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Secretary
Standing Committee on Education and Employment
Standing Committee on Regional Australia
Department of the House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Attention: Glenn Worthington
workplacebullying.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Worthington

Please find attached a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Workplace Bullying. The particular terms of reference I am addressing are:

➢ the role of workplace cultures in preventing and responding to bullying and the capacity for workplace-based policies and procedures to influence the incidence and seriousness of workplace bullying;

and

➢ whether the existing regulatory frameworks provide a sufficient deterrent against workplace bullying;

I am drawing on the work of colleagues in the Regulatory Institutions Network: the doctoral work of Dr Carla Day, Dr Jacqueline Homel, Dr Jenny Job and Dr Helene Shin and the research projects led by Dr Brenda Morrison and Dr Eliza Ahmed.

Key points made in this submission include:
➢ Top down approaches in dealing with workplace bullying are unlikely to be effective;
➢ Local knowledge, understanding and capacity are crucial to managing workplace bullying;
➢ Workplace bullying is an interpersonal issue that can be triggered and sustained by a host of factors including the personalities of the people involved, the norms of the workplace, structural features of the work, management style and emotional well-being;
➢ Because of the complex set of factors shaping bullying, a multipronged approach is necessary that engages all levels of the organization to regulate the behaviour. This might include organizational policy, organizational backing of local plans for managing bullying, mentoring, counselling, restorative justice conferencing, overhaul of work structures and practices, and mediation;

➢ Where workgroups communicate well, show respect for each other, are fair and open in their dealings with each other and are supported by their senior officers, compliance with policies such as anti-bullying is likely to be higher.

I do hope the Inquiry will find the submission of benefit in its deliberations. I can be contacted for further discussion should this be helpful to the Committee.

Kind regards

Professor Valerie Braithwaite
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A multipronged approach to the regulation of workplace bullying

Valerie Braithwaite

Regulatory Institutions Network, Australian National University,

18 July 2012

**Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Workplace Bullying,
House of Representatives, Parliament House, Canberra**

Overview

Workplace bullying confounds through its certainties and uncertainties. The certainties are that bullying can destroy people's lives and impose considerable costs on workplaces. Individuals' health and well-being suffers when subjected to bullying,[1] and workplaces contend with absenteeism, staff turnover, and conflict that can easily spill over to affect other parts of their operations.[2] As public opposition to workplace bullying mounts and consideration is given to introducing laws against bullying,[3] a whole new set of costs loom for individuals and organizations: Costs of investigation, lawyers, and drawn out legal proceedings. Taking the matter to court offers the hope of justice for those who have been bullied and their families. Equally certain is that adjudicating and delivering justice on anything but the more visible forms of abuse is difficult. Physical and verbal aggression is potentially observable and verifiable. But bullying is not always done in front of others, and more importantly, bullying often has the purpose of delivering aggression in an indirect or disguised form, without leaving accessible evidence.

Against these certainties, the inherent uncertainties in workplace bullying come into play that plague victims as well as those trying to address the problem. Bullying is a moving phenomenon, an act of domination that weaves around rules and can hijack norms of acceptable conduct.[4] Legislation alone will never be enough to solve the bullying problem and may even prove counterproductive in some circumstances, giving rise to a whole new set of problems around more cautious and less open employment procedures in workplaces.[5] Diversity is at risk when open competition gives way to appointments of people from the same background, same ethnic group, same gender, and same school, all of whom pass the test of 'safe' appointments unlikely to bully or be bullied.

An argument is made for a regulatory approach that is multipronged, where the main objective of anti-bullying legislation is to require workplaces to promote a socially responsible work culture and to demonstrate that they have been responsive to complaints of workplace bullying.[6] These expectations of workplaces would be similar to the expectations that already exist for equal opportunity and anti-discrimination.

Expectations of anti-bullying workplaces would include the adoption of a suite of preventive measures, the demonstration of early intervention in response to specific concerns about bullying, the creation of opportunities for the successful resolution of bullying problems, and efforts to restore those affected by bullying to a state of well-being and productivity. Individuals can still be made culpable through the criminal justice system where bullying is recognized as a violent crime against the person.

Uncertainties and subjectivities around bullying

When one is asked to respond to allegations of bullying, three problems present themselves: the greyness of what constitutes bullying, the subjectivity of bullying, and the meshing of the bullying incident with other difficulties inside and outside the workplace. There are cases of workplace bullying that are indisputably egregious and attract almost universal condemnation. But bullying occurs along a continuum,[7] with most occurring at the barely detectable level to outsiders. Importantly, the uncertainties are not just about facts. They are also about the different values that people hold and that guide the behaviours of individuals and workplaces.

Workplace bullying is reputed to be on the increase, though it is difficult to prove this definitively. What we describe as bullying has changed over the years. Thanks to awareness raising campaigns, the capacity and willingness of the public to define their experiences as workplace bullying has increased. The means by which we bully each other has also changed. Cyber-bullying was not even possible until mobile phones and social media became more readily available. Measures of bullying also have undergone change as researchers have brought greater sophistication to how bullying might be best measured.[8] For all these reasons, a rigorous data base for proving increases in workplace bullying is absent. That said, we now have greater specification and consensus around workplace bullying, both in terms of what the term means and our ethical judgment surrounding its desirability. Yet uncertainty over when bullying has occurred remains.[9]

The problem is one of transparency and openness. Unlike displays of physical or even verbal aggression, there are multiple interpretations of the meaning behind bullying behaviours. Uncertainty surrounds the content of bullying. Did he mean to say that? Is

she just having a bad day? Am I being too sensitive? With workplace bullying, there is ambiguity around the point at which incivility turns into bullying, criticism of work performance turns into bullying, and setting work tasks turns into bullying. Table 1 summarizes Australian data collected in 2005 through a national random survey conducted by an Australian-Japanese Consortium interested in crime and justice.[10] It lists a range of behaviours that have been associated with bullying and asks survey respondents how often they have had these things happen to them, and how often have they done these things to others in the workplace in the past 12 months. This is an older instrument developed by Quine[11] – it does not include cyber-bullying for instance, but the behaviours at the top of the list are the ones that continue to be most commonly linked with workplace bullying. When we look at these behaviours – inappropriate jokes, teasing, exclusion, sarcasm, unjustified criticism, we see how it can be that bullying depends on interpretation.

The much lower rates for being a perpetrator than a victim can be variously explained; for example, there are fewer bosses than workers and bosses are more likely to be perpetrators of these particular forms of bullying; another explanation is that it is more psychologically uncomfortable to admit to doing harm than to being the victim of harm. Even so, when we focus on the behaviours in Table 1, it is not hard to see how a manager and his/her subordinate could have different perspectives on "unjustified criticism of work," "shifting of goal posts without telling," even "teasing." Studies show that bullying is higher in work contexts where role demands are high and where there is role ambiguity and conflict.[12] It is a small step to infer that what is a demanding, responsive work environment to one employee may be interpreted as a bullying environment to another employee.

Table 1: Percentages of respondents who experienced a bullying behaviour (recipient or perpetrator) 'a few times', 'sometimes' and 'often' in the last 12 months. The remainder of the sample replied 'never'. (Data from a random sample of Australians taking part in A Cross National Comparative Study: Australian and Japanese Attitudes to Crime, 2003.)

Statements about what could happen in your workplace. In the past year, how often has this happened?	Was I treated this way? (N = 1196)			Have I treated others this way? (N = 1168)		
	A few times	Some-times	Often	A few times	Some-times	Often
Making inappropriate jokes	31	8	3	24	4	2
Teasing	33	10	4	32	7	3
Freezing out/ignoring/ excluding	24	8	4	19	4	1
Destructive innuendo and sarcasm	25	7	4	20	3	2
Unjustified criticism of work	28	11	3	16	5	1
Attempts to humiliate in front of co-workers	23	10	2	10	4	1
Unreasonable pressure to produce work	24	9	8	10	1	1
Shifting of goal posts without telling	26	8	5	8	1	.5
Constant undervaluing of efforts	21	9	6	10	2	.5
Attempts to belittle work	19	8	3	10	3	1
Intimidatory use of discipline procedures	13	5	2	5	1	1
Verbal threats	12	4	2	6	1	1
Removal of areas of responsibility without consultation	14	4	2	4	.5	.5
Attempts to demoralize as a person	13	6	2	4	1	.5
Unreasonable refusal of applications for leave, training, promotion	10	3	3	1	.5	.5
Physical threats	5	2	1	1	.5	.5
Threat to property	3	1	1	1	0	.5

The intrinsic difficulty in interpreting bullying is also reflected in one of the most debilitating consequences of being bullied, self-doubt.[13] When someone is hit or physically abused without provocation, there is no doubt that one has been unfairly victimized. The action can be dealt with as a real, not imagined or exaggerated event. Bullying is more likely to disable because it plays on an individual's insecurities and denies the individual a clear and agreed interpretation of events. To deny a person

validation of their experiences, particularly when those experiences are distressing, is arguably one of the most disrespectful aspects of bullying. [14] The lack of closure continues long after the actual bullying incident has occurred.

Context matters in bullying as does the quality of the relationship between perpetrator and victim. One person teasing another may be perfectly acceptable when there is a strong positive bond between them. Indeed this may be a very constructive way of supportive colleagues regulating each other. When context and relationships change, the very same behaviour may be interpreted differently. A person with a strained relationship with the boss may sense correctly domination and disrespect clumsily disguised as humour; or a particularly vulnerable and sensitive person may assume victim status in a situation that is a case of social ineptness (not that that excuses it). Observers, without the necessary background information, may dismiss the interaction as an awkward moment. Uncertainty prevails. If the victim happens to talk to others about the incident, there remains uncertainty over evidence[15]: Was there misunderstanding or social ineptness or a moment of incivility triggered by a stressful situation?

Researchers have suggested two ways around this problem: look for repetition[16] and look for power imbalance (or domination).[17] While most of us have experienced a lack of kindness and empathy from others and have failed to show lack of kindness and empathy toward others, we learn from these encounters with good will. From our own reactions and others' interpretations of events, we don't make the same mistake again as target or perpetrator. It is of note that 70% of those who participated in the Australian survey in Table 1 had neither been treated nor treated others in a bullying way over the past 12 months.

Table 1 also shows how the percent of people experiencing bullying decreases as the number of occurrences increases. Between 2% and 3% reported that they had been 'bullied' at work 'often' on nine of the behaviours in Table 1. One percent or less replied that they were 'often' perpetrators of most of the behaviours in Table 1. Far more had limited experience of what it was like to be bullied or to bully 'a few times' or 'sometimes'. Moreover, a quarter of those who were the recipients of bullying behaviour also had practiced bullying behaviours. We know nothing about the context

in which these behaviours occurred in Table 1. And we do not know if the behaviours accompanied a power imbalance; be that power imbalance reflected in formal status or through personal dominance. But other studies point out the percent of incidences that are provoked or involve retaliation is not negligible. The term 'bully-victim' is used to describe people who at different times occupy both roles. This group has been described as possibly the most psychologically unwell of the bullying groups in the school bullying literature and more recently in the workplace bullying literature.[18] The complexity of bullying situations and of the respective vulnerabilities of bullies and victims should not be underestimated.

The 2005 attitudes to crime survey showed a further disturbing trend on the extent to which bullying extended across boundaries into life outside work. In a parallel study, Jacqueline Homel followed-up the 1996-1999 ANU Life at School Survey of young people after they had left school and entered university or the workforce.[19] Homel found that school bullying was a precursor to aggression in adulthood.[20] The 2005 attitudes to crime survey showed that victims of workplace bullying were more likely to have been victims of crime. Bullies in workplaces were more likely to have committed a criminal offence. What is happening in the workplace with regard to bullying appears not to be divorced from what has happened in school and what is happening in private life. Spill-over effects can occur both ways from workplace to private life and from private life to workplace. Part of the meshing of problems across domains undoubtedly is also due to personality or coping styles, but we also know that it is possible for individuals to turn their lives around when they benefit from new opportunities.[21]

In summary, in all but the more blatant cases of bullying, it can be difficult to definitively state when bullying has occurred and who is the bully and who is the victim. It is also difficult to know the extent to which bullying and victimization at work meshes with other issues not associated with work.

How do we explain workplace bullying: The one-up one-down perspective

A substantial literature has investigated the personality dispositions of bullies and victims and the workplace characteristics that are associated with higher incidents of

bullying. Research has found support for the idea that some people have personal characteristics that mean they are more likely to be involved in bullying. Just as important, however are the characteristics of the workplace, how work is undertaken and how the workplace is managed. Workplace buffers have also been identified to contain the impact of some of the more common antecedents of bullying.

The findings show that those engaging in bullying are more likely to be impulsive, emotionally reactive, cynical, have low tolerance of ambiguity and aggressive, while those who are victims are more likely to have low self-esteem, poor social competence, and exhibit negative affectivity.[22] The likelihood that bullying episodes will flare is increased if the workplace is characterised by role ambiguity, high work demands, interpersonal conflict, and tyrannical or laissez-faire leadership.[23] Communication openness, a supportive work environment and providing bullied employees with recourse within the workplace have been found to reduce bullying and the problems it poses for targets.[24] As a result, the degree to which workplaces encourage bullying or keep it in check is being regarded increasingly as a reflection of management policy, not simply management neglect.[25]

If managers are to deal effectively with workplace bullying they need a model for dialogue and creating responses and solutions with their staff. The complexity of the issue means that it has to be dealt with at the local level, although senior managers may well be implicated in local problems and should accept responsibility for their role. Some address this issue from an ethics or values perspective that promotes workplace relations that communicate a duty of care and mutual respect. In a 2010 *Psychology Today* article, Izzy Kalman promotes what he calls the golden rule: Don't do to others what you would not want them to do to you.[26] Without dismissing this approach, it is worth remembering that not all workplaces will engage with anti-bullying policies on this basis, or more likely, they will agree with the philosophy but fail to practice it in a competitive business environment. There may be advantages therefore in discussing bullying through the language of business success and not only relational harmony.

Competitiveness is the reality of many workplace cultures where bullying risks are high.[27] It is also the reality of the school experience. In the context of school bullying, Roz Dixon and Peter Smith[28] address the question: What leads to persistent acts of unkindness, incivility, denigration, humiliation, verbal abuse or physical threat toward a particular individual that cannot be either terminated or reversed? They go on to use competitive values as a frame to analyze bullying among school children, as a game of one-upmanship that goes terribly wrong. With some evidence that school bullying can transition into workplace bullying, the model has potential for helping understand the dynamics of workplace bullying.

One-upmanship involves repeatedly getting the better of or outdoing a competitor, particularly through means that are not always legitimate or proper. In workplaces, people compete for promotion, salary, and clients and use tactics that are not always transparent and fair: One-upmanship is highly relevant to workplaces. Games of one-upmanship are social and can give rise to a group norm of individual initiative and opportunism: Different people 'play' robustly and with resilience and take their turn at being one-down while relishing in being one-up. One-upmanship games are not always fun, as we see in company takeovers or political debate. Television sitcoms, on the other hand, entertain us with clever quips and playful antics of one-upmanship. One person outfoxes another with good humour, then the tables turn and the reverse occurs. The game is not allowed to go so far as to make us feel uncomfortable, because one of the party will call a halt to the game, reining in the excesses of those who have crossed the line between funny and mean. Many would argue that this kind of play is good preparation for the rough and tumble of life. It builds resilience and empathy. We should not rule out this possibility. Modeling the behaviours of those we look up to provides us with one of our most important avenues for lifelong learning and social adaptation.[29] Modeling also leads us to choose on occasion negative role models, and there is every reason to believe that this happens in workplaces where bullying is rife and widely viewed as harmless. Researchers have even raised questions about the role of contagion in modeling bullying behaviour.[30]

As Dixon and Smith also point out, it is very easy for the one-upmanship game within a group to go terribly wrong. One person can hold on to the one-up position and find a one-down partner (albeit unwilling partner). The social dynamics of a group may

fail to challenge and break this pattern of persistent domination. Perhaps group dynamics even reinforce it, keeping the unfortunate partnership in play for longer than might otherwise occur. It has been suggested that observers may find it quite useful for someone else to be the 'target' to take pressure off them.[31] Or the game may appeal as good fun.

With or without the tacit support of others, perpetrator and victim both become locked into a bullying relationship. Victims become caught through lack of resources, or a dogged determination to reverse the power imbalance, or personal helplessness. The perpetrator, on the other hand, likes the position of dominance and cannot give up the sense of power it provides nor risk the victim calling the perpetrator to account or exacting revenge. The persistent pattern of one dominating the other, day after day, wears away at the mental and physical health of the victim and others, possibly even the perpetrator.

In the process of setting in train a persistent one-up/one-down relationship involving a perpetrator and victim, a further change is likely that is not helpful in a workplace. Competition no longer takes place on a level playing field with a rotation of winners and losers depending on performance in a particular context. Instead, in the bullying scenario, competition gives way to one person asserting a more general form of superiority over another, regardless of circumstance. Domination is stigmatizing in the same way as prejudice and discrimination is.

Domination arouses a set of emotions around shame and anger that relate to the whole person, their worth and their identity.[32] The person doing the dominating is vulnerable because at some level they are likely to see the harm they are doing but cling to a view of themselves as a good person striving for the success they deserve whatever the cost. The person on the receiving end of the bullying undoubtedly wants to reject the depiction of themselves as 'a failure' and wants to restore their reputation in their own eyes and others through exposing the perpetrator for his or her shameful conduct.

In summary, competition that gives way to one-upmanship that traverses into domination generates feelings of shame among all involved in the bullying experience. The victim feels shame as their identity is denigrated and belittled, the

victim believes that the perpetrator should be ashamed as should those who enable bullying to occur, and the perpetrator fends off feelings of shame to protect their status and identity of success.

In the next section we review some of the evidence that has been collected by the Regulatory Institutions Network research group to show how shame works in the bullying context and how it impedes resolution of the problem.[33] The implication of this work is that if bullying is to be averted or resolved, shame must be managed in a more adaptive and healthy way. Furthermore, this is not a solo venture. Healthier shame management needs to occur as individuals interact with each other in the workplace.

Shame and pride management

Our ethical identity is that part of ourselves of which we are proud. Included are our capacities, competence and character. When we act in ways that do not live up to the expectations that we hold or significant others hold for us we feel shame. When we succeed we feel pride in our accomplishment. Both shame and pride can be experienced in positive and negative ways for those around us. Neither bullies nor victims manage their shame and pride in ways that bring out the best in themselves and the other.[34]

When any of the behaviours listed in Table 1 occurs in a context where there is evidence that one person has disrespectfully dominated another, shame is likely to be experienced by perpetrator and victim. Shame is the emotional feedback that signals inappropriate behaviour. For the perpetrator, shame is the feeling that leads to the statement, "Oh no, I have this sickening feeling about this". The perpetrator could conceivably go on to say to those affected: "I am sorry, what can I do to make amends?" Responding to shame in this way is called shame acknowledgment – acknowledging one's action as a hurtful mistake, and resolving to make amends to those adversely affected. A different way of expressing shame in the same situation is the following: "It wasn't my fault. You deserved that." This is called displacing shame –fault is found with someone or something else and criticism is deflected elsewhere.

Most people do some acknowledgment and some displacement when they or others consider that they may be in the wrong, depending on the circumstances.[35] When we are among friends and feel our workplace is supportive and forgiving, it is safe to acknowledge shame, that is, admit to a mistake and offer to make amends. When we feel that others are just waiting for us to "put a foot wrong" because they want our job or want promotion before us, we are far more likely to displace our shame – it is not safe to acknowledge because we could be blamed and punished. In addition, personal disposition comes into play. Some of us see our environment in a more hostile and competitive way than others. Helen Shin's research on bullying among teachers in schools has shown that teachers who see the world as more hierarchical and individualistic are more likely to displace shame. Those who are more collectivist and egalitarian are more likely to acknowledge shame and are les likely to displace shame.[36]

Acknowledging shame and moderating our desire to displace shame are important social skills learnt in childhood. These skills enable people to develop secure and trusting social relationships in adulthood. Bullies and victims have difficulty managing shame.[37] In addition, bullies have counterproductive ways of expressing pride.

Bullies err on the side of displacing shame and find acknowledgment difficult. They also struggle to show humility when they are successful in solving a difficult problem (or have a win in the one-upmanship game). In such circumstances, bullies are prone to hubris and use their accomplishments to assert their superiority over others. Eliza Ahmed has used the term narcissistic pride to describe dominating displays of achievement, to be contrasted with humble pride that acknowledges others and importantly the social infrastructure that made the achievement possible.[38]

Victims have been shown to err on the side of blaming themselves rather than others, and this extends to how they believe bullies should feel when they harm others. Victims adopt shame management reactions to bullying that err on the side of moral superiority. Victims report that if they were in the shoes of the bully, they would openly acknowledge their wrongdoing and not displace shame.

In sum, in matters of shame management, bullies and victims aggravate each other: Bullies know no wrong, victims moralize their wrong.

Future directions for intervention

Popular recommendations include the introduction of anti-bullying laws and anti-bullying policies for workplaces. Both are important as value statements that bullying is not an acceptable workplace behaviour and will not be tolerated. Importantly, they also allow those in authority to take action against a perpetrator after the harm has been done. Providing there is enforcement capability, rule making and standard setting have important roles to play in dealing with workplace bullying. But not all bullying is going to be caught by enforcers, and even when it is, reversing the harm done through bullying is difficult. Most therefore would agree that prevention and early intervention are just as important options for protecting individuals and workplaces. A further observation based on the data is that no single intervention is likely to be the answer for solving the problem. Success in the long term requires multiple, less than perfect interventions where the strength of one compensates for the weakness of others.[39]

The weaknesses of single interventions become apparent when considered in relation to the research. We see how mediation could go horribly wrong with each party feeling shame and goading and aggravating the other. Restorative justice may offer good prospects for handling the emotions of shame around workplace bullying, but may not get off the ground if no agreement can be reached that harm was done through bullying. Because the problem is relational involving highly subjective aspects of disrespect and hurt, law courts risk becoming just another player in the contest of one-upmanship between victim and perpetrator. The idea of individual counseling – for bullies in anger management and in victims for resilience building also has its limitations because the problem is in part relational – a bully is not a bully without a victim and a victim is not a victim without a bully. In the 2005 survey featured in Table 1, bullies and victims expressed less trust in professionals, be they lawyers, doctors or counselors, than others, suggesting limitations to many of the formal processes that have been put in place to deal with bullying. Moreover, recent

work has suggested that transparent and formal procedures against bullying also are not necessarily deterring for bullies or comforting for victims. Formal processes without communication of respect for victims appears to be a tokenistic gesture with little effectiveness.[40]

What works in related contexts? The whole-of-school approach to bullying

Regulating bullying in workplaces can benefit from looking at related contexts where there has been intensive research effort into develop ways of containing bullying. In the extensive school bullying literature, research has converged on what has become known as a "whole-of-school approach to bullying".[41] This approach starts from the premise that bullying is a cultural problem in which the social context has led to pro-social values being sidelined and replaced with a set of practices that are opportunistic and anti-social. None of this is to deny individual differences among people. Some individuals are more predisposed to behaving aggressively and without control than others, some are more dispositionally timid and unable to stand up for themselves than others. Nor does the approach deny that those who are different often become targets of ridicule or rejection by those who form the majority group (ingroup versus outgroup hostility). These are characteristics of all groups, be they in schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods, churches, leisure activities, shopping malls). The aim is not to wipe out individual differences, but rather control social behaviour in these settings. Fundamentally, the success of a whole-of-school approach is based on setting standards for what is appropriate social interaction and what is not, standards that are respected and owned by all members of the community.

The premise of the whole-of-school approach is that a culture can be created that reduces the likelihood that inevitable conflict between people will flare into bullying incidents. The first requirement for the approach is that all stakeholders sign on for cultural change: principals, teachers, assistants, children, parents, the school board, bus drivers and local shop keepers - everyone who is touched by school bullying. The approach requires a full discussion of bullying and the harm it does and the development of an approach to stop the incidents of bullying. Research shows that while some prefer a punitive approach and some a more rehabilitative approach, there

is almost universal agreement that rehabilitation as a first step and punishment as the last resort is an acceptable way to proceed.[42]

The second requirement of a whole-of-school approach is that a mix of strategies is brought into play to be mutually reinforcing in a culture change program. At the top of the list are school rules and a united effort to enforce them. This includes parents, teachers and other children – it is not simply a narrow top-down control strategy of teacher's patrolling playgrounds although this is part of it. Teachers need to be present to see bullying, call children to account and deal with it immediately. Bystanders are also expected to call a halt to any bullying they see. Bullying is not passively tolerated or swept under the carpet or put in the too hard basket.

Interestingly, bullying is not automatically dealt with through punishment (suspending or expelling individuals). Such an action, if adopted routinely, is seen as an extension of bullying, the only difference being that authorities use their power to dominate repeatedly. Dealing with bullying this way condones less legitimate uses of power in the playground. Instead instances of bullying are discussed first by students and teachers most closely involved and then in wider circles if necessary to build a consensus around a plan of action to ensure it does not happen again. Bullying brings with it responsibility on everyone's part to prevent a recurrence and places special responsibility on the perpetrator to make amends and contribute to the school in a positive way.

While instances of bullying are being dealt with in an open and rehabilitative way, the whole-of-school approach also has other points of intervention. Education programs and discussion groups deal with why bullying is harmful and how it can be prevented. Children are taught to help others who are more vulnerable before a bullying incident escalates. Vulnerable children receive help, as do children who have difficulty controlling their frustration and anger. The aim of a whole-of-school approach is to empower everyone to be socially responsible and stop the harm that is caused by bullying. The outcome as described by Brenda Morrison is a school where children feel safe, confident and proud of what they have achieved in removing school bullying from their culture.[43]

Applying these ideas to workplaces

Workplaces are different from schools. They have production targets and their
mission statements do not include educating for civility and teaching pro-social
values. Nevertheless, many of the principles for effecting culture change in relation to
bullying apply to workplaces in the same way as they apply to schools. The principles
are:

(a) Build a consensus in the workplace around stopping workplace bullying. In a
large workplace there will be enclaves of resistance and enclaves of support.
Instead of focusing on the resisters, identify supporters and the centres of
civility that are managing staff well. Acknowledge the commitment of these
groups through additional resources and public praise. Values of civility are
not dead in the community; they are just not being enacted in workplaces.
Almost everyone will be happier when they are.[44] Resisters can be persuaded
to change when successful examples of change can be observed and modeled.

(b) Roll out anti-bullying training programs that fit the organization, making sure
that formal organizational processes are in place and have the backing of
senior management, while allowing local areas to undergo training and
develop their own anti-bullying strategy that has local support. Middle
managers have responsibility for negotiating a match between organizational
objectives and local conditions in a way that is responsive and respectful and
ensures local ownership. Workers and their immediate supervisors can then be
expected to accept responsibility for looking out for each other and developing
ways that are comfortable for them to intervene and prevent bullying. It is
possible that one of the reasons why too few intervene when they observe
bullying is that there is a lack of knowledge and confidence in how to go about
it.

(c) Have senior managers and members of company boards take an interest in
anti-bullying successes and bullying failures in different parts of the
organization. Their watchful eye should turn into intervention only in so far as
it communicates expectations and builds capacity at the local level to improve
conditions. Taking responsibility away from the local area leaves a
dysfunctional group even more dysfunctional. Constant monitoring and top-
down solutions will not be sufficient to reduce bullying because responsibility

will remain at the level of senior management, and not filter down to local work areas.

(d) Provide immediate support for both bullies and victims. Neither bullies nor victims exhibit patterns of well-being and both need assistance. One approach would allow each to consult a counselor or psychologist, and assign to each a mentor from senior management. This would mean that duty of care to perpetrator and victim would be taken seriously by the organization: The senior managers representing the perpetrator and victim respectively could converse about the problem with reasonable and fair consideration given to both sides. Preferably, bully and victim would agree to and benefit from mediation or group conferencing. But if this should fail, senior management mentorship, while not without cost, is still likely to be less costly emotionally and economically than a court case, and may give rise to a solution that is acceptable to all parties.

(e) Invest in a restorative justice program for dealing with bullying.[45] Restorative justice enables the above principles to be enacted in the workplace: both bullies and victims receive support, local workgroups learn how to handle bullying; evidence of senior management commitment becomes apparent; a shared commitment to culture change is built; structural workplace triggers can be identified and modified; everyone learns from the experience; and local ownership of a way forward can be developed.

The logic of this approach is to build a culture of practices that engages productively with the problem of workplace bullying rather than shying away from it. At the same time, a cooperative culture around work is strengthened that emphasizes the importance of working with people to get the job done through adopting norms of respect, openness, and good communication. Some data is available to support the importance of this course of action. While not looking specifically at bullying, Carla Day's study of the Australian Government Department of Defence researched the link between the work practices of different groups and their willingness to act with probity and in accordance with Defence protocols.[46] One of her most significant findings was that where workgroups communicated well, showed respect for each other, were fair and open in their dealings with each other, and were supported by their senior officers, problems were more likely to be acknowledged, and compliance

was significantly higher. It might be conjectured that compliance includes respecting anti-bullying policies. By way of contrast, cynicism and lack of respect for rules and other people signaled work groups that were out of control and possibly even beyond being disciplined effectively.

Conclusion

Research has accumulated to the point of clearly demonstrating the complexity of workplace bullying and the seriousness of its effects for individuals and organizations. Enough is known to allow us to infer that there is no single intervention that will bring a dip in graphs of workplace bullying nation-wide. Each workplace needs to develop a multipronged plan for addressing the problem. Government has a role in ensuring organizations introduce such plans and have access to resources to make the plans work. If legislation can nudge workplaces into grappling seriously with bullying, then legislation would be an important step forward. But law that only threatens to punish offenders is not sufficient to change behaviours like workplace bullying that are relatively widespread, open to different interpretations and often not directly observable. The desired behavioural change is local and it is collective. Where the response to bullying behaviour has commonly been to say nothing, turn a blind eye, withdraw or reinterpret, local responses must now be found that are quite different. The local response must be to disrupt the bully-victim relationship, provide both bully and victim with supports and a new set of opportunities, and draw on the resources of senior management to dissect the problem, interrogate the work context and prevent recurrence.

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