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**ACADEMIC BULLYING AND MOBBING: INTRODUCTION TO THE
SPECIAL ISSUE**

We placed a CFP a few years ago for this Special Issue on Academic Bullying and Mobbing knowing full well the courage it would take to bring narratives and analyses forward on such sensitive and charged constructs. Experienced as hurtful, damaging and exhausting, academic bullying and mobbing are all too often undisclosed and beyond the reach of research. With tremendous gratitude and respect for the authors, we introduce this Issue of *Workplace: A Journal for Academic Labor*.

In the lead article, “Of Sticks and Stones, Words that Wound, and Actions Speaking Louder: When Academic Bullying Becomes Everyday Oppression,” Harry Denny reflects on Tyler Clementi’s suicide, the “It Gets Better” public service campaign for gay and lesbian youth, and the relative silence of academic academics that followed. Denny offers his experiences, bullied as a Director in Writing Program Administration (WPA), as “a cautionary tale not just for queer people in academe, for junior faculty, or for those who find themselves in WPA positions” (p. 2).

In “Beyond Bullies and Victims: Using Case Story Analysis and Freirean Insight to Address Academic Mobbing,” Julie Gorlewski, David Gorlewski and Brad J. Porfilio provide productive case and critical incident methodologies for analyzing academic mobbing and rendering narratives pedagogical. Testing the methodologies, they analyze a multifaceted case story that demonstrates 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” (p. 17).

“Graduate Students as Proxy Mobbing Targets: Insights from Three Mexican Universities,” by Florencia Peña Saint Martin, Brian Martin, Hilde Eliazer Aquino López and Lillian von der Walde Moheno, provide a framework for understanding how and why graduate students become proxy targets. Like many of the processes explored in this Special Issue, this implication of graduate students has received little attention from researchers. “Students and supervisors are sometimes put through degradation rituals in which they are humiliated,” Peña Saint Martin, Martin, Eliazer Aquino López and von der Walde Moheno explain as they document the ethical lows reached through academic mobbing (p. 25).

In “Bullying in Academia Up Close and Personal: My Story,” Paul Johnson describes the alarming health and professional effects of experiencing bullying and his resistance narrative is a testament to survival when administrative mechanisms and protections fail the victim or worse, become instruments of bullying and mobbing. He concludes: “The consequences of administrative participation on one hand and inaction on the other are enormous for everyone but the real losers in the University are faculty, staff, and students” (p. 40).

Rachel Morrison Kenney puts academic mobbing in perspective through a disquieting account. “Mobbing in the Context of a Woman’s Life,” demonstrates that “what gives mobbing its power is not so much the ringleader as the ring: a message conveyed with one voice that you are outside the circle all the rest of us

are in” (p. 43). “The single main reason workplace mobbing is so devastating is that it shakes the target’s faith in other people. It is the betrayal of trust that leaves the person so much alone,” she concludes (p. 49).

Antonio Pedro Fonseca explores a range of metaphors for making sense of academic mobbing. “Pathogenic versus Healthy Biofilms: A Metaphor for Academic Mobbing” creatively argues that “prebiotics and probiotics can be used to promote healthy microcolonies and biofilms, administrative and peer-to-peer interventions can promote healthy departments” (p. 52).

In “Threat Convergence: The New Academic Work, Bullying, Mobbing and Freedom,” the co-Editors ask some rather basic questions of the new workplace bullying laws: To what degree are the new policies for academic speech inscribed in academic work, regardless of where it’s done? As the academic workplace is increasingly displaced and distributed, are academic policies displaced and distributed as well? Following an analysis of the changing nature of the “academic workplace,” in the final analysis they conclude that things are now very different in academia’s traditional system of constrained optimization: “This generation of intellectuals is now left with the Russian doll of academic freedom inside respectful workplace policies inside risk management and liability legal mechanisms inside anti-bullying laws. Rather than complemented by charter or constitutional law of free speech or expression, academic freedom is now a nested subproblem of workplace law.”