



The Social Injustice of Bullying and Its Effects:
A Conflict Theoretical Analysis

By

Omari R. Wynter



Social Researcher

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Abstract

Persons who are members of particular social groups will at some point be exposed to forms of bullying. Society has evolved into an age where race, gender and class are cloaked into an illusion of equality. This means that there are issues that still exist today (such as racism) that appear to be illusionary.

Bullying can be viewed as a social injustice because of the nature of the interaction between a bully and the victim. As a result, an individual may lose freedom of self and ponder their perceived social reality. Social Injustice will be defined as “*being unable to freely express what one is expected to be entitled to from a social standpoint.*” Peering at this through the lens of conflict theory, we will seek to identify areas of conflict with both parties involved; as well as determining whether these are negative or positive conflicts.



Introduction

It is important to understand why conflict is important and how it functions. Conflict is a positive or negative engagement. In Conflict Theory, positive conflict is conflict that produces progress or results. For example, when doing exercise, the act itself requires conflict between weight and strength to produce results in the future. Negative conflict produces loss or consequence. Another example here is constant arguing among family members where the interest of the member issuing the argument conflicts the other member's interest resulting in possible broken bonds or relationships.

Using a conflict theoretical approach to viewing bullying, three categories were created for the parties involved. These are: 1) Individual Bully, 2) Bullying Interaction and 3) Individual Victim. This was the best method of conflict analysis. We will identify each of these parties and correlations between each.

Individual Bully

As discovered in research done over the past years on bullying, bullies sometimes tend to have some sort of conflict existing in their personal lives. This may be issues at home such as abuse from parents or low self-esteem from performing poorly in school. For example, the bully may take his/her aggression out by bullying the student in their class that does the best academically. We will classify the origin of an individual bully's engagement with a victim as **Internal Conflict**. It can be said that an individual bully can be constructed (someone becomes) through **External Conflict** which results in internal conflict.



Bullying Interaction

Bullying, the result of contained stress that seeks to be expressed in an aggressive manner; is where one party [*Individual Bully*] engages the other party [*Individual Victim*] in a conflict of power. In this case, power is simply painting an illusion for the Individual Victim that the origin of the interaction is a true matter. An example of this is a group of children referring to another child as “fat and ugly” because he/she weights a lot of than they do. The child being criticized [*Individual Victim*] may perceive this to be true if majority of other children agrees. Power is at play here as the weakened Individual Victim is more likely to submit to the Individual Bully or group of individual bullies in which we will refer to as a **Cluster Bully**. This can result in positive conflicts for the Individual Bully and negative conflicts for the Individual Victim. It is important to inspect every aspect of these interactions to identify all factors of conflict in play.

Individual Victim

This party is usually the most impacted by Bullying Interaction. A person usually falls under this role if they belong to a social group or category with a high risk of being bullied. This is shaped by our **Socialization** in union with our rapidly changing social constructs such as culture, norms, and values. These things determine: 1) who an individual may bully, 2) why they may bully them and 3) what they may bully them about. In turn, individual victims may become individual bullies due to external conflict molding into internal conflict repeating the cycle of bullying.



Discussion with Data Visualization

Social interaction is an important factor that contributes to the development of conflict. Engagement from our community is a vital asset in finding a solution to bullying. We must mend the roots that sprout conflict leading to these interactions. However, society only places its attention on what is of interest.

To generate a hypothesis about interests and engagements, a stack plot taken from response rates for prospects [*Customers*] interested in purchasing a vehicle but never closed the deal was analyzed. This plot and others to be shown were programmed in Python 3 with the data collected and grouped into Visual, Auditory and Audiovisual responses using NumPy and Matplotlib. The sample size was only 38, but each contained criterion that commonly and frequently occurred. We will ignore Index.

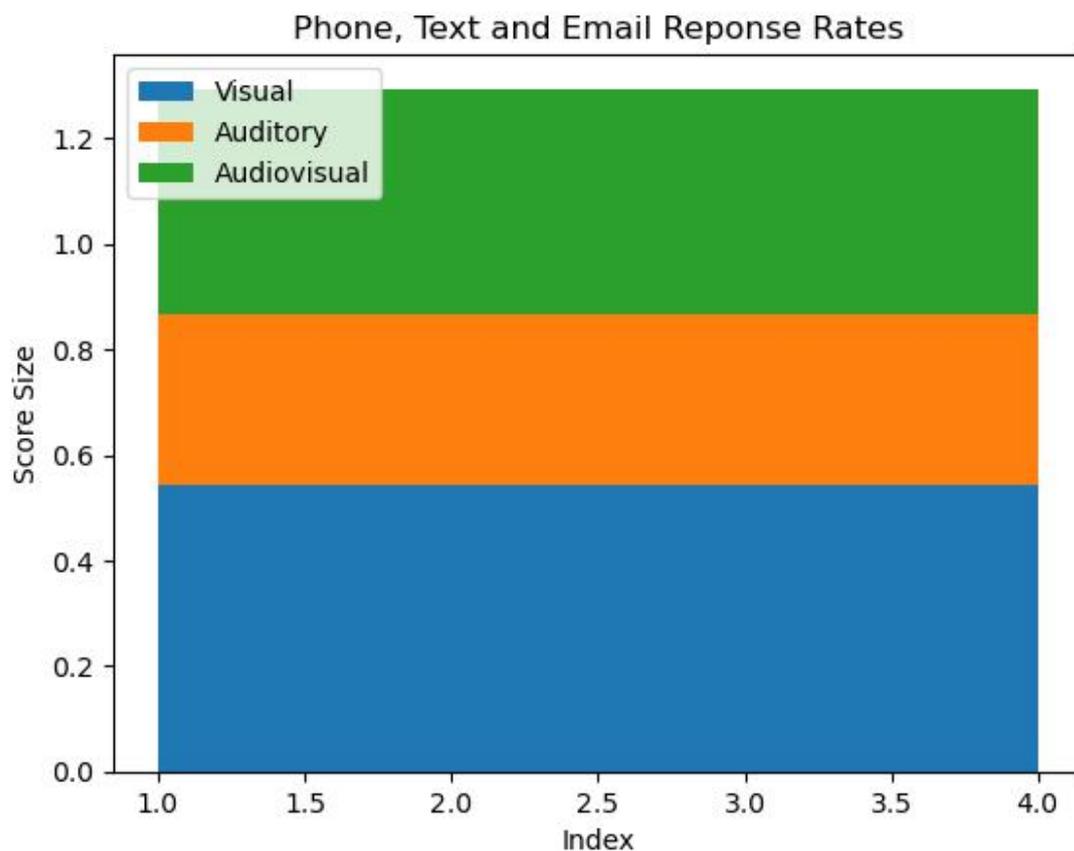


Fig: 1.1



TARGETED BULLYING

We see that Visual response rates (engagement from prospects via text or email) occupy the most size on the stack plot with Audiovisual in 2nd place and Auditory in 3rd. When it comes to attention span and focus our society as dropped a few points. As demonstrated by the stack plot data, prospects when interested mostly respond visually. We can assume this is due to the convenience of messaging at any time and less time having to focus which is required during Auditory interactions.

Now in terms of bullying, we can assume that one of the reasons in which bullying is still a widespread issue is because majority of people are not really interested or focused on the issue. This could be due to the topic requiring individuals to really engage focus and be genuinely interested.

Another pattern of engagement can be analyzed by looking at a scatter plot taken from the same response rate research done.

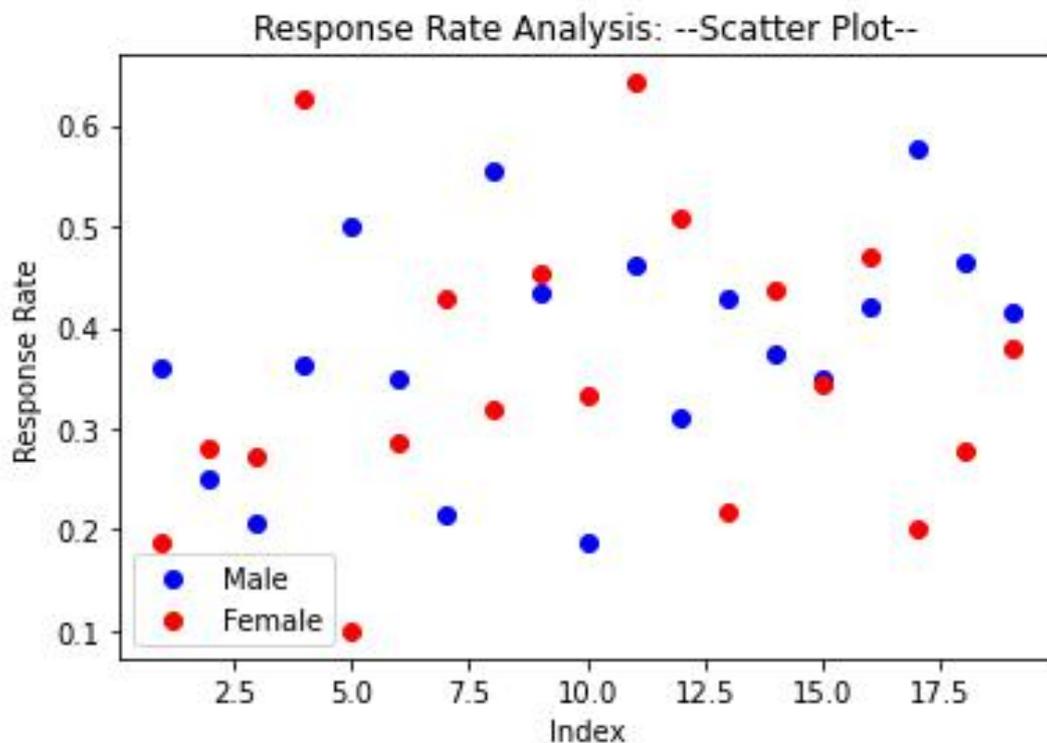


Fig 1.2

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Here we have response rates via phone, text and email but dispersed by gender. Generally, there is not too much of a face value difference in the data. Regardless, using these results as a reference, we see that females tend to be a bit more responsive to things of interest than males. However, we also see the lowest score belongs to a female. Let us use this to consider reports on observed-in-action bullying or being bullied. An assumption can be made that females are more prone to admit to bullying, being bullied or observing bullying than males. However, this is a general assumption limited to the small sample taken. This ties into conflicts originating from our socialization and the social construct of culture [Gender Roles, Norms].

Lastly, here is an optional comparison of Visual (Light green) and Auditory (Dark green) response rates plotted on a 3D graph with a surface area of 50x50. Currently experimenting with 3D data visualization.

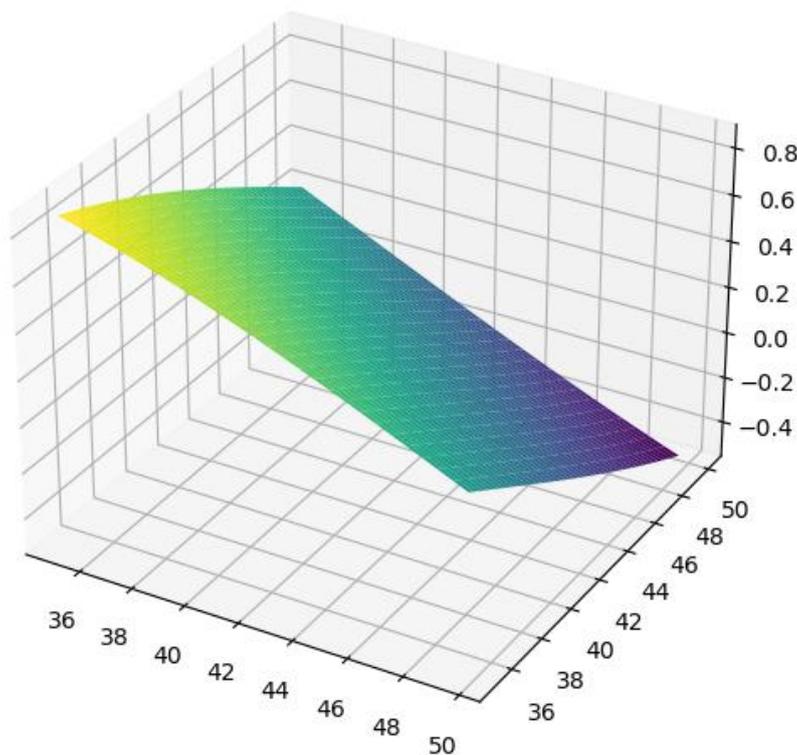


Fig 1.3



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After viewing these graphs and ideas, we can see how important social interaction is for reducing bullying. Lack of these in play will generate the risk of negative conflicts developing. Social injustice instead comes into play and plants the seed of **Social Dysfunction**.

Functionalist Theory: Social Dysfunction

The social effects of bullying heavily impact our society and causes multiple conflicts. We will identify some of these effects and how they correlate with both parties involved in bullying interaction. All effects will be viewed with internal and external conflicts as the basis

The effects to be discussed are:

- a) ***Suicide***
- b) *Stress*
- c) *Anxiety*
- d) *Depression*

Here is a table to illustrate how likely a particular effect may lead to suicide (prediction):

<i>Suicidal Risk Level</i>	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
Stress		X	
Anxiety	X		
Depression			X



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Suicide is one of leading consequences of negative conflict resulting from bullying. Some victims may resort to such measures due to the intensity of Bullying Interaction that is experienced. These interactions cause major stress and anxiety, but depression is the worst-case scenario. The individual victim is exposed to external conflict which can eventually construct internal conflict.

To understand how this can cause social dysfunction, *we can visualize society as a system and each person is a part with a function that contributes to the whole.* People operate differently when under stress or suffering from depression. Different patterns and unusual behavior develop that can most times go completely unnoticed by loved ones or close friends. Some of these patterns lead to unpredictable cases of suicide which can severely affect and may even traumatize those who know the victim.

Looking at these two scenarios, the change in behavior [*Individual Victim*] due to depression or a family/friend suffering the loss of a loved one to suicide affects those they have social interaction with (or do not interact with). The pain is very severe. Those who undergo high intensity bullying but do not succumb to suicide tend to develop disorders such as anxiety in the future. This affects other areas of an individual's adulthood as well. Some problems include socializing, trust issues and low self-esteem.

Functionalist Theory can be used to best describe society as a social system. Looking at the functions and roles people play in their family or society, there are numerous interactions of conflict that shape how we interact socially. How we interact socially shapes our society. Thus, when the usual shape of society is disrupted by individuals who have problems with socializing, trust or low self-esteem, social dysfunction is constructed.



Analyzing Survey Research on Bullying

Data and results from the 2017 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (U.S. Department of Education, 2019) will be analyzed to highlight some interesting assumptions that can be made. A total of 24.6 million students participated in this survey with 12.5 million being male and 12.1 million being female.

As predicted from the response rate research, females {23.8%} contributed a higher percent of reported bullying than males {16.7%}. Another interesting observation is analyzing the data on bullying by race. Whites totaled 12.8 million, Blacks totaled 3.3 million and Hispanic or Latino totaled 5.9 million. Looking at the percent reported bullying by race: 22.8% of Whites reported, 22.9% of Blacks reported and 15.7% of Hispanic or Latino.

Whites and Blacks have a near identical reported percent of bullying yet both groups differ greatly is total members.

Total Whites bullied = **2, 961, 264** / 12, 988, 000 Students

Total Blacks bullied = **768, 753** / 3, 357, 000 Students

Total Hispanic/Latino bullied = **933, 522** / 5, 946, 000 Students

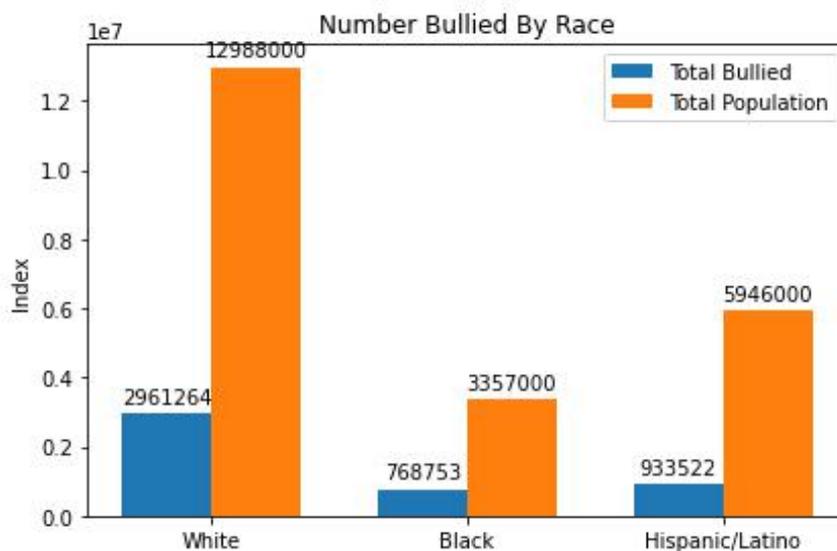


Fig. 1.4

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Based on the data provided, let us discuss some philosophical ideas about the results. One clear observation that can be made is that both Whites and Blacks have the same bully rate but both groups massively differ in number. Hispanic/Latino have 18% more members than Blacks, but their bully rate is only 15.7%. This could suggest that blacks are more likely to be targeted by bullying. This can be the result of members (both bully and victim) having a conflict of interest with the social values, culture, and norms of that social group. However, we would have to delve deep into how those conflicts may have constructed the engagement of Bullying Interaction within these social groups.

Survey Model: Bullying Intensity Rate (BIR)

A survey model system was created as a means of data collection to convert qualitative data into quantitative data. Numerical scores/values will be assigned to a descriptive element so that it can be used to create plots and form data analysis.



BIR Participant Protection Statement

“This survey is designed to gather data and information on correlations between race and gender on bullying, bullying interaction and bullying intensity. No data received will be associated with any specific participant as all information provided is anonymous, confidential and will not harm a participant in any way.”

BIR Survey Questions

1. What is your race?

White - Black - Hispanic/Latino - Asian

2. What is your gender?

Male - Female

3. Have you ever been bullied?

Yes - No | Intensity? Low - Med - High

4. Have you ever bullied?

Yes - No | Intensity? Low - Med - High

5. Have you ever seen bullying?

Yes - No



Bullying Survey Data (First Five Rows)

Index	Race	Gender	Victim		Bully		Viewed
1	Black	<u>Male</u>	Yes	<i>High</i>	Yes	<i>Low</i>	Yes
2	Black	<u>Female</u>	Yes	<i>High</i>	Yes	<i>Medium</i>	Yes
3	White	<u>Male</u>	Yes	<i>High</i>	No	-	Yes
4	White	<u>Male</u>	Yes	<i>Medium</i>	Yes	<i>Medium</i>	Yes
5	Hispanic/Latino	<u>Female</u>	Yes	<i>Low</i>	Yes	<i>Low</i>	Yes

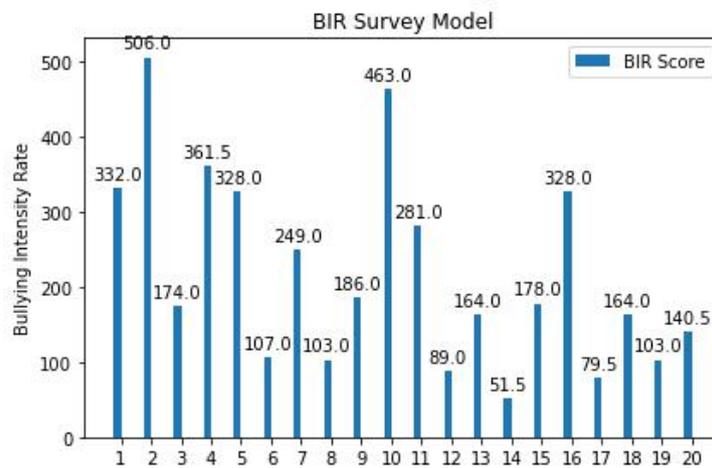


Fig 1.5

Conclusion

It was interesting to see that all participants so far have been a victim of bullying in some shape or form. The BIR score displays Individual Victims transitioning to becoming Individual Bullies and the intensity. Some High Victim participants did not always Bully to a high or Medium degree. The reasoning behind the bullying of victims would need to be analyzed to come to a more clear understanding of these correlations.

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