Racial/ethnic bullying: Exploring links between bullying and racism in the US workplace[☆]

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Abstract

This study examined relations between the incidence of workplace bullying and the everyday experiences of members of ethnic and racial minorities in the American workplace. Particular attention was paid to expressions of bullying that overtly or specifically refer to race or ethnicity, in the form of more or less subtle acts of discrimination and hostile treatment, introducing the term 'racial/ethnic bullying.' Participants belonging to four racial/ethnic groups (Asians, African-Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and whites) responded to a written survey of general and racial/ethnic bullying experiences, responses, and preferred modes and methods of internal organizational redress and dispute resolution. Very different profiles emerged between bullying perpetrated by supervisors/superiors versus co-workers/peers in the organization.
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1. Introduction

Workplace bullying is attracting increasing attention in the popular media and business press (Adams & Crawford, 1992; Big Bad Bullies, 2002; Namie & Namie, 2000). It has been the focus of scholarly attention as well, spreading from early organizational research on "mobbing" in Scandanavia (Einarsen, 1999; Leymann, 1990), Germany (Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996), and Austria (Niedl, 1996), to "bullying" in the United Kingdom (Rayner & Keashly, in press), and US research on bullying and emotional abuse (Keashly, 1998), incivility (Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001), workplace aggression (Neuman & Baron, 2003), and counterproductive work behavior (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001). Research has explored bullying from a number of perspectives, including forms of ill-treatment and hostile behavior (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Keashly, 1998; Pearson et al., 2001), incidence rates (Rayner, 1997; Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2003), characteristics of bullies and their targets (Zapf, 1999), organizational and social contexts that enable or foster such behavior (Hoel & Salin, 2003; Vartia, 1996; Zapf, 1999), processes such as escalation of conflict (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), ill effects on the target of bullying and organization (Tehrani, 2003; Zapf et al., 1996), and resolutions of bullying incidents and conflicts (Richards & Daley, 2003).

"Bullying," the umbrella concept for these various conceptualizations of ill-treatment and hostile behavior toward people at work, ranges from the most subtle, even unconscious incivilities to the most blatant, intentional emotional abuse. It includes single incidents and escalating patterns of behavior. In the current study, the researchers expand the scope of inquiry by differentiating between "general bullying," or behaviors that can occur to anyone without reference to race or ethnicity, and "racial/ethnic bullying," which attacks the target explicitly based on race or ethnicity.

There has been little empirical research connecting the incidence of bullying with everyday experiences of members of ethnic and racial groups in the American workplace. In light of dramatic changes in the legal and regulatory environment, societal norms, and organizational strategies, there is evidence that the overt enactment and expression of racism has been largely replaced by a symbolic or modern form of racism (McConahay, 1986; Rowe, 1990; Sears, 1988). Some scholars have argued that while laws and norms no longer condone overtly racist behaviors, the "modern" workplace provides ample opportunity for subtle, even unconscious manifestations of racism, including neglect, incivility, humor, ostracism, inequitable treatment, and other forms of "micro-aggression" and "micro-inequities" (Pierce, 1970; Rowe, 1990). Micro-aggressions consist of subtle, apparently relatively innocuous behaviors by themselves, but when "delivered incessantly…the cumulative effect to the victim and to the victimizer is of an unimaginable magnitude" (Pierce, 1970; p. 266).

Another aspect of bullying is the particular dynamic of abusive supervision, also known as supervisory bullying, petty tyranny, or social undermining (Ashforth, 1997; Duffy & Ferrier, 2003; Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002; Tepper, 2000). Ill-treatment by organizational superiors has been demonstrated to negatively impact employees and their organizations in areas such as job and life satisfaction, justice perceptions,

organizational commitment, work alienation, psychological contract violation, work–family conflict, turnover, and psychological distress. Tepper (2000) specifically links ongoing and condoned supervisory abuse with employees' perceptions of procedural injustice, underscoring perceptions that the organization has done little to develop or enforce procedures to protect employees from such abuse.

The current study was a preliminary exploration with three primary purposes. First, this study provided a descriptive portrait of the bullying experiences of employees across a wide range of occupations, job levels, and work environments. Second, potential differences were explored between African-American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white employees, in frequency and types of bullying behaviors experienced and emotional and behavioral responses. Third, the study examined preferred means of conflict management and alternative dispute resolution, both internal and external to the organization, from the perspectives of general and racial/ethnic bullying targets. As this was an exploratory study, it would be premature to propose a formal model with attendant hypotheses. However, the review of the recent workplace bullying and discrimination literature suggests six propositions to be explored.

Proposition 1. Employees who perceive themselves as targets of bullying behaviors at work are likely to respond emotionally, attitudinally, and socially, in addition to taking or considering taking concrete behavioral steps in response to the experience. These two clusters of responses (emotional, attitudinal, social-support-seeking responses, and active redress-seeking behaviors) will accompany an individual's experience of both general and racial/ethnic bullying.

P1. *High levels of bullying relate to high levels of responses to bullying.*

Proposition 2. Workplace incivility has a tendency to spiral (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). The initial bullying behavior and the response of its target should not be viewed as a single static or linear cause-and-effect incident, but rather as pieces of a complex interplay of behaviors by various organizational actors. It is difficult to disentangle a specific response of a target to a bullying incident from ongoing emotional and behavioral work experiences. Therefore, employees who perceive themselves to be targets of bullying at work will also experience high levels of stress, negative emotions, and physical symptoms at work in general, and will engage in counterproductive work behavior (CWB).

P2. *High levels of bullying relate to high levels of negative emotional, physical, and behavioral responses to work in general.*

Propositions 3 and 4. The patterns of relations with general versus racial/ethnic bullying will be complex, depending upon the racial/ethnic group. Almost by definition, Asian, African-American, and Hispanic/Latino employees are more likely than white employees to experience racial/ethnic bullying. It is unlikely that such attacks are limited to overtly racist actions; members of minority groups who experience higher levels of racial/ethnic bullying are likely to experience higher levels of general bullying as well.

P3. *Asian, African-American, and Hispanic/Latino employees report higher levels of both general and racial/ethnic bullying than white employees.*

P4. *Race/ethnicity moderate the relation between general and racial/ethnic bullying. Asian, African-American, and Hispanic/Latino, but not white, employees who report high levels of racial/ethnic bullying also report high levels of general bullying.*

Propositions 5 and 6. The experience of bullying is likely to affect employees' trust in the dispute resolution and conflict management systems of their organizations. Particularly, victims of bullying by supervisors or higher-level organization members might have lower levels of trust in the internal modes of redress of the organizations.

P5. *Employees who experience higher levels of general or racial/ethnic bullying are less likely to trust internal organizational avenues of redress, and more likely to support external solutions such as legislation.*

P6. *Employees reporting general or racial/ethnic bullying by supervisors report less confidence than targets of co-worker bullying in internal organizational forms of redress, and higher support of external solutions such as legislation.*

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were 262 full-time employees solicited by mail and e-mail from lists provided by the National Association of African-American Human Resources Professionals, Hispanic MBA Association, Loyola University Chicago Alumni Association (MBA graduates), and the National Black MBA Association (Illinois). A reasonably precise response rate cannot be calculated, because the e-mail lists were of indeterminate length, and the postal lists resulted in a large number of 'addressee unknown' returns. The Hispanic MBA Association and Loyola University MBA alumni participants responded to an e-mail solicitation. These participants chose to respond by mail, e-mail, or by linking to an anonymous Web-based survey. The rest were mailed solicitation letters and survey booklets, and anonymously mailed back the survey booklets. Of the 262 respondents who completed the survey, 28 (8.8%) were Asian, 138 (52.5%) were African-American, 27 (10.3%) were Hispanic/Latino, 71 (27%) were white, and 4 (1.5%) were other. Ninety (34.5%) were men and 172 (65.6%) were women. Managerial positions were held by 161 (61.9%) of the participants.

2.2. Measures

The anonymous self-report survey included measures of general bullying, racial/ethnic bullying, emotional/attitudinal reactions to bullying incidents, active/

behavioral responses to bullying incidents, emotional/physical strains ("CWB-emotion") experienced at work in general, counterproductive work behaviors ("CWB-action") committed at work in general, and effectiveness of human resource, conflict management, and dispute resolution systems and strategies. As this was an exploratory study, and to compile a questionnaire of reasonable length, these measures were abbreviated checklists compiled from existing measures in the cases of bullying and counterproductive work behavior, and checklists designed for the purpose of this study derived from the bullying literature (Hoel, Einarsen, & Cooper, 2003; Keashly, 1998; Richards & Daley, 2003; Tehrani, 2003; Zapf et al., 1996) and dispute resolution literature (Lipsky, Seeber, & Fincher, 2003; Stallworth, McPherson, & Rute, 2001).

2.2.1. Bullying

General bullying behaviors were assessed with a behavioral checklist based on a master list compiled from a number of existing measures (Duffy et al., 2002; Keashly, 1998; Keashly & Jagatic, 2000; Pearson et al., 2001). The goal was to avoid duplication and come up with a list of reasonable length that would cover the domain (content validity) represented by existing measures. The resulting 25 items were put in a checklist format in which the participant was asked "Over the past 5 years, how often have you experienced someone behaving toward yourself as follows in your place(s) of work?" An example is "...spread false rumors about your work performance." For each item, the participant was also asked: "For each item that has occurred, please indicate who DID the behavior (a co-worker, a supervisor, both or other)." An additional seven items, in parallel format, referred specifically to race or ethnicity. Examples are "Used racial or ethnic slurs to describe you" and "Excluded you from social interactions during or after work because of your race or ethnicity." Response choices ranged from 1 = Never to 5 = Extremely Often. The distinction between these two sets of items (general bullying and racial/ethnic bullying) was supported by exploratory factor analysis. The items and factor loadings are presented in Table 1. One item did not clearly load on a factor and was omitted.

2.2.2. Reaction to bullying incidents

A checklist followed of experiences or behavioral reactions: "In response to the same or other similar unfair, discriminatory, or emotionally abusive incidents you have experienced within the last five years." These included four emotional and attitudinal responses to bullying, such as "Became intensely emotionally upset when reminded of the incident" and "Experienced a decrease in commitment to your job or loyalty to your employer" and four behavioral responses to bullying, such as "Told a supervisor" or "Filed a grievance or EEO lawsuit." Response choices ranged from 1 = Never to 5 = Extremely Often. The distinction between these two sets of items was supported by exploratory factor analysis (see Table 2). This checklist was created for the purpose of this exploratory study, based on consequences of bullying described in the bullying literature, and remains to be validated in future research.

Table 1
Frequency of respondents reporting experience of general and racial/ethnic bullying behaviors, and factor loadings

	% experiencing it at all	% quite or extremely often	Factor loading	
			General	Racial
General bullying behavior				
Made aggressive or intimidating eye contact or physical gestures (e.g., finger pointing, slamming objects, obscene gestures)	47.9	8.3	**.64**	.08
Gave you the silent treatment	66.0	16.6	**.53**	.26
Limited your ability to express an opinion	59.6	16.2	**.63**	.20
Situated your workspace in a physically isolated location	17.7	5.7	**.42**	.36
Verbal abuse (e.g., yelling, cursing, angry outbursts)	51.3	9.4	**.62**	.03
Demeaned you in front of co-workers or clients	47.6	7.6	**.74**	.11
Gave excessively harsh criticism of your performance	43.8	9.4	**.71**	.28
Spread false rumors about your personal life	18.9	1.9	**.37**	.22
Spread false rumors about your work performance	39.6	7.2	**.71**	.26
Repeated things to others that you had confided	40.4	5.7	**.47**	.20
Made unreasonable work demands	46.4	14.0	**.62**	.05
Intentionally withheld necessary information from you	58.1	20.4	**.72**	.35
Took credit for your work	58.1	18.1	**.57**	.26
Blamed you for errors for which you were not responsible	53.2	14.7	**.79**	.23
Applied rules and punishments inconsistently	49.8	17.7	**.73**	.18
Threatened you with job loss or demotion	24.2	5.3	**.47**	.25
Insulted you or put you down	40.4	9.1	**.72**	.17
Interrupted you while you were speaking	76.2	19.3	**.61**	.11
Flaunted his/her status over you in a condescending manner	50.9	13.6	**.76**	.16
Intentionally left the area when you entered	28.7	5.7	**.48**	.27
Failed to return your phone calls, e-mails, etc.	42.6	6.0	**.38**	.16
Left you out of meetings or failed to show up for your meetings for no legitimate reason	44.9	7.2	**.52**	.39
Attacked or failed to defend your plans to others	42.6	11.3	**.71**	.34
Intentionally destroyed, stolen, or sabotaged your work materials	15.5	3.0	**.50**	.28
Intentionally gave you no work or assignments below your job description—*omit*	33.2	7.2	.41	.46

Table 1 (*continued*)

	% experiencing it at all	% quite or extremely often	Factor loading	
			General	Racial
Racial/ethnic bullying: Based on race or ethnicity				
Made derogatory comments about your racial or ethnic group	15.5	1.1	.10	**.71**
Told jokes about your racial or ethnic group	18.9	1.1	.03	**.72**
Used racial or ethnic slurs to describe you	7.6	0.8	.22	**.41**
Excluded you from social interactions during or after work because of your race or ethnicity	18.9	4.9	.19	**.64**
Failed to give you information you needed to do your job because of your race or ethnicity	15.1	3.8	.28	**.63**
Made racist comments (for example, says people of your ethnicity aren't very smart or can't do the job)	15.9	1.1	.12	**.69**
Made you feel as if you have to give up your racial or ethnic identity to get along at work	20.8	6.8	.19	**.66**

2.2.3. Job stress: Emotional/physical strain responses and counterproductive work behavior

As opposed to the specific reactions to incidents measured above, survey participants were asked how often they had done the following over the past five years. Seven items concerned negative feelings and physical symptoms experienced at work, in line with the strain responses typically measured in job stress research, such as "Dreaded (felt anxious) going in to work" and "Worried a great deal." Thirteen items were derived from Fox and Spector's Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist, CWB-C (Fox et al., 2001). These included behaviors targeting organizational productivity ("Worked slowly when things needed to be done.") and other people in the organization ("Started an argument with someone at work."). Response choices ranged from 1 = Never to 5 = Extremely Often. The distinction between emotional/physical strains and counterproductive work behaviors was supported by exploratory factor analysis. Four non-loading items were deleted, resulting in seven items measuring CWB-emotion and nine items measuring CWB-action (presented in Table 2).

2.2.4. Human resource responses

Eight items asked the survey participants how effectively they thought various HR systems and strategies would address these kinds of unfair or discriminatory incidents. Examples are "If the company culture encouraged employees to speak up when they saw another employee being treated unfairly" and "If the company offered mediation as a form of conflict resolution." Response choices ranged from 1 = Totally ineffective or counterproductive to 5 = Extremely effective. For each item, the respondent was also asked to indicate whether his/her company has such a program or process in place.

Table 2
Frequency of respondents reporting their own social/emotional and behavioral responses, and factor loadings

In response to the same or other similar unfair, discriminatory, or emotionally abusive incidents you have experienced within the last five years, how often have you done the following?	% responding this way at all	% quite or extremely often	Factor loading	
			Social/ emotional	Action
Emotional response to bullying				
Became intensely emotionally upset when reminded of the incident	45.7	10.6	**.61**	.17
Experienced a decrease in commitment to your job or loyalty to your employer	61.9	27.6	**.70**	.30
Felt it negatively affected your family or marriage	35.1	8.3	**.59**	.42
Told anyone other than a supervisor about the incident	62.3	21.5	**.60**	.46
Action response to bullying				
Had thoughts about taking revenge or committing violent acts	20.0	5.7	.26	**.55**
Told a supervisor	41.1	12.5	.40	**.55**
Filed a grievance or EEO lawsuit	10.2	1.5	.14	**.51**
Sought any other measures of redress at work	23.8	4.2	.30	**.57**

How often have you done the following on your job over the past five years?	% behaving this way at all	% quite or extremely often	CWB-Emotion	CWB-Action
CWB-Emotion				
Dreaded (felt anxious) going in to work	77.0	25.7	**.63**	.39
Seriously considered quitting your job	74.8	32.5	**.65**	.29
Felt stressed out	92.5	43.0	**.81**	.17
Got headaches, upset stomach, or chest pains	66.0	23.8	**.81**	.07
Worried a great deal	78.1	27.2	**.84**	.04
Experienced feelings of shame or guilt	45.3	12.1	**.65**	.16
Felt depressed	69.1	20.0	**.84**	.18
CWB-Action				
Spent much of your time on the phone or Internet for reasons other than work	72.8	9.4	.11	**.64**
Took long lunch breaks	73.6	7.6	.07	**.73**
Came in late or left work early	75.9	9.4	.20	**.67**
Tried to look busy while doing nothing	55.1	9.4	.27	**.66**
Purposely damaged company property	2.3	0.4	.09	**.40**
Worked slowly when things needed to be done	23.4	2.3	.16	**.63**
Insulted someone about their job performance	16.6	1.9	.18	**.41**
Refused to help someone at work	24.5	3.4	.13	**.57**

Table 2 (*continued*)

How often have you done the following on your job over the past five years?	% behaving this way at all	% quite or extremely often	CWB-Emotion	CWB-Action
Started an argument with someone at work	19.6	1.5	.03	**.35**
Isolated yourself in your office or cubicle—*omit*	68.7	15.1	.47	.43
Avoided speaking to people—*omit*	52.8	7.6	.37	.40
Told people outside what a lousy place you worked for—*omit*	58.9	16.2	.50	.46
Called in sick to work when you were not sick—*omit*	47.2	7.9	.40	.51

2.2.5. Dispute resolution process preferences

Seven items asked for levels of comfort or support for various modes or forms of redress if "…you were involved in an employment dispute because you felt you were treated unfairly or abusively." Response choices range from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. These items were reverse coded, so that a high score means a high level of comfort or support for the form or mode of redress.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the percentage of respondents who experienced each general bullying and racial/ethnic bullying item, the percentage of respondents who experienced it quite often or extremely often, and the factor loadings. Table 2 presents the items measuring social/emotional response to bullying (four items) and action response to bullying (four items). Also presented are the items measuring emotional strain and counterproductive work behaviors in response to the job in general: CWB-emotion (seven items) and CWB-action (nine items). Table 2 includes the factor loadings of the items, the percentage of respondents who reported doing each item at all, and the percentage of respondents who reported doing it quite or extremely often.

Table 3 presents support for propositions 1 and 2, as indicated by the zero-order correlations reported in the first line (total sample) of each cell on the table. High levels of both general and racial/ethnic bullying associated with high levels of emotional and action responses to bullying, as well as with high levels of emotional strains and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) in general. Significant correlations were found between general bullying and emotional response ($r = .68$), racial/ethnic bullying and emotional response ($r = .45$), general bullying and action response ($r = .58$), and racial/ethnic bullying and action response ($r = .43$). Significant correlations were also found between general bullying and emotional strain ($r = .65$), racial/ethnic bullying and emotional strain ($r = .44$), general bullying and CWB ($r = .28$), and racial/ethnic bullying and CWB ($r = .25$).

The third proposition examined racial/ethnic differences in bullying experienced, as well as the relationship between levels of general and racial/ethnic bullying. Table 4 presents mean scores on the main study variables (item clusters) for the entire sample

Table 3
Correlations among study variables for entire sample and by race/ethnicity

	Bully	Bullys	Bullyc	Brace	Braces	Bracec	Remot	Ract	Cemot	Cact
Bully	(.94)									
Bullys										
Total	.60**	—								
Asian	.83**									
A-A	.63**									
H/L	.28									
W	.49**									
Bullyc										
Total	.18**	.14*	—							
Asian	.13	.24								
A-A	.29**	.24**								
H/L	.17	−.20								
W	.00	0								
Brace										
Total	.50**	.28**	.12	(.84)						
Asian	.76**	.67**	.13							
A-A	.55**	.33**	.18*							
H/L	.13	.06	.13							
W	.22	−.11	.04							
Braces										
Total	.43**	.32**	.05	.68**	—					
Asian	.63**	.57**	.05	.84**						
A-A	.44**	.34**	.08	.64**						
H/L	.36	.32	.08	.71**						
W	.31**	.17	.15	.59**						
Bracec										
Total	.20**	.13*	.27**	.48**	.24**	—				
Asian	.17	.17	.38	.26	.22					
A-A	.26**	.18*	.31**	.49**	.24**					
H/L	−.20	−.12	.20	.63**	.18					
W	0	−.04	.16	.35**	−.04					
Remot										
Total	.68**	.49**	.10	.45**	.44**	.11	(.79)			
Asian	.68**	.59**	.30	.37	.46*	0				
A-A	.71**	.55**	.14	.53**	.47**	.16				
H/L	.70**	.12	.11	.28	.46*	0				
W	.55**	.34**	0	.06	.04	−.13				
Ract										
Total	.58**	.34**	.13*	.43**	.40**	.15*	.64**	(.68)		
Asian	.59**	.48*	−.13	.22	.35	0	.62**			
A-A	.65**	.42**	.16	.49**	.42**	.19*	.68**			

Table 3 (*continued*)

	Bully	Bullys	Bullyc	Brace	Braces	Bracec	Remot	Ract	Cemot	Cact
H/L	.65**	.12	.28	−.08	0	−.03	.64**			
W	.34**	.05	.20	.27*	.47**	−.09	.55**			
Cemot										
Total	.65**	.50**	.07	.44**	.44**	.15*	.72**	.51**	(.91)	
Asian	.69**	.61**	.14	.40	.56**	.06	.68**	.48*		
A-A	.68**	.60**	.17	.50**	.48**	.19*	.76**	.55**		
H/L	.58**	.09	.19	.26	.30	.06	.76**	.57**		
W	.56**	.32**	−.11	.16	.07	.05	.62**	.40**		
Cact										
Total	.28**	.20**	.15*	.25**	.30**	.10	.36**	.31**	.42**	(.82)
Asian	.14	.27	.18	.30	.41	−.11	.35	.28	.33	
A-A	.26**	.24**	.16	.27**	.31**	.15	.36**	.26**	.43**	
H/L	.62**	.16	.28	.02	.22	−.15	.66**	.73**	.47*	
W	.22	.06	.09	.28*	.23	.08	.22	.32**	.39**	

Notes. Bully = bullying, general; Bullys = bullying by supervisor; Bullyc = bullying by co-worker; Brace = bullying related to race/ethnicity; Braces = bullying related to race/ethnicity by supervisor; Bracec = bullying related to race/ethnicity by co-worker; Remot = response − emotion; Ract = response − action; Cemot = CWB-Emotion (emotional strain); Cact = CWB-Action (counterproductive work behavior); Race/ethnicity: Asian = "Asian or Pacific Islander"; A-A = "Black or African-American"; H/L = "Hispanic/Latino"; W = "Caucasian/white". Cronbach αs for total sample are given on the diagonal, where applicable.

 * $p < .05$.
 ** $p < .01$.

and for the four main racial/ethnic groups: Asians, African-Americans, Hispanics/Latinos and whites. These variables were general bullying, general bullying by supervisor, general bullying by co-worker, racial/ethnic bullying, racial/ethnic bullying by supervisor, racial/ethnic bullying by co-worker, emotional response to bullying, action response to bullying, emotional strain (counterproductive emotions), and counterproductive work behaviors. Table 4 also shows the percentage of employees in each racial/ethnic group reporting experiencing or engaging in at least one behavior from the respective item cluster. In addition, mean scores for each of the minority groups are compared (pair-wise) with mean scores from the non-minority (white) group, in a series of t tests. Significant differences are indicated in Table 4.

Reports of general bullying were similar across racial/ethnic groups, in contrast to reports of racial/ethnic bullying. The expectation that racial/ethnic minorities would report higher mean levels of general bullying than white employees was not supported for Asian or African-American respondents, based on pair-wise t tests comparing each minority group to whites. The difference was significant for Hispanic/Latinos. In contrast, higher percentages of Asian, African-American, and Hispanic/Latino employees report being targets of racial/ethnic bullying than do white employees (57, 50, 37, and 13%, respectively). t tests demonstrate that Asians (mean: 1.5 on a scale from 1 to 5), African-Americans (1.4), and Hispanics/Latinos (1.2) report significantly higher levels than do whites (1.1).

Table 4
Mean levels of bullying, responses to bullying, counterproductive works behaviors, and stress responses: Total and by ethnicity

	Asian or Pacific Islander $n = 23$	African-American $n = 138$	Hispanic/ Latino $n = 27$	White $n = 71$	Total sample $n = 265$
Bullying—general	1.9 (100%)	1.9 (94%)	2.0* (100%)	1.7 (100%)	1.9 (97%)
Bullying—general (perpetrator identified as supervisor)	2.2 (83%)	2.3 (79%)	2.6** (96%)	1.9 (76%)	2.2 (81%)
Bullying—general (perpetrator identified as co-worker)	1.0* (35%)	1.5 (57%)	1.4 (56%)	1.7 (69%)	1.5 (58%)
Bullying—racial/ethnic	1.5** (57%)	1.4** (50%)	1.2* (37%)	1.1 (13%)	1.3 (38%)
Bullying—racial/ethnic (perpetrator identified as supervisor)	1.0** (39%)	0.7** (23%)	0.6** (22%)	0.1 (4%)	0.5 (19%)
Bullying—racial/ethnic (perpetrator identified as co-worker)	0.2 (9%)	0.5** (17%)	0.3 (11%)	0.1 (4%)	0.3 (12%)
Response—emotion	2.2 (78%)	2.2* (75%)	2.4** (89%)	1.8 (73%)	2.1 (76%)
Response—action	1.6** (52%)	1.5** (51%)	1.5* (63%)	1.3 (46%)	1.5 (51%)
CWB—emotion	3.3** (100%)	2.6 (93%)	2.8* (100%)	2.3 (96%)	2.6 (95%)
CWB—action	1.7 (100%)	1.7 (88%)	1.8 (93%)	1.6 (92%)	1.7 (91%)

Results of t tests of pairwise comparison of each minority mean scores compared with whites.
Also percentage reporting ever experiencing or engaging in the group of behaviors.
Note. Response choices range from 1 = never to 5 = extremely often.
t test significance levels.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

Proposition 4 predicted that race and ethnicity would moderate relations between general and racial/ethnic bullying, and was mostly supported by subgroup correlational analysis results presented in Table 3. General and racial/ethnic bullying were significantly correlated for Asian employees ($r = .76$, $p < .0001$) and African-American employees ($r = .55$, $p < .0001$) but not for Hispanic/Latino or white employees. SISA Binomial, an on-line statistical package (Uitenbroek, 1997), was used to perform z tests on each pair of minority-group to white correlations of general with racial/ethnic bullying. The correlations were significantly stronger for Asians and for African-Americans (but not Hispanics/Latinos) than for whites. Thus, relative to Hispanic/Latino and white employees, Asians and African-Americans who experience high levels of general bullying were more likely to also experience racial/ethnic bullying.

In addition to the specific propositions, the study explored differences in ways in which members of the four racial and ethnic groups responded emotionally and behaviorally to general and racial/ethnic bullying. As shown in Table 3, all four racial and ethnic groups demonstrated a significant relation between general bullying and emotional responses. Of the minority groups, only the correlation for African-Americans ($r = .71$) was significantly higher than that for whites ($r = .55$), based on the

SISA binomial z test (Uitenbroek, 1997). Similarly, all four groups demonstrated a significant relation between general bullying and action responses. The correlations of African-Americans ($r = .65$) and Hispanic/Latinos ($r = .65$) were significantly higher than for whites ($r = .34$). All four groups had significant relations between general bullying and emotional strain (counterproductive emotions), but there were no significant differences between the correlations of the groups. The relation between general bullying and counterproductive behavior was significant only for African-Americans ($r = .26$) and Hispanic/Latinos ($r = .62$), and only the correlation for Hispanic/Latinos was significantly stronger than for whites.

More pronounced group differences emerged with racial/ethnic bullying. Only African-Americans demonstrated a significant relation between experiencing racial/ethnic bullying and responding emotionally ($r = .53$, as compared to $r = .06$ for whites, indicated by the z test to be a significant difference). Only African-American and white targets of racial/ethnic bullying responded significantly with actions ($r = .49$ and $.27$, respectively), with the correlation for African-Americans significantly higher than for whites. The same pattern describes relations between racial/ethnic bullying and general emotional strain at work (counterproductive emotions) and counterproductive work behavior (counterproductive actions). Only for African-Americans was racial/ethnic bullying significantly associated with emotional strain ($r = .50$), a significantly higher correlation than that for whites ($r = .16$, ns). Finally, only African-Americans and whites reported significant relations between racial/ethnic bullying and counterproductive actions ($r = .27$ and $r = .28$, respectively).

Table 5 presents differences in support for human resource and dispute resolution items expressed by survey participants who reported high versus low levels of general bullying and racial/ethnic bullying. These differences are further broken down between victims of bullying by supervisors versus bullying by co-workers.

Participants were divided into three groups based on the top, middle, and bottom thirds of mean general bullying scores. Table 5 presents mean scores (and percentages) of endorsement for Human Resource and Dispute Resolution items from the bottom and top thirds of bullying targets ("General Bullying Total LOW vs. HIGH"). The distribution of scores for racial/ethnic bullying did not allow for a similar division into three groups, as 61.5% reported no such instances. Therefore, for racial/ethnic bullying, two groups were compared: participants who reported no racial/ethnic bullying incidents versus participants who reported having experienced at least one such incident ("Racial/Ethnic Bullying Total NO vs. YES").

The results lend some support to Proposition 5. High (relative to low) general bullying targets consistently reported less support for all internal organizational forms or modes of redress, and more support for legislation to prohibit bullying. t tests of mean differences between high and low general bullying targets found significance for over half the items (encouraging employee voice, encouraging others to speak up when witnessing unfairness, EAP, mentor, unbiased third-party workplace dispute resolver, internal conflict management/dispute resolution programs, and legislation to prohibit bullying). Comparing targets of racial/ethnic bullying to non-targets, targets reported significantly lower levels of support for encouraging employee voice, availability of an ombudsperson, EAP, and internal dispute resolution programs.

Table 5
Preferred HR and dispute resolution responses by HIGH versus LOW targets of general bullying, any experience (NO/YES) targets of racial/ethnic bullying

| | General bullying total (% endorsing) | | General bullying by supervisor | | General bullying by co-worker | | Racial/ethnic bullying total (% endorsing) | | Racial/ethnic bullying by supervisor | | Racial/ethnic bullying by co-worker | |
| | Thirds | | Experienced | | Experienced | | Experienced | | Experienced | | Experienced | |
	LOW	HIGH	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Voice	3.37 (53%)	2.96** (46%)	3.26	3.15	3.24	3.12	3.28 (54%)	3.00* (47%)	3.28	2.73***	3.18	3.10
Others speak up	3.57 (64%)	3.15** (50%)	3.36	3.34	3.46	3.27	3.39 (57%)	3.29 (57%)	3.46	2.87***	3.36	3.24
Counselor	3.33 (49%)	3.00 (38%)	3.19	3.13	3.09	3.18	3.16 (38%)	3.11 (45%)	3.22	2.80***	3.12	3.24
Ombudsperson	3.15 (33%)	2.79 (30%)	2.83	2.99	2.88	3.01	3.06 (32%)	2.79* (33%)	3.06	2.48***	2.96	2.95
EAP	3.82 (66%)	3.16*** (48%)	3.58	3.51	3.43	3.59	3.64 (60%)	3.33** (56%)	3.65	2.98***	3.51	3.62
Mentor	3.70 (64%)	3.33* (55%)	3.36	3.57	3.54	3.53	3.56 (58%)	3.49 (62%)	3.64	3.09***	3.49	3.86
Mediation	3.35 (49%)	3.19 (45%)	3.24	3.28	3.14	3.38	3.31 (46%)	3.23 (46%)	3.32	3.07	3.27	3.34
Arbitration	3.18 (38%)	3.15 (44%)	3.00	3.16	3.03	3.21	3.22 (39%)	3.00 (43%)	3.16	3.05	3.15	3.03
Third party	3.83 (75%)	3.41** (57%)	3.82	3.54	3.54	3.64	3.65 (68%)	3.51 (60%)	3.65	3.35	3.62	3.46
Support legislation	4.14 (75%)	4.54** (88%)	4.08	4.35	4.39	4.23	4.27 (80%)	4.34 (78%)	4.22	4.65**	4.30	4.29
Trust internal dispute resolution	3.22 (40%)	2.53*** (27%)	3.48	2.84***	2.90	3.01	3.10 (41%)	2.75** (33%)	3.07	2.51***	2.96	3.00
Trust courts	3.00 (37%)	2.78 (31%)	2.90	2.94	3.01	2.88	2.94 (33%)	2.93 (40%)	2.97	2.80	2.94	2.90

Further breakdown by general and racial/ethnic bullying perpetrated by co-worker versus supervisor. Mean ratings and significant difference (t test). In parentheses is the % responding somewhat or extremely effective (items 1–8) or slightly or strongly agree (items 9–15) for total general and racial/ethnic bullying.

Note. A high score indicates agreement that these responses would be effective forms of redress. Significance level of difference.

* $p < .10$.
** $p < .05$.
*** $p < .01$.

All in all, the pattern of responses supports the proposition that targets of general and racial/ethnic bullying express less confidence than do non-targets in the ability of organizations to reduce bullying or respond effectively to bullying incidents. Targets of general bullying are more inclined than non-targets to support legislation.

For each item, participants indicated whether the bullies had been primarily supervisors, co-workers, both, or others. For both general and racial/ethnic bullying, substantially larger percentages of employees pointed to supervisors than to co-workers. Since the primary perpetrator was indicated for each item, it is possible that supervisors were responsible for some items and co-workers for others. Also, this comparison does not include items attributed to "both" or "other." The percentages are not expected to total 100%. For the total sample, 81% had experienced general bullying by supervisors, and 58% by co-workers. This is less clear for racial/ethnic bullying, as fewer respondents indicated that primarily supervisors (19%) or primarily co-workers (12%) were involved. Both supervisors and co-workers, or others, were implicated in the remaining racial/ethnic bullying items.

Table 5 breaks down of support for human resource and dispute resolution items by respondents who had or had not (YES/NO) experienced supervisory general bullying, co-worker general bullying, supervisory racial/ethnic bullying, and co-worker racial/ethnic bullying. For general bullying, supervisory bullying is associated with a lower level of trust in internal dispute resolution processes, but co-worker bullying has no such effect. A different pattern emerged for racial/ethnic bullying. Targets of supervisors are significantly less likely than non-targets to endorse internal organizational support mechanisms, such as encouraging employee voice, encouraging others to speak up, availability of a counselor, EAP, ombudsperson, or mentor, or to trust an internal dispute resolution process or program. Targets of supervisory racial/ethnic bullying are also more likely to support legislation to prohibit such behavior. No significant differences were found for support of these measures between targets and non-targets of co-worker bullying.

4. Discussion

The most striking finding of this study was the ubiquity of bullying among the survey participants. Nearly all (97%) had experienced some form of general bullying over the past five years at work. Several of the bullying items were reported as having been experienced "quite often" or "extremely often" by over 15% of the participants. Far more instances of bullying were attributed to supervisors than to co-workers. When the bullies were supervisors, associated increases in negative emotional and attitudinal responses of victims, and decreased trust in the ability of the organization to deal effectively with bullying, were substantial.

Both general and racial/ethnic bullying associated with increased levels of emotional responses to bullying (e.g., becoming intensely upset when reminded of the incident) and action responses (seeking redress). Bullying targets also experienced more negative emotions at work in general (e.g., worrying a great deal) and engaged in higher levels of counterproductive work behavior (e.g., coming in late or leaving early).

The proposition that racial/ethnic minorities would report higher levels of general bullying than whites was supported only for Hispanics/Latinos. All three racial/ethnic minority groups did report higher levels of racial/ethnic bullying. Asians and African-Americans but not Hispanics/Latinos reported a correlation between general and racial/ethnic bullying. Perhaps racial/ethnic taunts appeared to Asian and African-American participants to be part of a broader syndrome of ill-treatment and hostility that also included general bullying experiences. African-Americans (but not Asians or Hispanics/Latinos) who experienced either general or racial/ethnic bullying responded significantly more emotionally than whites, both in direct response to the bullying and in general emotions felt in the workplace. African-Americans and Hispanics/Latinos who were targets of general bullying were more likely than whites to respond actively. But only African-American targets of racial/ethnic bullying engaged in higher levels of actions in response to bullying and also in higher levels of counterproductive work behaviors in general. These intense emotional and behavioral responses may indicate a greater salience of bullying at work for African-Americans relative to other minority and non-minority groups.

Many human resource scholars and practitioners contrast the costs and benefits of the legal route (litigation) to internal organizational forms or modes of redress for victims of ill-treatment at work (Cascio, 2000). The results of this study, however, indicate that employees who have experienced bullying have less confidence in the ability of their organizations to deal effectively with these types of incidents, particularly when the perpetrators are their supervisors. Comparisons of targets versus non-targets of general and racial/ethnic bullying reveal a consistent pattern of lower confidence in internal conflict management or voice systems within organizations, and a greater desire to support the enactment of legislation to prohibit bullying. Closer analysis reveals this pattern holds true only when the perpetrator is the supervisor, not the co-worker. This suggests that when one experiences ill-treatment by one's supervisor, confidence and trust in the organization itself may be shattered, and broader issues of organizational justice and due process need to be addressed.

In addition to the forms or modes of redress listed in the survey items, several participants offered written suggestions of organizational interventions they would find useful. These ideas included seminars, sensitivity awareness campaigns, mandatory training for managers, monthly meetings on workplace issues for employees and executives together, employee committees, grievance procedures for these types of incidents, open door policy at the top, well-trained HR specialist or employee relations manager with authority to investigate and act upon reports of bullying, zero tolerance for abuse in the guise of "office politics," willingness to demote managers found to engage in bullying, and having a place to anonymously submit complaints without fear of retaliation.

Implications for organizations and employers include the troubling linkage between subtle, often unconscious and imperceptible episodes of incivility and a kind of interpersonal racism that escapes the scope of organizational mechanisms of redress, or even the scope of the law. Relations among expectations, perceptions, sen-

sitivities, and experiences of being the target of subtle racial and ethnic incivility need to be disentangled and closely analyzed. If the perpetrator is an employee's supervisor, finding a way to escape from the subtle barbs and putdowns may be very difficult, as aspects of power and retribution come into play. As one participant in this study commented, "If you work for a racist and his boss is a racist you are doomed." Continued refinement of bullying research should focus on differences between supervisory and peer bullying, effects of demographic dissimilarity (Duffy & Ferrier, 2003), and the role of power and authority in the bullying dynamic.

4.1. Limitations of this study

This study does not claim to be a highly controlled empirical study. It was designed as an exploration of new ground in a topic of growing interest to scholars, practitioners, and the public. The study suffers the weaknesses inherent in self-report survey research. However, as a preliminary exploration of a dynamic heavily dependent upon targets' perceptions, feelings, beliefs, and preferences, self-report may be the most appropriate approach. This is not meant to be a confirmation of relations among latent constructs in a formal model, but rather a search for possible links, within individuals, among perceived experiences, internal responses, and preferences for redress and resolution.

A related weakness is the use of ad hoc checklists, or shortened forms of previously used checklists. A more formal development of measures would provide more confidence in the results. Attempts to cluster items into `variables' and apply standard analytic methods require thought and care. Certainly as a `first go' at the research questions, these measures provide useful information for an exploratory study. Another problem is that the high inter-correlations between responses to bullying and general organizational emotions and behaviors indicate the difficulty people have separating these two concepts. Future research should address whether this is a methodological difficulty or a substantive spillover effect.

Another concern is the "convenience" nature of the sample. Typically in bullying research, individuals who perceive themselves as being bullying targets (perhaps with an "ax to grind") may be more likely to volunteer to participate in bullying research than are non-victims. Therefore general conclusions should not be drawn about the baseline frequency of these behaviors from such an inherently skewed sample. At best only comparative conclusions can be drawn about differences in subgroups, based on factors such as race, organization level of perpetrator, or organizational culture. A related concern is the uneven sample sizes for the racial/ethnic groups. More confidence may be drawn from results of comparisons of the African-American and white groups, than for the relatively small Asian and Hispanic/Latino samples.

Future research should address these issues. Research designs querying dyads of employees and peers or employees and supervisors would help address the common method variance issues associated with self-report surveys. To capture the dynamic nature of the bully-target relationship, it would be ideal to examine pairs of employees involved in ongoing interpersonal conflict situations, to ascertain how episodes of incivility escalate into bullying and abuse. Continued refinement of the checklists

would contribute to the development of a repertoire of reliable and validated instruments to be shared among researchers in the domain. Access to a limited number of large companies would make possible a more rigorous sampling methodology, from which generalizations could be more confidently drawn. Finally, more theoretical development is needed to understand the dynamic, interactive processes involved in provocation, bullying, retaliation, and escalation of conflict.

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