

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

A Thematic Analysis of stories of
Workplace Bullying Told on the
World Wide Web

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Industrial/ Organisational Psychology

at Massey University
Palmerston North
New Zealand

Josephine Schlup

2009

jmschlup@xtra.co.nz

Abstract

This study explored how the experience of workplace bullying is described by targets of the phenomenon. The target's experience has been neglected by the research to date as it is difficult to gain access to their point of view. A qualitative approach was undertaken to develop the study in order to gain insight into this experience. Targets' stories were analysed for themes which revealed important aspects of this experience.

The World Wide Web was utilised to harvest narratives from carefully selected websites which granted consent to access the stories. These websites provided anonymity for the targets to freely express their experiences of the phenomenon in an effort to provide self-help assistance to viewers. The World Wide Web is a new frontier for the research community which is still developing clear ethical guidelines for this arena. Therefore this project developed its own protocol for conducting its study which was informed by debates on the ethics of internet based data collection.

The analysis of harvested stories identified two global themes: acts of bullying and ongoing consequences. Acts of bullying included the following sub themes: a triggering event, hindsight, persistent and unrelenting negative criticism, scapegoat, tasks and duties changed, deadlines, basic rights denied, personal attacks and name calling, and temper tantrums. The second global theme encompassed ongoing consequences for the target. This theme consisted of the sub themes: rendered powerless, safety hazard, and psychological contract. These themes illustrated a trajectory for the progression of the phenomenon of bullying from targets' points of view.

This trajectory provides a richer and more specific understanding of workplace bullying which can assist practitioners and researchers to develop ways for organisations to prevent workplace bullying and/ or undertake interventions when it occurs.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the markers of this thesis by thanking them in advance for taking the time to consider it and provide feedback.

I am not sure how to express my thanks and appreciation to Mandy Morgan my thesis supervisor. She has provided constant inspiration and encouragement throughout this thesis. Her wisdom and patience has provided a light which has kept me focussed and on track.

Thank you to the website creators who granted consent to utilise the data on their websites and the targets who chose to utilise the World Wide Web to share their experiences of workplace bullying on these web sites. I hope that they have been able to continue their journey through recovery.

I would also like to take the time to show my appreciation to the many lecturers and tutors during both my undergraduate and post graduate years all of which have allowed me to answer the many questions I came to university with.

Last, thank you to Nigel and our three children who continue to provide me with the inspiration to study and have sustained this throughout my studies by supporting and encouraging me. I hope that this may inspire them to follow their dreams.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Chapter One – Literature Review	1
Introduction	1
Prevalence studies.....	2
Negative consequences of workplace bullying for the target.....	5
Organisational factors.....	7
Cost of bullying.....	12
Rationale for this project.....	13
Chapter Two – Internet Research	16
Introduction.....	16
Ethical internet research.....	19

Chapter Three – Methodology 23

Introduction.....	23
Procedures for data gathering.....	26
The sample.....	28
Analytical description of websites.....	29
Thematic analysis.....	30
Conclusion.....	32

Chapter Four – Analysis 33

The act of bullying.....	33
Triggering event.....	33
Incidents of negative behaviour.....	40
Hindsight.....	41
Persistent and unrelenting negative criticism.....	44
Scapegoat.....	47
Tasks and duties changed.....	48
Deadlines.....	50
Basic rights denied.....	55
Personal attacks, name calling, and temper tantrums.....	57
Conclusion.....	62

Chapter Five – Analysis	63
Ongoing consequences for the target.....	63
Rendered powerless.....	63
Safety hazard.....	67
Psychological contract.....	73
Conclusion.....	79
Chapter Six – Conclusion	81
Introduction.....	81
Future research.....	89
References.....	92
Appendix.....	111

List of Tables

Table 1.....	2
---------------------	----------

Chapter One

Literature Review

Introduction

Over the last four decades much research has been conducted to establish the existence of bullying as a distinct workplace phenomena. Largely this research has involved assessing negative acts occurring in the workplace and eliciting yes/ no responses to definitions of the phenomenon (Niedl,1995; Hogh & Dofradottir, 2001; UNISON, 1997). Unfortunately these studies have firmly established that workplace bullying does occur in workplaces all around the world. Due to this acknowledgement it is time for the research community to investigate the phenomenon in more detail so that interventions can be developed to assist those who have been or are being currently psychologically affected.

This chapter provides an overview of the how our understanding of workplace bullying has developed in four subsections. The subsections include defining the phenomenon and prevalence studies, organisational factors associated with bullying, negative consequences of bullying, and the cost of bullying. At the end of this chapter the rationale for this study will be provided.

Throughout this study the term target instead of victim will be used to describe the people who feel the impact of negative behaviours at work. This terminology has been borrowed from criminology as the use of the term target instead of victim was coined by a political movement within this field to highlight the rights of victims of crime and to displace fault back to the offender who chose the situation and the target (victim) for their offending behaviour (Hough, 1987). To be clear there will be no explication or profile of the bully or perpetrator of the bullying behaviour as this project is only interested in the impact the negative behaviours have on the target.

Prevalence studies

Investigating the prevalence of bullying at work has been undertaken in many countries however many studies have utilised different strategies to gain prevalence rates. Different strategies have been used because the central problem is that the phenomenon does not have a shared definition of what it is, what types of behaviour are involved or the frequency and duration that the acts must occur for bullying to be identified. Writing this section required finding the best way to present the results of the investigations in a way that acknowledged the problem yet enabled a sensible (clear and consistent) way of providing an overview of them. To address this problem a table of findings had been created which illustrates the different criteria which have been used in a range of prevalence studies (Table 1).

Country	Authors	Sample	No.	Criteria	Prevalence
Austria	Niedl (1995)	Hospital employees	368	Type of acts	26.6 %
Denmark	Hogh & Dofradottir (2001)	Randomised sample	1857	Approximate criterion	2%
Finland	Bjorkqvist et al, (1994)	University employees	338	last 6 months Type of acts	16.9%
Spain	Gonzalez & Grana (2009)	Randomised Sample	3000	type of acts	14%
Germany	Minkel (1996)	Staff of a rehabilitation Centre	46	types of acts	8.7%
The Netherlands	Hubert, et al. (2001)	Randomised	427	definition of WPB	4.4%
Norway	Einarsen & Skogstad (1996)	Large sample across occupations	7787	definition of WPB	Weekly 1.2% Occasional 8.6%
Portugal	Cowie et al. (2000)	Multinational organisation	221	definition of WPB	33.5%
UK	UNISON (1997)	Public sector union members	736	definition of WPB	14%

Table 1. Prevalence studies

Chapter One – Literature Review

Included in Table 1, are studies which have used a range of ways to assess the prevalence of this phenomenon. The criteria included types of acts, definition of workplace bullying, and an approximate criterion (limited definition of workplace bullying). The studies which used the types of negative acts to conceptualise bullying used the negative acts questionnaire with cut off points to determine how many participants had experienced bullying. A definition of workplace bullying by Einarsen & Skogstad (1996) was set as the criteria. While studies that provided an approximate criterion required participants to acknowledge if they had experienced negative social behaviour at work which included gossip, slander, and teasing.

This has been included to establish the prevalence rates and to demonstrate the difficulty that the research community has experienced as they have tried to understand this phenomenon.

Predominantly Scandinavian and German countries label the phenomenon mobbing (Leymann, 1996) while English speaking countries refer to it as bullying at work (Liefhoghe, 1999). It has been suggested that because of the array of definitions that exist it is possible that researchers are investigating different concepts (Liefhoghe & Olafsson, 1999; Cowie, Naylor, Rivers, Smith, Pereira, 2002).

This section has not been an exhaustive review of all the prevalence studies of this phenomenon. It is included to demonstrate the array of strategies researchers have employed to investigate how often it occurs. A standardised way of measuring workplace bullying has not been broadly accepted in the research community.

Chapter One – Literature Review

Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla (1996) suggest that there are seven factors which can be included in workplace bullying these include:

1. Mobbing by organisational measures
2. social isolation
3. attacking the targets private life
4. attacking the targets attitudes
5. physical violence
6. verbal aggression
7. rumours about the target

These seven factors are similar to the definition the Leymann developed which is mentioned in the next section of this chapter. However it neglects to consider how frequently the acts may occur and the duration in which they would occur. Nielsen, Matthiesen, Einarsen, (2008) include these seven factors and add another three to complete a definition of the phenomenon:

1. The negative acts are repeated regularly: at least one negative act weekly.
2. The prolonged nature of the negative acts.
3. The perceived imbalance of power between the bully and the target.

Combined these factors define the behaviour, frequency, and duration of the phenomena. Zapf & Warth (1997), question whether it is ever possible to reach a generalised definition of the phenomena because some negative behaviour is likely to be acceptable in some occupations and/ or organisations but not others. Which researchers continue to assert (Zapf & Einarsen, 2001)

Negative consequences of workplace bullying for the target

The most disturbing aspect of this phenomenon is the impact it has on the mental and physical health of the target and their ability to function in their workplace.

One of the first studies on this topic was conducted by Carroll Brodsky (1976) who published his findings in 'The Harassed Worker'. This book included an analysis of over 1,000 case studies from his private practice as a psychiatrist. Amongst these case studies Brodsky found a core group of people who had experienced cruel treatment in the workplace and as a result they suffered from mental injury. They experienced severe stress reactions and ill health without being exposed to physical damage. They had psychological scars which had been caused by harassment of a "sexual or generic nature (sic)", from other workers in the workplace. Brodsky reasoned that harassment is a basic human interaction which we can find evidence of when we look back in history or when we observe the school yard, the family, the workplace, and the defence forces. Harassment is then considered unpreventable to a large extent as it is naturally woven in to all social structures. He argues that bullies merely picked on victims who had inadequate personalities. Brodsky concluded that the structure of a workplace can include elements that encourage productive rather than destructive interaction. Therefore an organisation can develop their systems and procedures to encourage productive interaction amongst its employees so as to discourage such damaging, if natural, interactions.

The first wave of research into this phenomenon was led by researchers in Scandinavian countries. In Sweden, Leymann (1990), a psychologist and doctor, treated targets of workplace mobbing in the world's first clinic for those traumatised at work. He was able to treat targets but also conduct research into workplace mobbing. He defined workplace mobbing as:

Chapter One – Literature Review

Psychological terror or mobbing in working life involves hostile and unethical communication which is directed in a systematic manner by one or more individuals, mainly toward one individual, who due to mobbing is pushed into a helpless and defenceless position and held there by means of continuing mobbing activities. These actions occur on a frequent basis

(Statistical definition: at least six months' duration). Because of the high frequency and long duration of hostile behaviour, this maltreatment results in considerable mental, psychosomatic, and social misery (p.252).

Leymann's research focussed on the impact workplace mobbing had on the target. He asserted that the level of PTSD (Post traumatic stress disorder) experienced by these targets was more intense than that of train operators who had witnessed suicides by people jumping on to railroad tracks in front of them. He further asserted the mental affects of workplace mobbing were "comparable with PTSD from war and prison camp experiences" (p.251). He found that in the Swedish working life workers were being victimised by co-workers and superiors. He concluded that this was caused by organisational factors rather than individuals.

Groeblinghoff & Becker (1996), describe two cases in which their clients have been the targets of mobbing in the workplace. Both cases present a dim picture of the consequences of prolonged exposure to mobbing in the workplace. Both patients worked in the same organisation at the same time, and were tormented 'partly by the same person'. Both patients reported that they had been the targets of mobbing for longer than five years. During the assessment phase of treatment they were assessed using various health status tools that measured anxiety, depression, and stress. Their reports of mobbing behaviour were analysed using Leymann's Inventory of Psychological Terrorisation Questionnaire. The researcher found that both patients

experienced high levels of stress caused by the way work was organised, the work environment, and the social conditions of that environment. Both patients were in positions that required a high level of communication and cooperation with others and increasing restrictions of these by the same superior. As they described their experiences the researchers felt that the patients had suffered from PTSD that eventually developed into generalised anxiety disorder due to the prolonged exposure to mobbing. Beyond this point the researchers assert that both patients experienced severe depression and / or obsessive symptoms which led to profound and irreversible alteration of their personality. Both patients underwent a treatment program involving prolonged sick leave, psychopharmaceuticals, and psychotherapy.

Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen, & Helleoy, (1994) found that anxiety, depression, and aggression were the effects most related to bullying. In Finland targets were found to suffer from insomnia, nervous symptoms, melancholy, apathy, sociophobia, PTSD, and an inability to concentrate (Einarsen & Matthiesen, 1998). Suicide has also been found to be related to workplace bullying (Leymann, 1996). In recent times the bullying of a female ambulance officer in New South Wales, Australia, by her male colleagues resulted in the female officer taking her own life (Wallace, 2008). Those who survive are often expelled from the labour market as they are unable to regain employment (Field, 1996).

Organisational factors

As mentioned in the last section bullying behaviour causes the target both mental and physical injury. This section reviews the research which has been conducted to investigate what factors of an organisation are associated with bullying at work.

Vartia (1996) attempted to identify the work-related risks of bullying in the work environment and the climate of the organisation, using a 149 item questionnaire. The

Chapter One – Literature Review

questionnaire contained seven sections: occurrence of bullying, perceived reasons for bullying, general atmosphere at work, type of problem solving technique utilised, psychological work environment, organisational climate, and individual and personality traits of the respondents. The responses were divided into three categories: Bullied, observers of bullying, no bullying. The study found that an authoritative approach to problem solving, little opportunity to influence matters concerning oneself, a lack of information flow and few discussions about the tasks and goals of work were characteristics related to a work environment which 'promotes bullying'. These results are found in both groups who felt they had been bullied or had observed bullying in the workplace. Participants in the bullied group felt that envy, a weak superior, competition for tasks or advancement, and competition for the superiors favour and approval were reasons for bullying. In this study gender and age were not related to bullying.

Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla (1996) investigated the relationship between mobbing, job characteristics, social environment variables, and psychological ill health. To investigate these relationships 149 participants were recruited by way of newspaper advertisements, local broadcasting, and mobbing self-help groups. This strategy yielded a poor response therefore the snowball system was utilised which started with people the researchers knew. Each participant completed a set of questionnaires which included the Leymann's Inventory of Psychological Terrorisation to measure mobbing, stress orientated job analysis questionnaire, a scale of social stressors, and a scale of irritation. The researchers found that mobbing by organisational measures included: social isolation, attacking the targets private life, attacking the targets attitudes, physical violence, verbal aggression, and rumours. Mobbing correlated highly with bad job content (role ambiguity), a bad social environment (lack of interaction between workers), and psychological ill health. The researchers conclude that organisational factors are potential causes of mobbing at work.

Chapter One – Literature Review

Liefoghe & Olafsson (1999) utilised the critical incident technique with focus groups to explore the participants' "implicit thoughts and feelings about bullying to make these explicit" (p. 39). When the participants place their amateur knowledge of workplace bullying on the incidents they were able to provide interpretation which included the following frameworks:

Belittling, trouble maker, de-professionalization, insecurity, bad mood, divide and rule, exclusions, embarrassment, injustice, hypocrisy, selfishness, control, power, the manager (good and bad), downsizing, the workforce, pressure, stress, bully, victim, and weak personality.

Each framework was anchored by each participants understanding of bullying. This amateur knowledge of bullying provides additional meanings of the phenomenon which appear to focus on the effect bullying has on targets and the reasons it may occur.

An exploratory study conducted by Zapf (1999) investigated multiple causes of bullying in the workplace. The sample included 129 participants who were divided into two groups: targets of workplace bullying and workers who had never experienced bullying in the workplace. Multiple causes of bullying were assessed which included: the social system, the target, mobbing behaviour, and consequences of mobbing. The study found that the target group reported that organisational uncertainty, organisational problems, and time pressure were the most likely related to mobbing. While both groups reported that conflict behaviour at work affects the well being of workers. Zapf (1999) concludes that an accumulation of unresolved conflicts in an organisation can create a sense of organisational mobbing. This shifts the focus of mobbing away from the individual worker to the organisation itself. Zapf & Gross (2001) found further support for this when they studied conflict escalation in the workplace.

Chapter One – Literature Review

The personalities of self identified samples of targets were assessed by Matthiesen & Einarsen (2001). The participants completed the MMPI-2 (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory – 2) which was scored and the results were compared. The comparison found that targets had a high level of generalised anxiety disorder, fear of specific incidences, and many had health problems which they worried about. The researchers acknowledge that a longitudinal study needs to be conducted which assess the personality of workers before and after a bullying experience to explore how the experience affects personality.

A three way model of how bullying develops in the workplace was created by Baillien, Neyens, DeLittle, & DeCuyper (2009). These researchers approached 126 key informants with an example of an incident of workplace bullying to gain their interpretation of the event. The key informants include: union representatives, human resource managers, and supervisors all of whom had the responsibility to deal with incidents of workplace bullying in their organisations. The informants were required to suggest what may have caused the incident. Among the interpretations three potential triggers reoccurred which included inefficient coping with frustration, unresolved interpersonal conflicts, and organisational characteristics. Creating a positive work environment which encourages positive interactions has been suggested by researchers (Peyton, 2003; Rayner, 1999; Sue, 2007; Weick, 1995).

Organisational restructuring was found to facilitate workplace bullying as it encouraged feelings of insecurity amongst employees fearful of redundancy and placed extra demands on employees (Kearns, McCarthy, & Sheehan, 1997). Similar to this finding Lewis (1999) asserted that the change from personnel management to human resources management created extra pressure on department managers and supervisors. This pressure to manage their employee's recruitment, staff appraisals,

and holidays on top of the ongoing need to improve productivity created an environment that encouraged managers and supervisors to bully their employees. Zapf (1999) asserted that leadership and organisational problems do not harass workers but that the accumulation of unresolved conflicts in an organisation can create a sense of organisational mobbing. Therefore the focus of the phenomenon is shifted from the individual to the organisation as a cause of the phenomenon.

According to Sheehan (1999) there are indicators of workplace bullying occurring in the context of the downsizing and delayering processes. Sheehan suggests that the perceived need for downsizing and delayering are paradoxical to the outcomes of these processes. That is contemporary organisations perceive downsizing and delayering to be a method of increasing corporate earnings. This perception has been encouraged by the finding that the stock markets favour companies which downsize. However research has found that the outcome of downsizing is decreased morale, decreased organisational commitment, and a declining profit which results in staff being rehired and new positions being created with the organisation (Sheehan, 1999).

In the process of downsizing and/ or delayering extra pressure is exerted on managers who in an effort to cope may adopt bullying behaviours which are often incongruent with the goals of the organisation. As organisational downsizing and delayering is considered to be a contemporary practice it suggests that a paradigm shift has occurred which has caused workplace bullying. Sheehan (1999) suggests that to prevent these managers need to develop the following skills: communication, conflict resolution, interpersonal relations, leadership skills, skills of negotiation, stress management, and team building. These skills have been conceptualised as emotional intelligence which is believed to be inherent in all of these skills (Goleman, 1995).

Consequences for the organisation are reported as including: high staff turnover, increased sick leave, increased absenteeism, and loss of organisational knowledge (Einarsen, et al., 1994; Sheehan, Barker, & Rayner, 1999; Salin, 2003). The organisation further suffers as the individual worker experiences decreased levels of motivation, job satisfaction, and therefore levels of efficiency decline (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Coyne, Chong, Seigne, Randall, 2003). These findings substantiate Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper's (2002) assertion that the negative consequences have a ripple effect which affects the individual, the organisation, and society.

Cost of bullying

The cost of bullying to the target, his/ her family and friends, the organisation, and ultimately society can only ever be estimated. The financial cost of this phenomenon is important as the job of organisations is to produce a profit or to keep their business running cost effective in the case of volunteer organisations and the public sector. The business community in the US economy has defined the cost of bullying to be in monetary terms at \$5.2 billion due to loss of productive work hours, prolonged sick leave, premature resignations, high staff turnover, and early retirement. In Britain it has been estimated that workplace bullying costs organisations £682.5 million in 2007 with the overall reduction to the Gross Domestic Product for the county approximated at £17.65 Billion (Giga, Hoel, & Lewis, 2008). Urbanski (2002) estimated that workplace bullying resulted in the lost time and productivity of \$US180 million.

The actual cost of bullying when extended to the health care of the targets and the loss of the future income is incalculable. The human cost of this phenomenon due to the loss of enjoyment in life experience (Crawford, 1997) as a result of the suffering can never be and should never be calculable in monetary terms (Niedl, 1996). But the personal suffering they experienced is evident when we consider the mental and physical harm which has been reported in studies.

Rationale for this project

This literature review laid the foundation for the development of this project. From these studies it is clear that the concept of workplace bullying is now recognised and the phenomenon unfortunately occurs in many countries around the world.

Disagreement remains on how to best define and measure the phenomenon (Salin, 2001). Within this disagreement exists the methodological issue of under reporting since targets of bullying will not admit to having this experience as they prefer to decline the victim role (Einarsen, 2000). This was further supported in a 2001 study by Mikkelsen & Einarsen who found an overall prevalence of 2-4% yet the data revealed that 17.7% reported witnessing bullying in the workplace. The nature of self reporting relies on the subjective experience of being a target of bullying and requires that participants risk being stigmatised by acknowledging that they are targets of this behaviour.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter researchers have experienced difficulty recruiting participants for their studies on the phenomenon. Ishmeal (1999) found that targets are reluctant to report incidents as this may result in further harassment; therefore participating in research projects may elicit unwanted attention. Denying the experience has been found to protect and minimise the damaging effects of bullying by the target (Randall, 1992; Bowling & Beehr, 2006). It is impossible to study it as it occurs and therefore much research has centred on the use of case studies and court cases to piece together what actually occurs during the bullying process (Doyle, 2003). Focussing on case studies from the court system to investigate the process of bullying may only reflect the way in which the targets legal counsel perceived the experience. In a court of law legal counsel model stories on past cases whose verdicts were favourable to them (Bruner, 2002) since they

must rely on legal interpretations of legislations or past precedents to successfully argue their case. Therefore studying court cases will not provide insight into the experience from the targets' point of view.

Hoel (1997) highlighted the importance of post trauma studies of the targets to better understand how best to assist the targets after the experience. Gaining an understanding of the targeted workers subjective experiences is missing in academic studies even though it is integral to understanding how and why bullying is so costly to the individuals and organisations (Tracey, Lutgen-Sandvik & Alberts, 2006; Silvester, 2008; Tehrani, 2001; Bolton, 2007).

This project recognises this gap and has been developed to capture the targets perspective of their experiences of workplace bullying. Searching different avenues to obtain this perspective ended on the World Wide Web which is a place many people use to share information and their experiences. A full explanation of how the project developed on the basis of an understanding of how best to conduct research using this media is included in the next chapter. The potential the World Wide Web offers social science researchers to gain an understanding how people use this media has become a new frontier for the research community (Hewson, Yule, Laurent, & Vogel, 2003).

Discovering this new frontier and incorporating the issues outlined in this chapter enabled the development of the research question: How do targets describe their experiences of workplace bullying on the internet? The aim of this question is to gain insight into how people describe their experiences which includes what aspects of the experience they choose to focus on. The way in which targets describe this experience will provide a deeper level of understanding into this phenomenon and how they have survived and moved on in their lives. Whether they experience ongoing consequences and if they do what are they. These are issues which have

Chapter One – Literature Review

been neglected in the literature to date and internet sites provide naturalistic subjective data to better understand and make sense of this phenomenon and explore these issues.

Most of the research on the topic has focussed on how to detect and measure bullying in the workplace; how to define this new construct. While this is important it is also equally important to find ways of assisting targets to get back into work. Solely investigating negative acts in the workplace and their affect on people depending on the frequency of such acts is merely skimming the surface. It is the ongoing affects of this form of trauma on the targets which in the long term needs to be considered. If we submit that workplace bullying isn't a new phenomenon and that it has existed for as long as the workplace has existed then it is reasonable to assume that there are many targets who are trying to get on with their lives carrying the burden of their bullying experiences alone. Perhaps the personal stories which are published on the internet can provide us with a better understanding of the long term effects of bullying at work and enable us to assist target to find a way of overcoming their ordeal. The personal stories can tell us about the meaning that is attached to the negative acts endured by the targets this in its own way may enable to find ways to better design systems in the workplace to counteract their occurrence.

The following chapter provides a review of internet research methods and it expands the rationale for this project. Conducting ethical internet research is also discussed and the ethical protocol for this project is outlined.

Chapter Two

Internet Research

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of internet research and the ethics criteria developed for this project. The information revolution that has taken place in the last two decades is due to the public accessibility of internet technology. Because this revolution has been fast paced, the research community is still coming to grips with how best to explore this new frontier of human interaction. Therefore, conducting research in this arena requires much time to develop how best to utilise this new arena and ensure that projects have clear ethical guidelines.

Gaining an appreciation of the abused workers subjective experiences is integral to understanding how and why bullying is so costly to individuals and organisations (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). Tracey, et al., (2006), highlight that the emotional stories of targets are missing in academic studies. It is this gap in the literature that the current project aims to address. Yet there are serious issues confronting researchers who are seeking the subjective, emotional experiences of those who have been targets of bullying.

To gain insight into this experience requires the research to be conducted in a way that provides the targets with the opportunity to describe their experiences in their own way. Needham (2003), points out that targets are often prevented from discussing the episode or episodes as they may be bound to confidentiality clauses if they have accepted a settlement from their employer. Targets may be involved in or may become involved in legal action as a result of the abuse they have suffered at work and will not be able to disclose details of their experiences. Underreporting suggests that many targets may be reluctant to participate in research; hence gaining access to stories of workplace bullying is difficult to achieve.

Chapter Two – Internet Research

Fortunately, the use of the internet for research has recently been developed more fully and provides a means of redressing some of the difficulties of research in sensitive areas such as subjective experiences of bullying. It would usually be the case that investigations of subjective experiences are undertaken through qualitative research. Denzin & Lincoln (2008) assert that qualitative research has reached its 'eighth moment' in which the social sciences and the humanities are sites for critical discussion about globalization, freedom, and community. All of these are encapsulated within the internet itself as it is a form of media which reaches a global community of users who can freely share information.

The world wide internet has played an instrumental part in the globalisation of information. We can communicate online with people thousands of miles away in seconds. The internet has become a popular way to exchange information for the portion of the global community which has the resources to utilise it. The first computers connected to share information across a long distance in the 1960s although this only occurred between universities in the United States of America (O'Dochartaigh, 2002). The internet as we know it has only been user friendly to the general population since 1994 (O'Dochartaigh, 2002). By July 1995 there were 6.6 million networked hosts, and by January 2002 there were 147 million users (Hewson, Yule, Laurent, & Vogel, 2003). As I write this there are 1,574 million people online (www.internetwordstats.com).

Cyber psychology contends that the internet has provided an avenue for a shared consciousness to be conveyed globally on a multitude of topics (Suler, 2006). This shared consciousness can be found on websites where people type themselves into existence in cyberspace. Typing one's self into existence provides an avenue for people to share their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs on topics which may otherwise remain hidden (Gajjala & Altman, 2006).

Chapter Two – Internet Research

Internet research has become a popular field of inquiry into the experience of being diagnosed as having cancer (Pitts, 2004; Orgad, 2006; Gooden & Winefield, 2007; Sandaunet, 2008) and participation in HIV/Aids support groups (Bar-Lev, 2008). Overall these studies found that the internet offered free expression and a sense of empowerment which was unobtainable in other spheres of the participants' lives. These fields of inquiry have provided insight for researchers of cancer and HIV which were inaccessible otherwise, but have not been incorporated into our understanding of these illnesses.

Since explicit stories of pain and victimization are particularly likely to happen behind closed doors (Deetz, 1992), the internet allows stories to be shared widely, anonymously and in the privacy of ones own home. Hence it affords those who have experienced victimisation, the privilege of freely expressing themselves on topics which may be difficult for them to discuss in any other forum.

Taken together the stories of victimisation on the internet construct a shared consciousness and an understanding of what it means to experience victimisation. This offers researchers a unique opportunity to explore these experiences and reveal aspects of these experiences that may otherwise remain hidden. Each story teller has the privilege of sharing their experiences without being constrained by place and time. This allows them to choose the words and phrases to describe their experiences without time pressure, whenever they choose. The stories are expressed freely in an unobtrusive naturalistic manner which provides subjectively meaningful raw data for researchers. The authenticity of these stories cannot be established, but then information provided by face to face interviews is usually not verified for authenticity either. In the main, qualitative researchers accept that the stories they are told by participants are subjectively meaningful to the tellers.

Chapter Two – Internet Research

Therefore in this eighth moment of qualitative research the internet provides an opportunity for research to be conducted into the experience of workplace bullying. For targets of bullying at work the internet can provide a safe haven in cyber space in which they can achieve free expression. Stories on the internet can then in turn provide insight for researchers of workplace bullying so that more aspects of this phenomenon can be revealed and incorporated into our understanding.

Collecting data from websites which publish the anonymous stories of workplace bullying is considered to be web archival data collection which is naturalistic and unobtrusive. Insight can be gained without the targets risking stigmatisation by participating in face to face interviews or postal surveys.

The stories can be seen as contemporary artefacts since they are published on the World Wide Web which is a significant evolutionary change in communication of our time. They are a product of globalization in the sense that the individual story tellers are sharing their own lived experiences of bullying with the world. We can read them any where in the world that has an internet connection. The story tellers can do so freely with the promise of anonymity from the World Wide Web to gain freedom of expression. Anonymity is assured by some website creators who offer the opportunity for a person to submit and share their stories via a moderator who removes all identifying features of their stories. This safe haven allows people to express their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about their experiences unhindered by the need to meet any expectations other than their own need to share their stories.

Ethical internet research

The World Wide Web is a new frontier for researchers this new frontier offers as many problems as it does benefits (Jones, 1999). Developing the ethical guidelines for this project became a challenge within itself. The ethics of harvesting data on the

Chapter Two – Internet Research

World Wide Web have been debated far and wide and at times bitterly (Witte, 2004). Some consider the internet to be the first truly global village which because of its easy accessibility is exploiting the individuals who participate within it (Barbrook, 2007). Others are less appreciative and consider it to be a virtual world only useful for commercial activities and exploitation. A full review of this debate is beyond the scope of this project. However, the brief overview of internet research which follows aims to locate the current project within these ethical debates.

Internet research to date has included web based surveying, email interviewing, context analysis research, analysis of chat room discussion and web archival research (Kraut, Kielser, Boneva, Cummings, Helgeson, & Crawford, 2002; Mulveen & Hepworth, 2006). The benefit of each type of internet research is that it is cost effective, time and resource efficient therefore environmentally friendly, and has the ability to defy geographical barriers to gain access to the entire world of internet users. Im & Chee (2008) asserts that the internet provides non face to face interaction that is liberating as the researcher is not affected by features of a person such as their specific identity that is, gender, ethnic identity, and other social features. Therefore it fosters freedom of expression without the fear of social sanction based on gender, ethnic or other relevant stereotypes (Kendall, 1998; Evans, Elford, & Wiggins, 2008).

However due to the fast pace of development which has occurred on the World Wide Web the creation of ethical guidelines has kept up. This means that researchers have to develop their own ethical guidelines as they develop their project and adhere to the fundamental principals of their chosen field of inquiry.

At the inception of this topic the notion of analysing discussions in online chat rooms was to be the main field of inquiry. But on further investigation I discovered

that this was ethically similar to bugging a person's home. Discussions in chat rooms are considered to be private and even though they are published on the World Wide Web the users have found this method of inquiry to be obtrusive and distasteful (Sharf, 1999). This caused a major rethink of the entire project which led to the discovery of web archival data. These are essentially repositories of information that has been stored on the internet by creators who gather information, removing all identifiable features, and then publish it online for users to view. Wallace (1999) contends that anonymity is a moving target on the internet as computer programs and technology are constantly being developed and redeveloped to maintain anonymity and prevent anonymity by tracking email addresses and ISP addresses. However some website creators who archive information ensure anonymity as information is sent to them via the post and is typed on to the website by the website creator. Other information is emailed to them but the emails are printed and retyped onto the website so there is no chance that they can be traced. Hence anonymity is assured regardless of new technology that could be used to identify the source of information on the World Wide Web.

As mentioned in the last chapter it is difficult to study workplace bullying as the targets either refuse the victims role, may not be aware that they are being bullied or are legally constrained from sharing their experiences. Therefore it emerged that web archival data offered the most potential to gain insight in their experiences in a safe and ethical manner.

To maintain the anonymity of the story tellers websites were selected for this study on the basis that they assured that any stories submitted would be altered to protect the identity of the story teller and the spirit of the website's intent was to assist and inform viewers of workplace bullying without exploitation.

Chapter Two – Internet Research

Another criterion was that the website creator consented to their websites being included in this project. As a researcher I wanted to ensure that the website creators themselves were given the opportunity to consider participating in this project. Even though the websites are freely accessible it seemed unethical to assume that conducting an analysis of their content was considered the same as just viewing it.

Therefore gaining permission from the website creators was deemed appropriate as this new frontier of research, where ethical guidelines are still being debated it is important to err on the side of caution rather than assume that free access for viewing is the same as consent to conduct an analysis.

This chapter has provided a brief overview of internet research and the rationale the project has taken to develop its own ethical guidelines. The next chapter provides a full explanation of the methods and the methodology of this project undertaken to gather the raw data and analyse it in the context of internet research. The development of internet research methods is clearly in its infancy as are ethical protocols which provide guidance to research. However this project has been developed to ensure the story tellers retain their safe haven of anonymity but at the same time their stories gain perhaps a broader audience by assisting the research community to better understand the targets experience of workplace bullying.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

Chapter One provided an overview of the literature on workplace bullying and identified a gap in this research so far. The gap identified was research on the targets' experience of workplace bullying which led to the development of the research question: How do targets describe their experiences of workplace bullying on the internet? Chapter One recognised the difficulty in gaining such an insight into the targets' experience and Chapter Two offered an avenue to address these difficulties. This chapter describes the methodology employed to gather subjective data on bullying, from the targets' stories of their experiences and a way of systematically studying this data.

Qualitative methodology provides researchers the opportunity to ask questions which have not been derived from hypotheses, but rather explore the data under investigation (Berg, 2004). This approach best fits within this field of inquiry as it is a topic which has received little attention in the past from which to drive hypotheses and utilizes the internet to gather data which is a new frontier for research. Immersed in this new frontier by surfing the World Wide Web and reading and rereading the material on the internet allowed the formulation of the methods to elicit data and systematically analyze it in a meaningful way.

Qualitative research has reached its 'eighth moment' in which the domains of the Social Sciences and Humanities are sites for discussion about globalization, freedom, and community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008a), all of which characterize this

Chapter Three – Methodology

present study. Through this medium of the internet, there has been a heightened understanding of just what a global community is, as all users become united in one space. The World Wide Web has provided authors with freedom of expression and the opportunity to do so in a safe environment: one where a target of workplace bullying can share their stories online without fear of retribution and where they are also able to recognise that they are part of a community where their shared experiences are meaningful to others (Lombardo & Gillet, 2006).

A qualitative approach to this present study was selected for two reasons. Primarily, the topic has been neglected as it is difficult to gain access to targets of workplace bullying as mentioned earlier. This methodology is interested in investigating first person accounts and stories of bullying, both of which are included in this project. A qualitative analysis assumes multi methods need to be employed in order to capture as much of the phenomenon as possible, accepting that ‘reality can never be fully apprehended’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008a), whilst fundamentally maintaining that rich descriptions of the social world are valuable fields of inquiry. The stories of workplace bullying on the World Wide Web are rich in description as they provide a multi layered account of the phenomenon. The stories were written in a context of the targets choosing in their own time away from the gaze of an interviewer and other demand characteristics that are present in other research contexts.

Within the tool shed of qualitative research there are many different approaches to select from which inform the methodology of a study. The aim of these approaches is to gain the perspective of people who have experienced psychological phenomenon, thus allowing researchers to develop a meaningful understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and thereby develop theories about this (Smith, 1996). After

Chapter Three – Methodology

careful consideration and evaluation, it was determined that a thematic analysis would be the most apt manner in which to analyse the data obtained.

Thematic analysis was selected as the best method to achieve a thorough analysis of the stories of workplace bullying retrieved from the internet because it was well fitted to the goals of this project. Smith (1995) asserts that the aim of thematic analysis is to achieve an interpretative phenomenological understanding of the participant's experience which is similar to that of many qualitative methods (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). Thematic analysis can either be approached from a theory-driven perspective or a data-driven standpoint (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This project utilised a data-driven approach as there is little research into the experience of the target to inform a theory-driven analysis of this phenomenon. A requirement of this strategy is to allow the data to speak for itself and shape and form the analysis process (Charmaz, 1994). In identifying themes common in the textual data (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000; Wilson, 1993; Eatough & Smith, 2008; Smith, Harre, & Van Langenhore, 2005), patterns can be detected through the examination of co-occurrences between the stories, when they are being analysed for themes and events (Le Compt & Schensul, 1999; Loewenthal, Lee, MacLeod, Cook, Goldblatt, 2003). A more detailed description of the analysis is included at the end of this chapter.

The researcher utilizes their research skills to reveal an in depth understanding of the experiences of others in a meaningful way that acts as a conduit (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008b) for these experiences. The researchers aim is to walk in the shoes of the story teller armed with the knowledge of her discipline to gain the story tellers' perspective and interpret that and place it into the knowledge base of the discipline (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

Chapter Three – Methodology

As the researcher using this methodology it important to acknowledge my work experiences and understanding of workplace bullying. It is important for the researcher to position herself because of the subjectivity involved in the interpretation (Guest & McLellan, 2003). As a mature student I have already held many positions in working life. Fortunately I have not been the target of bullying and therefore my understanding of this phenomenon has grown as I have completed this project.

Amongst the challenges I have faced whilst completing this project reading the stories has been the most compelling as reading them has felt more like listening to many voices of anguish. As a researcher in this context I have been rendered helpless at times. This sense of helplessness has occurred because of the lack of opportunity to provide assistance or any form of response to the pain and grief which the targets have expressed in their stories. Excellent supervision and many breaks from my analysis and journal writing (Rager, 2005; Rew, Bechtel & Supp, 1993) I have been able to overcome this to complete the project. This experience is not uncommon for researchers, when investigating a topic researcher exposes themselves to personal facts (David & Sutton, 2004) and the emotions of the other which is necessary to produce a high quality of research (Gilbert, 2001; Finlay & Balingier, 2006), but also difficult and challenging in itself.

Procedures for data gathering

In order to best gather data for this present research I needed to select an appropriate search engine on the World Wide Web that is most popular amongst internet users (Beaulieu, 2005). On this basis Google was selected. This search engine is so

Chapter Three – Methodology

popular that the Oxford dictionary has recognised this by including “Google it” in its dictionary:

Intr. To use Google search engine to find information on the internet.

Trans. To search for the information (a person or thing) using the Google search engine.

By entering the term ‘stories of workplace bullying’ the search engine retrieved 1,640,000 websites in a mere 0.20 seconds. This pool of websites became the general population of possible websites from which to draw a sample. Reviewing the websites initially to familiarise myself with the scope and breadth of the various websites revealed the actual impermanence of the internet. By bookmarking the websites which conformed to criteria for selection into this project I was able to revisit these sites. This was when I discovered the full meaning of “URL error 404”. This means the website has shut down or is currently receiving maintenance, as a result, these websites were revisited one more time and if that resulted in the “URL error 404” then they were removed from the list of possible websites to be included in the study.

The next step required defining the selection criteria for gathering data. As discussed in Chapter Two, these criteria were informed by research ethics and the methodology of this project. A low risk ethics application was approved by the Massey University Ethics Committee. The websites were selected on the basis that they were created for and maintained a spirit of supporting and informing the

Chapter Three – Methodology

general public and the stories published on them had to be altered to ensure anonymity for the story tellers.

Once the websites were selected an email was sent to the website creator to gain consent to utilise the website for the purposes of this project (Appendix A). Once consent was granted the website was printed and stored for analysis. Each website was printed at the point that consent was granted due to the threat of the “URL error 404” and the constant impermanent state in which the internet exists. Through increasingly applying the criteria to relatively stable sites, and seeking consent from the website creators the field of sites was narrowed to five internet sites which contained 208 stories. This included 554 pages of text to be analysed; the average story was 2.5 pages long. The stories were numbered on the websites therefore a name was given to each target story for the purposes of this project each name was randomly chosen from list of names website and assigned to each story.

The sample

The sample for this project included the stories (n=208) which had been published on the selected websites. Since the websites guaranteed the anonymity of those who submitted their stories a detailed description of the story tellers is not possible. It is assumed that the stories are expressed freely by the targets of workplace bullying. This means that the words they have used to express their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about their experience of workplace bullying are theirs and have been carefully selected in their own time. Changes made to protect their anonymity have not substantially altered the way in which they told their stories. The stories have not been elicited by anyone other and were told because of the targets' own need or desire to share their experiences with the world wide community of internet users.

Chapter Three – Methodology

Seen in this context, the data included in this project has been gathered unobtrusively from its natural environment (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Analytical description of websites

The websites which contained the stories that have been analysed thematically in this project were selected cautiously. It was important that a high level of integrity was maintained to ensure that the story tellers' voices could be heard but their anonymity was preserved. Therefore to maintain this integrity the particular details such as their website addresses and websites names are not recorded in this project. Instead an analytical description of the websites is provided to an understanding of the websites and a brief context analysis which investigated the context in which the websites are located on the World Wide Web.

The selected websites were chosen as they encouraged awareness of the phenomenon of bullying and self help for people who have experienced the phenomenon. They did this by providing a cohesive explanation of workplace bullying, information on how to recover from the experience, legal advice, and personal stories from those who had experience of workplace bullying. The websites included advertising which consisted of books on the topic, counselling available, and lawyers who specialise in employment law. The spirit of the websites entailed helping people gain an awareness of the phenomenon in an attempt to share the experience so that targets' no longer felt alone. The website creators had been targets of workplace bullying which was the reason they created the websites. The information contained on these websites is supported by references and links to research articles on the topic are available. The references afford a sense of legitimacy about the information and provide the reader with the ability to follow up with other reading that will help make sense of their own experiences. These

Chapter Three – Methodology

features are all a hallmark of the websites which set them apart from other websites on the phenomenon. Other websites were set in the context of chat rooms which contained little information on the phenomenon but primarily focussed upon advertising a range of products that were not related to the phenomenon.

Thematic analysis

According to Attride-Stirling (2001) thematic analysis develops in six steps with each step directing the researcher to a deeper level of analysis of the material in a methodical manner. This section is designed to reveal how the stories have been analysed which according to Attride-Sterling (2001) is often not included in research reports.

Step one entailed reading and rereading the material to identify recurrent issues which had appeared in the stories. Identification of these recurrent issues allowed the stories to be divided into meaningful chunks. These chunks became coding frameworks which were applied to the stories so that passages, quotes, and single words could be attached to the codes. To achieve this I photocopied several copies of the stories making sure I kept a master copy which remained untouched, except for numbering each story. The photocopies were worked with by highlighting different areas and writing notes in the columns of the text. I continued to do this until I was satisfied that I had captured as much from the text as possible. A sign of this completeness was when I compared the different photo copies of the stories and found that I had repeatedly written the same notes and highlighted the same areas of the text on different copies.

Chapter Three – Methodology

Once the frameworks for codes had been developed step two required abstracting themes from the codes. This was a time consuming process that required repeatedly jumping between step one and two since I wanted to be sure that what I thought I had captured was really there. In the end I was able to refine the themes in a way that made better sense through this process of iteration between steps one and two.

To refine the themes I wrote all of the selected quotes, passages, and single words on large posters developing a large poster for each theme. The posters were hung on the wall and much time was spent re-reading them and comparing them with the stories. The posters remained on the walls throughout the analysis and memo notes were added to them as the analysis continued.

Step three involved arranging the themes into groups which required considering their content to determine if particular themes fitted closely together. Two overarching groups of themes emerged: the acts of bullying and the ongoing consequences of bullying. Once this was recognised I stepped back into each group and found that within each group there appeared to be an order in which the themes occurred for the targets. This led to a trajectory of how the bullying process develops and how it affects the targets.

Step four involved revisiting the stories and rereading the passages, quotes, and single words which had been divided into themes instead of rereading the entire set of stories in a linear way. Re-reading the stories through the themes that had emerged provided a way to see how well the analysis is supported by the text. As a consequence each step in which this had occurred, was revisited to ensure that all themes were well supported by the data, and sequence identified in the themes was commonly recognised in the stories.

Chapter Three – Methodology

Step five was the summarising of the themes individually, and then succinctly into the two groupings which had emerged. This provided an explication of the implicit and explicit themes which had emerged from the stories. As I worked through summarising the themes I was reminded of literature which I had studied during my undergraduate and post graduate courses as well as research I had read to review the literature for this study. As this occurred, I decided to include the literature into the analysis which I hadn't planned to do initially but it made sense as the analysis unfolded.

The aim of the sixth step is to bring the analysis together by revisiting the research question and answering it by summarising the analysis. It was important to ensure that the research question was answered by the patterns which had emerged from the stories. In order to do this I reviewed the posters, memo notes, and the diary I had written throughout the project. This enabled me to revisit my thinking and how my interpretation and analysis of the stories had developed throughout the project. It is difficult to explain this step, other than to say that I revisited the each of the five initial steps as the sixth step unfolded in an attempt to return to the very beginning of this project to answer the initial research question which drove the entire project.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter had been to provide the methodological underpinnings of this project and the methods undertaken to answer the research question. In essence, it contains a detailed description of how the following chapters of analysis have been developed. As mentioned earlier qualitative research methods are difficult to describe in detail but I have attempted to do this to add transparency to the process and provide the reader with the understanding of how the analysis has adhered to a methodical systematic approach. The following chapters include the two chapters of analysis and then a final chapter which revisits the research question and responds to it with the findings from this project.

Chapter four

Analysis

The act of bullying

This is the first of two analysis chapters for this project; they include a detailed analysis of the stories from which the themes emerged. On final analysis the themes were found to be interlinked in a way which described stages that occur during the process of workplace bullying from the targets perspective. From the outset of this project it was not envisaged that the themes would emerge in stages. The stories themselves were not written in a systematic fashion which stated an order of how the bullying occurred. Each individual story was written in its own unique way. But as the analysis progressed it became clear that there were stages to the development of this phenomenon. The stages proved to be useful as a framework for the analysis in this project.

The analysis has been divided into two chapters which illustrate two overarching themes. The first overarching theme is the act of bullying and the second is the long term consequences which the targets experienced as a result of their encounter with this phenomenon. The two overarching themes consist of primary themes which are interlinked and are explained by including excerpts of the stories which are followed by an interpretation.

Triggering event

It is reasonable to assume that something in the workplace must change or an event must occur which heralds the beginning of bullying in that workplace. Otherwise we would have to assume that bullying was a phenomenon that was always present in the dynamics of a workplace. Yet as we found in chapter one only a percentage of the working population experiences it at any given time. Therefore when this

Chapter Four – Analysis

analysis provided insight into the notion that a change in the workplace triggered bullying behaviour it assisted me to make sense of the stories and to gain a better appreciation of the affect this phenomenon has on the target.

Many targets mention an event that they believe triggered the beginning of the bullying in their workplace. This event included either a new superior or a new job for the target. Each of these events will be discussed in turn.

In this first excerpt the target describes the introduction of a new manager into her workplace. The effect on the workplace was that workers began to resign even though many of them had been loyal to the organisation for many years.

I worked in administration for about two years and was also a member of the management committee. Many of the members had been on the committee for several years but suddenly they began to resign one by one. The newly appointed manager turned out to be the reason for their resignations. I eventually resigned myself because of the bullying tactics of the manager. This is a brief account of my encounter with a serial bully. [Julie]

While Julie acknowledges that the sudden onset of resignations was directly related to the new manager she stayed on for some time and did not resign until the tactics of the manager eroded her ability to perform her duties and removed the sense of job satisfaction she had experienced until this change occurred. This story shows us how a bully increased the staff turnover in that workplace and consequently lost a large portion of the organisation's knowledge. Einarsen, et al, (1994) asserted that a high staff turnover and loss of organisational knowledge are endemic within this phenomenon and signify the real cost of bullying.

The next target describes trying to cope with the harsh treatment he suffered when the new manager started in the workplace. The sense of bullying was magnified for

Chapter Four – Analysis

him when the manager recruited new staff and then assigned the target menial and then physically impossible tasks.

It seemed the new manager ruled with an iron fist and was basically a bully. He surrounded himself with staff he had recruited in his own image. Every reasonable step I took to resolve my situation was refused or worse I was totally ignored, all the time my treatment seemed to get harsher, I was given totally menial tasks, which when complained about would result in me being given physically impossible tasks. Joel.

From Joel's perspective adapting to a new manager and new staff members placed him in a difficult position as he must now build rapport with not only the manager but with other new staff which he clearly found difficult to achieve. Being assigned menial tasks further complicated this new work environment which inevitable caused concern for Joel. Researchers have found that introducing many new staff members at the same time changes the workplace in unpredictable ways and unless this change was managed carefully would result in the existing staff members concern (Huse, 1975; Wayne, Hoobler, Marinva, & Johnson, 2008; Skogstad, Einarsen, Torshemin, Aasland, & Hetland, 2007). For Joel attempting to reason with the new manager is ignored and the treatment becomes harder for him to deal with. Complaining about this harsh treatment results in Joel being assigned physically impossible tasks. It appears that Joel is being punished until he conforms to the demands of the new manager or at least acclimatises to the new work environment. In the context of this workplace the new manager has made a decision for change to fit his needs rather than to first acclimatise his own style of management to fit that of this new workplace. Existing members of this workplace, such as Joel, are treated harshly until they conform. Until then Joel's profile in is minimised to a point in which he doesn't fit. Even though Joel has worked for the organisation many years

Chapter Four – Analysis

and in this time has worked hard to gain a position of responsibility all of this is lost with the introduction of a new manager. For Joel this harsh treatment was too much to bear and he prematurely resigned from the organisation.

In the next story we find another target who has spent years in the organisation that she describes as great. However the introduction of a new manager changes this perception and the target is at a loss as to explain how things at work could become so intolerable.

When I began my career as a paralegal, I thought that I would be working in that job for a long time. I had a good experience starting out in a job I landed after being recruited from my school. Things were great for about 3 years. Then came an office manager who was the ultimate bully. All I can figure after the whole experience is that she was mean by nature. There was no other reason for her attack on me. But attack it was. From the moment the bully manager set foot in the office, she decided she was going to have me sacked. She would remove things from my desk when I was at lunch or gone from the office. Later she would have a note attached to the notebook or file saying "Return to (my name)". She did this to make sure I knew she had snatched items from my office in a sneaky manner. Jenny

Jenny had a rewarding start to working life, so great was his start that she couldn't imagine working anywhere else for a long time. Unfortunately this great workplace turned into a mean work environment with the introduction of a new manager. Jenny felt that the new manager intended on having her sacked therefore she became fearful of losing her job. This fear only intensified when the manager remove things from her desk when she was absent. Clearly Jenny considered her desk as her own personal space which was repeatedly violated by the new manager. This form of violation combined with other bullying behaviour strengthens Jenny's belief that the

Chapter Four – Analysis

manager is a bully and that Jenny's position in the organisation will continue to be undermined. Jenny's working relationship with her new manager had not developed to the point in which they shared a sense of trust. A lack of trust has been found to be important in studies of organisations (Thau, Crossley, Bennett, & Sczesny, 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). Taking items out of a person's desk requires a sense of trust before it can happen without installing a sense of violation. Unfortunately these acts were experienced as a violation for Jenny and affirmed her sense that she was being targeted. She resigned prematurely to prevent the bully from having her sacked.

From its inception the merger of two branches within an organisation means unpredictable changes for the workers in the organisation (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001). For Alex experiencing these changes first hand proved to be too much to bear due to the bullying tactics of the newly appointed Director who was in charge of implementing the merger.

In September a new Director, who had previously managed another, much smaller local branch took over in the run-up to a merger of the two centres. She was immediately recognised by all the staff as a control freak, constantly comparing us unfavourably to the other branch, changing individual and office methods and systems just for the sake of it, rummaging through staff's desk drawers in their absence, butting in on conversations and talking loudly in the office even when staff were in the midst of telephone calls with distressed clients.[Alex]

The new Directors ability to manage the merger is questioned by Alex as the new Director has only managed a smaller branch. Therefore Alex is not confident that the changes to methods and systems in the workplace will effectively manage the workload. This sense is heightened due to the lack of discussion and explanation when the changes were introduced. It is also possible that Alex's own sense of competence and understanding of her work tasks are undermined in the process.

Again we find a target who feels violated when her desk is rummaged through by the new Director. This violation of a personal space is unnerving in the presence of bullying tactics. Butting in on conversations and disturbing phone calls prevents Alex from competing work tasks. The bully retains power not only by her status as the Director but as she is in a position that enables her to undermine Alex's ability to perform her duties and to prevent Alex from complaining about the tactics.

Complaining in a time of constant change may be seen as resistance to change by the Director and could place Alex in a more vulnerable situation. When a planned merger is being implemented workers prefer to be informed about the changes (Heath, Knez, & Camerer, 1993; Harvey, Buckley, Heames, Zinko, Brouer, & Ferris, 2007). In the absence of this lack of information and in the presence of a new Director Alex resigns from the organisation.

The next story provides an example of a workplace that refuses to allow the new manager to use his power to bully a worker. The target's co-workers support him throughout the ordeal until the bully is removed from this position within the organisation.

I was bullied with unrelenting vehemence by a new line manager from February 2001 to August 2001. The bullying was witnessed by other managers and my staff (all of whom stood up to be counted and relayed to higher management what had occurred). I went through four months of informal resolution meetings where the bully had a forum to openly abuse me, this behaviour was then tackled. However in order to tackle his basic beliefs I was used as the whipping boy. During the last meeting I was shouted and sworn at in front of two senior managers who did nothing to protect me. I protected myself by leaving the meeting. Somehow I managed to go to work every day and eventually for the first time in the history of this government department the bully was reverted to a lower grade and moved. [Dean]

Chapter Four – Analysis

In this case it is likely that Dean was able to remain in the workplace and protect himself from the antics of the bully simply because he was aware that he had the support of his fellow workers. Walking out of meetings to protect himself did not weaken his position as he was confident that eventually the abusive behaviour would be addressed. Being used as the whipping boy and enduring verbal abuse was seen by Dean as necessary so that the bully's abusive behaviour could be revealed and dealt with. This indicated that Dean also had faith that the organisation would listen to his co workers and resolve the situation. Unlike the writers of the previously cited stories, Dean did not resign from his position to avoid being bullied: his organisation dealt with it.

Sometimes the triggering situation is not a new member of staff joining an organisation that the target already works for, but the target beginning in a new position themselves. Starting a new job is difficult for anyone; everything is different and there is a lot to learn when integrating into another environment. This adaptation is made even more difficult for the new worker if from the outset they are blamed for mistakes that happened before they commenced working there.

After a couple of weeks of starting we were in the Architect's office, which was full of their staff listening to the discussion, when I pulled the P M aside making a few suggestions how to go forward on an issue. This lead to a tirade of abuse from him, who seemed to be holding me liable for al the mistakes on the job, even those prior to my arrival. This left me devastated and I then had to sit in a meeting with PM until 8 pm that night all I wanted to do was get away from him. [Lee]

In this story Lee is a new employee and is targeted by the bully as the scapegoat who is blamed for all mistakes which had happened prior to him commencing work in the organisation. Lee is in a weak position as the new employee. He is unable to fend off such attacks and he does not have any supportive relationships within the work

environment. Williams (1993) suggests that the bully utilises the target to publicly abuse and unleash their frustrations. Lee becomes the scapegoat for mistakes and the person who can be abused in front of others so that the bully can display their dominance and power.

Unfortunately this behaviour only continued unchallenged and Lee continued to be socially isolated in the workplace unable to build any friendships and his work performance was continually undermined. Even though working in this environment never improved he continued to make his own attempts to change the situation until his mental health declined to the point that his doctor recommended he take extended sick leave.

This section has discussed two events which the targets in the stories describe as the beginning of their bullying ordeal. Both events include a change to the work environment which included the introduction of a new person. The stories that attributed an event which triggered bullying provided this analysis with a trajectory for the bullying experience. Therefore it was fitting to place the triggering event at the beginning of the analysis section.

Incidents of negative behaviour

This section has been divided into sections which represent the sub themes of the primary theme of the act of bullying. The sections include: hindsight, persistent and unrelenting negative criticism, scapegoat, tasks and duties, deadlines, basic rights denied, personal attacks, name calling and temper tantrums. Except for the first sub-theme, these are all acts of bullying that the targets in the stories describe from their point of view. They provide us insight into how they have been experienced by the target.

Hindsight

Before considering the specific acts of bullying below, this section discusses an interesting aspect of the targets' perspectives which emerged from the stories. Frequent references in the stories were made to the lack of insight the targets had of what was happening to them at the time the bullying occurred. This lack of awareness has emerged as it was present in many stories. This was a difficult theme to conceptualise as it was hard to comprehend how it must have been for the targets since they were so often unaware of the phenomenon at the time the bullying began to occur. The blindness that targets experience is in itself a negative act inflicted upon them by the bully's behaviour. Therefore many direct quotes from the stories have been included to convey to the reader the state in which the targets found themselves as they began to realise what was happening or had happened to them in the work environment. The stories which describe a triggering event did so from most in hindsight as they recounted their perspective.

Now I realise, in hindsight... [Ned]

I now understand it was bullying. [Brandon]

Now that I reflect back I recognise I was being bullied. [Sam]

I now understand what was happening to me. [Ellie]

I later came to realise what was happening. [Raewyn]

I didn't realise it until now. [Ty]

I have worked in a call centre for 18 months and really being bullied almost from the start of employment, but I can only see that in retrospect now. [Rob]

Working in a large organisation likeyou might expect to find people who can be more or less easy to work with but I gradually realised that his inappropriate behaviour seemed to be directed at me. [Lois]

Chapter Four – Analysis

These stories shared a sense of bewilderment and lack of awareness that they were the target of bullying at the time it was happening. Reflecting back on the incidents occurred when the target was away from the stress of that workplace. At this time they were able to connect incidents and place them in context. The target is aware of feeling confused and frustrated at the time but cannot understand why they feel that way.

The confusion and bewilderment has now tuned to fury and anger upon enlightenment of bullying information. [Mel]

For some time Mel knew that something was wrong but was unable to attribute the feeling to anything. Her understanding occurred almost serendipitously as she tumbled upon a magazine article on workplace bullying as she read this article she as reminded of her own experiences.

Jane describes that the pressure of the workplace was so great that like many of the earlier examples, she had to leave the workplace.

Of course, I only realise all this after I left. At the time I was punch drunk. I just buckled under the pressure of it all. [Jane]

Jane described her state at the time as being “punch drunk” which made her so disorientated that she was unable to realise what was happening. Leaving the stress of the workplace provided her with the ability to clear her mind and realise that she was a target of bullying. Lack of awareness is attributed to the pressure that she is in at the time which leaves her in a helpless state unable to protect herself from the negative behaviour. Another target rationalises that she was too busy working to be aware of what was causing her to feel that things were not right at work.

Chapter Four – Analysis

I was too busy and unaware at the time. [Kate]

I have nothing but a mental breakdown to show for trying to unsuccessfully, to work through and fix what couldn't be fixed – and what I now understand was long term mobbing – an unacknowledged conspiracy of abuse. [Sam]

Both Kat and Sam are busy working hard to overcome the sense that something is wrong and that it needs to be fixed. But they don't know what it is and as a result they don't know how to fix it. Yet try they must. It is this sense of unknowing but knowing that is present in many stories; they know that something is wrong but at the time they can't quite put their finger on it and grasp what is happening. The harder they try to grasp it the more pressure they experience. This pressure and the negative acts themselves erode the targets' mental health and therefore their ability to cope and function in the workplace (Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2007).

It is too late by the time you figure out what is happening. You are will and truly discredited before you realise what is happening. [Tom]

After a few months of crying myself to sleep every night, the light dawned: it wasn't my fault that I was subjected to abuse; my manager was an abusive person. [Kate]

I experienced bullying in my last job, but didn't recognise it until fairly late – after it had taken its toll on my psychological health. [Rochelle]

As the excerpts of the stories illustrate the targets often blamed themselves because they did not know what was happening. They assumed by working hard the circumstances at work would improve. That sense of confusion and bewilderment told them that things weren't right but they were so overwhelmed they were unable

to understand why. Their psychological health declined with the loss of sleep due to work pressure. As the targets describe their experiences the acknowledgement of not realising what was happening to them at the time seems to consume them as they find it difficult to comprehend that this effect was so overwhelming.

They had me believing that they had the right to abuse me, that everything was my fault, that my feeling and my needs weren't important but everybody else's were...
[Michael]

This theme of hindsight emerged from the stories as it kept reoccurring in the stories. The target's lack of awareness demonstrates the psychological abuse which the bully inflicted upon the target. The following section provides an analysis of the negative acts of bullying the targets described in their stories. These acts tormented the target into the 'punch drunk' state which was mentioned earlier and rendered them blind to the bullying or at least unable to admit that it was happening to them.

Persistent and unrelenting negative criticism

Commonality between the stories revealed the subtle unrelenting nature of the negative acts that the targets described as bullying behaviour. It is possible that if the incidents occurred less frequently and with less intensity they would have not impacted upon the targets so seriously. Baron & Neuman (1996) found that the bullying behaviour reported in their study were subtle, passive, indirect, and verbal acts inflicted persistently and on a frequent basis.

Roberta describes the dreadful position of knowing that she could not do anything right in the eyes of her bully. It can be described as nit picking that her bully would reprimand her for using the wrong sized paperclip, a task that most people don't even think about in their daily routines. A simple typo in a draft would for most of

Chapter Four – Analysis

us be considered insignificant. These incidents would not in themselves be detected by most people; in fact even the bully at times and in some situations may not be aware of the impact it has on the people they work with.

If I failed to say “I’m sorry” (for using the “wrong” size paperclip, a typo in a draft, not responding quickly enough, trying to explain something when I hadn’t been asked)’ or if I objected to their conduct, my bosses held stage –whispering meetings about my “completely intolerable” attitude and that they should “seriously consider getting rid of me. Later they’d walk by me, smirking. [Roberta]

This negative nit picking followed by smirking and threats of dismissal, places Roberta on edge and in a very weak position to fight back from or protect herself in any way. As none of this behaviour in and of itself is substantial enough to place her in a position to act against it or prevent it from reoccurring.

Constant criticism followed by isolation leaves the target in a precarious situation; they are removed from the flow of information by being excluded from meetings and activities. This exclusion is likely to increase the possibility of making mistakes which is only maximised when they are refused help and information.

She began to question and criticize everything I did. Every time I would ask her for help or information, she would reply with Why?, to even the simplest of requests. Things got worse, as she started to ignore me, and excluded me from meetings and activities within the team. She would spend hours chatting relentlessly to my colleagues, across the open plan office, but would not pass the time of day to me, except to criticise my work. [Lorraine]

The bully succeeds in ostracising Lorraine from the rest of the team by publicly excluding them from meetings and activities. This ostracism is strengthened when

Chapter Four – Analysis

Lorraine is excluded from conversations. Even her attempts to rejoin the team by simply passing the time of day are rejected by the bully. This sends the message to the entire team that Lorraine should be kept isolated from every aspect of the work environment.

I was subject to nit picking, unfounded criticism, and specious comments. She kept making criticisms that I couldn't relate to, and to which my colleague's couldn't relate either. Instructions were changed, denied and contradicted. She pointedly ignored all the positive aspects of my work and made trivial and negative observations which also demonstrated her lack of understanding about the job. She spoke to me on more than one occasion as if she were a tyrannical headmistress reprimanding a naughty child. Her tone was intimidating and more than once I was left shaking and close to tears. [Fiona]

Fiona describes constant criticism and nit picking as bullying behaviour, but for Fiona the affect is weakened by her colleagues who cannot relate to it and therefore they provide an external cue that the manager is a bully. Fiona ascertains that the bully lacks an understanding of her work yet the intimidation still leaves her shaking and nearly in tears. Therefore although Fiona is able to rationalise some of the behaviour the core effect still has its toll on her.

Trudy is able to rationalise what has happened to her by noting that her performance was criticised even though there are no performance guidelines in place.

This bullying took the form of constant nit picking, character assassination, performance issues without performance guidelines, threats of poor performance procedure and denials of comparisons with other colleagues. I have suffered numerous attempts at destroying my confidence. (You start to believe that you are at

fault, no good and not up to the job and that maybe there is some credibility in what they are saying). [Trudy]

This psychological abuse erodes Trudy's self confidence to the extent that she questions her own competence to perform the duties and as her self esteem declines she discredits her own belief that she is not at fault.

Constantly criticising a worker's performance has been found to be a result of poor management training as the manager has not learnt the ability to provide constructive feedback to their employees (Schilling, 2009).

Scapegoat

Caught up in the turbulence of the bullying the target's psychological state is weakened and through tiredness and stresses they make errors in their work. These errors afford the bully the ability to turn the target into the scapegoat for all errors in the workplace - even future mistakes will be blamed on them. An example of this was included in the section on the triggering event (Lee's story). In that example the target was a new employee whom the bully used as the scapegoat. In the following example, bullying has been happening long term.

He indulged in black and white thinking, so the moment my stress and tiredness caused me to make a mistake he was on my back forever after. No matter what I did right I was future blamed for almost everything. [Ron]

Ron has clearly suffered bullying persistently for long enough for his ability to function at work to be affected. This is a vicious cycle: the more tired and stressed Ron becomes the more likely it is that Ron will make mistakes but even if he does

not make mistakes the bully will blame Ron for mistakes that others make. Ron attributes black and white thinking as the way in which the bully uses him as the scapegoat for all that is wrong with the workplace. In this way Ron discredits the bully's ability to think clearly and perform his job.

I could not do anything right in the eyes of the Director of nursing and would even get abused for things that had nothing to do with me and mostly pathetic non events.
[Francis]

Francis believes that the bully simply searches for any excuse to abuse her as she knows that she can never do anything correctly and therefore if others make mistakes instead of criticising them the bully prefers to use Francis as the scapegoat. The bully takes the opportunity to harass Francis when any errors occur in the workplace and this allows the bully to increase the negative impact she has on Francis leaving her in a helpless situation.

A scapegoat becomes the sacrifice which the workplace can use to blame wrongs on in an effort to restore equilibrium in that workplace (Gemmil, 1989). By appointing a worker as the scapegoat the group can resolve any of their problems because it assigns the reason for the problems on that person (Westhues, 2002). Unfortunately it only temporarily restores group coherence as the scapegoat will eventually leave and the problems will continue to resurface.

Tasks and duties changed

Embedded in the constant criticism, nit picking, and blaming the targets must endure the bully constantly changing their work tasks and duties. Mary believes that by constantly changing procedures without explanation the bully is creating opportunities to undermine her.

Chapter Four – Analysis

Sometimes I'd get abused for doing something that the Director wanted me to do, yet I did not know that she expected me to do a certain something. After being abused I would find out that she wanted me to do a certain duty regularly. The next time I went to do my newly assigned duty I would bet abused for doing it. If I did do it I'd get into trouble if I didn't I'd still get into trouble. I would then be expected to ask her if I was to do it, then I'd get into trouble for asking her and then would get yelled at "do I have to do everything", if I took the initiative to do it I'd get abused.
 [Mary]

The bully maintained power over Mary by not only being the manager but using this status to torment Mary by exerting this power by creating role ambiguity for Mary. Role ambiguity exists when the worker is unsure of what tasks and duties they are expected to perform at work and has been found to be associated with bullying in the workplace (Baillien & DeWitte, 2009). Being threatened with job loss Mary was unable to do anything but to conform to the constant changes and suffer this ongoing form of psychological distress.

I had to endure being told off in an aggressive manner in front of patients and colleagues on a regular basis. I was like the school child in front of the Head Mistress. If her footsteps were heard in the department everyone looked for something to do because you knew she'd be looking for something to pick you up on. You think you're doing things the way she wants them done, but all of a sudden the boundaries have changed and actually things should be done in another way. This results in staff not being able to fully concentrate on the standards of their work which gives her more fuel to pick up on things. It's a vicious cycle. [Sam]

In this story we find another target caught in a vicious cycle of psychological abuse controlled by a bully. Sam must endure constantly changing boundaries within her

role. Instead of being able to put her head down and work hard she is forced to monitor her environment for the presence of the bully. When the bully is present Sam is concerned that she maybe performing her duties incorrectly which leads her to make mistakes as her attention is divided and she is unable to concentrate on the task at hand. The bully demands conformity by treating Sam in this way and ensuring that Sam experiences a permanent state of hyper vigilance.

Constantly changing the tasks and duties torments the target of bullying and is likely to cause a disruption to the organisation itself. Disrupting one workers role is likely to cause a ripple effect in an organisation creating frustration between workers.

Deadlines

Deadlines provide an opportunity for the bully to assert their dominance over the target. In the following story Vicki explains how the bully manipulates her by placing extra stress on her when she is approaching a deadline.

She started criticising my work in front of him (the manager) and other colleagues. Everything I did, she picked on no matter how trivial. When I looked back at the previous month's work, I had done the work correctly. She was just picking on my work for the sake of it. She used to set deadlines and do everything possible to stop me from completing the deadline on time. [Vicki]

This sabotages Vicki's performance by attempting to stop her from meeting deadlines which is a core indicator of her competence. The tactic is employed to undermine Vicki's ability openly in front of her colleagues, superiors, and clients. Changing the deadline at short notice or without any notice at all provides an opportunity for another bully to sabotage Kerry and display the power he has to manipulate and cause harm.

Chapter Four – Analysis

Having deadlines changed at short notice – or no notice and without relevant staff being informed until it was too late we were then castigated and disciplined for having failed to meet the deadline. [Kerry]

Having unrealistic goals set, which changed without explanation other than 'you misunderstood'. [William]

When unrealistic goals are set and deadlines are shortened for Kerry and William the bully is able to provide negative feedback and is able to appraise their performance negatively. Negative feedback has been associated directly with bullying in the workplace as it decreases job satisfaction and leads to a decline in work performance (Tata, 2002).

She attempted to sabotage me on many occasions. On the eve of a deadline, she spent the entire day screaming at me at the top of her lungs in front of everyone. [Jackie]

A weak point which the bully chooses to aim for is the accessibility of resources the target requires to complete a task. Overloading the target with work they are untrained for or not supplying the resources to complete the work effectively undermines John's belief that he is fit for the job.

Being overloaded with work without being given the resources and training to accomplish it effectively despite requests, my line managers refused to discuss my training needs and I was refused the clerical assistance that I asked for. [John]

John was keen to learn and realise his full potential in the workplace but this belief is damaged when he realises that he does not have the ability or resources to compete

Chapter Four – Analysis

the tasks. The high demand placed on him outweighs his ability to supply the completed tasks because of a lack of resources. Being in a high demand low supply situation is a major cause of work stress which changes the worker's perception of self (Haslam & Reicher, 2006).

Without the required training and support Jack realises that the bully has found his weak point which would provide an opportunity for the bully to push Jack out of the organisation.

She was charming one minute and poisonous the next. She kept drumming more and more work on me. When I complained I was told "I needed to examine my commitment to the job" and everyone else could do it, so why couldn't I". [Jack]

Removing Jack isn't achieved openly it is merely insinuated by suggesting that Jack is not committed to the job. This implies that Jack would have found a way to complete the tasks regardless of the lack of resources if he was committed to the work itself. Comparing Jack to other workers and implying that the other workers have not received the training or had access to the resources effectively increase a sense of self doubt in Jack.

Even targets who attempted to circumvent the bully by being extremely organised and conscientious were unable to avoid criticism. Instead the bully found ways to sabotage this attempt and turn it into something to be criticised.

They mocked my organised ways. I am ridiculed almost daily. These two have also stolen stickers that we use at my work. Hey even got into my desk and took my secret stash that I had pre-torn for myself to use. Now I am such a nice person that I tore my co workers a stack too, so that they may benefit from my organised ways.

Chapter Four – Analysis

Nevertheless, I was able to overcome this thievery by utilizing my secret, secret stash of stickers. Hey continue to mock me and leave ransom notes in my mailbox. The ransom notes state that I am not able to speak to my bosses These kind of mind games have taken a toll on me. The emotional roller coaster is too much to bear. They scare me and I am afraid of what might happen next if they are not stopped.
[Kay]

If the bully did not constantly change the task and duties, change deadlines, or remove the resources required for the target to effectively complete their duties then they found another way of undermining the target's performance. Other tactics included stealing and plagiarizing Francine's work. Removing the ability for Francine to gain a sense of satisfaction or receive credit for her hard work.

Finding that work and the credit for it – was stolen and plagiarized. [Francine]

The following story describes how a bully manipulates Charlie's work environment This excerpt provides an overview of the combination of tactics the bully employed to psychologically abuse Charlie.

I've been embarrassed, humiliated, belittled, and scrutinized in front of many persons with the office. I've been screamed at in front of people for simply straightening a blind, touching a car key, stepping in or out of a door wrong, opening a garage door, cleaning a sink area, making a noise, accused of reading confidential information, asking for required key release signature from him and him shoving the book at me. I was washing a floor and he deliberately drags his black boot across it to scuff it, he has even walked right through the middle of wet wax deliberately. He's urinated on the floor thinking I was going to have to clean it up. Constantly urinates on top of the urinal. I've been called stupid in front of a group of people, he's stalked me, driving past my house 5 -6 times a shift...he's tried

Chapter Four – Analysis

many time to have me fired for reasons I have never gotten to the bottom of. Last week I was actually accused of stealing urinal cakes. [Charlie]

Charlie is the janitor in a police station. His bully is a police officer so when this bully stalks him after work there isn't much he can do about it. Sabotaging Charlie's work, calling him names in front of others, and then stalking him outside the workplace demonstrates the intensity of bullying Charlie has endured. Charlie remains in the workplace regardless of this even when the bully has attempted to have him fired many times. But the final straw for Charlie which led him to reconstruct his story and submit it to the website was the accusation of stealing urinal cakes which to him is ridiculous. For Charlie this accusation on top of the other bullying behaviours confirms that he is indeed the target of bullying at work. Charlie cannot comprehend why this is happening to him until this final accusation leads him to realise the absurdity of the whole situation he has been experiencing.

These stories of workplace bullying describe acts that at times seem to hard to believe. The following list of excerpts provide examples of absurd acts of bullying which when they occur must confuse and frustrate the target to the point of disbelief.

My desk in that office was given to someone else and there were no spare places (I had no base). [Tina]

Deliberately delaying me so that I arrived late for some appointments. [Gabby]

All my paperwork, documents, etc were put into boxes and put in the boot of my car. [Hayley]

They set out a task to|completed in a short time – during hours in which I did not work for them. [Monique]

Chapter Four – Analysis

Constantly queried the hours I worked and mileage claimed (I itemised these).

[Angela]

They made out a timetable and work schedule which was impossible to adhere to.

[Michelle]

From the targets perspective each of the abovementioned acts are designed to unsettle and sabotage their ability to perform their duties. But the affect for the target is stronger as the acts themselves must be annoying. For instance returning to work and finding that your desk has been given to someone else leaving Tina without a base or place to complete her duties. These acts all provide the same message to the targets which is that they are not welcome in the workplace and if moving work resources is not enough then the bully will make work so uncomfortable that eventually the target will leave.

Basic rights denied

Annual leave and time in lieu are entitlements which are considered basic rights that all workers share. These entitlements are earned through hard work and commitment to the organisation. Managers who behave manipulate leave entitlements are clearly misusing their power in the workplace to cause harm to their employees (Hodson, Roscigno, & Lopez, 2006)

Having annual leave and time in lieu refused constantly. [Denise]

I made requests for holidays, that would sit in her in tray unacknowledged until I was forced to remind her, in order to get them booked. I found that the only way I could get her to play ball, was to request everything in front of her boss. [Simone]

Chapter Four – Analysis

The form of control the bully has over Simone when she is in need of a break places extra pressure on her. Over time, targets begin to realise that for as long as they stay in the job they will forever be trapped in a distressed state.

For Gina even her ability to gain light relief during the day is removed and she is forced to suffer in a state which is reminiscent of the workplaces that existed before basic rights for workers were legislated.

In this office, I was not permitted to go to the bathroom or to lunch. Menstruating was extremely dreadful. It always amazed me that she could not keep track of files (I was always blamed for misplacing them, even when she was sitting on them) but she always know where her hair spray and make up could be found. For 17 moths, I tolerated her abusive, immature, egoistic behaviour. [Gina]

The basic right to be able to go to the bathroom and rejuvenate at lunch time crystallises the lack of control Gina has over her movement while at work. These acts increase the levels of discomfort she experiences in the workplace which consequently lowers her ability to competently complete her duties. To some degree it must send a message to other workers that this target should be isolated and kept at bay simply due to the unpleasantness that must come from not being able to have access to the bathroom and the tiredness that likely ensues from lack of sustenance to maintain energy levels. Loss of dignity for Gina is a likely result. Loss of dignity has been argued as one of the many damaging effects of this phenomenon (Sayer, 2007; Lewis, 2006).

Personal attacks, name calling, and temper tantrums.

Attacks of a personal nature littered the stories I collected. Personal attacks were a tactic which emerged to undermine the target's profile within the workplace in front of other workers and in private. The personal attacks were aimed at perceived weak points of the target. This implies that the bully was intent on harming the target.

Being told by a colleague. It didn't matter if I was dead. (Done in private of course).

[Kate]

He would be extraordinarily patronising and condescending. [Jerome]

Twisting a, distorting and misrepresenting what the target said and did. [Tom]

These forms of personal attacks are hurtful and effective at weakening the target especially amongst other bullying behaviours. Nobody wants to be made to feel that if they died it wouldn't matter to anyone because they wouldn't be missed. Being patronised attacks your sense of intelligence and it is directed at making a person believe that they aren't smart enough to understand very basic things. If we place these excerpts together we see that the target is told that they might as well be dead and the bully can distort and twist what the target does in order to show that they lack intelligence.

For Jan the attacks were highly personalised and aimed at a weakness which provided the bully with an excuse to exclude her from aspects of the workplace.

It began with little comments – because I am over weight, I started to notice the little digs at my weight, things like being banned out of the front display window “In case I knocked anything over”. Being accused of being clumsy, little sly digs about what I

Chapter Four – Analysis

should be wearing to show off my figure, what I should be doing with my hair, I could go on. [Jan]

Jan has a health problem which makes it difficult to lose weight which in itself must be difficult to live with but to be reminded of it and criticised over it in the workplace was overwhelming for Jan. After taking prolonged sick leave Jan could not face returning to the workplace. Instead she felt that she was unsuitable for that particular industry because of her weight and hopes to gain work elsewhere. The bully succeeded in removing her from the workplace and the industry. Rather than work being a reward for her as she attempts to get on with her life and overcome her health problems, work becomes the experience that highlights her illness and excludes her from the workplace.

Further incidents involves some very negative generalisations about my personality (“Your sneaky.”) and my future (You’ll never be manager”). In each case, the comments were unrelated to the discussion at hand. Unsurprisingly, all of this occurred behind closed doors with no witness. [Wayne]

Attacking Wayne’s personality is a tactic the bully uses as it indicates that there’s an aspect of Wayne that isn’t fitting and can’t be overcome from hard work alone. It also indicates to the Wayne that something is wrong with him which is why he is being treated badly in the workplace therefore blame for the mistreatment is placed on Wayne as he is made to feel that his personality doesn’t fit within the setting.

I felt uncomfortable being in her team and she was nit picking about small things in my performance and was now saying my tone with customers was inappropriate as when I get a difficult call my tone rises. I felt intimidated and stressed by this but no matter how well I did at the job it was never good enough. I have been belittled,

Chapter Four – Analysis

have constant derogatory comments made about my accent and culture and am constantly threatened about losing my job. [Heather]

Criticising a person's culture and accent is considered to be racial discrimination yet it also fits under the umbrella of bullying at work as it is in itself a negative act towards an employee (Lewis & Gunn, 2007). Like attacks on personality it cuts to the core of a target and places blame on them for the negative treatment. Using her accent as an opportunity to threaten her and potentially exclude her from the workplace is discriminatory.

Attacks of a personal nature almost seem to intensify the act of bullying on the target. The target has their work performance criticised constantly and the bully seems to strengthen the attacks by focussing on attacking personal aspects of the target. In amongst these negative acts the bully further demoralises the target by resorting to name calling and verbal abuse both publicly and privately.

Temper tantrums were often cited by the targets as a regular event in their workplace. This is an act of bullying behaviour which is a form of psychological abuse as the target is publicly demoralised. In Glenn's story the bully targets different workers for bullying at different times.

These tantrums would often involve screaming fits, verbal abuse, name calling, and threatening gestures towards his target. [Glenn]

The screaming fits and temper tantrums indicated to the work group who the current target was and was a show by the bully of how powerful he was. The targets must conform to the demands of the bully or the behaviour will escalate and warnings that at any time the focus of the rage may be moved to someone else in the work group.

Chapter Four – Analysis

When he wasn't getting his own way on something, no matter how trivial, he would throw the most appalling tantrums in the office. These tantrums would often involve screaming fits, verbal abuse, name calling, and threatening gestures towards his current target. [Brian]

From Brian's perspective the aim of the temper tantrum from is force the targets to comply with the demands of the bully at all times regardless of how trivial these demands are. This overt display of dominance is likely to affect the climate of the workplace if it continues as it suggests that this form of behaviour is acceptable. Acceptance occurs due to the inaction of other in the organisation to stop it.

She would scream at me and run after me cursing me. [Thomas]

She would refer to me as "that bitch" to other members of staff. [Emily]

I was shouted at on a near daily basis by both of them. He would brush his boy across by bottom, and in anger would violently shove the back of the chair I was sitting on. [Theresa]

These examples of negative behaviour provide insight into how the climate of the workplace is affected. The climate is affected directly when voices are raised and offensive language is used to refer to workers. The subtle covert acts of bullying have been surpassed and as they have passed without altercation the behaviour escalates to overtly undermine the status of the target.

The subtle yet insidious behaviour of the bully eventually alters the atmosphere of the workplace. Regardless of the subtle nature of the negative acts they disrupt working relationships within the workplace and essentially erode the atmosphere in the workplace because they are persistent and ongoing. Some of the targets

Chapter Four – Analysis

experienced acts of aggression from the bully including acts that intimidated the target leaving them fearful of what may happen next.

Then the lady started snatching things out of my hand like clipboards and papers. This lady started acting out towards me which scares me. [Susannah]

Some targets experienced acts of aggression that left them devastated. The following excerpt is from Val who had been teaching for over 30 years and was understandably traumatised by this incident.

On the first teaching day of 2003, I was run at from behind, forcibly grabbed by hands dug deep into my shoulders, spun around sharply 60 degrees, and with clenched hands held neck and face level, I was berated by my manager, despite my bursting into tears and asking her to stop. I froze, totally immobilised in a time warp,. (This unfortunately caused me, for the last 18 months, to have constant daily and bedtime flashbacks, with every detail of her hands clenching me and her facial gestures recorded in picture form). She then followed me into my office and cornered me, continuing to harangue me for a further 25 minutes, before she went to teach her class. The day following the assault, she scoffed at me saying, “it’ll be my word against yours, and he’ll (the principal) believe me over you’. [Val]

This incident left Val so traumatised she is forced to re-experience it in the form of flashbacks that are a symptom of PTSD. Returning to work the next day the bully takes the opportunity to undermine her belief about the episode by asserting that the principal will not believe her. As nobody witnessed the incident Val is unable to substantiate the claim and is forced to resign from the workplace.

Conclusion

The episodes of bullying included in this chapter have provided us with an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and how it progresses from the targets' perspective. The negative acts and the many forms they take in the workplace make us realise that the impact they have on the targets affects them deeply. In many instances they prematurely resign from the organisation and sometimes even leave their chosen occupation. Expulsion from the organisation is seen as the end phase of each bullying episode within a workplace (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003). These valuable insights lead us to the next chapter which aims to provide an understanding of the ongoing consequences the targets suffer as a result of the bullying ordeal.

Chapter Five

Analysis

Ongoing consequences for the target.

The previous chapter provided an analysis of the acts of bullying targets based on the stories harvested from internet sites. This chapter provides an analysis of the stories that draws out aspects of the experience which are not mentioned explicitly but became apparent during the process of analysis.

Rendered powerless

Issues of power are not mentioned directly in the stories but it does emerge after careful analysis as an underlying theme across the stories. The stories leave the reader with an overwhelming sense of powerlessness that the targets have experienced as a result of the persistent, subtle nature of bullying. The insidious presence of power is evident from the targets' inability to recognise they are being bullied until it's too late and then with the realisation of their victimisation comes the awareness that they have no proof of the bullying behaviour. They are rendered powerless to do anything about it.

Tim realised that he was the target of bullying and decided to take action against the bully in an effort to stand up for himself and confront it. Unfortunately by the time he realised it he had no tangible proof and no witnesses. Even if he had recorded the episodes of abuse he would have required witnesses to substantiate his claim.

Things came to a head, when I confronted her in front of a witness and accused her of bullying. Of course, I had no proof, and it was her word against mine. I had not kept adequate records, and management closed ranks against me. [Tim]

Chapter Five – Analysis

The sense of empowerment Tim experienced as he decided to take action was removed when the bully and management were confronted and Tim was left in an awkward position at work. Although he knew what was happening not being able to prove it placed him as a trouble maker and he realised that management would not listen to his complaints at any time. Kevin reported a similar experience:

UNISON tried to bring matters to Tribunal but after 12 months I was told that there were no grounds for a case. [Kevin]

Attempting to resolve his situation and working with an outside body UNISON (the union) to assist him failed to provide Kevin with the ability to gain any compensation from his bullying experience. All he was left with were the wounds of the bullying experience which compounded by twelve months of stress to overcome his situation. Fighting back against the bully resulted in Kevin losing his job and left him feeling frustrated as he could not prove that he was the target of bullying.

Sarah's situation was even more difficult:

My case is complicated in that the secretary who bullied me was supported by my boss, who at the time was my husband. He supported her because they were having an affair. They knew that I knew, even though I had no proof.[Sarah]

Sarah has her entire life turned upside down and she has lost her job and her marriage the two problems entwined upon each other. She is powerless to prove the bullying as it looked like she had uncovered her husband's affair and that this was the premise of her complaint. She is left unemployed and totally undermined by the entire episode from which she can only walk away and describe as a very complicated stage of her life.

Chapter Five – Analysis

Bridget found that lodging a harassment complaint that clearly had some basis was not entirely successful either.

Two weeks after I formally lodged my harassment complaint, and before I was given the result of the investigation into my harassment, my union representative told me that the company wanted to offer me \$4,500 in exchange for discontinuing my harassment complaints, signing a gagging clause and leaving the company. He said that I would be expected to sign a gagging clause and that I would not be provided with a reference. [Bridget]

Bridget is dismayed by the reaction of the union and the company as they have placed her in between a rock and a hard place. She decides to take the offer after realising that if she proceeds with the complaint she is unlikely to win. In doing this she realises that she must have had evidence of something for the company to respond in this manner. She refuses to sign the gagging order as she cannot imagine not talking about the episode given how deeply it affected her. She wanted to have the bully's identity revealed so that he could not find another target for his behaviour and she wanted to keep her job within the company. She recognises that she has no power to fight the bully and that the union appeared to be on the side of the company. Totally disempowered to change her situation she realises that she can only resign and try to recover from the episode.

When the bully labels the target as a 'trouble maker' or 'crazy' the target is left with even less power to act and at the same time this labelling may increase the targets sense of self doubt and bewilderment (Boni & Circeli, 2002).

Chapter Five – Analysis

He doesn't seem to have any goal other than to destroy me entirely. Even though – due to various comments he has made to me throughout the period – he is doing this I don't have any proof and I have been consistently painted as crazy or imagining things. [Rita]

Left confused and devastated Rita knows that she was the target of bullying but whenever she tries to fight back the bully undermines her story by saying that she is 'crazy'. As many of the bullying acts occurred in private she has no witnesses or tangible evidence that they occurred. Suffering from stress and fatigue she begins to believe her bully. She knows that she hasn't slept properly for a long time and she had experienced trouble completing her work tasks. Her co-workers have socially isolated her and so she has not been able to talk to anyone to discuss what is happening. The burden to prove what is happening leaves her floundering in self doubt.

I remember at one point he told me there were 'no conspiracies' and pointed his finger to his temple moving it around in circles, i.e. 'crazy' [Brandon]

Brandon recalls this episode as he describes the attempts he made to confront the bullying with his manager. He is left to realise that he has no way of proving the bullying behaviour is directed at him. He is forced to confront the fact that can't reason with the bully and that each time he complains he is made to look paranoid in front of his co workers.

Reducing the targets profile to a paranoid crazy person immobilises the target to act against the bully. This tactic employed by the bully allows him/her to continue his/her bullying antics without being challenged. The targets mental health has already

Chapter Five – Analysis

declined from the other bullying tactics but this tactic negates any sense of power they felt they had. Acting against the bully only provides more opportunities for the bully to attack them. In the end the only evidence the target has of the bullying behaviour is their increased sense of self doubt and the other psychological damage they sustain from the episode.

I can't ask for help, as I don't know what kind of help. I can't accuse of anything, having no proof, and he being very charming with people. [Victor]

Victor realises that the bully totally dominated not only his work but the way in which he viewed himself. The bully was able to disarm Victor by presenting himself as charming to everyone else hence Victor is smothered by the process and rendered helpless and powerless to resolve the situation.

This excerpt from a story summarises the powerless position the target is placed into by the bully. The target faces the ongoing consequences of this sense of powerless because as they look back they realise that because of the position they were in at the time of the bullying meant there was nothing they could have done.

Safety hazard

A safety hazard is normally considered to be something in the work environment which poses a risk to the physical safety of the workers: for instance cords running across the floor or a lack of handrails on a stairway. But more recently practitioners have come to realise that the mental well being of workers is just as important as their physical wellbeing to maintain a productive safe workplace. The recurrent

Chapter Five – Analysis

theme of safety hazard emerged from the stories and provides us with a better understanding of why bullying at work needs to be treated with importance.

The turmoil that the target is caught up in during the ongoing criticism and negative acts of bullying diminish their targets physical and mental health. In this respect workplace bullying becomes a safety hazard for workers. The subtle and relentless nature of the acts erodes the target's ability to function and complete daily activities both at work and in their private lives. Therefore this phenomenon is indeed a psychological hazard in the workplace. The following example is a disturbing account of the Lisa's experience of bullying which illustrates the impact the phenomenon has on her.

My hair was falling out. I had been menstruating heavily for long periods of time. I slept in my clothes, and what little sleep I got was light and fitful. I couldn't stop thinking about work. I had panic attacks. My smoking doubled. I couldn't concentrate and couldn't remember what had just happened, what I was going to do, if I had eaten. I wasn't hungry, anyway. I had acne and bad gas. I sometimes had to take my underwear off and hide it in my purse because I had pissed myself. I wasn't regularly showering, My back was in a near-chronic state of spasm. I'd walk around the office, hunched over. I'd suddenly cry. I was feverish and barely functional in the mornings. My face flushed uncontrollable. I sweated profusely-and my sweat stunk (literally, the stench of fear. And still – I kept trying. [Lisa]

The severity of bullying Lisa experienced devastated her both mentally and physically to the point that she was rendered unable to take care of her own basic needs. Yet she kept trying, she kept returning to the workplace everyday blinded by the scale of the bullying against her. Lisa didn't realise this until later, until she had

Chapter Five – Analysis

left the workplace and had started to recover and regain the strength to revisit the events that had occurred. A combination of self doubt, fear, and embarrassment could likely explain her lack of insight in to what was happening. Lisa describes experiences that could have serious implications for her mental wellbeing. Combined these experiences eroded her ability to function and eventually excluded her from the organisation.

In the last chapter we found evidence of the bully minimising the profile of their target in the workplace. In this chapter we can see the bully manages to affect the target's mental health with this strategy. At this stage we are able to see the deep impact the phenomenon has on the target unfortunately this analysis reveals aspects which have an ongoing affect on the target's ability to recover from the ordeal.

I started feeling ill, tired, getting colds easily, not sleeping at night, not eating for days at a time, feeling tearful, I thought I was going mad. [Brandon]

Brandon's health declines to the point where he actually questions his sanity. He hadn't realised that work was causing these symptoms of ill health although he knew something was wrong.

This has made me very stressed and my blood pressure very high. I cannot sleep and feel physically sick in the morning about the thought of going to work. [Todd]

Todd is conditioned by the negative acts in the workplace that they affect his blood pressure and causes disruption to his sleep patterns. This negative treatment has unconsciously conditioned him to feel physically ill when he thinks about returning to work.

Chapter Five – Analysis

I was so exhausted by the whole bullying process that ended up having a raised blood pressure and stress and have been on stress leave for five weeks. [Toby]

Prolonged sick leave is a common factor in all the stories. When we consider from the last chapter that many targets were refused annual leave it seems inevitable that this results in them requiring prolonged sick leave as they may be experiencing burn out. Toby is fearful of returning to work as he predicts that he will return to being the target for his bully's negative actions.

Bullying destroys lives and when driving into a motorway bridge seems preferable to driving to work things have gone way too far. [Frank]

Frank reflects back on what his life was like when he was still being dominated by his bully. Starting each day with the thought of suicide is a stunning realisation for him as he struggles to overcome the impact bullying has had on him. Fortunately he realised that the bullying was literally destroying his life and resigned from his position in an attempt to save his life. Even though he was struggling to financially support his family he realised that if the suicidal thoughts were realised his family and his life would be destroyed for ever.

The psychiatrist, having diagnosed PTSD, anxiety and depression, he concluded that the severity of my psychiatric injury had been made worse by the failure of my management to take the situation and my concerns seriously. [Rosemary]

This workplace hazard harmed Rosemary to the extent that she was diagnosed with serious health conditions which were debilitating and required specialist treatment to

Chapter Five – Analysis

assist her to overcome them. As the psychiatrist pointed out the mental injury is compounded by the lack of concern and recognition Rosemary received from the organisation. In a sense Rosemary is left to suffer in silence.

All I ever wanted was to work in peace and safety and that was my right and it was violated. Now I am trying so hard to pick up the pieces. [Rachel]

Over the last few month's, I too have become a "victim", and I am now off sick and unable to see a time when I will ever feel comfortable and safe working in my usual job again. [Kaye]

The sense of safety in one's workplace which most people take for granted is removed from the targets perception of work. It is replaced with the knowledge that they have been violated and they are no longer able to perceive feeling safe at work again. Picking up the pieces under these circumstances is very difficult as we all need and want to participate in working life. While work environments have been made safer in many years over the last century the most dangerous element of the workplace still remains: That of interaction with our colleagues. Even though essentially everyone is there for the same basic reasons unfortunately this human element proves to be just as fatal as physical safety hazards in the workplace ever were.

I have been diagnosed as being depressed and in need of specialist treatment. It has had a devastating affect on me, I am confused, angry and hurt and I am still blaming myself and I can't answer the question, "Why me?" [Tony]

Chapter Five – Analysis

Recovering from depression Tony is devastated and cannot reconcile within himself why he was targeted by the bully. He is left with the belief that he is somehow responsible for the entire episode occurring and for affect that it had on his health. If the bullying had been acknowledged by the organisation then perhaps his ability to come to terms with his depression would be possible and he would begin the process of healing.

A story of a chauffeur who was targeted for bullying by his boss perhaps best illustrates workplace bullying as a safety hazard.

I accepted a generous offer to be a contract chauffeur to this man and relocated at the company's cost with my family from Brisbane to Sydney. Over a four year period my hours increased and at times I was working 100 hours per week. My boss known as a bully and about eighteen month of working eleven of his most senior directors and managers took grievances to New York I was becoming very fearful of him as he was the only person I answered to. Although I confided in the HR director to try and alleviate the many issues that were arising a turn occurred when this person became a drinking buddy. I had to deal with threats of loss of job and yelling and in the car while always being late for meetings. Phones being thrown in the car and the constant forcing to break all the road rules. The stress became so intense that I developed a nervous condition which was only truly apparent to me when I left. On once occasion the abuse was so intense and my day had been about 18 hours long I simply broke down. I was unable to drive and told him I was having a nervous breakdown. The next day he pleaded for me to return. [Roger]

Rogers own personal safety, his bully, and the general public were all put at risk in this story. Constantly being pressured to break the road rules and the need to hurry to

Chapter Five – Analysis

meetings implies that Roger was being bullied to drive too fast which places everyone on the road at that time at risk. Being yelled at, having phones thrown at him, and working long hours increases the risk of accidents occurring exponentially. It is difficult to comprehend the level of pressure and difficulty Roger experienced on a daily basis: Notwithstanding the probable compounding fear that he could lose his licence and face legal action and therefore the loss of his livelihood at any given time due to the bully's requests to break the road rules.

The negative acts of the bully manipulates the targets behaviour and performance in the workplace; the mere constant pressure and relentless criticism which all of the stories describe in this project reveal that workplace bullying is indeed a safety hazard. First and foremost is the physical and mental health of the target and then the health of the clients and associates of the organisation are all at risk of harm.

Psychological contract

While the targets of workplace bullying suffer from the abovementioned illnesses the toll that the experience has had on them appears to affect them in other ways. It is as though their whole concept of work and what they are prepared to do for and in their workplaces this has been affected. The literature discusses the concept of a psychological contract employees have with their employer and/ or organisation. Argyris (1960) first coined the term 'psychological contract' and it is understood as the unwritten and often unspoken set of assumptions and expectations upon which the relationship of employer and employee are based (Rudman, 1999). This analysis hints at another perspective of the psychological contract about work which can only be described as the psychological contract a person has with themselves. That is, the set of assumptions and expectations of themselves that put boundaries around what

Chapter Five – Analysis

they are prepared to give of themselves to obtain a place and participate in the working life.

In Mark's account, the psychological contract on which his relationship with his boss was built was suddenly disrupted:

I had a good boss – it was his philosophy to reward people adequately, to delegate and leave things to people if they were being well done. My working life could not have been better. Unfortunately, my boss was poached for a high level government post and left almost immediately and very unexpectedly. [Mark]

The psychological contract Mark had with his boss was consequently transferred to the expectations he had of the organisation. When the boss was replaced without warning the unwritten psychological contract was abruptly broken and the worker then became the target of bullying from the new boss who was described as a notorious bully. Mark expected that the same philosophy would continue as he assumed that his old boss was displaying the philosophy of the organisation. Mark was unprepared for this sudden change in his workplace and was consequently in a vulnerable situation at work which occurred without warning and therefore without an opportunity for Mark to adapt to the prospect of a new boss.

It's been eighteen months since then. Only now, have I regained the strength to write this down. For the first four months, I cried pretty much constantly. I suffer now from panic attacks in new situations, migraines, stomach cramps. As well as the physical symptoms, I'm very nervous around new people. Friends who had been there for me previously have turned on me, accusing me of putting all my symptoms on to avoid work. What they don't realise is, for a long time, the mere thought of work made me physically sick. [Thomas]

Chapter Five – Analysis

Before the bullying episode Thomas enjoyed and looked forward to returning to work and enjoyed each day. Eighteen months later and he just beginning to be able to describe the experience and the impact it has had on him and his personal friendships. He like a target in the previous chapter who described how just the thought of work causes him to feel physically sick. Again this describes being conditioned to relate work to sickness as a result of the bullying. The long term debilitating illness that has prevented him from returning to the workforce and the breach of a psychological contract about work are among the many consequences targets describe in their stories.

A consequence of the stress breakdown is reactive depression, a new experience for me. Wild swings of mood, from thoughts of suicide to occasional euphoria, overwhelming negativism, anger, irritability, aches and pains, fatigue, constant infections, disturbed sleeping and eating patterns – over 40 symptoms, with half still present a year later. For months, all I wanted to do was curl up and die. The reason I didn't commit suicide was the thought of my two young children, plus some excellent counselling. [Mac]

After a year Mac is still suffering from many symptoms and although he is now able to write about them the knowledge that the bullying impacted upon so heavily leads him to question whether is capable of returning to working life. Counselling is warranted as the reason he was able to overcome his suicidal thoughts and reveals that the impact of bullying wears upon the target long enough to actually mark them. Hallberg & Strandmark (2006) report a similar finding among the participants in their study who remained marked for life from the bullying experience. The

Chapter Five – Analysis

experience of bullying becomes a life changing event for the targets which irreversibly alters the way they think and feel about the workplace.

I am scared, frustrated and stressed. I do not know when this is going to end and my health is really suffering. At the moment, I am in the process of lodging a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission re the racial abuse and comments but I don't know how much good it will do as the company will manipulate the situation into me being the problem not the victim. [Rata]

Feeling scared about the prospect of lodging a complaint is paired with the shame and disappointment she feels about herself. She knows the other people have put up with racial abuse without being damaged by it. But she feels if she complains about the bullying it is less likely to be taken seriously. Regardless of the fact that the ongoing bullying is the real cause of her complaint she feels that if she complains about the racial abuse she may be able to gain some form of recompense. Rata is aware the company holds enough power to manipulate the complaint in their favour and that she is essentially powerless to change that. This is an intersection between the psychological contract she has within herself on how to defend her sense of self and how the world should be and how this transfers to her sense of self as an employee and the psychological contract she has with the organisation.

Consequently this had stuck with me since then and it never seems to go away. She's damaged my vision of myself and I'd really like her to realise what a bad force she is on people. I've got baggage and I'd like someone to remove it please. My only fear is that she's joined some other firm now and had chosen some other poor graduate to bully endlessly and crush. [Patricia]

Chapter Five – Analysis

Thoughts of her bullying experience remain with her everyday and Patricia is keenly aware that they are burdensome. This renders her incapable of off loading the burden and even though she has removed herself from the workplace she is still smothered by the impact it has had upon her. Through this sense of powerless she has to change things for herself she is aware that the bully has gone on unchallenged and in no doubt that she is inflicting her harm upon somebody else. She acknowledges the injustice that she has forever been changed but that the bully has not been held accountable for her actions.

Like Rata, Patricia is experiencing a breach of the psychological contract she has with within herself about work. Her damaged vision of herself is a burden which she is struggling to renegotiate in order to regain her self esteem.

I intend to never be a permanent employee again, hoping that by taking only contracts I can avoid some of the vicious politics out there as my temporary presence will be less of a threat. I also hope that having many clients and several strands of business will make me less vulnerable to dependency on just the one job and feeling I have to kow-tow to unreasonable demands. [Trevor]

Trevor has renegotiated with himself terms for re-entering working life the aim is to protect himself from being the target of bullying in the future. He has attempted to take control of the situation by starting his own business thereby being his own boss and being able to choose which companies he provides his services to. Trevor has decided that if he only agrees to short term contracts he will minimise his presence in the company's therefore minimising the opportunity for a bully to target him. He rationalises that limiting exposure to working life is the only way he will be able to safeguard himself from further harm and in the process finds away to regain a place

Chapter Five – Analysis

in working life. In effect, Trevor has re-negotiated the psychological contract that he has with employment, and with himself.

I did so much and brought many skills with me to that company and he made me feel so bad in return, this has affected me emotionally and physically and unable to trust people, I feel so let down. I felt as though I was made to leave because of all the unreasonable demands and how he treat me. I am now just temping and happy.
[Rhonda]

Rhonda held the belief that she had the right skills and if she worked hard enough she would gain two things: recognition and job satisfaction. In this belief she felt that hard work would afford her the right to feel safe and share a sense of trust with her colleagues and superiors. Rhonda resigned from the organisation and left with all her beliefs about working life destroyed. Returning to work after a long period of recovery could only be actualised if she only remained in particular work setting temporarily. Like Trevor she renegotiated with herself to be able to find a way back into working life.

Relocated to another state, and after 7 months, am not able to find employment other than temporary positions. Some of this is due to the economy at this time, but I had a friend call as if checking references. As soon as my name came up, the manager curtly replied, "not without a release." That's the same thing as a bad reference. [Phillip]

Phillip resigned from his job as a result of ongoing bullying and in an effort to make a clean start he moved his family to another state. Unfortunately he has been unable to make a new start as he requires references to obtain a new job. Therefore his bully

Chapter Five – Analysis

still maintains a level of dominance over Phillip's life. Phillip resents this and is frustrated that even though he has worked hard to recover from the episode he is unable to move on in his life but instead has provided the bully with another opportunity to inflict harm upon him and his family.

I entered the job as a confident BA (Hons) graduate and she squashed me down into a gibbering, self-conscious wreck with absolutely no self-esteem or self-worth or belief in my ability to do anything right at all. [Katrina]

Successfully completing her university studies and emerging from this with a new sense of achievement Katrina enters the workforce keen to conquer it and display the many skills and abilities she has acquired. Working hard to achieve success Katrina had longed to gain a place in the workforce. Unfortunately she instead was confronted with a bully instead. The bully has damaged her belief that she is capable of maintaining a place in the workforce and the manipulation has forever damaged her belief in herself.

Conclusion

In combination these stories of workplace bullying provide valuable insight into the ongoing impact the bullying has on the target. The consequences of this are far-reaching for the targets as incidents such as being unable to gain a reference or being feeling physically sick could not have been envisaged by the target. They initially believed that just removing themselves from the toxic work environment would enable them to regain their health.

The estimated cost of bullying in the workplace to the individual, the organisation, and society which was mentioned in chapter one gains some validation from these

Chapter Five – Analysis

stories. The prolonged sick leave and early resignations which these targets have endured provide evidence of the cost. The resultant loss of production which the organisation endures during the sick leave and when an employee suddenly resigns without a replacement attest to that. From the stories we can see that the individual suffers the most as their recovery takes much longer which must cause a financial and emotional strain for individual households. From this we can estimate the loss that society endures as a consequence of bullying in both monetary and well being terms.

As acknowledged at the beginning of Chapter four it was not anticipated that the themes would emerge in a way that describes the impact of bullying in stages. But this pattern emerged after a careful analysis of the raw data. Now that it has emerged in this way we are able to gain insight into the targets perspective of bullying and how it slowly erodes their sense of self and their perception of the workplace. After their experiences of bullying their own concept of participating in working life is too much for many of them to bear.

This chapter has provided an understanding of the long term consequences the target endures. The identity the targets have of themselves is drastically altered leaving them to contemplate that they are unfit to participate in working life on a full time permanent basis. Some targets believe they are unable to ever return whilst others attempt to renegotiate working life on a temporary basis. These issues will be further discussed in the following chapter along with a discussion of the emergent themes and the pattern in which they have developed from this analysis.

Chapter six

Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter we revisit the research question that drove the development of this project and respond to it through a summary of the data analysis. From this point a review of the project findings and suggestions for future research are made.

The research set out to investigate how targets describe their experiences of workplace bullying on the internet. The themes which emerged to answer this question included a global theme identifying the acts of bullying themselves which consisted of related primary themes: a triggering event, incidents of negative behaviour: hindsight, persistent and unrelenting negative criticism, scapegoat, changing tasks and duties, deadlines, denying basic rights, personal attack, name calling, and temper tantrums. This global theme set the context for the second global theme to emerge: Ongoing consequences for the target that consisted of the following primary themes: rendered powerless, safety hazard psychological contract.

The first global theme the acts of bullying is identified from aspects of the stories in which the targets offer their own perspective of what negative acts they feel fit within the umbrella term of workplace bullying. Within the stories it became apparent that there was a trajectory for how the experience of bullying progresses beginning with the triggering event. In many of the stories the triggering event was a change in the workplace when either a new manager started or the target of bullying entered into a new job. The introduction of a new manager has been found to trigger bullying in organisations when the new manager implements changes in their area of responsibility (O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire, & Smith, 1998; Rayner, 1997). Both of these studies reached similar conclusions that the introduction of a new manager to a

workplace requires sound selection techniques and that the workers are informed when the new manager will be starting. An awareness of the potential for a new manager to change the climate of the workplace also needs to be carefully developed especially when they will hold a position of power in an organisation.

The potential for bullying acts in the event of any person being recruited into an organisation needs to be taken into account. In this analysis we found evidence of the need for the workplace to be free from negative we found in the analysis before a new recruit begins otherwise the organisation risks the recruit being treated as a scapegoat whose well being will be sacrificed to resolve any problems the department is experiencing.

The introduction of a new employee into a workplace requires good selection techniques and a system of induction which aids the changes which occur in that workplace as a result of their addition to the staff. This is important for all members of the workplace and the organisation itself (Liefoghe & Davey, 2001).

The next theme which emerged was that of hindsight. The targets were unaware that they were being targeted at the time the bullying acts occurred and realised later as they worked through the events that had happened at work. An interesting aspect of this theme is that realising that they were targets involves a sense of shame and guilt. They seemed to feel that they should have realised they were targets, so that they could have done something to stop it. Their lack of awareness may also contribute to underreporting which was discussed in Chapter One and it also may reflect that the prevalence rates may be underestimated because of this lack of awareness. This theme hints at the possibility that the phenomenon requires a name change. It is possible that if the phenomenon was labelled with “negative social interactions in

Chapter Six – Conclusion

the workplace” or “antisocial behaviour in the workplace” workers who experience it would be better able to detect the harm as it occurs. Historically bullying is an episode that is synonymous with the school yard not the adult world of work.

Unrelenting negative criticism permeated all of the stories and this theme appears to describe the very nature of the phenomenon. The acts themselves can be so subtle that the only way they are detected is because they keep occurring. It is this nature of the phenomenon that allows it to continue and links to the powerless state the targets are consequently left in after the event. They are rendered powerless because the nature of the acts leaves no trace or tangible evidence.

As scapegoats targets are blamed for the mistakes and errors which occur in the workplace. This became a vicious cycle for many of the targets as the more blame was assigned to them, the more pressure they experienced, the more errors they did make themselves. While appointing a scapegoat in a workplace provides a way to resolve problems it may also cause greater problems as the target themselves will lose interest and motivation to perform the duties they are actually responsible for.

Tasks and duties being changed constantly leads to role ambiguity and role conflict within the organisation. When bullying causes the target to make mistakes it provides an opportunity for the bully to exert their dominance over the target. The organisation itself will experience the chaos which must ensue as a net affect of tasks and duties constantly changing and this likely to lead to a waste of organisational resources. Linked closely to this theme were deadlines that were shortened for the target so that they experienced unnecessary stress and loss of job satisfaction. Being unprepared when a deadline closes ruins the profile of the target to their superiors, colleagues, and clients. All of whom will be unaware of the motives of the bully and that the deadlines were shortened without the target being informed. A loss of dignity is likely to be experienced in relation to both of these

Chapter Six – Conclusion

themes as workers like to feel that they are competent in their jobs and have some form of autonomy to perform them.

In the theme which was labelled ‘basic rights denied’ we find the bullying acts become very personal for the target. When a target is refused the ability to use the bathroom and take lunch breaks they must experience a very personal level of discomfort. Constant refusal of annual leave applications and having to find new and creative ways to gain permission interferes with the workers personal life as they would be unable to plan family holidays or any kind of event in their personal life. This would also cause fatigue for the target as they are unable to have a break when they feel they need to rest from their work routine. Lack of leave approval may also account for the targets who report long term sick leave as a result of the fatigue the experience from the acts of bullying behaviour.

‘Personal attacks, name calling, and temper tantrums’ is the theme that displays how subtle bullying, left unabated, escalates to overt behaviour. Many stories included incidents of blatant discrimination based on a target’s accent or appearance. Although these incidents may be regarded as a specific phenomenon in the workplace when they are embedded amongst acts of bullying they become part of that phenomenon from the point of view of targets. Physical and verbal abuses are clearly overt acts of bullying which other workers would have been able to witness in many cases. Public displays of negative behaviour must affect the climate of the organisation negatively.

The first global theme of acts of bullying provided the context for the targets to explain the ongoing consequences they experience. The ongoing consequences

Chapter Six – Conclusion

that the targets experience are an aspect of this topic that has received very little attention from the research community in the past. To a degree it falls out of the scope of researching organisations since many of the targets leave the workforce. Therefore they become a silent voice which is no longer a part of working life.

Subtle acts of bullying rendered the targets powerless in two ways. Firstly the acts themselves are so subtle they are undetectable even to the target and secondly when the target does recognise the bullying there is no evidence to show others. For some of the targets realising they were bullied is a bitter sweet experience once they have left the workplace. During their process of recovery they realise why they felt so bad. Piecing events together, they feel a sense of empowerment when they realise they were targets of bullying. This empowerment quickly erodes and turns into frustration when they realise they cannot prove that they were being bullied as they have no evidence.

Recognition that bullying is a safety hazard in the workplace could potentially reposition the way in which organisations and regulatory bodies manage the phenomenon. However there is little recognition of bullying as a safety hazard in the literature to support this finding. The mental and physical harm which the targets endure is real and reported in other studies (Macik-Frey, Quick, & Nelson, 2007; Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Penney & Spector, 2005). The most interesting example of how bullying in the workplace poses a safety hazard in the workplace was described in the previous chapter. The personal story of the chauffeur illuminated this theme during the analysis however it was difficult to conceptualise the many aspects of that situation that posed a risk. For that reason it worth reiterating aspects of it. The chauffeur spends his entire working life confined to the driver's seat of his car, in this confined space he is yelled at and has things thrown at him when his passenger is late for an appointment. While the chauffeur is in control of the car he is not in

Chapter Six – Conclusion

control of the work schedule of his passenger and must follow the passenger's instructions. Yet in order to do this he was sometimes forced to literally risk life and limb. First we recognise the physical harm and the possibility of violations of road rules which may result in a loss of licence and consequently the loss of his livelihood. Then we must consider the mental harm that may result from the entire situation for the chauffeur everyday at work. The risk factor of many occupations may be multiplied in the presence of bullying and is deserving of more attention from researchers.

The final theme came from reflecting on the ways in which the story tellers described their thoughts and feelings about work as they struggled to recover from the bullying episode. At this stage how the episode had altered the targets' perception of their willingness to participate in working life emerged. This is an important aspect of the entire phenomenon since working is the only way to get the money to feed one's family, provide housing, and every other necessity that is required to live, for most people. However the episode of bullying has such an extreme effect on these storytellers that they can not imagine being able to return to the workforce. It is as though their psychological contract with themselves to participate in working life has been stamped null and void. Some targets described how they had renegotiated the idea of work and as a consequence they only work temporarily in organisations, to limit the risk of experiencing bullying again. Others are unable to do this and even after a reasonable period of time has passed they still feel physically ill when they think about work.

It is here at the end of the analysis that the full power of the bullying behaviours and their consequences resonates. The trajectory of the events from the triggering event through to the change in the target's thinking about the idea of work itself provides an insight into this phenomenon that I have found both disturbing and frustrating.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

While there are many ways that the stories may have been analysed leading to different answers to the initial research question, it is likely they would have led to a similar sense of frustration at the difficulties of dealing with this phenomenon. From this analysis it became clear that the personal stories of workplace bullying on the internet describe episodes which occurred in the experience and the ongoing consequences of the experience that provide insight into the total effect of the phenomenon is capable of in the long term. This supports Hallberg & Strandmark's (2006) assertion that targets of workplace bullying are left with an internal scar that leaves them marked for life. Being marked for life from this phenomenon is not unlike the change that has occurred for the targets in this analysis. The change in the target's perception of work and how they lose their sense of fit within the workforce is essentially the same as being marked for life. As the targets now renegotiate how they may or may not interact with the working world their decision making can be explained through social exchange theory.

Social exchange theory asserts that people will enter relationships that maximise benefits and minimise costs (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). If the cost of a relationship is too high and the benefits are minimal they will end the relationship. Essentially this is like a cost benefit analysis of the social relationships people have with other people. In the context of working life the targets seem to be conducting their own cost benefit analysis of participating in work. On one side of the equation we have the benefits of work (money, job satisfaction, fulfilling an implicit contract, and so on) while on the other side there is the cost: For many targets the costs seemed to be encompass all the harm which they have sustained and the risk of future harm which may occur in a new workplace. As a result of this cost benefit analysis the costs are assessed as far outweighing the benefits.

The targets who suffer from ill health as a result of bullying realise that money can not replace or restore their health completely. The experience of workplace bullying

changes them and this change is sustained by the memories of the bullying and the ongoing consequences as their sense of identity is altered. Leymann & Gustafsson (1996) asserted that targets of workplace bullying experience such a prolonged state of stress that it eventually irreversibly alters their personality. Perhaps this describes the change that is present in the targets description of the ongoing consequences they endure. It would in part account for their change in world view about work. But it would not account for the conditioned response of being physically sick at the thought of work that many targets described. Consequences of bullying are experienced for some time after the target has left the bullying workplace and provide us with motivation to further investigate how best to meet the needs of the target in order to allow them to move on in their lives. At the least it is necessary to urgently acknowledge that the subtle, persistent nature of bullying which employs many strategies to bear on dominance over the target succeeds in ensuring that the targets suffers for a long time.

The stories told on the websites included in this study are reminiscent of the fable of the boiled frog; a frog is placed in a pot of water and as the water is heated slowly the frog does not notice the change is happening until the water has reached a temperature which renders the frog incapable of escaping. For the target of workplace bullying the impact of the negative acts are so subtle that they are unable to detect the changes until it is too late.

The findings in this project have revealed more insight into the bullying experience in particular what happens to the targets after they have left the workplace in which they experienced the bullying. This insight can direct future research into how best to decrease the likelihood of it reoccurring and to minimise the ongoing effects it has on its targets.

Future research

The research community needs to continue to develop ways to assist the targets of bullying to overcome the difficulties they experience long after they remove themselves from the bully. Within this research it is likely that more insight will be revealed into this phenomenon which may allow preventative measures to be put into place to minimise its presence in organisations.

Intensive remedial identity work with the target of bullying has been suggested as a way of assisting them to overcome the experience (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008). This work focuses on allowing the target to grieve and to then assisting them to restructure their identity by integrating the experiences of bullying into the narratives they have of their life. The aim of remedial identity work is to remove the stigmatising effects of the bullying and integrate the experiences in order for the target to have a more coherent sense of self. This form of intervention is in line with the change in world view and beliefs they were no longer able to participate in working life that emerged from the analysis of this project.

Future research needs to find a way to define this phenomenon to allow for individual differences in the way the experience is perceived (Milam, Spitzmueller, & Penney, 2009). This might also provide a way for researchers from both English and non English speaking countries to share information as they will be more confident that they are discussing the same phenomena. In this way when prevalence studies are conducted we will have a better understanding of how often bullying occurs and whether particular occupations or organisations experience the same levels of this phenomenon.

To conclude this section the comments of Resch & Schubinski (1996) provide a sense of how the occurrence of bullying behaviour may be curbed in the workplace.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

They suggest that organisational factors can be developed into successful anti mobbing programmes in all organisations which recognise the importance of employee wellbeing. These factors include: changes in work design, changes in leadership behaviour, improvement in the moral standing of employees, appointing contact people for mobbing targets and providing neutral clearing posts. Included in this should be a system for preventing the escalation of mobbing behaviour which is recognised early as well as intervention processes when it is recognised at a later stage. The targets who shared their stories on the internet and were included in this project would have benefited if their employers had such strategies in place.

The perspective of people who are identified or accused of being perpetrators of negative acts in the workplace is likely to illuminate more aspects of this phenomenon. While this project has not aimed to provide information on perpetrators the descriptions of the acts of bullying which have been identified in the analysis provide insight into the acts that they may be capable of committing. Therefore research projects need to be developed which can gain insight into their perspectives of the experience. It is likely that their stories will assist in developing ways to combat this phenomenon as their understanding of what happened should not be discounted.

The context of the World Wide Web provided the targets of bullying with a safe haven for the free expression of their personal stories of bullying. They described how the incidents of bullying affected and led them to suffer the consequences of that bullying. Nye (1997) believes writing is important as it provides a healing process for people who survived stressful episodes in their lives. Writing can be seen as a cathartic process which allows people to explore and share their experiences and it aids in the healing process. Hopefully the targets who have shared their stories with us have continued to heal.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

From my perspective analysing these stories led to a sense of helplessness as I was unable to interact with the targets. However as the analysis unfolded this sense was overcome when I was reminded that this study enabled those experiences to be heard and incorporated into this arena. Whether this study is widely read or not the knowledge that I have gained will inform my practice as I begin my career in the field of industrial/ organisational psychology. The experiences which have been included in this study have been held and will continue to be held by me and hopefully they will inform all readers of this study to have a better understanding of this phenomenon.

I leave the last words to Frosh (2007) who found that sharing an experience is like passing a hot potato.

‘The consolation of having shared it (an experience) with a listener is perhaps also a kind of passing around a hot potato: take this feeling and let it work inside you’.
(p. 650).

In this vain the hot potato has now been passed to you.

References

- Argyris, C. (1960). *Understanding organisational behaviour*. Oxford: Dorsey Press.
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1, 3, 385-405.
- Baillien, E. & DeWitte, H. (2009). Why is organisational change related to Workplace bullying? Role conflict and job security as mediators. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 30, 3, 348-371.
- Baillien, E., Neyens, I., De Witte, H., & De Cuyper, N. (2009). A Qualitative Study on the development of workplace bullying: Towards a three Way model. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 19, 1, 1-16.
- Barbrook, R. (2007). *Imaginary Futures: From thinking machine to the Global village*. London: Pluto Press.
- Bar-Lev, S. (2008). We are here to give you emotional support: Performing Emotions in online HIV/Aids. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18, 4, 509-521.
- Baron, R. A. & Neuman, J. H. (1996). Workplace violence and workplace Aggression: Evidence on their relative frequency and potential causes. *Aggressive Behavior*, 22, 161-173.
- Beaulieu, A. (2005). Sociable Hyperlinks: An Ethnographic Approach to Connectivity. In C. Hine (Ed.). *Virtual methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*. Oxford: Berg.

References

- Berg, B. L. (2004). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. New York: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Bjorkqvist, K., Osterman, K., Hjelt-Back, M. (1994). Aggression among university Employees'. *Aggressive Behaviour*, 20, 173-184.
- Bolton, S. C. (Ed.). (2007). *Dimensions of Dignity at Work*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Boni, N. & Circelli, M. (2002). *Contemporary Issues facing women in policing*. Australian Centre for Policing Research. Sydney: Payneham.
- Bowling, N. A. & Beehr, T. A. (2006). Workplace Harassment from the victim's Perspective: A Theoretical Model and Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, 5, 998-1012.
- Brodsky, C. M. (1976). *The harassed worker*. Toronto: Lexington Books: D C Heath & Company.
- Bruner, J. (2002). *Making Stories: Law, literature, life*. New York: Farrar, Straus, And Giroux.
- Charmaz, K. (1994). The Grounded theory method: An explication and Interpretation. In G. Glaser (ed.). *More Grounded Theory Methodology: A reader*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Cowie, H. Jennifer, D., Neto, C., Angula, J, C. Pereira, B., del Barrio, C. & Ananiadou, K. (2000). Comparing he nature of workplace bullying In two European countries: Portugal and the UK. In M. Sheehan, S.

References

- Ramsey and J. Patrick (eds), *Transcending the boundaries: Integrating People, processes and systems*. Proceedings of the 2000 Conference. Brisbane: Griffith University.
- Cowie, H., Naylor, P., Rivers, I., Smith, P. K., & Pereira, B. (2002). Measuring Workplace bullying. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 7, 33-51.
- Coyne, I., Chong, P. S., Seigne, E. Randall, P. (2003). 'Self and peer nominations Of bullying: An analysis of incident rates, individual difference, and Perceptions of the working environment'. *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 12, 209-228.
- Crawford, N. (1997). Bullying at work: A psychoanalytical perspective. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 7, 3, 219-225.
- David, M. & Sutton, C. D. (2004). *Social research: The basics*. London: Sage
- Deetz, S. A. (1992). *Democracy in an age of corporate colonization: Developments In Communication and the politics of everyday life*. Albany: State University Of New York Press.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008a). *The Landscape of qualitative research*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008b). The discipline and practice of qualitative Research. In Denzin, N. K & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. London: Sage Publications.
- DeSantis, L. & Ugarriza, D. N. (2000). The concept of theme as used in qualitative Nursing research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 22, 3, 351-372.

References

- Dirk, K. T. & Ferrin, D. L. (2001). The role of trust in organizational settings. *Organization Science*, 12, 4, 450-467.
- Doyle, C. (2003). *Work and Organizational Psychology: An introduction with Attitude*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Duffy, M., & Sperry, L. (2007). Workplace Mobbing: Individual and Family Health Consequences. *The Family Journal*, 15, 4, 398-404.
- Eatough, V. & Smith, J. A. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In C. Willig & W. Stinton-Rogers (Eds). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Einarsen, S. (1999). The nature and causes of bullying at work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20,1,2.
- Einarsen, S. (2000). Harassment and bullying at work: A review of the Scandinavian approach. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 5, 4, 379-401.
- Einarsen, S., Raknes, B. I., & Matthiesen, S. B. (1994). Bullying and Harassment at Work and Their Relationships to Work Environment Quality: An Exploratory Study. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 4, 4, 381-401.
- Einarsen, S., Rakens, B. I., Matthiesen, S. B., & Hellesoy, O. H. (1994). Mobbing og Harde Personkonfliketer. *Helsefarlig samspill pa Arbeidsplassen*. London: Sigma Forlag.

References

- Einarsen, S. & Skogstad, A. (1996). Bullying at Work: Epidemiological Findings in public and private organizations. *European Journal Of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5, 2, 185-201.
- Einarsen, S., Matthiesen, S. B., Skogstad, A. (1998). Bullying, burnout and well-being among assistant nurses. *Journal of Occupational Health and Safety*, 14, 563-568.
- Elliott, R., Fischer, C. T., Rennie, D. L. (1999). Evolving guidelines for publication Of qualitative research in psychology and related fields. *British Journal Of Clinical Psychology*, 38, 215-229.
- Evans, A., Elford, J., & Wiggins, D. (2008). Using the Internet for Qualitative Research. In Willig, C. & Stainton-Rogers, W. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: Sage Publications.
- Field, T. (1996). *Bully in Sight: How to predict, resist, challenge and combat Workplace bullying. Overcoming the silence and denial by which Abuse thrives*. Wantage: Wessex Press.
- Finlay, L. & Balinger, C. (Ed.). (2006). *Qualitative Research for Allied Health Professional: Challenging Choices*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Frosh, S. (2007). Disintegrating Qualitative Research. *Theory Psychology*, 17, 5, 635-653.
- Gabriel, Y., Fineman, S., & Sims, D. (2000). *Organizing & Organizations*. London: Sage.

References

- Gajjala, R. & Altman, M. (2006). Producing Cyber-Selves through techno spatial Praxis: Studying through doing. In P. Liamputtong, (Ed). *Health Research in Cyberspace Methodological, Practical and Personal Issues*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Gemmill, G. (1989). The dynamics of scapegoating in small groups. *Small Group Behavior*, 20, 406-418.
- Giga, S. I., Hoel, H., & Lewis, D., (2008). The costs of workplace bullying. *Research Commissioned by the Dignity at Work Partnership: A partnership Project funded jointly by Unite the Union and The Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform*. University of Bradford.
- Gilbert, K. (2001). Introduction: Why are we interested in emotions? In K. R. Gilbert (Ed.), *The emotional nature of qualitative research*. Boca, FL: CRC Press LLCC.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for Qualitative research*. New York: Aldine.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Gonzalez, D. & Grana, J. L. (2009). The Psychological harassment in the place Of work; Prevalence and descriptive analysis in a sample multioccupational. *Psicothema*, 21,2, 293-298.
- Gooden, R. J. & Winefield, H. R. (2007). Breast cancer online discussion boards: A thematic analysis of gender differences and similarities. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 12, 1, 103-114.

References

- Groeblinghoff, D. & Becker, M. (1996). A Case Study of Mobbing and the Clinical Treatment of Mobbing Victims. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5, 2, 277-294.
- Guest, G. & McLellan, E. (2003). Distinguishing the trees from the forest: Applying Cluster analysis to thematic qualitative data. *Field methods*, 15, 2, 186-201.
- Hallberg, L. & Strandmark, M. K. (2006). Health consequences of workplace bullying: Experiences from the perspective of employees in the public service sector. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 1, 2, 109 – 119.
- Harvey, M. G., Buckley, M. R., Heames, J. T., Zinko, R., Brouer, R. L. & Ferris, G. R. (2007). A Bully as an archetypal destructive leader. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 14, 2, 117-129.
- Haslam, S. A. & Reicher, S. (2006). Stressing the group: Social identity and the Unfolding dynamics of responses to stress. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, 5, 1037-1052.
- Hauge, L. J., Skogstad, A., & Einarsen, S. (2007). Relationships between stressful Work environments and Bullying: Results of a large representative study. *Work & Stress*, July – September, 21, 3.
- Heath, C., Knez, M., & Camerer, C. (1993). The strategic management of the Entitlement process in the employment relationship. *Strategic Management Journal*, 14, 75-93.

References

- Hewson, C., Yule, P. Laurent, D., & Vogel, C. (2003). *Internet Research Methods: A Practical guide for the social and behavioural sciences*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hodson, R., Roscigno, V. J. & Lopez, S. H. (2006). Misuse of Power. *Work and Occupations*, 33, 4, 382-416.
- Hoel, H. (1997). 'Bullying at work a Scandinavian perspective'. Institute of Occupational Safety and Health Journal, 1, 51-59. In Rayner, C. (1999). From research to implementation: Finding leverage for prevention. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20,1,2.
- Hoel, H. & Cooper, C. (2000). *Destructive Conflict & Bullying at work*. Manchester School of Management. University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. (UMIST).
- Hoel, H, Cooper, C. L., & Faragher, B. (2001). The experience of bullying in Great Britain: The impact of organisational status. *European Journal Of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10, 4, 443-465.
- Hogh, A. & Dofradottir, A. (2001). Coping with bullying in the workplace. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10, 4, 485-495.
- Hough, M. (1987). Offenders choice of target: Findings from victim surveys. *Journal of Qualitative Criminology*, 3, 4.

References

- Hubert, A. B. & van Veldhoven, M. (2001). Risk sectors for undesirable behaviour And Mobbing. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(4):415-424.
- Huse, E. F. (1975). *Organizational Development and Change*. New York: West Publishing Co.
- Im, E. & Chee, W. (2008). The use of internet cancer support groups by ethnic Minorities. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 19, 1, 74-82.
- Ishmael, A. (1999). *Harassment: Bullying and violence at work*. London: The Industrial Society.
- Jones, S. G. (1999). *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the net*. London: Sage Publications.
- Kearns, D., McCarthy, P., & Sheehan. (1997). Organizational Restructuring: Considerations for workplace rehabilitation. *Australian Journal of Rehabilitation Counselling*, 3, 1, 21-29.
- Keashly, L. (1998). Emotional abuse in the workplace: Conceptual and empirical Issues. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 1(1), 85-117.
- Kendall, L. (1998). Recontextualizing 'Cyberspace'. Methodological Considerations for online research. In S. G. Jones. *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for examining the net*. London: Sage Publications.

References

- Kraut, R., Kielser, S., Boneva, B., Cummings, J., Helgeson, V. & Crawford, A. (2002). Internet Paradox Revisited. *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(1): 49-74.
- Le Compt, M. D. & Schensul, J. J. (1999). *Analyzing and interpreting ethnographic Data*. Walnut Creek: Altamina.
- Lewis, D. (1999). Workplace Bullying – Interim findings of a study in further And higher education in Wales. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20,1,2.
- Lewis, D. (1999). UK workplace bullying: HRM, friend or foe? Paper presented At the Ninth European Congress on Work and Organizational Psychology, Helsinki, Finland. In Liefoghe, A. P. D. & Davey, K. M. (2001). Accounts of workplace bullying: The role of the organisation. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(4), 375-392.
- Lewis, D. & Gunn, R. (2007). Workplace Bullying in the Public Sector: Understanding the Racial Dimension. *Public Administration*, 85, 3, 641-665.
- Lewis, S. E. (2006). Recognition of workplace bullying: A qualitative study of Women Targets in the public sector. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 16, 2, 119-135.
- Leymann, H. (1990). Mobbing and psychological terror at workplaces. *Violence and Victims*, 5, 119-126.
- Leymann, H. (1996). The content and development of mobbing at work. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5, 2, 165-184.

References

- Leymann, H. & Gustafsson, A. (1996). Mobbing at work and the development of Post-traumatic stress disorders. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5, 2, 251-275.
- Liefoogh, A. P. D., & Olafsson, R. (1999). "Scientists" and "Amateurs": Mapping The bullying domain. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20, 1,2.
- Liefooghe, A. P. D. & Davey, K. M. (2001). Accounts of workplace bullying: The role of the organisation. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(4), 375-392.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Loewenthal, K.M, Lee, M., MacLeod, A. K., Cook, S. & Goldblatt., V. (2003). Drowning Your sorrow? Attitudes towards alcohol in UK Jews and Protestants: A thematic analysis. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 49, 3, 204-215.
- Lombardo, A.P. & Gillet, J. (2006). Online HIV Research: Assessing case study Methodologies. In P. Liamputtong, (Ed). *Health Research in Cyberspace: Methodological, Practical and Personal Issues*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P. (2003). The Communicative Cycle of Employee Emotional Abuse: Generation Regeneration of Workplace Mistreatment. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 16, 4, 471-501.

References

- Lutgen-Sandvik, P. (2008). Intensive Remedial Identity Work: Responses to Workplace Bullying Trauma and Stigmatization. *Organization*, 15, 1, 97-119.
- Macik-Frey, M., Quick, J. C., & Nelson, D. L. (2007). Advances in Occupational Health: From a Stressful Beginning to a positive future. *Journal of Management*, 33, 6, 809-840.
- Mattiesen, S.B & Einarsen, S. (2001). MMPI-2 Configurations among victims of Bullying at work. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10, 4, 467-484.
- Maykut, P. & Morehouse, R. (1994). The qualitative posture: Indwelling. In P. S. Maykut (Ed.), *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide*. London: Falmer.
- Mikkelsen, E. G. & Einarsen, S. (2001). Bullying in Danish work-life: Prevalence And health correlates. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(4): 393-413.
- Milam, A. C., Spitzmueller, C., & Penney, L. M. (2009). Investigating Individual Differences among targets of workplace incivility. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 14, 1, 58-69.
- Minkel, U. (1996). *Sozialer Stress an Arbeitsplatz und seine Wirkung auf Fehlzeiten (Social stress and its consequences for sickness absence)*. University of Konstanz: Social Science Faculty.

References

- Mulveen, R. & Hepworth, J. (2006). An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Of Participation in a Pro-anorexia Internet Site and Its Relationship with Disordered Eating. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 11, 283-286.
- Needham, A. W. (2003). *Workplace Bullying: The Costly Business Secret*. Auckland: Penguin Books.
- Niedl, K. (1996). Mobbing and Well being: Economic and Personnel Development Implications. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5(2): 239-249.
- Niedl, K. (1995). *Mobbing/ Bullying am Arbeitsplatz. Eine Empirische Analyse Zum Phanomen sowie zu personalwirtschaftlich relevanten Effekten von Systematischen Feindseligkeiten (Mobbing/bullying at work. An Empirical analysis of the phenomenon and of the effects of systematic Harassment on human resource management)*. Munich: Hampp.
- Nielsen, M. B., Matthiesen, S. B., Einarsen, S. (2008). Sense of coherence as a Protective Mechanism among targets of workplace bullying. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 13, 2, 128-136.
- Nye, E.F. (1997). Writing as healing. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, 439-452. (439)
- O'Dochartaigh, N. (2002). *The Internet Research Handbook: A Practical Guide for Students and Researchers in the Social Sciences*. London: Sage Publications.

References

- O'Moore, M., Seigne, E., McGuire, L., & Smith, M. (1998). Victims of workplace Bullying in Ireland. *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 19, 2, 345-357.
- Orgad, S. (2006). 'The cultural dimensions of online communication': A study of Breast cancer patients' internet spaces. *New Media & Society*, 8, 6, 877-899.
- Penney, L. M. & Spector, P. E. (2005). Job stress, incivility, and counterproductive Work behaviour (CWB): the moderating role of negative affectivity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26, 777-796.
- Peyton, P. R. (2003). *Dignity at Work: Eliminate Bullying and Create a Positive Working Environment*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Pitts, V. (2004). Illness and Internet Empowerment: Writing and Reading breast cancer In cyberspace. *Health: An interdisciplinary Journal for the social study of Health illness and medicine*, 8, 1, 33-59.
- Rager, K. B. (2005). Compassion stress and the qualitative Researcher. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15, 3, 423-430.
- Randall, T. (1992). Abuse at work drains people, money, and medical workplace is Not Immune. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 267, 1439-1440.
- Rayner, C. (1997). The incidence of workplace bullying. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 7, 199-208.
- Rayner, C. (1999). From research to implementation: Finding leverage for prevention. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20,1,2.

References

- Rayner, C., Hoel, H., & Cooper, C. L. (2002). *Workplace Bullying: What we know, Who is to blame, ad what can we do?* New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Resch, M. & Schubinski, M. (1996). Mobbing-Prevention and Management in Organizations. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5, 2, 295-307.
- Rew, L., Bechtel, D. & Supp, A. (1993). Self as instrument in qualitative research. *Nursing Research*, 42, 5, 300-301.
- Rudman, R. (1999). *Human Resources Management in New Zealand*. Auckland: Longman.
- Salin, D. (2001). Prevalence and forms of bullying among business professionals: A comparison of two different strategies for measuring bullying. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(4): 425-441.
- Salin, D. (2003). *Workplace Bullying among Business Professionals: prevalence, Organisational antecedents, and gender differences*. Helsinki: Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration.
- Sandaunet, A. G. (2008). A space for suffering? Communicating breast cancer in an Online self help context. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18, 1631-1641.
- Sayer, A. (2007). Dignity at work: Broadening the agenda. *Organisation*, 14, 4, 565-581.

References

- Scheurich, J. J. (1997). *Research Method in the Postmodern*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Schilling, J. (2009). From ineffectiveness to destruction: A qualitative study on the Meaning of negative leadership. *Leadership*, 5, 1, 102-128.
- Sharf, B. F. (1999). Beyond Netiquette: The Ethics of Doing Naturalistic Discourse Research on the Internet. In S. Jones (Ed). *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for the Examining the Net*. London: Sage Publications.
- Sheehan, M. (1999). Workplace Bullying: responding with some emotional Intelligence. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20, 1/2.
- Sheehan, M., Barker, M., Rayner, C. (1999). Applying strategies for dealing with Workplace bullying. *International Journal of Manpower*. 20,1/2.
- Silvester, J. (2008). Work and Organizational Psychology. In Willig, C. & Stainton-Rogers, W. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*. London: Sage Publications.
- Skogstad, A., Einarsen, S., Torshemin, T., Aasland, M. S., & Hetland, H. (2007). The Destructiveness of Laissez-Faire leadership Behavior. *Journal of Occupations Health Psychology*, 12, 1, 80-92.
- Smith, J. A. (1995). Semi-structured interviewing and qualitative analysis. In J. A. Smith, R. Hare, & L. Van Langenhore. (Ed.), *Rethinking methods In psychology*. London: Sage Publications.

References

- Smith, J. A. (1996). Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: Using Interpretative phenomenological analysis in health psychology. *Psychology and Health*, 11, 261-271.
- Smith, J. A., Harre, R., & Van Langenhove, L. (Ed.). (2005). *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*. London: Sage publications.
- Sue, M. P. (2007). *Toxic People: Decontaminate Difficult People at Work Without Using Weapons or Duct Tape*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Suler, J. (2006). The psychology of cyberspace. <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~suler/psyber/psyber.html>. Retrieved on 12/01/09 at 11.22pm.
- Tata, J. (2002). The influence of managerial accounts on employees reactions to Negative feedback. *Group organisation Management*, 27, 4, 480-503.
- Tehrani, N. (2001). *Building a Culture of Respect: Managing Bullying at Work*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Thau, S., Crossley, C., Bennett, R. J. & Sczesny, S. (2007). The relationship Between trust, attachment, and antisocial work behaviors. *Human Relations*, 60, 8, 1155-1179.
- Thibaut, J., & Kelley, H. H. (1959). *The social psychology of groups*. New York: Wiley.

References

- Tracy, S. J., Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & Alberts, J. K. (2006). Nightmares, Demons, and Slaves: Exploring the painful metaphors of workplace bullying. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 20, 2, 148-185.
- UNISON (1997). *UNISON Members' Experience of Bullying at Work*, London, UNISON.
- Urbanski, L. (2002). Workplace bullying's high cost: \$180 M in lost time, productivity. *Orlando Business Journal*, March 18.
- Vartia, M. (1996). The Sources of Bullying – Psychological Work Environment And Organizational Climate. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5, 2, 203-214.
- Wallace, N. (2008). Bullying caused woman's suicide, inquiry told. July 9. The Sydney Herald. Retrieved on 08/09/08 at <http://www.smh.com.au>.
- Wallace, P. (1999). *The Psychology of the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wayne, S. J., Hoobler, J. M., Marinova, S. V., & Johnson, M. M. 'Abusive Behaviour: Trickle Down Effects beyond the Dyad.' Proceedings of the Annual Academy of Management, Anaheim, CA, 2008.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in Organizations*. London: Sage Publications.
- Westhues, K. (2002). At the mercy of the mob. *Occupational Health and Safety*. 18, 8, 30-34.

References

- Williams, G. R. (1993). Style and effectiveness in negotiation. In L. Hall(ed.), *Negotiation: strategies for mutual gain*. Newbury Park, C.A: Sage.
- Wilson, H. S. (1993). *Introducing research in nursing*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison Wesley Nursing.
- Witte, J. (2004). The case for multimethod research: Large sample design and the Study of life online. In Howard, P. N. & Jones, S. *Society Online: The Internet in context*. London: Sage Publications.
- Zapf, D. (1999). 'Organizational, Workgroup related and personal causes of Mobbing/ bullying at work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 20, ½, 70-85.
- Zapf, B., Knorz, C. & Kulla, M. (1996). On the relationship between mobbing factors, And job content, social work environment, and health outcomes. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 5, 2, 215-237.
- Zapf, D., & Warth, K. (1997). Mobbing: Subtile Kniegsfuhrung am Arbeits[;atz. (Mobbing: Subtle warfare at the workplace). *Psychologie Heute*, August, 20-25.
- Zapf, D., & Einarsen, S. (2001). Bullying in the workplace: Recent trends in Research and practice – an introduction. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(4): 369-373.
- Zapf, D., & Gross, C. (2001). Conflict escalation and coping with workplace Bullying: A replication and extension. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10, 4, 497-522.

Appendix A: Consent Email

To (Website Creator),

I am a postgraduate student with the School of Psychology at Massey University, Palmerston North. Workplace bullying is my thesis topic. I would like to include the stories you have on your website in my thesis. My aim is to explore the phenomenon of workplace bullying from the targets perspective.

My thesis supervisor is Dr Mandy Morgan; please contact her at the following email address: C.A.Morgan@massey.ac.nz, if you would like to discuss this further with her. Alternatively my email address is jmschlup@xtra.co.nz if you would like to discuss it further with me.

I appreciate the time you have taken to consider my request.

Regards

Josephine Schlup
Ph: 063547991
0274528276

‘This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University’s Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant Chancellor (Research Ethics), telephone 063505249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz’.