THE ABETTING BULLY: VICARIOUS BULLYING AND UNETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The purpose of this paper is to examine the phenomena of vicarious bullying, or an abetting bully, when a bully's subordinate is used to inflict abuse on the target. This study examines who is most affected by this multi-faceted organizational abuse in American higher education.
Background	Workplace bullying has received international attention. Recent studies in the United States have focused on workplace bullying in higher education. However, workplace bullying emerges from an elaborate social structure. This research article brings the unique perspective of vicarious bullying for analysis.
Methodology	A data collection from 729 American higher education professionals was used to answer the following three research questions which were addressed in this study: RQ1: What is the overall prevalence of vicarious bullying in American higher education? RQ2: What is the likelihood of experiencing vicarious bullying in American higher education based on gender? RQ3: What is the likelihood of experiencing vicarious bullying in American higher education based on a woman's race? A chi-square analysis was used to examine which demographic groups are more susceptible to vicarious bullying.
Contribution	This article expands the literature on workplace bullying in American higher education by considering how unethical leadership can contribute to and inspire abetting and vicarious bullies who are enabled to maintain the toxic work culture.
Findings	This article expands the literature on workplace bullying in American higher education by considering how unethical leadership can contribute to and inspire abetting and vicarious bullies who are enabled to maintain the toxic work culture.

Recommendations for Practitioners	Vicarious bullying occurs when the organization fails to curtail managerial abuse. The result is higher turnover for women employees. Working with chief diversity officers and EEO officials can develop policies that stifle this behavior.
Recommendations for Researchers	While workplace bullying has gained international attention, the organizational behavior of vicarious bullying is a unique organizational perspective that warrants further study.
Impact on Society	Data confirm that women are more likely to leave their organizations to avoid workplace bullying. Women's departures weaken an organization when they take their insight and knowledge with them.
Future Research	Future research can consider the relationship between ethical leadership at the department level and executive level of higher education, and how that might have an impact on the prevalence of workplace bullying.
Keywords	higher education, workplace bullying, vicarious bullying, gender, race

INTRODUCTION

Abetting and vicarious bullying behaviors signify the expansive bureaucratic influence bullies use to maintain their political power in higher education through coercion and manipulation. Such behaviors support a complex and abusive social structure. Abetting and vicarious bullies who hurt the targets on behalf of the primary bully (Hollis, 2017a) parallels the toxic triangle instituted by Pelletier, Kottke, and Sirotnik (2018). Narcissistic and self-aggrandizing toxic leaders engage in behaviors that benefit their positions without much concern for the institution. This toxic leader, who operates in an environment that allows for such toxicity, is emboldened by unethical, opportunistic, or colluding subordinates who are willing to maintain the pernicious center of power (Pelletier et al., 2018).

Namie and Lutgen-Sandvik (2010) also analyzed bullying accomplices. Their findings confirmed that bullies had support from personnel within toxic environments that tacitly allowed for continued abuse. Further, Namie and Lutgen-Sandvik (2010) remarked that, "when aggressive organizational members bully others, they rarely do so without accomplices of one type or another" (p. 344). Without interventions such as a policing through shared governance, ethical and humanitarian leadership, or other checks and balances suppressing such toxicity, the bullies prevail utilizing their accomplices, categorized in this study as abetting and vicarious bullies. Nonetheless, the topic of the accomplice and colluding subordinate bullies remain understudied and therefore the focus of this research. The abetting and vicarious bullying presents another avenue for analyzing organizational complexities that propagate workplace bullying in higher education.

For the purpose of this study, vicarious bullying is a form of organizational aggression when the primary bully sends or inspires a messenger, henchman, to bark orders, diminish staff accomplishments, and extend the bully's rule through fear (Hollis, 2017a). In vicarious bullying, the secondary bully is using the power of the primary bully to inflict emotional and psychological abuse on the target. Such bullies may be directed or simply enabled to abuse others after seeing that the primary bullies have been rewarded for mistreating staff. Vicarious bullying is a departure from bystanders and witnesses who are also third parties to the bullying behaviors. However, bystanders and witnesses are observing the bullying as a third party, instead of participating in the bullying in conjunction with the primary bully (Jenkins & Nickerson, 2017; Quirk & Campbell, 2015). This abetting/vicarious bully may be an administrative assistant or an entry-level colleague. Nevertheless, the abetting and vicarious bully is often a figure subordinate to the primary bully. Resultantly, such secondary bullies often gain favor in additional pay or privilege for doing the primary bully's bidding.

Vicarious bullying creates a widespread impact on the organization given the multiple onerous characters abusing the staff. Through the borrowed power of the original bully, the vicarious bully uses coercion, deception, and psychological abuse to control the staff. Further, the environment becomes more formidable and toxic when several junior bullies rise to serve the head bully. This application of abetting and vicarious bullying to the phenomena of workplace bullying moves beyond just considering the power differential between the bully and targets, but it elucidates the communal and environmental milieu required to support pervasive bullying behaviors (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006). A workplace bully cannot thrive in a vacuum; the work environment frequently has apathetic and unethical leaders within the organizational structure who fail to interrupt the abuse, or even encourage or model the abuse. Resultantly, bullies make an inclusive and diverse environment almost unobtainable. Favoritism, deceit, and aggression usurp merit and conscientious organizational progress.

This analysis provides a more comprehensive examination of workplace bullying by highlighting the inclusion and impact of secondary bullies. With more colleges and universities developing anti-workplace bullying policies, policy makers should be informed that a single bully typically does not contaminate the environment. The abetting and vicarious bullying component illustrates that a nexus of bullies often compromises the work environment; therefore, policy development should also be reflective of abetting and vicarious bullies. As this workplace bullying analysis embodies intersecting factors of American harassment laws, toxic work environments, American higher education, and the impact of ethical leadership, the following discussion addresses these elements that converge in yielding American workplace bullying in American higher education.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORKPLACE BULLYING AND AMERICAN HARASSMENT

Scandinavian researchers have led the workplace bullying research since the 1990s (Einarsen, 1999; Hoel & Einarsen, 1999; Sjotveit, 1997). Their work has documented the prevalence of workplace bullying and the adverse health results for employees who endure stressful bullying. By definition, workplace bullying does not solely rely on racist or sexist animus but instead is primarily based on a power differential (Hodson, Roscigno, & Lopez, 2006; Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper 2001; Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). The bully typically has more power and willingness to abuse that power to control and manipulate the target. The results of Scandinavian and European studies have influenced a number of countries, such as Norway, France, Canada, Sweden, Turkey, and Spain, to prohibit workplace bullying. Yet note, these countries are somewhat more homogenous than the American culture.

American employers and human resource professionals typically rely on 1960s civil rights legislation to consider how to address workplace abuse. The American harassment, which was prohibited over 50 years ago, typically governs internal human resources investigations and potential legal action, yet does not address workplace bullying. Legislation invoking workplace protection in the United States revolves around the 1964 Civil Rights Act, prohibiting harassment *based on* a protected class such as race, gender, religion, color, national origin, and later disability, pregnancy, and genetic information. Nonetheless, some employers in the United States still exploit the power differential in organizational structures whether a protected class is involved or not. When someone of a protected class, a white female, for example, harasses another white female, the target will face difficulty in claiming illegal harassment unless she can prove with data and demonstratively different treatment from men that she is facing illegal harassment from someone of her same protected class. Racism and sexism even across protected classes are difficult to prove. Racist or sexist epithets, risqué pictures, slurs, or gestures typically signify discrimination, yet employers in the United States have evolved with a savviness which avoids nudie calendars and hanging nooses overtly showing their bias. Nonetheless, though these artifacts are absent the internal bias can still linger.

Whether workplace bullying is a product of suppressed racism or sexism or a product of an insecure boss abusing an employee, close to 37% of Americans will face workplace bullying in their lifetime (Namie & Namie, 2009). As of 2018, only five states, Utah, Tennessee, Minnesota, Maryland, and California, have any legislation that addresses workplace bullying in addition to the federal prohibition of racism and sexism. Workplace bullying may include bias and discriminatory animism, but it typically includes a power differential. As women and people of color often are in the least powerful positions, they are more likely to face workplace bullying (Hollis, 2018b).

WORKPLACE BULLYING AND UNHEALTHY WORKSPACES

In many states, workplace bullying is still legal, and therefore typically ignored by human resources when targets of workplace bullying muster the resolve to report bullying behaviors (Hollis, 2016). Nonetheless, Matthiesen and Einarsen commented, "Exposure to systematic and long-lasting verbal, non-physical, and non-sexual, abusive and aggressive behaviour at the workplace may cause a host of negative health effects in the target" (2004, p. 335–336). When workplace bullying proliferates through higher education, the faculty and staff incur health and wellness issues (Cassidy, Faucher, & Jackson, 2017; Davies & Bansel, 2005; Westhues, 2004; Zabrodska, Linnell, Laws, & Davies, 2011). Such health conditions include but are not limited to heart disease, diabetes, panic attacks, insomnia, and posttraumatic stress (Minibas-Poussard, Seckin-Celik, & Bingol, 2018; Spence Laschinger & Nosko, 2015; Weuve, Pitney, Martin, & Mazerolle, 2014). Tehrani (2004) reported that of 67 healthcare professionals who faced workplace bullying, 44% experienced high levels of posttraumatic stress. Such reactions are associated with the frequency of bullying, the power differential between the target and the bully, and the inability for the target to escape the abuse (Leymann, 1990).

Those who witness the workplace bullying also experience adverse reactions. Lutgen-Sanvik (2006) noted that witnessing workplace bullying could be a devastating experience for bystanders along with the abused targeted. Other researchers have further noted that witnesses experience anxiety, panic, exhaustion, and depression (Emdad, Alipour, Hagberg, & Jensen, 2013; Vartia, 2001). When an organization ignores workplace bullying, that organization cultivates a hostile work environment as the bully is allowed to terrorize employees with no consequences. In response, employees often engage in self-isolating behaviors that minimize collaboration. Employees take more sick leave to deal with bully-related health issues and lose trust for the organization overall for allowing such abuse in the first place (Frost, 2003; Hollis, 2016; Vartia, 2003). These health problems can span several years as targets of workplace bullying in higher education report being bullied over two and three years; some respondents reported enduring workplace bullying for over five years (Hollis, 2016).

As women and people of color are often hindered in achieving organizational power positions, they have less access to resources and policy development that can prevent workplace bullying. Higher education espouses itself as a sector that embraces equality and diversity. In converse, when leadership abuses the power differential, women and people of color are not only disenfranchised but often face career disruption to escape bullying behavior.

A mitigating factor is the ethical leader who creates an empathetic work environment with clear policies and expectations. Such an ethical climate confirms which behaviors are accepted and which behaviors are admonished (Bulutlar & Öz, 2009; Cowie, Naylor, Rivers, Smith, & Pereira, 2002). As discussed later in this article, ethical leaders can prevent workplace bullying. Comparatively, unethical leadership allows bullying behaviors actually enhancing workplace abuse (Wornham, 2003).

WORKPLACE BULLYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education with its commitment to enlightened thought and intellectual advancements is also a workplace reportedly with a higher prevalence of workplace bullying (Hollis, 2016; Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013; Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2003). Researchers have noted, that such incivility and negative behavior in higher education is actually normalized and expected despite the costly damage

to the institution and its employees (Cassidy et al., 2017; Cowie et al., 2013; Hollis, 2016). Reportedly, workplace bullying is particularly costly, with targets of workplace bullying spending 3.9 hours a week or five weeks a year ruminating about strategies to avoid or defeat the bully. Targets often report withstanding such an abuse longer than three years (Hollis, 2016). The time wasted on workplace bullies is time not spent in commitment to the organizational mission.

In considering the organizational factors that spawn incivility and workplace bullying, Pelletier et al. (2018) reflect on organizational instability in higher education that yields bullying behaviors. Mercurial enrollments and post-recession budget cuts have destabilized higher education heightening personnel's insecurities and leadership's hostilities (Hollis, 2016; Twale, 2017). Further, Pelletier et al. (2018) highlight the impact of a virulent and destructive leader who attracts and inspires accomplices to maintain power. When human resources departments do not address the destructive leader in an unstable environment, a dynamic reported by several researchers, workplace bullying permeates the organization, stifling morale, creativity, and loyalty (Dalager, 2016; Hollis, 2016; Pelletier et al., 2018). In addition, as noted by Westhues (2006), when academic bullying and mobbing go unchecked, other colleagues can become embroiled in the conflict and abuse.

For staff, workplace bullying manifests in unreasonable deadlines, unwarranted budget cuts, and minute-by-minute accounting of time (Gerstenfield, 2016). Bullied staff members also endure insults, commands, yelling, and cursing. Also, workplace bullies often perceive popular and hard-working employees as a threat to their own power. Consequently, popular high performers draw the ire of an insecure bully (Gerstenfield, 2016; Keeling, Quigley, & Roberts, 2006).

Faculty ranks engage in a battle of the minds when it comes to workplace bullying. Faculty bullies use passive aggressive moves such as withholding information and the denigration of academic accomplishments. Twale (2017) and Hollis (2018a) reflect on how faculty members use the tenants of academic freedom to advance incivility, thus perverting faculty rights to engage research freely with a presumed right to say anything in any manner. Such presumptions emerge from the power faculty embody as the engine of any higher education organization. Twale's (2017) comments align with this notion in stating that faculty members are the "means of production" (p. 33). The faculty members produce the scholarship, the grants, and degrees. Therefore, faculty productivity in the United States determines the Carnegie Classification, with the most prestigious organizations earning the coveted Research 1 classification. The power within the faculty, especially tenured faculty, often outlasts that of executive administrators. In the ascendance from junior faculty ranks to tenured faculty ranks, the junior faculty members who rely on the approval of peers to grant tenure are in a particularly susceptible position and vulnerable to bullying. Given the lifetime security and freedom at stake on the other side of tenure, junior faculty members endure last minute class assignments, unruly students, and extensive service requirements. The life of the mind can be a marvelous profession, yet the road to such a career often is rife with incivility and uncertainty until tenure is granted. Unfortunately, bullying may continue after this significant milestone is met.

Within both faculty ranks and staff ranks, powerful leaders can use that abetting and vicarious bullying strategy to wreak havoc on subordinates. The abetting and vicarious bully will extend the incivility in an unstable environment. Staff members who are not tied to the organization through the 'golden handcuffs' of superior retirement benefits, tuition remission, or local family responsibilities will leave the toxic environment (Costrell & Podgursky, 2010). While an employee may be figuratively handcuffed by benefits and circumstances, employees can mentally disengage from the university setting while producing their scholarship. If they can persist until tenure is granted, often-productive faculty members leave the organization once earning tenure if they are successful in securing the same financial benefits elsewhere with tenure. In either facet, the abetting and vicarious bullying and its problematic extension of the primary bullies warrant additional analysis in workplace bullying research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

Brown and Mitchell's (2010) ethical leadership theory informs this study's conceptual framework. Their comprehensive review of scholarship regarding leadership ethical and the resulting "dark" organizational behaviors are applied to this analysis on workplace bullying and the subsequent vicarious bully. Respondents in previous studies on workplace bullying attribute the problem to apathetic leaders who allow the proliferation of workplace bullying (Hollis, 2016). Because unethical leaders incentivize cruelty by enabling, empowering and at times promoting abetting bullies, the work culture soon recognizes such cruelty as a valued organizational behavior (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Employees respond to unethical behavior by either joining such bad behavior, through mental disengagement (Byrne, 2014), or turnover (Hollis, 2016).

Morality informs an ethical leader, both as a person and a manager (Treviño, Hartman, & Brown, 2000; Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003). As a person, moral leaders engage in honest dialogue and decision making while avoiding duplicity and manipulation. Moral leaders use empathy and genuine concern for employees (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Such leaders listen to their staff and apply rules, resources, and opportunity fairly. Accordingly, they expect and maintain a moral work environment through their own model behavior. The ethical leaders not only expect such conscientious behavior from fellow colleagues, but they also remain resolute in projecting these moral behaviors. Employees typically react to moral leadership with devotion and an elevated organizational commitment. Many employees actually feel indebted to an ethical leader who cultivates a conscientious and compassionate work environment (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). In such an environment, employees will give extra time or personal resources to help the organization. Further, ethical leadership creates a culture that sets expectations; when the culture is one of caring, employees in such a climate are often restrained from engaging negative behaviors such as bullying (Ambrose, Arnaud, & Schminke, 2008; Lavan & Martin 2007). When an ethical leader establishes a caring climate with ethical and empathetic rules that are also enforced without favoritism, the people in that culture recognize which behaviors are accepted, and which are admonished (Bulutlar & Öz, 2009; Martin & Cullen, 2006). Consequently, ethical leadership and their corresponding cultures are mutually exclusive from primary bullies, trailing vicarious bullies and their abhorrent bullying behaviors.

In converse, employees do not trust immoral leaders and the environments they cultivate. Unethical leadership behaviors yield cynicism and disdain contributing to staff's deviant work behaviors (Bulutlar & Öz, 2009). Unethical leadership is self-serving, ignoring aggressive work behaviors, institutional policies, and the resulting despondent staff. Such leaders can explicitly recruit vicarious bullies, or the culture established by the unethical bullying simply condones the bully behaviors. Multiple secondary bullies can evolve without correction or reprimand. Conclusively, workplace bullying festers when unethical leaders model unscrupulous behaviors, which can inspire other aberrant organizational behaviors (Bulutlar & Öz, 2009) and fail to diminish workplace aggression among the staff (Hepworth & Towler, 2004; Brown & Treviño, 2006).

Amoral or unethical leadership engages in 'dark' and inappropriate acts (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Researchers categorize this behavior as tyrannical (Ashforth, 1994), toxic (Frost, 2004), abusive, strategically manipulative, and purposely undermining (Tepper, Moss, Lockhart, & Carr, 2007). Holt and Marques (2012) further analyzed the unethical and apathetic leadership, using terms such as 'grandiose,' 'deceitful,' 'remorseless,' 'irresponsible,' and 'impulsive,' terms that they attribute to psychopathic behavior (Hare, 1999).

Sims and Brinkmann (2002) noted that unethical leaders gravitate to other unethical employees and reward these unprincipled employees with favor and promotion. Such unscrupulous leaders reward aggressive and destructive behaviors while failing to champion conscientious and empathetic employee behaviors. Unethical leaders seeking unethical employees give rise to abetting and vicarious bullies, who willingly hurt fellow employees for the favor of the unethical bully boss. At times, when unethical leadership has cultivated such a demoralizing environment, the unethical subordinates have

learned to execute unethical behavior without direction (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). These subordinates operate on the automatic pilot, yet without a moral compass. Resultantly, amoral department heads can insulate themselves with "plausible deniability" (Baker & Faulkner, 1993; Braithwaite, 1989; Brown & Mitchell, 2010). Under an unethical and amoral leader, workplace aggression and bullying metastasize, extinguishing creativity and empathy. Such leaders initially seem ideal for the position, but use charm and their organizational power to infiltrate the organization and taint the work environment. In turn, workplace bullying behaviors and the emergent vicarious bullies are directly associated with unethical leadership.

Within the conflux of American harassment laws, toxic work environments, American higher education, and the impact of ethical leadership, ethical leaders and their commitment to ethical rules and procedures quash a variety of workplace bullies. An ethical leader uses the fair application of policy to combat behaviors devoid of collaboration and care for employees. Further, just as ethical leaders quash primary bullies, abetting and vicarious bullies would be repressed as well in a healthy and humane work environment.

RESEARCH METHODS

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

After receiving IRB approval in June 2017, the researcher conducted the data collection in late 2017/early 2018, relying on a sample from the *Higher Education Publication* (HEP) directory. The participants' contact information in American two-year and four-year colleges included emails. Regarding reliability, the researcher has conducted previous survey-based studies using the same questions, demonstrating reliability over time (de Souza, Alexandre, & Guirardello, 2017). Just as previous instruments were beta-tested, the instrument for this study was beta-tested by a professor, a former affirmative action officer, and a human resources expert; all those who beta-tested the instrument had at least 18 years of experience in American higher education.

Regarding content validity and stability, reproducing the survey and results in a separate occasion, many of the questions in this survey were used in a previous study in 2012 and 2014 to examine a different population in American higher education (de Souza et al., 2017). This instrument, while using many of those previously disseminated questions, was designed to be industry specific to American higher education, and administered five years after the initial industry-specific study in 2012. The data collection for this analysis is a new administration in a new historical moment, after some states, colleges, and universities have created anti-bullying policies.

This data set is not a data set of convenience, but data is collected with a 51-question instrument to allow for various analyses from the same data collection. While the entire instrument is not available, below are the questions used in this study. The analysis included asking about gender, race defining workplace bullying, then asking about vicarious bullying. These questions generated the binary variables for the chi-square analysis by determining the number of participants by gender, race, and those who experienced vicarious workplace bullying:

Questions that informed this analysis:

> *What is your gender? Male   Female   Transgender*

This question established a binary variable, as there were no transgender respondents. Further, also in the demographic intake, respondents were asked if they were white or of color, establishing race as a binary variable (white or of color).

Definition of workplace bullying was offered first:

> *Note the definition of bullying [Workplace-bullying] is: harassing, offending, socially excluding someone, or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. This behavior occurs repeatedly and regularly over a period of time.*

With the escalating process, the person confronted ends up in an inferior position (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011, p. 22).

In regard to VICARIOUS bullying (boss sends assistant or other staff to do his/her bullying) in higher education ... (check all that apply)

A) I have been VICARIOUSLY bullied in the last 2 years.
B) I have witnessed VICARIOUS bullying in the last 2 years.
C) I have NOT witnessed or experienced VICARIOUS bullying in the last 2 years.

The questions on race, gender and experience with vicarious bullying were used to create binary variables for the chi-square analysis that operates on yes/no answers. Consequently, SPSS does not calculate standard deviation, mean, and median because this analysis did not operate with the continuous variables needed for such calculations.

The sample was primarily comprised of middle- to upper-level administrators in American higher education, such as directors, executive directors, deans, provosts, and vice presidents. The sample also included assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors. The types of institutions were inclusive of large state schools, large private schools, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Community Colleges, Religious Affiliated schools, and research institutions. These designations were not mutually exclusive. A Research 2 Carnegie Classification could also be private or a state institution. A Hispanic Serving Institution could also be a community college. The result was *n* = 729 respondents participating in the study. IBM SPSS was used to analyze the data with a chi-square statistical test to determine the likelihood of a target facing vicarious bullying based on gender and race (see Table 1).

Table 1. Organizational type
(Participants could choose more than one)

Type of School	%	N
Community College	31.56	N = 213
Small Private school (under 5,000 enrollment)	20.15	N = 136
Large State school (over 15,000 enrollment)	14.07	N = 95
Small Liberal Arts School (under 5,000 enrollment)	12.44	N = 84
Religious Affiliation	8.89	N = 60
Historically Black College/University HBCU	5.78	N = 39
Hispanic Serving Institution	5.48	N= 37
Technical/Professional/ Trade School	5.19	N = 35
Research 1 Carnegie Classification	3.85	N= 26
Large Private school (over 15,000 enrollment)	3.26	N = 22
Research 3 Carnegie Classification	2.22	N = 15
Research 2 Carnegie Classification	1.04	N = 7
Ivy League	.03	N = 2

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Quantitative research allows for an analysis of a larger sample, leading to descriptive and predictive analysis. While the larger dataset lends itself to predictive statistical analysis, quantitative data often do not include the respondents' personal experiences regarding the topic. The survey was administered online through SurveyMonkey™, via direct emails and industry specific social media groups. With an unknown number of potential participants who possibly could engage the study, the response rate is unavailable. As with most studies, this data set is also limited to the honesty provided by respondents in reporting their experiences with workplace bullying. The data collection utilized a 51-question instrument specifically designed to garner information on a number of subjects on workplace bullying in higher education. Nonetheless, this is not a data set of convenience. While the questions used for this analysis are available in this study, the instrument itself is too lengthy to publish in an appendix.

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Those who research workplace bullying in higher education have collected data regarding the respondents' experiences in dealing with this emotional and psychological abuse (Hollis, 2016; Misawa & Rowland, 2015; Simpson & Cohen, 2004). Workplace bullies may use emails and gossip to hurt the target. Further, workplace bullies continue often with an escalating focus to terrorize the target. While some states, such as Utah, Tennessee, Minnesota, Maryland, and California, have prohibited workplace bullying, higher education employees are still subject to workplace bullying at disproportionate levels. The result is costly interference with work productivity; hence, while bullying may appear to be an interpersonal conflict, bullying behavior emerges from deep-rooted organizational problems that not only hurt the bullied targets (Balducci, Fraccaroli, & Schaufeli, 2011; Vega & Comer, 2005), but also adversely affect the bystanders (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2011; Emdad et al., 2013; Vartia, 2001).

This specific study examines how vicarious workplace bullying affects women and women of color in higher education. For the purpose of this study, women of color include Black/African American women, Hispanic/Latina women, Native American women, and Asian/Pacific Islander women. Vicarious bullying occurs when the primary and more powerful bully sends a subordinate to abuse and bully the target.

> RQ1: What is the overall prevalence of vicarious bullying in American higher education?

This question is answered with descriptive statistics.

> RQ2: What is the likelihood of experiencing vicarious bullying in American higher education based on gender?
>> H_1: There is a higher likelihood of experiencing vicarious bullying based on gender.
>
> RQ3: What is the likelihood of experiencing vicarious bullying in American higher education based on a woman's race?
>> H_1: There is a higher likelihood of experiencing vicarious bullying based on a woman's race.

A chi-square analysis was used to address the second and third research questions.

FINDINGS

During a four-month data collection period, November 2017 through February 2018, a total of 729 participants responded to the study.

From the general data, $n = 498$ women answered the survey. These women participants were a mixture of faculty, middle-level positions, such as deans and directors, and upper-level positions (see Table 2).

Table 2. Job titles of women who participated in the study (N=498)

Title	%	N
Director	28.71	N = 143
Other	11.85	N= 59
Dean of College	11.04	N = 55
Provost/Vice President	9.04	N = 45
Assistant Director/Coordinator/Manager	9.04	N = 45
Executive Director	6.22	N= 31
Associate or Full Professor (tenured)	5.02	N = 25
Assistant/Associate Vice President/Vice Provost	4.82	N = 24
Assistant Professor (non-tenured)	4.62	N = 23
Counselor/Advisor	3.82	N= 19
Department Chair	3.61	N = 18
Associate Dean	2.01	N = 10
President	.20	N = 1

According to a study in 2016 by College and University Professional Association of Human Resources (CUP-HR), only seven percent of upper administration in higher education is Black/African American. Three percent were Hispanic/Latino, two percent were Asian, and another one percent identified as another ethnicity else. Eighty-six percent were white (Seltzer, 2017). Therefore, this sample is slightly more diverse than the sample represented in the CUP-HR study (see Table 3).

Table 3. Demographics

Race	%	N
White	73.82	N=499
Black/African American	14.94	N=101
Hispanic/Latino/a	4.44	N= 30
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.93	N=13
Multiple Race	4.29	N= 29
Gender		
Male	29.29	N=198
Female	70.71	N=478
Sexual Orientation		
Straight/Heterosexual	1.72	N=620
Gay/Lesbian	5.77	N=39
Bisexual	2.51	N=17

To answer RQ1, "*What is the overall prevalence of vicarious bullying in American higher education?*", 58% (n = 384) reported being affected by workplace bullying either as the target or a bystander. Forty-two percent or $n = 283$ reported being affected by vicarious bullying when the boss sends a subordinate to conduct the bullying.

To answer the second research question, RQ2: "*What is the likelihood of experiencing vicarious bullying in American higher education based on gender?*" with the hypothesis, H_1: There is a higher likelihood of experiencing vicarious bullying based on gender, 45% of the women answering this question (214 of 476) and 36% of the men answering this question (70 of 197) stated that they were affected by vicarious bullying. The following chi-square analysis confirms that, proportionally, women are more likely to face a vicarious bully, in higher education (see Table 4).

Table 4. Women are more likely than men to perceive vicarious bullying (N=672)

		Men	Women	Total
1 = Yes, Faces vicarious bullying	Count	70	213*	283
	Expected count	83	200	283
2 = No, Does not face vicarious bullying	Count	127	262	389
	Expected count	114	275	389
Total	Count	197	475	672
	Expected count	197	475	672

Statistically significant* X^2 (1, $n = 672$) = 4.950, $P = 0.026$*

For women who face vicarious bullying, the expected count is 200, but the actual count shows 213 women face vicarious bullying, which is higher than expected. For men, the expected count is 83 and the expected count is 70, which is lower than expected. Further, the chi-square analysis revealed that 275 women were expected to report that they did not face vicarious bullying; however, the actual count of the women who do not face vicarious bully is 262, which is less than expected. In converse, the chi-square analysis showed that 114 men are expected to report not facing vicarious bullying; however, 127 men, more than expected, reported they did not face vicarious bullying. These findings confirm that gender is a significant factor in who faces vicarious bullying in higher education. The chi-square tabulation reveals an association between variables, which is considered *statistically significant** when $P < 0.05$. The findings reveal X^2 (1, $n = 672$) = 4.950, $P = 0.026$*. Therefore, hypothesis H_1, there is a difference in prevalence of vicarious bullying based on gender, is accepted.

To specifically address the third research question, RQ3: "*What is the likelihood of experiencing vicarious bullying in American higher education based on a woman's race?*" with the hypothesis H_1: There is a higher likelihood of experiencing vicarious bullying based on a woman's race, the following chi-square analysis was used (see Table 5).

Table 5. Women of color are more likely to perceive vicarious bullying (N=477)

		Women of color	White women	Total
1 = Yes, Faces vicarious bullying	Count	67*	148	215
	Expected Count	56.8	158.2	215
2 = No, Does not face vicarious bullying	Count	59	203	262
	Expected Count	69.2	192.8	262
Total	Count	126	351	477
	Expected Count	126	351	477

Statistically significant* X^2 (1, $n = 477$) = 4.539, $P = 0.033$*

For women of color who face vicarious bullying, the expected count is 56.8, but the actual count showed 67 women of color face bullying, which was higher than expected. For white women, the expected count is 158.2, while 148 white women actually reported bullying, which is lower than the expected count. Further, the chi-square analysis revealed that 59 women of color actually report that they do not face vicarious bullying, while the expected count of the women of color who do not face vicarious bullying is 69.2. In short, fewer women of color reported not facing vicarious workplace bullying than expected. In converse, the chi-square analysis showed that 203 white women were expected to report that they do not face vicarious bullying; however, 192.8 white women actually reported not facing bullying, which is lower than expected. Women of color are more likely to endure vicarious workplace bullying in higher education than white women. The chi-square tabulation reveals an association between variables, which was *statistically significant** at $P < 0.05$. The findings reveal X^2 (1, $n = 477$) = 4.539, $P = 0.033$*. Therefore, hypothesis H_1, there is a difference in prevalence of vicarious bullying based on women's race, is accepted.

Due to the experiences white women and women of color face, women are making career decisions to avoid this workplace abuse. Consequently, more white women and women of color report departure from their institutions as a direct result of workplace bullying (see Table 6).

Table 6. Respondents who have left or planning to leave due to workplace bullying

Percentage	Group	Number
48% of	All respondents	79/585
38% of	Men	63/163
48% of	White women	151/312
59% of	Women of color	65/110

When women are forced to leave their organizations, their ideas, innovations, and models of women's leadership leave with them. Students, faculty, and staff are further denied the benefit of a diverse and equitable higher educational environment when women take their contributions from the institution. Also, typically when a target of workplace bullying leaves an organization, the goal is to flee from the bully, not advance the career. Resultantly, more white women and women of color leave their jobs or plan to leave their jobs compared to men because of workplace bullying in any form.

DISCUSSION

Study respondents repeatedly mentioned the need for leadership accountability and policy development to stop workplace bullying in higher education. In short, the presence of ethical leadership governed by empathy and genuine care for employees would diminish primary bullies and the secondary abetting and vicarious bullying. When executive leadership subscribes to the tenants of ethical leadership, workplace bullies would not thrive or develop junior bullies. The ethical leader would develop conscientious policies and then use these conscientious policies to generate a healthy workplace. Such intervention from ethical and moral leaders would prohibit these different bullying types from destroying staff morale (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). In contrast, when the executive leadership is unethical, narcissistic, and self-aggrandizing, a toxic work environment flourishes. Respondent #714 of the data collection confirmed such in writing, "It all starts from the top. Our president could care less what happens to us – so bullies reign, while the president stays in the paper" (personal communication, 2018). Abetting and vicarious bullying confirms that workplace bullying often evolves beyond one-on-one toxic experience with a primary bullying hurting the target. The mix of callous and apathetic leadership styles and non-compliance with policy lead to these expensive and deleterious work environments. Hence, analyzing ethical leadership, or the lack thereof, along with the complicit

vicarious bullying sheds light on the organizational culture and the people who support workplace bullying.

Xu, Loi, and Ngo (2016) noted that ethical leadership must support ethical policy and fair application of those policies, inclusive of training for managers and supervisors. For example, when leadership is not held accountable for unethical hiring and promotion practices, ethical employees have a diminished chance for advancement because the bullies instead promote their respective accomplices. In contrast, ethical leaders would engage sound policy development and application that eradicates favoritism and subjective compliance with procedures.

The role of the ethical leader in higher education environments is to establish and maintain a productive and conscientious workplace in which faculty and staff can engage colleagues without fear of belittling retribution. A simple comment from a leader in the more powerful position can subdue workplace bullying behaviors before these antics truly take hold in the department or division. In addition to addressing the microaggressions that can blossom into workplace bullying, the ethical leader is in a position to incentivize positive behaviors and promote other principled colleagues. Rewarding and celebrating positive and collaborative behaviors sends a message to the organization on which values and behaviors are preferred. Further, ethical leaders can invoke progressive discipline, and workplace coaches to help bullies abandon abusive behaviors. When ethical leadership documents poor behavior, gives warning to all types of bullies about wicked behavior, and does not avoid demoting or terminating the bullies who destroy the work environment, that ethical leader sets conscientious priorities eclipsing organizational maltreatment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Workplace bullying as a communal and pervasive organizational phenomenon does not flourish overnight. Unethical and negligent leadership allows these destructive behaviors to take root and strangle an organization. Without attentive ethical leadership that conscientiously champions merit and equity, the belligerence of the bully, instead of the content of one's character, shapes the organization. The application of a humane and ethical leader curtailing workplace bullying is consistent with (Power et al., 2013) who found that more humane cultures find workplace bullying unacceptable. The findings of this study revealed that vicarious bullying is a compelling element in higher education, which elucidates the complexity of institutional workplace bullying. Resultantly, women and people of color, who are often on the deficient end of the power differential, are more likely to endure vicarious bullying.

Future studies can examine bullies and how the toxic environment enthuses abetting bullies. The vicarious bully can act on inspiration to follow in a primary bully's footsteps or the primary bully's directives to abuse the faculty and staff. Further, studies can also encompass potential reward systems that support the abetting bully. A qualitative approach that queries targets would be suited to examine 'how' vicarious bullies operate and 'why' vicarious bullies operate (Hollis, 2017b; Smith, 2015; Van Manen, 2016). In conclusion, to advance research on vicarious bullying, the following are suggested.

VICARIOUS BULLYING AND POLICY

An examination of the prevalence of vicarious bullying in relationship to institutional anti-bullying policies could determine if such policies inhibit colluding and vicarious bullying behaviors. This complex style of workplace bullying includes a primary bully and secondary bullies.

IMPACT ON GENDER AND HEALTH

The findings highlight an impact on diversity and equity; therefore, chief diversity officers, who are asked to promote diversity and equity, could be researched. If chief diversity officers recognize workplace bullying, the more complex vicarious bullying, and the impact on diversity, chief diversity officers could stem this destructive behavior. Further, the literature on workplace bullying confirms

that the target's health is compromised in toxic environments. A qualitative phenomenological approach can highlight these dynamics and consider if multiple bullies (the primary and abetting bullies) exacerbate the abuse on women and women of color, which intensifies the targets' resulting health challenges.

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