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# CONFLICT MOTIVATIONS AND TACTICS OF TARGETS, BYSTANDERS, AND BULLIES

## A Thrice-Told Tale of Workplace Bullying

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Adult bullying at work is a unique type of escalated, entrenched conflict that occurs between and among organizational members. Nearly half of all U.S. workers are affected by bullying during their working lives, either being targeted or witnessing abuse as a bystander. The power disparity between bullies and targets, the aggressive character of bullying communication, and the persistent wearing down that occurs mark adult bullying as a unique type of escalated, destructive workplace conflict. Adult bullying at work is not, however, simply a dyadic one-on-one conflict—many others are involved and affected. Bullying conflicts are also extremely difficult to resolve, and the targets' tactics (especially problem solving) rarely resolve the conflict and often make it worse.

We tell a *thrice-told tale* of bullying conflicts from three standpoints: targets, bystanders, and bullies. To illustrate the tale, we include a case study to show how targets, bystanders, and bullies (dis)engage with bullying conflicts in real-life scenarios. By exploring bullying conflicts as experienced by these three groups, organizational members and researchers might have a better understanding of some of the forces that constitute the phenomenon and potentially locate leverage points for more effective interventions. We begin by describing the features that make workplace bullying a unique type of conflict. From this, we outline a typology of interpersonal motivations in conflict situations adopted from the multiple goals theory (Ohbuchi & Tedeschi, 1997) and a framework for conflict management tactics adapted from Rahim's (2002) theory of managing organizational conflict. We then explain why the three factors of focus in the chapter—profiles, motivations, tactics—are useful for understanding bullying conflicts and subsequently flesh out these three factors

for each employee group in the thrice-told tale. We wrap up the discussion by exploring the contextual issues surrounding bullying conflicts, presenting ideas for transformation, and suggesting potential avenues for further research.

## WORKPLACE BULLYING AS A UNIQUE FORM OF CONFLICT

Workplace bullying takes place between and among people who work together and is marked by

> a pattern of repeated hostile behaviors over an extended period of time; actual or perceived intent to harm on the part of the actor [bully]; one party being unable to defend him- or herself; [and] a power imbalance between parties. (Keashly & Nowell, 2011, p. 424)

Power disparity is central to bullying conflicts, and research calls the disadvantaged parties *targets*. The target's disadvantaged position can be due to position (e.g., supervisory bullying[1]), influence, or charisma; or can develop because of the persistent "hammering away" characteristic of bullying (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006, p. 163).

Bullying is a *pattern* of communication, and when targeted workers try to explain their experiences, they often struggle with encapsulating their story, usually needing "to describe the entire set of behaviors and their interrelationships" (Keashly & Jagatic, 2011, p. 50). The enduring character of bullying contributes to targets' feelings of powerlessness. Persistent aggressive attacks contribute to increased stress and decreased coping capacity, which increase feelings of powerlessness, making targets even more easily bullied and less able to defend themselves.

Bullying is *escalatory*; initially aggression is passive, circuitous, and immensely difficult to describe, increasing in frequency and antagonism as time passes. In extremely escalated incidences, aggressors may even start to objectify their targets, which enable the use of more aggressive, inhuman attacks. In some instances, "the total destruction of the opponent is seen as the ultimate goal to be attained by the parties" (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003, p. 19).

Conflict, on the other hand, involves (a) parties that are interdependent (i.e., they have the capability to impede or interfere with the other), (b) a perception by at least one party that an opposition or incompatibility (or the potential thereof) exists among the goals or values, and (c) some type of interaction among the involved parties (Knapp, Putnam, & Davis, 1988). Bullying includes these general indicators of conflict but has additional features making them conflicts that are "most like intractable, escalating violent conflicts between unequals" (Keashly & Nowell, 2011, p. 427). In such conflicts, the bullies' goals might be to harm or drive targets from the workplace; targets' goals may be to end abusive treatment and repair identity. And the aggressive character of bullying conflicts creates hostile work environments affecting many employees, whether directly targeted or not.

## THE COMMUNAL CHARACTER OF BULLYING CONFLICTS

One of the tendencies, especially in U.S. organizations and popular thought, is to individualize the problem of workplace bullying. Supervisors, manager, and bystanders often blame the victims for their own abuse and label targets' reports of abuse as overexaggerated, subjective, and questionable (Keashly, 2001). By attending to the experiences of more of the employees who are involved and affected by adult bullying, we are better able to recognize the complexity of this type

of conflict and avoid, at least partially, such myopic viewpoints. Thinking of bullying as a matter involving only a bully and a target contributes to viewing it as a solely subjective experience and stunts efforts to resolve this toxic form of conflict. From such a stance, managers and peers are less likely to believe target reports and thus take corrective action (Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). Because workplaces are collective sites of human interaction, what occurs between any dyad or among group members bleeds and buzzes throughout the workgroup and affects all in proximity (Waldron, 2000). Thus, some understanding of target, bully, and bystander perspectives—especially their motivations—sheds light on some of the reasons these conflicts are so difficult to resolve.

Certainly, any view of the *reality* of bullying conflicts is partial, and current research on the subject may overemphasize the target perspective. Although literature on adult bullying extensively examines targets' perspectives in these conflicts, it less often explores bystanders' experiences (for an exception, see Vartia, 2001), and bully explanations are nearly nonexistent (for an exception, see Rayner & Cooper, 2003). We call attention to the fact that bullying conflicts involve *all* affected workers, whether or not those workers are actively engaged in conflict communication and behavior. Bullying conflicts slowly colonize and take over nearly all actions and interactions in workgroups where it is present. To gain a better picture of this involvement, the core material in the chapter explores three interrelated factors associated with targets, bystanders, and bullies: (1) general profiles, (2) motivations to act or withhold action, and (3) conflict tactics. We outline these factors because involved parties may be reticent or unable to report them for a number of reasons. They might not fully understand their motivations; they may feel bound by emotion display rules; they might feel compelled to

perform certain image management work, or some combination of these. The three factors flesh out bullying conflicts in particularly useful ways.

## MOTIVATIONAL GOALS, TACTICAL COMMUNICATION, AND GROUP PROFILES

Motivational goals and conflict tactics are inextricably linked. Motivational goals fuel action, giving behavior its energy and direction. Motivation is the first link in a chain of interconnected interactions that lead to various outcomes, both intended and unintended. To understand bullying conflicts requires understanding the motives of the actors who are involved or affected. The drive for justice, for example, is often an overriding motivation in bullying conflicts, particularly for targets, (Cowan, 2009) but also for bystanders (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006) and even bullies (Crawshaw, 2007). Tactics in conflict management are the ways in which people approach and engage with conflict, and tactics make sense in light of what motivates them. Tactics are driven both by personality tendencies, social situations, and the relational context of the conflict. In all conflict, and especially in bullying conflicts, "the *opponent's message behavior* accounts for the majority of variance in communication strategies" (Knapp et al., 1988, p. 416). Underscoring target, bystander, and bully motivations and tactics helps us better understand what is going on in these conflicts, where to intervene, and why certain interventions are less than effective. In addition to understanding motivations and tactics, different experienced subjectivities (i.e., profiles) can contribute to specific motivations and tactics.

Profiles are the common markers of persons who self-identify as belonging to one of the three groups and report certain personal or social characteristics in interviews or

**Table 13.1**    Motivational Goals in Conflict Management

| Motivational Goal | Description |
|---|---|
| Resource goals | • Economic—drive to obtain or protect something of economic value |
|  | • Personal—drive to maintaining privacy or personal freedom and choice |
| Social goals | • Relationship—drive to maintain or protect good relationships with others |
|  | • Power/hostility—drive to punish or establish influence or dominance over another |
|  | • Identity—drive to face-saving, identity supporting, and preserving self-image |
|  | • Functionality—drive to resolve conflict in a constructive way |
|  | • Justice—drive for fairness and the need to restore social justice |

surveys. Profile markers can help organizational decision makers better discern who is doing what and why, without having to depend solely on he-said she-said accounts. On one hand, profiles are overgeneralizations and exceptions always exist. As such, those dealing with bullying conflicts will want to avoid using profiles as fuel for either witch-hunting or victim-blaming. On the other hand, to ignore personality traits, social tendencies, and the patterned human communication and behavior documented in scientific research can be naive and counterproductive when trying to manage such conflicts. Profiles are useful *sensitizing devices* when trying to sort out bullying, if used prudently as a general guide rather than a hard-and-fast set of rules.

## Motivational Goals in Bullying Conflicts

Multiple goals theory outlines seven core motivations or goals in conflicts—two associated with resources and five with relationships (Ohbuchi & Tedeschi, 1997). Resource goals include *economic* and *personal* goals. Economic resource goals include the desire to obtain or protect something of economic value, and personal resource goals are those concerned with maintaining privacy, personal

freedom, and choice. Social goals include *relationship, power/hostility, identity, functionality*, and *justice*. Relationship goals are motivated by a desire to maintain or develop high-quality connections with others. Power/hostility goals include the drive to punish or establish influence and dominance over others. Identity goals are associated with face-saving, self-supporting, or preserving a preferred image. Functionality goals are drives "to resolve the conflicts in a constructive or socially appropriate manner" (Ohbuchi & Tedeschi, 1997, p. 2185). Justice goals are the inclination toward equanimity and a desire to restore social fairness. Motivations typically guide tactics. (Table 13.1 summarizes these goals.)

## Tactical Communication in Bullying Conflicts

A popular approach to the study of tactical communication in conflicts is Rahim's (2002) theory of managing organizational conflict, which identifies tactics as integrating/problem solving, obliging/accommodating, dominating/forcing, avoiding/withdrawing, and compromising. Integrating/problem solving "involves openness, exchanging information, looking for alternatives, and examination of differences to reach an effective solution

acceptable to both parties" (Rahim, 2002, p. 218). Obliging/accommodating "is associated with attempting to play down the differences and emphasizing commonalities to satisfy the concern of the other party" (Rahim, 2002, pp. 218–219). A dominating/forcing style is associated with a win–lose orientation in which "a dominating or competing person goes all out to win his or her objective and, as a result, often ignores the needs and expectations of the other party" (Rahim, 2002, p. 220). Avoiding/withdrawing is ignoring or steering clear of conflicts and the involved parties. In compromising, parties identify and settle on a solution that is partially satisfactory to those involved but not completely pleasing to either. We adopt this formulation as it is common in conflict and adult bullying research (Keashly & Nowell, 2011) and consistent with multiple goal theory. However, we also include third-party tactics from multiple goals theory since involving others is common in bullying conflicts because of power disparities. (See Table 13.2 for summary.)

## Group Profiles

Although bullying conflicts are social and contextual and a number of systemic features, issues, and contingencies press parties to move them toward particular ways of dealing with conflicts, research suggests that certain types of employees are more likely to be targeted, to aggress against others, and to remain bystanders. Targets that are provocative may draw the attention of aggressive others, whether that provocation is simply speaking their mind or tending toward aggression themselves. Bystanders most often remain silent hoping they can avoid involvement but may also side with targets or bullies. Bullies are high verbal aggressives and tend to respond aggressively or harshly in most situations, escalating aggressive behavior when perceived pressures increase. For the most part, most bullies fall into the accidental category; they bully others as a means of goading more productivity from them. Other bullies, however, appear to have personality pathologies driven by fear, insecurity, or extreme ambition. In the case study that follows, a number of these profiles are apparent.

## A THRICE-TOLD TALE: TARGETS, BYSTANDERS, AND BULLIES

We offer a case study to illustrate the points made in the following sections about profiles, motivations, and tactics. From the case study, we detail these three factors for parties.

**Table 13.2**     Conflict Management Tactics

| Conflict Management Tactic | Description |
| --- | --- |
| Integrating/problem solving | Openness, exchanging information, and looking for alternatives |
| Obliging/accommodating | Playing down differences, emphasizing similarities for others' sake |
| Dominating/forcing | Winning is objective, often ignoring needs of other party, forcing one party's position or opinion |
| Avoiding/withdrawing | Ignoring, steering clear of conflicts or other parties |
| Compromising | Parties identify, settle on partially satisfactory solution |
| Third party | Bring someone else into conflict, usually with power to resolve conflict or influence others who have power to arbitrate conflict |

SOURCE: Adapted from Ohbuchi and Tedeschi (1997) and Rahim (2002).

## Case Study

The case study[2] is taken from Pam's (first author) work with organizations troubled by bullying. The setting was Youth Matters, a youth delinquency program in which staff worked with middle and high school adolescents who had problems with drugs, school failure, and misdemeanor crimes in the community. The bully was the program director, Buddy, a male clinical psychologist who oversaw the program, hired clinical staff, managed staff, and worked as a community representative for the program as a liaison with schools, police, legal system personnel, and so forth. Of the eight staff members (40% male, 60% female), six were clinical counselors with counseling education, social work, or psychology degrees (Hank, Bob, Toby, Kimberly, Deb, and Sue). One staff member (Crystal) was the community educator and another (Carrie) served as the office manager who scheduled appointments, maintained client files, billed insurance, and carried out related support tasks.

Prior to Buddy's management of the youth program (he had served as treatment director for the entire agency), Youth Matters had a dismal reputation in the community. Educators and law-related professionals (i.e., probation, courts, and police) had little faith in the program or its staff. May, the past program manager, had a confrontational relationship with these professionals, typically displaying undisguised contempt for them and their organizations' goals in relation to the youth they were tasked with helping. Buddy, on the other hand, was charismatic and convincing in community outreach efforts with these professionals, easily winning them over. In fact, school and probation professionals described him as a "breath of fresh air" after May's dampening effect. As a result of Buddy's charisma and efforts, the client numbers (and related billing revenue) increased fourfold in the first year (from $30,000 to nearly $120,000).

Additionally, the adolescents' families loved Buddy's engaging style and had extraordinary faith in his ability to help their children. As effective as Buddy was in the community, with adolescents, and with their families, he was equally ineffective at managing employees.

For instance, Buddy practiced a haphazard manner of hiring staff. If he liked someone he just met, he immediately offered the person a job, claiming he could train the person to be a youth delinquency counselor. For example, Buddy hired Hank, a man who was an academic guidance counselor at a local high school. He also hired Kimberly, a young woman working in a men's clothing store (with a college degree but no experience), because he "loved her energy." Buddy did not fulfill his promises to train them adequately, and eventually, they disappointed him. Once staff members drifted into the "disappointing" category, Buddy systematically blew up at them, constantly criticized their efforts, repeatedly spoke with Claire, the executive director, about writing up a (retrospective) case for firing, and ignored or ridiculed them in case review meetings.

Three staff members (Toby, Bob, and Deb) initially resisted Buddy's abusive style and complained to the executive director. Kimberly and Hank were too fearful to support others' grievances, stating that they would report their experiences only if their statements would be held in confidence. Even when outside consultants came in, Kimberly and Hank remained reticent to speak, saying they feared Buddy's aggression (with good reason; complaining staff always became targets, likely because Buddy deemed them his "enemies"). Two staff members (Carrie and Sue) allied with Buddy and supported his negative judgments and subsequent "punishment" of others. Even during formal interventions, Carrie and Sue stood by Buddy. Buddy eventually targeted both of them, however, and they were transferred to other organizational programs.

On one hand, the administration loved Buddy. Claire, the executive director, and the board of directors were thrilled with his success in the community and the revenue generated by increased client numbers (e.g., board was able to pay off a substantial loan). On the other hand, program staff morale suffered horribly. While youth client numbers increased, so did turnover. In the first two and a half years of Buddy's management, the turnover was more than 200%. Many exiting employees filed complaints about Buddy's aggressive, abusive management style. Claire and outside professionals assessed the situation, planned interventions, and carried out these interventions—interventions aimed at capitalizing on Buddy's charisma and effectiveness with community members, adolescents, and families and reducing staff mistreatment, turnover, and legal liability from staff grievances.

Buddy was a narcissistic bully (explained in later sections); Buddy saw himself as a superstar and viewed staff as lesser than him. If staff members failed to support Buddy or complained about his performance, they were punished. Following interventions, he would make small shifts in his abusive behavior but continued his wild hiring style—always with an unfortunate result. Sadly, no interventions had any long-lasting effects on his behavior. When turnover rates were confronted, Buddy would argue that the program dealt with a very difficult population that caused staff to burn out. In nearly all instances, he was able to sway the executive director and the board to see his viewpoint. When Claire retired after 4 years of Buddy's tenure, the board inexplicably appointed Buddy the interim executive director (despite warnings from external consultants). Buddy served for 3 months before exiting the organization. The board did not reveal whether he was fired or left on his own volition.

We refer to this case throughout the chapter as it applies to the thrice-told tale. We move now to a discussion of targeted workers—their general profiles, motivations in conflict situations, and tactics used to manage conflicts. From this, we will also discuss bystanders and bullies using these three factors.

## Targets

*Profiles.* Although anyone can be targeted by bullies at work, research on victimization (i.e., being targeted by others' aggression) suggests that certain traits and tendencies appear to situate employees in ways that make them more likely to be targeted. Victimization research points to three general target profiles: provocative, submissive, and rigidly conscientious (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). The first author's work points to two types of provocative targets: aggressive and assertive. The first type of *provocative* target is "aggressive, hostile, or irritating and therefore likely to provoke attack from others" (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004, pp. 1025–1026). Aggressive provocative targets are conflict-prone employees, usually less agreeable, and more likely to become involved in conflicts because they often disagree with others and create friction in their interactions (e.g., Aquino & Bradfield, 2000). At Youth Matters, May (past program director) was highly confrontational, which is why she had problems with the community member organizations. Her removal occurred early in Buddy's tenure as the treatment director (her supervisor) and was linked to May constantly arguing with Buddy.

The second type of provocative target is *communicatively assertive* employees who readily speak their minds, a tendency that can infuriate some bullies. Depending on the pressures bullies are facing, the argumentative style of a communicatively assertive employee can trigger harsh responses from high verbal aggressives (Fast & Chen, 2009). People who are professionally successful or highly skilled are often assertive and can be targeted because

their experience or expertise may pose a threat to a less secure bully (Fast & Chen, 2009; Namie, 2007a). In Youth Matters, Crystal, a well-liked and knowledgeable community educator, had considerable conflict with Buddy because of what she perceived as his misrepresentation of the program during community outreach sessions. Because of Crystal's stellar reputation both in and out of the organization, Buddy's bullying tactics were less effective at marginalizing Crystal, less direct in form, and more politically focused (e.g., obliquely questioning her knowledge or skill when she was not present). She did, however, eventually exit the organization stating that she could no longer work for Buddy because of his manipulative, dishonest character.

The assertive provocative target may also have exceptional argumentation skills. High verbal aggressives are often low in argumentation skills and so have considerable difficulty countering skilled peers or "insubordinate" subordinates. When they face conflict situations, they quickly run out of constructive material and fall back on verbal aggression (Infante, Trebing, Shepherd, & Seeds, 1984). Such was not the case with Buddy, however, who had an incredible acuity at assessing or "reading" people coupled with extraordinary argumentation skills. As a result, he was able to stifle nearly anyone who questioned him—including the executive director and the board members.

The next target type is the *submissive* employee, a person who is conflict aversive. The submissive target is "passive, insecure, frequently rejected by peers, and unwilling to defend against attack" (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004, p. 1025). Submissive targets are less extroverted, less stable, less independent, have a reduced tendency toward self-defense, and an increased dependency on or desire for others' approval. Appearing weak, anxious, unassertive, low in self-esteem, and conflict-aversive can be provocative for high aggressives (Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000). These

inclinations can make the submissive employee an easy target, as a passive "weakling" can be seen as low risk—someone who can be bullied with impunity and serve as an example or warning to others (Neuman & Baron, 2011). In fact, some high verbal aggressives report using aggression to express their disdain of the targets (Infante, Riddle, Horvarth, & Tumlin, 1992). At Youth Matters, Kimberly was eventually a submissive target. Initially she was a silent bystander, but over time Buddy targeted her, eventually driving her from the program.

The final target type is the *rigidly conscientious* worker. These employees are very scrupulous, assiduous, "organized, self-disciplined, hardworking, conventional, moralistic, and rule-bound" (Lind, Glasø, Pallesen, & Einarsen, 2009, p. 234). Rigidly conscientious employees can be bullied at work because others perceive them as infuriatingly condescending due to their apparently inflexible, perfectionist approach to work and adherence to work-related rules. Rigidly conscientious workers are unlikely to go along with informal group rules if they believe the informal rules to be morally wrong. When these employees face situations they view as breaking the rules, they can become "rude, suspicious, uncooperative, ruthless, [and] irritable" (Lind et al., 2009, p. 234). They are likely to defend stubbornly their point of view, especially when moral issues such as work quality, client ethics, or productivity expectations are at stake. What they see as moral or ethical issues are far more important to rigidly conscientious employees than are relationships or others involved in the conflict. Additionally, they may report coworkers who break rules, behaviors that culminate to make them widely unpopular, increasing their social isolation and reducing potential allies or supporters (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). When workers are in these socially excluded positions, they are simply easier targets; bystanders may even feel satisfaction at seeing them targeted.

At Youth Matters, Toby fit the rigidly conscientious target profile because he did not believe that anyone in the program was adequately or effectively providing treatment to the clients (except for Toby himself). Toby had registered multiple complaints against a number of his coworkers and against May, the past program director. Because of this behavior, he had no friends in Youth Matters and little or no support from the executive director. When Buddy moved into Youth Matters as the youth program director, he fired Toby in the first 3 months, most likely because Toby, like May, continued to argue against Buddy's ideas for treatment provision.

In addition to these general profiles, three other factors increase the likelihood of being targeted: organizational position, communication skill deficits, and social difference. First, although employees at all levels can be bullied (Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2003), typically the higher one's position, the lower the incidence of bullying (Aquino, 2000). Second, persons who lack effective social and communication skills (e.g., some submissives, many high verbal aggressives) can have great difficulty protecting themselves and can thus be targeted quite easily (Coyne et al., 2000). Third, being noticeably different also increases the risk of becoming an outsider and thus a target. In the United States and Great Britain, for example, employees of African descent "are victimized more frequently than any racial group" (Aquino, 2000, p. 182).

*Motivations.* Typically all targets are motivated to protect their interests and identity and to achieve a fair or just outcome. Although all target types share similar motivational goals in bullying conflicts, they also differ depending on what is important to them personally. Most targets involved in an entrenched bullying conflict are motivated by *personal resource goals* and *identity* and *social justice goals.* Interpersonal aggression, by definition, is behavior that targets are motivated to avoid (Neuman & Baron, 2011). Targets are motivated to protect themselves, stop abusive treatment, manage face and identity threats, and be vindicated (Cowan, 2009). Personal resource goals are driven by a need to maintain personal freedom, in this case freedom from attacks on their character. Targets go to great length to protect themselves and to end the abusive treatment. Most targets are also motivated by *economic resource goals*; they want to maintain their jobs. This motivation is well founded as the majority of targets find that bullying only ceases when they quit, transfer to another job, or are fired (Namie, 2007b).

*Social justice goals*, based on a drive for fairness or restorative justice, are also at play in bullying conflicts. Targets communicatively position themselves as moral warriors, fighting depraved enemies, and argue that they respond accordingly to restore justice and fairness (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Many responses to bullying conflicts are indirectly motivated by what targets call a *moral imperative* to act against what they perceive as corrupt actions and interactions. Beyond restoring justice, however, targets are also highly motivated by identity goals. Targets want to be vindicated (Cowan, 2009); they want to redeem themselves because being victimized is stigmatizing. Especially in the United States, dominant cultural norms, being a victim brands someone as weak, childish, and usually to blame—if people are victimized, others often assume that they did something to bring it on themselves (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008). In addition to these motivational goals, specific types of target have unique motivations in bullying conflicts.

*Provocative targets (aggressive)* are motivated by social power goals. Rather than a drive to punish (often seen with bullies), these targets' power goals are to establish influence and dominance over others in conflicts.

At Youth Matters, Bob and Deb argued with Buddy because he harassed staff about their inadequacies in working with adolescents. From Bob and Deb's perspective, Buddy spent too many hours in the community and not enough time on site training staff. Buddy publically humiliating, criticizing, and embarrassing staff for how poorly they provided treatment seemed a kind of betrayal to Bob and Deb since Buddy had promised to train the inexperienced clinical staff he hired. Bob and Deb also clashed with coworkers and community members about adolescent treatment issues. Buddy, Bob, and Deb were reputed to have near-screaming matches at the site, sometimes even in the presence of adolescent clients. (Bob and Deb were the second and third staff members Buddy fired after Toby.)

Although also quick to speak up, the *communicatively assertive* provocative targets are motivated by economic personal goals—they are driven to protect their right to free speech, personal freedom, and choice. Crystal, the community educator, was a target of this type. When she disagreed with Buddy, she assertively put forth her perspective—something that infuriated Buddy, who thought Crystal should defer to his status and position. Crystal never used verbal aggression but calmly and straightforwardly stated her position and reasons for it, an approach very different from the more aggressive targets like Bob and Deb.

*Submissive targets* want to avoid conflicts and so are motivated by the social functionality goal—the desire to settle conflicts in a socially proper way. They are also motivated by social relationship goals as they wish to maintain peaceful, nonconfrontational contact with others. Kimberly, the young woman hired from the clothing store, most closely fit the submissive profile. She rarely spoke out, followed others' prerogative, and appeared to be motivated by a desire to please and get along with others. (Kimberly was initially a silent bystander, a point we take up in the bystander section.)

*Rigidly conscientious* targets are motivated by power goals; they seek to influence the other parties to see the issue as they do. Specifically, rigidly conscientious targets want others to recognize the importance or moral value of the issue. Toby's goal in the bullying conflict with Buddy was driven by Toby's concern that adolescents were not receiving correct treatment. Specifically, Toby thought Buddy's new treatment program omitted critical areas that the former treatment program included (e.g., electronic monitoring bracelets), areas Buddy believed were the responsibility of collaborating institutions. Toby also thought that Buddy put too much emphasis on family counseling nights where Buddy was "the star" and the families' needs were secondary. Toby was the first counselor fired.

*Tactics.* Bullying conflicts most often involve affective (e.g., threatening identity, values) rather than cognitive (e.g., focusing on ideas, tasks) types of conflict. Although problem solving and compromising work well for cognitive conflicts, such is not the case for affective conflicts. Problem-solving efforts in bullying conflicts often exacerbate the conflict (Keashly & Nowell, 2011). And despite targets' efforts to appease or oblige high aggressives (e.g., speaking with the bullies about the problem, working harder, cutting off communication with certain peers, and monitoring their own messages to the bullies), hostile actions and interactions continue unabated or even escalate (e.g., Zapf & Gross, 2001).

Specific to the thrice-told tale and in line with diverse target profiles and motivations, victimization literature suggests that "conflict styles [tactics] . . . [can] distinguish victims from non-victims [and] . . . employees who rely on certain styles more than others may unwittingly present themselves as potential

targets of aggressive action" (Aquino, 2000, p. 174). The *provocative aggressive target's* tendency to use forcing communication likely elicits aggressive tactics from other parties. Because provocative aggressive targets want to gain influence over bullies in the conflict, they more often use dominating/forcing tactics, but some form of problem solving typically precedes forcing. Forcing tactics are more often passive aggression because bullies typically have more power, influence, or both than targeted workers. In fact,

> higher levels of bullying [are] predictive of . . . behaviors such as purposely wasting company materials and supplies, . . . doing one's work incorrectly, and . . . damaging a valuable piece of property belonging to the employer. (Ayoko, Callan, & Härtel, 2003, p. 283)

The provocative assertive targets are motivated to speak their minds in disagreements and argue about issues of disagreement without employing verbal aggression. Depending on the parties involved, even their assertive disagreement can trigger aggression, hostility, and behavior framed to "put them in their place." At Youth Matters, the staff who disagreed with Buddy's approaches first went to Buddy with their concerns, using problem-solving tactics. When Buddy met their concerns with put-downs, harassment, and public humiliation at case review meetings, staff members circumvented the chain of command and complained to the executive director[3] and in one case the board of directors—third-party conflict management tactics.

Tactics of *submissive targets* usually are obliging/appeasing and avoiding/withdrawing, although all targets use these tactics to some degree. They hope that if they do nothing to upset anyone, the conflict might go away. Submissive targets are typically amenable to compromising tactics to manage conflict but rarely suggest such tactics themselves

(Ayoko et al., 2003). Rather, they are willing to go along with others' ideas regarding compromises if they believe that those tactics will end the conflict. At Youth Matters, Kimberly was a silent bystander but became a submissive target near the end of her time with the program. She remained silent for the most part throughout intervention sessions. When consultants or the executive director approached her in confidence, she said that things were fine. Although passive targets such as Kimberly are particularly uncommunicative, such is not the case for the rigidly conscientious target.

*Rigidly conscientious targets* use forcing tactics because they feel so strongly about the issues at hand. They will also use problem solving, accommodating, and compromising but *only* when these tactics get them the results they want. If less aggressive tactics fail, rigidly conscientious targets shift to forceful communication, often coupled with third-party involvement (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). Because they believe that they are right—absolutely—they work to involve higher authorities as allies in the conflict. At Youth Matters, Toby used forcing/dominating communication (e.g., *repeatedly* complaining about the quality of youth treatment, implying that clinical staff were failing the adolescents) without apparent concern for how his complaints affected his workplace relationships. He typically coupled forcing/dominating with third-party tactics, as Toby often brought complaints to Claire, the executive director, or evoked her name in support of his arguments (e.g., "I talked to Claire about this.").

## Bystanders (Nonbullied Witnesses)

A special note is warranted as we move into this section about bystanders. Because of their once-removed status, they do not have to be active parties to the bullying conflict and may have a particularly powerful type of voice.

They are neither stigmatized like the targets nor instigators of bullying like the aggressors.

*Profiles.* Because bullying conflicts are so volatile and aggressive, they typically spread fear through the entire workgroup and push members into one of three nonbullied bystander groups: (1) those who cluster around and support bullies (*bully allies*), (2) those who support or protect targets (*target allies*), and (3) those who attempt to distance themselves from the bullying conflict (*neutral* or *silent bystanders*). Bystanders are often considered *secondary* targets because although they are not targeted directly, their "perceptions, fears and expectations are changed as a result of being vicariously exposed to violence" (Barling, 1996, p. 35). This group often reports "significantly more general stress and mental stress reactions than employees from the workplaces without bullying" (Hogh, Mikkelsen, & Hansen, 2011, p. 108) and often leave organizations (avoiding) after witnessing bullying.

Depending on the framework, bully allies are alternately labeled "passive bullies, followers, or henchmen" (Olweus, 2003, p. 67), or patrons and pawns (Boddy, Ladyshewsky, & Galvin, 2010). Olweus's (2003) framework, taken from his work on schoolyard bullying, indicates that passive bullies and followers are those "who participate in bullying but do not usually take the initiative" (p. 67). These "passive bullies can be equally troubling to the victim . . . where others are gathered willingly or unwillingly to participate in continuous malevolent actions" (Vickers, 2006, p. 271). Henchmen and -women, on the other hand, actively take part in bullying conflicts, loyally following the bully's lead and working to undermine, remove, and sometimes even destroy targets' reputations. Bullies appear to have two other types of allies: patrons and pawns (Boddy et al., 2010). Patrons help bullies ascend to positions of power and are persons to whom bullies turn as third-party allies.

Bullies often choose these people as a support network. Pawns, who often emerge later as targets, are persons initially loyal to the bullies who side with them in bullying conflicts but later feel or discover they are being used or manipulated.

At Youth Matters, Sue and Carrie supported Buddy and could be considered followers or pawns. Despite months of siding with Buddy in various bullying conflicts, Buddy eventually targeted them, and they were driven from the program. The agency administrators were also supportive of Buddy. Claire and Buddy earned their Master of Social Work degrees together and were friends prior to Claire hiring him. The board members had heard from their peers in the community about Buddy's charismatic, collaborative approach; they were as impressed as their peers. Because the board was tasked with the agency's economic oversight, they were also delighted at the impressive increase in client revenue, which allowed the board to purchase new property and pay off a loan. Thus, despite ongoing staff problems, the administrators remained Buddy's allies. Even when it was necessary to hire outside consultants to intervene with Buddy and his staff, administrators remained awed with Buddy's skills.

When solutions to the problems in the program seemed unachievable, Claire decided she would have to fire Buddy; the board, however, intervened on Buddy's behalf. The board was so impressed with Buddy that instead they hired Buddy to serve as interim executive director when Claire retired. The promotion may have been due to his ability to "read" his superiors and then "talk to them in their own language." This skill made believing complaints about Buddy difficult for the higher ups.

At Youth Matters, Buddy was the only person identified as a bully or high verbal aggressive (although no one used these terms). In other workgroups, bystanders who witness and then subsequently model aggressive

communication and become bullies can be of grave concern. Whether bystanders mimic bullying behavior depends, in part, on group norms and cohesion. If workgroup cohesion is high, bystanders' direct observation of bullying can increase their own use of aggression (Ferguson & Barry, 2011). Additionally,

> norms of toughness . . . tend to reduce the likelihood that witnesses to workplace bullying will take action against it. On the contrary, such norms tend to increase the odds that witnesses will join in and even applaud the action of workplace bullies. (Baron & Neuman, 2011, p. 217)

In a majority of cases, bystanders becoming active bullies is less frequent than members becoming more rude and discourteous in everyday interactions, likely due to the reciprocal nature of communication. Although some members may become more uncivil over time, others empathize with and try to help targets.

*Target allies*, in contrast to bully allies, are bystanders who witness abusive conflicts and side with the targets. They comprise a second (albeit small) group of bystanders—those who either believe abuse is morally wrong or have long-standing friendships with targets (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Ferguson and Barry (2011) suggest that directly witnessing another's abuse

> affords the observer an opportunity to witness and, accordingly, vicariously experience the emotions of the target (or victim) . . . [giving] the observer . . . an opportunity to empathize with the victim, and perhaps to mentally place themselves in the victim's shoes. (p. 89)

Other bystanders may eventually join the target's side of the conflict, especially if they shift from being followers, patrons, or pawns to being targets. At Youth Matters, Crystal often defended colleagues when Buddy humiliated or shamed them, and though she

eventually became a target, she remained a staunch defender of others.

Unlike target or bully allies, *neutral* or *silent bystanders* withhold voice and allegiance to parties of the conflict and take a Switzerland-type position in the conflict, striving to be uninvolved noncombatants. Silent bystanders want to stay out of the conflict because they see targets being "undermined, disenfranchised, and emasculated" (Boddy et al., 2010, p. 124). At Youth Matters, Kimberly silently looked on for most of her time in the program. She apparently wanted to avoid conflict and refrained from taking sides in bullying conflicts. Quite possibly, Kimberly emerged as a passive target toward the end of her time in the program because she failed to side with Buddy or anyone else.

The relative size of bystander groups is unique to each workgroup, as are bullying conflict dynamics, issues of contention, and personalities of those involved. Regardless of the setting, membership in bystander groups continuously shifts and morphs. Targets' supporters may burn out; noninvolved persons can become targets or begin taking sides, and persons in the bully's circle of supporters are ousted. Persons safe from targeting can become targets when bullies' alliances shift, which they commonly do. At Youth Matters, Kimberly was a silent bystander and became a passive target. Additionally, individuals may simultaneously fall into multiple categories. Crystal, for example, was a target ally and a provocative assertive target.

*Motivations.* Nearly all bystanders are motivated by *economic resource goals*; like targets, most want to keep their jobs. The threat of becoming embroiled in the bullying conflict often jeopardizes employment (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2007; Namie, 2007b). Further motivations depend on the bystander's profile. *Bully allies* who may passively and symbolically side with aggressors are often

motivated by *social relationship goals* and want bullies to see them as allegiant. Such was the case for Sue and Carrie at Youth Matters. Some bully allies are motivated by *social justice goals*, and they believe that targets are in the wrong and bullies are in the right. Many are motivated by *social identity goals* and want to prevent their own potential target status. *Power/hostility social goals* motivate henchmen and -women who, like bullies, can be high verbal aggressives. This type of bully supporter may want to establish their own dominance, strength, and position in the workgroup.

*Target allies* are often motivated by *social justice goals*; their primary motivation is to restore fairness at work and stop abusive treatment of workers (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Some are motivated by a moral imperative to right a wrong and to take action against tyranny. Crystal was motivated by this goal at Youth Matters. In some cases, if bystanders are motivated toward justice, they collectively work with targets and like-minded allies in acts of collective resistance. Target allies are also motivated by *social relationship goals* and want to maintain their friendships and positive interpersonal affiliations with targeted persons.

*Silent bystanders*, on the other hand, are typically motivated by *personal resource goals*; they want to maintain their privacy and personal freedom, which can be threatened if they become involved in the conflict. Another motivating factor for silent bystanders is the *social identity goal* (face-saving and identity preserving); they want to avoid becoming a target. Additionally, silent bystanders may be motivated by *social relationship goals* and hope to avoid alienating bullies, targets, or anyone allied with either side by appearing neutral. Sadly, this strategy rarely works because bullying conflicts are so emotionally charged, mainly because the stakes are high, that both target and bully groups negatively judge those who stand by silently. In all bystander groups, the motivations typically drive the tactics or conflict management approaches.

*Tactics. Bully allies* side with aggressors and use tactics including spying on targets and target allies and reporting back to bullies (third party, forcing), silently looking on as bullies harass and abuse targets (avoiding), and bending to the bullies' demands (obliging). For allies who also aggress, tactics can include ignoring targets' feelings or needs (avoiding), asserting their influence (forcing), and stressing their position as a bully ally (forcing, appeasing). The latter move is closely tied with efforts to dominate or force outcomes that favor the bully allies or the bully (Vickers, 2006).

For *target allies* motivated by *social justice goals*, they may speak with upper management (third party), meet with union stewards (third party), or organize group discussions outside the workplace (avoiding) (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Most tactics have a dominating/forcing thread because target allies are interested in taking disciplinary action against bullies—blocking promotions, countering claims, and constructing employment termination—even if third parties are involved. Target allies motivated by *social relationship goals* provide social support. They offer instrumental support by helping targets with their work and trying to arrange breaks and moments of escape, informational support by telling targets of their redress avenues or about powerful allies who might help in the fight for justice and emotional support in the form of "empathy, caring, acceptance and assurance" (Tracy, 2009, p. 88). Supportive tactics are supplementary to conflict management tactics but often involve advising targets how to fight back in the bullying conflict. Thus, even social support can be a form of indirect forcing and advising targets how to win. Tactics of those who choose to remain silent, however, are focused on self-protection.

*Silent bystanders* try to withdraw into a nonaligned position that appears safe (Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010) using avoidance/withdrawal tactics. Kimberly at Youth Matters used this tactic throughout her time in the program. In toxic working environments, however, neutral bystanders may struggle with whether to stay uninvolved or help the targets being persistently abused. It can be difficult "to remain uninvolved in such cases . . . due to a seemingly strong need for the target to seek support for their case" (Hoel, Einarsen, & Cooper, 2003, p. 151). On the other hand, neutral bystanders are often motivated by social relationship goals, so they will remain friendly with persons from both sides of the conflict—an obliging/accommodating tactic.

## Bullies

We have argued earlier that bullying conflicts involve all affected workers, not simply bully–target dyads, and have outlined both target and bystander dynamics. In bullying conflicts, however, the bully or aggressor plays a crucial role. Unlike other types of conflict that assume mutuality of parties, "workplace bullying . . . is characterized as involving a clearly identified actor (bully) . . . [who is] primarily the provocateur" (Keashly & Jagatic, 2011, p. 52). Although bullies cannot harass, humiliate, and verbally abuse others unless the organization's climate is marked by a "sense of permission to harass" (Brodsky, 1976, p. 84), certain personality types appear more likely to use verbal aggression. Some people appear to be more verbally aggressive than others, whether it is an inborn trait (Beatty & McCroskey, 1997) or socially learned (Baron & Neuman, 2011). These actors may not always instigate the conflict but are the parties who persistently use hostile, aggressive attacks to press their side.

*Profiles.* Bullying conflicts occur in relationships of unequal power, so despite coworkers being most common source of aggression in the workplace (e.g., Keashly & Neuman, 2005), when asked to identify a bully, targets most often report that the perpetrator is someone with legitimate power—supervisor, direct manager, or upper manager (e.g., Ayoko et al., 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007). Even when lacking legitimate power, bullies tend to have access to more resources than targets, including relationships with persons who have influence. In addition to more power and influence than targets, research suggests three general bully profiles based on motivation, tactics, and responses to challenge (Crawshaw, 2007): the *accidental bully* (under pressure); *narcissistic bully* (vulnerable, insecure); and *psychopathic bully* (grandiose, power-driven) (Egan, 2005). Narcissistic and psychopathic traits are tendencies that range on a continuum and are influenced to some degree by contextual, situational factors. However, people who have worked with any of these bully types will recognize the characteristics to some degree as they are quite descriptive of observed behaviors.

*Accidental bullies* are the most common and are (usually) managers with a very tough, even rough, style and way of interacting and directing others. They demand that others complete work tasks, often within exceedingly tight deadlines, and have little or no perception that what he or she says hurts or disturbs others. The accidental bully typically overreacts to pressure and passes that reaction on by blowing up, making impossible demands, and otherwise communicating in a blunt, insensitive, and insistent manner. The situational factors that trigger accidental bullies are wide-ranging and can include unorganized or poorly orchestrated changes and demands, organizational conditions such as work pressure, high performance demands, role conflict, and role uncertainty (Hoel & Salin, 2003). In their drive toward tasks, they often lose sight of the humanity of others. They frequently

act aggressively as a means to an end—to reach higher standards, thrash the competition, protect the company, and so forth. The welfare of people is secondary to task or output goals. Accidental bullies expect others to be resilient—to understand that nothing personal is meant by their tirades. In fact, "such people are often shocked when they are made aware of the consequences of their attitudes and actions" (Egan, 2005, para. 8; see also Crawshaw, 2007). This bully type is the most amenable to intervention, particularly if that intervention is tough and straightforward (Egan, 2005).

The *narcissistic bully* is charismatic but driven by fear, especially fear of appearing incompetent, and so may see harming others as a justified means of social survival (Crawshaw, 2007). This bully does not plan to harm others, "he [or she] does so offhandedly, as a manifestation of his[/her] genuine character" (Egan, 2005, para. 10). They are exceedingly self-absorbed, frequently pretentious, and can have "fantasies of breathtaking achievement" (Egan, 2005, para. 10). They believe themselves to be better than others and therefore should be treated exceptionally, yet they feel entitled to treat others as they wish.

Narcissistic bullies are typically shame prone and exceedingly sensitive to slights or any hint that they are less than competent (Crawshaw, 2007; Fast & Chen, 2009). Because they have limited impulse control and are fear driven, their grandiose self-image is easily punctured, and they can respond by acting out in rage and making outlandish claims about their detractors. That is, if they are crossed or questioned, they can respond with cruel fury (Boddy, 2010). Given these tendencies, narcissistic bullies can shift from being very charming to extremely difficult and even vicious. "Their abuse is not cold and calculating and meant to intimidate, it's just an expression of their superiority when they rage against you because they see you as the idiot. Of course

they don't have much empathy" (Egan, 2005, para. 8). The narcissistic bully can alter his or her communication and behavior if organizations are willing to invest considerable time and effort coaching and counseling. Although the cost may be high, if the narcissistic bullies are valuable, the upper level managers may believe that their talents are worth keeping them.

At Youth Matters, Buddy most closely fit this bully profile. In his job interview, Buddy claimed he could turn the youth program around in less than 6 months. The executive director developed stringent outcome goals, which Buddy easily met. As such, his grandiose self-image was supported by his skill. He was an incredibly talented counselor, one able to reach adolescents and their parents, often in one session. With a difficult population (adolescences from troubled homes), his skills were miraculous. However, Buddy's skills wildly fluctuated—he was either outrageously successful (with clients or community members) or just outrageous (with his staff). He was capable of exceptional success but was also self-defeating because of his verbal aggression, aggression that predictably occurred when questioned or critiqued. Buddy seemed aware of his shortcomings, had insight into his psychological issues, and changed slightly after interventions, but he invariably reverted to aggression in time. The paradox for administrators was how he could be so effective in the community and with clients and so disastrous with staff.

The third bully type is the *psychopathic bully*, a rare personality type (1%–2% in general population, 15%–25% in prisons) that is thought to be found in higher proportions in senior-level organizational positions (up to 3.5%) (Boddy, 2010). These aggressors are also called industrial psychopaths, organizational psychopaths, organizational sociopaths, and corporate psychopaths (see Boddy et al., 2010, for discussion). These noncriminal or

successful psychopaths, deemed *successful* because unlike criminal psychopaths they have evaded legal authorities, are "not prone to outbursts of impulsive, violent, criminal behaviour" (Boddy, 2010, p. 301). Psychopathic (like narcissistic) bullies are grandiose, and they come across as friendly and charming at first. They are highly motivated to gain power and exceedingly talented at ingratiating themselves with powerful others. They often rise almost meteorically in organizations "because of their manipulative charisma and their sheer, single minded dedication to attain senior levels of management" (Boddy et al., 2010, p. 124). These bullies can be authoritarian, aggressive, and domineering but in ways that imbue a sense of safety, particularly when organizations face external threats.

Psychopathic bullies usually work to attract a follower base of patrons who can assist in their ascendancy. They also identify pawns to use or manipulate potential opponents, whom they attempt to undermine or disenfranchise (e.g., auditor, HR staff, safety, and security personnel; Boddy et al., 2010). Developing a cadre of followers is important to the psychopathic bully, and they are likely to react aggressively to those whom they perceive as disloyal or oppositional to their goals (Egan, 2009). These bullies may perform feelings of remorse if the situation calls for it, but these are not *felt* emotions; such emotions are more likely displayed for manipulative effect. Their personalities are marked by coldheartedness, manipulativeness, ruthlessness, and lack of emotions, including fear, empathy, guilt, and remorse, when they harm others (Boddy et al., 2010). Psychologists believe that this personality type has no capacity for empathy or perspective taking.

A disturbing part of communicating with psychotic bullies is that they may distort what others say in self-serving ways. They typically blame others if their own actions bring about negative ramifications. If this bully type is challenged about his or her behavior, his or her reaction is as volatile as the narcissist but often involves threats of litigation, claims of being a victim of bullying, threats of divulging information about others, and escalated bullying (Egan, 2005). Counseling or mentoring has little effect as the psychopathic bully is unlikely to change his or her communication or behavior (Boddy, 2010).

*General Bully Characteristics or Traits for All Types.* Most bullies are unlikely to praise others (Wigley, Pohl, & Watt, 1989) and are prone to verbal aggressiveness. They are likely to have this trait to a higher degree than those who do not bully others, regardless of the situation or pressure. Because high verbal aggressives have lower scores on perspective taking and higher scores on social dominance orientation, they are unlikely to perceive aggressive messages as hurtful (Infante et al., 1992). Motivations do differ somewhat, however, based on unique profile markers.

*Motivations. Accidental bullies* are motivated predominantly by *economic resource goals*, the desire to gain or keep something of economic value (Fukushima & Ohbuchi, 1996). Their drive for achievement comes from this motivation. Typically, the accidental bully wants to reach high standards and meet organizational goals (regardless of human costs). They respond readily to demands from higher-placed organizational members, especially as those demands deal with output or the organization's financial survival. Certain antecedents can drive the accidental bully by evoking additional stress around work production, which evokes aggression, venting negative emotions, and pushing subordinates and peers even harder (e.g., Hoel & Salin, 2003). Quite likely, frustration exacerbates accidental bullies' aggression if they believe that employees are stifling production goals (Infante et al., 1984).

*Narcissistic bullies*, on the other hand, are driven by *social identity goals* (e.g., face-saving, identity preservation, and maintaining their self-perception of someone exceptional). They justify aggressive treatment as a means of bolstering their persona and maintaining their image or identity management work. Secondarily, they may be motivated by economic goals of obtaining something of value but only if it serves the primary goal of bolstering grandiose self-identities. These bullies want to protect others' perceptions of them as competent and excellent (Crawshaw, 2007; Egan, 2009; Fast & Chen, 2009). Such was the case with Buddy at Youth Matters, who appeared to be driven primarily by identity preservation. When questioned about his mistreatment of staff, Buddy was keen to defend his use of aggression by drawing on deep-value arguments such as client confidentiality, the fatal course of untreated drug addiction, and the community's need for a youth program. That is, Buddy deflected critique by focusing conversations on deeply important issues to the other person with whom he interacted. Because of his skill for reading people, he was able to identify issues most important to the other person in order to win that person over. Because of Buddy's basic insecurity, he often viewed other people's questions as attacks.

Narcissistic bullies like Buddy and psychopathic bullies are often motivated to act aggressively because of a tendency to ascribe others' actions and words as having malevolent intent and see themselves as victims (Burroughs & James, 2005). As such, *justice goals* are activated for both types, as they believe they have been wronged and so seek retribution (Infante et al., 1992). Other indirect motivating factors are psychopathology (e.g., transference of negative emotions toward someone who represents unresolved conflict) and argumentative skill deficiency (e.g., lacking ability to communicate position effectively) that can trigger verbal aggression (Infante et al., 1984).

Buddy at Youth Matters could argue well, but when Claire, the executive director, demanded he stop mistreatment of staff, he said to others that she was "a bitch just like [his] mother." Narcissistic bullies as high verbal aggressives can be motivated by their own anger and bad mood—emotions they rarely control very well (Infante et al., 1992).

*Psychopathic bullies* are motivated predominantly by *power/hostility social goals*, the drive to establish dominance, gain power, and punish anyone who stands in the way of achieving these. As part of a drive for power and influence, psychopathic bullies are often motivated by *social identity goals* and will cover up errors and bad decisions or scapegoat and shift blame onto others (Egan, 2009). As high verbal aggressives, they can be driven by the desire "to appear 'tough,' . . . to be mean . . . , and to express disdain for" the other person (Infante et al., 1992, p. 122). Self-defense, reprimanding someone, winning arguments, expressing anger, and manipulating another person's behavior also motivate verbal aggression (Infante, Bruning, & Martin, 1994). They may be motivated by *social justice goals* because they often have a retribution bias (belief that retaliation is better than reconciliation); they might also be motivated by a potency bias (tendency to frame conflict as a contest in which to demonstrate dominance or submissiveness) (Burroughs & James, 2005), another form of a *power/hostility social goal*.

*Tactics.* Primarily, bullying involves a hostile, forcing/dominating conflict management style—bullies want their way and often shift conflicts over tasks (cognitive conflicts) to conflicts attacking targets' identity or values (affective conflict) (Keashly & Nowell, 2011). Conflict management tactics are aggressive, and bullying conflicts, rather than being marked by a single form of negativity, involve numerous barbs, jabs, and machinations. Exchanges are far more extreme and

intense than everyday incivilities. Tactics vary by bully type, as might be expected, although all bullies use verbal aggressiveness (passive or active) to varying degrees. Most bullies derogate their targets, often to justify their own abuse of others in the conflict. Caustic humor is a common tactic bullies use against targets because it is ambiguous and provides plausible deniability.

> High verbal aggressives [claim] that about 46% of their verbally aggressive messages . . . [involve] trying to be humorous. . . . [As such,] using humor may be a tactic for being mean to disdain another, or it may be an "evasive" device which masks the use of personal attacks and avoids provoking physical violence. (Infante et al., 1992, p. 125)

Depending on the bully type, tactics can include blaming targets for the bullies' errors (narcissistic, psychopathic), making unreasonable demands (accidental), criticizing targets' work ability (all types), yelling and screaming (accidental, narcissistic), inconsistently referring to made-up rules (narcissistic, psychopathic), threatening job loss (all types), discounting targets' accomplishments (all types), socially excluding targets (narcissistic, psychopathic), insults and put-downs (all types), taking credit for targets' work (narcissistic, psychopathic), and scapegoating (narcissistic, psychopathic Hoel & Salin, 2003). Psychopathic bullies disparage, belittle, emasculate, and destroy anyone who appears to be blocking their aspirations (Egan, 2009). Tactics can include physical and psychological intimidation intended to cause fear, distress, or harm to the target (Parkins, Fishbein, & Ritchey, 2006). This type of bully employs third-party tactics quite often, depending on the protection of patrons and the important or powerful others with whom the bully has developed power-based relationships. In fact, they are quite adept at *managing up*, so to speak (Namie, 2007a).

This overview of the involved employee groups outlines many of the issues involved in bullying conflicts and illustrates why bullying can be so difficult to stop. Table 13.3 (on p. 368) summarizes involved party profiles, motivations, and associated tactics. In line with the central themes of this volume, we add to our thrice-told tale an exploration of the contextual and transformational issues affecting bullying conflicts as perceived by the three-employee groups.

## Contextual Factors Complicating Bullying Conflicts

Contextual, organizational factors can exacerbate and induce bullying conflicts, including workplace climates and professional cultures, productivity pressure, prevailing social norms external to organizations, and predominant national cultures. When workplaces are chaotic and unpredictable, with high job insecurity or role–conflict strain, bullying is more likely (Hodson, Roscigno, & Lopez, 2006). In chaotic workplaces or workplaces with high levels of task-related conflict, bullies may use aggression to maintain control or advantage.

Organizational cultures and economic demands can drive bullying conflicts. Some organizational or professional cultures have adversarial, aggressive norms for working relationships (Hoel & Cooper, 2001) and may even reward aggressive members with promotions, access to leadership, personal credibility, and voice. Economic pressures can also trigger bullying conflicts. Demands for increased productivity, especially when coupled with cost cutting, can place incredible pressures on both supervisors and employees that can trigger aggression.

External social and cultural belief systems influence employee abuse since boundaries between organizations and external environments are highly permeable (Mumby & Stohl,

**Table 13.3**    Three Groups' Profiles, Motivations, and Tactics

| Profile | Primary Motivational Goals | Most Common Conflict Tactics |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Provocative aggressive target[a] | • Social power | • Dominating/forcing<br>• Integrating/problem solving<br>• Obliging/accommodating<br>• Third party |
| Provocative assertive target[a] | • Justice<br>• Economic personal | • Integrating/problem solving<br>• Obliging/accommodating<br>• Compromising<br>• Third party<br>• Dominating/forcing |
| Rigidly conscientious target[a] | • Social power | • Dominating/forcing<br>• Third party |
| Passive target[a] | • Social functionality goal | • Avoiding/withdrawing<br>• Obliging/accommodating |
| Bully ally bystander | • Economic resource<br>• Relationship<br>• Identity<br>• Justice<br>• Power/hostility | • Third party<br>• Avoiding/withdrawing<br>• Obliging/accommodating |
| Target ally bystander | • Economic resource<br>• Justice<br>• Relationship | • Third party<br>• Domination/forcing |
| Silent bystander | • Economic resource<br>• Identity<br>• Relationship | • Avoidance/withdrawal |
| Accidental bully | • Economic resource | • Dominating/forcing[b] |
| Narcissistic bully | • Identity<br>• Justice | • Dominating/forcing[b] |
| Psychopathic bully | • Power/hostility<br>• Economic resource<br>• Justice | • Dominating/forcing[b]<br>• Third party (patrons) |

a. All targets are motivated by personal resource goals, economic resource goals, and social identity goals. We note here goals that differ among target types.

b. Verbal aggression is a hallmark of bullies' communication.

1996). Social discourses or meaning systems contributing to bullying include a wide range of forces, including the ideological link between work and religion, philosophies of individualism and meritocracy, a reverence for hierarchical power, profit as an ultimate goal, and Theory X notions of workers as lazy and in need of goading (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008). Related cultural ideologies can stimulate bullying and include praising power, profit, and position; devaluing human and stakeholder interests; and stigmatizing victims or disadvantaged persons. An important effect of these ideologies is to whom they confer voice. Bullied workers (a class of *victims*) in subordinate positions (low-position status)

may be doubted, especially if being bullied by a highly productive (profit) or politically astute (high-position status) aggressor (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012).

Considerable evidence points to predominant national culture as a key factor in bullying prevalence. Scandinavia, for example, has far lower bullying rates than the United States and Great Britain (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Zapf et al., 2003)—arguably due to Scandinavia's low-power distance and feminine-egalitarian norms. As bullying is a power-driven phenomenon, fewer power and status differences between people likely result in lower rates of conflict. In cultures with high concern for the quality of interpersonal relations, persons may communicate more respectfully.

There are many drivers of bullying in organizations beyond the involved parties we have focused on in this chapter. (For in-depth discussions of these, see Baron & Neuman, 2011; Salin & Hoel, 2011.) So, what can organizations and their members do to transform bullying conflicts and encourage sustainable and respectful conflict management?

## Transformational Possibilities

We now bring some optimism to the chapter and talk about directions for transformation. Although we believe strongly that bullying is an organization-wide issue, individual employees are keen to be empowered to improve these situations, so we touch on both. Fleshing out the different types of targets, bystanders, and bullies, as well as their motivations in these conflicts, underscores the complexity of bullying conflicts. Clearly, no "one-size-fits-all" solution will work. Rather, the dynamic nature of the resource and social goals in combination with the differing tactics to managing conflicts will result in negative spirals of retaliation

and war zone–like workplaces. Then where does this leave organizations? Our experience suggests that organizations dealing with bullying conflicts should carefully consider this chapter's discussion to be forewarned of the involved actors and their situations. Organizations will necessarily have to conduct a careful analysis of the history (e.g., involved parties, motivations, and tactics to date) surrounding the conflict to unravel the situational dynamics unique to the involved workgroup.

Bullying really is an organization-wide issue rather than something individuals alone can solve. Solving the problem is not only an organization-wide responsibility, but successful efforts also require the total commitment of top-level organizational leadership, involvement of middle management, and engagement of employees (Tehrani, 2001). Short-term approaches such as identifying lone perpetrators while ignoring initiating and maintaining factors ultimately fail to produce meaningful, lasting change.

Vandekerckhove and Commers (2003), who claim that bullying results from being inadequately prepared for the pressures of globalization, argue that organizations need "new rules" such as "clearly defined channels for support and advice in addition to clear reporting standards, times, and lines. Not surprisingly, this merges with a higher concern for *communication*" (p. 47). Indeed, there is a "need for new managerial skills such as strong interpersonal, communication, and listening skills and an ability to engage in reciprocal rather than manipulative behavior." We would add that *all* organizational members need these communication skills.

In fact, the most effective interventions for reducing aggressive communication among organizational members occur via changing the very nature of day-to-day conversations (for full discussion and details, see Keashly & Neuman, 2005). Policy development, while important for victim redress, has little effect

on reducing bullying if the organizational climate and culture do not change at a fundamental level. Similarly, although the training of individuals about workplace bullying is important, labels the phenomenon, and should be part of an overall plan for staff education, training alone rarely has a determinable effect on interpersonal aggression levels (Vartia & Leka, 2011). Rather, the members need to learn new ways of interacting at the day-to-day level.

From Keashly and Neuman's (2005) work with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, we summarize the following steps for an effective organization-wide approach. This approach requires the involvement of four groups. First, top-level persons must be committed to organization-wide change regarding dignity for all workers. Second, middle managers must be involved at each step. Third, members from support staff such as HR, Employee Assistance Program, ombudspersons, and unions should be involved. Finally, representatives chosen by direct-line staff in each program or division must be involved. Organizations may benefit from bringing someone in from outside to help facilitate analysis and planning, as an outsider may be more objective and less likely to have a vested interest in outcomes. Teams comprising persons from these groups carry out the following steps: (1) each workgroup conducts a baseline evaluation of aggression using a validated measure (Neuman's WAR-Q, Workplace Aggression Revised Questionnaire is outstanding); (2) based on the types of aggression and the unique makeup of each group, teams develop tailored interventions and implement them; (3) after 3 to 6 months, teams conduct a follow-up evaluation using the same measure as in Step (1). If desired change has not occurred, teams assess the follow-up findings, design new approaches, implement, and measure again in a predetermined time frame. We cannot stress the importance of this approach

enough if true change is desired. However, if there is no support for this plan, we suggest the following individual-level actions for targets, bystanders, and bullies.

Individual responses to managing bullying conflicts constructively begin when involved parties are able to recognize when a simple conflict has become a bullying conflict. In particular for targets *and* bystanders, it is being able to name abusive conflicts "workplace bullying"; this is an important first step to understanding what is occurring and what to do about it (Namie, 2007a). Information about bullying (e.g., research articles and books) coupled with being able to name bullying as a distinct phenomenon also bolsters employee claims to upper management and HR (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Targeted workers may also decide to file formal or informal complaints to unions, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the bully's boss, or attorneys (Macintosh, 2006)—reports that typically require detailed documentation (e.g., dates, times, and events; Tracy, Alberts, & Rivera, 2007). Targeted workers may also consider filing lawsuits against employers but should understand that such suits are rarely won and take enormous resources and personal energy.

Ensuring self-care and social support is especially important for effectively dealing with bullying conflicts. This may mean taking time off, trying not to take the experience personally, and spending time with trusted others (Namie & Namie, 2009). Gaining peer support is easier if other organizational members understand bullying and know it is occurring. Informally educating peers can be done by distributing articles and talking about bullying in a manner that protects vulnerable persons (Macintosh, 2006). If and when individual conflict management tactics fail, which is often the case, workers may choose to quit or transfer and, we argue, should frame their exits as a victory rather than defeat.

Bystanders are very important in bullying conflicts. Although directly confronting bullies can be risky and make situations worse, there are other responses bystanders can take. Scully and Rowe (2009) suggest that bystanders can do two things that will reduce bullying, mobbing, verbal aggression, and so forth: "discouraging negative behaviors, and, . . . encouraging *positive* behaviors" (p. 89). This means helping "people in all cohorts to note—and to commend—the achievements of their fellow workers. Such commendations often matter to the person concerned and are thought to be useful in encouraging future, socially desirable behavior" (pp. 89–90). Bystander action also means "helping people in all job categories to react, and then act appropriately, when they see unsafe, unprofessional, offensive, discriminatory, or illegal behavior in the workplace" (p. 90).

In addition, bystanders can be very helpful for supporting targets' stories and breaking the bullying cycle; concerted voice simply increases believability (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). Collective voice also reduces some of the risk of being labeled troublemakers, mentally ill, or problem employees. Nontargeted work-group members may not be as stigmatized, since they lack the victim label. But even with collective resistance, there is the risk of being pejoratively branded when speaking out against abuse and oppression (Cowan, 2009). These ideas suggest an instructive approach for building others' competence in work-groups, so that they can help prevent, handle, and, in some cases, stop aggressive communication behavior (Keashly, 2010).

As for bullies, the organizational and communication literatures are sparse regarding what they could do to better manage conflicts and keep conflicts civil and constructive.[4] Infante, Myers, and Buerkel's (1994) and Rancer and Avtgis's (2006) work does provide constructive pointers, however, regarding persons with high-trait verbal aggressiveness—likely present in some degree with all bully profiles. Their scholarship suggests that one of the reasons people use verbal aggression is that they lack argumentation skills. Thus, if organizational members who bully others realize they tend to become aggressive in interactions that are conflictual, one remedy could be to learn how to constructively argue. In fact, Infante (1995) has developed a curriculum specifically for this purpose. Another useful skill is improving one's ability to read others' emotions. Laura Crawshaw (2007), who coaches abrasive managers, argues that these individuals tend toward aggression because they have little ability to empathize with others so they do not see fully the effect their aggression has on others. And although learning empathy is not a simple task, persons in the medical profession often complete courses on this skill (e.g., La Monica, 1983). Indeed, the steps that high verbal aggressive might take is an area needing more research.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This look at the three central employee groups suggests areas of research necessary so that we might improve organizational efforts in resolving bullying conflicts. One of the areas that has received little attention is studying the factors that have transformed other workplaces faced with bullying. Although there are a number of models outlining organization-wide change (e.g., Keashly & Neuman, 2005), researchers are yet to explore fully what organizations have done in circumstances in which bullying decreased as a result of less formal ways of responding and dealing with the problem. From all perspectives in the thrice-told tale, what situational, contextual, or cultural factors assist or thwart targets, bystanders, and perpetrators in resolving conflicts?

Target actions rarely resolve bullying, and there is a substantial body of research focusing on their (ineffective) efforts (e.g., Zapf & Gross, 2001). What is needed is a look into the experiences of bystanders, especially when bystander action has proven effective in the resolution of bullying conflicts. As important is developing and supporting bystander training programs like Keashly's (2010) and Scully and Rowe's (2009), both of which are still in nascent stages. Bystanders more than any other group in the thrice-told tale have been woefully understudied.

As important as bystanders in bullying conflicts is learning more about the perpetrators' experiences, perspectives, and motivations. Interpersonal communication research about verbal aggression informs much of what we have presented in this chapter regarding perpetrators. As workplace bullying is currently in the news and is of increasing interest to organizational leadership, researchers might creatively devise means of accessing the bullies' point of view. In Pam's (first author) experience, after presenting to professional groups about bullying, some audience members have approached her saying, in effect, "I can see that I've been doing this to the people I'm supervising." These interactions could provide fruitful inroads for deeper discussions or interviews.

## Conclusion

We define workplace bullying as a unique type of conflict because it includes power disparities, aggression, and persistence that involves all employees in affected workgroups. Specific to the discussion about workplace bullying conflicts, an exploration of these parties' goals and tactics helps trace the likely motivations and how those differ for targets, bystanders, and bullies. If we say that there are roughly three different types of target (provocative, submissive,

and rigidly conscientious), three types of bystander (bully allies, target allies, and neutral bystanders), and three types of bully (accidental, narcissistic, and psychopathic) and all nine of these general types have different motivations and tactics driven by those motivations, then we have some idea of how impossible it can feel to address bullying conflicts once they develop. In fact, many motivations are at odds with each other (e.g., targets and bullies want someone on their sides, neutral bystanders want to stay out of it).

## Notes

1. For a review of communication and supervisor–subordinate conflict in organizations, see Roloff (1987).

2. All names are fictitious.

3. Although we do not expand herein about the role of upper management and associated staff (e.g., HR), bullying conflicts often involve these organizational members. In Youth Matters, these were primarily the executive director and secondarily the board of directors. When Deb and Bob complained, the executive director attempted to negotiate compromise in the face of the conflict, asking Buddy to spend more time on site conducting training and asking clinical staff to seek external training opportunities to improve their skills. The executive director also worked with Buddy extensively, teaching him hiring tactics for finding more qualified staff (integrating/problem solving). Certainly, there was the unspoken but well-understood power of the executive director to fire, demote, or otherwise sanction involved parties (dominating/forcing) if they failed to go along with his suggested resolutions.

4. Rather, there are various texts to assist upper management dealing with bullies (e.g., Crawshaw, 2007; Namie & Namie, 2011; Twale & De Luca, 2008). Most of these are for acting on the bully (interventions) rather than actions for actual or potential bullies.

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