases in their most recent 2005-06 report.[111] The Mediation Office's most recent report found that "interpersonal conflicts" was the most frequently raised issue by its clients.[112] Each year, the Ombuds Services' casework shows that issues related to bullying ("interpersonal conflicts" and "managerial skills and behaviors" under Ombuds Serivices' case coding) remain constantly at a high level—182 cases (23% of overall caseload) in 2003-04, and 183 cases (25% of overall caseload) in 2005-06.[113]

The increase of "harassment" cases in the work of multiple CRS units does not necessarily reflect an upsurge of actual cases. It may result from the enhanced general anti-harassment awareness among Bank staff, thanks to the outreach and training programs by various units. Staff members might not otherwise have reported such cases or resorted to help should their awareness be low. Nevertheless, the number of reported cases is still an indication that harassment—which often involves bullying behavior—is a serious issue in the Bank. Short of a comprehensive study to systemically identify the Bank's hostility profile, this assessment extracted from limited interviews and document research can only be preliminary and may not accurately reflect the situation on the ground and broad picture of the entire Bank.

Despite the lack of data in making a comprehensive assessment, the interviews suggested that the general awareness among Bank staff members on the phenomenon office bullying is very low. One staff member only thought he had "a difficult boss", until told about the concept of office bullying.

In fact, some efforts have been made in the past to introduce the concept of office bullying into the Bank system. In 2004, the Staff Association (SA) attempted to inform the Bank management and staff of the concept of "office bullying". The cover story of the September SA Newsletter—"Bullying Bosses Damage Staff and the Bank Group" highlighted the damage bullying bosses could cause to individuals and the Bank's work and reputation as a whole. It also pointed out the loopholes in Bank's anti-harassment policy and called for further policy initiatives to address the bullying issue.[114] The impact of this article was confirmed by the subsequent Ombuds Service Annual Report (2004) released in May 2005 saying "… (the article) prompted more comments and self-referrals to Ombuds Services than any previous article". Yet, as an SA staff admitted, the introduction of the bullying phenomenon by way of a newsletter article can only generate very limited impact. Despite these previous efforts, discussion on office bullying has so far only been conducted on a limited scale, primarily among CRS units, SA and a few other units, and has largely failed to attract a wider audience and the leadership's attention.

Existing Regulations and System

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[111] See The Office of Ethics and Business Conduct 2005-2006 Report.
[112] See Mediation Office
[113] See Ombuds Services Periodic Report 2005-06.
[114] See "Bullying Bosses Damage Staff and the Bank Group", *Staff Association Newsletter*, September 2004.

Existing Bank rules and regulations, although they do not specifically include the word bullying, provide a fairly solid policy framework to deal with the issue. The Bank Staff Rule 2.1 states that "The Organizations shall at all times act with fairness and impartiality and shall follow a proper process in their relations with staff members…. (and) shall respect the essential rights of staff …" It is the Bank's policy statement that "the Bank recognizes the right of every staff member to be treated with dignity and respect, to work in an atmosphere free of harassment and intimidation, and to expect that complaints of being treated disrespectfully will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly."[115]

In Bank Staff Rule 8.01, "harassment (creating a hostile workplace, threatening or intimidating other staff members)" is the first type of workplace issues that constitute "misconduct"—a behavior that is subject to disciplinary actions.

The Bank has developed an Eradicating Harassment policy, alongside with a separate Preventing and Stopping Sexual Harassment policy. The policy defines "harassment" as "unwelcome verbal or physical behavior that unreasonably interferes with work or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment." It adds that "harassment can consist of a single incident or repeated incidents".

"It can:
- *include comments (oral, written), gestures, or physical actions;*
- *be a single incident or a repeated, continuous pattern of behavior;*
- *demean, belittle or cause personal humiliation or embarrassment;*
- *be directed at a particular person or a number of people;*
- *be initiated by a colleague, a supervisor or someone outside the organization;*
- *take place at work or during social functions related to the job;*
- *be linked to bias when a group of people is singled out for negative attention."*

The list continues. *"Behaviors that might constitute harassment include:*

- *public or private tirades by a supervisor or colleague;*
- *severe or repeated insults related to a person's personal or professional competence;*
- *threatening or insulting comments, whether oral or written, including those made through all types of electronic media;*
- *deliberate desecration of religious and/or national symbols;*
- *racial epithets, slurs, and malicious, negative stereotyping expressed toward an individual or a group directly or indirectly (e.g., circulated via e-mail, written on walls);*
- *malicious and false complaints of misconduct against other employees."*

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[115] See RWA Terms of References.

This list of possible harassing behaviors is certainly comparable to the earlier list of bullying actions. In other words, the Bank's anti-harassment policy defines most, if not all, bullying behavior as misconduct.

Alongside the policy framework, the Bank also has an institutional structure to deal with conflicting issues including office bullying—the Human Resources, the Respectful Workplace Advisors (RWA) program, the Conflict Resolutions System (CRS), the Staff Association, the Department of Institutional Integrity and the Counseling Unit.

Challenges and Options

Despite the existing policy framework and institutional structure available to deal with bullying and other general harassment issues in the Bank, challenges exist if the Bank decides to systematically address the issue of bullying. Several important questions need to be considered.

First, should the concept of bullying be introduced into the Bank system?

A number of studies have recommended that naming the issue should be the first key step if it is to be addressed. In fact, the SA and several interviewees have expressed a similar support of the idea to name bullying and acknowledge it as a genuine problem.[116] According to them, naming an issue would generate substantial momentum to start and push the agenda forward. It could also encourage leadership attention to this issue.

While introducing a new term will certainly have a positive effect on pushing forward the anti-bullying agenda in the Bank, it may also come with adverse impacts. The fact is that individuals react, sometimes negatively, to the introduction of any new terminologies into the system. Given the fact that many Bank employees are highly educated and care about their reputations, it is likely they may find using the word bullying repulsive. Also, a stereotyped perception is that if certain contentious issue is named by a terminology such as bullying, the situation would not be changed easily without a grave consequence such as someone's removal.[117] Under the polite culture of the Bank, the strategy to introduce such a new agenda has to be done carefully. Negative reactions may be invited if pushed too hard.

In addition, introducing a new concept into a large organization such as the Bank, making it part of its official policy and integrating it into staff members' mindsets require high-level leadership commitment, sustained working level mobilization and specific technicalities. Among them, a key question would be how to define office bullying in the Bank.

Second, how to formulate a working definition of office bullying in the Bank?

Review of the bullying concept above has shown that defining office bullying can be difficult. Scholars have suggested various definitions of the concept. Should the Bank decide to introduce an anti-bullying agenda, it needs to phrase its own working definition of office bullying and make it acceptable and applicable. It is not an easy mission.

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[116] SA Newsletter, September 2004.
[117] Interview with Ombudsman at Princeton University.

Since the Bank's anti-harassment policy already covers most dimensions of bullying, an anti-bullying policy may be drafted based on the existing text. If so, a further question would be—should bullying be listed under general harassment, or as a separate issue in parallel position with harassment? In other words, how much weight should be put on preventing bullying? Policy statement often needs to be followed with relevant initiatives and specific actions.

Third, how would the cultural factor play out?

Like many other issues, the complexity of dealing with conflicts in the Bank often has a cultural component. It is not surprising that the concept of bullying can be perceived and understood very differently among Bank staff members coming from more than 100 countries.

The subjective component in understanding bullying further enlarges the role culture plays in shaping people's understanding. It may be that certain behavior regarded as bullying at the workplace in one culture may not necessarily to be felt as harmful in another culture. For example, people are used to working for long hours in many countries. The same working style, if imposed on staff from other cultural background, might well be seen as bullying. Formulating a proper and practical working definition of bullying that is acceptable to people with different cultural backgrounds would be difficult but extremely important given the Bank's multi-cultural environment.

Fourth, what can the Bank as an organization do?

The Bank's organizational structure certainly follows many institutional features that may potentially foster bullying—a big organization with a hierarchical structure, an organizational tradition that puts more weight on technical expertise, the dependence of employees on superiors and the institution out of economic and job security concerns, limited career flexibility, etc. Changing these fundamentals of the organizational culture and making it "flat", as many people have suggested, would be extremely difficult. But the Bank can still take many steps to create a better working environment.

One key component would be to enhance the awareness of Bank employees on the subject of bullying, the Bank's policy on this issue and the available institutional resources for resolution. Education is highly necessary to help people realize the significance of the issue, discourage potential bullying cases and encourage bullying victims to resort for help. Mechanisms to reward good management and interpersonal skills and respectful working environment should be in place and made known to encourage good working relations among staff. At the same time, disciplinary measures should also be credible enough to act as a deterrence to discourage bullying behavior.

The senior leadership should demonstrate enough good will and determination to deal with the issue. As said above, naming the issue would be a clear message from the leadership. How to introduce the term would require more specific deliberation.

HR should enlarge its presence in monitoring the office working environment through formal or informal channels. The existing performance review and peer evaluation

processes may be adjusted to better reward individuals with good interpersonal skills and identify those with poor people skills. In case a potential bully is identified, noticeable and concrete HR actions need to follow.

Managers' people management performances should be monitored more systematically and taken into account in performance reviews and salary adjustment.

Fifth, what can the CRS and Ombuds Services do?
The CRS units certainly have a large role to play in dealing with the bullying issue in the Bank.

First, the bullying issue itself poses challenges to CRS, especially to the Ombuds Services' work. Because bullying tends to be subtle aggression and lasts for a long period, if the complaints are about one specific issue, it may be difficult for third parties to understand. Quite often, bullies are talented at having two different faces. It is hard for the bullies' superiors or other third parties to discern or imagine. Therefore, the CRS units need to understand the issue of bullying, know the causes, the stages and characteristics, and possible options to deal with it. This paper is a continuation in this direction.

Second, the CRS units need to convey the message to top leadership and work closely with management and HR. Should the anti-bullying agenda be introduced into the Bank system, the CRS must be an integral part of the driving force. The CRS, particularly the Ombuds Services, may be in the best position to raise the issue to the top-level leadership, as several interviewees have suggested. Leadership support is essential in any policy initiatives in the Bank. The CRS units should form a strong partnership with HR to better coordinate case-related employment and compensation issues.

Third, the CRS should certainly do more outreach, education and training programs to introduce the CRS to Bank staff members and also inform them of specific issues such as bullying. The ongoing internal coordination and structural reform of the CRS may provide positive steps for the CRS to provide better services to Bank staff both at headquarters and in country offices.

Concluding Thoughts
As stated earlier, the purpose of drafting this paper is to introduce the office bullying concept to the Ombuds Services and a potentially broader readership in the Bank. It is the author's hope that this paper has fulfilled its mission in answering some fundamental questions regarding bullying and would potentially help the CRS in providing better service to Bank staff who are faced with workplace difficulties. It is also the author's hope that this paper will invite further policy discussion at the management level and promote general awareness among Bank staff members on the issue of office bullying.