Many families strive to function normally in the challenging and chaotic world that we live in while others struggle daily to survive. It is much the same with the jobs that we go to day in and day out. In general, most of us arrive at work expecting to put in at least eight hours a day and return home to our personal lives. For many people, walking into their jobs compares to reliving their worst nightmare every single day. They dread having to deal with daily or weekly doses of harassment and humiliation. Although the subject of workplace bullying does not spark the sensationalism that often excites the media, research based on surveys and other scientific data shows that workplace bullying should indeed be making headlines. Physical, emotional and psychological harm inflicted on targeted employees is shown to have a direct link to their experiences of bullying on the job.

Studies show that children who practice bullying at an early age will more than likely become adult bullies. Adequate laws to combat workplace bullying are not yet in place. At present, few claims of workplace harassment settle favorably for the victim. Workplace bullying has noticeably become more of an issue as experts continue to research and study data to expose the devastating effect that bullying has on the victims. Other support systems are also affected which includes victims’ families, friends and co-workers. Companies that do nothing about bullying within their ranks will incur losses, as more time is spent dealing with the bully than is actually spent being productive.
Washington State Department of Labor and Industries defines workplace bullying as:

Repeated unreasonable actions of individuals (or a group) directed towards an employee (or a group of employees), which is intended to intimidate and creates a risk to the health and safety of the employee(s). Workplace bullying often involves an abuse or misuse of power. Bullying includes behavior that intimidates, degrades, offends, or humiliates a worker, often in front of others. Bullying behavior creates feelings of defenselessness in the target and undermines an individual’s right to dignity at work. (1)

Normally people do not subject themselves to this type of working environment. However, in many instances, targeted employees must make life-altering decisions on whether to confront their bullies seek legal assistance or leave the job. No decisions for the victims are ever that simple or straightforward. The majority of us would agree that while we do not expect our work environments to be blissful utopias, we would rather not have to confront hostile managers or co-workers at our jobs. So who are these people whose lifelong goal it is to wreak havoc in the lives of the unfortunate souls who happen to cross paths with them? Victims of bullying can in time discover that ogres are not the mythical monsters found in fairy tales but are alive and very real in their workplace.

Bullying can start at a very young age. Children will randomly select their victims while older youths and adults tend to target their victims. Mobbing is a European term mostly used to describe the bullying of an individual by a group. Konrad Lorenz an Austrian ethologist used mobbing to describe the type of behavior that animals engage in to scare away predators. A Swedish doctor called Peter-Paul Heinemann applied the term mobbing to describe similar
behavior children use to isolate and humiliate other children. Such vindictive behavior has been known to cause children to become depressed and suicidal (Middelton-Moz and Zawadski 9).

From an early age children learn how to socialize in cliques based on similarities in likes, dislikes and appearances. Boys are raised to be tough, good at sports, not seek help and to bully rather than be bullied. Girls tend to gossip, slander and lately have shown more physical aggression in dealing with their peers (Middelton-Moz and Zawadski 11-12). Studies show that people who grew up being victimized as children will more than likely become either bullies themselves or targets. Children learn who they are, their values, limitations, positive and negative behavior from adults including parents, teachers, coaches, extended family and friends. As children get older and aggressive behavior grows unbridled, it becomes increasingly difficult to change (Middelton-Moz and Zawadski 57).

Children need limits so that they do not become insecure and feel that they are “bigger” than the adults that influence them. Bullies often express that they reached a turning point in their lives after they were confronted with compassion, shown an “honest mirror” and were held accountable for their actions. They needed to “feel safe enough to work through their pain” in order to have better lives (Middelton-Moz and Zawadski 71). Parents can be either neglectful or can set unrealistic goals for their children. Adolescents who are unable to achieve those goals can find themselves being ridiculed and unfairly criticized. Their feelings of unworthiness can later lead to bullying behavior (Middelton-Moz and Zawadski 78). Children find it difficult to deal with conflict effectively when parents and other role models do not set the right examples to follow. Children start out in life at a disadvantage when the only role models they have are portrayed on television and in violent video games (Middelton-Moz and Zawadski 80).
Since 1999, all schools in the United Kingdom were required to have anti-bullying policies in place because of the increasing problem of school violence. Similar policies were implemented in Georgia after a student named Jonathan Miller delivered a fatal blow to the head of a fellow student Josh Belluardo. Jonathan had thirty-four prior incidents of violence that had been reported and yet was allowed to remain in school until he took the life of another child (Middelton-Moz and Zawadski 89). Many people falsely believe that children will eventually outgrow their bad behavior. How often have we heard or said “boys will be boys” which is supposed to somehow justify bad behavior? Children who are bullied or witness violence may attempt to immerse themselves in sports, schoolwork or some other activity to gain self-recognition. If they lose that recognition or self-worth, they resort to the only thing that they know which is bullying others. If children learn from an early age that bullying gains them attention and forces people to do what they want, they will see no reason to change their behavior unless there is intervention (Middelton-Moz and Zawadski 98).

Irby describes a bully as a predator that is “an individual dedicated to using any means necessary for the consumption, and/or total annihilation, of another’s spirit, dignity, and communal connection. […] Predators have a compulsive need to manipulate, control, and consume—power is everything” (5). Many of us work in environments where we sense that all is not right. We feel disconnected, unsure and unstable but we put our thoughts aside and carry on with our jobs. Irby calls it “an illusion of authentic leadership” but in fact there is nothing but “manipulation, inequity, control, competition and negation.” Too often people remain mired in jobs because of high salaries but often pay an even higher price for endangering their health and emotional well-beings in the end (41).
According to David Weiner, power freak is another name associated with bullies. A sports personality like Bobby Knight known for physically and mentally abusing members of his basketball team might be considered a power freak or hotel chain owner Leona Helmsley who was infamous for ridiculing and firing employees at will, would probably be considered by her victims as the ultimate power freak (19). Then they are the lesser known power freaks; those individuals that we interact with daily. Power freaks can appear to be nice and extremely charming—nothing more than a guise to ensnare well-meaning but misguided targets.

Power freaks can display “a grandiose sense of self-worth, a lack of empathy for other human beings, lack of remorse or guilt, cunning and callousness.” They are manipulative, usually do not take responsibility for their actions and will question the loyalty of associates and friends (21). Weiner advises that trying to show a power freak how his or her behavior affects other people will generally be met with anger and retaliation. Just as alcoholics and drug abusers have a distorted view of themselves, so do bullies. The incessant drive of power freaks can be compared to the ranking system or social hierarchy of primitive tribes. The alpha male of the tribe needed to “fight his way up the ranks and defend himself against challengers.” The same ranking system was true for women. Both men and women can be equally as frightening in their quest to outrank their peers (47).

People are consumed with power and status which provides a formidable breeding ground for bullying behavior. There are symbols of power and status everywhere. From the army, the country clubs, the neighborhood gangs who must defend their turfs to the caste system in India where historically the elite discriminated against the less privileged. In the corporate world, people maintain their “inner circles” socializing only with the chosen few. Weiner suggests that everyone seeks some level of status, from a level one to ten. Level one would be
the person who is content to be left alone to do a job. A person at level five likes the idea of power and status but is not willing to destroy others to attain it. Those persons at level ten have psychopathic or narcissistic traits and will not only strive for absolute power but would be willing to gain it by any means (49). Bullies, who smirk while others cringe, seek to control and intimidate their targets in an attempt to gain power.

Weiner shares about a mild and pleasant woman he knew who became an “extreme power freak” after her husband died and she took control of the company. He recalls that her transformation was remarkable. She took delight in demeaning the managers and other company employees (72). Weiner states that many psychologists he spoke with agree that people who intimidate and demean others do so in an attempt to conceal their own inadequacies and feelings of low self-esteem. However, he found on the contrary that narcissistic people appear to have high self-esteem. A theory that is supported by Roy Baumeister, professor of psychology, who agrees that aggressive types have high levels of self-esteem relating back to the alpha male who could not afford to have self-doubt at the prospect of an enemy invasion into his territory! (92)

On what scale has the problem of bullying risen to? A 1997 study of 130 nurses in the United States found that 90% of the reported incidences of verbal abuse from doctors ranged from being ignored to feeling belittled. A subsequent study in 2003 of 431 nurses found that 91% felt “attacked, devalued and humiliated.” Doctors were most often guilty of offensive behavior but nurses were also exposed to unfair treatment from patients, families and other nurses (Sutton 21). Bullying is prevalent in Australia, Canada, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland and South Africa. A study of 5,000 Danish employees revealed that 6% were bullied by means of “nasty teasing.” Approximately 50% to 80% of their superiors were responsible for inappropriate behavior. Women and men were found to be bullied at the same rate with the
tendency for women to bully other women and men to act the same with other male employees (Sutton 23).

In Britain, a study undertaken by Professor Cary Cooper and Helge Hoel of the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) polled about 5,000 British employees from more than seventy organisations in the private, public and non-profit sectors. Of the 12,350 questionnaires that were distributed, 5,288 were returned (approximately 42.8%). The respondents were proportionate in number with 52.5% male and 47.5% female. Approximately 48% of workers studied, consisted of managers and professionals (Rayner, Hoel and Cooper 20-22). A total of 553 employees reported being bullied within a six-month period. One in seven reported regular incidences. The researchers reasoned that with 24 millions employees in the United Kingdom, nearly 2.5 million people could be victims of bullying (Rayner, Hoel and Cooper 24). High risks sectors in the survey were telecommunications at 28%, prison service employees were at 32% while 64% witnessed bullying all within a five year period. Approximately 36% of teachers were bullied and 58% had been witnesses (Rayner, Hoel and Cooper 26).

The study also showed that the highest level of bullying occurred between the 35-44 year age group while those above 55 years of age apparently did not report being bullied. In Norway, findings were reversed, where older employees reported higher incidences of harassment. Researchers determined that survey results varied based on the different dynamics of the countries. The UMIST study showed that 22% of men and 28% of women were bullied equally (Rayner, Hoel and Cooper 28-29). Individuals in the police force, fire service and retail sectors were targeted and bullied. The researchers concluded that these statistics represent organisational cultures where people are “punished for breaking ranks” (Rayner, Hoel and
Those respondents who confronted the bully (including those who made a group complaint) reported that in some cases the bullying increased. Those who sought support from union representatives or company personnel did see some improvement. The Hoel and Cooper study also showed that two-thirds of the women did seek support through discussions with family and friends, while one-third of the men sought similar support (Rayner, Hoel and Cooper 34-35).

Negative behaviors reported included information withheld that would affect performance (67%). Having opinions and views ignored (57%). Being exposed to unmanageable workloads (54%) and being assigned tasks with unreasonable or impossible deadlines (52%). Hoel and Cooper were concerned with frequency since bullying is the repetition of small acts that come together and form a pattern. Occasionally, we might receive unmanageable assignments or projects during the course of our work schedules; however, the problem lies in the persistent pressure that people feel when they are given such workloads repeatedly (Rayner, Hoel and Cooper 37-38).

In 2001, Queensland Australia set up a task force to study the effects of bullying. Results showed that one in four workers was affected by workplace bullying. In addition, there were reported losses of 12 billion Australian dollars in one year (Peyton 15-16). In 2001 a human resource firm conducted a survey in Australia which revealed that 33% of the legal profession stated that they had experienced regular bullying from an employer or manager. In the government sector 22% reported that their employers were bullies (Futterman 16). Studies conducted in Australia, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States indicate high levels of stress, psychological, emotional and physical disorders (Futterman 38).
One study done in Australia showed 34% of bullied victims took time off from work while another revealed that 22% of employees were unable to make basic decisions and 20% saw a decrease in their quality of work. In the United States, stress was the cause of many work-related diseases at a cost of $26 billion annually as estimated by Workplace Bullying & Trauma Institute (Futtermann 193). A study conducted by Canada’s Respectful Workplace Project in 2002 showed that 18.4% of the respondents had called in sick in an attempt to avoid workplace conflict. Absenteeism from jobs resulted in losses of $1 million Canadian in a year. In 1993, Sweden implemented “Provisions on Measures Against Victimization at Work.” At the time, similar legislature was being considered by Australia, Belgium, Norway and the United Kingdom (Futtermann 197). In Japan courts rule that bullying is a violation of employees’ constitutional rights and that employees are within their rights to be treated respectfully. Employers are obligated contractually to provide a safe workplace for their employees (Futtermann 200).

Futtermann suggests when dealing with bullies, it is necessary to make direct eye contact, to remain calm and not to allow oneself to play by their rules. Other recommendations include the importance of documenting everything that is said and done while trying to avoid lone encounters with the bully. Someone else being present at meetings could prove useful if the victim intends to file a future claim (57). Victims should talk about their experiences and seek help from qualified therapists, attorneys, union representatives or employee assistance personnel. Family and friends should be willing to support the victims and remind them that they are worthy human beings, reinforce their attributes and help them to see that the problem does not lie with them but with the bully (37). Victims of abuse should take copious notes to record any improper
practices or derogatory comments. In addition, keeping a list of any personal achievements could be valuable if a claimant has any chance of success (61-63).

It should be made clear that legal action, if chosen, is not “simple, swift or cheap either monetarily or emotionally.” While bullying behavior can become unbearable, it is not against the law in the United States. Lawmakers are presently working to include protection for victims of workplace abuse under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (106). Under the tort system, the claimant might gain some leverage if a link between workplace harassment and one of the legally protected classes can be established. Intentional infliction of emotional distress (IIED) is defined by the courts as extreme and outrageous conduct intended to cause severe emotional harm to an individual. This type of claim is often very difficult to prove (108).

Peyton describes bullying as “insidious by nature” and gradual so that victims are unaware of what is happening. Bullying is described as “cumulative and entrapping.” People are harassed because of race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, physical appearance, education, popularity, intelligence and willingness to fight back. In Austria and Germany research was conducted and studies were done on mobbing. Results consistently showed that people who had been mobbed reported feelings of “depression, obsession, agitation, resigned attitudes, cognitive disturbances, irritability, insomnia, substance abuse and suicidal tendencies.” Stress can precipitate alcohol abuse, overeating and chronic illnesses that can lead to premature deaths (10-11).

Targeted employees can feel alienated through exclusion from meetings, invitations to lunch or other forms of socialization. Most people want to feel accepted as part of a team (Peyton 21). Bullying is described as having a trickle down effect. Usually behavior displayed at the top level will find its way down to the lower level. This is characteristic of the management
Cummins 11

style or culture of that particular organisation (Peyton 19). Organisations that do not live up to their mission statement by allowing or encouraging bullying will experience losses in productivity from high absenteeism, reduced morale, apathy, high turnover and tarnished reputations (Peyton 17-18).

Bullies are described as three main types. The self-righteous I’m OK-You’re Not OK type who does not favor criticism and has low esteem. This person’s behavior is destructive and enjoys seeing others suffer. The second group is categorized as I’m not OK- You’re OK. These individuals see themselves as vulnerable and are inclined to be self-protective; they fear exposure of their inadequacies. The third type will bully others as a way to gain respect or to be influential. The last two groups are inclined to be most responsive to behavioral training (Peyton 41).

Bullying can force people out of a job and prevent others from transferring to other areas within the company. If bullies gain knowledge of personal information, they can use that information to malign their victims. Employees should be cautious when interacting with their peers. Though they may seem pleasant enough, they are generally not intimate friends and one must be careful when divulging personal information. Aside from practical jokes, inappropriate comments and “accidents”, bullying can be done through electronic mail, voicemail and text messages. Reported incidents expose how bullies, having obtained their targets’ passwords, were able to access their computers and delete important files (Peyton 47-51).

Peyton describes an incident where one woman on returning to work from treatment for cancer, found that her chair had been replaced by an old broken down one and all of her personal possessions had disappeared. Her manager wanted to send a clear message that she was no longer needed (45). In another incident, a funeral wreath was delivered to the home of an
employee tagged with the employee’s name, while another woman received two hundred emails inviting her out and commenting on her body. These forms of harassment are only a few of the “creative” schemes that bullies will think up to be menacing to their victims (5).

A survey conducted in September 2007 by the Workplace Bullying Institute revealed some troubling statistics. Key findings are as follows:

- **Workplace Bullying is an Epidemic.** Fifty-four million (37%) of American workers were bullied at work. It affects half (49%) of American adults, 71.5 million workers.

- **Bullying is Same Gender/Same Race Harassment Ignored by Current Laws.** Bullying is 4 times more prevalent than illegal forms of “harassment.”

- **American Employers Can and Do Ignore Bullying.** In 62% of cases, when employers were made aware of bullying, the problem either grew worse or they did nothing despite losing between 21-28 million workers as a direct result of bullying.

- **There Oughta Be A Law**

- **More Bullies are Bosses, 72% –the Stereotype is Real.** The rank-and-file employees bullied were 55%.

- **Bullying Most Strongly Affects Women.** Women are targeted by bullies more frequently (in 57% of cases) especially by other women in 71% of cases.

- **Bullying is a Public Health Hazard.** For 45% of bullied targets, stress affects their health and 33% suffer for more than one year.

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1 The Workplace Bullying Institute Legislative Campaign is presently lobbying for passage of the anti-bullying Healthy Workplace Bill. Since 2003, 13 states have introduced the Bill.
Bullied Individuals are not “sue crazy.” Many Fail to Even Complain.

Only 3% of bullied targets file lawsuits and 40% never complain.

Perpetrators Suffer Little Despite Inflicting Suffering. Targets (77%) must put an end to the bullying by losing their jobs despite being the ones harmed.

Source: (WBI Research Director: Gary Namie, PHD 360.656.6630).

This survey was conducted using online interviews with a sample of 7,740 adults in the United States. It ran for three days from 8/10/07 to 8/13/07. It is currently the largest national survey conducted in the United States.

Namie argues that some bullies have “certifiable character disorders and are either anti-social or narcissistic.” They are a few of about 2% to 3% according to the American Psychiatric Association who possess those characteristics. It would be prudent however, to be wary when dealing with these personality types. Namie reminds us that “labeling bullies as sociopaths and psychopaths” does not excuse their behavior and people should be more concerned about the damage they inflict than what causes their bullying behavior (15). Work-related stress is the leading source of stress in the United States. Approximately 78% to 90% of Americans visit their doctors for problems directly associated with their jobs. Job stress costs about $200 to $300 billion annually, 60% to 80% of accidents on the job are stress-related (59-60).

Victims of bullying experience physical symptoms of nausea, tremors, diarrhea, dizziness, rapid heart beat, chest pain, high blood pressure, headaches and muscle aches to name a few. Cognitive and emotional problems include lost of memory, poor concentration, disorientation, nightmares, anxiety, fear, guilt and grief, mood swings and shame (Namie 60-61). Michael Scott and Stephen Strandling, two English psychologists found that a majority of victims suffer from Prolonged Duress Stress Disorder (PDSD). This usually follows an
onslaught of bullying tactics rather than just one major traumatic incident. People are also at risk for a condition called acute stress disorder, a condition recognized by the American Psychiatric Association with symptoms resulting from acute disorientation and intense agitation. People who suffer with acute stress disorder are more likely to have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Bullying is not only cruel and threatens the health of victims but can cause people to “question their very existence” as they become more obsessed with the ordeal. At the same time, the victim’s obsession becomes a burden to family and friends (Namie 65).

In Australia, an Employer’s Guide to Workplace Bullying provides information about state laws related to bullying. It is the duty of employers to protect their workers and if the perpetrators should fail to comply, they could be held liable if the victims suffer physical or psychological injury. Recent bullying incidents were handled as personal injury claims. The WorkCover Queensland Act 1996 permits a worker to submit a claim if he or she suffers an injury or disease as a result of bullying. A worker can make a claim under unfair dismissal provisions of The Workplace Relations Act 1997. Under the 1991 Anti-Discrimination Act, a complaint can be made if bullying involves discrimination or sexual harassment and the employer can be held responsible (Namie 97).

The United States trail Europe in focusing on the workplace bullying phenomenon. In 1979, Sweden began to examine mobbing (bullying). England began investigating bullying in 1997 and Australia followed around 2003. Namie warns that America needs to catch up with the rest of the world and set an example of leadership and compassion to stop bullying. He attributes this lag by Americans to an “insatiable drive for production, competitiveness and globalization” (99). Cornell University law professor, Theodore Eisenberg confirms that the success rate of job discrimination claims remains at one of the lowest classes of litigation; the only other class with
a lower success rate are cases filed by prisoners (103). In the United States 12 states\textsuperscript{2} have
proposed legislation to deal with workplace bullying which has yet to be passed by either Federal
or State Government. Some courts however, specifically the 9\textsuperscript{th} Circuit Court of Appeals, are
finding unique ways to make “equal opportunity bullying” illegal (Appleby 236).

Namie argues that when it comes to workplace bullying, you must rely on yourself to
fight back. Human Resource managers can assist to some extent—keep in mind that they
represent the companies that employ them—union representatives and employee assistance
personnel can help also. Co-workers may or may not get involved for whatever their reasons,
but for now confronting the bully remains the most viable option both financially and
emotionally. Confrontation also provides a way to regain some dignity (124).

Although the anti-bullying Healthy Workplace Bill was introduced in the United States,
currently there is no law against bullying unless it involves harassment based on race/color,
creed, religion, age, disability, national origin and sex. In the legal system, employers will
attempt to find loopholes even when these protected classes are involved. Even if the Workplace
Bill passes successfully, litigation for these cases will present many challenges. Washington
State Department of Labor and Industries offers some suggestions on how employers can protect
themselves and their employees by having a zero-tolerance policy with regard to workplace
harassment. Anti-bullying policies and procedures should be implemented and disclosed fully so
that management, existing employees and new hires are fully aware of their existence. Any
reports of bullying must be taken seriously and acted upon swiftly. Employees should have clear
expectations and should be involved in decision-making processes whenever possible. Open

\textsuperscript{2} As of October 2007, 13 U.S. States proposed the Healthy Workplace Bill. Currently there no laws passed to
protect the victims of workplace harassment.
door policies should be encouraged. Management training is needed to teach sensitivity when dealing with conflicts (4).

We continue to face challenges that seem insurmountable at times. Political and religious turmoil, economic crises, housing problems and inadequate health care systems are dominant issues that continuously demand solutions. It is imperative that problems associated with workplace bullying not be trivialized but are given the attention by government and other entities involved with establishing policies to effect change. Overwhelming statistics reveal the inconceivable difficulties that victims of workplace bullying encounter. Bullying or harassment of any sort is malignant and serves only to fuel the burgeoning cost of healthcare, significant economic losses and above all the slow death of human life and spirit.
Works Cited


