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# The Perceived Effects of Organizational Culture on Workplace Bullying in Higher Education

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# The Perceived Effects of Organizational Culture on Workplace Bullying in Higher Education

## **Abstract**

Current research indicates that workplace bullying exists among a variety of industries in the United States. Further, the reported frequency of workplace bullying appears to be above average in some industries including higher education. Workplace bullying can cause long term harmful effects for the bullied target. Additionally, workplace bullying can create a negative work environment leading to decreased productivity and employee turnover. The purpose of this study was to learn from higher education faculty, administrators, and human resource personnel about their experiences with workplace bullying. This study examined the problem of workplace bullying through different roles and perspectives to better understand how and why it occurs. This study used organizational culture theory as a guide to investigate the role of the institutional processes in interpersonal behavior. This study employed qualitative phenomenological methodology using interviews to gather data. It found that workplace bullying was experienced as both verbal and emotional abuse. The bullying behavior was often conducted by a superior or someone who held power over the target. Due to the power imbalance, most bullied targets felt there was little recourse to combat the behavior. All participants suggested that training on workplace bullying behavior, creating policy with consequences and ultimately legislation against the behavior would help mitigate the problem.

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## **Dedication**

This journey would not have been possible without the love and support of my family. Thank you to my parents for making education a priority and providing the opportunities to pursue my dreams. Thank you to my children Emily and Jason who set the bar high and inspire me to be a better, stronger person, and to always do the right thing. To Rich, my husband and chief editor, thanks for always cheering me on. To Dr. Montanaro, thank you for the support and your research and writing guidance. Thank you to my dissertation committee, Dr. Girardi and Dr. Schulman, for all the support and direction.

## **Biographical Sketch**

Laura Persky is currently a Graduate Program Director at the Manhattanville College School of Business. Ms. Persky attended the University of Colorado in Boulder and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business in 1985. She attended New York University's Stern School of Business and earned a Master of Business Administration in 1990. She began doctoral studies in the St. John Fisher College Executive Leadership program in the spring of 2016. Ms. Persky conducted her research on the effects of organizational culture on workplace bullying in higher education under the direction of Dr. Janice Girardi and Dr. Jennifer Schulman and earned her degree in 2018.

## **Abstract**

Current research indicates that workplace bullying exists among a variety of industries in the United States. Further, the reported frequency of workplace bullying appears to be above average in some industries including higher education. Workplace bullying can cause long term harmful effects for the bullied target. Additionally, workplace bullying can create a negative work environment leading to decreased productivity and employee turnover.

The purpose of this study was to learn from higher education faculty, administrators, and human resource personnel about their experiences with workplace bullying. This study examined the problem of workplace bullying through different roles and perspectives to better understand how and why it occurs. This study used organizational culture theory as a guide to investigate the role of the institutional processes in interpersonal behavior.

This study employed qualitative phenomenological methodology using interviews to gather data. It found that workplace bullying was experienced as both verbal and emotional abuse. The bullying behavior was often conducted by a superior or someone who held power over the target. Due to the power imbalance, most bullied targets felt there was little recourse to combat the behavior. All participants suggested that training on workplace bullying behavior, creating policy with consequences and ultimately legislation against the behavior would help mitigate the problem.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Background**

For most people, the location associated with bullying is in a schoolyard, and bullying is often considered a problem among children (Douglas, 2001). Less discussed however is the issue of bullying in the workplace among adults (Namie & Namie, 2009). According to the Workplace Bullying Institute, 38% of American workers have faced bullying on the job (Namie, 2017b). Despite the high incidence of reported workplace bullying there is a lack of research in the United States on this topic (Georgakopoulos, Wilkin, & Kent, 2011; Namie & Namie, 2009). According to Hollis (2012), bullying involves mistreatment and hostility that can create a toxic workplace. Workplace bullying is distinguished from harassment due to legal status of the targets (Hollis, 2012). Harassment can include the same behaviors as bullying, but it can only be claimed when applied to certain groups of people who are considered members of a protected class, including ethnic or gender minorities (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011; Hollis, 2012).

According to Hollis (2012), research and reporting on workplace bullying is limited. However, this research shows that the increasing prevalence of this phenomenon can be seen across news mediums and impacts a wide variety of fields and industries. The following are recent examples of this broad-based issue. In 2016, after a congressional oversight committee supported employee complaints that he created a hostile workplace by allowing bullying, harassment, and other misconduct, the Superintendent of Yosemite

National Park, Don Neubacher, was forced to retire (The Associated Press, 2016). In a 2016 study of higher education, researchers who conducted a survey on campus life among faculty at the University of Wisconsin were surprised to find a higher than expected level of bullying (Sheridan, Pribbenow, Carnes, & Wendt, 2016). Workplace bullying is also present in the high-tech industry, where a study found bullying and hostility affects all groups and was particularly pervasive among women and minorities (Scott, Klein, & Onovakpuri, 2017). The existence of workplace bullying in the US became more widely known during the past year when many television and movie stars spoke up about sexual harassment during the #MeToo movement (Lieberman, 2018). The motivation to confront workplace bullying extended to other organizations because bullying was noted as behavior that could lead to sexual harassment, “in many of the workplace environments that resulted in some of the high-profile #MeToo moments . . . an undercurrent of bullying created a belief that mistreatment would go unpunished” (Townsend & Deprez, 2018, p. 23).

Adult bullying in the workplace was rarely discussed until the 1990s (Namie, 2017b). In 1998, Dr. Gary Namie sought to research the issue and found few resources available. In response, he founded the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) to study the phenomenon and address its negative impacts (Namie, 2017b). The WBI conducts annual surveys on workplace bullying, provides education on preventing and managing the problem, and offers direction to get support. In their most recent report, the WBI 2017 U.S. Workplace Survey, which included 1,008 adults gathered to represent the demographics of the U.S. population, almost one in five workers, or 19%, reported being bullied on the job and an additional 19% said they witnessed workplace bullying of

others. Thus, according to the survey, a total 38% of U.S. workers have been exposed to bullying in the workplace.

It appears from research on workplace bullying by industry, that certain types of organizations are impacted from this behavior more than others (Namie, 2013). The WBI provides data on bullying by industry and they find the highest incidences of bullying reported by workers in healthcare and in education (Namie, 2013). Crumpton (2014), who studied the impact of workplace bullying on university library staff, posits that bullying is more common in these types of organizations because they are “prone to silos or non-collaborative work environments” (p. 18). Hollis (2012) conducted a survey among higher education administration and staff which also supported the prevalence of workplace bullying in academia. Hollis’s (2012) research found that 62% of the respondents had witnessed or experienced bullying. This is far greater than the frequency among the general workforce, which was 38% as reported by Namie (2017a).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Workplace bullying is a problem that results in a drain on human capital, both physically and emotionally, and it can lead to a negative and toxic work environment (Hollis, 2012). This phenomenon has several adverse effects, including negative health consequences, reduced morale, lost productivity, and employee turnover (Hollis, 2012; Keashly & Neuman, 2010). There appears to be a high rate of workplace bullying in higher education, with most studies reporting bullying rates between 27% and 62% (DelliFraine, McClelland, Erwin, & Wang, 2014; Hollis, 2015; Keashly & Neuman, 2008; Williams & Ruiz, 2012). Workplace bullying can be a result of structural, cultural,

and leadership issues, and the unique structure and culture of higher education institutions may contribute to the problem (Gunsalus, 2006; Twale & De Luca, 2008)

Workplace bullying is difficult to manage because in most states there are no laws against it (Namie, 2016). The only two states with laws pertaining to workplace bullying are Tennessee and California (Namie, 2016). Since there is rarely a legal mandate, very few institutions have a policy against bullying or a process to address the behavior (Cowan, 2012). Workplace bullying has a tangible effect not only on people's lives, but also on the economy in terms of lost productivity, efficiency, and profitability (Georgakopoulos et al., 2011). A report by Indvik and Johnson (2012), professors at California State University, Chico, estimated that on a national level, workplace bullying can cost up to \$43.4 billion per year. Higher education institutions with a workplace bullying problem also suffer a great drain on resources, which, according to Einarsen et al. (2011), typically ranges from \$30,000-\$50,000 per case. Hollis (2012) attempted to quantify the financial effect on higher education institutions. In her study, she estimated that for a medium sized private college, costs can be in the millions due to missed work, employee turnover, and lawsuits. In sum, as this researcher notes, workplace bullying is harmful to victims and it is a proven drain on organizational, human, and financial resources.

Researchers have suggested that some of the structures and processes, such as decentralized hierarchies and the tenure system found in higher education, may contribute to an environment that enables workplace bullying (Salin, 2003; Twale & De Luca, 2008). The tenure process may protect the perpetrators of bullying and inhibit their targets from coming forward and speaking up (DelliFraine et al., 2014; Fogg, 2008;

Georgi, 2012; Taylor, 2012). Higher education has at least two of the three elements that Salin (2003) suggests may contribute to workplace bullying: low perceived consequences for bullying and enabling structures. However, in most institutions, there is little attention paid to the issue of workplace bullying and few policies, if any, are in place to address it (Cowan, 2012). Salin's (2003) research provided insight on the perceived contributing factors and experiences as shared by those who have been exposed to workplace bullying and those who have a fiduciary responsibility to investigate, mitigate, and enact policies to prevent this behavior.

### **Theoretical Rationale**

The theoretical framework used to guide this study is organizational culture theory (Schein, 1984). According to Schein (1984), organizational culture theory encompasses the idea that the beliefs, structure, rituals, values, and practices of an organization guide the way people behave. Organizational culture theory requires a review of the values that an organization presents, the public image an institution desires, and the underlying assumptions or the unconscious attitudes that really guide how people behave (Schein, 1984). Salin (2003), a professor in management and organization, added to the concept of organizational culture by proposing that certain institutional processes or organizational structures may enable negative behavior. Salin (2003) studied workplace bullying and argued that in addition to interpersonal dynamics, there are organizational factors such as motivating structures and processes, which serve as potential catalysts for workplace bullying. These structures are part of Schein's definition of artifacts and include internal competition, bureaucracy, and difficulty in laying off employees. In addition, there may be processes that trigger negative behavior, such as

organizational changes, budget cuts, or leadership changes (Salin, 2003). According to Salin (2003), when these processes are present with other enabling structures, such as a perceived power imbalance and low perceived consequences, workplace bullying becomes more likely. The research goes on to say that many of these elements are similar to structures and processes found in higher education. Twale and De Luca (2008), who studied faculty incivility and use it as another term for workplace bullying, expanded on Salin's research by focusing on higher education and explaining how the organizational structure, processes, and culture may contribute to this negative behavior. These researchers suggest that the governance structure, tenure, and the traditional higher education organization design may contribute to the prevalence of bullying. They support and add to Salin's (2003) theory that there are inherent qualities in academic institutions that allow, if not foster, bullying.

Organizational culture theory helps address and understand the issue of workplace bullying by looking at the structure and processes that enable the problem (Salin, 2003). Research and theories such as those posited by Schein (1984) on organizational culture, as well as Salin (2003) and Twale and De Luca (2008) on higher education structure, guided this researcher's questions seeking to understand why some higher education organizational cultures seem to foster an atmosphere that seems to perpetuate workplace bullying. While workplace bullying is evidenced through interpersonal relations, its development and impact may be shaped by the organizational context in which it transpires (Salin, 2003; Twale & De Luca, 2008). This theory guided the inquiry by focusing on the organizational structure, culture, and processes, and how those elements shape organizational behavior.

## **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn from higher education faculty, administrators, and human resource personnel about their experiences with bullying in the workplace. This study examined the problem of workplace bullying through their perspectives and sought to identify their challenges in dealing with this issue. The focus was on learning about each groups' perceptions and experiences with workplace bullying and their views on whether or not they can assist in solving the problem. It sought to determine what tools, rules, or policies they believed would help address the issue and what strategies bullied victims might use to help themselves. This study includes a unique set of perspectives by combining the experiences of faculty, administrative, and human resource personnel.

There are several quantitative studies on the prevalence of workplace bullying in higher education (DelliFraine et al., 2014, Keashly & Neuman 2008; McKay, Arnold, Fratzl, & Thomas, 2008; Taylor 2012; Williams & Ruiz, 2012). These studies indicate the frequency and types of workplace bullying reported. Keashly and Neuman (2008) conducted a study of faculty and staff at one Midwestern university and found 32% of respondents self-identified as bullied victims. A different study of faculty and instructors at one Canadian university by McKay et al. (2008) found a higher rate with 52% of respondents reporting that they had been bullied. Another study at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, conducted among all employees, found 39% of respondents reported having experienced workplace bullying while at that institution (Williams & Ruiz, 2012). With a different approach of studying faculty across a variety of schools, DelliFraine et al. (2014), who conducted a survey among healthcare management faculty

at major U.S. universities, found 64% of respondents reporting that they had been bullied. In a more recent study at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, over 35% of faculty responding reported personally experiencing what the survey termed “hostile and intimidating” behavior (Sheridan et al., 2016). The types of reported bullying behaviors were consistent across the studies and included gossip or malicious rumors, belittling remarks, overlooking or ignoring contributions, and unwarranted and unprofessional remarks (DelliFraine et al., 2014; McKay et al., 2008).

There are both quantitative and qualitative studies on the mental and physical effects on bullied employees across industries (Sedivy-Benton, Strohschen, Cavazos, & Boden-McGill, 2015; Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). These studies indicate the adverse effects on the target and the working environment. While these studies look at different aspects of the workplace bullying situations, they tend to have many common themes. The bullied victims reported that the situation was devastating to their personal well-being and they felt violated and abused (Sedivy-Benton et al., 2015; Tracy et al., 2006). Another common theme was that victims felt lost or alone in terms of knowing where to report or seek help with the problem. Bullied victims often feel that reporting the problem to human resources (HR) cannot or does not help (Cowan & Fox, 2014; Harber, Donini, & Parker, 2013; Namie, 2007). One reason that victims feel reporting to HR does not help may be a result of the many roles and responsibilities that the typical HR department shoulders (Fox & Cowan, 2015). Cowan and Fox (2014), who conducted research among HR professionals, argue that many institutions lack a cohesive policy addressing bullying conduct or the tools and protocols for handling the situation and disciplining the perpetrators. Despite the claim that addressing workplace bullying

creates an emotionally charged situation and it is one of the “toxins” that HR must address, Cowan and Fox (2014) indicate that there has been “little research dedicated to understanding the HRP’s [human resource professional] viewpoint or role regarding bullying situations” (p. 120).

In addition to the goals stated, this study highlights the process of reporting and managing workplace bullying in higher education and what, if anything, faculty, administrators, and HR can do to help stem the problem. The study gleans learning from higher education HR and other professionals about the role they play in managing reported workplace bullying and what tools they have or would like to have, to help prevent and respond to workplace bullying situations.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following questions regarding workplace bullying in higher education.

1. How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel perceive workplace bullying in higher education?
2. How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel see their role as it pertains to workplace bullying in their institutions?
3. What solutions do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel think would be helpful to address the issue at their institution?
4. What are the perceived barriers or challenges to introducing or suggesting solutions to workplace bullying?

This researcher believes that the data gathered from this study (a) provides insight on why this behavior exists and (b) contributes direction for developing procedures needed to improve the prevention and response to workplace bullying.

### **Significance of the Study**

“The high prevalence rates of bullying and the severe negative effects of this phenomenon suggest that bullying represents a serious problem with regard to psychosocial safety for many employees in contemporary working life” (Nielsen, 2013, p. 127). Therefore, it is important to understand what influences or contributes to workplace bullying in higher education. This study provides an understanding of why workplace bullying is common in institutions that should value diversity of thought and ideology (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). This study identifies the challenges that higher education professionals face and the solutions they would like to see implemented to help prevent and respond to reported workplace bullying situations. The study is useful to higher education leadership and human resource personnel as they look to create relevant and effective policy in the future, and ultimately help victims and prevent bullying in the workplace. As Cowan and Fox (2014) indicate, employees often do not know where to seek support. This study can assist bullied employees as well as HR personnel understand their roles and responsibilities so that their expectations for assistance and support are realistic.

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following provides terms and definitions used throughout the study.

*Harassment* – Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or

genetic information. Harassment becomes unlawful where (a) enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or (b) the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2017).

*Silo* – A term used to express how parts of organizations function in a manner disconnected from the others (Cilliers & Greyvenstein, 2012).

*Tenure* – An indefinite teaching appointment that can be terminated only for cause or under extraordinary circumstances such as financial exigency and program discontinuation (American Association of University Professors, 2017).

*Workplace Bullying* – Workplace bullying (WB) is extreme, negative, and pervasive or persistent workplace abuse achieved through communication, experienced by targets as an imbalance of power, which can cause distress, humiliation, and other adverse consequences for the target and the organization (Cowan & Fox, 2014).

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has introduced the topic of workplace bullying and has shown that the problem is more pronounced in certain types of organizations, including institutions of higher education. Some researchers argue that the higher education structure and culture may contribute to an environment ripe for conflict (Twale & De Luca, 2008). The structure of higher education may present unique challenges due to the issues of tenure and faculty governance. The higher education organizational culture is impacted by the unique structure and hierarchies that exist in academia. While employees often turn to human resource personnel for help with their problems, bullying appears to be more difficult for higher education human resource personnel to address. This research

illuminates the challenges faced in higher education and helps develop viable solutions. Chapter 2 provides a history of the topic and a review of the current literature. Chapter 3 presents a detailed description of the research methodology and process used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 provides the findings of the study and Chapter 5 provides implications and recommendations for the future.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

### **Introduction and Purpose**

Workplace bullying is a growing issue in the United States, as exemplified in several studies across U.S. industries (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007; Namie, 2013, 2017a). Studies have shown that higher education is an industry where there is an increased trend in reported bullying (DelliFraine et al., 2014; Sheridan et al., 2016; Williams & Ruiz, 2012). This research focused on workplace bullying in higher education. A review of the literature includes a focus on workplace bullying with a primary emphasis on the higher education industry. First, a review of workplace bullying history is summarized. Second, the definitions of bullying and harassment are clarified. Third, research highlighting the frequency and effects of workplace bullying is examined. Next, organizational structure, leadership and practices in higher education, and the perceived impact on workplace bullying were evaluated. The review concludes with a synopsis of the literature regarding workplace bullying in higher education.

### **Review of the Literature**

**Workplace bullying history.** Sources credit Carroll Brodsky, who was investigating workers compensation cases in the 1970s, with first introducing the workplace bullying concept. Brodsky described what may now be called workplace bullying in his book, *The Harassed Worker* (1976). The book chronicled the emotional abuse, mainly psychological and non-sexual in nature, which often created severe and traumatic effects on the employees. These findings were followed by Leymann (1986), a

Swedish psychologist, who also addressed the topic of adult bullying in workplace settings. Leymann (1986) used the term *mobbing* to describe negative and abusive group behaviors to which certain people were exposed at work. It was only in the 1990s when a British journalist, Andrea Adams, used the term workplace bullying in her book, *Bullying at Work: How to Confront and Overcome It*, that the term became more commonly recognized. Through Adams's radio show she gave a voice to people who had experienced workplace bullying but had kept their experiences private (Adams, 1992). Adams's (1992) focus on this issue was the catalyst for European researchers who began to discuss and explore workplace bullying. In the US, the concept was still developing, Keashly (1997) conducted a literature review on the topic and used the term *emotional abuse* to describe workplace hostility – verbal and nonverbal behavior that created a toxic environment (Keashly, 1997).

Workplace bullying is different from harassment because the negative behaviors often “take place within the organization's established policies and procedures or general rules governing behaviors or organizational culture” (Crumpton, 2014, p. 17). Harassment, on the other hand, is defined and illegal, as it involves unwelcome or offensive conduct based on race, color, gender, or religion. Bullying often happens when the target and perpetrator are alone, and the actions may be subtle and discreet (DelliFraine et al., 2014; Indvik & Johnson, 2012).

Drs. Gary and Ruth Namie spearheaded the early activism on workplace bullying in the United States. The impetus for their effort was driven by Dr. Ruth Namie's personal experience as the victim of a workplace bully in the late 1990s (Namie, 2017b). The couple started researching the topic and found that while there was research and

support for bullied employees in Europe, there was a lack of information available in the United States. Since there were no organizations dedicated to the issue in the United States they founded the Campaign Against Workplace Bullying in 1997. As the campaign grew and developed, the name was changed to the Workplace Bullying Institute in 2000. The WBI has developed and published frequently cited studies (Namie, 2007, 2013, 2014, 2017b) on the prevalence, types, and issues surrounding workplace bullying in the United States. They also supported the introduction in several states, of the Healthy Workplace Bill, which was developed with attorney David Yamada (Namie, 2017b).

**Workplace bullying defined.** Workplace bullying is a “type of interpersonal aggression at work that goes beyond simple incivility and is marked by the characteristic features of frequency, intensity, duration, and power disparity.” (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007, p. 837). Cowan (2012) helps illuminate what distinguishes bullying from the occasional rude behavior by listing the features that occur in bullying situations. Those features are “persistence, escalation, power disparity, attributed intent, and adverse effects” (Cowan, 2012, p. 380). Persistence is explained by Einarsen et al. (2011) where they describe the acts as “systematic mistreatment of a subordinate, colleague or a superior which if continued and long-lasting, may cause severe social, psychological, and psychosomatic problems in the target” (p. 4). Escalation indicates that the problem or treatment worsens over time. Power disparity can be a result of a formal subordinate structure or organizationally defined relationship, or it can be based on an informal relationship. For intent, the actions of the perpetrator are perceived as intended to inflict control or fear in the target. These combined actions lead to adverse effects for the target and the organization. Williams and Ruiz (2012) added new insight when they included

language indicating that “Workplace bullying generally involves repeated, unreasonable actions, but it can also be a single, severe action” (p. 4). Cowan and Fox (2014) provide another definition offering this description:

Workplace bullying (WB) is generally defined as extreme, negative, and pervasive or persistent workplace abuse achieved through communication, experienced by targets as an imbalance of power, which can cause distress, humiliation, and other adverse consequences for the target and the organization. (p. 119)

While there are other variations and definitions of workplace bullying, the overarching description of this behavior has several consistent themes. These themes include severe negative behavior that has an element of power imbalance, legitimate or perceived, and the behavior has a negative impact on the target’s ability to work. The University of Wisconsin – Madison (UW-Madison) study (Sheridan et al., 2016) added the words hostile and intimidating to describe bullying behavior. Another consistent theme is that the definitions provide detailed and objective criteria that distinguish bullying from the occasional rude comment or display of anger (Einarsen et al., 2011). These descriptions of workplace bullying are incorporated in the language used by the Healthy Workplace Law which was passed in Tennessee and California in 2015. The law provides a lengthy description of abusive conduct, which included the idea that behavior should be judged based on what a *reasonable person* would consider bullying. In the healthy workplace law, “abusive conduct” is defined as:

Conduct with malice that a reasonable person would find hostile, offensive and unrelated to an employer’s legitimate business interests. The conduct may include

verbal abuse, such as the use of derogatory remarks, insults, and epithets; verbal or physical conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening, intimidating or humiliating; or the gratuitous sabotage or undermining of a person's work performance. (College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, 2015, para. 3)

This concept of what a reasonable person would find hostile or intimidating appears to be gaining popularity, as it was used to introduce the questions on workplace bullying in the recent study of faculty work life at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Sheridan et al., 2016).

**The impact of workplace bullying.** “Each person's self-image is to a large extent dependent on how he/she is treated by fellow employees” (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Hjelt-Back, 1994, p. 173). The reported consequences or feelings that bullied victims report appear consistent across the research and bullied victims experience a variety of negative emotional and physical reactions that can send many into poor health (Kivimäki et al., 2003; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). The psychological impact of persistent bullying can manifest into loss of concentration, clinical depression, and even lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; Harber et al., 2013; Kivimäki et al., 2003; Vega & Comer, 2005).

Bjorkqvist et al. (1994) studied the impact of work harassment (bullying) among university employees in Finland. The mixed methods study with a sample size of 338, provided data showing a significant increase in depression and anxiety among bullied employees versus non-bullied employees. A different study among hospital workers with a sample of 5,432 employees, found “a clear cumulative relationship between bullying

and the incidence of depression” (Kivimäki et al., 2003, p. 781). The study conducted by Kivimäki et al. (2003) also found bullied victims to be at a greater risk of cardiovascular disease.

Sedivy-Benton et al. (2015) conducted a phenomenological study of the lived experiences and survival strategies of bullied female educators. These researchers interviewed three female faculty in a range of career stages, across institution types, and geographic regions. The respondents reported that bullying was carried out for many years because there were rarely consequences for the perpetrator. The participants indicated the experience was devastating to their “professional development, career advancement, personal well-being, collegiality and quality of service” (p. 40). Dentith, Wright, and Coryell (2015) provide insight on their experiences with workplace bullying. They reported being subject to “verbal abuse, threatening conduct, and professional sabotage” (p. 31). The experiences led all three victims to feel anger, confusion, and self-doubt and all three professors left their respective universities. While both are studies with small populations, three participants each at a variety of institutions, the feelings of anger, depression, lack of confidence, and lingering psychological impact, are consistent with research conducted on a larger scale (DelliFraine et al., 2014; Hollis, 2012; Kivimäki et al., 2003; Williams & Ruiz, 2012).

Bullying behavior also has a negative impact on work, including reduced productivity, dissatisfaction with the organization, and job loss (Hollis, 2012; Williams & Ruiz, 2012). Hollis (2012) conducted a survey with 401 participants from a variety of colleges and universities across the Northeast. She asked questions about the impact of bullying on the target’s emotions, work performance, productivity, and intent to stay or

leave their current position. Hollis (2012) found that 25% of those reporting they were bullied indicated that they were looking for a new job, and 71% of those who were bullied indicated the experience made them change their view of the university. Over 50% of those bullied reported a change in their interest in work and had trouble sleeping, and 40% reported changes in concentration (Hollis, 2012). Hollis's study confirmed that many people who feel bullied have a change in their work commitment level and consider leaving the organization. The 2014 WBI survey indicated that 29% of victims voluntarily left their organizations. Bullied victims leave their jobs because they do not feel supported by the organization. There appears to be a lack of policy regarding appropriate behavior and how to address violations of conduct. In the DelliFraine et al. (2014) study, the participants were asked what actions universities should take to address bullying behaviors. The most common answer was "design policies to deal with incivility and bullying behaviors" (p. 158). The participants suggested that universities should proactively develop policies to deal with incivility and bullying. According to Sedivy-Benton et al. (2015), bullied victims expressed that the university did not respond to, nor did anything to address the situation. Sedivy-Benton et al. (2015) also suggested that bullying is a human resources and security problem as it can escalate into workplace violence.

**Workplace bullying and the law.** Workplace bullying behavior is different from harassment because harassment is clearly defined by law (Hollis, 2012). Bullying is not classified as illegal if the hostile acts are not based on the target's membership in a certain race, religion, gender, or origin (Hollis, 2012). Individuals who belong to a group due to race, religion, gender, or origin are defined as a protected class. If the bullying

conduct and language is generally harming but not related to gender or ethnicity, the targets are not protected by law in the United States (Indvik & Johnson, 2012). While harassment can be claimed when the target is part of a protected group, bullying action which may be subtle and discrete, can occur that may not be related to race, ethnicity or gender (Hollis, 2012; Indvik & Johnson, 2012). Bullying is harder to prove as it may be conducted by people of the same age, gender, or race and the actions are often subtle (Indvik & Johnson, 2012). The fact that bullying often occurs among people of the same gender, age, or race has led workplace bullying to be known as “status blind harassment” (Namie & Namie, 2009, p. 9). In her 2012 book, *Bully in The Ivory Tower*, Hollis offered the term “bullrassment” to describe this behavior (p. 20).

There is a legal movement to address this gap in protective law, by adopting the Healthy Workplace Bill. In 2015, Tennessee and California passed the healthy workplace law, providing some legal grounds for addressing bullying in the workplace (Namie, 2016). According to Namie (2016), the healthy workplace law incorporates protections for both employees and employers. For employers, the law provides a definition of *abusive work environment*, requires proof of harm by doctors or mental health counselors, and offers employers grounds to sanction or terminate offenders. For employees, it provides legal recourse to address emotional and physical distress caused at work, holds the employer accountable, and mandates training of supervisors to prevent what it calls abusive behavior (Namie, 2016). In Tennessee, the law only applies to public sector organizations, but in California, it applies to all employers with 50 or more employees who are already required to provide sexual harassment training for their employees. Most businesses and higher education institutions have a code of conduct that

addresses the harassment of protected classes because it is illegal, but few have codes of conduct that address workplace bullying (Wajngurt, 2014). The following section will address the development of workplace bullying in the U.S.

**Workplace bullying in the United States.** Brodsky (1976) was the first to indicate that stress in the workplace can lead to long lasting emotional scars. Brodsky (1976) studied employees complaining of workplace abuse and found that persistent mistreatment can leave devastating effects on their productivity and health. Dr. Loreleigh Keashly studied worker complaints of unfair treatment and used the term *emotional abuse* in the early 1990s (Keashly, 1997). It was not until the work of Drs. Gary and Ruth Namie in the late 1990s that the term workplace bullying was used in the United States. Namie and Namie have been conducting national surveys and research on the level, types, and issues surrounding workplace bullying in the U.S. since 2000. The Namie's interest in the topic came from a personal experience when Dr. Ruth Namie suffered a career setback due to a workplace bullying situation. When they began to research workplace bullying they found there was a dearth of information or resources in the U.S. They started collecting data on the prevalence and consequences of workplace bullying and built a support network, using the name Workplace Bullying Institute, with resources and tools to help victims (Namie, 2017b).

The WBI began national research on the prevalence of workplace bullying in 2003. The first study was a self-selected non-scientific sample consisting of people who went to the WBI website seeking information and solutions to their challenges at work, and who chose to participate in the online survey (Namie, 2003). The demographic breakdown of the 1,000 people who opted into the study were: 80% were women, 20%

men, an average age of 43, and 84% were college educated. The industry breakdowns were: 36% corporate, 31% government, 12% nonprofit organizations, and 11% small businesses. The data was collected anonymously, eliminating location or other identifiers. Among the respondents, 61% reported the bullying activity was current and ongoing, and 71% of the bullies were in a supervisory role (Namie, 2003). Additionally, the respondents placed the cause of bullying on the individual perpetrators (55%) or on a toxic work environment (32%). Over time, the research methodology changed, and the sample was no longer self-selected. In 2007 WBI commissioned Zogby International to conduct the first of the scientific surveys; with a sample of 7,740 people representative of the adult U.S. population. The survey titled U.S. Workplace Bullying Survey, September 2007, led to the estimate that on a national level, 37% or 54 million adults have been bullied at work. In the later surveys, since 2007, the “sample was a scientific (technically representative of the nation) one” (Namie, 2017b). The national studies were repeated in 2010 and 2014, with the most recent survey conducted in January of 2017. The 2017 survey found that 19% or 33 million adults have been bullied at work (Namie, 2017b).

A different study of the U.S. workforce was conducted by Schat, Frone, and Kelloway (2006) on a statistically representative sample of U.S. workers that measured the prevalence of workplace violence on a continuum of behavior from psychological aggression to physical abuse. The survey titled, National Survey of Workplace Health and Safety, had 2,829 participants who were selected through stratified sampling that was designed to provide a representative sample of the U.S. working population. The researchers found 13% of workers reporting exposure to psychological aggression on a weekly basis, and another 9% reporting exposure monthly. The “participants were asked

how frequently someone at work did the following: shouted obscenities at you or screamed at you in anger; insulted or called you names in front of other people; made an indirect or hidden threat” (Schat et al., 2006, p. 89). These figures are very similar to those reported by the WBI in 2007. Another survey that used a nationally representative sample of 13,807 participants was conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics in 2010 (Asfaw, Chang, & Ray, 2014). This study, the 2010 National Health Interview Survey (as cited by Asfaw et al. 2014), had one question that asked, “During the past 12 months, were you threatened, bullied, or harassed by anyone while you were on the job?” The researchers found 8% of respondents reported being bullied in the past year (Asfaw et al., 2014).

A different study by Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007), used networking, advertisements, and self-selection to find participants. This data collection method was not statistically representative of the U.S. population. These researchers found 28% of respondents reported being bullied based on the definition of “at least two negative acts weekly or more often for at least six months” (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007, p. 849). The reported frequency from the Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007) study was higher than the WBI 2007 study that found 13% reported workplace bullying during that same year. These studies list the industries where employees worked, but they did not analyze or compare reported frequency rates by industry.

Namie (2013) conducted a non-scientific (self-selected) industry analysis and found that those reporting bullying mostly came from a few types of organizations including healthcare and education. The industry breakdown of those self-reporting workplace bullying was healthcare-27%, education-23%, and public service-16%

(Namie, 2013). This data led the WBI to argue that the education environment may be prone to workplace bullying behavior. This view is supported by Zapf, Escartin, Einarsen, Hoel, and Vartia (2011) who found similar trends in European studies, and Twale and De Luca (2008) who studied faculty incivility in the United States.

**Workplace bullying in higher education.** As noted, the WBI provides data on bullying by industry and they find the highest incidences of bullying reported by workers in healthcare and education (Namie, 2013). Among respondents indicating they were bullied, 27% worked in healthcare and 23% worked in education; these were followed by 16% in public service and 14% in other industries. Several researchers have focused specifically on education and have found workplace bullying to be prevalent in higher education (DelliFraine et al., 2014; Georgi, 2012; Keashly & Neuman, 2008; McKay et al., 2008; Williams & Ruiz; 2012).

Keashly and Neuman (2008) conducted the Workplace Behavior (Bullying) Project survey of faculty, administration, and staff at Minnesota State University – Mankato in May 2008. There were 1,185 respondents who were asked to check off which, if any, of the 29 aggressive behaviors they had experienced, including the frequency of occurrence. Based on responses to the list of behaviors, 23% of respondents were classified as victims of bullying. However, after reading a definition of workplace bullying, 32% self-identified themselves as being bullied. This Mankato study is one of the earliest U.S. studies of workplace bullying in higher education, yet findings presented by the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2012, and University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2016, reported similar frequency with 39% and 35% respectively (Sheridan et al., 2016; Williams & Ruiz, 2012).

In the spring of 2012, Williams and Ruiz conducted the Workplace Bullying Survey among all employees at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, receiving 2,254 responses. The survey found 39% of respondents had experienced workplace bullying in the past 2 years. Additionally, the respondents indicated that 63% of the perpetrators were of a higher rank, and 49% had considered changing jobs because of the experience. Almost half of those feeling bullied, or 46%, indicated the experiences affected their emotional health and had negatively affected their work performance (Williams & Ruiz, 2012).

DelliFraine et al. (2014) conducted a study to examine the extent and nature of workplace bullying among healthcare management faculty. They used a gender stratified random sample of faculty, based on membership in the Association of University Programs in Health Administration. The survey, no name provided, was based on the questions used in previous studies by McKay et al. (2008). The DelliFraine et al. (2014) survey was sent to 250 healthcare administration faculty at major universities throughout the United States and received a high response rate of 53% or 134 respondents. Almost two-thirds, or 64%, of the respondents, reported being the target of a bully. Respondents reported adverse consequences including anger, stress, frustration, and exhaustion. The research shows the high prevalence and adverse outcomes of bullying behaviors in the higher education setting.

A work-life survey at University of Wisconsin-Madison (2016), designed to assess faculty morale found “over 35% of faculty report personally experiencing H&I [hostile and intimidating] behaviors in the past 3 years and over 40% have witnessed these behaviors” (Sheridan et al., 2016, p. 6). According to the researchers of the UW-

Madison study, the reported incidence was surprising. The survey was sent to all faculty, tenured and tenure-track, receiving 1,285 responses, for a 58% response rate. According to the researchers, this provided for an acceptable representation of the population.

International studies also weigh in on this issue. In addition to the US, workplace bullying in higher education has been studied in many countries around the world including Canada, Italy, Wales, and South Africa (Georgi, 2012; Ilongo, 2016; McKay et al., 2008). A study in higher education conducted at a mid-size, Canadian university by McKay et al. (2008) included an original survey sent out to 820 faculty, instructors, and librarians, excluding administrators and staff. The participants were asked if they had been exposed to behaviors ranging from incivility, to bullying, to violence. The results indicated 52% of those responding had been bullied. It should be noted that the survey response rate at 12% was low, and the results may have been skewed to those with specific interest in the topic. However, the researchers argued that the data still indicated a total of 52 faculty and instructors felt bullied, which they said should merit concern.

A different study in an Italian university by Georgi (2012) focused on the relationship between the work environment, workplace bullying, and employee health. Georgi (2012) used three different tools to develop correlations. He used the UNICLIMA Questionnaire developed by Italian researchers Mariani and the Uniclisma Group to assess organizational climate. Georgi (2012) used the Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009) to measure workplace bullying. He combined that with an unnamed health scale assessment where respondents reported on their perceived psychological and physical health. A total of 371 higher education administration and staff completed the Workplace Bullying Survey. The data collected by Georgi (2012)

showed that 19% of respondents reported continuous bullying. The participants suggested that the institutional culture encourages or allows bullying behavior. Another finding reported that longer tenure at the organization was associated with an increased rate of bullying. Georgi suggested there should be a shift in focus from the individual to the organization, evaluating the organizational culture, to explain the problem of workplace bullying. With these insights, Georgi expanded upon the organizational culture theory contributions of Schein (1984), Salin (2003), and Twale and De Luca (2008).

Related higher education studies have identified specific disciplines, such as healthcare management and arts and humanities, that may be more prone than others to bullying behavior issues (DelliFraine et al., 2014; Taylor, 2012). Taylor's (2012) research was designed to study the relationship between tenure and workplace bullying but she also found a correlation between workplace bullying and individual academic disciplines. Taylor used two types of surveys designed to assess the relationship between tenure and workplace bullying, and the effect that bullying had on the motivations or intentions of people involved. Taylor (2012) sent an online quantitative survey to all faculty at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. She used two research tools, the Negative Acts Questionnaire revised (NAQR) and the Exit Voice Loyalty and Cynicism (EVLNC) scale to measure how likely a respondent is to exhibit certain types of behavior in response to dissatisfaction in the workplace. She conducted a large study with 2,472 invitations to participate, receiving a strong response rate of 53% or 1,060 completed surveys. The data revealed that 12% of respondents reported some type of bullying, which is lower than many other higher education studies. It did, however, show a correlation between academic disciplines and an increased prevalence of reported workplace bullying. The

arts and humanities had a higher prevalence of workplace bullying rates than the physical sciences, life sciences, or professional disciplines. The DelliFraine et al. (2014) study mentions and provides support for the suggestion that there is an above average level of workplace bullying in the academic healthcare discipline.

The studies mentioned demonstrate that there is interest and attention focused on this topic, however, they are limited in scope and overall there appears to be relatively little research on workplace bullying in higher education (Keashly & Neuman, 2016). Despite the prevalence of uncivil practices and bullying in higher education, Lester (2013), who edited the book *Workplace Bullying in Higher Education* stated that “few studies empirically examine the prevalence and nature of bullying in academe” (p. viii). According to Gloor (2014), who stated that she has firsthand experience being the target of workplace bullying in academia, there is a large, and potentially problematic gap, in the current literature. Scholars who have studied uncivil behavior and bullying in higher in education question why aggressive behaviors are pervasive in institutions that ostensibly value intellectual debate and reasonable discussion (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). Keashly and Neuman (2010) posited that there is a relationship between organizational conditions and workplace bullying.

**Organizational culture.** According to Schein (1984), organizations have their own culture created by their beliefs, ideologies, policies, and practices. Schein, a management professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Sloan School of Management, used case study analysis to review the way organizations develop culture. He looked at organizations in retail, manufacturing, and financial services to assess the impact of leadership on organizational culture (Schein, 1983). Schein (1983) found that

culture originates from founders and leaders. He posited that a culture can be strong or weak, and positive or negative, depending on the leadership style, the length of time people work together, and the experiences they face. “The culture of a group can be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration” (Schein, 2010, p. 18). Culture includes three levels: (a) artifacts, (b) espoused beliefs and values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 2010). Artifacts include manuals, policies, and visible structure or processes. Espoused beliefs and values consist of ideals, goals, and ideologies. Basic underlying assumptions are the unconscious assumed beliefs and values that determine behavior. These elements of organizations will be discussed in terms of how they may prohibit or enable certain workplace behaviors.

Salin (2003), a professor of management and organization, added to the concept of organizational culture by introducing elements that can create negative behavior. Salin conducted a mixed methods study among working professionals in Finland. She received 377 responses to a survey sent to 1,000 members of the Finnish Association of Graduates in Economics and Business. Salin chose this population to study the issue of workplace bullying among those with higher education and career positions. Salin suggested that there are motivating structures and processes, part of what Schein (1984) termed artifacts, that serve as potential catalysts or enablers of workplace bullying. The motivating structures included in Schein’s (1984) definition of artifacts, include internal competition and bureaucracy, and difficulty in laying off employees such as tenured professors. Then there are precipitating processes that may trigger negative behavior, such as organizational changes, budget cuts, or leadership changes. When these processes are

present with other enabling circumstances, such as perceived power imbalance and low risk of consequences or punishment, workplace bullying becomes more likely. Many of these organizational elements are similar to structures and processes found in higher education (Salin, 2003).

The organizational elements discussed by Salin (2003), in terms of the problems of workplace bullying in higher education, are expanded on by Twale and De Luca (2008) in their study of faculty incivility. Twale and De Luca (2008) used observation, interviews with faculty, (sample size not available) and a literature review to add to Salin's research. Twale and De Luca (2008) focused on higher education to examine how the organizational structure, processes, and culture may contribute to workplace bullying. In Twale and De Luca's (2008) book about higher education workplace bullying, *Faculty Incivility: The Rise of the Academic Bully Culture and What to Do About It*, the authors suggested that the governance structure, tenure, and the traditional higher education organization design may contribute to the prevalence of bullying. The authors posited that there are inherent qualities in academic institutions that allow, if not foster, bullying. Twale and De Luca (2008) provide a conceptual framework of workplace bullying that identifies the organizational elements that might make higher education prone to this type of behavior. The structures and processes they identified as contributory include: faculty governance structure, faculty peer review for promotion and tenure, competition and reward structures, power imbalances and hierarchical structure, both autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles, and a lack of policy on civility (Twale & De Luca, 2008).

**The impact of tenure on workplace bullying.** One aspect of the higher education structure that many suggest contributes to bullying is the tenure system (Harber

et al., 2013; Salin, 2003; Taylor, 2013). Earning tenure means that a professor has an indefinite appointment or job at a particular school. It is not guaranteed, but it usually signals a job for life, unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as illegal behavior or program discontinuation. The tenure system was designed to protect the educator's academic freedom as it allows individual thought or expression without fear of reprisal (American Association of University Professors, 2017). Nevertheless, the tenure system can create both protection for bullies and a fear of reporting by targets (Taylor, 2013).

Taylor's (2012) quantitative study among faculty at the University of Minnesota, discussed previously, was designed to determine the relationship between tenure and workplace bullying, and the impact it had on employees' feelings about the organization. This research was for a dissertation and thus was not peer reviewed. Taylor's (2012) study received 1,060 completed surveys from faculty, with a breakdown as follows: 60% were tenured, 18% were tenure-track, and 22% non-tenure-track. She was attempting to learn how bullying impacts the victim's participation, motivation, and desire to leave the job. Taylor (2012) found that tenured faculty are the most likely to be bullied, and they are followed by non-tenure-track faculty. Not surprisingly, the analysis showed a positive correlation between the level of reported workplace bullying and workplace dissatisfaction.

Taylor (2012) referenced Salin's (2003) theory that power imbalance and low risk of punishment may contribute to workplace bullying. This research says that targets of bullying who are seeking tenure, may not want to risk tenure by reporting their problems and potentially creating an issue. Conversely, those with tenure do not want to give it up and will put up with problems due to the job security that tenure provides. Additionally,

those with tenure have very secure positions and are difficult to fire (Harber et al., 2013; Taylor, 2012). Tenure is supposed to allow faculty to pursue their own ideas and beliefs and to be autonomous without fear of criticism (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). Keashly and Neuman (2010) suggested that while these beliefs are meant for intellectual pursuit, this academic entitlement may extend to social behavior. Some faculty in tenured positions may abuse that job security by exhibiting bullying behavior (Salin, 2003). Another suggestion about tenure is that bullying is used as a method to oust tenured faculty (Taylor, 2013).

Since there are few ways to fire tenured faculty, it is suspected that some have used bullying to make the targeted person want to leave their job (Taylor, 2013). In the study by DelliFraine et al. (2014), mentioned previously, the tenure system is listed as a constraint to reporting behavior. The DelliFraine et al. (2014) study found 64% of faculty reported being bullied and 73% of experiences occurred while the individual was untenured. “Untenured respondents who reported being bullied (28%) were significantly ( $p=.000$ ) more likely to be bullied by tenured Full Professors (31.5%)” (DelliFraine, 2014, p. 154).

**Hierarchical structure.** Another aspect of higher education culture that may contribute to workplace bullying is the hierarchy and the way organizations are divided into individual departments and schools (Gunsalus, 2006; Salin, 2003). This decentralized structure creates many small hierarchies within a given organization. C. K. Gunsalus, adjunct professor and special counsel to the University of Illinois College of Law, and author of *The College Administrator's Survival Guide* (2006), suggested that this decentralized structure may provide an environment ripe for bullies. One outcome of

this structure is that work may be conducted in isolation, without awareness or consideration of the overall organization. Salin (2003) and Twale and De Luca (2008) refer to this as an enabling structure. Additionally, the larger organization may not be aware of what is happening in individual departments (Barsky, 2002). Higher education faculty and staff often complain that it seems as if academic departments work alone for their own benefit in what are often called *silos* (Keeling, Underhile, & Wall, 2007). There seems to be common knowledge and reference to the issue of higher education departments acting in isolation, which may contribute to bullying on campuses (Crumpton, 2014; Keeling et al., 2007). Higher education institutions are commonly accused of operating in silos and the primarily vertical nature of the different schools within institutions can create operations and services that often compete for limited funds (Keeling et al., 2007).

The concept of internal competition was also raised by Barsky (2002) who conducted an ethnographic study to learn about what might contribute to this structural conflict. In his research, Barsky (2002) interviewed professors, administrators, support staff, and students who were randomly selected from the telephone directory of one large Canadian university. He asked the participants about their experiences with conflict, including what factors they thought contributed to the conflict, how the conflict was managed, and if there were consequences from the conflict. Barsky (2002) pointed to elements of organizational culture to explain that the different units or departments may have their own missions and visions, which may lead to separate and different priorities. Barsky (2002) stated that there are different constituencies in higher education institutions that may compete for control. For example, as this research points out, the

faculty often has the power to vote on college policy and procedures. The board of trustees has the power to hire and fire a president and set a budget. Since they pay tuition, the students think they should have a say in how the school runs. These different factions, with their conflicting opinions, present just one example of the type of challenges found in managing higher education institutions (Barsky, 2002). If organizational structure is contributing to the workplace bullying problem, then this is a topic deserving further study (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). The emphasis on resolving individual personnel issues may be moot if the organizational structure is more of a contributing source to internal conflict and continues to cause more problems (Barsky, 2002).

Crumpton (2014), who studied the impact of bullying among higher education library staff, provides insight on organizational conditions in the workplace that may encourage negative or bullying type of behaviors. He stated that “bullying is generally considered to be more prevalent in academia or community service type of environments due to the decentralized and less structured nature of these work environments” (Crumpton, 2014, p. 2). Crumpton (2014) also suggested that “organizational cultures that are toxic in nature or prone to silos or non-collaborative work environments” (p. 18), contribute to deviant or bullying behavior.

**Leadership’s influence on workplace bullying.** Leadership is an important element of organizational culture and it must be examined in terms of its impact on a bullying culture (Dentith et al., 2015). Schein (2010) indicated that one of most important roles leaders play is to create and manage culture (Schein, 2010). Leadership style is discussed by Barsky (2002) and Gunsalus (2006), who suggested many academicians promoted into leadership roles lack formal management or leadership training. Gunsalus

(2006) pointed out that department heads have often progressed through a career as faculty, not as managers, and may not have training in personnel management. Faculty may be focused on self-promotion and competition due to their career progression; they compete to get into academic programs, compete to get published, and then compete for tenure (Barsky, 2002). As faculty transition into leadership roles, they may not be comfortable with addressing different personalities or have adequate training in conflict resolution (Gunsalus, 2006).

Where there is an atmosphere of fear and distrust, it creates a toxic work environment that can adversely impact all levels in an organization (Georgakopoulos et al., 2011). Georgakopoulos et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study to understand more about the process of workplace bullying and the relationship with organizations. Their overall research question was “Why is workplace bullying a complex problem that needs to be addressed in contemporary organizations?” (Georgakopoulos et al., 2011, p. 6). The researchers held a series of focus groups with 112 graduate and doctoral level students. In addition to being students, they had vast work experience, almost; 95% of the participants worked in one or more organizations for at least 6 years. The researchers asked about the participants’ experiences with workplace bullying and how they would want the problem handled. The study’s conclusions provided insights on leadership and how different leadership styles create organizational cultures that can exacerbate the workplace bullying problem. Georgakopoulos et al. (2011) found that, by not addressing the problem, apathetic leaders often reinforce the behavior. This research stated that leaders who ignore bullying or let it continue are abdicating their designated responsibilities and duties. Additionally, it goes on to say that when the boss acts like a bully, subordinates

may imitate that behavior as they see it as the norm. The participants in a study by Hollis (2012), conducted in higher education organizations, indicated that ingrained leadership behavior affects organizational culture and it is the main reason bullying exists in institutions. If senior leaders exhibit uncivil behavior or tolerate that type of behavior from others, it can have a negative, widespread effect throughout the organization (Georgakopoulos et al., 2011; Hollis, 2012).

The WBI found that the leadership in organizations is often the source of bullying; 61% of respondents indicated that the bullies held a higher rank than the target (Namie, 2017a). The terms used to describe negative leadership included *abusive leadership* and *toxic leadership*. These leadership styles have adverse effects on both the organization and individual employees. The descriptions of the damage they cause to both groups, including reduced productivity and morale are very similar to the damage attributed to workplace bullies (Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007). In their study of negative leadership styles, Einarsen et al. (2007) describe the behavior of destructive and toxic leaders as including manipulation and sabotage, that is repeated and systematic. The researchers argued that the impact on employees often results in their becoming fearful and intimidated, and those emotions can lead to poor physical health.

**Human resource policies and workplace bullying.** Cowan (2012) found many human resource professionals believed their organizations had specific policies regarding bullying behavior, but upon closer inspection, realized the policy was not adequately specific, nor did it include the term bullying. Cowan interviewed 36 human resource professionals to learn about their experiences and discovered there was a discrepancy between what the participants thought the organization's policy included, and what was

documented in the handbook. The participants' feedback indicated that most of their organizations did not have policies that defined bullying behaviors or used the word bullying. Cowan posited that preventing or addressing bullying was not a priority of the organizations since there was an absence of policy. Harber et al. (2013), who have a combined amount of experience of 65 years working in both higher education human resources and administration, contributed a chapter to *Workplace Bullying in Higher Education*. The researchers provided a variety of case studies to initiate discussion and training on handling workplace bullying. They suggested that the unique structures in higher education are particularly challenging for the human resource professional, and the wide variety of roles present in higher education structure can leave human resource personnel unprepared to deal with workplace bullying. Faculty power and the tenure process mean that human resources departments may not be able to create the type of standardized bullying policy that can usually be found in a traditional office environment (Harber et al., 2013). According to Harber et al. (2013), part of the challenge for higher education human resource personnel "is that the law is slow to catch up not only in defining this behavior but also recognizing it as legally actionable" (p. 135). Despite the legal limitations Harber et al. (2013) proposed that human resources should develop processes and policy and ensure that it is communicated throughout the institution.

Clark's (2013) study among nursing school faculty yielded a similar suggestion in terms of the importance of implementing policies, guidelines, and reporting protocols. Clark (2013) used the Faculty-to-Faculty Incivility Survey (F-FI Survey) to measure perceived frequency and level of incivility. The term incivility and the behavioral actions described in the survey are similar to those presented in the workplace bullying

measurement tool, the Negative Acts Questionnaire Revised survey. The descriptions of encounters include “berating, insulting, excluding, degrading, power playing and taking credit for the work of other” (Clark, 2013, p. 99). Her survey included responses from 588 nursing faculty from across the United States. Since it was a mixed methods study, the survey included a quantitative section reporting on behavior type and frequency, as well as two open ended questions that asked participants to describe the encounters and provide suggestions on ways to address the problems. The suggestions for addressing the problem support the need for effective leadership that models positive behavior and acknowledges and addresses persistent negative behaviors. The respondents indicated that measuring the problem and developing a process to prevent, and then react to issues when they occur, is an important step in addressing workplace bullying.

The importance of having a plan to prevent and address workplace bullying is supported by the research of Cowan and Fox (2014), who found that the lack of specific policies makes the human resource department appear as if it is part of the problem. Research on workplace bullying and the human resources involvement is primarily informed by the target’s perspective and it indicates that employees perceive the human resources team as apathetic towards the allegations of bullying (Cowan & Fox, 2014). In many cases, the targets believe that human resources personnel are likely to support or protect the perpetrator and organization in bullying situations. Researchers have found that human resources policy and practice can affect employee attitudes and behavior, which in turn can affect organizational performance (Cowan & Fox, 2014). A good policy helps clarify the human resources role and their ability to react to a situation

(Cowan & Fox, 2014). Keashly and Neuman (2016) posited that a well-written policy provides a solid framework for problem solving and managing risk.

**Quantifying the cost of bullying.** Hollis attempted to quantify lost productivity due to bullying in her 2012 study of higher education administration and staff. Hollis found 53% of the higher education employees that felt bullied, were looking for other jobs and they spent a reported mean of 3.9 hours per week avoiding the bully. This unproductive use of time and potential for turnover is draining on employees, resources, and is costly to the organization.

In addition to the human cost, bullying has a quantifiable cost in terms of lost productivity, efficiency, and profitability. A report by Query and Hanley (2010) indicated that workplace bullying costs the United States \$64 billion annually. It appears from recent research by Hollis (2012), that higher education institutions which have this problem also experience a drain on resources. Based on her 2012 study, Hollis estimated that bullying costs for a medium-sized private college due to missed work, employee turnover, and lawsuits can be in the millions of dollars each year. Hollis compared the bullying problem to a thief:

Workplace bullying is like a petty thief, pilfering the resources of the organization. While the customary petty thief takes cash, the bully steals the productivity of the organization by causing employee disengagement. In an environment that can ill afford wasted resources, higher education would benefit from a critical look at the cost of workplace bullying and resulting employee disengagement. (Hollis, 2015, p. 1)

A recent study by Anjum, Ming, Siddiqi, and Rasool (2018) supported the importance of studying workplace bullying due to the cost impact to an institution. The researchers conducted a quantitative study with 267 responses from higher education professionals in private universities in Pakistan. Their goal was to determine the impact of different types of negative behavior of job productivity. Their survey results, examined using regression analysis, demonstrated a significant negative correlation between workplace bullying and job productivity. “By using the multiple statistical tools and techniques, it has been proven that ostracism, incivility, harassment, and bullying have direct negative effects on job productivity” (p. 1). Anjum et al. (2018) added to the research by Hollis (2012) indicating there are costs associated with workplace bullying that hurt the financial performance of higher education institutions.

### **Summary**

People often assume that educational institutions are safe environments, and it is a common belief that an institution devoted to developing and educating people will provide a positive, nurturing atmosphere (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). However, bullying in higher education appears to be a common occurrence and there are many negative consequences as a result of it. There have been several quantitative studies that measured the frequency and type of workplace bullying, identifying who the perpetrators are, and measuring the impact that the problem has on employee productivity and retention (DelliFraine et al., 2014; Hollis, 2012; Keashly & Neuman, 2008; Taylor, 2012; Williams & Ruiz, 2012). Many of the studies indicate that reporting the problems to the human resources department does not provide satisfaction for the target, and in some cases, it has made the victim’s situation worse (Cowan & Fox, 2014; Namie, 2014.) There does not

appear to be a study investigating why this behavior is common in higher education institutions.

There has been qualitative research that provides insights on the impact and lived experiences of the bullying victims (Dentith et al., 2015; Sedivy-Benton et al., 2015). These studies provide detailed information on the emotional cost and substantial negative effects that bullying has on the victim and on organizational cultures. However, there is a lack of information available or research conducted on why this is happening, and what contributes to workplace bullying. While the problem is prevalent and costly, it is not clear that senior leadership is aware of or occupied with the objective of addressing the situation (Namie, 2014).

Workplace bullying is draining on both human and financial resources and the cost for each individual case of bullying can run into thousands of dollars, leading to overall annual losses in the millions (Hollis, 2012; Query & Hanley 2010). There have been suggestions that the decentralized, and hierarchical organizational structure contributes to the university bullying culture (Gunsalus, 2006; Salin, 2003; Twale & De Luca, 2008). There is research showing that leadership and organizational culture set the tone for what is acceptable in terms of interpersonal behavior (Einarsen et al., 2007). However, there is limited research on leadership's view of the problem. A commonly suggested theme is the need for better human resources support and policy in dealing with this complicated issue (Cowan & Fox, 2014). Given the absence of laws addressing the workplace bullying problem, the organization's leadership and human resources team should take a proactive approach in setting policy and procedure for dealing with bullying in higher education. Knowing how high the emotional and financial costs are,

there should be more emphasis on acknowledging this issue and developing solutions (Hollis, 2012; Lester, 2013).

The purpose of this research inquiry was to learn more about the perceptions, causes of, and potential solutions for workplace bullying behavior in higher education. The goal is to raise awareness of the workplace bullying problem and provide proposed solutions for creating environments that foster more positive work relationships.

Chapter 3 provides a summary of the available research and how it aligns to the study. It presents the research methodology including research context, participants, data collection, and analysis.

## **Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology**

### **General Perspective**

This chapter includes a review of the available research and summarizes the research design and methodology for this phenomenological study of the perceptions of faculty, administrators, and human resource personnel, on workplace bullying in higher education. The chapter explains the alignment between the research problem statement and questions, and the research design.

Workplace bullying has been shown to have devastating, long term, and traumatic effects on bullied victims (Einarsen et al., 2011). Bullying has a negative impact on the immediate target as well as bystanders who witness the behavior, affecting many in the organization (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). “Exposure to such treatment has been claimed to be a more crippling and devastating problem for employees than all other kinds of work-related stress put together” (Einarsen et al., 2011, p. 4). Despite the negative impacts of workplace bullying, it is common in the U.S. workplace, as demonstrated by the research of the Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI), which reports a projected 19% of workers have faced bullying on the job (Namie, 2017a). Additionally, a variety of studies have found workplace bullying to be even more prevalent in higher education, with studies indicating 32-62% of respondents reporting they have been exposed to workplace bullying behavior (Dellifraigne et al., 2014; Keashly & Neuman, 2008; Sheridan et al., 2016; Williams & Ruiz, 2012). Given the severity and negative outcomes it has on participants and the organization overall, it is imperative that higher

education institutions acknowledge and address workplace bullying behavior (Taylor, 2012). This qualitative, phenomenological research study was designed to gather insight for academic leadership on the perception of the causes, contributing processes, and possible safeguards to prevent workplace bullying. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to produce a rich, holistic description of the essence of the lived experiences of participants who have experienced workplace bullying, or who have been a leader for others who have been exposed to workplace bullying in a higher education setting. This study examined the problem of workplace bullying through three different perspectives, faculty, administrator, and human resource personnel, to identify their challenges in addressing this issue.

The research examined the participant's perception of workplace bullying and identified the meaning of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus of this study was to discern the nature of the participant's reality as seen from the differing views of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Perception is role based and this research provided new insight because it used the quotes and themes in the words of participants, providing evidence of these different perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Much of the available research focuses on measuring the frequency of bullying and describing the impact it has on the target (Hollis, 2012; Keashly & Neuman, 2010). There is little research addressing the organizational structure and processes that impact this behavior to understand why it persists (Keashly & Newman, 2010).

This study was guided by the following questions regarding workplace bullying in higher education.

1. How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel perceive workplace bullying in higher education?
2. How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel see their role as it pertains to workplace bullying in their institutions?
3. What solutions do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel think would be helpful to address the issue at their institution?
4. What are the perceived barriers or challenges to introducing or suggesting solutions to workplace bullying?

Creswell (2014) explains that qualitative research involves inductive data analysis that establishes patterns and themes, and it can help explore a social problem. Keashly and Neuman (2016) add that “Qualitative research allows an in-depth look into the dynamics of the experience and the intersectionality of a number of antecedents in the conditioning or shaping from the perspective of the target(s)” (p. 5). This study used a qualitative, phenomenological interview approach to explore different perspectives of workplace bullying in higher education. This design was appropriate since the interview process is consistent with the goal of answering why something is happening and providing insight for developing proposed practices or policies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative inquiry allowed for the collection and analysis of individual experiences to help test the theories by Schein (1984), Salin (2003), and Twale and De Luca (2008) on the interrelationship between higher education structure, processes, and workplace bullying. Utilizing this approach allowed the researcher to gather individual perspectives and insights needed to understand, “the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). This type of data collection and analysis is not available

through quantitative research and analysis. This study did not seek to establish correlations or measure frequency. This qualitative approach explored why the phenomenon exists and how it might be addressed.

### **Research Context**

The research interviews were conducted from March through May 2018. The interviews were with faculty, administrators, and human resource personnel working at private, not-for-profit colleges, mostly (11 out of 12) in the New York tristate area. The environments in different sectors of higher education institutions such as private, public, or for-profit can vary and impact the workplace culture. To gather data within the limited time available, the participants were associated with institutions from only one sector. Participants had to be current or past employees at an institution that fit under the Carnegie classification of small to medium, private, not-for-profit, 4-year institutions (Center for Postsecondary Research Indiana University School of Education, 2017). The Carnegie Classification is a system for identifying comparable groups of higher education institutions based on their enrollment, types and level of degree programs, for-profit or nonprofit status, private or public designation, focus on research, and student residency levels. For interview convenience, this researcher attempted to limit participants to those associated with schools in the New York tristate area which includes Long Island and Westchester, NY; Fairfield, CT; and New Jersey. The participants came from schools that are considered moderate research (R3) or master's level institutions (M1, 2, 3). This excludes the most prestigious schools considered high (R2) and highest research (R1) activity. There are over 100 schools that fall within these classifications in the stated geographic area. A preliminary list of 10 schools that fit these criteria was identified (see

Appendix A), however, no names or identifiable descriptors were used in the presentation of the research findings. Through personal contact the researcher compiled a list of people who worked in these schools.

This research aimed to gain perspective from three different groups of employees and included interviews with at least three people from each category. Creswell (2014) recommends that phenomenological studies can be based on three to 10 interviews. The interviews continued until the themes gathered from the narrative reached saturation.

### **Research Participants**

The research was conducted with faculty, administrators, and human resource personnel working at private, not-for-profit colleges, mostly in the New York tristate area (see Appendix A). The participants were purposely selected based on their experience with the phenomenon being studied. The sample did not include any direct coworkers or subordinates from the researcher's institution. It was not a convenience sample because the participants volunteered based on their meeting the stated criteria for participation in the study (Bryman, 2012). The researcher sent an email to her personal and professional network explaining the study, and invited people to volunteer for the interviews if they met the criteria of being current or former higher education employees who worked in one of the identified roles, and who had experienced workplace bullying, or had been in a leadership role exposed to others who had been involved with workplace bullying (see Appendix B). The invitation to participate was sent by email to the researcher's network and posted to select groups on social media including Facebook and LinkedIn (see Appendix C). The goal was to interview three to four people working in each type of position – faculty, administrator, and human resource personnel to compare the different

perspectives. The researcher planned to expand this sample until saturation was reached. When additional participants were needed, a snowball sampling method was employed. Snowballing is utilized when the researcher asks interviewees to propose other qualified participants with similar characteristics or the required experience (Bryman, 2012).

Participants were asked if they had knowledge in the subject matter, met the stated criteria and, would volunteer to discuss the topic. Creswell and Poth (2018) indicate that participants in phenomenological research should have experienced the phenomenon. Those agreeing to participate were asked to set a mutually convenient time to meet. Once participants were confirmed, the researcher sent an email with a confirmation letter (see Appendix D) and the consent form (see Appendix E). Follow-up emails and personal phone calls were used since there were not enough initial volunteers. One-to-one interviews were conducted in person or via telephone. The in-person interviews were at locations suitable to participants such as in their office, conference room, or private library room. The interview locations provided adequate privacy with limited chance for interruption. The participants agreed to volunteer their time and understood that they were not being compensated for the interview.

Initially, participants had to meet the following criteria; qualified participants must:

1. Have experience working in higher education.
2. Hold or have held the position of faculty, administrator, or human resource manager at a private, not-for-profit college in the New York metro area.
3. Have personal experience with workplace bullying.

After repeated requests for participation through the researcher's network and even with snowballing referrals, it was difficult for the researcher to secure a third human resource professional in the local, New York area. A participant who met the criteria, other than being local, volunteered and the interview was conducted via telephone.

### **Instruments Used in Data Collection**

The researcher was the primary source of data collection. The participants completed a brief demographic questionnaire to collect background data (see Appendix F). In addition, the interviews employed a semi-structured list of questions with an open-ended question design. This design, "allows the researcher to keep an open mind about the contours of what he or she needs to know about" (Bryman, 2012, p. 12). The semi-structured interview allowed the interviewer to ask a predetermined set of questions and follow up with new questions, based on the respondent's answers. The interview questions were designed to support the overall research questions, noted above, regarding workplace bullying in higher education. The pre-designed interview questions allowed for a consistent interview experience but also provided an opportunity for individual follow up (see Appendix G).

The interview questions were developed by the researcher and reviewed by individuals having requisite knowledge of research methodologies and the dissertation process. These individuals included the researcher's dissertation committee, executive mentor, and professors in the behavioral science field. The interview questions were field tested prior to the interview process. The questions were revised or eliminated based on the feedback. By testing the interview questions, the researcher ensured that they would garner data that was appropriate for the research. The study participants were given the

confidentiality and release forms for review and signature prior to starting the interview process. The participants were informed of the purpose of the interview, that their participation was voluntary, and that they could halt the interview at any time. The recording procedures, along with steps to protect confidentiality, such as not using personal or school names, or other identifying descriptors, were explained.

The researcher used two reliability and validity strategies to check for the accuracy of the findings. Creswell (2014) recommends use of multiple approaches including peer debriefing, where a person not involved in the study asks questions about the research to ensure that the findings make sense to people other than the researcher. The researcher used spot checks to compare the transcriptions to the recordings to ensure reliability of transcription. The researcher also had two social science researchers review transcript samples to develop coding. The reviewers completed their own coding and then compared their results to that of the researcher. The reviewers' coding and the researcher's coding were found to be compatible and to yield similar in vivo codes. In vivo coding is the process of using the participant language to develop codes rather than using predetermined phrases (Saldaña, 2016). Additionally, the researcher used peer debriefing by reviewing the findings and answering questions from people not involved in the study. For participant protection, the researcher worked to ensure that data and information were kept confidential and not traceable to any individual participant by using alternative person and school names and by limiting use of identifying descriptors.

Interviews were conducted in person or through telephone, as necessary, and were recorded using digital audio recording equipment. All data collection, management, and storage procedures were developed and followed to comply with the St. John Fisher

College approved research procedures. The recordings were uploaded to a secure website for transcription. A backup copy was uploaded to a password protected folder on the researcher's computer and hard drive. The transcriptions were returned and kept in secured password protected files on the researcher's computer. Hard copies of transcriptions, as well as any devices storing the digital recordings, will be kept in a locked file cabinet for a duration of 3 years, after which time they will be destroyed.

### **Procedures for Data Analysis**

The demographic questionnaire was used to gather background data on the participants. It collected information on the participants role, gender, years of experience, and number of different institutions at which they worked in higher education. The demographics were used to describe the participants' backgrounds without any personal or individual identifiers.

The rest of the interview data was collected by digital recording and then transcribed by a professional service. The data was returned in the form of text documents. Those documents were reviewed line-by-line to develop an overall understanding of the participants' experiences with workplace bullying (Creswell, 2014). The researcher manually coded the text identifying recurring words, phrases, and patterns that were categorized into themes. The transcripts were copied into Microsoft Excel for ease of counting the frequency of certain repeated or similar words and phrases. Coding is the process of separating data into smaller parts that can be labeled and grouped together to form themes (Bryman, 2012). Bryman asserts that coding helps with the process of data reduction by enabling the researcher to better understand, analyze, and make sense of large quantities of data. Coding allows the researcher to summarize the

salient points extracted and developed through the interview process (Saldaña, 2016). The coding process enabled the researcher to develop themes and analyze data. The coding process allows the researcher to capture the essence of the interview data or language (Saldaña, 2016). The coding was peer reviewed to develop consistent interpretation. The trustworthiness was tested by peer review to verify consistency of coding procedures and labels. After the data was segmented into themes it was compiled into narratives to provide an overview of the participants' stated experiences. The findings provide the unique perspectives of the participants' experiences. The themes are presented and compared using text, visual word maps, and tables or charts.

### **Summary of Methodology**

The researcher conducted a qualitative, phenomenological study to understand the lived experiences of workplace bullying as perceived by faculty, administrators, and human resource personnel. Once the proposal and the St. John Fisher College Internal Review Board (IRB) application was approved, the researcher contacted potential participants. When the participants were confirmed, the researcher scheduled the interviews. The participants were asked to set aside up to an hour for the interview. The researcher confirmed the interview in writing and sent a consent form for review prior to the interview. For in-person interviews the researcher collected the consent forms at that time. For phone interviews, the consent form was received prior to the call. At the interview meeting, but before the session began, the participants were asked to review and sign a consent form. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and a backup device was on hand. Once the interview was completed, the recording was

uploaded to a transcription service for development of a text copy. Transcription and coding began as soon as the first interview was completed.

This chapter introduced the methodology used to examine the phenomenon of workplace bullying in higher education through the perspective lens of faculty, administrators, and human resource personnel. The goal for this study was to add value to the knowledge base and provide insight as to factors that may contribute to workplace bullying in higher education.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

As the findings of Hollis (2012) and Keashly and Neuman (2010) demonstrated, when workplace bullying is allowed to continue, it can lead to negative consequences for bullied employees and their organizations. This study examined the topic of workplace bullying in higher education by revealing the participants' experiences and their perceptions of this behavior. Organization culture theory, presented by Schein (1984), which includes analysis of organizational structure, policies, and leadership, was used to guide this study. Much of the prior research on workplace bullying in higher education was designed to measure the frequency of occurrence or investigate the impact that bullying had on the targets (Hollis, 2012; Keashly & Neuman 2010). There was little research investigating the organizational structure and processes that impact and foment this behavior to understand why and how it was happening (Keashly & Neuman, 2010).

The purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of why workplace bullying exists in higher education. This study used a phenomenological qualitative design to gather data. The researcher interviewed 12 participants; five faculty, four administrators, and three human resources personnel, who had considerable experience in a variety of higher education institutions. The participants all worked at private, nonprofit, small to medium size colleges. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and reviewed to develop narratives that described the experiences. The data was compiled and categorized to demonstrate how it pertained to the research questions and related to organizational culture theory. The participants' different perspectives

provided insight on the effects of organizational culture on workplace bullying in higher education. This chapter begins with an overview of the research questions and then provides the data analysis and major themes that were identified by the participants.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel perceive workplace bullying in higher education?
2. How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel see their role as it pertains to workplace bullying in their institutions?
3. What solutions do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel think would be helpful to address the issue at their institution?
4. What are the perceived barriers or challenges to introducing or suggesting solutions to workplace bullying?

The 12 participants were employed in one of the three employee roles noted.

There were nine female and three male participants. Half of the participants had worked in higher education for over 10 years and nine had experience at two or more institutions.

The faculty participants included both tenure-track and tenured professors. The administrators ranged from program director – a middle management level, to associate provost and dean, which represented more senior leadership positions. The HR participants included one manager and two director level personnel.

*Faculty 1* – Faculty 1 was a non-tenure-track female professor, age 35-50, who had worked in higher education for less than 10 years. She had only been employed by one higher education institution.

*Faculty 2* – Faculty 2 was a tenure-track male professor, age 51-65, who had worked in higher education for 11-20 years. He had experience at more than four higher education institutions.

*Faculty 3* – Faculty 3 was a tenured female professor, age 51-65, who had worked in higher education for less than 10 years. She had been employed by two higher education institutions.

*Faculty 4* – Faculty 4 was a tenured female professor, age 51-65, who had worked in higher education for 11-20 years. She had experience at two higher education institutions and was one of two Black participants interviewed.

*Faculty 5* – Faculty 5 was a tenured female professor who stated she had leadership aspirations. She was age 35-50, had worked in higher education for 11-20 years at three different institutions. She had served as the department chair at a prior institution.

*Administrator 1* – Administrator 1 was a female dean and tenured professor. She was between 51-65 and had worked in higher education for 1-10 years. She had experience at three different higher education institutions and was one of two Black participants interviewed.

*Administrator 2* – Administrator 2 was a female program director and adjunct professor, age 51-65. She had worked in higher education for 11-20 years at two different institutions.

*Administrator 3* – Administrator 3 was a female associate provost, age 35-50. She had worked in higher education for 11-20 years at more than four institutions.

*Administrator 4* – Administrator 4 was a male executive director and visiting professor, age 51-65. He had worked in higher education for less than 10 years at two different institutions.

*HR 1* – HR 1 was a female HR manager, age 35-50. She had worked in higher education for less than 10 years and had been employed by one institution.

*HR 2* – HR 2 was a male director and vice president, age 66+. He had worked in higher education for over 31 years and had experience at four different institutions.

*HR 3* – HR 3 was a male director, age 51-65. He had worked in higher education for less than 10 years at one institution.

The participant demographic details are presented in Table 4.1. Potential participants were screened to find employees from similar institutions. The participants were all currently or previously employed by small to medium size, private not-for-profit, 4-year colleges in suburban or urban settings, as indicated in Table 4.2. The schools offered liberal arts degrees along with business or professional education. The student population ranged from 1,614 to 11,809. The size of the full-time faculty ranged from 43 to 701. Descriptions of the higher education institutions where the participants were currently or previously employed are indicated.

Table 4.1

*Demographic Data for All Participants*

Role	Title	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Years in higher ed	# of institutions worked
Admin 1	Dean/Tenured Professor	F	51-65	Black	1-10	3
Admin 2	Program Director	F	51-65	Caucasian	11-20	2
Admin 3	Associate Provost	F	35-50	Caucasian	11-20	4+
Admin 4	Executive Director/Visiting Professor	M	51-65	Caucasian	1-10	2
Faculty 1	Professor, Non-tenure-track	F	35-50	Caucasian	1-10	1
Faculty 2	Professor, Tenure-track	M	51-65	Caucasian	11-20	4+
Faculty 3	Professor, Tenured	F	51-65	Caucasian	1-10	2
Faculty 4	Professor, Tenured	F	51-65	Black	11-20	2
Faculty 5	Professor, Tenured	F	35-50	Caucasian	11-20	3
HR 1	HR Manager	F	35-50	Caucasian	1-10	1
HR 2	HR Director/VP	M	66+	Caucasian	31+	4+
HR 3	HR Director	M	51-65	Caucasian	1-10	1

*College 1* – College 1 was a small, highly residential school in a suburban location. There were 109 full-time faculty, of those 58 were tenured. Five of the participants were either current or former employees of this college: one faculty and two

administrators were former employees, and two HR personnel were current employees at the time of the interviews.

*College 2* – College 2 was a small, highly residential school in a suburban location. There were 171 full-time faculty and 105 were tenured. One tenure-track faculty worked at this school.

*College 3* – College 3 was a medium, primarily nonresidential school in a suburban location. There were 198 full-time faculty and 53 were tenured. One administrator worked at this school.

*College 4* – College 4 was a medium, primarily nonresidential school in a suburban setting. It had 186 full-time faculty and 121 were tenured. Two participants worked at this school: one administrator and one faculty.

*College 5* – College 5 was a medium, highly residential school in a suburban setting. It had 263 full-time faculty and 95 were tenured. One faculty worked at this school.

*College 6* – College 6 was a medium, highly residential school in a suburban setting. It had 220 full-time faculty and 126 were tenured. One faculty worked at this school.

*College 7* – College 7 was a small, primarily nonresidential school in an urban setting. It had 43 full-time faculty and 21 were tenured. One faculty worked at this school.

*College 8* – College 8 was medium, primarily residential school in an urban setting. It had 701 full-time faculty and 352 were tenured. One HR participant worked at this school.

Table 4.2

*College Setting, Student and Faculty Size*

School	Student Population	Setting	Faculty (Full-time)	Faculty Tenured	Faculty Tenure-track
College 1	2,865	Suburban	109	58	35
College 2	3,909	Suburban	171	105	47
College 3	11,272	Suburban	198	53	33
College 4	4,497	Suburban	186	121	65
College 5	7,781	Suburban	263	95	54
College 6	3,970	Suburban	220	126	68
College 7	1,614	Urban	43	21	11
College 8	11,809	Urban	701	352	110

*Note.* Adapted from Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education Center for Postsecondary Research. Copyright 2015 by Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.

The researcher's interest in the subject of workplace bullying emerged from her role as an administrator and adjunct professor in higher education. As an administrator in the academic setting, the researcher had firsthand knowledge of the subject. The researcher was cognizant of the potential for bias in reporting these findings and made efforts to limit that risk. The researcher employed bracketing, a process that helps investigators put aside their experience and evaluate the interviews and data with a fresh perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher reviewed the transcripts and data repeatedly and made sure to use the participants' words and phrases to support all

statements. The codes developed were based on the participants' words and were reviewed by two peers experienced in the social science research process to assess the reliability of the evaluation.

The researcher sent an invitation to participate in the study through e-mail to her personal and professional network (see Appendix B). The researcher also posted the invitation on social media in a Facebook group (see Appendix C). The researcher's contacts were encouraged to share the invitation with others. There were 11 initial respondents spread throughout the three higher education employee groups. However, there were only two HR volunteers. The researcher continued to seek HR participants by reminding her network of the research and resending the request to participate. In the end, the study included one HR participant from out of the New York metro area. All other participants were employed at colleges within the New York metro area. The final HR participant met all the criteria of having experienced workplace bullying and working in a small to medium, private not-for-profit higher education institution. Since he was not located in the New York metro area, that interview was conducted via telephone.

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

For the first review of the transcripts, an *in vivo* coding process was used where the initial codes developed came from the language of the participants as opposed to researcher-generated words and phrases (Saldaña, 2016). The *in vivo* coding further allowed the researcher to minimize the introduction of bias and utilize the bracketing process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The transcripts were then reviewed multiple times with an emphasis on focused coding, looking for the frequently used initial codes that could be developed into salient categories in the data (Saldaña, 2018). As the number of interviews

progressed, participants began to reveal repeated terms, thus, thematic patterns began to emerge. The codes were grouped into categories that encompassed similar words, phrases, and ideas. The categories and phrases were counted and the frequency of each is presented in Table 4.3.

The analysis and coding of 308 statements provided the development of 24 themes. The frequency of themes is composed of the following: 61 statements were assigned to leadership, 50 statements were assigned to emotional abuse, 48 statements were assigned to verbal abuse, 47 statements were assigned to power, 40 statements were assigned to tenure, 37 statements were assigned to policy, and 25 statements were assigned to structure.

Several themes emerged from the data. The themes were associated with different aspects of higher education organizational culture including the tenure process, the hierarchical structure, power, and leadership behavior. All of these elements of organizational culture have an impact on employee behavior and workplace bullying. These themes and descriptions are displayed in Table 4. 4.

Table 4.3

*Categories and Themes (Frequency)*

Category	Theme (Frequency)
Leadership (61)	Leadership needs training (22) Leader knew/condoned behavior (16) Leader sets tone (15) Leader's action (8)
Emotional abuse (50)	Demearing/Belittle (16) Withholding information/lying (13) Public display of rudeness (12) Humiliate/intimidate (9)
Verbal abuse (48)	Disrespectful/uncivil speech (12) Yelling/screaming (10) Verbally abusive (9) Micro aggression (7)
Power (47)	Leader/supervisor was bully (25) Fear of retaliation from tenure committee (16) Fear of retaliation from supervisor (6)
Tenure (40)	Tension between tenured and non-tenured professors (16) Tenured professor behavior (13) Tenure criteria is subjective/political (11)
Policy (37)	HR not helpful (15) There is no law/legislation (12) There are no consequences (10)
Structure (25)	No collaboration (10) Silos (9) HR does not deal with faculty (6)

Table 4.4

*Themes and Descriptions*

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Themes	Descriptions
Verbal and emotional abuse	The participants experienced workplace bullying in the form of both verbal and emotional abuse.
Leadership and power	The ability to address workplace bullying is driven by the employee's role, and the perpetrator's power, in the organization.
Policy	Suggested solutions include training in leadership skills, and creating policy addressing workplace bullying behavior.
Tenure and structure	Barriers or challenges include elements of the organizational culture such as the tenure process and the hierarchical higher education structure.

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The interviews provided revelations into the variety of experiences that participants encountered with workplace bullying. This section provides the results of the interviews as they pertain to the research questions. Individual participant quotes are used to support the stated themes and findings.

**Research question 1.** Research question 1 asked: How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel perceive workplace bullying in higher education? The participants experienced workplace bullying in the form of both verbal and emotional abuse. The

abuse was conducted in public settings and in more subtle ways through one-to-one conversation or by exclusionary tactics and withholding of information.

**Verbal abuse.** Faculty, administrators, and HR personnel described workplace bullying behaviors with similar words and phrases. They described situations where people raised their voice, yelled, engaged in verbal abuse and spoke in a rude manner to other employees. Administrator 1 described this situation, “I can remember being in a meeting, the three of us, the vice-president of [title deleted], the dean, my direct supervisor, and myself, the chair, and the vice-president of [title deleted] was literally screaming at him in my presence.” Workplace bullying behavior included demeaning or insulting language or public display of rudeness. HR 2 described it as “calling down someone in a public meeting.”

Faculty 1 shared this experience, “you have the people who, when they don't understand something, they just start yelling at their subordinates.” Administrator 2 indicated her boss demonstrated “outright anger, yelling, and throwing things.” Administrator 2 told of ongoing verbal abuse that was directed at her and a coworker:

So, another boss was outright bullying. She was divisive, she pitted myself and my clerk against each other by being friends with me and not her one day. And talking behind our backs to each other. And being friends with her and not me another day. And it's funny, but it isn't. But the joke was that my staff person and I were very close. And we knew her number, so it didn't hurt us.

While Administrator 2 stated that this behavior “didn't hurt us” the cumulative effect of the ongoing bullying behavior did seem to impact her and her

coworker, as evidenced by the fact that both eventually left the organization and moved to other institutions.

*Emotional abuse.* Workplace bullying was mentioned as it related to the way people, specifically professors seeking tenure, were treated by other faculty and administrators. For example, Faculty 3 and Administrator 1, both of whom were tenured, said the tenure process had elements of hazing, and an initiation process involving harassment. Faculty 3 used the word hazing to describe the process when she explained how the tenure process felt to her, “It's like college hazing. And it's not that dramatic. We don't have to drink gallons of liquor, and we don't have to go out and shoot somebody, but you have to do everything they tell you.” Administrator 1 was an associate dean and in the tenure review process at the time of the following event. The dean was directing Administrator 1 to teach six credits, two classes, when all the other associate deans were teaching three credits or one class which was the written department policy.

Administrator 1 shared, I went to my dean and I had been telling her all along I'm really struggling to manage everything. She basically said, “You're wrong. You're supposed to be teaching six credits. All associate deans teach six credits and you're going to teach six credits.” So I said, “Okay, will you look into this at least? Here it is in black and white it says three credits.” She said, “No I don't have to look into it. I know you're supposed to teach six credits. When I was an associate dean I taught six credits and you're going to teach six credits.” So I went and I asked my peers, other associate deans, “What are you teaching?” Everybody said, “Oh we're teaching three credits.” So, I circled back with my dean and I said, Listen, I've spoken to all the other associate deans and everybody's

teaching three credits but me. I'm the only one teaching six. She said, "I don't know what you're talking about. You've got to teach six credits. That's what it is."

Another example of emotional abuse was described as public humiliation. Administrator 2 shared stories of feeling demeaned and diminished in meetings. She provided this example:

At new faculty orientations when all the administrators were around, she would go through her favorites. And she said, "Oh, this is so and so, and he does, and she does this and this. And they're adept at this. And they succeed at this." Then I'm waiting for my introduction, and she gets to me and says, "Oh, that's so and so, and she sits outside my office."

Faculty 4 shared that she felt devalued when other faculty "acted as if my research was not important." She shared how she felt in a meeting after presenting her recent research,

I remember standing in front of the faculty, people who you talk to at the coffee line. I looked out into the room and I realized they are not interested in this, I am not part of inner circle. That was very clear to me that day. It was the most painful thing. I had seen other people do much less and people went nuts.

(Faculty 4)

Three participants, Faculty 3, Administrator 3, and HR 3 also mentioned their superiors lying and withholding information. Faculty 3 experienced a supervisor lying "about things that I didn't know at the time and only found out later." Administrator 3 needed to gather information from colleagues for institutional reporting purposes. She explained, "I would ask him multiple times and he would simply either ignore my emails

or say that it was not ready to be shared.” And then later in staff meetings “He lied about having shared the information, stating that he had shared it in our group meetings.”

*Unanticipated findings.* One unanticipated finding was a noticeable distinction in the way the different employee groups described workplace bullying behavior. There was a difference in the words they used to express the behavior and emotions associated with workplace bullying experiences. The faculty and administrators had personally experienced workplace bullying because it had happened to them. Administrator 2 described her emotions after a meeting where she felt publicly demeaned,

I'm not a crier at work, but I started to cry. And the most obnoxious administrator in the organization, this is how bad it was, he stayed and helped me pack up the awards. That's when I knew, he realized [how badly I was treated].

In contrast, the HR participants were only involved as bystanders or supporters of other employees. HR participants had not personally experienced workplace bullying directed at them. HR 1 described behavior as “We've definitely had a couple cross the line and been disrespectful to the other person.” The HR group had not experienced the feelings described by the other two groups. Faculty 1 shared her perspective when speaking about witnessing the workplace bullying of her coworker. She explained that her coworker was “ostracized from the beginning and the head of this department who had, I believe, an associate vice president role, she went out of her way to ostracize him, humiliate him in a variety of ways, undermining everything.” The employee role impacted the lens of their experience and seemed to affect how the participants described the situations.

Another difference in the perception of workplace bullying arose when participants discussed the organizational environment in terms of the amount or prevalence of workplace bullying. Five of the 12 interview participants, two administrators, one tenured faculty, and two HR personnel, were either current or former employees of the same college. Three of the five who had worked at this same college, (Administrators 2 and 3, and Faculty 5, a tenured professor), had left this particular college and were working at other institutions at the time of their interviews. The other two participants from this organization, both in HR, were still at the college. Faculty 5 said the college had “a culture of bullying.” Administrator 2 said, “everyone on campus knew we were being abused . . . but yet nothing was done.” The administrators and faculty suggested that the problem stemmed from the leadership and described numerous situations where bullying was conducted in public, in front of many others. However, the HR personnel from this college seemed to indicate that workplace bullying was not a problem at their school. HR 1 said, “we don’t have a ton of it here.” HR 2 said, “it’s not pervasive.”

**Research question 2.** Research question 2 asked: How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel see their role as it pertains to workplace bullying in their institutions? The ability to address workplace bullying is driven by the employee’s role, and the perpetrators real, or perceived, power in the organization. The participants who were bullied seemed fearful about speaking up because the bully perpetrator often had more power than the person being bullied.

The bully was often a direct supervisor or someone on the tenure committee who held power over the person feeling bullied. Faculty 5 shared that she was encouraged to speak up about the workplace bullying she experienced:

So, the provost wanted me to grieve it and she felt very strongly that I had enough evidence through my evaluations, and I wouldn't because I didn't want further bullying. I felt like she was in such a position of power and I did not want it to be held against me if I was going to continue to work for her. I was upset, but again this is my boss, so I was never going to push against it or talk about it further with her, I didn't feel comfortable.

HR 2 explained the power difference and the impact it had when he said,

Junior faculty are less likely to speak up when they perceive condescending or bullying behavior by a senior faculty member, either in private or in a public setting for fear of reprisal, fear of not getting tenure. And that's where it's really egregious. That's kind of the quid pro quo thing there when there's a power relationship.

The tenure-track faculty seemed fearful of reporting problems or raising concerns. In some cases, the reported bully was on the tenure granting committee, so it was uncomfortable for the target to raise the issue or speak up about the behavior. Faculty 5, currently a tenured professor, explained it this way “the tricky thing in academia and the tricky position I was in is that I’m going through a tenure process and I need this supervisor who’s a bully to support my tenure application.” Once tenure is granted the faculty member has more power and may feel more secure. The tenured faculty can choose to ignore the bullying behavior or be less involved in activities without fearing it

will hurt their chances for job security. Faculty 4 who observed “eye rolling when people spoke” at meetings said, “I hardly talk in meetings anymore.”

Administrator 3 was bullied, and it affected her ability to complete her work. She explained how she felt in a meeting when asked about how her project was progressing. She said, “I could not respond honestly in a meeting where my supervisor was sitting right across the table from me.”

One difference between the faculty and administrators was that all four of the administrators spoke about bullying experiences in their prior institution, meaning they had all left the institution where the bullying occurred. Two of the four administrators experienced bullying again in their current institutions. However, four out of the five faculty spoke about bullying in their current institution. They were either trying to get tenure or were already tenured and stayed at the organization despite the negative behavior.

**Research question 3.** Research question 3 asked: What solutions do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel think would be helpful to address the issue at their institution? All the participants suggested that supervisory and leadership training could help clarify expected behavior and provide insight on management training that some academics may not have received. The participants also indicated that leadership sets the tone for the way other employees behave, so setting a good example is important. Lastly, the participants all suggested that creating and enforcing a policy with actionable consequences would help address workplace bullying.

***Supervisory and leadership training.*** The participants suggested that the methods used to promote employees to managers, or the lack of process preparing people to be

managers, may contribute to an environment ripe for workplace bullying. Administrator 1 supported this idea with this comment:

One thing that I think is unique about higher ed is that I have found it to be very common to have high level executives that have come up through any of these branches [faculty, admissions or student services] that have no business background, no business training, no managerial training, and they are now in a major managerial role. I think that it's a flaw of higher ed.

Then Administrator 1 added, "Corporations operate in a similar organizational structure . . . I think what's problematic about higher ed is the number of people in supervisory positions who don't have supervisory training. That's what I think is unique about higher ed."

Administrator 3 shared this view:

I think that is where higher ed is probably very different from corporations, where management and supervision is a thing as you go. It's not just about doing your job or knowing your discipline. That's a big part of being promoted. And people rotate into the position of department chair regardless of their supervisory, or managerial, or leadership skills. A lot of them are kind of just forced to do it because it's their turn in the rotation. So, there's an intentional lack of wanting to be a leader or be a good leader. Higher ed has a lot of those, which makes higher ed more problematic than corporate.

Employees promoted to leadership positions need to be trained to be effective managers. HR 1 mentioned that her college had provided training to new supervisors, but it is not an ongoing program:

We've done supervisor training in the past. We had developed a 5-part supervisor training [program], which we did a couple of years ago, but it hasn't been revisited. It's probably time again to start it because we have a whole new crop of supervisors. It's probably time again to start with that again.

Administrator 3 added,

I think they're beginning to recognize that [higher ed] supervisors are not really trained as supervisors. They are good at their jobs, and they get promoted. And especially in higher ed, faculty are definitely not trained as managers. They're not trained as teachers, they're not trained as managers, so they need to be, unless there is something structured for them to get those skills or they choose to go out and read books and do it on their own, they essentially learn as they go.

Administrator 1 stated, "I think private industry generally does a better job of equipping their supervisors."

**Leadership.** One participant, Administrator 2, left an organization where she indicated there was widespread bullying and went to a new organization that had a better climate and policy. She suggested that people spoke in a more professional manner. Administrator 1 also said the difference between a bullying environment and a collegial one was that people spoke in a "professional manner." The participants indicated that

workplace bullying behavior such as yelling or public displays of rudeness were not an acceptable method of communicating and leadership should step in to address the negative behavior.

Faculty 5 relayed a story about a positive change in leadership. She said that a dean who was exhibiting bullying behavior was demoted and the new dean did not tolerate that kind of behavior. Faculty 5 shared the new dean's response to "abrupt" behavior in a meeting. Faculty 5 indicated that the new dean set the tone: "We are colleagues, we treat each other with respect even when we disagree. I will not accept or tolerate anything but that and the same goes for everybody." Faculty 5 said "He just said it, set the tone, sat back, then we kept going." This supports the theme that leadership sets the tone for how the team behaves. If leaders address negative behaviors, and there are consequences, then employees will better understand what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

In contrast, when a leader allows the behavior to continue, then there is little an employee can do. Faculty 1 had an experience where the leader acknowledged that there were some difficult employees but did not do anything to address it. Faculty 1 said, "Even the president of the school, she heard my friend's complaints and she goes, 'Yeah, yeah, I know that these are very unprofessional people to work with,' and yet she did nothing to intervene."

**Policy.** All three of the participant groups thought that legislation and policy could help manage the problem because as Administrator 2 said "I think people really paid attention when [anti-sexual] harassment was made a law." She added, "and because it's legislation, it's a law, it's really then definitively spelled out." Legislation informs policy and helps create practice. HR 3 said a law would "give it [anti-workplace bullying

policy] teeth.” Faculty 4 added “I think legislation would be helpful. I'm a Black person, I believe in the legal system. We live in a society where we are not going to take care of ourselves without law.”

HR 1 suggested that educating employees on what constitutes workplace bullying could help reduce the behavior. HR 1 explained:

I guess maybe training just for staff in general about how to recognize it . . . Just as you had to explain to me the definition or the difference between harassment and bullying, people might not recognize it when it's happening and really know what it is or really know what to call it. Then what to do about it or what their options are.

Administrator 3 explained if there is policy then “it's a thing, and people talk about it, and it has clear cut guidelines that can be enforced.”

Along with a policy, to enforce the standards, there needs to be a reporting process. It was noted by Administrators 2 and 3 and Faculty 1, 2, and 5 that HR was not helpful in addressing workplace bullying. An ombudsman can be used to seek advice on difficult work issues. Administrator 3 reported her complaints to an ombudsman and said it was helpful even though it did not immediately solve the problem. Administrator 3 shared,

It was really, really critical and helpful to have an ombuds in place. At the institution where I spoke to the ombuds that was incredibly helpful because it was a place that was completely confidential, where you could go off the record and just get guidance on how best to proceed without having anyone know about it.

**Research question 4.** Research question 4 asked: What are the perceived barriers or challenges to introducing or suggesting solutions to workplace bullying? One barrier is that there are few if any policies addressing workplace bullying. Another barrier is the tenure process. Lastly, the structure of different schools and departments can create an environment that competes for funding and recognition and that can inhibit collaboration.

**Legislation.** Few higher education institutions have a policy against workplace bullying because it is not illegal. Administrator 1 noted, “You know what's funny is as I went through this process what I learned is, at least at this institution, our workplace bullying policy only protects you if you're a protected class.” When asked if her institution had a policy HR 1 replied:

I would say the only thing really specifically would be the code of conduct where we talk about treating people with respect and courtesy and all of that sort of thing. I don't think we currently have a workplace bullying policy specifically.

If there is a policy in place, then there should be consequences when the policy is not followed. Faculty 4 said “we are supposed to go to HR and report it, but there are no consequences that I am aware of.”

**Tenure.** The tenure process can create an environment that participants called political, subjective, and one that caused tremendous stress. There is fear of retaliation or risk to earning tenure that prevented or inhibited some people from wanting to raise the bullying issue. As Faculty 5 said, “there is power in that right, and there is a hierarchy that has been built.” Faculty 3 stated tenure “is a terrible process, it's horrible. It is the worst thing.”

Administrator 3, as part of a departmental program review, was advised to interview the tenured faculty separate from the non-tenured faculty. The reason given to her by the department chair of the program being reviewed was “it's well known in higher ed that when you are an untenured faculty, you essentially have to keep your mouth shut and do what you're told to do, or you're not going to get tenure.”

Faculty 1 said, “I think tenure, in its way, is its own version of bullying, tenured versus non-tenured faculty, or even tenured faculty versus administration.” Administrator 1, who was also a tenured faculty member said:

I think that [tenure] definitely influences it because tenure and promotion is a big deal, it's very political, and I think it creates an opportunity for bullying to occur. I think that maybe what creates the climate is that, I'm holding something over you. I can control you because I'm holding something over you. I think that's a position of power and people can use power in a positive way or in a negative way. I think that maybe some of what we're experiencing is because of that tenure structure.

Faculty 5 said, “So you felt insecure in your position at the university and you felt like you couldn't say no.” Faculty 3 added insight on the fear of risking her tenure award when she said “Why would you call attention to yourself? I wasn't tenured.” And then, “It would be perceived as negative and this is the person who was going to sign my tenure papers” (Faculty 3). Faculty 2 referred to tenured faculty as a “protected class.” Although the tenure process is an integral part of higher education, it is seen as a barrier to solving the workplace bullying problem.

*Higher education organizational structure.* The structure of higher education institutions seems to have some ingrained elements that create barriers and challenges to change. One element that creates a barrier to change is that different employee groups may have different oversight and policies governing behavior. For example, the HR department has limited authority over the tenured faculty, so while improved policy may help administrators, those in the faculty role are treated separately. The higher education hierarchical structure, with separate schools and departments, was also mentioned as a possible barrier to creating change. Administrator 3 mentioned, “There are a lot of silos in higher ed, and no collaboration, people only do what they need to do for their job.” HR 3 added,

I think in higher ed it's not a collaborative culture, it's because the [pause] often, universities are very, very siloed and everyone kind of does their own thing and this is not just [university name] but being involved in CUPA-HR [College and University Professional Association for Human Resources], we connect with universities all the time and the fact that universities are often so siloed, and they've been so decentralized, it's hard to rein everybody in.

Administrator 3 said the lack of collaboration is due to the fact that separate schools or departments may receive different financial support. She commented, “How money is allocated contributes to how people collaborate.”

### **Summary of Results**

This chapter presented a summary of the research findings. It described the experiences that the different employee groups had with workplace bullying. The findings indicated a similarity in behaviors reported and some common perceptions as to

why workplace bullying is so prevalent in higher education. However, the findings also indicate a difference in perceptions of behavior based on the employees' roles and experience. The faculty and administrators who had experienced workplace bullying described the situations with stronger language than the HR personnel who had been observers. The behaviors reported included verbal and emotional abuse. Participants were yelled at, felt put down in meetings, and made to feel less important and devalued. Most of the participants who were bullied felt they had little recourse because the bully had power over them. The power relationship had an impact on whether an employee was comfortable speaking up. The participants reported fear of retaliation if the bully was a supervisor or a risk to earning tenure when the bully was on the tenure committee.

The participants indicated that leadership sets the tone for an organization. The absence of informed or capable leadership can negatively impact an organization. There were many comments about the importance of leadership training because leadership actions impacted how other employees behave. While some leaders are either inherently capable or have received training, it appears that many in higher education do not receive training. Participants mentioned the need for training to educate employees on how to act more professionally, as is expected in a corporate setting, and how to recognize bullying behavior.

All participants thought that legislation and policy creation would help operationalize the definition of workplace bullying. Once there is a law in place then there is more incentive for an organization to create policy. The participants voiced the need for creating anti-workplace bullying policy and communicating to employees what constitutes bullying behavior. The behavior would have to be defined in the context of

how it is used. This means employees need to understand the difference between one person being rude on a bad day and the repeated and consistent hostile behavior that negatively affects the target's ability to work.

Chapter 5 provides a review of the implications of the findings. It compares the findings of this study to those of prior research. It discusses the limitations of this study and provides recommendations for future research. Chapter 5 offers conclusions and recommendations for addressing workplace bullying in higher education.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **Introduction**

This research identified and presented examples of workplace bullying in higher education through the lens of three different employee perspectives. Interviews with faculty, administrators, and human resources personnel revealed major themes related to the organizational structure and processes that enable workplace bullying in these types of organizations. The findings support and extend prior research in the relationship between workplace bullying and organizational culture theory (Salin, 2003; Twale & DeLuca, 2008). Chapter 5 presents a summary of the earlier research that led to this study and examines the implications of the findings. The chapter presents the limitations of the research, suggestions for future research, and recommendations for higher education organizations that aspire to address workplace bullying behavior.

Research over the last decade has confirmed the existence of workplace bullying in higher education. Research on individual higher education institutions by Keashly and Neuman (2008), Williams and Ruiz (2012), and Sheridan et al. (2016) found 32%, 39%, and 35% respectively, of employees reporting, that they had been bullied. Additional research by Hollis (2012) and DelliFraine et al. (2014) found workplace bullying across a variety of institutions with 62% and 64% of employees reporting that they had been bullied or had witnessed bullying behavior. The behaviors associated with workplace bullying include yelling, demeaning behavior, and verbal and emotional abuse (Dentith et al., 2015; Hollis, 2012). Sedivy-Benton et al. (2015) explained that workplace bullying

can have devastating effects on a person's professional and career development, can negatively impact their work performance, and can lead to a decline in personal well-being. Kivimäki et al. (2003) reported a significant relationship between workplace bullying and depression. Workplace bullying affects the individual and the organization as it can often lead to dissatisfaction with the organization and ultimately job loss (Hollis, 2012; Williams & Ruiz, 2012).

Salin (2003) and Twale and DeLuca (2008) theorized that the structure and processes in higher education which create organizational culture enable an environment that is ripe for workplace bullying. A study by Taylor (2012) on the relationship of tenure status and workplace bullying supported Salin's (2003) theory. The power that comes with tenure status, as well as other senior academic and administrative roles, seems to influence employee behavior. Taylor also found that tenured faculty who felt bullied tend to remain at their institution. Research from both Schein (2010) and Hollis (2012) suggested that leadership, another important element of organizational culture, sets the tone for other employees in terms of workplace behavior.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to increase the understanding of the impact that organizational culture has on workplace bullying in higher education. Organizational culture is a combination of an institution's processes and policies, accepted communication and behavior, and leadership style. This research sought to understand the impact of these cultural elements on employee behavior through the lens of different employee roles. The rich and detailed descriptions from the participants' experiences provide information to help develop programs and policy to address workplace bullying behavior in higher education. This study's findings support and add

to prior research and theory as it pertains to the role of organizational culture in higher education and the impact it has on employee behavior. This research provides an increased understanding of workplace bullying behavior and its impact on the target employees. The results provide insight for developing practical solutions along with ideas for long-term policy changes.

The interviews were conducted with employees from three different roles to learn more about their lived experiences, their perceptions of workplace bullying behavior and their suggestions for how it can be addressed. The semi-structured interviews explored the following research questions:

1. How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel perceive workplace bullying in higher education?
2. How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel see their role as it pertains to workplace bullying in their institutions?
3. What solutions do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel think would be helpful to address the issue at their institution?
4. What are the perceived barriers or challenges to introducing or suggesting solutions to workplace bullying?

### **Implications of Findings**

This research supports the existing studies on reported workplace bullying behavior and expands on the topic by providing added insight as to how the behaviors are manifested. Workplace bullying is exhibited by using both verbal and emotional abuse (Dentith et al., 2015; Einarsen, 1999). This research also supports organizational culture

theory that suggests a relationship between institutional structure and processes, and the presence of workplace bullying (Salin, 2003; Twale & DeLuca, 2008).

The participants mentioned the higher education tenure structure, the lack of collaboration or silos due the decentralized hierarchy, and the lack of perceived consequences, as reasons that bullying behavior could continue. The participants also shared insight on how the employee's role in the organization affected their perception of the problem. The findings from this research may have implications for development of policy and practice to address this negative behavior.

The participants explained that workplace bullying was experienced as both verbal and emotional abuse. Participants reported instances of supervisors yelling and slamming doors when they were angry. There were examples of being insulted and belittled in meetings. The participants shared stories of having information withheld or being lied to by superiors. The bullying behavior left the participants feeling intimidated and demeaned. These participant descriptions are consistent with the research findings from Nielsen and Einarsen (2012) and Dentith et al. (2015) on the impact of workplace bullying. Nielsen and Einarsen (2012) indicated that consistent exposure to verbal and emotional abuse qualifies as workplace bullying and can lead to negative morale and poor individual and organizational health.

**Power.** Workplace bullying occurs when one person exerts power over another, that power being granted to employees in certain positions (Cowan, 2012; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). A person's role in the organization and their perceived level of power had an impact on their desire and ability to address the workplace bullying situation. Salin (2003) referred to power disparity with her theory that power imbalance

and low risk of punishment enable workplace bullying in higher education. Many targets of workplace bullying are afraid to speak up because the perpetrator is often a supervisor or someone who wields power, either real or imagined, over the target (Keashly & Neuman, 2016).

This research supports earlier studies which found that employees bullied by a supervisor or someone on a tenure committee often felt they had no recourse (Dentith et al., 2015; Taylor, 2013). This study supports the idea that the non-tenured professor is reluctant to report or criticize anyone in a position of power for fear of reprisal or fear of risking their tenure award (Taylor, 2013). Conversely, employees in a more senior position or who already had tenure are less vulnerable to a bully's power. Tenured professors may not want to get involved in bullying complaints because there is no incentive to address it. Tenured professors have a safe position and may not address poor behavior or other problems if they can handle it by ignoring or avoiding the situation. As Faculty 4, a tenured professor said, "I hardly talk in meetings anymore." If organizations were role or power neutral, meaning all employees were on equal levels and no one had more power than anyone else, there would be much less workplace bullying since bullied targets would be comfortable speaking up for themselves.

**Leadership.** This research supports the organization culture theory that suggests leadership sets the tone for the organizational behavior (Schein, 2010). These findings indicate that leaders often acted as the bully or knew of the behavior and allowed it to continue. Georgakopoulos et al. (2011) and Hollis (2012) suggested that leadership behavior affects the culture of the entire organization and is one of the main reasons that workplace bullying exists in institutions. When senior leaders exhibit bullying behavior

or tolerate such behavior from others it can have a negative influence throughout the organization. This research noted how ineffective leaders were tolerant of the behavior while proactive leaders put an end to it by publicly addressing the behavior and declaring it as unacceptable.

This research also supported the findings of Barsky (2002) and Gunsalus (2006) who suggested that many academicians are promoted into leadership without formal management or leadership training. Administrator 3 noted that some faculty may be forced to rotate into the role of department chair because it is their turn regardless of whether they have managerial or leadership aspirations or training. HR 3 indicated, “it's very difficult for department chairs to confront, and even deans, because they haven't been trained in management. Many times, they don't even want to be in management.”

**Cost.** The participant's stories supported the findings of Hollis (2012) that indicated workplace bullying can lead to low employee retention and high job turnover. In this study, all four of the administrators interviewed, as well two of the five faculty left their jobs and moved to different organizations where they found the behavior to be more professional. Employee turnover can be costly to an organization, both in terms of employee morale and the financial expense of replacement and training (Hollis, 2012). Additionally, while employees are searching for new opportunities they are likely to be less productive in their current job (Hollis, 2012).

This research supports the premise that workplace bullying is harmful to both individuals and organizations. Research by Hollis (2012) and Anjum et al. (2018) provide empirical research on the negative human and financial cost of workplace bullying. This

research, while not quantitative, supports these findings by revealing that half of the participants left organizations where they felt bullied.

Cost cutting measures are commonly discussed in business organizations and it is no different in higher education. In recent years many higher education institutions have had to tighten budgets and lower expenses (Taylor, 2012). The mounting evidence of workplace bullying in the field of higher education indicates that these institutions should look closely at this issue and work to prevent it from reducing their profitability. As Hollis (2012) noted, workplace bullying costs for a medium-sized private university can run into millions of dollars per year. This research indicates that colleges and universities that have a bullying problem should attempt to reduce this negative behavior since it is a drain on their resources.

**Policy.** Organizational culture is impacted by the internal policies and accepted behavior of an organization (Schein, 1984). In support of recommendations by Harber et al. (2013) and DelliFraine et al. (2014) this researcher's findings also suggest there is a need to create policies that address workplace bullying behavior. If there is no policy that defines acceptable behavior, then it can be difficult to eliminate problem behavior when it is presented. There is a need to define workplace bullying in academic settings because many employees who are experiencing it do not recognize it or know what it is. Participants indicated that they may not have realized there was a term for the behavior when it was happening. Faculty 3 stated,

You know what, if I had to go to court and say here's what was done, it would be pretty tough because most of it was kind of subtle. And one of

the things that occurred, that I didn't even know at the time, was absolutely lying to me about things.

Over time, and with awareness of what constitutes positive professional behavior, the participants realized they had been or were being bullied. Organizations that want to mitigate workplace bullying need to have policies in place to explain the definition of the behavior and follow through with employee training to make sure all are aware of what it means. Organizations should have policies concerning acceptable workplace behavior and impose consequences if employees do not comply. In the absence of clear policy and consequences, there is little recourse for a bullied target, which often results in people leaving the organization. The burden must be on the organization to be proactive and create and enforce policy since there are currently few laws that define and prohibit workplace bullying.

**Tenure.** This research supports the findings of Salin (2003) and Taylor (2013) who suggested that tenure is an element of organizational culture that seems to foster workplace bullying. The tenure process was mentioned by several participants as a source of stress and a cause of workplace bullying. As shared by Faculty 3, pursuing tenure felt at times like being hazed. This confirmed the arguments by Salin (2003) and Taylor (2013), that tenure can create a protection for bullies and a fear of reporting by targets. HR 3 noted that some tenured faculty, “hide behind this whole academic freedom nonsense . . . The cloak of academic freedom seems to cover all manners of sins in terms of how people work together.”

HR 1 told a story about one tenured faculty member who, due to disruptive speech and bullying behavior, was banned from public or school-wide meetings, but was

still allowed to stay on as faculty. Faculty 5 also talked about employees who were demoted, but were kept on at the school despite negative workplace behavior.

**Human resources.** As noted in the prior research by Harber et al. (2013) faculty power and tenure status may limit the ability of human resources to address workplace bullying behavior. This HR limitation is an element of the organizational culture in higher education that may enable an atmosphere of workplace bullying. Additionally, since workplace bullying is not illegal in most states, HR has limited authority to intervene. Even when HR is contacted this research found that little was done to help the target. These findings support the research by the Workplace Bullying Institute ( Namie, 2017) which indicated that when workplace bullying is reported to employers, 71% of the employers do nothing about it or worse, it ends up negatively affecting the target.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. One limitation of the study was that most of the participants interviewed worked at different higher education institutions. The research conducted suggests that interviewing people from the same organization may provide additional insight on the different perceptions of what is happening in that particular organization. It might be helpful to interview several employees from a single organization to see how that organization is perceived by employees in different roles.

Another limitation is the small sample size of the subgroups of administrators, faculty, and HR. While Creswell (2014) indicated that a sample of 9 to twelve is sufficient for a phenomenological study, the process of comparing subgroups might warrant a larger total sample. Additionally, there was limited diversity among the participants. Out of 12 participants, 10 were considered Caucasian and two were Black.

Research indicates that people classified in minority groups tend to have a higher frequency of workplace bullying. A more varied participant group may yield additional insight.

Lastly, in the demographic questionnaire, the choices of number of years that people worked in higher education could be expanded. The first choice of 1-10 years might be separated into two brackets with 1-5 and 6-10 years as options. In the analysis of results, it was noted that the large span of 1-10 years was not as informative of the person's experience as the two smaller brackets, 1-5 and 6-10, might have been.

### **Recommendations**

The findings from this research have implications for the development of policy and practice to address workplace bullying in higher education. The recommendations include leadership development and training, reviewing the tenure process and creating a workplace bullying policy. The participants' insight into the elements of organization culture that foster workplace bullying, and allow it to continue, suggest that there are measures that can help address the problem. Some elements of the higher education structure are so ingrained in tradition that major change is unlikely. However, there are steps that higher education institutions can take to mitigate workplace bullying behavior.

**Leadership development.** Faculty and administrators could benefit from leadership training, particularly those who move up into supervisory roles but have not worked in a managerial or professional role prior to that position. Many organizations in the corporate sector include training and development as part of their employee development. Higher education institutions would benefit by incorporating this practice to provide managers and leaders with support for their roles. This type of training could

help employees better understand how to deal with communication and leadership challenges in a less emotional and more professional manner. Leadership development training should be ongoing with different topics covered throughout the year. Leadership training can continue throughout one's career, it is not a one-time process.

**Tenure.** The tenure evaluation process appears to foster an atmosphere ripe for bullying. Promotion by committee with subjective guidelines opens up the possibility of inappropriate abuse of power. Threats to earning tenure and fear of retaliation were common reasons cited for not reporting workplace bullying. Higher education institutions should review the tenure process and requirements and look for ways to make the evaluation more transparent and objective. The tenure review process could be improved to reduce the potential for abuse of power.

**Organizational structure.** This research supported the suggestions by previous studies that many higher education institutions suffer from lack of collaboration (Barsky, 2002). Higher education institutions are often referred to as siloed due to the different schools and departments that may compete for funds (Crumpton, 2014). Leadership should work to address this problem by creating, as HR 3 mentioned, *esprit de corps*. It is the leader's responsibility to set the tone of working for the common good of the entire organization. Job descriptions could include phrases such as *coordinates and collaborates* with other departments to encourage teamwork. Job performance reviews could include feedback from members of peer departments. If teamwork and collaboration were promoted and supported, it could help improve organizational productivity and reduce the level of internal competition.

**Human resources.** It appears that in at least one institution included in this study, faculty and administrators were aware of workplace bullying behavior while the HR personnel were not. It is recommended that that higher education institutions develop training that teaches staff about workplace bullying behavior. They should also create and communicate a policy that prohibits workplace bullying behavior and allows for consequences when that policy is violated. These tools would give HR more latitude to address workplace bullying behavior.

**An ombudsman role.** The current lack of trust in HR and the limited ability of HR to help in workplace bullying situations suggests the need for alternative resources. One suggestion is for higher education institutions to have an ombudsman to help raise awareness and manage internal issues. An ombudsman is a neutral third party who employees can contact for confidential help with their complaints about others inside the organization (Leidenfrost, 2013). The ombudsman can track complaints by department and identify structural problems to make leadership more aware of potential issues. Ultimately, they may make recommendations for improving the process or the work environment in the future.

**Support legislation.** Employees of higher education institutions should be willing to support legislation that defines and prohibits workplace bullying. As Faculty 4 noted, “we are not going to take care of ourselves without law.” Even with laws in place, power has been used to abuse subordinates. This was evident in the US during the past year when the #MeToo movement unearthed many cases of sexual harassment that occurred despite laws prohibiting sexual harassment behavior (Townsend & Deprez, 2018).

In the absence of law, as Harber et al. (2013) and DelliFraine et al. (2014) suggested, higher education institutions should voluntarily create policy addressing workplace bullying behavior. Additionally, higher education institutions should describe acceptable conduct and educate employees about what constitutes workplace bullying behavior. There should be a plan with protocol and consequences to help mitigate the behavior. Organizations should provide training to employees to recognize the behavior similar to the training mandated for sexual harassment.

**Future research.** This study suggests there is opportunity for further research to understand the workplace bullying problem in higher education.

1. Future studies could seek to further quantify the cost of workplace bullying to organizations. Developing metrics on employee turnover, length of employment and organizational reputation could help identify problems. While there has been some attempt to estimate the cost to individual institutions, the research is limited. Given the shrinking enrollments and budgets at many colleges and universities, these organizations should be working to improve efficiency and operations (Taylor, 2012). It has been demonstrated that workplace bullying hurts financial performance, thus it is a problem that should be addressed.

2. Future studies could include research in individual institutions to evaluate if there is a workplace bullying problem and how pervasive it might be. Longitudinal research would help develop benchmark data and then allow for comparison of changes over time. There seems to be a lack of desire by leadership to assess the workplace culture, yet research has demonstrated that when employees have a positive experience at

work they are more engaged and more productive than unhappy workers (Schneider & Blankenship, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

Research has shown that workplace bullying occurs in higher education at a rate above average for U.S. workplace environments (Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Namie, 2013; Sheridan et al., 2016; Williams & Ruiz, 2012). Other research suggests that the organizational environment of higher education institutions contributes to the problem (Barsky, 2002; Salin, 2003; Twale & DeLuca, 2008). This research was designed to learn more about the relationship between organizational culture and workplace bullying in higher education.

The purpose of this study was to examine workplace bullying through the experiences of three different employee groups; faculty, administrators, and HR personnel, and to gather their insight on the impact of organizational culture on employee behavior.

The study was guided by the following research questions;

1. How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel perceive workplace bullying in higher education?
2. How do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel see their role as it pertains to workplace bullying in their institutions?
3. What solutions do faculty, administrators, and HR personnel think would be helpful to address the issue at their institution?
4. What are the perceived barriers or challenges to introducing or suggesting solutions to workplace bullying?

This study provides firsthand accounts of workplace bullying as experienced by a variety of higher education employees. It used in-depth interviews to gather insights on how workplace bullying is experienced and why it continues. This study supports previous research that found that the tenure process may contribute to workplace bullying in higher education (Taylor, 2012). This study also supports previous research that suggests the traditional higher education organizational structure may foster an environment that enables workplace bullying (Twale & DeLuca, 2008). Additionally, this study found that leadership behavior has a strong impact on organizational culture (Schein, 1984).

One of the insights from this research is that all the participants described workplace bullying behaviors with similar words, but the faculty and administrators added the emotion of how it made them feel. While the HR staff was somewhat aware of the problem they did not have the experience to understand the depth of distress that it can cause. There is clearly a role-based perception on what workplace bullying is and how it affects employees. Additionally, in one institution included in this study, there was a discrepancy as to the general awareness of workplace bullying behavior. This indicates that organizational culture may be perceived differently based on one's role in the organization.

Another finding is that the role held by the participants had a significant influence on how they saw their opportunities to address or react to the workplace bullying situation. Faculty who were bullied by those who had the power to impact a tenure appointment felt that they could not take action to address the bullying behavior. Faculty who had tenure felt they had power and were able to speak up or ignore the problem

because they were secure in their position. The same held true for middle managers. Those administrators who felt bullied by superiors were strongly affected by the experience, but did not feel they could speak out for fear of retaliation. Once administrators reached a certain level, such as associate dean or dean, they were more secure in their ability to combat the behavior.

This study supports the ideas of organizational culture theory which notes the influence of organizational structure and practice on employee behavior. Organizational culture is driven by processes, values, and leadership behavior. Some of the processes and values in higher education create a hierarchy that may enable workplace bullying. The decentralized nature of the different schools and individual goals may contribute to competition instead of collaboration. Additionally, leadership has the responsibility to set a positive tone for their organization. Yet, it was found that some leaders lack the training and development often provided to employees in other industries. Executive leadership should demonstrate the behavior they want others to display and be willing to address negative behavior when it is hurting the organization. The lack of informed or capable leadership may hurt an organization's ability to address workplace bullying.

This study also supports prior research that found workplace bullying negatively impacted retention and turnover (Hollis, 2012). Many of the participants left institutions where they were bullied, resulting in detrimental costs to organizations. Yet, it is a problem that could be improved with organizational and leadership attention.

The recommendations include the need for leadership development programs in higher education, as it was found that many faculty and administrators are not exposed to leadership training. There is also a recommendation to make the tenure process more

objective and transparent, as it was noted as a potential opportunity for power abuse and politics as it relates to individual promotion. Additionally, it is recommended that higher education institutions create resources to address workplace bullying behavior. One resource is developing a specific code of conduct defining workplace bullying and providing consequences when the policy is not followed. Another suggestion is to provide a third party or ombudsman office that can collect information and provide guidance to address problems that are reported.

It is in an organization's best interest to mitigate workplace bullying behavior before it leads to reduced productivity and costly turnover. The first step is for organizations to allow research that would measure the level of workplace bullying. Workplace bullying can be addressed by leadership attitude and commitment. Eliminating the behavior can provide long lasting positive outcomes for both employees and their organizations.

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## Appendix A

The following list of schools all fall within the Carnegie classifications of small to medium, private, not-for-profit institutions within New York and Connecticut. Additional descriptors are noted below.

<b>ID#</b>	<b>Enrollment Profile</b>	<b>Student Population</b>	<b>Size and Setting</b>	<b>Carnegie Basic Classification</b>
1	Majority Undergraduate (UG)	7,610	4-year, medium, primarily nonresidential	Doctoral Universities: Moderate Research Activity
2	Majority UG	10,953	4-year, medium, primarily residential	Doctoral Universities: Moderate Research Activity
3	High UG	3,909	4-year, medium, primarily residential	Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs
4	Very High UG	3970	4-year, medium, highly residential	Master's Colleges & Universities: Medium Programs
5	High UG	2,865	4-year, small, highly residential	Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs
6	Majority UG	11,272	4-year, medium, primarily nonresidential	Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs
7	High UG	4,497	4-year, medium, primarily nonresidential	Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs
8	Majority UG	2,896	4-year, small, highly residential	Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs
9	Majority UG	12,857	4-year, large, primarily residential	Doctoral Universities: Moderate Research Activity
10	Majority UG	7,781	4-year, medium, highly residential	Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs

## Appendix B

### Request for Voluntary Participation in Study

Dear Colleague,

I am a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College, enrolled in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. I am conducting a study focused on the relationship between organizational culture and workplace bullying in higher education. The purpose of the study is to increase the understanding of employee perspectives on higher education structure, culture, and policies as they pertain to workplace bullying.

If you meet the following criteria, then I believe you can provide valuable insight through your participation in this study.

1. You are a current or former higher education administrator, faculty or human resources employee
2. At a private, not-for-profit college in the New York tri-state area, and
3. Have experienced workplace bullying or have been in a leadership role exposed to others who have been involved with workplace bullying.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will not be asked to provide any identifying information as a measure of confidentiality. Reports or publications generated from the data collected will not include any information which will identify you as a participant or the organizations we discuss. In this study you will be asked semi-structured questions in an interview expected to be approximately 45-60 minutes.

The researcher perceives minimal risks from your involvement in this study and you have the option to withdraw from this study at any point. The risks may include discussing topics that could be uncomfortable or painful to recall.

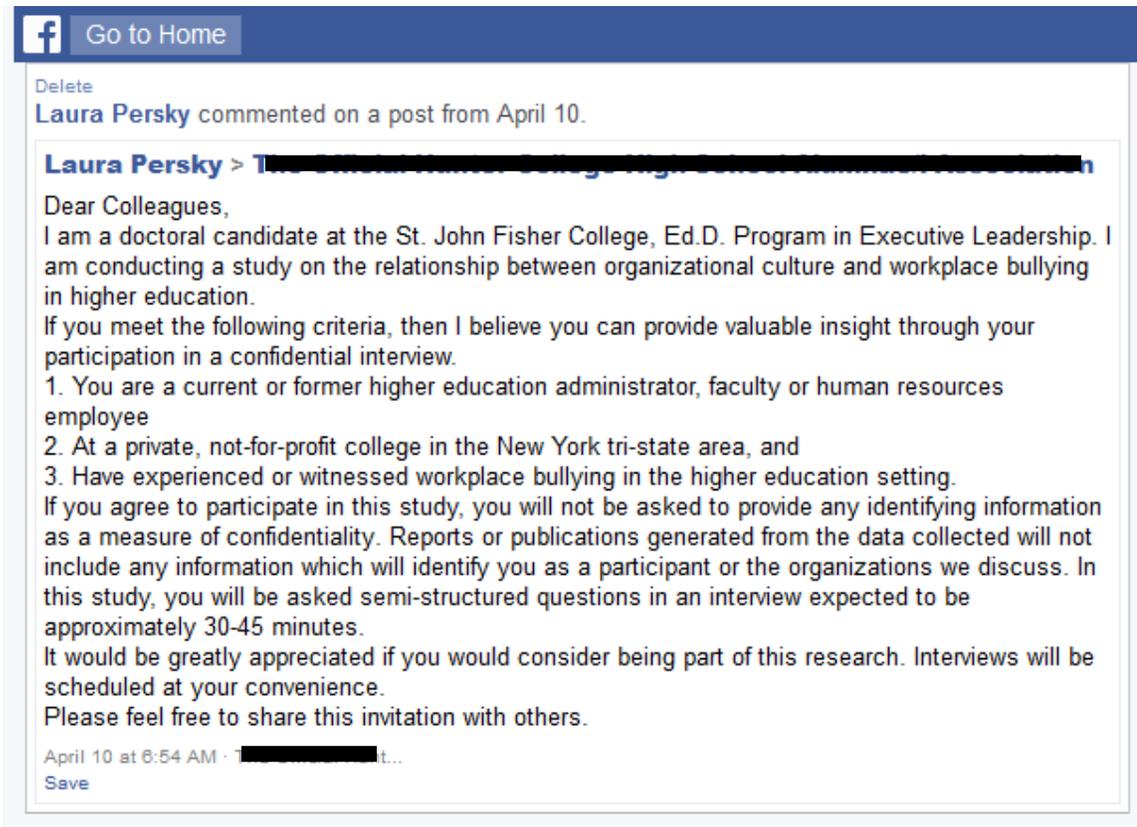
It would be greatly appreciated if you would consider being part of this research and indicate your willingness to do so by (2 weeks from date of email).

Please feel free to share this invitation with others.

Sincerely,  
Laura Persky  
Doctoral Candidate and Researcher  
St. John Fisher College  
  
[Lrp01085@sjfc.edu](mailto:Lrp01085@sjfc.edu)

## Appendix C

### Request for Voluntary Participation in Study, Posted in Facebook Group



The image is a screenshot of a Facebook post. At the top, there is a blue navigation bar with the Facebook logo and the text "Go to Home". Below this, the post is attributed to "Laura Persky" with a "Delete" link. The post content begins with "Dear Colleagues," followed by a paragraph introducing the researcher and the study's focus on workplace bullying in higher education. It then lists three criteria for participation: being a current or former higher education administrator, faculty, or HR employee; being at a private, not-for-profit college in the New York tri-state area; and having experienced or witnessed workplace bullying. The post concludes with an invitation to participate, a note on confidentiality, and a "Save" button at the bottom.

Go to Home

Delete

Laura Persky commented on a post from April 10.

**Laura Persky** > T [REDACTED]

Dear Colleagues,

I am a doctoral candidate at the St. John Fisher College, Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. I am conducting a study on the relationship between organizational culture and workplace bullying in higher education.

If you meet the following criteria, then I believe you can provide valuable insight through your participation in a confidential interview.

1. You are a current or former higher education administrator, faculty or human resources employee
2. At a private, not-for-profit college in the New York tri-state area, and
3. Have experienced or witnessed workplace bullying in the higher education setting.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will not be asked to provide any identifying information as a measure of confidentiality. Reports or publications generated from the data collected will not include any information which will identify you as a participant or the organizations we discuss. In this study, you will be asked semi-structured questions in an interview expected to be approximately 30-45 minutes.

It would be greatly appreciated if you would consider being part of this research. Interviews will be scheduled at your convenience.

Please feel free to share this invitation with others.

April 10 at 6:54 AM · [REDACTED] t...

Save

## Appendix D

### Interview Confirmation

Date:

Dear Participant:

Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in the research study. We are planning to meet on *date, time and place*

The researcher is an Educational Doctorate (Ed. D) candidate at St. John Fisher College. I believe your input will be valuable to this research study. As part of the study, you will assist with providing your experiences and insights with structure, culture, and policies as they pertain to workplace bullying. *The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has approved the research study for the completion of the dissertation.*

In this study, you will be asked semi-structured questions in the interview. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview will be recorded so that I can collect the results of each interview and combine them for analysis. There is minimal risk associated with participating in this study and you have the option to withdraw from this study at any point. The risks may include discussing topics that could be uncomfortable or painful to recall. If you decide to end the interview early, there will be no repercussions to you. To encourage a quality conversation, I have the option to ask follow-up or clarifying questions related to the research questions. This will elicit valuable data to use in the study.

All interviews will be confidential, and you can decide on a pseudonym for yourself as well as the school in which you work for the duration of the interview. No individual or school names will be used in the research findings or presentation. All notes and recordings of the interviews will be locked and stored at a secure location for 5 years following the publication of the dissertation. After 5 years, all paper records will be professionally shredded and electronic records will be erased from the hard drives and devices.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at Lrp01085@sjfc.edu or [REDACTED].

Thank you,

Laura Persky  
Doctoral Candidate and Researcher  
St. John Fisher College

## Appendix E

### St. John Fisher College

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Title of study:** Perceived Effects of Organizational Culture on Workplace Bullying in Higher Education

**Name(s) of researcher(s):** Laura Persky, [lrp01085@sjfc.edu](mailto:lrp01085@sjfc.edu), [REDACTED]

**Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Janice Girardi, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

**Purpose of study:** The purpose of this study is to increase understanding of administrators, faculty and human resources personnel perspectives on structure, culture, and policies as they pertain to workplace bullying in higher education.

**Place of study:** To be determined

**Length of participation:** If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire and participate in a 45-60 minute interview.

**Method(s) of data collection:** The researcher will digitally record the interview, and have it transcribed for analysis. The researcher may take notes during the meeting to support the recording.

**Risks and benefits:** There is minimal risk associated with participating in this study and you have the option to withdraw from this study at any point. The risks may include discussing topics that could be uncomfortable or painful to recall.

**Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of subjects:** No individual person or school names, or identifying details, will be used in the research findings or presentation. Your identity will be kept confidential through pseudonyms in any data that is reported from this study.

*Your information may be shared with appropriate governmental authorities ONLY if you or someone else is in danger, or if we are required to do so by law.*

**Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of data collected:** Your identity will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym instead of your name in all written documents. All electronic notes and recordings will be in password protected files; hard copies will be stored in a secured location for 5 years.

**Your rights:** As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.

4. Be informed of the results of the study.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher(s) listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact your personal health care provider or an appropriate crisis service provider. A local resource is Phelps Hospital Counseling Services (914) 366-3600.

The Institutional Review Board of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study/or if you feel that your rights as a participant (or the rights of another participant) have been violated or caused you undue distress (physical or emotional distress), please contact Jill Rathbun by phone during normal business hours at (585) 385-8012 or [irb@sjfc.edu](mailto:irb@sjfc.edu). She will contact a supervisory IRB official to assist you.

**I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.**

_____	_____	_____
Print name (Participant)	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Print name (Investigator)	Signature	Date

Audio recordings addendum:

All digital audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be maintained using a private, locked, and password-protected file and password-protected computer stored securely in the private home of the principal researcher. Electronic files will include assigned identity codes and pseudonyms; they will not include actual names or any information that could personally identify or connect participants to this study. Other materials, including notes or paper files related to data collection and analysis, will be stored securely in unmarked boxes, locked inside a cabinet in the private home of the principal researcher. Only the researcher will have access to electronic or paper records. The digitally recorded audio data will be kept by this researcher for a period of 5 years following publication of the dissertation. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for 5 years after publication. All paper records will be cross-cut shredded and professionally delivered for incineration. Electronic records will be cleared, purged, and destroyed from the hard drive and all devices such that restoring data is not possible.

## Appendix F

### Demographic Survey

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please answer each of the questions below.*

1. Role\Job Title
  - a. Administrator
  - b. Faculty
  - c. Human Resource Personnel
  - d. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Tenure status
  - a. Tenured
  - b. Tenure-track
  - c. Non-tenure
  - d. Not applicable
  
3. Number of years worked in higher education
  - a. 1-10
  - b. 11-20
  - c. 21-30
  - d. 31+
  
4. Number of different higher education institutions worked at
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4+
  
5. Age
  - a. 21-34
  - b. 35-50
  - c. 51-65
  - d. 66+
  
6. Gender
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
  - c. Prefer not to answer
  
7. Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_ Prefer not to answer \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G

### Interview Questions

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
How do faculty, administrators, and human resource personnel perceive workplace bullying in higher education?	<p>What do you think is the difference between workplace bullying and sexual or race-based harassment?</p> <p>Can you tell me about your experience with workplace bullying?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What behaviors did you see?</li> </ul>
What role do faculty, administrators or HR personnel play pertaining workplace bullying in their institution?	<p>Have you seen others being bullied? If yes, did you get involved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Was leadership made aware of the problem and if yes, how?</li> </ul> <p>How have others in your organization addressed this behavior?</p> <p>How do you see leaders contributing to the campus culture?</p>
What are the perceived barriers or challenges to solutions to workplace bullying?	<p>What do you think is the effect of each of the following on employee behavior?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organization structure and employee behavior?</li> <li>- Tenure and employee behavior?</li> <li>- Department structure employee behavior?</li> <li>- Governance structure employee behavior?</li> </ul>
What solutions do faculty, administrators, and human resource personnel think would be helpful to address workplace bullying at their institution?	<p>Are you aware of any policies that address workplace bullying? If so, what are they?</p> <p>Is there is a reporting process that you are aware of, please explain.</p> <p>Are you aware of, and can you describe formal or informal consequences for engaging in workplace bullying?</p> <p>Can you explain any barriers to reporting incidents?</p> <p>Can you explain why someone may not feel comfortable reporting bullying behavior?</p>

	<p>Is there anything that you think would be helpful in addressing this issue?</p> <p>How do you feel about legislation regarding anti-bullying in the workplace?</p>
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