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**BEYOND BULLIES AND VICTIMS:
USING CASE STORY ANALYSIS AND FREIREAN INSIGHT TO
ADDRESS ACADEMIC MOBING**

The world of academia is typically associated with high intellectual pursuits; in fact, the stereotypical professor is often characterized as alienated from ordinary human emotion – immersed instead in the cognitive world of ideas and theories. In reality, of course, academicians are fully human, driven as all people are by physical, social, emotional, and psychological impulses. As in any community, individuals construct and produce social norms and identities through their daily interactions. Power is exercised and distributed, and resistance manifests. Leaders emerge, collaboration and mutual support occurs, and – unfortunately – bullying and victimization transpires. This is not to imply that these negative, injurious behaviors are acceptable; only that they can be anticipated. And being able to anticipate and understand particular, destructive kinds of encounters can help to prevent them.

Academic mobbing produces no positive consequences. However, condemning it will not make the behaviors associated with the practice disappear. Khoo (2010) defines academic mobbing as

a non-violent, sophisticated, ‘ganging up’ behaviour adopted by academicians to ‘wear and tear’ a colleague down emotionally through unjustified accusation, humiliation, general harassment and emotional abuse. These are directed at the target under a veil of lies and justifications so that they are ‘hidden’ to others and difficult to prove. (p. 61)

Academic mobbing involves the cultivation of cultural norms that reinforce a sense of belonging that is explicitly connected with a concomitant consciousness – and validation – of “Othering.” As might be expected, it is a discouraging, infuriating, appalling example of human interaction; an abuse of power is terrible regardless of the scale. However, we will also argue that simply denouncing academic mobbing is insufficient. Because academic communities are intensely human groups, engaged in work that is intellectually, socially, psychologically, and even sometimes physically complex and demanding, any approach intended to reduce the production and ameliorate the effects of academic mobbing must be multifaceted and reflective.

Case story analysis offers the potential to examine and ameliorate academic mobbing in ways that complicate the roles of participants *and* provide a safe means of investigating causal forces without essentializing (or revealing) identities. This article offers an explanation of case story analysis, particularly as it applies to academic mobbing. The analysis will be coupled with “on the ground” experiences of academic mobbing and conclude with the possibilities of using case story analysis as a means of reculturing, with the ultimate aim of creating educational institutions that reflect principles of social justice.

Our approach to analyzing the phenomenon of academic mobbing is grounded in Freire's (1970, 1998a, 1998b) "pedagogy of freedom." To end victim-centered discourses surrounding academic mobbing, we argue critical scholars must lay bare the constitutive forces behind why academics engage in virulent behaviors to destroy or humiliate their colleague, leaving her or him "often scarred for life" (Westhues, 2006). In essence, we firmly recognize that social actors are conditioned by their socio-historical reality, but are unfinished agents who have the potential to critically understand and transform their world (Freire, cited in Benade, 2009). In this case, we are hopeful that through critical reflection and dialogue a new academic culture can be engendered to eradicate academic mobbing. The culture would prioritize diversity, freedom, justice, and love over ideals propelling the senseless 'Othering' of numerous faculty members across the globe, ideals that include greed, competition, individualism, and profitmaking.

Academic Mobbing and Neoliberalism

Academic mobbing, unlike individual bullying behaviors, is particularly pernicious: it is surreptitious, repetitive and, although generally initiated by individuals, it is reinforced and encouraged by colleagues. These features mean that, in a sense, academic mobbing is a self-fulfilling endeavor: weaknesses (real or spurious) are identified, exaggerated and magnified, realized and publicized. An additional characteristic of academic mobbing relates to the nature of its targets, who are singled out in order to sustain existing power structures. Bullies who engage in mobbing do so, in part, to avoid being overshadowed by a more accomplished, ethical coworker. Khoo (2010) elaborates:

Bullies use mobbing activities to hide their own weaknesses and incompetence. Targets selected are often intelligent, innovative high achievers, with good integrity and principles. Mobbing activities appear trivial and innocuous on its own but the frequency and pattern of their occurrence over a long period of time indicates an aggressive manipulation to "eliminate" the target. (p. 61)

Khoo emphasizes three critical aspects of academic mobbing. First, its targets tend to be exceptional in both achievement and integrity, and those who act ethically are less likely to expect others to be corrupt. Therefore, targets may not suspect that they are under attack until individuals, for any number of reasons, have established a mob. This relates to the second aspect, which is that mobbing involves frequent, systematic strikes that, in isolation, may appear trivial and harmless. Collectively, however, these actions are personally and professionally devastating. According to Westhues (2004), who examined over one-hundred fifty academic mobbing cases in the U.S., Britain, and Austria, targets of academic mobbing often deal with petty harassment and formal sanctions from colleagues and administrators. Their academic lives are terminated through retirement, suicide, mental breakdown, or stress-induced cardiovascular disease (p. 34). The third aspect is the objective: academic mobbing is intended not only to harass, but to remove the target.

Khoo (2010) identifies several types of mobbing, which include attacks on a target's self-expression, social relations, reputation, professional life, and her or his physical and mental health. Khoo also delineates five phases associated with the mobbing:

Phase 1 – Critical incident (Conflict phase)

Target is accused of anything from making an insensitive remark to committing an unethical act. Whether real or perceived, these accusations give justification to the mobbers to take administrative actions against the target.

Phase 2 – Mobbing and stigmatizing

Phase 2 consists of aggressive acts and psychological assaults against the target with the intent to "get at a person" or punish him or her.... By this time more people have been co-opted into the mobbing process.

Phase 3 – Personnel management

Phase 3 is the period in which administration seriously enters into the mobbing, usually after having ignored or minimized it in the earlier phases. Due to previous stigmatization, it is easier for administration to misjudge, place the blame on the target and to do something to “get rid of the problem” that is the mobbed person....

Phase 4 – Incorrect diagnosis

Phase 4 is the period in which administration allies with the mobbers in the construction of the target as “difficult”, “under extreme stress”, or “mentally ill”.... This judgment can destroy the person’s chances of gaining anything from vocational or occupational rehabilitation.

Phase 5 – Expulsion

Phase 5 is the expulsion phase in which the target is forced to leave the organization either by being dismissed or through constructive dismissal because working conditions are intolerable....Targets may find that they are completely expelled from the labour market, unable to find another job. (p. 63)

Finally, Khoo (2010) explains why academic environments are especially well-suited for these types of activities:

College and university campuses are common grounds for this non-violent, polite, sophisticated kind of academic mobbing culture. If professors aim to put a colleague down, a clever and effective strategy is to wear the target down emotionally by shunning, gossip, ridicule, bureaucratic hassles and withholding of deserved rewards. Women faculty members who are outspoken about ethical and unjust matters are usually the targets being mobbed. Their competence and professional success are perceived as threats by the bullies. (p. 61)

These behaviors are disturbing and hideous; however, they do not exist in a vacuum. Academic cultures are produced within larger societies: they shape, and are shaped by, local, national and global influences. If we consider dominant societies in the contemporary world, bullying behaviors may seem less anomalous and more “normal” or “ordinary” – perhaps even expected. As neoliberal policies and social philosophies intensify, their effects infiltrate macro and micro human interactions. Therefore, it may be useful to consider how neoliberalism, itself, reflects dominant colonial perspectives that thread through experiences of academic mobbing.

Neoliberalism should not be confused with the concept of social liberalism or progressivism. Rather, it represents a post-Depression resurgence of *economic* liberalism in which the workings of the so-called “invisible hand” of the free market are seen as the answer to all problems – social and economic (Gorlewski & Gorlewski, 2012). Neoliberal philosophies privilege four key tenets:

1. *The Rule of the Market* which liberates “free” enterprise from any bonds (regulations) imposed by the government no matter how much social damage this causes.
2. *Cutting Public Expenditures* for social services such as education and health care.
3. *Deregulation* of any policies, practices or laws that could diminish profits, including environmental protection and worker safety.
4. *Privatization* of state owned enterprises, goods, and services through sales to private investors
5. *Eliminating the Concept of “The Public Good” or “Community”* and replacing it with “individual responsibility.” (Martinez & Garcia, 2000)

How do these tenets connect to academic bullying and mobbing? Neoliberalism honors and sustains competition over community. Individual gain – always defined in relation to lower achieving “others” – is promoted as the economic, moral, and social imperative. The discursive thrust of neoliberalism is dehumanizing, exploitive, and alienating. Systems of higher education in countries such as Australia, Canada, England, and the US have become “explicitly capitalist” over the past few decades with a chief

focus on how to tap revenue streams, internal and external to the institutions (Touchman, 2011, p. 4). Since systems of education appear to be abandoning the prospect of being a chief force for “strengthening the imagination and expanding democratic public life” (Giroux, 2010), it is no coincidence that academic mobbing is becoming more pervasive and degenerative.

Mole (2007) argues that the neoliberalism cannot be reduced to a tidal wave of policies; its effects cannot be predicted nor can these effects be separated from the lived experiences of people. She explains that capitalism and labor deeply affect subjectivity, as capital is internalized and shaped by laboring subjects. With mobbing, of course, the question often becomes how *not* working or exclusion *from* work affects subjectivity. The production of subjectivity under neoliberal conditions, then, entails a close examination of how such subjectivities are formed “*outside* the institutions, but even more intensely ruled by their disciplinary logics” (Hardt & Negri 2000, pp. 331-332; Agamben, 1993).

Mole asserts that the neoliberal expansion of capitalism results in a sense of precariousness for workers. This precariousness is an important link between the economy and the daily experiences of workers because “economic risks radiate to encompass multiple aspects of daily biological life and how it should be managed” (p. 45). When workers comprehend their own disposability, competitive impulses are intensified. Therefore, they are more likely to act in ways that isolate colleagues through “suspicion, doubt and distrust” (2012, p. 49). Workers in a neoliberal context must adapt to the material and philosophical logic of their own realities, and often their “ambivalent, confusing, or disjointed work relationships become construed as mobbing” (p. 37). That is, as Dunn (2004) notes, “new forms of management shape not only performance of work, but also the kinds of persons that workers become” (p. 20). Roy (2012) describes the discursive shift that accompanied the rise of neoliberal capitalism:

Gradually, one particular imagination—a brittle, superficial pretence of tolerance and multiculturalism (that morphs into racism, rabid nationalism, ethnic chauvinism or war-mongering Islamophobia at a moment’s notice) under the roof of a single, overarching, very unplural economic ideology—began to dominate the discourse. It did so to such an extent that it ceased to be perceived as an ideology at all. It became the default position, the natural way to be. It infiltrated normality, colonised ordinariness, and challenging it began to seem as absurd or as esoteric as challenging reality itself. From here it was a quick easy step to ‘There is No Alternative’. (np)

Discursive and material realities of neoliberalism are interrelated. Economic precariousness, which affects the relationships of workers to their own labor, also permeates the relationships of workers to one another; and in workplaces that feature relative autonomy, such as in academia, mobbing can be initiated by almost any colleague.

Academic Mobbing – Case Story

The education department of a small private college was in the midst of an unprecedented increase in student enrollment. An interesting set of circumstances enabled the education program to expand from a student body of about forty special education majors to just over a thousand students seeking a masters degree in areas such as English language arts, social studies, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, foreign language, and elementary education. The increase in enrollment occurred rapidly and the education department, which had at one time consisted of 6 faculty members, ballooned to 25 within a five-year span. Providing additional personnel for this growing department was a cadre of nearly a hundred adjunct instructors who came and went to meet the needs of the department. As a result of the growth in its tuition revenue, for several years the education department was referred to as the “cash cow” of the college.

The set of circumstances which led to this situation was simply a matter of supply and demand: A massive teacher shortage in a southern province of Canada (the result of teacher demographics and retirement incentives), coupled with a dearth of teacher colleges in that province, meant that teaching vacancies in all

content areas were plentiful. Located on the Canadian border, this private college was perfectly positioned – geographically and programmatically – to meet the demand; therefore, the additional enrollment consisted almost entirely of Canadian students.

As with all “booms,” there came a “bust” and the college enrollment began to decrease sharply. It was at this point that the department decided to consider offering new programs which would appeal to, and draw, US students. Among those programs was a Masters in Literacy.

After gaining state approval for a Literacy program, the department conducted a national search for a full-time faculty member to serve as the program’s coordinator and instructor. As a condition of employment, the Literacy coordinator was to have full control of the program including budgeting, program development, personnel selection, and all aspects of program assessment, evaluation, and reporting.

Selected for this position was Dr. Asha Singh (a pseudonym), a native of India who had earned her PhD from, and was employed at, a prestigious midwestern university. Dr. Singh appeared to be an excellent choice for the position. She had extensive experience in Literacy program development, professional connections throughout the US, an impressive grant-writing and publication record, and, throughout the hiring process, she consistently provided insightful responses to interviewers’ questions.

The reference check underscored the selection committee’s perceptions: Dr. Singh was described as highly skilled, hardworking, and driven. Only one of the five references offered a veiled concern: that Dr. Singh, despite all of her positive qualities, was, perhaps, a bit too single-minded; a bit too goal-oriented. Overall, this last concern was interpreted by the selection committee as a positive feature, not a negative one.

Dr. Singh’s first two years at the college were nothing less than a spectacular success. The Literacy program was up and running, enrollment in the program had increased from year one to year two, and Dr. Singh was given the “Faculty Achievement Award” for her contributions to the education department and the college. Her contract was renewed for another two years.

It should be noted that faculty members from underrepresented ethnic or racial groups – to this point – had not fared well in the college’s education department. As the department had grown from 6 to 25 full-time faculty members, several of the new hires hailed from countries such as Ghana, Kenya, South Korea, and Burkina Faso. Two were Native Americans. Yet, not one lasted more than two years. Generally, those whose contracts were not extended were said to have had dismal student evaluations. But even before their contracts were terminated, faculty members from underrepresented minority groups seemed invisible; they were hired and dismissed with such frequency that no one who remained seemed to care. The sheer number of students entering the program every semester, and the preponderance of adjunct instructors (not to mention average class sizes of 30), gave the overall program a sense of being just slightly out of control. Too many students, too many new faculty members, so many strange names and faces; it was just too much for the tenured (and long-serving) members of the department to internalize. As part of the accreditation process, plans were developed to provide staff development and assign a mentor for each new faculty, but these plans never materialized.

But as enrollment dwindled and full-time positions were eliminated, Dr. Singh became the sole remaining non-white (and foreign-born) instructor in the department. And in this context, she captured – quite suddenly it seemed – the attention of her tenured colleagues.

The “attention” manifested itself in several ways: The first indication of academic mobbing occurred during department meetings. When, as part of the aforementioned accreditation process, reports regarding department deficiencies were discussed, Dr. Singh would note that *her* program (the Literacy program) was already in compliance. She would go on to explain what she had done to meet the respective requirement, whether it was pre-assessing students, collecting writing samples, analyzing syllabi, developing comprehensive examinations, or recruiting new students. She would end her explanation with an offer to share what she was doing with any interested member of the department. Her offers were met with silence; a silence that did not seem to register with her. In short, whenever Dr. Singh spoke at a

department meeting, members always listened politely but never asked a question, never offered a comment, and never took her up on her offers to help.

It was also clear that Dr. Singh's Literacy program was seen as a "stand alone/stand apart" entity. Part of the problem was the complete lack of connection between the Literacy program and the rest of the education department. Dr. Singh, tapping into the local K-12 educational community, hired area reading specialists and administrators to teach in her program. Education department members were not asked to serve as instructors, further widening the gap between the department and the Literacy program. From the lack of response at the department meetings, coupled with the lack of faculty involvement in the Literacy program, two conclusions could be drawn: first, tenured department members didn't know much about that program; and second, they didn't *want* to know much about it either.

As Dr. Singh entered her third year of employment, she had developed a comprehensive Literacy program that included recruitment programs, orientation sessions for students and faculty, federal and state funding to offset the tuition costs, staff development opportunities for adjuncts and area K-12 teachers, and various celebrations of success. Though invitations to these events went out to everyone in the education department, tenured faculty were rarely, if ever, in attendance.

At the same time, Dr. Singh became involved in conflicts with several students whom, she believed, did not meet the standards she had set. The student "transgressions" varied: one student misinterpreted a question on the comprehensive examination and Dr. Singh made him rewrite the entire test; another asked for verbal guidance regarding internship guidelines and, rather than answer his questions, she repeatedly insisted that he read (and reread) the internship manual. The common verbal thread that ran through each student complaint was the phrase "With Dr. Singh, it's 'my way or the highway.'"

Dr. Singh's perspective on each of these issues was that attention to detail and problem-solving were essential skills for Literacy graduates and that the students involved were not exhibiting professional dispositions. These complaints eventually made their way to the office of the newly appointed vice-president for academic affairs. He investigated the student grievances (which included one scathing letter outlining Dr. Singh's alleged inflexibility), met personally with Dr. Singh, and asked her to reconsider some of her decisions. Initially she refused, but after numerous conversations with her department chair (who had been on her selection committee), she relented.

Word of Dr. Singh's conflicts with students soon spread throughout the department. In a short period of time, she went from being ignored to becoming a focal point. Her comments at department meetings were now met with scowls, head-shaking, and dismissive comments. In addition, Dr. Singh, along with perhaps three other department members, tended to come late to the monthly meetings – sometimes by 10 or 15 minutes, sometimes by as much as an hour. One day, as the meeting was getting started, a sheet was passed around the room (gleefully – and ironically – generated by the tenured faculty member who had the previous year nominated Dr. Singh for the "Faculty Achievement Award") asking department members to guess the time of Dr. Singh's arrival. Since the meetings began at 10:00 am, department members listed their names on the paper along with the estimated late arrival time of Dr. Singh: 10:22? 10:35? 10:45? 11:02? No money was wagered, but there was always a level of restrained celebration when Dr. Singh – totally unaware of the "competition" – entered the room and the "winner" was determined. Another faculty member regularly penciled in Dr. Singh's name halfway through the agenda under the heading "Singh shows up."

Though it was irrefutable that Dr. Singh often arrived late to department meetings, it was also irrefutable that no other tardy member was ever targeted in this manner and that no one in a leadership position (either as department chair or by having status as tenured faculty) ever confronted her in this matter. Department members seemed more than content to allow her to arrive late and continue their competitive (and, apparently, entertaining) "guessing" game.

At the end of her third year, though she had two full years left on her contract, Dr. Singh was informed by the vice-president for academic affairs that he would not recommend her for her next renewal. Just prior to

this, in meetings with the department chair, the vice-president indicated that he thought “something was wrong” with Dr. Singh and that, perhaps, she “should see a doctor.”

Within what seemed to be less than a year, Dr. Singh went from being a successful program developer and award-winning faculty member to becoming a social and professional outcast. The independence with which she worked ultimately worked against her as colleagues, students, and then the administration began to perceive her as an outlier who threatened the department and the institution.

Case Story Analysis: Beyond Victim-Centered Perspectives

As noted in the literature on the topic, the problem of academic mobbing cannot be resolved in any organization unless there is a focus on the underlying cultural contexts. The question, then, is “How does one focus on the underlying contexts?” Gorlewski and Gorlewski (2012) recommend the application of what they refer to as the ExPAND conceptual framework which enables members of an organization to analyze mobbing – or any problematic situation.

The ExPAND framework provides multiple lenses through which to analyze the mobbing situation. The deeper and more thorough analysis enhances the possibility of seeing the organization from a broader perspective and, as a result, the reculturing process can begin.

The letters in the ExPAND construct stand for the following: **E**xplain the situation (much as was done with the case story above. That is, all facts should be presented as objectively as possible); consider and articulate the **P**erspectives of various participants (how does the mobbing situation look from the point of view of e.g., the victim, the department members, the students, the administration? etc.); determine under what **A**ssumptions the various participants are operating. In other words, consider the different belief systems that may drive the various perspectives; then, give some thought as to what information is missing; in other words, what’s **N**ot there? Whether analyzing a case story or a real-life conflict, it is critically important to seek additional information. What would you like to know about the situation – knowledge that would enable you to have a better understanding of the mobbing? For example, are there eye witnesses who can corroborate certain events? Are there documents you wish you could see? Given the information gained from the analysis above, you might feel confident to take action. That is, what should you **D**o? This represents the fifth and final portion of the conceptual framework.

The analysis suggested above aims to offer revelatory and critical insights into the organization. It enables participants to “see” the organization in a different light and it offers an opportunity for organizational cultural change. Unless the organization understands its culture – and how it has contributed to the behaviors of its members – reculturing will never occur.

The culture of the education department portrayed in the case story had two distinct characteristics. First, an “old guard” mentality was pervasive and the expansion of the department from 6 members to 25 did not, in any way, diminish the power of the core 6. As tenured faculty (the *only* tenured faculty in the department), they saw themselves as impervious to any changes. They had, in the past, successfully eliminated junior faculty representing minority or marginalized peoples, underscoring what Khoo referred to as a consciousness and validation of “othering.” Dr. Singh, the remaining minority in the department, represented a threat to the status quo by taking the lead in accreditation compliance, innovative staffing, and alternative funding. Second, the department had low expectations for faculty (in terms of publishing, community service and outreach, and conference participation). Though its members would disagree with that characterization, the fact was that the education department lagged far behind other departments in those categories. Dr. Singh’s own accomplishments – in publishing, in reaching out to the local K-12 community, and through her conference presentations – set her apart from her colleagues. As Khoo posited, the perpetrators of academic mobbing used that weapon as a way to hide their own weaknesses and incompetence.

A thorough analysis of the case story reveals another, more subtle aspect – one worth pursuing; and that is the level of complicity exhibited by Dr. Singh. Though academic mobbing, like common middle school

bullying, must not be tolerated, there is ample evidence that Dr. Singh contributed, in part, to her situation. Operating independently, though commendable, has its downside. Mutual benefits might have occurred had Dr. Singh's colleagues been included in the Literacy program, yet no effort was made to reach out to them for advice, assistance or input. The lack of connection was two-way: as department members knew very little about the Literacy program, so did Dr. Singh exhibit very little interest in the regular education program. The lack of interest on Dr. Singh's part could have contributed to her absence or late arrivals to department meetings. From a purely practical standpoint, the matters being discussed at those meetings had virtually no impact on her program. The lack of mutual engagement was understandable and yet, ultimately, it made her vulnerable.

It is important, therefore, to avoid a purely either/or perspective in analyzing academic mobbing. Tuck (2009), in reference to issues of resistance and reproduction, explicates the problem of "dichotomized categories" (p. 420) by explaining what Lefebvre (1991) calls the thirdspace

This is important because it more closely matches the experiences of people who, at different points in a single day, reproduce, resist, are complicit in, rage against, celebrate, throw up hands/fists/towels, and withdraw and participate in uneven social structures – that is, everybody. (p. 420)

Such an understanding embraces what Tuck honors as "complex personhood" (p. 420) and resists the urge to pursue a victim-centered analysis.

The five phases of mobbing, as posited by Khoo, reveal themselves in this story. Phase 1 (Critical incident) consisted of the series of conflicts Dr. Singh had with her students. These conflicts, as noted in the story, drew the attention of the vice-president for academic affairs and included a blistering letter written by a student to the college president. On the heels of this conflict came verbal complaints from other students (one could assume collusion here), and Dr. Singh was beginning to be seen as a problem. Phase 2 (Mobbing and stigmatizing) manifested when department members began "betting" on the exact time of Dr. Singh's predictably late arrival to department meetings. Her unprofessional behavior (tardiness) was not met with explicit advice from colleagues (or supervisors) to be prompt; rather, it was used by department members to amplify and underscore her deficiencies. It should also be noted that the department's dwindling student enrollment and the related decrease in staffing resulted in a sense of employment precariousness. Thus, the prevailing effects of neoliberalism helped fuel the second phase.

The third phase (Personnel management) occurred when the administration directed Dr. Singh to reconsider her rigid stance with the students who filed complaints. Despite these directives, Dr. Singh openly and explicitly maintained her belief that she was upholding program standards. That meeting cemented the administration's belief that Dr. Singh was the problem, not the students. This morphed into Phase 4 (Incorrect diagnosis) when the college's administration implied privately that Dr. Singh was ill and that she should seek professional help.

Phase 5 (Expulsion) came indirectly. Though Dr. Singh still had nearly two full years left on her contract, the college notified her that she would not be renewed after that period. This led Dr. Singh to seek and gain employment at another institution; after which, she resigned her position well before her termination date.

Final Thoughts: Eliminating Academic Mobbing through Critical Awareness, Case Studies and Imagination

Although several researchers and senior scholars have generated important work in terms of providing indicators of when academic mobbing occurs (Keim & McDermott, 2010; Westhues, 2006), of highlighting key phases surrounding the mobbing process (Khoo, 2010), and of suggesting the best way to quell academic mobbing (Olsen, 2008), this essay demonstrates the salience of the educational community engaging in a Freirean (1993) reflexive process of taking inventory of how neoliberal capitalism is impacting the subjectivity of academics and how it inflicts emotional and professional harm on

unsuspecting colleagues. Case story analysis helps to reveal the complexity of how macro-structural forces merge with micro-cultural dynamics to fuel academic mobbing; and, it offers an alternative perspective to the victim-centered approach in addressing this social problem.

In addition to the analysis provided above, we believe critical scholars must explore how neoliberal forces in higher education, along with discursive forces outside of graduate seminars, are complicit in causing faculty to feel as though they are disposable. This often results in actions that have harmed colleagues personally and professionally – actions perpetrated just to garner support in the academy. Moreover, critical scholars must generate portraits of how they successfully invoked with their colleagues critical pedagogical case stories and studies surrounding bullying; and this includes administrators and graduate students (the latter hoping to eventually teach and conduct research in the academy). The pedagogical portraits should provide insights as to how they are able to position learners to understand how the economic structure, discursive systems, and unjust policies give rise to academic mobbing and how it is possible to effect dissent through and build movements to eradicate – or, at least minimize – this social problem. Pedagogies of the oppressed, of freedom, hope and dissent provide a tradition from which critical scholars can “dare teach” about bullying and mobbing and explore case stories such as that articulated here (Freire, 1970, 1998a, 1998b; McLaren, 1997; Steinberg, Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998).

Finally, the academic community must engage in the process of dreaming and imagining. Energy must be spent reflecting upon what steps are necessary to introduce contradictions and alternatives to ascendent models of higher education as a capitalist enterprise where many faculty members are led to believe that they are disposable, where they harm their colleagues to gain success, and where corporate leaders treat students as commodities in order to gain wealth and power. Clearly, there must emerge generative insight about providing a just or utopian vision for the academy where pedagogy is “a deeply civic, political and moral practice,” where diversity is respected, and where the ideals of love, freedom, equity and justice flourish (Giroux, 2010).

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