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Journal of Career Development published online 6 January 2011

DOI: 10.1177/0894845310390035

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Journal of Career Development
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DOI: 10.1177/0894845310390035
<http://jcd.sagepub.com>



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Abstract

Workplace bullying is a significant problem in many adult work settings. Much of the research has been conducted by organizational psychologists. It is important for vocational scholars and practitioners to be knowledgeable about the phenomena of workplace bullying, as they are in a position to contribute to the literature base and to counsel perpetrators and targets of workplace bullying. Further, integration of workplace bullying constructs may improve the predictive ability of vocational theories. The authors discuss research findings related to workplace bullying that are relevant to the field of vocational psychology and formulate recommendations for both research and practice. Research on workplace bullying by vocational scholars could lead to a better understanding of individual career development and improved worker interventions.

Keywords

bullying, workplace, harassment, adult career development

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Introduction

Vocational scholars have studied several kinds of harassment in the workplace, including sexual harassment (Bergman & Henning, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2003; Fitzgerald & Shullman, 2003; Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007), group discrimination, and oppression (Blustein, 2006; Burkard, Boticki, & Madson, 2002; Chung & Harmon, 1999; Evans & Herr, 1994; Jackson & Nutini, 2002; Liddle, Luzzo, Hauenstein, & Schuck, 2004; McWhirter, 1997). At the same time, industrial and organizational scholars have begun to recognize and study a phenomenon called “workplace bullying,” a form of interpersonal harassment that has ambiguous intention and that appears to occur across all demographic groups and types of work settings (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Jennifer, Cowie, & Ananiadou, 2003; Leymann, 1990; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007; Zapf & Einarsen, 2001). We suggest that vocational psychology scholars have much to learn from and to add to this area of research.

First called harassment over 30 years ago (Brodsky, 1976), behaviors associated with workplace bullying have in recent years been given many labels, including interpersonal aggression (Glomb & Liao, 2003; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2008), destructive interpersonal conflict (Hoel, Giga, & Faragher, 2006), harassment (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994), emotional abuse (Keashly & Harvey, 2005), mobbing (Leymann, 1990; Niedl, 1996; Yildirim & Yildirim, 2007), petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1997), incivility (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001), and counterproductive work behavior (Spector & Fox, 2002). The specific labels have depended upon the country of origin or particular focus of the authors, and there is variance in the operational definitions and measurement of constructs. We will discuss definitional issues in detail shortly, but it is important to recognize that definitions of workplace bullying and associated constructs are independent of the perpetrator’s motive or the group membership of the individual target. Thus, the concept of workplace bullying by definition includes behaviors for which the perpetrator’s motivations are unknown, and the target does not appear to have been selected on the basis of a particular personal characteristic or behavior.

While much of the research into workplace bullying was initiated in Europe, recent studies in the United States have estimated workplace bullying is experienced by nearly 30% of U.S. employees over the course of their work life (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). Regardless of geography, workplace bullying presents a significant problem for individuals who are targeted, as well as associated employees and organizations. There is strong evidence that individuals who are bullied at work are likely to experience negative health and vocational outcomes (Ashforth, 1997; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Cortina & Magley, 2003; Djurkovic, McCormack, & Casimir, 2004; Glomb & Cortina, 2006; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). In addition to harm experienced by targets, which may include symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002), employees who observe but are not themselves the targets of bullying have been shown to experience

negative health and employment effects (Einarsen et al., 1994; Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2007), such as a symptoms of depression and anxiety, and a decrease in job satisfaction. Finally, employers may experience absenteeism, reduced productivity and turnover as a result of employee bullying (Bowling & Beehr, 2006).

Organizational impacts have garnered interest from scholars who have attempted to understand personality characteristics of bullies and victims to reduce organizational disruption, sometimes under the more expansive concept of negative employee behaviors called *counterproductive work behaviors* (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Hershcovis et al., 2007; Milam, Spitzmueller, & Penney, 2009; Spector et al., 2006; Spector & Fox, 2002). From the standpoint of vocational psychologists and career counselors, perhaps the most critical implication is the negative influence bullying experiences may have on individuals' psychological experience of work and on their career trajectories.

The research cited above, as well as a recent literature review in the *Annual Review of Psychology* (Aquino & Thau, 2009), demonstrates that the current body of research on workplace bullying is strong and growing. The focus from industrial and organizational scholars indicates important overlap with topics of interest in vocational psychology. For example, organizational scholars have shown connections between workplace bullying and basic vocational constructs such as global job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Bowling, Beehr, & Lepisto, 2006; Cortina et al., 2001; Glomb, 2002; Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2008; Tepper, 2000). However, organizational psychologists have not studied workplace bullying from an individual career framework and have not fully explored or explicated links between workplace bullying and many dimensions of individual diversity. Further, vocational psychologists have not studied interpersonal harassment with indeterminate motivation and how these phenomena might affect career decisions, trajectories, and outcomes. Thus, there are gaps in both the organizational and the vocational psychology scholarship.

The following sections will first review the literature on workplace bullying and make recommendations for vocational psychologists, focusing on definition of terms and measurement issues, and then review empirical studies that have assessed prevalence of workplace bullying in international and U.S. locations, the experience of targets, and individual vocational outcomes. Next, we will consider three vocational theories, which may be utilized to generate research questions associated with individual career behavior in response to bullying, and discuss multicultural issues in workplace bullying research. Finally, we will propose research recommendations for vocational scholars, which might support a better understanding of workplace bullying and summarize vocational psychology practice implications.

Literature on Workplace Bullying

Terminology and Definitions

Before considering the content of studies on workplace bullying, it is important to recognize that definitions of workplace bullying and related constructs have varied

on dimensions of severity, frequency, duration, trend (escalation), perpetrator intention, perpetrator status (supervisor or peer), and number of perpetrators (several or one). A recent publication listed 35 current and historical terms, all variously used to describe behavior in which workers are subjected to harassment in the workplace (Crawshaw, 2009). However, all definitions share the requirement that the behavior results in harm to the target.

Because workplace bullying is illegal in some countries such as Great Britain, it may be that terminology and definitions have proliferated as scholars attempted to fully operationalize the construct to demonstrate national or industrial prevalence rates and to provide detail for legal definitions and legislation. However, the many definitions that researchers have created and used have made it difficult for scholars and practitioners to compare results across studies and establish conclusions (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Crawshaw, 2009; Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, & Salem, 2006; Fox & Stallworth, 2009). The variance on included behaviors, duration, and frequency required is likely the source of significant variation in measures of prevalence.

In a special issue of *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, Crawshaw (2009) proposed terminology that establishes general and specific categories, rather than creating new terms to capture each situational detail. The author proposes "Workplace Abuse" as a general category that encompasses all forms of harmful acts toward employees, including but not limited to discrimination, sexual harassment, violence, and unsafe working conditions. Further, she suggests "Workplace Psychological Harassment" (with the common name "workplace bullying") as a subgroup of Workplace Abuse that can vary in perpetrator–target formations and status, including individual-to-individual, group-to-individual or group, organization-to-individual or group, peer-to-peer, or supervisor-to-employee. In addition, Crawshaw (2009) recommends the terms "perpetrator" and "target," as opposed to "bully" and "victim," to recognize that the interpersonal dynamics can be quite complex and may include situations in which the perpetrator and target exchange roles in a cyclic fashion.

To clarify, this framework proposes a general superset of all forms of harassment called "Workplace Abuse." Behaviors that form subset constructs would include Workplace Psychological Harassment (indeterminate motivation), racial harassment/discrimination, sexual harassment, physical violence, and other forms of abuse that are associated by perpetrator motivation or distinct characteristics. There may be overlap between subsets (e.g., between workplace racial harassment and workplace bullying or sexual harassment and workplace bullying), which calls for empirical research to verify the distinction between recommended groups. However, there is empirical support that several of the subsets Crawshaw proposes are separate and related behaviors (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Lopez, Hodson, & Roscigno, 2009).

We recommend the Crawshaw (2009) terminology because it is a parsimonious framework that encompasses related but distinct groups of behaviors. Further, it clarifies the relationship between actors and allows for considerable variance in

specific situations without a proliferation of terminology. However, Crawshaw did not provide a general definition for Workplace Psychological Harassment. Namie and Namie (2009) suggested that there is consensus among scholars on the definition: “repeated and persistent non-physical mistreatment of a person” (p. 203) at work, which results in harm to the target.

Namie and Namie’s definition (2009) and Cranshaw’s (2009) framework seem particularly useful and relevant for vocational psychologists. Neither attempts to speculate on or require particular motivations of the perpetrator. Historical research on sexual harassment has supported the idea that the critical defining factor for psychologists is the impact on the target rather than the intent of the perpetrator (Fitzgerald & Shullman, 1993) not in the least because the perpetrator’s actual motivations may be unknown and unknowable.

Further, other than describing the behavior as “repeated and persistent,” the terminology and definition do not require particular levels of validated severity, duration or frequency, or particular configurations of actors. From the perspective of vocational psychologists interested in individual rather than organizational outcomes, we propose that the exact frequency or duration of incidents may not be relevant. Rather, it is the psychological impact to the target, which may trigger coping behaviors or altered career decisions, such as an individual deciding to leave a career due to bullying when he or she remains interested in the work domain. For a career counseling practitioner, this approach recognizes that if a client perceives he or she has been or is being bullied and seeks counseling, the client’s perception and subsequent actions are the issues of interest. Similarly, for the vocational scholar seeking to investigate career behaviors or attitudes, individual perception of target status is the construct that has the potential to influence occupational and personal outcomes.

Measurement of Workplace Bullying

The variation in terms and definitions of workplace bullying has resulted in generally inconsistent instruments and often poor measurement methodology, including development and use of idiosyncratic measures with little empirical validation (Barling, Dupre, & Kelloway, 2009). Still, a few measures have been well validated, used by researchers more or less consistently for more than 10 years, and have been demonstrated to predict various negative career outcomes. Two instruments in particular may be useful tools for vocational psychologists as researchers and with additional validation may also be useful to practitioners.

The Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997) and the Negative Acts Questionnaire–Revised (NAQ–Revised) by Hoel and Einarsen in 2006 is one of the most commonly implemented measures of workplace bullying, although it does not utilize the term “bullying” in the title or items. The NAQ–R contains 22 items and assesses a range of negative workplace acts to which respondents may have been subjected within the past 6 months, including insulting remarks and ridicule, verbal abuse, offensive teasing, isolation and social exclusion, or the

constant degrading of one's work and efforts. Two subscales have been found to delineate person- and task-related bullying (NAQ-Person, NAQ-Task). Cronbach's α for the overall scale was .88 in a socioeconomically diverse sample of Norwegian employees, with good subscale reliabilities (.86 and .76, respectively). Researchers looking for a more concise instrument might consider the 5-item Bergen Bullying Index, which was also found to have good internal reliability (.86) in a large sample of 10,611 Norwegian working professionals (Einarsen et al., 1994). However, neither instrument has been investigated for use as an assessment instrument for career counseling practice, which may be a fruitful area of future research.

Prevalence of Workplace Bullying

Quite a few researchers have examined the prevalence of workplace bullying, and their findings generally indicate that bullying is not a rare occurrence, although the reported rates vary greatly. In European countries, prevalence rates of bullying experiences for employees within their most recent 6 months of employment have included 8.6% of Norwegian workers (Vartia & Hyyti, 2002), 10.6% of British workers (Hoel & Cooper, 2000), 20% of Finnish police officers (Vartia & Hyyti, 2002), and 55% of Turkish workers (Bilgel, Aytac, & Bayram, 2006). In the United States, one study found the rate of bullying experience within the past 6 months to be 28% (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007) across a range of occupations. More recently, Rospenda, Richman, and Shannon (2009) examined the prevalence of Generalized Workplace Harassment (defined as harassment with an undetermined motivation, consistent with the definition of workplace bullying) in a random sample of 2,151 adults using a version of the Generalized Workplace Harassment Questionnaire (Rospenda & Richman, 2004), and found that 63% of participants reported one or more workplace bullying experiences over the past 12 months.

Characteristics of Perpetrators and Targets

Researchers have also examined who is most likely to engage in bullying and differences in targets of bullying. Some research suggests that bullying behaviors are most commonly perpetrated by superiors toward subordinates (Bilgel et al., 2006; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Quine, 1999; Tepper, 2007). Tepper has done considerable research in this area (which he terms "abusive supervision") and estimates that this form of bullying affects 13.6% of U.S. workers. Furthermore, in a review of the literature, Hoel and Cooper (2000) suggest that 75% of bullying behaviors falls under the category of abusive supervision.

Some research has investigated gender and racial differences in targets of bullying. Results of gender studies have been mixed. Hoel and Cooper (2000) reported no significant differences in experiences of bullying between men and women. However, Rayner, Hoel, and Cooper (2002) reported that men in Britain were more likely than women to be reported as perpetrators, although this may have been due to men's

greater likelihood of being in a supervisory position. Aquino and Bradfield (2000) found that women were more likely to report instances of experiencing some types of bullying, which these authors termed *indirect aggression*, defined as acts intended to inflict harm while being difficult to detect. Similarly, Cortina et al. (2001) found that women reported significantly higher rates of *incivility*, which is analogous to workplace bullying but includes more mild behaviors, such as persistent interrupting.

In addition to investigations of gender differences in workplace bullying, some scholars have investigated the links between racially motivated harassment and workplace bullying (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Cortina, 2008; Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Nelson & Probst, 2004; Rospenda et al., 2009). However, only one large-scale study has assessed prevalence of workplace bullying and racial/ethnically motivated harassment and compared the rates by racial group. Rospenda et al. (2009) found that 10% of their sample reported racial harassment or discrimination experiences over and above the rate of workplace bullying. Further, they found that racial and ethnic minority participants reported workplace bullying at high rates: Asian 24%, Black 61%, Latino 50%, and mixed race 52%. These data indicate that the targets of bullying are more often racial minorities; thus, experiences labeled as racial harassment and those identified as workplace bullying may be difficult to disambiguate.

Experiences of Bullying Targets

Several researchers and scholars have attempted to capture the impact of workplace bullying and related constructs on bullying targets. For vocational scholars, it is important to understand that this research has demonstrated a significant impact of workplace bullying on targets, which is likely to affect their personal well-being, their success within their organizations, and possibly their long-term career paths. Further, an understanding of the experience of targets may help career counseling practitioners to appreciate the potential for clients to experience severe reactions to being the target or even the observer of workplace bullying.

In a comprehensive literature review, Aquino and Thau (2009) identified several themes in the existing literature describing the victim experience, which includes victim characteristics, structural and organizational influences of victimization, consequences of victimization, and coping mechanisms used by victims. These authors used the term “victim” to indicate the individual that reports bullying, which is consistent with the terminology in the literature they reviewed. As discussed, other authors (Crawshaw, 2009) have recently suggested “target,” and we will use the terms interchangeably here. For the purposes of this section, our focus is on the most influential theoretical models for framing the victim experience and related outcomes in terms of psychological well-being, physical health, and workplace attitudes and behaviors. Interested readers are referred to Aquino and Thau for a complete review of the literature related to victim experience.

Brodsky's (1976) early book on the subject of workplace harassment proposed a three-phase model of victim reactions. This model is based on extensive typological background data on thousands of workers' compensations claimants using medical records, employer records, and qualitative interviews with victims, coworkers, supervisors, and family members. During the first phase of Brodsky's model, victims are shocked and overwhelmed by their treatment, which is likely to result in increases in anxiety and depression, physical symptoms ranging from headaches to twitching, a lowered sense of security, and social withdrawal. During the second phase, victims are likely to act in a random fashion as they attempt to stop the harassment and normalize their work lives. The third phase of the Brodsky model may include one of three possible outcomes: a continuation of the random actions associated with Phase 2, an increase in depression, or most commonly, an increasing sense of anger on the part of victims. Although no later studies have specifically researched this model, Brodsky's work was grounded in both qualitative and quantitative data, and the model has been influential in providing a framework for subsequent scholars investigating victims' experiences of bullying.

More recently, Bowling and Beehr (2006) conducted a meta-analysis to explain workplace bullying from the perspective of victims. The authors included 90 articles that focused on workplace bullying and analogous terms (including harassment, abuse, incivility, interpersonal conflict, mistreatment, mobbing, petty tyranny, and social undermining) published between 1987 and 2005. Their results indicated that workplace bullying had a moderate positive association with depression ($\rho = .34$) and negative emotions at work ($\rho = .46$) and a small negative association with life satisfaction ($\rho = -.21$) and self-esteem ($\rho = -.21$). The authors concluded that there is substantial evidence that workplace bullying is a critical stressor that significantly influences victims' mental health and subjective ratings of overall happiness.

Of particular note for vocational practitioners is research that has found a link between workplace bullying victimization and PTSD. In two studies, Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002) found that a large majority of respondents reported symptoms partially consistent with PTSD, including "anxiety, depression, somatisation, and psychological distress" (p. 341), a measure of intrusive thoughts and memories and avoiding certain memories and locations. These studies demonstrate that the experience of being bullied can be much more than a simple nuisance, and it is important for practitioners to recognize that psychological reactions to workplace bullying can be severe.

Workplace Bullying and Vocational Outcomes

Although it seems obvious from the review of victims' experiences that workplace bullying is frequently related to life and career disruption, the body of literature specifically investigating traditional vocational constructs and their relationship to workplace bullying is limited. Some scholars have included basic occupational constructs also of interest to vocational scholars in their research such as overall job

satisfaction (Cortina et al., 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007; Quine, 1999), intention to leave (Djurkovic et al., 2004; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Quine, 1999; Simons, 2006; Zapf & Einarsen, 2001), and occupational commitment (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002; McCormack, Casimir, Djurkovic, & Yang, 2006; Tepper, 2007; Yildirim & Yildirim, 2007). The Bowling and Beehr (2006) meta-analysis of workplace bullying outcomes previously discussed considered the combined results of research assessing vocational consequences associated with negative workplace experiences. Results indicated moderate relationships with burnout ($\rho = .40$), negative emotions at work ($\rho = .46$), job satisfaction ($\rho = -.39$), and a smaller relationship to organizational commitment ($\rho = -.25$). Moderate relationships were also found with individual performance outcomes including counterproductive work behaviors ($\rho = .37$) and turnover intentions ($\rho = .35$) but not with absenteeism ($\rho = .06$).

Job satisfaction is a construct of central importance to vocational psychologists and is also arguably the most thoroughly studied vocational outcome in relation to workplace bullying. Thus, we examine this literature more closely. The negative relationship between workplace bullying and job satisfaction has been shown to occur across a range of different occupations (Bowling and Beehr, 2006). The negative influence of bullying on job satisfaction has also been shown to hold for a variety of perpetrator–target relationship dyads, including supervisor–subordinate relationships (Tepper, 2000) and peer-to-peer relationships (Vartia & Hyyti, 2002). Further, the relationship between bullying experiences and job satisfaction was found to be moderated by a binary measure of perceived organizational support (high support and low support), such that a supportive work environment appeared to protect against the harmful effects of bullying (Quine, 1999). Later large, cross-industry studies in the United States and in European countries supported the Bowling and Beehr (2006) findings and reported a significant and negative relationship between bullying experience and job satisfaction (Bilgel et al., 2006), with correlations in a U.S. study as strong as $-.58$ (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007).

In addition to considering job satisfaction, studies have consistently found a positive correlation between individuals' experiences being bullied in the workplace and their intention to leave and negative correlations with job rating and occupational commitment. In the aforementioned Quine (1999) study, researchers found staff who had been bullied had higher levels of intention to leave ($d = .53$), which, like the relationship with job satisfaction, was moderated by organizational support. In a study of 511 licensed nurses in Massachusetts (Simons, 2006), bullying experiences measured by the NAQ-R were found to predict 29% of the variance in intention to leave.

Implications for Vocational Research

Experiences of workplace bullying clearly have a significant impact on individual career experiences and have been found to predict reduced job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment, and organizational turnover. For individuals, these

outcomes represent significant career events, yet workplace bullying has not yet been considered in theories of career and vocational development. In addition, existing research on workplace bullying lacks investigation of multicultural influences that limit our understanding of bullying in diverse workplaces. We suggest a comprehensive understanding of the processes of workplace bullying with a multicultural perspective and an integration of this construct into career theory. Such research may increase the ability of vocational scholars to predict career behavior and of practitioners to suggest effective individual career interventions. When considering dominant career development theories, we believe it makes sense to focus initially on those theories that include a consideration of how external factors in the environment interact with individual differences to affect career development. Thus, here we discuss possible ways in which workplace bullying could be incorporated into The Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA; Dawis, 2005). Next, we consider Career Adaptability (Savickas, 1997), a constructivist framework grounded in Super's Archway of Career Determinants model (Super, 1994), which suggests a variety of environmental influences that can affect an individual's self-concept and development. Third, we consider Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), which recognizes environmental barriers that indirectly affect career performance and decisions. Finally, we provide specific suggestions for multicultural research on bullying within and across these three theories. Our purpose is to generate career theory-driven research questions, as well as to identify critical questions stemming from multicultural gaps in current research.

Vocational Theory and Workplace Bullying

Bullying and adjustment. TWA (Dawis, 2005; Dawis, Lofquist, & Weiss, 1968) would predict that the decrease in job satisfaction experienced by victims of bullying is a result of a lack of correspondence between employees' needs, perhaps for positive working conditions or human relations, and the reinforcement of these needs in the work environment. In addition to reinforcers such as pay and prestige, TWA encompasses basic needs, such as security. Aquino and Thau (2009) suggest that basic psychological needs, such as the need for belonging and control are thwarted by experiences of bullying. TWA would propose that when people are in discordance (needs not being met), they go into adjustment mode. This may help to explain self-blame (reactive adjustment) or acting out with positive or negative behaviors (active adjustment).

TWA assumes individual variation on the value placed on preferred reinforcers, or needs, such as the relative importance of positive coworker relations. Experiences of workplace bullying with the potential to create severe psychological and physical reactions may or may not be fully captured as the absence of such a reinforcer. Individuals do clearly vary on their *flexibility*, which TWA defines as the "degree of discordance tolerated before becoming dissatisfied enough to engage in adjustment behaviors" (Dawis, 2005, p. 9). It may be that individual responses to

experiences of bullying depend upon flexibility, which also may vary by group membership or minority status (Lyons et al., 2005).

TWA offers alternative predictions relating to what workplace bullying means in terms of *satisfactoriness* or the level of satisfaction an employer has with an employee. If bullying targets most or all employees, it may not relate to satisfactoriness of a particular employee. If a single employee is targeted, supervisor dissatisfaction may be played out through actions perceived by the employee as bullying, such as extensive supervision or negative feedback. Supervisor dissatisfaction of an individual employee may also be affected by minority status, in cases of implicit or explicit prejudice.

TWA makes clear predications about individual difference factors such as flexibility that may moderate the relationship between the experience of bullying and career outcome variables such as job satisfaction or intention to leave. Further, TWA would predict that when employers rate employees as less satisfactory, they may be more likely to take actions that would be perceived by employees as supervisor bullying. Both hypotheses could be explored as research questions investigating the integration of workplace bullying into the TWA.

Bullying and career adaptability. In describing his Career Construction Theory in which the construct of *career adaptability* plays a central role, Savickas noted that career stories can “focus on mini-cycles by emphasizing adaptability for transitions, especially coping with changes that are unexpected and traumatic” (2005, p. 50). We suggest bullying targets may have experienced *workplace* traumas that forced an adaptive reaction. One qualitative study investigating stories of victim experiences suggests career construction theory provides a view into victims’ meaning making (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). Workers described bullying experiences as a “nightmare” in which they encountered severe cognitive dissonance and a sense of unreality; bullies as “demons” and themselves as “slaves” and “children,” and these individuals clearly struggled to make sense of their experiences in the context of their overall career. Research on workplace bullying using a career construction framework might consider questions such as How do experiences of workplace bullying influence elements of career adaptability and life themes? What specific forms of adaptability are threatened by or are used to support coping with bullying? How does bullying influence career decision making and career tasks? Further, are individuals from different groups or who are minorities more likely to choose different decision paths in response to bullying, and do these choices differ if the target perceives bullying to be motivated based on group membership? Savickas (2005) noted that a function of career counselors is to uncover why an individual may have encountered “writer’s block in authoring the next chapter of his or her career story” (p. 57). Bullying experiences might be one important reason why, at least for some individuals.

Thus, analogous to the TWA flexibility construct, Career Adaptability Theory would predict that those employees higher on career adaptability would be less likely to experience negative career outcomes associated with bullying. The research

questions generated above might help explicate these links. Second, research on effective treatment approaches may find narrative techniques help targets of bullying make sense of and recover from their experiences.

Workplace bullying and SCCT. Bullying seems most related to the SCCT construct of contextual career barriers (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). If recent research on the influence of barriers on self-efficacy can be generalized beyond career choices of adolescents to work choices of adults, it may be that experiences of workplace bullying are career barriers that influence individuals' work task or coping self-efficacy. It may also be that the content of bullying material—whether personal or work related—is related to a particular domain of self-efficacy. That is, if a bully is focused on the victim's quality of work, the victim might experience a decline in work task self-efficacy. SCCT research has suggested that a decline in domain self-efficacy is associated with a decline in interest, goals, and performance in the domain (Lent et al., 2001). Thus, SCCT theory would predict that work-task-related bullying would negatively influence career interests, goals, and performance, mediated by a decline in work-task self-efficacy. In addition, a strong sense of task self-efficacy or coping self-efficacy might serve as a protective mechanism against bullying. Both hypotheses could be tested in research that measured SCCT variables such as self-efficacy and interests and related these variables to measures of workplace bullying. Vocational scholars who have done considerable research with SCCT barrier, self-efficacy, and other constructs, particularly in how the model is influenced by culture, might be well suited to utilize this framework to explicate the influence of workplace bullying on vocational choices and outcomes.

Multicultural Research and Workplace Bullying

In our view, throughout the workplace bullying literature, scholars have paid insufficient attention to race, gender, sexual orientation, and other group or demographic variables; this may be an important way that vocational psychologists could contribute significantly to this program of research. To date, workplace bullying researchers have focused on target personality characteristics, rather than minority status on group dimensions, in considering how individual variables might influence experiences of bullying (see Aquino & Thau, 2009; Moayed et al., 2006, for reviews). In two exceptions, Rospenda et al. (2009) concluded that racial and ethnic minorities are victims of workplace harassment and discrimination more often than White employees, and Cortina (2008) proposes that incivility and other forms of workplace bullying may be covert forms of sexism and racism. Other than these studies and those investigating gender, research generally does not report bullying experiences of participants by group membership on other dimensions such as race, ethnicity, immigration status, religion, ability status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Thus, little is known about whether or how targets of minority group discrimination overlap with targets of workplace bullying.

In addition, we know nothing about whether there are differences between psychological experiences of bullying for majority and minority group members and whether health or vocational outcomes differ. It may be that victims who are part of a minority group experience more or less self-blame than victims who are not part of any obvious minority. Alternatively, it may be that members of minority groups have more experience with harassment and are thus more equipped to respond effectively or they may have more avenues for redress due to employment policy or legal protections (Meglich-Sespico, Faley, & Knapp, 2007). There is considerable existing vocational scholarship considering the career development of members of minority groups, thus vocational researchers may be uniquely qualified to address this gap in the workplace bullying literature. Such a research program would be stronger if it were grounded in an empirically validated career theory that has considered multicultural influences, such as those discussed in this article.

Summary of Research Proposals

Vocational psychologists have much to contribute and much to gain by an understanding of workplace bullying and its effects on individual careers. To summarize, the following points define a set of linked proposals for research of workplace bullying by vocational scholars. First, scholars must develop theory-grounded, consistent, and validated measurements of individual perceptions of workplace bullying experiences that can be utilized for research and assessment, possibly utilizing the Crawshaw (2009) framework and Namie and Namie (2009) definitions as a starting point and including: (a) empirical validation of the framework proposed by Crawshaw to verify that the subsets of Workplace Abuse proposed are distinct or under what conditions and to what extent they overlap and (b) item verification and factor analyses of workplace bullying inventories, such that measurement instruments could be used for research and practitioner assessment.

Second, research is needed that investigates how important vocational constructs such as correspondence, adjustment, career adaptability, self-efficacy, and career barriers influence or are influenced by workplace bullying, and how these relationships fits into larger vocational theories that consider environmental influences on career outcomes (e.g., TWA, Career Construction, and SCCT).

Third, it is important to conduct multicultural studies that (a) explicate the relationship between minority status on group dimensions such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability status and sexual orientation, and workplace bullying to provide guidance on the extent to which such factors may influence bullying and (b) within- and between-group differences in attributions for bullying, coping styles, and other vocational variables.

Further, there is a need for longitudinal studies of workplace bullying experiences throughout individual careers to provide an improved understanding of the nature of short- and long-term disruption caused by such experiences. Finally, researchers must link their efforts to practice implications, to provide career counselors with

guidance on intervention techniques that will effectively support individuals who have experienced bullying to cope with negative symptoms, recover, and continue their career.

Implications for Vocational Practice

Specific research investigating effective career counseling practice interventions to clients' reports of workplace bullying has not been conducted. However, existing research strongly suggests that many workers experience bullying, and there may be severe negative consequences on their psychological health, well-being, and career trajectories. Therefore, we suggest that practitioners not only be aware of this issue but develop capability to enact effective interventions when working with individuals affected by workplace bullying. First, practitioners should appreciate that clients may experience severe negative reactions to being a target or observer of workplace bullying. Reactions may vary but could include symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Second, practitioners should be able to recognize some of the common signs of victimization. For instance, if a client reports changes in job satisfaction, anxiety level, or turnover intentions, the practitioner may want to probe for experiences of bullying.

Third, once a client reports being a target of workplace bullying, the practitioner should pay specific attention to the client's perceptions of being bullied, and the subsequent actions, coping behaviors, and altered career decisions that follow. Practitioners should be aware that victimization may alter a number of important vocational and psychological outcomes. In addition, although there is not yet efficacy evidence, practitioners might consider narrative techniques may support clients' ability to make sense of their past experiences and establish a sense of control. In addition, communication training in organizations has reduced incidences of bullying (Dingfelder, 2006), thus individual assertiveness training might help targets of bullying to better advocate for themselves. Finally, while there are no U.S. laws regulating bullying, many employers do recognize that bullying creates a negative climate in the workplace and is related to turnover, thus employers may be responsive to clients' advocacy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we note that to date organizational psychology has been the primary lens in which workplace bullying has been investigated and has established that general workplace bullying is a substantial problem for individuals and for organizations. However, the mission of organizational psychology is to understand the work behavior of groups and individuals so as to contribute to the success of the *organization* (Building Better Organizations, 2006). Thus, generally the individual worker is of scholarly interest only to the extent to which their well-being and job satisfaction improves the performance of the organization. In contrast, vocational

psychology has focused on scholarship to support career development and counseling of individuals throughout their life span or “the person’s progression and development through the worklife” (Dawis, 1996, p. 230). While these missions are complimentary, an organizational perspective alone fails to consider the impact of such experiences on individuals’ careers. An individually focused workplace bullying research agenda with clear links to establishing effective practice guidelines would help vocational researchers to better understand the implications of workplace bullying to immediate career decisions and long-term career trajectories and to support workers who have been negatively affected by these experiences.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interests with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

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