Faculty Experiences with Bullying in Higher Education

Causes, Consequences, and Management

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ABSTRACT

Although much research has been done on workplace aggression and bullying over the past two decades, academics have paid relatively little attention to bullying in their own institutions. In this article, we discuss what is currently known about bullying in academia, with a particular focus on faculty behavior, and apply empirical and conceptual findings from research on aggression and bullying in other work settings and the significant literature on conflict management in higher education. We begin by describing the nature and prevalence of aggression and bullying in higher education. Drawing on well-established findings from interpersonal aggression research, we discuss several important social, situational, and contextual antecedents to aggression (including academic culture, climate, values, and work practices) and demonstrate how these may serve as causes and consequences of bullying. Embedded in this discussion, we offer a number of specific propositions for future research. We conclude with a discussion of possible actions for prevention and management of bullying in higher educational settings.

In the 1990s, researchers began to discuss, and explore, bullying among adults in work settings (Leymann, 1990). For the better part of the past two decades, a growing number of researchers (ourselves included) have been conducting research on this and related phenomena (e.g., workplace aggression and violence, mobbing, emotional abuse, etc.). Surprisingly, university-

based researchers have paid relatively little attention to bullying in their own backyards. This is an interesting oversight for a number of reasons. First, it stands in contrast to reliable evidence of other forms of hostile and demeaning behaviors on campus such as student and faculty incivility in the classroom (e.g., Braxton & Bayer, 2004). Second, the quality of interpersonal relations, such as collegiality, is an important factor in retention of faculty (Norman, Ambrose, & Huston, 2006). Third, the extensive literature on conflict and misconduct in higher education (Cameron, Meyers, & Olswang, 2005; Euben & Lee, 2006; Holton, 1998) highlights the structural and interpersonal opportunities for disagreement and potentially for hostility in such settings. Finally, the academic environment has a number of organizational and work features that increase the likelihood of hostile interpersonal behaviors (Neuman & Baron, 2003; Twale & De Luca, 2008).

While academics have paid little systematic empirical research attention to bullying in academic settings, this has not been the case in several popular online outlets and more traditional trade publications. For example, http://bulliedacademics.blogspot.com and www.mobbingportal.com/index .html represent some online destinations. In terms of a respected "industry" publication, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* has published numerous articles recently on the hostility and mistreatment that occurs on campuses (e.g., Fogg, 2008; Gravois, 2006). This suggests that academic settings are worthy and in need of concerted attention by researchers in workplace aggression and bullying.

In this article, we attempt to address this deficiency. First, we will briefly outline important findings about the nature, prevalence, and effects of bullying, aggression, and related phenomena. Next, we discuss several well-established causes of aggression and bullying and demonstrate how these antecedents are commonly manifested in (and endemic to) academic settings.[1] We will draw upon the extensive theoretical and empirical literature on interpersonal aggression, conflict in higher education, and related areas and use these findings to offer a number of concrete propositions for future research on bullying in higher education. We conclude by providing some suggested actions for addressing such behavior that flow from our analysis.

As our point of departure, we adopt the following definition of workplace bullying:

> Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. . . . It has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g., weekly) and over a period of time (e.g., at least six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003, p. 15)

A central premise of this article is that workplace bullying (also referred to as "mobbing" in some literature) represents acts of workplace aggression—efforts by individuals to harm others at work (Neuman & Baron, 2005). Thus, theories of aggression and conflict serve as the theoretical bases of our presentation.

BULLYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PREVALENCE, NATURE, AND EFFECTS

A comprehensive review of all the relevant literature specific to all aspects of bullying in academia is not possible given the space constraints of this article. Such a discussion would have to include a variety of actors and targets (e.g., students, staff, and administrators) as well as assorted (or unique) forms of bullying (e.g., cyberbullying). Consequently we have chosen to focus our attention on faculty experiences and behavior, as they are important determinants of organizational culture and climate—well-established antecedents and consequences of aggression and bullying. We have summarized a number of relevant studies in Table 1. Review of Table 1 reveals several interesting observations. First, the rates of bullying seem relatively high when compared to those noted in the general population, which range from 2% to 5% in Scandinavian countries, 10% to 20% in the UK, and 10% to 14% in the United States (Keashly & Jagatic, in press; Rayner & Cooper, 2006). The presence of witnesses is notable as an indicator of the climate within an organization that others in the environment are aware of and harmed by these experiences. These individuals could play a very helpful role in the prevention and management of aggression and bullying, as discussed below.

The nature of the relationship between actors and targets is also notable. As power differences can be a defining feature of bullying, it is not surprising to find supervisors and administrators often identified as actors. However, in our recent study conducted with university employees (Keashly & Neuman, 2008), colleagues were more likely to be identified as bullies by faculty (63.4%), while superiors were more likely to be identified as bullies by frontline staff (52.9%). Contrary to the current emphasis on student incivility, faculty concern about workplace harassment was more likely to be associated with colleagues (especially senior colleagues) and superiors much more frequently than with students. These findings support the importance of focusing on faculty behaviors in understanding bullying in academic settings.

Another observation is that the experiences reported involved two or more actors, that is, mobbing. Westhues (2004), in discussing the mobbing of professors by their colleagues and administrators, has argued that the experience of being mobbed is very different from the experience (however upsetting) of being harassed by a single actor. In our 2008 sample, we found that rates of mobbing differed as a function of the occupational group being studied. Faculty members were almost twice as likely as staff to report being the victims

Table 1. Studies of Aggression and Bullying in Academic Settings

Study	Sample	Time frame	Rates	Actors
Björkqvist, 1994 Finland	Employees at one university; *N* = 338 (47% response rate)	Prior 6 months	Experienced: 20.5% Witnessed: 32%	Superior: 55.5% Peer: 32.1% Subordinate: 12.4%
Lewis, 1999 Wales	Further/higher educa-tion union members; 32 institutions; *N* = 415 (50.3% response rate)	Not reported	Experienced: 18% Witnessed: 22%	Not asked
Kinman & Jones, 2004 UK	Members of University Teachers Association; 99 institutions; *N* = 1100 (22% response rate)	Not reported	Experienced: 18%;	Not asked
Simpson & Cohen, 2004 UK	Employees at one university; (19.8% response rate)	Not reported	Experienced: 25% Witnessed: 33%	Superior: 80% Peer: 20%
Times Higher Education Supplement, 2005 UK	Self-selected sample of higher education employees; *N* = 843	Not reported	Experienced: 42% Witnessed: 72%	Manager: 49% Senior to victim (not mgr): 26%
Raskauskas, 2006 New Zealand	Higher education employees, 7 institutions; *N* = 1117	Previous year	Experienced: 67.7% Of these, 27.4% report 1–2 incidents; 37.8% report ≥10 incidents	Superior: 60.7% Peer: 18.1% 1 bully: 38.4% 2 bullies: 29.9% ≥5 bullies: 9.4%

(continues)

Table 1. (*Continued*)

Study	Sample	Time frame	Rates	Actors
Fox, 2009 United States	Faculty, convenience sample; $N = 228$	Prior 5 years	Experienced: 36.6%	Superior: 22.1% Peer: 23.9%
Keashly & Neuman, 2008 United States	Employees at one university; $N = 1185$ (34.3% response rate)	Prior 12 months	Experienced: 32% Witnessed: 41%	Superior: 43% Peer: 42.2% Subordinate: 4% Customer/student: 2% 1 bully: 43% 2 bullies: 30% ≥3 bullies: 27%
McKay et al., 2008 Canada	Teaching staff and librarians at one university; $N = 100$ (12% response rate)	Prior 5 years	Experienced: 52% (32% "serious")	Superior: 34% Peers: 61% Students: 16%
Court, 2008 UK; stress survey (April–May)	Members of University and College Union; $N = 14, 270$	Not reported	Experienced: 27.3% further education; 23.4% higher education	Not reported
Court, 2008 UK; negative behaviors survey (November)	Members of University and College Union; N not specified (48% in higher education; 44% in further education)	Prior 6 months	Experienced: 25.9% with 15.6% now and then; 10.3% at least several times monthly	Indicate more than one category Superior: 75.4% Peer: 38.7% Subordinate: 9.7% Clients: 1.6% Students: 6.0%

of mobbing by three or more actors (14.5% vs. 8%, respectively). Frontline (nonacademic) staff members, on the other hand, were 1.5 times more likely to be bullied by a single perpetrator. These occupational group differences, and the possibility of some differences in antecedents, consequences, and dynamics, support our focus on faculty experiences for this article.

When bullying/mobbing occurs, it tends to be long-standing. McKay et al. (2008) found that 21% of their sample reported bullying that had persisted for more than five years in duration. In our 2008 study, 32% of the overall sample (faculty, staff, administrators, etc.) reported bullying lasting for more than three years. This percentage increased to 49% when we focused on faculty. It may be that academia is a particularly vulnerable setting for such persistent aggression as a result of tenure, which has faculty and some staff in very long-term relationships with one another. Both conflict (Holton, 1998) and aggression (Jawahar, 2002) research note that the longer and more interactive the relationship, the greater the opportunity for conflict and potential for aggression. Further, while ensuring a "job for life," tenure may also restrict mobility so that once a situation goes bad, there are few options for leaving. Zapf and Gross (2001) observed that the number of actors was linked to the duration of bullying. They found that the more people who joined in the situation, the longer it went on, concluding that it may become increasingly difficult for witnesses/bystanders to remain neutral as bullying proceeds and intensifies. Given the preceding discussion, once bullying begins, and the longer it is permitted to continue, the more likely it is that other colleagues will be drawn into the situation—possibly accounting for the higher incidence of rates of mobbing among faculty (Westhues, 2006).

Of all the types of bullying discussed in the literature (e.g., Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003), the behaviors most frequently cited in academia involve threats to professional status and isolating and obstructional behavior (i.e., thwarting the target's ability to obtain important objectives). Such findings "make sense" given the critical importance placed in academia on one's accomplishments, intellectual rigor, and reputation. If one wished to harm someone in this context, then behaviors designed to undermine their professional standing, authority, and competence, or impede access to key resources for their work (such as money, space, time, or access to strong students), may be the weapons of choice. Within the academic culture of reasoned discussion and debate, such behaviors can be justified by the bully as normative, that is, part of the "cut and thrust" of academic discourse (Nelson & Lambert, 2001). It is less likely that hostility would be expressed by insults, swearing, shouting, or threats of physical harm that would openly contravene such norms and run the risk of sanction from colleagues as a result. This leads to our first research proposition:

> *Proposition 1: When faculty bullying does occur, aggression will be indirect (as opposed to direct) in form, given the norms of academic discourse and collegiality.*

From the extant literature on bullying in both academic and nonacademic settings, including extensive interviews and personal accounts from targets (e.g., Vickers, 2001; Westhues, 2004), we know that the consequences of bullying can be quite damaging to individuals (physical, psychological, and emotional damage), groups (destructive political behavior, lack of cooperation, and interpersonal aggression), and organizations (organizational withdrawal behaviors, theft, lowered organizational commitment, and sabotage).

Of particular relevance to discussions of bullying among faculty is the impact on job satisfaction, productivity/performance, and turnover as well as abrasive interactions with students. Job satisfaction is well established as a key predictor of productivity and turnover in all employment settings (Sirota, Mischkind, & Meltzer, 2005) and as such can be an early warning of a problem. In terms of productivity, if faculty members withdraw from or notably reduce their effort in scholarship, not only will their chances for tenure, promotion, or merit pay be seriously undercut, it also will affect their ability to mentor graduate students and shift the advising load to their colleagues. If they reduce their investment in teaching, the students and the quality of their learning experience will suffer, not to mention raising the ire of their colleagues and the department chair. Similarly, withdrawal from service within the institution places a heavier burden on other faculty and staff and reduces the amount and quality of work necessary to keep the institution moving forward (Ambrose, Huston, & Norman, 2005). The literature on work withdrawal is rich with the ways that people can "exit" the situation while remaining physically present (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2004). Thus, when we consider the effects of bullying on faculty, we need to consider the more subtle ways in which faculty may remain employed but disengaged—essentially, "retiring on the job."

> Proposition 2: Tenured faculty exposed to bullying will be more likely than untenured faculty to "retire on the job," or lower the quality of their courses, or less likely to engage in "discretionary" service-related behavior.

Finally, voluntary and involuntary (nonrenewal or organizational decisions not to grant tenure) turnover can be disruptive for students, colleagues, programs, the department, and the institution. As is the case in all organizational settings, turnover is expensive in human and financial terms (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.).

In sum, the studies reviewed here suggest that workplace aggression, bullying, and mobbing are part of the academic landscape, and their impact not only can be damaging to the targets and bystanders, but also may adversely affect the learning environment and the institution itself. Importantly, we are not suggesting that bullying is unique to higher education; rather, we are suggesting that the academy represents a somewhat unique context in which bullying may thrive. Consistent with recent calls for an increased emphasis

on the role of context in organizational research (e.g., Johns, 2006), we believe that a focus on aggression and bullying in higher education is certainly justified. To that end, we now turn our attention to the causes of aggression and bullying, paying particular attention to institutions of higher education as our context.

SOCIAL AND SITUATIONAL CAUSES OF WORKPLACE BULLYING AND AGGRESSION

In reviewing the literatures related to social justice and human aggression, three classes of variables emerge as central to both research streams (Neuman & Baron, 1998). These factors include "unjust" situations that: (1) violate norms, (2) produce frustration and stress, and (3) induce negative affect. In the sections that follow, we discuss several important social and situational antecedents of aggression and bullying in which these three classes of variables play a significant role.

Injustice and Aggression

Anger and aggression are most frequently associated with perceptions of unfair or provocative treatment by others (Neuman, 2004). In work settings, there are an inordinate number of issues over which people may become upset. This assertion is supported by research evidence and common everyday experience. In a study of 452 employees from a diverse group of businesses, 21% indicated that they were dissatisfied with the degree of respect and fair treatment they received from their boss (Baron & Neuman, 1998). Similarly, in a study of 124,716 employees in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 38% disagreed with the statement "People treat each other with fairness and respect" (Neuman, 2004). When you consider the wide range of justice judgments made at work on a daily basis (e.g., promotion decisions, office assignments, merit pay, etc.), these numbers are not surprising. Reactions to perceived slights have been shown to be associated with a wide range of aggressive behaviors (Neuman, 2004).

While injustice perceptions are common in all work settings, institutions of higher education may present numerous (sometimes unique) opportunities for such perceptions by faculty. For example, student evaluations of instruction are used in many important faculty personnel decisions such as discretionary salary increases, promotions, and reappointment and tenure decisions. Research clearly demonstrates that the content of the course, and "tough" grading, can adversely impact student ratings of teacher performance—leading to stress and frustration (which we discuss below), especially among junior (untenured) faculty. To combat this problem, some faculty may resort to grade inflation as a way of improving their own student evaluations—which, by the way, is

often resented by other faculty members. This problem may differ according to academic disciplines and across academic departments.

Faculty members are also evaluated using subjective, often ambiguous, criteria, as evident in reviews of scholarly/intellectual contributions, department- and college-wide service, continuing growth, and community service. Few institutions have clear standards for judging such contributions and, instead, rely on general guidelines or descriptive criteria for making such evaluations. Such judgments often lead to perceptions of distributive injustice, unfair treatment associated with outcomes and procedural injustice, and unfair treatment associated with the decision-making process used to determine those outcomes (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005).

To complicate matters further, such personnel decisions are made by colleagues in a peer-review process. At the departmental level, where people have "histories" with each other and are often in competition for scarce resources (money, equipment, space, power, high-caliber students, etc.), hidden agendas can abound (Higgerson & Joyce, 2007). Even when evaluators operate with the best motives, they may not be in a good position to make informed decisions about the quality of others' scholarly work. This is especially true at the college- or university-wide central committee level, where people from diverse academic disciplines (with little understanding of each other's fields) sit in judgment of others' scholarship, teaching, and professional service. When the outcomes of the process are favorable to the candidate, the issue is moot. But when the outcomes are less than favorable, perceptions of unfair treatment (both real and imagined) may result.

We now turn our attention to a discussion of the mechanisms by which perceptions of injustice so frequently lead to anger, aggression, and bullying.

Norm Violations and Aggression

As suggested by Lerner, justice refers to "an appropriate correspondence between a person's fate and that to which he or she is entitled—what is deserved" (1981, p. 12). Referent cognitions theory, and more recent formulations of fairness theory (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001), suggests that with respect to outcome allocation, resentment is greatest when individuals believe they *would* have obtained better outcomes if the decision maker had used other procedures, which *should* have been employed.

When considering the outcomes that a person "should" get, the perception of "entitlement" is a defining characteristic. There is some evidence that in recent decades, employees seem to have a greater sense of entitlement (Florida State University, 2006). To the extent that people believe they are entitled to more, these expectations are more likely to go unrealized and unsatisfied. There is evidence to suggest that entitlement is deduced from the social category or group to which the individual belongs (Lind & Tyler, 1988). In the

case of academics, the identification with the group is strong and, we would suggest, the sense of entitlement is well defined—possibly increasing strength with rank, status, and organizational tenure. As we discuss later, the value of academic freedom suggests that faculty (especially senior faculty) are entitled to (and expect) extensive autonomy in many of their work-related activities. To the extent that these expectations go unmet, psychological contract breach occurs (Kiewitz et al., 2009) and reactive aggression is more likely to occur. The form that this aggression will take is governed, in part, by the *effect/ danger ratio* (Björkqvist, 1994)—the subjective estimation about the likely consequences of an aggressive act. In essence, aggressors seek to maximize the effect of their aggression while minimizing the risks to themselves. In situations in which aggressors feel exposed or lack power over their targets, they tend to employ indirect and passive tactics that shield them from retaliation. Conversely, when aggressors perceive that they are in secure or more powerful positions, as relates to their target(s), they may employ more direct and active approaches.

The preceding discussion suggests the following propositions:

> *Proposition 3: In general, perceived norm violations will result in higher levels of direct aggression and bullying on the part of senior (as opposed to junior) tenured faculty members.*

> *Proposition 4: Senior (tenured) faculty members will direct their aggression and bullying against untenured faculty members who are lower in rank, students, or staff.*

> *Proposition 5: Senior faculty members will be more likely to engage in indirect forms of aggression against colleagues of equal rank, department chairs, and other senior administrators.*

Elicitation of Frustration, Stress, and Aggression

To the extent that norm violations block the attainment of some desired goal, a state of relative deprivation may result—the feeling that one has been *unjustly* deprived of some desired thing. This, in turn, may lead to a sense of frustration.

Frustration was one of the first variables to be studied systematically and has, over the years, received a considerable amount of attention in terms of its connection to aggression. There is evidence to suggest that frustration may produce a state of readiness or instigation to aggress (Geen, 1991). In organizational settings, frustration has been found to be positively correlated with aggression against others, interpersonal hostility, sabotage, strikes, work slowdowns, stealing, and employee withdrawal (Spector, 1997).

Almost 30 years ago, Crase (1980) identified the following sources of frustration among higher education faculty members: (1) mandated student evaluations; (2) stringent guidelines for promotion; (3) increased fear of dismissal; (4) inadequate salary increases; and (5) growing apathy among student populations. In recent years, a number of factors have intensified the impact of these factors, such as the growing need for accountability (demonstrating "value-added"), associated mandates for standardized outcome measures, and the more recent economic downturn and its impact on job security and compensation. Programs have been (and continue to be) eliminated as a cost-saving measure, and increased work and teaching loads, class sizes, and faculty-student ratios have become routine, particularly for publicly funded institutions. Funding for scholarly and professional activities has decreased at the same time that increased expectations have been placed on faculty to participate in conferences and other professional and research-related activities. These issues may have a disproportionate impact on junior (untenured) faculty.

Related to this, junior faculty members are more likely than tenured faculty to experience stress associated with job insecurity, student hostility and incivility, enrollment concerns, workload issues, "publish or perish" fears, and salary concerns. Consistent with the effect/danger ratio cited previously, they are not likely to employ direct forms of aggression for fear of retaliation. This suggests the following:

> *Proposition 6: The experience of frustration and stress among junior (untenured) faculty will result in higher levels of indirect and passive aggression against the perceived source(s) of that frustration and stress.*

Negative Affect, Physiological Arousal, and Aggression

Another well-established finding in the aggression literature involves the role of negative affect and physiological arousal as both antecedents to, and mediating process in, the instigation to aggress (Anderson, Deuser, & DeNeve, 1995). In short, anything that results in unpleasant emotional reactions or physiological sensations (which includes all forms of frustration and perceptions of injustice) can increase the likelihood of aggression and—by extension—bullying. Conversely, aggression and bullying produce negative affect and perceptions of injustice in targets and witnesses. Many of the cost-cutting measures, identified previously, may also result in the production of negative affect and physiological arousal. For example, lowering thermostats in the winter (and raising them in the summer) to conserve energy costs, reductions in cleaning staff, restricted access to office and computer supplies, and reduced funding for building maintenance are just some of the many "subtle"

factors that may lead to negative affect and unpleasant physiological arousal. These variables have all been found to lead to increased levels of aggression in work settings (Neuman & Baron, 1997). The operation of these variables as antecedents to aggression and bullying is very consistent with the excitation transfer theory (Zillmann, 1983) in which the activation of sympathetic arousal facilitates aggressive behavior—especially in the presence of perceived provocation, attributions that are common in a "toxic" work culture/climate, which we discuss below.

> *Proposition 7: Increased levels of cost-cutting measures will be associated with increased levels of negative affect, unpleasant physiological arousal, and, ultimately, workplace aggression and bullying by faculty.*

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CLIMATE

The workplace bullying literature strongly suggests that an organization's culture and related climate play an important role in the manifestation of hostile behaviors at work. They influence how members define and perceive the nature of interpersonal interaction as well as how they respond and manage such interactions (Lester, 2009). Cultures that "breed" bullying and hostility are variously characterized as competitive, adversarial, and highly politicized, with autocratic or authoritarian leadership that does not tolerate nonconformity (Hoel & Salin, 2003). These are conditions that appear contrary to the academy's espoused notions of collegiality and civility, grounded in the "sacred" values of academic freedom and autonomy. So, why are hostile and aggressive behaviors part of the social landscape in institutions that prize intellectual inquiry and debate, independence of thought, and reasoned discussion? As suggested by our first research proposition on the form of hostility, the core norms of academic freedom, autonomy, tenure, and collegiality may help illuminate this seeming contradiction.

Historically, academic freedom and tenure have been interpreted to mean that faculty should not be unduly restricted in the "what" and "how" of their scholarship or in their teaching and discussions of material (American Association of University Professors, n.d.). Autonomy is a critical requirement for academic freedom and refers to both independence of thought and action as well as immunity from undue influence of others. Tenure is considered vital to ensuring that faculty remain autonomous and pursue "truth" without fear of reprisal. These elements should foster and promote a climate of open debate and critique and permit the exploration of a diversity of ideas, no matter how distasteful or controversial, that is critical to knowledge creation and application. Austin and Gamson (1983) found that these features of academic culture were intimately related to faculty job satisfaction, which, as we have

noted earlier, is a key influence on faculty productivity and turnover.

For us, an understanding of how a toxic culture may evolve in academe revolves around the interpretation of, and interaction between, collegiality and autonomy. A study on faculty beliefs about posttenure review (O'Meara, 2004) gives us some insight into how faculty interpret and connect these two concepts. Faculty expressed the feeling that giving performance feedback to tenured faculty was not collegial because it interfered with a faculty member's (and their own) autonomy by threatening the faculty member's authority to direct their own work. In essence, by having gained tenure, these faculty members were "entitled" not to have their work evaluated by their colleagues. Further, such feedback was not collegial because it violated the norm of "professional respect," which apparently restricts telling people something negative (or constructive) about their work or behavior. In essence, there is a tension between the values of collegiality and confrontation (Leal, 1995). To the extent that these interpretations are operational in a department or institution, not only will faculty not think they can give feedback or engage a colleague around difficult issues such as bullying, but the groundwork is laid for an "alleged" bully to ward off input and action by colleagues' regarding his or her behavior (Nelson & Lambert, 2001).

This analysis suggests that faculty may have little motivation (or perceive themselves as not having the "legitimate" authority) to handle issues with "difficult" colleagues—allowing situations to escalate, resulting in a toxic climate and an increased likelihood of aggression and bullying. Recent research suggests that faculty find such circumstances difficult and often intolerable. For example, Ambrose, Huston, and Norman (2005) found that lack of collegiality was a key influence in the dissatisfaction of current and former faculty, resulting in their decisions to leave their institutions. In a survey of college and university faculty by Braxton and Bayer (1999), respondents identified several "inviolable" standards or norms of behavior that, if violated, warranted "strong sanctions" (e.g., condescending treatment, abuse of authority, disrespect, cynicism, etc.). So herein lies the dilemma: collegiality and autonomy are critical for academic freedom and the work of the academic, yet these norms are interpreted as preventing action to address what faculty view as problematic behaviors that, in turn, create a climate of noncollegiality, hostility, and incivility, increasing the likelihood for bullying and mobbing. In addition to these normative constraints, Leal argues that faculty for the most part are not trained in the necessary "processes of problem-solving, consensus building, negotiation and mediation" (1995, p. 20) that would permit them to manage these tensions and behaviors in constructive ways, contributing to further potential for escalation.

Finally, the mechanisms available in higher education institutions may not be appropriately suited for helping faculty deal with these tensions due to their highly formalized structure and limited mandate (Leal, 1995). For

example, in the United States and Canada, unions are designed to handle issues between faculty and the administration. They are not set up to handle member-on-member issues. Also, faculty members are less inclined to utilize these formal mechanisms because they take control of the situation out of faculty hands and into those of administration, impinging on the sacred value of autonomy. Given all the "forces" that can work against constructive engagement in academic settings, what can be done to prevent and respond to bullying in higher education?

ACTIONS AND RESPONSES

To begin, we believe that early action is critical in preventing situations from escalating into increasingly hostile and damaging situations such as bullying. By this we mean processes and procedures to help build the capacity (awareness and skills) of faculty and provide support for their efforts to constructively manage and in some cases resolve their own situations. Further, we believe that there need to be mechanisms and procedures in place to address the underlying causes of these hostile interactions to prevent many of these situations from arising. For example, the establishment of clear policies and standards for promotion, tenure, and merit review as well as transparent decision making regarding resources (to reduce injustice perceptions and negative effects).

Because a thorough discussion of all possible strategies, processes, and mechanisms is beyond the scope of this article, we have chosen to focus on the informal opportunities offered by various conflict management and resolution processes such as skill development in negotiation and related skills and third-party support through mediation and informal problem-solvers (e.g., Holton, 1998; Lipsky, Seeber, & Fincher, 2003). We do this for three reasons. First, these processes offer earlier action before entrenchment and irreversible damage occurs, that is, the "not yet bullied" (Rayner, 1999). When bullying is advanced, active conflict management strategies on the part of the victim become ineffective and can potentially exacerbate the situation (Keashly & Nowell, 2003; Zapf & Gross, 2001). Clearly, for such advanced situations, more formal approaches such as grievance and arbitration procedures or legal action might be more effective in at least ending the harmful relationship (Euben & Lee, 2006). Second, informal processes are likely to be less adversarial and more consistent with the purported model of collegial decision-making and faculty autonomy. Thus, faculty members are more likely to be receptive to them.

Finally, informal approaches permit the parties greater control of the process and thus the outcome. The issue of control is important in academia generally and for bullying in particular. Zapf and Einarsen (2003) argue that the loss of control by the victim as the bullying process evolves undercuts the target's ability to respond and defend. Perceived lack of control is also associated with increased levels of stress and frustration—which may lead

to reactive aggression (Spector, 1997). Thus, it is important for targets to feel they have some influence or ability to change the circumstance. Similarly, the alleged bullies are entitled to opportunities for explaining, and if necessary, modifying their own behaviors. In the case of dispute-related bullying, both parties carry some responsibility, and more informal processes allow this recognition, away from others' eyes.[2]

Academic settings have actually been in the forefront of developing and utilizing a variety of conflict management and resolution processes in response to their nature as "havens of all types of discourses and ideologies" (Leal, 1995, p. 19). However, much of that attention has been focused on addressing student conflicts and those of staff. The success in these areas has created the impetus to develop approaches and processes customized to fit faculty's unique position and the nature of their work.

As noted in our earlier discussion, faculty may not be skilled in processes necessary for working collectively and collaboratively with each other. Thus, an important step is to educate faculty initially about the nature and process of conflict generally but also within academia. This approach is appealing to faculty as it is grounded in research and theory and speaks to their analytical side. Against this backdrop, faculty can then be taught about the conflict management process and the specific skills involved in problem identification, solution development, and selection, implementation, and evaluation of the solution. The specific skills involved include active listening, assertion (as opposed to aggression), differentiating between "advocacy" and "inquiry," and problem solving. While many faculty members possess these skills, they are not often put into use in conflictual or hostile situations. Training faculty in these skills when they are not in the midst of a difficult situation facilitates their learning and retention. A good example of a model and approach for such skill building can be found in Bolton (1986).

Mediation represents another important skill set. Mediation involves a neutral third party who facilitates a constructive discussion between parties in dispute. The third party is neutral in being unbiased regarding the parties and the solution. The mediator helps the parties identify their underlying issues and needs and develop solutions that address their needs. Mediation is an informal process permitting faculty more control over the outcome or process than if they sought redress through the more formal grievance process, arbitration, or litigation. Training faculty to be the mediators has the added benefit of building collegial capacity to address issues early on. Training faculty as a group in conflict analysis, negotiation, and mediation skills also creates a shared experience and perspective and facilitates the development of a commitment to working through situations together. Examples of the use of mediation and mediation training in facilitating faculty relations can be found in Leal (1995).

In our discussion of academic culture, we noted that while the values and norms of academic freedom, collegiality, and autonomy are the foundation

of the academy, the understanding and interpretation of these may vary. Such variability can lead to misunderstandings and potentially perceived or actual mistreatment. Braxton and Bayer's (1999) identification of inviolable norms indicates that there is some shared sense among faculty of what is *not* acceptable. Thus, it becomes important to explicitly discuss and set what these norms are, how they are manifested, and what behaviors support or contravene them. Having a consensus of "how we work here" can be a useful tool for managing difficult behaviors and situations and for establishing a more constructive work environment in which bullying is antithetical.

One model for developing a shared sense of appropriate behavior is the departmental communication protocol developed at the University of California–Davis (Hoover, 2003). This process was designed to address generalized conflict in a department and a toxic work environment characterized by hostile factions. The communication protocol is a set of guidelines for day-to-day communication and informal problem-solving that is developed by the members of the unit themselves (Hoover, 2003). Jointly determined guidelines, if adhered to, would work against bullying behavior or, when hostile or demeaning behavior starts to occur, can provide guidance on how to address the issue. Because unit members develop the protocol, it reflects the culture and norms of that unit. While development of specific conflict management and mediation skills can provide the groundwork for a shared understanding, it does so indirectly. The communication protocol, however, is an *explicit* discussion and articulation of this understanding. At its heart, the communication protocol is a strategy for developing a constructive communication climate (Keashly & Neuman, 2009).

When the situation is beyond the capacity of the faculty or the unit to address, an institutional resource that has become quite familiar on university campuses is the office of the ombudsperson. These individuals are considered an independent, neutral, confidential, and informal resource for the university community writ large to handle conflict situations through fact finding, mediation, and conciliation (Warters, 1995). Their institutional position and mandate are an important resource for addressing bullying, particularly with a power imbalance between victim and bully. In our conversations with several ombudspersons, they indicate that bullying situations are being brought to their offices. They are responding by developing educational materials and awareness programs for the university community and utilizing conflict coaching to work with both victims and alleged bullies (e.g., Rowe & Robinson, 2007; Rowe, Wilcox, & Gadlin, 2009).

CONCLUSION

We believe that we have demonstrated that aggression and bullying is part of faculty experiences, and the potential consequences of these behaviors

to individuals, groups, and educational institutions may be substantial. Embedded in our presentation, we have enumerated a number of testable propositions derived from theories of aggression and conflict and our own preliminary research in public and private universities. We have also suggested some informal actions that can be undertaken to prevent and manage these situations.

Over the past 10–15 years, researchers have learned quite a bit about workplace aggression and bullying in a variety of organizational settings, but very limited attention has been focused on bullying in the academy. We have suggested there are contextual factors that seem unique to institutions of higher education that have been strongly linked to the onset of aggression both theoretically and empirically. Consequently, we believe that there is sufficient justification for pursuing more systematic research on bullying and aggression to better understand the nature, causes, consequences, and management of such damaging behaviors within institutions of higher education. Such research would need to include an examination of all organization stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, etc.), size and type of institution (public, private, professional), and cross-cultural issues as well. We trust that this article will serve as the impetus for further research and action on workplace aggression and bullying in our own "schoolyards."

NOTES

Both authors contributed equally to this manuscript. The order was determined alphabetically.

1. The terminology we employ, and the academic environment we describe, may reflect the norms and practices of North American (Canada and the United States) academic institutions. We describe these elements in detail in order to facilitate comparison cross-nationally.

2. We recognize that bullies and bullying may thrive precisely because it is done "out of sight." We are not advocating that there be no public processes, rather that they are more suitable and appropriate when bullying has advanced and is resistant to other efforts for change (see Keashly & Nowell, 2003).

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