

Beyond the Specious Present: Workplace Bullying Victimization's Roots in Lived Experience

- bullet one
- bullet two



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Disclosure

For author names and employers, see previous page

Learner objectives are:

- Describe factors that discourage workplace bullying targets from walking away from their bully counterparts
- Consider factors that might facilitate a successful intervention to stem workplace bullying

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Workplace Bullying

- Frequent in occurrence
- Enduring
- Interactive in nature

Involves often subtle and repeated behavior — intentional or enacted through ‘reckless disregard’ (Parzefall & Salin, 2010) — posing a physical and/or psychological threat and a perception of hurt through a power imbalance mediated by a stable constellation of unacknowledged conditions

At issue for this study:

The *interpersonal engagement*
characterizing workplace
bullying and VICTIM response

In bullying, targets \neq
victims

Targets can walk away

Victims engage

The question motivating our study:
Why?

Design

Pragmatic Utility

—an inductive research approach
grounded in assumptions of
hermeneutics

Method

Analysis of published research and prose from across many disciplines to “synthesize data, to push beyond the limits of isolated findings and individual disciplines, to identify shared knowledge, and to provide new insights, lines of questioning, and direction” (Weaver & Morse, 2006, p. 191).

Steps in Our Process

- broad review of literature
- identification of relevant descriptions found there
- development of analytical questions to forward understanding of the phenomenon under review, and
- synthesis of results through re-review of the literature

Study Goal

“.....to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first
time” (p. 61)

--Eliot, T. S. (1943). Little Gidding. In *Four Quartets* (pp. 45-64 New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt).

Teleology

Our argument is *a posteriori*, i.e., from the specious present to a lived past, following an argument from effects to potential cause

Findings from this study
extended the notion that had
begun to manifest in previous
studies:

A sense of inadequacy
characterizes bully victims'
views of self

Insights from this Study

The sense of inadequacy victims experience in response to bullies may, in fact, be long-standing, with bullies' affronts serving merely to inflame it.

Core Whatness

This Thomist notion (Kerr, 2002) – introduced to nursing by Parse (2013, p. 112)—provides a framework for understanding a possible link between a long-standing and established sense of self and personal response to bullies' affronts.

As Heidegger intimated,
we ARE our histories:

Each of us “... is *Dasein* [there-being] as it already was, and it is 'what' it already was. It is its past, whether explicitly or not” (p. 41)....

Meaning emerges in retrospect and in light of past experiences (Heidegger, 2008/1962); it is born of associations (Thomas, 2012) between and among all things known, past and present.

Sense of Self—Core
Whatness—is automatic, a
function of everything that's
ever happened to each of us (our
historicality)

The brain has a pivotal role

“In the case of fearful experiences, or fearful feelings (such as those bullying induce), the conscious emotion may be the result of some immediately present stimulus triggering long-term explicit memories and *amygdala activation*”

(LeDoux, 2000, p. 176) (parentheses and italics added)

Core Whatness Incorporates an
Overwhelming Sense of
Emotion—Not Rational
Cognition

Personal Examples from the Literature:

Bullying encounters seemed to remind victims that “you are not good enough” (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2010, p. 112), a sense they brought along with them through time.

A participant in one study (Peters, 2014) described the relevance of her childhood experiences to her experience of workplace intimidation, noting that she felt, “Like I was a kid with a bad report card. Getting yelled at for the report card, then” (p. 220).

“No, I will never forget it (the bullying), never ever. There is still a large scar left inside me. I always have to carry this scar with me ... and I have never managed to understand them (the bullies) either. That (the bullying) was an episode that now has passed away and now I have to continue living my life. But I think it would have been much easier to live my life without this scar inside ... that is what I think ... definitely. When I, for example, read in the paper about someone being bullied somewhere, *the old scar reopens and it hurts*. In some way I must try to repress it all the time ... if it is possible (Hallberg & Strandmark, 2006, p. 113) (italics added).

Supporting Theories

Negative childhood experiences are linked with individuals' subsequent sense of vulnerability (Tracy & Alberts, 2006).

Black (2002) and Brown (2015) argued that for many individuals, functioning day to day involves negotiating from a perspective that is based in a negative and historically-mediated sense of self.

Examples from Prose

The main character in Gruen's (2015) recent book, '*At the Water's Edge: A Novel*,' demonstrated, summarizing life-long encounters with her mother:

“At home, she sulked with extravagance, and I learned early that silence was anything but peaceful. She was always upset about some slight, real or imagined, and more than capable of creating a full-blown crisis out of thin air” (p. 94).

Subsequently, she described her adult experiences with two male peers, about whose motivations she had question. She said:

“Being my mother’s daughter, placating them (adults with whom she was involved) should have come easily even if it was the last thing I wanted to do” (p. 314)

(parenthetical phrase added).

In sum:

For victims in the studies and prose we reviewed, redolent and automatic recall of the embedded past appeared to color core whatness to cloud victims' thinking and shape their responses to bullies' affronts.

Eleanor Roosevelt (n.d.) asserted that
“No one can make you feel inferior
without your consent.”

Potential Interventions

Address interpersonal dynamics in the workplace

Build work cultures that are just

Establish supports to aid each individual to develop self-insight

Findings from our pragmatic utility study suggest that, indeed, the present is specious and that victimization may well be rooted in lived experience.