

# **The Anatomy of an Academic Mobbing**



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This is the author's revision of her Hector Hammerly Memorial Lecture given at the University of Waterloo on April 11, 2008. The event was co-sponsored by the Department of Sociology and the Program in Peace & Conflict Studies, and supported by a bequest from the estate of Hector Hammerly (1935-2006), late Professor of Linguistics at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC.

# Introduction

**Kenneth Westhues**

Above all, this booklet is for that majority of professors in North America who have heard of academic mobbing but are not quite sure what it is. In the archetypal case study she presents at the start, a composite of actual cases, Joan Friedenberg successfully conveys the reality of this extraordinary social process and how it proceeds from the almost imperceptible initial signs to horrific conclusions.

Friedenberg does more than tell what mobbing is. She also provides a critical summary of research since the term was introduced to American readers in the late 1990s. She appraises the research critically and identifies debatable issues. She offers tantalizing original hypotheses, notably that professors of working-class or otherwise modest background are especially at risk of being mobbed. Having whet the reader's appetite, she concludes with a long list of references that can be taken as recommendations for further reading.

Self-interest by itself is enough to warrant perusal of the research Friedenberg summarizes here in graceful prose. Popular wisdom has it that tenure guarantees job security, cash for life. It doesn't. Not only can professors be dismissed for good reason but they can also, like any other workers, be ganged up on for no good reason and run out of their jobs. Collective

agreements and manuals of policies and procedures do not prevent eliminative campaigns, though they require them in academic settings to be subtler and more complex.

Professors intent on serving the public good have still more reason to learn about mobbing in colleges and universities. Academic freedom, crucial to the advancement of knowledge and search for truth, is a vaporous mantra when administrators and professors turn on a colleague and mobilize to get rid of him or her. How frequently this happens is not widely known. The research on mobbing is a corrective for blissful ignorance.

In *The Guardian Online*, eminent British litterateur John Sutherland wrote in 2006: “One can compile a whole lexicon of terms which, once we know them, make facts of working life around us materialise and, thereby, easier to deal with.” *Mobbing*, he suggested, is one of those necessary words. Friedenbergs’ essay shows why.

The essay originated as a lecture on April 11, 2008, at the University of Waterloo, jointly sponsored by the Department of Sociology and the Program in Peace and Conflict Studies. But it was hardly a routine colloquium.

The chief sponsor of the event was dead: a longtime Professor of Linguistics at Simon Fraser University named Hector Hammerly. His body was discovered on March 5, 2006, in a room of a British Columbia Ramada Inn. Seventy years of age, he had apparently succumbed to a heart attack or stroke.

Hammerly had joined the charter faculty of Simon Fraser in 1965, and taught there until being forced out in 1997, at the age of sixty-one. The circumstances of his ouster fit the definition of mobbing, and he found intellectual solace (though not legal redress) in research on this topic. He and I became long-distance friends, our relationship nourished by phone and email. After his death, part of his modest estate was assigned to the University of Waterloo, in support of my research program on academic

mobbing. That is how the Hammerly Memorial Lecture on Academic Mobbing came to be.

Hector had a way with words. Words got him into ultimately fatal trouble, but he took delight in words. I told him once I wished we could invite him to lecture at Waterloo, book the talk in a popular campus venue, and announce it on a poster with this line: “Hear Hector Hammerly in the Hagey Hall of Humanities” – it would sound really good in Cockney.

Hector laughed, but the lecture was not to be. If the heaven he believed in is real, the heaven in whose promise he found strength to challenge earthly authority, he looked down on our gathering for the memorial lecture with an approving smile.

As Hammerly did, Joan Friedenbergs has made her academic career in linguistics, specializing in bilingual education. As Hammerly did, she speaks Spanish and English fluently, several more languages capably. Since earning her PhD at Illinois in 1979, she has published scores of books, reports, and articles, especially on bilingualism in the workplace, she has amassed honours, and administered millions of dollars in grants and contracts – all of which achievements are beside the point of her essay on academic mobbing.

The relevant similarity between Hammerly and Friedenbergs is that both were ganged up on by colleagues and administrators, and wrongly shamed. The details of their cases are easily accessed by googling their names.

A still more relevant similarity between the deceased scholar for whom the lecture is named and the joyfully living scholar who gave the lecture is that both seized upon their personal experience of workplace mobbing to advance scholarship in this area, to create new knowledge and deeper understanding of it.

As for Friedenbergs’s thinking on the topic, her essay speaks for itself. Let me note here in preface the single idea I treasure most in her work, an idea she shared with me first in an email in

2002, long before we met. A psychologist, an outside consultant hired by the university where Friedenberg was then on the faculty, had made herself a leader of the campaign to eliminate Friedenberg, and on this account Friedenberg was suing her.

But Friedenberg also appealed to the American Psychological Association to address the problem of consulting psychologists being used as weapons against mobbing targets:

Perhaps if the APA realizes that my case is not unique [Friedenberg wrote to me], it will seriously address the problem. Addressing the problem is a higher priority for me than retaliation. My greatest fantasy is for the psychologist I am suing to get together with me, admit that she had been “bought” (okay, *swayed*) by my administration, and work with me to bring about reform in the field of consulting psychology by participating with me in a special session of the APA on the issue. If this could happen, I’d drop my suit. Imagine what kind of article or book she and I could write together, former plaintiff and former defendant. Alas, it will likely never happen, and tomorrow the heat will get turned up when I file additional federal charges.

For keeping on her horizon something beyond retaliation, revenge, the turning of tables in a zero-sum game, for serving the longer-range and infinitely more constructive goal of reciprocal learning, reconciliation, reform, and scholarly collaboration, as well as for the enormous insight she has brought to the empirical analysis of mobbing cases, Joan Friedenberg deserves our deepest respect. When she traveled from Florida to Ontario to give the Hammerly lecture, it was a privilege for me to introduce her. It is a like privilege to introduce her paper here, for an audience beyond Waterloo.



# **The Anatomy of an Academic Mobbing**

**Joan Friedenber**

## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Imagine yourself in these circumstances:

You are born in South America of immigrant parents. You go to school each day and, with your parents, attend church regularly where you learn the importance of truth, justice and faith. You do well in school, making your parents, and your grandparents, who live with you, as well as your many aunts and uncles, proud. You graduate and attend college near your hometown on a scholarship, being the first in your family to do so. You feel a little awkward in college because most of your classmates come from homes with college-educated parents. You manage to make a few friends – who, not by coincidence, also come from working class backgrounds – and you do fine academically. You get married. Then, unhappy with social injustice and the lack of freedom in your country, you work hard to save up money to go to graduate school in North America.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the estate of the late Simon Fraser linguistics professor Hector Hammerly, the Department of Sociology and the Program in Peace & Conflict Studies at the University of Waterloo for supporting the lecture that occasioned the writing of this essay.

You spend several years in North America with your spouse and complete a Ph.D. in linguistics. You then land a dream academic position in a university in North America. It's a tenure-earning position in linguistics at a respected institution. You teach classes and, despite having higher standards than some of your colleagues, having a foreign accent, and refusing to teach on your religious holidays, you earn the respect of your students. You publish books, chapters, and articles in your adopted language; you land several grants; you are a sought-after speaker at top academic meetings worldwide; you develop two new degree programs in your department, doubling its enrollments, and you participate in other service activities both inside and outside your university. Your research focuses on language immersion and bilingual education, areas that many linguists and foreign language educators frown upon as non-traditional.

But you thrive in academe. You and your spouse raise a child and stress the importance of truth, justice, faith, and learning. You are awarded tenure, are twice promoted, and now occupy the coveted and apparently "safe" position of tenured full professor. Unlike *some* of your colleagues in that position, *you* continue to be a productive scholar. Your achievements are more than you ever imagined for yourself and your life is pretty good.

As a tenured senior faculty member and a moral and religious person, you speak up when staff, junior faculty, and students are treated unjustly. For example, when your colleague Pat is charged with sexual harassment by the department chair and suspended after a detractor produced twenty vague complaints from students – all unsigned – you fought for and helped Pat get "due process," which, when respected, resulted in Pat's complete exoneration and reinstatement. You support the creation of unions on campus and write letters to the editor and guest columns for the campus newspaper criticizing some of the

university's administrative policies and procedures in hopes of making the university a better place. When fifty university secretaries are laid off, supposedly for financial exigency, you notice that those receiving pink slips had the most seniority and had filed grievances in the past. So you help expose this in the campus newspaper, whereupon several secretaries are called back to work, including *your* department's.

Your campus activism makes you stand out from colleagues. You're also aware that your working class roots encourage a directness and bluntness in your communications that more refined colleagues find annoying. And you exercise your religious freedom by not teaching on important religious holidays.

Then, the birthday card the department chair gets for the department secretary (whose job you helped save) somehow never makes it to you to sign and this makes you worry that the secretary may think you failed to sign on purpose. After that, you begin to suspect that some of your mail is missing and that your copying and office supply requests are ignored. You hear about a department party that you weren't invited to, and wonder if it really occurred. But your incipient paranoia is supported when, as you walk down the hall, you *think* you hear colleagues mockingly imitating a foreign accent before they scuttle into their offices and close their doors upon your approach. Sensing you may be the object of their scorn, your heart begins to pound, your mouth gets suddenly dry and you feel nauseous. You wonder: "Is it *me* they are mocking?"

Next, the department chair calls you in to inform you that there is a vague complaint about you by a student. You are never told the specific nature of the complaint, who the student is, or whether anything will become of it. You have also seen your chair entering your colleagues' offices from time to time and closing the door upon spying you. You grow more paranoid. You perspire and your hands visibly tremble in the presence of

your colleagues. You then receive a letter informing you that, because of supposed departmental space needs, you must vacate your office for one that is far from your colleagues and that lacks access to a printer, fax, and photocopy machine. Later you discover that your colleagues had signed a petition requesting your physical removal from the department on the grounds that your presence makes them not only uncomfortable but actually fearful. You cannot imagine why anyone would be afraid of you, especially because you are not physically imposing. Your heart sinks when you learn that even Pat, who has been avoiding you lately, has signed the complaint. By design, it seems, your office move is scheduled on one of your most important religious holidays, but you are able to delay it a few days. Nevertheless, you spend most of that religious holiday packing your belongings. On the second day in your new office, you find garbage dumped in front of your door and graffiti by the nameplate on your office door indicating that you are crazy. You grow confused and more paranoid. You are now more comfortable coming to work on weekends but must keep some normal office hours and attend meetings during the week, despite feeling nauseous and now having diarrhea with almost each weekday visit to campus.

You awake one morning and come to the conclusion that the office change was retaliation by the department chair for supporting Pat. You file a grievance, and, miraculously, prevail! In an interview with the campus newspaper, you liken the outcome in your grievance to David's victory over Goliath in the Bible.

After winning the grievance and returning to your original office, you feel hopeful that things will improve, and, although you still feel queasy each time you come to work, you do your best to continue to be a productive scholar and effective instructor.

But despite your hopes, things do not improve. You are no longer chosen for committees. The department chair neglects to call on you when your hand is raised in meetings. And when you attempt to offer comments without raising your hand, you are called out of order. When you offer suggestions, your colleagues roll their eyes. If you disagree with the prevailing departmental view, even politely, you are shouted down. This explains why, during department meetings, your heart pounds, your hands tremble, and sweat runs down your back.

You have trouble sleeping, your stomach burns with acid, and you notice that your hands are beginning to shake persistently. Your physician informs you that your blood pressure is dangerously high and your heart has an irregular beat. Embarrassed, you mention some vague problems at work. The doctor recommends that you not attend meetings and you, reluctantly, follow the suggestion -- on the assumption that when things improve, you will attend again.

But things still do not improve. You sometimes have the vague feeling that you are being followed, but your family thinks this is only more evidence of your paranoia. Luckily, your family does not suspect *you* when two of your auto tires are slashed in the university parking lot. They grow concerned *themselves* when, a few weeks later, your home is vandalized. You begin to suffer nightmares about intruders breaking in and sometimes about being chased. You become clumsy and forgetful, dropping and losing things like your eyeglasses and keys. At work, you receive a disciplinary letter for not attending meetings. When you return to the meetings, you request that they be taped or video recorded in hopes that your colleagues will behave better, but your requests are ignored. After your raised hand is ignored and you are, essentially, prevented from participating in one meeting, you raise your voice and say you are entitled to your opinions— “after all, isn’t this what higher education is supposed to be about--the free flow of ideas?” A

week later, you receive a letter from the department chair indicating that your colleagues have found you to be disruptive, dangerously out of control, and the source of departmental paralysis. Your behavior, it is claimed, has caused one colleague to have high blood pressure and another to have a seizure. A day later, another letter arrives from HR (Human Resources) indicating that a consulting psychologist engaged by the university, having met with your colleagues but not with you, has assessed you and concluded that you are mentally unstable and in need of professional counseling to control your anger and violent tendencies. Copies of both letters enter your personnel file -- and also manage somehow to make their way around the department. Shaken, you rush off to class, and, on your way, are startled when a Lexus swerves out of nowhere and heads for you. You jump out of the way and realize ... that the driver is your department chair.

Upon being recognized, the chair smiles and waves enthusiastically to you. You are confused. Was it your imagination that the car was headed for you? Given all the other problems, you decide to report it to campus police – just in case. A week later, police show up and arrest *you* for trying to run down the department chair. “But the chair was the one trying to run me down; you have it backwards! I don’t even drive a car to work; I ride a bicycle!” you exclaim. Nevertheless you are taken away to jail. The next morning, your family awakens to the newspaper headlines “Mentally Unstable Professor tries to Murder Boss.” You learn the evidence alleging that “your” auto attack was intentional lay in the David and Goliath “death threat” you made months earlier to the campus newspaper after winning your office grievance, as well as in the letters from the department chair and HR complaining about your supposedly violent disruptions in meetings, the consulting psychologist’s assessment of you, and the petition by the faculty claiming to feel uncomfortable and fearful around you. You are utterly

baffled at any suggestion that you have or could behave violently. Your family lawyer gets you out of jail and a preliminary hearing finds you not guilty of trying to murder your department chair, but the judge, whose child attends your university's law school on a scholarship, finds you guilty of the lesser charge of disorderly conduct and warns you to control your violent tendencies and to get help. The newspaper does not report the not guilty finding. Defeated and shaken, you ask for and receive a medical leave for the rest of the semester.

While on leave, you attempt to do some writing and to work on healing both your mind and body. You have stomach, heart, and sleep problems and are easily startled. Your mind obsessively plays over the psychologist's report, the swerving car, and your arrest. You need desperately to heal. But your department chair sends you an annual evaluation of your work that states, incorrectly, that you are the worst instructor and the least productive scholar in the department. It also indicates that your service to the department is lacking in that you do not serve on any committees and do not even bother to attend department meetings. You have a decision to make. Should you focus your energy collecting evidence and responding to the untrue and politically motivated allegations on your annual evaluation or should you work on "letting go" of this hostile workplace for now and just healing?

A week later, you receive a letter from HR accusing you of working for another employer while on medical leave. Of course you are not working anywhere else, but how can you prove it? You abandon your writing and healing to focus your attention on this new barrage of accusations. Then your spouse receives an anonymous letter suggesting that you may be having an affair with a graduate student. Your spouse cannot help but wonder whether this presumed affair is really behind all your problems at work and all your anxiety. After all, you have not been in the mood for sex in a long time. More anonymous letters come. To

your horror, you awaken in the middle of the night to discover that you have wet the bed.

Your spouse decides to spend some time with relatives. Concerned more about what the situation is doing to your spouse than what the potential loss of your spouse would do to you, you begin to write a letter proclaiming your faithfulness and apologizing for what your work circumstances have done to your family. Your letter writing, however, is interrupted and you leave the partly written letter on the end table next to your favorite chair. Your department secretary has called to indicate that your department chair requests that you come to campus for a brief meeting to discuss your annual evaluation. Anxious to respond to the bad evaluation, you collect several documents demonstrating your excellent teaching and latest publications and go to see your chair. After taking a seat, the chair informs you that you have plagiarized a paragraph on your web site from the Bible and that your employment is terminated, effective immediately. At that moment, campus police enter and you are escorted to your office to collect your personal belongings and books, which will be kept for you in boxes until you can return with a car. You are told that you may not come to campus other than to collect your belongings.

You can hardly breathe. You walk your bike home, too stunned, dizzy, and shaken to ride it. You arrive at your empty home, sit in your favorite chair and stare. You have trouble breathing and feel excruciating pressure in your chest. With one hand on your chest and the other on the arm of the chair, you try to get up, but fall back into the chair, dizzy and gasping for breath.

For days your spouse tries to call, but no one answers the phone. The department secretary calls and sends letters asking when you plan to pick up your belongings. The messages and mail pile up. Furious that you never seem to be home in the evenings and wondering if you are with the graduate student,



your spouse returns home expecting to catch you in a compromising position. But your spouse only finds your still body in the chair, and next to it, what appears to be an unfinished letter:

“I have never, ever taken a romantic interest in anyone but you; you have always been my only love. I am guilty only of expressing myself at work too bluntly, but good causes for which millions of people have been willing to die are worth fighting for, especially when we see others being mistreated. I am terribly s.....”

Was this a *story* or a *history*? The events I have described seem so extreme that you must suspect the former. But I can assure you that I have no talent for fiction. This was the composite story of Hector (a highly productive immigrant full professor arrested on trumped up charges who suffered a stroke after being forced into early retirement for speaking out), Chris (son of a union mechanic, tenure-track assistant professor, 33 years old, fired on the spot for plagiarizing, with no due process, but with the campus police present), Elisabeth (daughter of a carpenter, full professor with a foreign accent whose colleagues claimed she caused seizures in a colleague by expressing heterodox opinions in faculty meetings and whose colleagues petitioned the administration to have her removed from the department), Maureen (daughter of immigrants, highly productive full professor who was falsely accused of working elsewhere during a medical leave pursuant to being mobbed for supporting a colleague who had been wrongly accused of sexual harassment—a colleague who then distanced himself from her during her mobbing), Jerry (son of a livestock and cement block trucker, a highly productive, 70 year old full professor whose office was moved to another building after a petition drive by less productive junior colleagues and who endured garbage dumped in front of his new office), Jon (highly productive, libertarian, religious full professor whose colleagues accused

him of racism in an ad in the campus newspaper), Herb (highly productive full professor, observer of the “wrong” religion, accused of violating sick leave and forced into early retirement), David (full professor who took his own life after being accused of racism and terminated), Lionel (full professor who passed away last month after a long illness that began shortly after his forced early retirement), Joan (productive full professor, union activist and grievant, whose employer engaged a consulting psychologist and private detective to target her), George (whose tenure-track contract was not renewed and who is trying to make it as an independent scholar and by selling TVs while also suing his former employer using his meager future pension funds), and a few others.

Collapsing their cases into one perhaps exaggerates the array of tactics by which individual victims of mobbing are stigmatized and harassed in hopes of driving them from the workplace, but only through such exaggeration can I hope to communicate on the printed page the feelings of bewilderment and dread that victims of mobbing feel, as well as to motivate the somatic consequences of nausea, palpitations, diarrhea and so on that often leave their trace in post-traumatic stress disorders. What I further hope the composite story underscores is the willingness of colleagues and bosses to employ patently dishonest schemes to hound targeted individuals from the workplace. The moral compromises that mobbers countenance are serious enough that you must surely suspect they face, without legitimate defenses, an insidious enemy, and so are compelled to adopt dubious strategies. In reality, however, the “enemy” merits no stronger characterization than, perhaps, “pain in the ass” (Westhues, 1998). The contrast between the routine annoyances that targets of mobbing are seen as visiting upon their colleagues and superiors and the extremity of the latter’s response is one of the enduring psychological puzzles in mobbing. I know I cannot make it more intelligible for you.

Indeed, as we proceed from the drama of our composite case to a brief overview of the characteristics of mobbings, your curiosity over this issue of proportion is apt only to grow.

### **The Anatomy of a Mobbing in Higher Education**

Based on examining over 100 mobbing incidents in academic settings researchers have been able to identify common characteristics of a mobbing (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 1999; Westhues, 1998, 2004). I will discuss eight common ones here.

#### **1. Similarities among Victims**

First, mobbing victims are typically productive, inner-directed individuals who also often *act* on their principles. Their productivity in higher education may also include successful grant procurement (personal observation). They are also often a little different. You might have noticed that our mobbing victim was foreign-born, had accented speech, came from a working class background, and, unlike colleagues, was religiously observant. The results of several studies in Europe suggest that women are mobbed more than men (Meschkutat, Stackelbeck, & Langenhoff, 2002; SEIN, 2004; Cox, 2004; Ferrari, 2004; ITW, 2004; Kvinnoforum, 2004); however these results are controversial and may be influenced by women's willingness to report this embarrassing phenomenon more.

#### **2. Conspiracy and Secrecy**

The inability of supposed intellectuals and "communicators" to air and address differences results in secrecy and conspiracy. The secrecy of the mobbing process often *begins* with rumors, gossip, and unflattering knick-naming of the person targeted. In

our composite story the mobbing victim came upon a group of colleagues who dispersed when the victim approached; they were not only mocking the victim's accent, but likely gossiping about the victim as well. (I am aware of professors referred to secretly as "the little twerp," "the witch," and, for a professor whose surname was "Wilhelm," "Kaiser Wilhelm.") Later, the department chair held secret meetings with the target's colleagues and organized a secret meeting with the target's colleagues and a consulting psychologist. Finally, the investigation into the target's writings for plagiarism was carried out secretly and it was certainly no coincidence that campus police were on hand for the final sacking.

### **3. Exclusion and Marginalization**

A third common component is marginalization and exclusion, usually from meetings, social events, and committees. In our story, exclusion began with the secretary's birthday card and continued with not being invited to a party, not being assigned or elected to committees, and being ignored or met with hostility during department meetings. In situations in which it is too obvious to exclude a target from a scheduled meeting, it is common for colleagues to hold secret informal auxiliary meetings from which the target is excluded, as was evident in our story.

### **4. "Critical" Incident**

Many mobbings are also said to have a "critical incident" after which exclusion and marginalization escalate to less subtle and more formalized forms of harassment. In our story, the critical incident was likely our target's expression of exasperation during a department meeting about not being able to express an opinion. It should probably be noted that the use of "critical" in "critical incident" refers less to the severity of the

targeted victim's behavior and more with how it is used by others to justify an extreme reaction to it.

### **5. Unanimity**

A fifth component is a shared, unanimous or near-unanimous conviction that the target is reprehensible, of abhorrent character, and merits punishment. In our story, letters from the department chair and HR and the opinion of a hack psychologist illustrate that everyone was "on-board" in supporting both the conviction of and formalized action against the target.

### **6. Flouting of Evaluation and Adjudication Policies and Procedures**

Normally, if an employee's routine evaluation notes some legitimate performance problems, a supervisor or HR representative will work with or coach the employee to correct the deficiencies. But in a mobbing situation, no one is really interested in professional development and rarely is anyone's performance lacking. A sixth characteristic of mobbing is employers skirting normal established evaluation procedures and, instead, initiating immediate elimination strategies, with the excuse that the workplace needs urgent relief from the threat posed by the target. In our story, both evaluation and adjudication policies and procedures were flouted. Our target received spontaneous disciplinary letters outside of a normal work evaluation and was eventually terminated on the spot for a supposed offense unrelated to the exasperation expressed at the meeting, and with no investigation or due process.

### **7. Emotional Rhetoric Bordering on Hysteria**

In order to justify flouting established evaluation and adjudication procedures, passionate, perhaps even hysterical, defamatory rhetoric about the target is used, the seventh component. These indictments are usually gross exaggerations

or outright fabrications about the target's character and are not related to work performance (although any opportunity to criticize the target's work performance during routine evaluations is certainly also seized upon). In our story, letters referred to our target as dangerous, out of control, violent, and the cause of others' seizures and high blood pressure. The actual behavior that stimulated these characterizations, however, was simply complaining about not being free to express opinions in meetings.

### **8. Serious Consequences for the Target**

Research by the late Swiss psychologist Heinz Leymann (1996), US psychologists Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliot (1999), and others has found significant incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, among mobbing victims (including symptoms of nightmares, obsessive mental replays of incidents, anxiety, being easily startled), as well as job termination, constructive dismissal (i.e, being forced out of a job), illness, and death, including by suicide. As you likely know, job termination in the US means loss of medical benefits just when one likely needs them the most. Some heal emotionally by modifying their research focus to include mobbing. In our mobbing example, the target suffered from many of the symptoms of PTSD, in addition to blood pressure and heart problems, leading to death.

These and other characterizations of mobbing are available to us thanks mostly to the results of research in sociology (e.g. Westhues 1998, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008) and psychology (e.g., Leymann, 1990; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Davenport et al, 1999; Mueller, 2004; Housker & Saiz, 2006;). Mobbing is experienced broadly and can, therefore, be *addressed* broadly by academic disciplines. Doing so will give us a more complete understanding of all its complexities, and provide creative and therapeutic research and development outlets for mobbing

victims from varied fields. As more mobbing-related books, articles and book reviews find their way into academic outlets across fields, as media coverage becomes not only more frequent, but more thoughtful, and as more mobbing-related subjects find their way into artistic outlets, one can at least hope that enough awareness will be raised to diminish recourse to the practice.

### **Mobbing as a Multidisciplinary Subject**

In the remainder of this essay, I provide a casual review of the development of mobbing as a subject of interest with some suggestions for future projects in a variety of disciplines, and a review of some current problems with the developing literature. I hope the latter will provoke further discussion and research.

First, to my casual review. Though a little-noticed book, *The Harassed Worker* (Brodsky, 1976), published in the US discussed mobbing under different names, it was psychologist Heinz Leymann, a German-born, Swedish citizen, who was probably the first to apply the term to human behavior. Previously, the term “mobbing” was used almost exclusively in zoology, characterizing the behavior of small birds aggressively ganging up on a larger, predator bird. Based on his work in the 1980’s, Leymann is credited with defining workplace mobbing; he combined research and writing about mobbing with treating mobbing victims for PTSD (Leymann, 1996; 2000).

Leymann’s work prompted an active interest in mobbing in Europe, which resulted in anti-mobbing legislation in several countries (SEIN, 2004; Cox, 2004; Ferrari, 2004; ITW, 2004; Kvinnoforum, 2004). Ten major books were published in the 1990’s related to workplace mobbing and bullying, seven of them in North America. These books are mostly descriptive self-help books based on cases and surveys, often written by

individuals who had experienced or observed mobbing, workplace bullying, or abuse first-hand (Martin, 2000).

Since Leymann's death in 1999, researchers on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as from Australia and South Africa, have addressed mobbing in a variety of ways. The European Commission sponsored several studies of workplace mobbing in countries such as Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, the UK, Belgium, and Sweden, including examinations of the prevalence, nature, costs of mobbing, and mobbing-related legislation, often with a special focus on women victims (Meschkutat, Stackelbeck, & Langenhoff, 2002; Rajda, 2006; Meschkutat, Stackelbeck, & Langenhoff, 2002; SEIN, 2004; Cox, 2004; Ferrari, 2004; ITW, 2004; Kvinnoforum, 2004). And at least one European journal has devoted an entire issue to the topic of abusive workplaces (Einarsen, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003).

Here in North America, the Edwin Mellen Press has taken the lead by publishing several volumes on mobbing with case studies, profiles, and personal accounts, some with detailed analyses, comparing and contrasting cases and suggesting patterns such as I discussed earlier. The Mellen series illustrates mobbing in a number of disciplines, and is unique in its emphasis on mobbing in higher education. (See Westhues 1998, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c) Additionally, scholars from a variety of disciplines, likely victims or observers of mobbings, have begun to address the issue in their respective fields. I will address these later.

Mobbing cases, especially those that have gone to court, have been covered by the media in North America, which have also recently addressed mobbing's close cousin, "workplace bullying." However, both mobbing and workplace bullying in general (not related to specific court cases) are now capturing the attention of both the media and lawmakers in North America. In Canada, the *National Post* published two pieces about mobbing (Mathias, 2000, 2001). In 2004, Canada's largest



national daily, the *Globe and Mail*, ran a feature story on mobbing (Kerr, 2004); *Reader's Digest Canada* published an article on working with difficult people (Cornwall, 2005), and Canada's popular women's magazine, *Canadian Living*, published an impressive feature article on adult bullying (McClelland, 2007). In the US, The *Chronicle for Higher Education* did an extensive front-cover piece on mobbing in higher education (Gravois 2006); and the *New York Times* included a story on workplace bullying two weeks ago, complete with a video component, that has produced, thus far, over 500 comments (Parker-Pope, 2008). The popular US morning show, *Good Morning America*, addressed it on March 31st of this year; and since 2003, 13 states in the US have been considering legislation against workplace bullying (Workplace Bullying Institute) . Thus public interest in the topic in North America is increasing.

In the field of law, researchers have examined legal aspects of mobbing in the US, especially as it relates to intentional infliction of emotional distress (or IIED), and compared European and US legislation related to mobbing (Coleman, 2006; Yamada, 2004). Having more research on the legal framework available to prosecute mobbing cases in the US and Canada focusing on, for example, due process, free speech, and wrongful termination, with specific analyses of cases that were and were not successful, would certainly help mobbing victims prosecute cases more effectively. Additionally, researching both the effectiveness and the abuse of anti-mobbing codes and laws would help societies and organizations decide whether to support such measures and, if so, how to craft them judiciously.

Journalists have written about mobbing cases and bullying in the mass media and in books (Gravois 2006; Parker-Pope, 2008; Cornwall, 2005; McClelland, 2007). More, and more thoughtful, coverage that clearly distinguishes between bullying and mobbing would help raise awareness among newspaper and

magazine readers. Film documentaries would increase awareness among an even greater portion of the population.

Although one's religion is sometimes the *cause* for being mobbed (see, for example, Westhues, 2006a and White & White, 2004), the relationship between religion and mobbing *can* be a healthier one. I am aware of one article that places mobbing in a Christian context (Baldwin, 2006) and when I informally searched for potential ethical issues in Judaism that may be related to mobbing, I identified Judaism's views on rumors, indifference, bullying, criticism, cruelty, cruel nicknames, embarrassing others, humiliating your enemy, being fair to your enemy, and passing on negative information about another (Telushkin, 2000). Religious leaders can and should play a crucial role in promoting awareness about mobbing, perhaps with the help of religious analyses of mobbing by academics.

Sociologist Kenneth Westhues (1998, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2008) has published many case studies of mobbings all over the world and has identified the common characteristics of mobbing victims, some of which were mentioned earlier. A recent book by journalist Alfred Lubrano (2003) on the problems that professionals from working class backgrounds experience in workplaces dominated by middle-class culture, suggested to me that it would be worthwhile to examine the possible relationship between *social* class and mobbing. Are mobbing victims disproportionately from working class backgrounds? If so, how is it that perpetrators *sense* their difference and why do they respond with such antagonism? What about the social class backgrounds of perpetrators? Additionally, some social scientists suggest that mobbing would perhaps be less prevalent in academically superior universities; however, as the treatment of Lawrence Summers at Harvard (Bombardieri, 2005) suggests, failure to observe certain pieties

seems to provoke a strong collective response even in the most elevated academic *milieux*.

The Arts are another area that can raise awareness of mobbing. While there are numerous films, novels, and plays that portray the ganging up of people on others, there are no modern-day ones, to my knowledge, that portray a prototypical academic mobbing and use the word. (for a list of novels and films depicting mobbing-like behavior, see [www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/~kwesthue/mob-novels.htm](http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/~kwesthue/mob-novels.htm) and [www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/~kwesthue/mob-films.htm](http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/~kwesthue/mob-films.htm)). US theatre professor and playwright David Rush recently wrote and produced the play “One Fine Day,” based loosely on a mobbing incident he observed on his campus at Southern Illinois University. The play was first produced in Chicago by Stage Left Theater (March, 2007) and then shortly after on his campus. It was nominated for a “Jeff Award,” Chicago’s version of New York’s Tony Award, won several “best new play” awards, and had a recent reading in New York.

In the mental health field, there has been some research on treatments for mobbing victims (Leymann, 1996, 2000; Davenport, et al, 1999), on the impact on the victim’s children (Hockley, 2003), on the affects of mobbing on the wellbeing and coping strategies of employees (Rosen, et al, 2007; Davenport, et al, 1999), and on how mental-health practitioners can actually be used to *collaborate* in mobbings (Friedenberg, 2004). But most of the work on treatments for mobbing victims was developed in Europe and has not yet found its way to North America. It is my opinion that few counselors in North America are informed about mobbing and equipped to help victims.

Unfortunately, my perception about mobbing and medicine is that most medical professionals interested in mobbing have focused their attentions *more* on mobbing problems within the field of medicine than on the physical and psychiatric consequences and possible medical treatments for its victims.

(See, for example, Falk & Falk, 2006; Cavina, 2004; Yildirim & Yildirim; Heinrich, 2006; A Newcomer Surgeon, 2005; Hoosen & Callagher, 2004; cf. Rosen, Katz, & Morahan, 2007) Perhaps the unfortunate prevalence of mobbing in healthcare professions will encourage more medical research into the identification and treatment of mobbing-related ailments.

There are more examples from fields such as education (Birnbaum, 2006; Blase & Blase, 2004), history (Howlett, 2005), library science (Hecker, 2007), social work (Reichert, 2003; Duffy & Sperry, 2007), business (Bassman, 1992; Bultena & Whatcott, 2008; Falk & Falk, 2006), and law (Yamada, 2004; Coleman, 2006). The needs and opportunities are limitless. I will turn now and conclude with four issues that concern me about current mobbing research.

### **Current Problems in Researching Mobbing**

First, I am concerned about the terminology used to label the various kinds of workplace conflict. Although some writers, scholars, journalists, and helping professionals from various fields have begun to address the problems of semantic confusion (see, for example, Martin, 2000; Westhues, 2006; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Bultena & Whatcott; Westhues, 2007), more attention to this problem is sorely needed. For example, *mobbing* (carried out systematically and frequently over a long period of time by more than one co-worker against a colleague who is often productive, inner-directed, and “different”) is commonly used interchangeably with *bullying* (typically associated with overt acts by a single person, often a supervisor or more senior co-worker against a vulnerable subordinate). To confound the problem further, labels such as workplace harassment, deviance, incivility and aggression are used, as are generalized workplace abuse and abusive supervision. It is clear

that the similarities and differences among these phenomena need to be clarified so that the research on each can be integrated with the others and so members of the media use terms precisely. Further, prospective codes or laws prohibiting such behavior require that absolutely clear definitions be established and relevant differences recognized.

Research directly into mobbing itself faces at least two additional important and related issues, one practical and one moral. The practical issue is that, since being identified as a mobber is to be placed in a stigmatizing category, mobbers are understandably reluctant to participate in research into their behavior. This means that their side of the story, or, rather, the full story of their motivation, remains underdeveloped, and is seen largely from the outside (Westhues, 2006d). Does the application of the term “mobbing” to an event *ever* cause mobbers to see their actions in a significantly different light, or do they merely retreat to nourish their grievances against their victim in private and complain about being misunderstood? What we would *really* like to have here is a series of “confessions” by mobbers – detailed self-examinations that weigh their behavior as they have come to see and understand it in the light of its new designation, which they may or may not choose to accept. Lacking such confessions, an understanding of the psychological and social dynamics of mobbing is apt to remain somewhat stunted.

This methodological problem has a companion moral one. It seems reasonable to assume that most mobbers see their actions as perfectly justified by the perceived depravity of their target, at least until they are asked to account for it with some degree of thoughtfulness, such as in a court deposition, by a journalist or in a judicial hearing. People’s accounts may be more or less successful. An unsuccessful account leaves the mobber entirely morally culpable. For example, a mobber may claim that the target’s contributions to departmental discussions “prevented

anything from getting done,” but be unable to point to a single example of any action that these contributions blocked. My own experience suggests that a mobber’s recognition that his or her accounts have failed in this way has no transformative effect. In fact, as social psychologists interested in cognitive dissonance would expect, the perceived degree of the target’s depravity might be increased in proportion to the weakness of the account.

But some mobbers are perhaps more effective in providing accounts. For example, the women faculty at Harvard who attacked Lawrence Summers after he remarked that biologically based sexual differences might account for some of the underrepresentation of women in scientific careers, presumably believed that their crusade advanced the cause of women, and particularly of women in science (Bombardieri, 2005). Similarly, faculty who mob colleagues they contend have made “racist” comments before students believe it is their responsibility both to uphold the highest professional standards and to protect students from harm to their sensibilities – harm that their protectors apparently see as potentially maiming. The question here becomes whether or not these accounts successfully justify the mobbing, or whether they are to be seen more as excuses. And, from whose perspective is this to be assessed?

Indeed, *are* there ever legitimate excuses for mobbing? If we assume, first, that the actions of mobbers always occur outside or in violation of established procedures, and, second, that their target is adequately performing his or her assigned duties, is mobbing always evidence of some dark flaw in mobbers? Or is there some, perhaps very narrow, set of circumstances in which it is justified?

Challenged by my husband to come up with an example of such circumstances, I recalled that linguists in Nazi Germany used the linguistic atlases they had developed to help the Gestapo identify Yiddish-speaking communities across the

occupied territories. Had I been their colleague, I certainly would have been tempted to mob such collaborators, but, as a practical matter, the climate of opinion against Jews being what it was, it is unlikely I would have found colleagues to join me in a mob. Thus it may just be that when mobbing is most justified, it cannot, for want of participants, occur.

Finally, although I certainly applaud business and management publications that illustrate the costs and other detriments of mobbing and bullying to both workers and employers, such as costs from worker turnover, lost productivity, litigation, and disability as a result of mobbing, (e.g., Namie & Namie, 1999), I am concerned that a commonly accepted point of view in the field of business and management concerning workplace relations may actually exacerbate the incidence of mobbing. A publication currently getting a good deal of attention in the US is Stanford University management professor Robert Sutton's 2007 book, *The No Asshole Rule: Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One that Isn't*. (Actually, what seems to be causing an even greater buzz than his book is his related piece in the *Harvard Business Review* in which he uses the term "asshole" eight times.) Those of us interested in mobbing might salute the mainstream success of such a book. Its basic message, that we should treat one another civilly at work, is good. Its chapter on coping with an abusive work situation is quite good. However, the book should give those of us interested in mobbing reason for concern. First, it oversimplifies the complexities of workplace conflict and refers almost exclusively to situations in which a single supervisor bullies many people. It assumes that everyone in the impacted unit would be happy to be rid of this bully, whom Sutton refers to as an asshole. But we all know that frequently so-called bully bosses reward friends who go along and only bully those who question, challenge or, if necessary, blow a whistle. The second and more serious problem is that the book has the potential to

actually increase workplace mobbing. For example, consider some examples, which Sutton lauds, of ways companies have either excluded or driven out “bullies”:

“Lack of cultural fit was the main performance reason that [bullying] employees were fired” said a JetBlue executive (2007: 56)

“Hotshots who alienate colleagues are told to leave,” said a Barclays executive (2007: 59).

“It’s all about creating a mutual feeling of fit,” said an IDEO executive (2007: 65).

I can think of scores of mobbing cases in which weak, unproductive co-workers *felt* intimidated by the mere presence of a highly productive colleague. Sutton seems to imply that if others *feel* alienated from or intimidated by a person, then that person is an asshole who should be driven out. In another example, the book characterizes “interrupting” others verbally as degrading and aggressive behavior. “If people interrupt and are quick to jump into a discussion with their own ideas,” this is seen by Sutton as “breeding fear and frustration.” (p. 113). But interrupting is considered normal in enthusiastic conversations and arguments by, for example, Jewish and Italian-Americans from the US Northeast. It occurs when people are passionate about a topic and each raises his or her voice and interrupts to add to the argument. And, I will add, it is a lot of fun to interact this way! In addition to interrupting, Sutton also includes on his list of “asshole behavior,” standing too close to a co-worker. Does Sutton really mean to drive out workers because they do not subscribe to WASP norms for communication? And do we really want weaklings in the workplace who cannot manage to elbow their way back into an argument? Do I think Sutton



knows the difference between aggressively standing too close and interrupting and culturally standing close and interrupting? Probably. But from my experiences, readers will easily misunderstand or intentionally abuse Sutton's message to target energetic, creative people who are different or question the status quo. To be fair, the book does tell readers not to rush to judgment when labeling and targeting potential assholes and it does admit that constructive arguing is okay but it devotes only a couple of paragraphs to these ideas and seems more bent on organizing campaigns to drive out so-called assholes than on protecting those who, to use Westhues' words (1998), are simply pains in the ass. Also worrisome is the book's suggestion that the best way to identify an asshole worthy of being driven out is simply to ask the target's co-workers what their "views" of him or her are. But what reason do we have to expect that such views are accurate? If people feel intimidated around someone, does that necessarily mean the person behaved badly? Unfortunately, such a naive view of workers' "views" or opinions, combined with the "go-along-to-get-along" mentality the book perhaps unconsciously promotes have the potential to increase the scapegoating of workers who go or exist against the grain, who dare to blow a whistle, who overproduce, or who suggest change.

I probably should confess at this point that, perhaps, some of my hostility towards this book is likely the result of my having read it only two days after a colleague of mine, a theatre professor, got fired, during the first year of his tenure track. Why? He was told that he was not a "good fit." Perhaps it was because my colleague, a Jewish Yale Drama School graduate from New York, was accustomed to a highly energetic and interactive theatre environment in which designers and directors excitedly engaged one another when planning an upcoming performance. What he found, instead, was a highly protective and low-energy environment where creative new ideas and any

kind of engagement were frowned upon. Perhaps it was also because he dared to try a more challenging play, and to ask the department chair, who writes the programs for the shows, to add a few program notes to help the audience keep track of all the characters. This was perceived, a confidant in the department told him, as telling the boss what to do. Another issue that troubles me about this case is that my colleague asked the confidant, who disagreed with the chairman's actions, to write a letter on his behalf to the dean to help his appeal. The colleague, who is tenured, said he did not feel comfortable doing that but might talk to the dean on his behalf if the dean should call him. The weakness of this worker was actually more troubling to me than management's behavior. This leads me to conclude that the greatest problem in the workplace is actually the *lack* of workers willing to swim against the current, question, challenge, change and argue. If this is viewed as negativity, as being a bad fit, as being an asshole, then we need more of it so that behaving this way represents the norm and a *good* fit. As the US populist Jim Hightower (2008) subtitled his new book, "Even dead fish can go with the flow." As for management books such as this, there is a danger in encouraging a confusion between "pains-in-the-ass" and "assholes." What separates the two is a subject for moral reflection that few in the workplace seem prepared to undertake, and it is, thus, incumbent upon investigators to engage in with the utmost awareness and concern – at least if their well-intentioned work is not to backfire.

## Conclusions

In this essay, I have attempted to escort you through a mobbing to its terrible consequences, describe common characteristics of mobbings, discuss how interdisciplinary treatments of mobbing can help us understand more about the

phenomenon, provide for creative outlets for mobbing victims and, hopefully, raise awareness enough to reduce its incidence, and to share some current problems in researching and addressing it.

For those readers who have been mobbing victims or observers of it, it is important that you avail yourself of some of the excellent resources available so that you can help yourself, your families, and other mobbing victims (see, for example, Davenport, et al, 1999 and Rosen et al, 2007). For those who have read these pages because of a curiosity about mobbing, I ask you to also become more familiar with some of the resources so that you can also help raise awareness. And to all readers: speak up if you suspect a mobbing; you may save someone's life. And speak up if you have new ideas and observe other injustices. I know of a professor with seven children who was fired from his job for defending students who he believed were expelled from the university inappropriately and without due process. He and his family had to live on old insect-infested pasta for a while after that. He lived until he was 90. His family and friends gave him the most beautiful eulogy you could imagine, remembering this and his other righteous deeds.

In closing, I would like to mention that many of the persons whose first names I mentioned earlier, who are still living, were aware that I was going to include components of their mobbing experiences in my lecture and it seems to be therapeutic for them to be able to share portions of their stories, even indirectly like this, so we all thank you for this opportunity.

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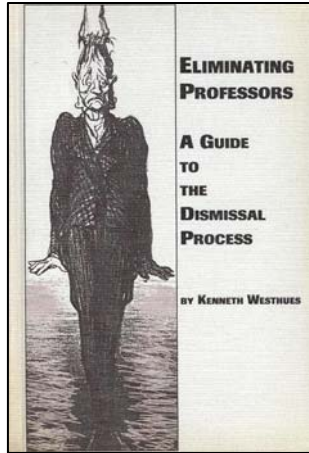
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A Guide to the Dismissal Process***

Kenneth Westhues

x + 218 pp., hardcover, 1998

Factual and funny, this preliminary report of research on academic mobbing is based on the first two dozen cases studied. Westhues wrote it during a four-month period of comical exchanges by fax with the adjudicator appointed to decide his fate at the University of Waterloo. Week by week, he interrupts the analysis for updates on his bizarre

predicament. The book ends by discussing how mobbing cases end, as the author awaits the adjudicator's overdue decision.

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*The book's chapters – highly readable, personal, engaging, and illuminative – alternate between a suspenseful narrative of Westhues's own case winding its tortured and exasperating way through an appeal, and the "how-to" chapters, which are written, this reader presumes, with an intensely ironic but tellingly effective voice. They sound like advice-to-administrators manuals, of which readers of this journal should be overly familiar. But let the reader beware that Westhues skewers them with a satiric intensity that chills the blood.*

David W. Leslie, College of William and Mary, in *The Journal of Higher Education*, 2000.

*. . . a remarkably perceptive account of the techniques useful for getting rid of unwelcome academics.*

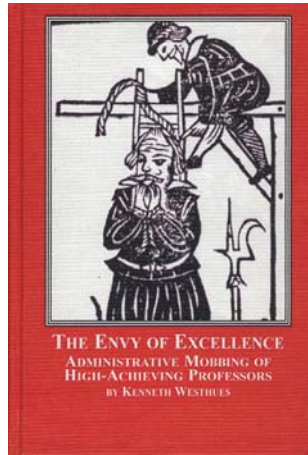
Brian Martin, University of Wollongong, in *Campus Review*, 1999.

*. . . an informative and passionate look into the darker side of ideological correctness and intellectual weakness within academe.*

William Zwerman, University of Calgary, in *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 2000.

*. . . with publication of this book and his continuing research on the subject, Westhues has virtually founded a new field in sociology.*

David S. Clarke, Southern Illinois University, Editor, *Knowledge, Technology, and Society*, 2003.



***The Envy of Excellence:  
Administrative Mobbing  
of High-Achieving Professors***

Kenneth Westhues

vii + 355 + 130 pp., hardcover,  
2004, 2006

The full report on a decade of research: the conceptual framework for mobbing research plus detailed examination of one extraordinary case, to which fifty others are contrasted and compared. This edition includes critical commentaries by scholars in varied disciplines:

Philip Mathias, journalist, Toronto  
Yeager Hudson, Colby College  
Anthony J. Blasi, Tennessee State  
Brian Keith-Smith, Bristol  
Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Wales

Robert B. Young, Ohio  
Charlotte Spivack, Massachusetts  
Brian Martin, Wollongong  
John Bolt, Calvin Seminary  
Michael Manley-Casimir, Brock

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*Often book reviewers commend the book under review as valuable or sometimes essential reading. This book is that and more besides. This book and the issues it raises should be on the desk and bedside table of every academic administrator in the post-secondary sector....*

Michael Manley-Casimir, Acting Provost and Former Dean of Education,  
Brock University, in *The Canadian Journal of Education* 2004.

*... a searing critique of the rituals of managerial power. ... Those who march to the beat of their own drummers (as Richardson did, by Westhues' own account) are a lesser threat to the integrity of the university and other bureaucratically managed organizations—not to mention the integrity of human relationships—than the pretextual use of this managerial power.*

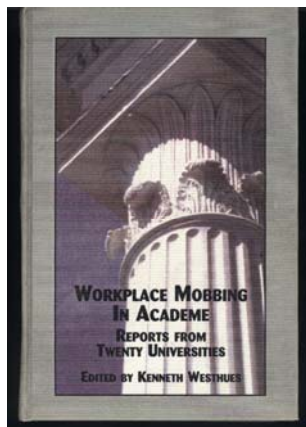
Bradley C. S. Watson, Philip M. McKenna Chair in American and Western  
Political Thought, Saint Vincent College, in *Academic Questions*, 2007.

*Worthy of a screenplay, it will serve as an excellent source book for many years to come.*

J. Philippe Rushton, Professor of Psychology, University of Western Ontario.

*Professor Westhues is to be deeply congratulated on the terrifying vision of institutional evil which he has presented to us.*

Hugo Meynell, F.R.C.S., University of Calgary



## ***Workplace Mobbing in Academe: Reports from Twenty Universities***

Edited by Kenneth Westhues

viii + 410 pp., hardcover, 2004

This stand-alone introduction to academic mobbing consists of responses to *The Envy of Excellence* in six categories: first-person narratives; third-person accounts; the origins of mobbing; eliminative techniques; techniques of resistance and recovery; strategies of

prevention. The authors approach mobbing from diverse viewpoints: law, education, psychology, and other disciplines. Contributors:

Dhiraj K. Pradhan, Bristol

Enrico Cavina, Pisa

O. Kendall White, Washington & Lee

Melvin Williams, Michigan

Martin Loney, journalist, Ottawa

Nathan Young, British Columbia

John Mueller, Calgary

Kathleen Kufeldt, Memorial

Roman Dubinski, Waterloo

Jan Gregersen, consultant, Jar

Hugo Meynell, Calgary

Daryl White, Spelman College

Jo and Joseph Blase, Georgia

Carey Stronach, Virginia State

Irving Hexham, Calgary

Joan E. Friedenber, SIUC

Brian Martin, Wollongong

Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Wales

Charmian Bondi, consultant, Oslo

David Yamada, Suffolk

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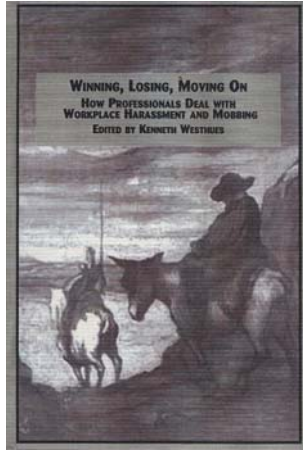
*Workplace Mobbing in Academe: Reports from Twenty Universities is a new book edited by Kenneth Westhues and published by Mellen Press. I recommend it highly, especially, but not only, for people concerned about the mobbing of academics (usually tenured professors). Many of the observations would be accurate across the board for all kinds of employment situations.*

*The book contains 21 essays, research, case studies, and "think pieces". These include essays by Westhues, Brian Martin, David Yamada and many others. The book is divided into seven parts, 1) The concept of mobbing (including a 12 point checklist for recognizing it), 2) narratives, 3) case studies, 4) predisposing contexts, 5) eliminative techniques, 6) techniques of resistance and recovery, and 7) strategies of prevention. This is rich material with diverse viewpoints.*

*The sections on resistance and recovery and strategies of prevention, are leading-edge discussions of the important question of what is to be done once this pattern of activity has been recognized. These sections include the papers by Martin and Yamada. Solid discussions of what can be done to make it less likely that mobbing will occur, and to weaken its force when it does, are still rare. Sections 6 and 7 of this book contain perhaps the best collection on these topics yet assembled.*

Nancy C. Much Ross, Chicago, weblog, April 2005.





***Winning, Losing, Moving On:  
How Professionals Deal with  
Workplace Harassment and  
Mobbing***

Edited by Kenneth Westhues

xii + 198 pp., hardcover, 2005

Editorial introductions show how these nine gripping accounts shed light on mobbing in academe and beyond. One professor tells how he escaped a poisonous work environment, another how he survived in one. A third (before his suicide) traces the steps to his dismissal.

A teacher, a dramatist, a doctor – their stories are all here. Contributors:

†David S. Clarke, Southern Illinois; Jacob Neusner, Bard College; Ross Klein, Memorial; Doug Giebel, Montana State; Charles F. Howlett, Molloy College; Robert F. Fleissner, Central State; Geary Larrick, Stevens Point, WI; Ursula & Gerhard Falk, Buffalo State; A Newcomer Surgeon.



***The Remedy and  
Prevention of Mobbing  
in Higher Education:  
Two Case Studies***

Kenneth Westhues *et al.*

iv + 251 pp., hardcover, 2006

Therese Warden and Uhuru Watson, tenured professors at Medaille College, were fired for turpitude in 2002. Herbert Richardson, tenured professor at the University of Toronto, was fired for gross misconduct in 1994. Careful comparative

study of these cases yields rich insight, especially since the Medaille mobbings, unlike the one at Toronto, have been corrected. Besides detailing a pragmatist method for the study of mobbing, this book provides analyses of the Medaille cases by Westhues and AAUP, and dialogue on the Toronto case between Westhues and seven colleagues in varied disciplines:

James Van Patten, Florida Atlantic; Stan C. Weeber, McNeese State; Jo A. Baldwin, Mississippi Valley State; Anson Shupe, Indiana/Purdue; Barry W. Birnbaum, Northeastern Illinois; James Gollnick, Waterloo.

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<http://chronicle.com>


**Federal Panel Floats Plan to Overhaul Accreditation**  
College leaders decry replacing regional boards with a national system  
BY BURTON BOLLAG

ACCREDITORS and some college groups are aghast at a proposal to eliminate regional accreditors and replace them with a national accreditation body. The proposal is contained in a discussion paper released late last month by the secretary of education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education.

The news came just as the chairman of the commission allayed another concern of college officials by publicly promising that a mandatory test of college students would not be among the panel's final recommendations.

Even with few details, the accreditation proposal has drawn fierce criticism from regional accreditors and from leaders of the American Council on Education and the Council of Independent Colleges.

A national accreditation body would "undermine the strength and diversity of U.S. higher education," says Judith S. Eaton, president of the Council for Higher Education Ac-



**'Mob' Story**  
When professors gang up on their colleagues, academe becomes a nasty place to work: A10

*Kenneth Weathers, a U. of Waterloo sociologist, says professors are especially prone to "mobbing", a term used to describe how birds gang up on a predator.*

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