‘I WON’T DANCE, DON’T ASK ME:’

Concerning why workplace bullying bystanders simply stand by
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BACKGROUND

‘Context’ (Fetzer, 2004) is the background milieu that affords boundaries for day-to-day activities, behaviors, and interactions.

For our purposes, context comprises situational and institutional factors.
PERSONAL/CONTEXTUAL INTERACTION SHAPES REALITIES TO BE PERCEIVED...
OBJECTIVES:

1. Examine workplace context and personal disposition as features that influence behaviors in situations of workplace bullying.

2. Recognize the significance of bystander actions to workplace bullying outcomes.

3. Describe factors that discourage bullying bystanders from intervening in bullying situations.
CONTEXT ACTS TO SHAPE REALITY
INTENTIONALLY, VIA FORMAL POLICIES

demanding significant, focused attention
promoting inattention (Simons & Chabris, 1999), and sometimes unanticipated support, for behaviors they do not address
"what is possible becomes delimited but, by the same token, expectations about what is possible can be set up" (Kendon, 1992, p. 330).
CONTEXT INTERPRETATION INVOLVES DISPOSITION (PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE)

as we ‘hear’ the voices of others

(Dzurec, Kennison, & Albataineh, 2014; Dzurec, Kennison, & Gillen, 2017)

Sometimes I have to REMIND myself that I don’t have to do what EVERYONE ELSE is doing.
BULLYING EMERGES THROUGH ‘HEARING’ AT THE INTERFACE OF DISPOSITION AND CONTEXT (SITUATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL)

As workplaces complexify, so do the social relationships transpiring there, with bullying a logical outcome.
BULLYING LOOKS LIKE THIS:
largely understated and uncomfortable interpersonal behaviors that are subtle yet aggressive, *engaged*, and repeated, intentional or reckless

resulting in

perceived physical and/or psychological threat and of hurt,

AND...

(Dzurec, Kennison, & Albataineh, 2014; Johnson, et al., 2015; Kennison et al., 2015)
AND

a power differential that favors the bully
BULLYING, ONCE ESTABLISHED, QUICKLY EXPANDS TO INCORPORATE BYSTANDERS
bystanders are beyond incidental—they are integral to the context of bullying...

(Namie & Lutgen Sandvik, 2010; Paull, Omari, & Standen, 2012)
YET, ABSENT PERCEIVED DANGER

(FISCHER, GREITEMEYER, POLLOZEK, & FREY 2006)

BYSTANDER NUMBERS

(Darley & Latané, 1968; Latané & Nida 1981)

LIKELIHOOD OF INTERVENTION

Genovese effect (In 1964, 38 witnesses watched the brutal rape and murder of Kitty Genovese in New York) (Sword & Zimbardo, 2015)
STUDY PURPOSE
USING CROSS’S (1981) MODEL OF DETERRENTS TO ADULTS’ PARTICIPATION IN CONTINUING EDUCATION:

Identify

situational

ing institutional, and

dispositional factors

that dissuade bystanders’ interventions in situations of workplace bullying
QUALITATIVE, DESCRIPTIVE DESIGN
Data

- Published, first person narratives
- Formal descriptions of bystanders’ experiences in bullying situations
- Psychological theories (which turned out to be MANY)
PROCEDURE
A TWO STEP PROCESS—STEP I

Review of data using Lanigan’s (1988) approach to hermeneutics

• Description
• Reduction
• Interpretation
A TWO STEP PROCESS—
STEP 2

Consideration of meanings interpreted through hermeneutics in light of Cross’s (1981) categories:

- Dispositional—attitudes and self-perceptions
- Situational—arising from the environment
- Institutional—overriding organizational practices
FINDINGS
AS MUCH AS BULLYING IS STRESSFUL AND COMPLICATED
SO IS BULLY BYSTANDING

A complicated circumstance
Bystanding manifests broadly (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2011) as disposition and context interact.
SOME ‘HELPLESS’ EXAMPLES

All of us are in a **precarious position**. Because company is only concerned with SLAs and revenues – they care for us about that only. So any problem means you are **alone**. And if no superior wants to help you, your team members also cannot. There are **no options**. If friends help, they can be kicked out of the job. So employee well-being, **professionalism** – all this is humbug.

I just **withdrew** in a way – held back, stayed far. I guess I was **so afraid of being victimised** that keeping a low profile seemed the right thing to do. Of course, I was there for her but mostly outside the office.

I feel we could have done something – take the consequences. But at that time, we thought differently. Actually, we were **too scared**, so we didn’t think only. But we were troubled.

D’Cruz & Noronha, 2011, pp. 281-282
A ‘LESS HELPLESS’ EXAMPLE

As a senior (staff member) I had opportunities to intervene and did so in individual cases. Rarely however did this make a difference in the long term due to management behavior and organizational culture due, I believe, to the entrenched power differential between management and staff.

OLWEUS (N.D.) SUMMARIZES BYSTANDING LIKE THIS:
Broad sets of theory, occurring in hierarchy, appear to account for the foundation for bullying bystanders’ experiences
FOR BYSTANDERS, PERSONAL DISPOSITION INTERACTS WITH SITUATIONAL FACTORS

Deciding How to Act
Group Membership and Rules (Gini, 2006; Larsen, 2014); Pluralistic Ignorance (Sword & Zibardo, 2015)—looking to others for clues; Diffusion of Responsibilities (Burkley, n.d.; Holfeld, 2014)—‘not my job;’ Generational theory (Howe & Strauss, 2007, 2008)

Assigning cause by proximity
Einstellung (attitude)--Bilalić, McLeod, & Gobet (2008)

Thinking & Rethinking
Perceived Degree of Danger (Fischer, Greitemeyer, & Pollozek, 2006)
Perceived Vulnerability (Paull, Omari, & Standen, 2012; Vartia, 2011); Styles of Engaging (Paull, Omari, & Standen, 2012; Twemlow, Fonagy & Sacco, 2004) van Heugten, 2011); Expectancy Violations (McPherson & Yuhua, 2007)
ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS HAVE A SPECIAL, OVERRIDING INFLUENCE THROUGH....
The world is perceived not only in terms of objects and space, but also in terms of possibilities for action (affordances).

Perception drives action.

(Gibson, 1977)
“Bystander intervention makes bullying everyone’s problem, holding each individual (including organization administrators) accountable for the behaviours around them”

(parenthetical phrase added).

(D’Cruz & Noronha, 2011, p. 286)
FINDINGS FROM MULTIPLE STUDIES SHOW THAT

- According to some, bullying is less likely to occur, and is more likely to be addressed, in the presence of strong and well-organized union representation
  - (Ironside & Seifert, 2003)

- “bystander intervention training will work only in a conducive organisational context”
  - (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2011, p. 286).
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ALTERING THE BYSTANDER DANCE
“And if no superior wants to help you, your team members also cannot.”

--D’Cruz & Noronha, 2011, p. 281

Or, as Dr. Seuss said,
Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.

Dr. Seuss
People tend to conform to contextual/situational and institutional expectations (Asch, 1956; Milgram, 1963) as they are influenced by social, historical, and intrapersonal features characterizing their personal dispositions.
PERFORMANCE SUPPORT FROM THOSE IN POWER IS VITAL TO LIMITING BYSTANDING IN WORKPLACE BULLYING
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HUMAN ERROR</th>
<th>AT-RISK BEHAVIOR</th>
<th>UNREASONABLE RISK</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEADER’S ROLE:</td>
<td>LEADER’S ROLE:</td>
<td>LEADER’S ROLE:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reassess processes</td>
<td>Remove negative incentives</td>
<td>Remediate</td>
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<td>Change procedures</td>
<td>Introduce positive incentives</td>
<td>Take punitive action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Train personnel and redesign</td>
<td>Increase situational awareness</td>
<td>(Table from Marx, 2007)</td>
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<td>environments</td>
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Likelihood of bullying and bystandance increases left to right;

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<th>CONSOLE</th>
<th>COACH</th>
<th>PUNISH</th>
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A JUST CULTURE PROVIDES AFFORDANCES TO LIMIT BYSTANDING

Recognizing the essences of bullying
Establishing a zero-tolerance rule
Being there for employees
Writing and following strong policies
Facilitating vulnerability
FIGURING OUT WHAT TO DO NEXT, AS THIS PROBLEM CONTINUES ACROSS MULTIPLE SETTINGS, LARGELY UNABATED
ONE ANTI-BULLYING POLICY WITH TEETH MAY HELP TO DIRECT US

Alamo Colleges:

https://www.alamo.edu/uploadedFiles/District/Employees/Departments/Ethics/pdf/policies/H.1.2.3-Procedure.pdf
Attention to dispositional, situational, and institutional factors to better understand the context of bystander conformity and behavior, to build better workplaces and support individual well-being.

To do that.....
Paraphrasing Reis (2008, p. 311) to continue our work in understanding and supporting bystander intervention:

• Relevant analysis should involve identification of objective features (yet-unclear in this case)

• Attend to Dispositional, Situational, and Institutional factors--they will be highly relevant to understanding (bystander experience, in this case)

• Tap contextual affordances might facilitate efforts to constrain bullying in the first place
TO FACILITATE A BETTER DISPOSITIONAL RESPONSE TO A YET-UNYIELDING CONTEXT
WE INVITE YOU TO DANCE

(References available on request)