

Chapter 3

The Role of Passive Evil in Perpetuating Downward Academic Mobbing

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ABSTRACT

Downward academic mobbing occurs when unethical administrators initiate a pattern of bullying, intimidation, and the commission of personal and career damage on undeserving faculty members (most often principled, tenured professors who question their decisions or call attention to unethical behavior such as policy violations and lack of academic due process). Once these unethical administrators succeed in framing a faculty victim as a target (often through innuendo, factual distortions, or outright lies), the victim's colleagues—many of whom have known and benefited from the victim for years—either fail to support the victim (a problem known as passive evil) or begin actively participating in the persecution themselves (often in pursuit of personal gain). The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the first instance (i.e., passive evil), and to discuss how passive evildoers' failure to stand up for victims of downward academic mobbing effectively encourages future acts of persecution—including against the passive evildoers themselves.

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INTRODUCTION

Downward academic mobbing occurs when unethical administrators initiate a pattern of bullying, intimidation, and the commission of personal and career damage on undeserving faculty members (most often principled, tenured professors who question their decisions or call attention to unethical behavior such as policy violations and lack of academic due process; Faria, Mixon, & Salter, 2012; Khoo, 2010; McDonald, Stockton, & Landrum, 2018). Once these unethical administrators succeed in framing a faculty victim as a target (often through innuendo, factual distortions, or outright lies), the victim's colleagues—many of whom have known and benefited from the victim for years—either fail to support the victim (a problem known as passive evil) or begin actively participating in the persecution themselves (often in pursuit of personal gain; Duffy, 2009; Westhues, 2005). The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the first instance (i.e., passive evil), and to discuss how passive evildoers' failure to stand up for victims of downward academic mobbing effectively encourages future acts of persecution—including against the passive evildoers themselves.

This chapter is organized into several sections. First, an overview of workplace bullying and academic mobbing is presented, including a discussion of the interchangeability of the wording regarding these constructs. The prevalence of bullying, the dynamics of bullies and their actions, and the effects of bullying on victims are presented. In the second section, passive evil as a phenomenon is explored, as well as the damage it causes to the victim. Third, the authors discuss how passive evil (particularly through the mechanism of selective moral disengagement) not only fails to stop the persecution of the initial victim, but also virtually guarantees that there will be future victims (including, quite likely, victimization against those who fail to stand up for themselves and others). In the final section, some ways of combating passive evil, and for protecting faculty members from downward academic mobbing in the future are discussed.

WORKPLACE BULLYING AND ACADEMIC MOBING

Research on workplace bullying has been accumulating for over 50 years, dating back at least to Brodsky's (1976) book on workplace harassment (Duffy, 2009). The term 'harassment' did not survive long in the context that researchers currently describe workplace bullying, perhaps due to its longtime association with status-based offenses

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such as racial and sexual harassment (Duffy, 2009). What is now known either as workplace bullying or mobbing (or even as psychoterror, as Leymann [1993] once described it) is sometimes discussed with both of these terms interchangeably, as some researchers recommend (e.g., Namie & Namie, 2003). As described by Duffy (2009), the eminent sociologist Westhues (Westhues, 2005; 2006), spending much of his career studying academic mobbing, argued that the two terms should not be confounded, as he believed that the term bullying evoked an image of a stereotyped two-person conflict (such as a playground fight) whereas mobbing involves more than one perpetrator, and because mobbing is a more nuanced problem that requires a more nuanced solution than simply punishing the perpetrator (as mobbing involves multiple perpetrators and is often facilitated by a toxic organizational climate). In any case, as Pheko (2018a) observed, “bullying and mobbing can lead to similar consequences, such as a loss of dignity, lowered self-confidence and productivity, and an excessive amount of non-work-related stress and other related health issues” (p. 2). With apologies to those who prefer to differentiate between bullying and mobbing, for the sake of consistency with many authors who research these topics (as well as for simplicity), in this chapter the authors use the terms fairly synonymously, with the caveat that workplace bullying is considered a problem that occurs in all employment sectors, and downward academic mobbing refers to the similar processes occurring specifically in the higher education environment.

Because the authors use the terms bullying and mobbing as general synonyms, it seems prudent to give general definitions of both; in most cases, readers will see clear commonalities. A good, general definition of workplace bullying is “the persistent exposure to interpersonal aggression and mistreatment from colleagues, superiors or subordinates” (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009, p. 24). In some sectors, the bullying practices are typically overt behaviors carried out by a single person, most often an administrator or senior colleague (with a clear power differential) against a less powerful coworker or subordinate (Pheko, 2018a), with an element of workplace exclusion involved (often forced, such as banishment of the victim from department meetings or social activities); another feature of workplace bullying is that it tends to escalate over time (Beckman, Cannella, & Wantland, 2013). A good working definition of mobbing is offered by Duffy and Sperry (2007; as cited in Duffy, 2009), who defined mobbing as:

The nonsexual harassment of a coworker by a group of other workers or other members of an organization designed to secure the removal from the organization of the one who is targeted. Mobbing results in the humiliation, devaluation,

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discrediting, degradation, loss of professional reputation, and, usually, the removal of the target of the organization with all the concomitant financial, career, health, and psychological implications that one might expect from a protracted traumatizing experience. (p. 245)

Many other researchers who use definitions of mobbing (e.g., those used by Metzger, Petit, & Sieber, 2015; Prevost & Hunt, 2018; Twale & De Luca, 2008) agree on these key features of the construct. In this chapter, it should be noted that the focus is on *downward* academic mobbing, which differs from a more general form of academic mobbing in that the former is always initiated by a superior (in most cases, an unethical mid-level academic administrator such as a department chair, director of a school, or a college dean), whereas the latter could be initiated by another faculty member, a staff member, or even a student.

With respect to downward academic mobbing specifically, McDonald et al. (2018), summarize the literature (relying particularly heavily on the work of Faria et al. [2012] and Khoo [2010]) on the critical elements thusly:

First, academic mobbing tends to be initiated by unprincipled administrators whose malfeasance was questioned or revealed through the expression of academic free speech. Second, the victims of academic mobbing tend to be productive, likable, principled tenured professors who publicly speak out about administrative wrongdoing. Third, academic mobbing involves manipulation of the language or misrepresentation of the facts regarding the victim's motivations, speech, or behavior. Fourth, the victim's colleagues are either poisoned against him or her, or choose not to support the victim due to fear of sharing his or her fate, indifference, or a lack of conviction (a pervasive problem in educational administration characterized by Samier [2008] as "passive evil"). Finally, the victim is left personally and professionally injured, while the perpetrator(s) goes unpunished and therefore perhaps empowered to pursue a new target. (para. 18)

Most often, faculty members who are targeted for mobbing have done nothing "wrong" in the legal or policy sense; they have not lied, cheated, plagiarized, sexually- or racially-harassed, or engaged in any other type of moral or academic turpitude (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2015b). What the faculty member has done, in almost all cases, is exercise his or her right to academic freedom by questioning or challenging unethical decisions made by administrators (AAUP, 2015a; AAUP, 2015c). In such situations, unethical administrators have

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no valid basis for punishing the victim, *so they create a reason*. Often, the ‘reason’ is so baseless as to be almost absurd if it was not so serious for and damaging to the victim; typically, victims are accused of “being uncivil,” “not collegial,” or violating some form of “shared values” (AAUP, 2015b). In short, the accusations are often deliberately nebulous, and because they are so ill defined and subjective they are almost impossible to definitively disprove or defend oneself against in any form of procedural or legal fashion (McDonald et al., 2018). When unethical administrators punish longtime, established, and accomplished faculty members through mechanisms so obviously unjustified and malicious (Faria et al., 2012; Khoo, 2010), they send a clear message to other faculty members who are newer, less accomplished, or with lower reputation capital: *“If I can do this to Professor Established imagine what I can do to you?”*

Prior to proceeding to a presentation of the tenets of passive evil, it seems beneficial to summarize several features of downward academic mobbing sequentially. These features include characteristics of the perpetrators, characteristics of the victims, and the methods used by perpetrators to bully victims.

Researchers have identified a number of specific features of workplace bullies. Some of these researchers have focused on identifying personality traits of perpetrators, and there are definitely some distinct and common features. For example, Young (2017) reveals manager bullies to have a psychological profile of being competitive, demanding of respect, and having extrinsically-motivated narcissistic pride combined with Machiavellianism (i.e., being sneaky, cold, amoral). Other researchers (e.g., Glendinning, 2001) have reported similar findings, while identifying other undesirable traits such as being domineering, arrogant, and having a strong (though undeserved) sense of entitlement. The workplace bully has the goal of humiliation, intimidation, and punishment – all directed toward the target (Einarsen et al., 2009; Young, 2017). Interestingly, the bully’s bad behavior increases when bystanders fail to comply, a colleague asserts his or her independence, social skill, or professional success, or if the targeted victim of the bullying exhibits personal vulnerabilities (Young, 2017).

A recent area of investigation has involved applying principles from the study of domestic violence to the study of workplace bullying. Scott (2018) published an article revealing that the personality traits and characteristics of workplace bullies were extremely similar to male batterers in domestic violence situations. Using what is known as the Duluth Model, she mapped workplace bully behavior onto a schematic commonly used for understanding domestic violence, and created the Workplace Power Control Wheel pertaining to workplace bullying. This wheel consists of eight spokes, including:

1. *Using intimidation (making workers feel uncomfortable or afraid)*

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2. *Using emotional abuse (name calling, making workers think they are crazy, humiliating workers)*
3. *Using isolation (controlling whom workers communicate with, where they are allowed to go)*
4. *Minimizing, denying, and blaming (making light of the worker's concerns, denying abuse is happening, shifting the blame from the manager to the worker)*
5. *Using co-workers (making workers feel guilty for the work levels of other workers, or how the worker's supposed misbehavior affects other workers)*
6. *Using employer privilege (treating workers like servants, not involving workers in decision making)*
7. *Using economic abuse (threatening the worker's job, tenure, or work conditions)*
8. *Using coercion and threats (making threats to employee rights or privileges). (p. 447)*

There are at least two remarkable contributions from Scott (2018). The first is that she articulates that workplace bullying in general, and downward academic mobbing as a sub-case, *constitutes interpersonal violence*. It may not be physically violent; however, it creates all of the other levels of harm associated with domestic violence. Second, it lays out a sequence of behaviors that bullies/mobbers use to harm their victims. The Workplace Power Control Wheel seems to be a very valuable tool in demonstrating how bullies try to accomplish control and domination, and also why society should perhaps treat workplace bullying/mobbing as seriously as it treats domestic violence.

New work is just now emerging from researchers such as Pheko (2018b), who describes how bullies and those who engage in academic mobbing achieve their goals. Two tools of the trade that are not covered in the Workplace Power Control Wheel (Scott, 2018) but are common elements of the bullying/mobbing repertoire, are rumors and gossip. Rumors are “unsubstantiated and instrumentally critical pieces of information in circulation, which function to assist people in making sense and managing risks within concepts of uncertainty, danger, or a potential threat” (Pheko, 2018b, p. 452), whereas gossip is “evaluative talk arising in the context of social network formation, change, and maintenance about individuals who are not present” (Pheko, 2018b, p. 452). Four possible strategies have now been identified as to how rumors and gossip are used by those who engage in bullying and academic mobbing (Pheko, 2018b): (1) as a tool for maintenance of oppression and social dominance; (2) as an expression of envy and social undermining; (3) as weapons

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to humiliate subordinates by corporate/organizational psychopaths; and (4) as an attempt to widen the power gap. By understanding these uses, it is also apparent that these are the warning signals/red flags to be watchful for to differentiate between fun and engaging hallway conversation and more sinister gossip with latent, malicious motivations.

The victims of bullying seem a more heterogeneous lot, both demographically and psychologically, than their persecutors. Whereas some reviewers (e.g., Prevost & Hunt, 2018) suggest that predictors of academic mobbing include race (with racial/ethnic minority members bullied more often than Non-Hispanic Whites), gender (with females being bullied more often than males), and age (with younger faculty being more often mobbed than older faculty), other scholars (e.g., Khoo, 2010; Thomas, 2009) suggest that the people most likely to be bullied/mobbed are those whom bullies find the most threatening—particularly tenured professors and those whose “reputation capital is combined with academic freedom, and the combination is then used to criticize the actions of the administration of the institution (Faria et al., 2012, p. 721). Regardless of whether there is a victim/target “type,” there is tremendous commonality in the physical and mental health consequences of bullying/mobbing. Prevost and Hunt (2018) provide an excellent summary of these consequences, and they are presented in Table 1.

Armed with an understanding of what downward academic mobbing is, who perpetrates it (and how), and how it impacts its victims, the authors now proceed with an exploration of the nature of passive evil, before presenting how passive evil perpetuates downward academic mobbing.

PASSIVE EVIL

Passive evil is a concept that gained particular interest after the Second World War when a number of academics such as Hannah Arendt began studying how many good people, including ordinary, non-ideological citizens of Germany during Hitler’s Third Reich, failed to defend or protect their neighbors who were targeted by the Nazis for being members of a ‘socially undesirable’ group (such as Jewish persons) or being involved in activities (such as trade unionism) considered dangerous to the regime (Adams & Balfour, 2009; Davenport, 2013). Although Arendt (1963; 1978) is best known for her writings on the banality of evil, in which fairly ordinary, unspectacular persons such as Adolf Eichmann and Albert Speer came to commit extraordinary crimes during the Holocaust, she also wrote extensively on how

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Table 1.

<p><i>Summary of Reported Physical, Emotional, and Psychological Consequences of Academic <u>Mobbing</u> (Presented in Alphabetical Order)</i></p> <hr/> <p>Anger Anxiety Confusion Damaged personal relationships/family issues Depression Despair Destructive behaviors Difficulty concentrating Embarrassment Fear (Afraid of tormentor, exposed as victim) Foolishness Hopelessness Humiliation Inferiority and withdrawal Pain Phobias Pointlessness Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Powerlessness Reduced self-esteem Reluctance acceptance/denial of experiences Sadness Self-blame Self-doubt Shame Social isolation Stress Stress-related illnesses and health issues (digestive, sleep disturbances, change in eating patterns, increased smoking/drinking) Suicidal thoughts</p> <hr/> <p><i>Note.</i> Source: Prevost and Hunt (2018)</p>
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bystanders and witnesses, through their inability or unwillingness to confront evil or protect its victims, were guilty of the commission of evil themselves. Arendt (1978) conceptualized evil as a fungus, and maintained that people who fail to resist it become part of that fungus, passively following the externally-set order of a given system (be it an organization, an institution, or a society) rather than attending to their inner structures that, through introspection and self-reflection, would enable them to differentiate good from bad and right from wrong. Vuger (2017), drawing on Arendt's conceptualization and expanding it to other bureaucratized settings (such as workplaces), deftly demonstrated how the same processes of passive evil occur there; by identifying with the organizational system (and the evils it contains

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or allows) rather than with fellow individuals within it, people engage in acts of self-deception that make witnessing evil more bearable. How this relates to our discussion of downward academic mobbing is as follows: In practice, a person who acts in discord with the system (for example, whistle-blowing or calling attention to administrative malfeasance) is labeled as a dissident or an enemy of the system (in a philosophical sense, an Other) and as such any punishment that is within the established parameters of the system is considered appropriate, under the guise of protecting the system but without regard to the Other (Vuger, 2017).

What is clear in this work is that through inaction we implicitly (although perhaps unknowingly) risk becoming passive collaborators in the potential destruction of people who are dear to us and/or are members of our own communities, including our work community. In fact, both sadly and paradoxically, this is something that happened to Arendt in her own career; she was a workplace-mobbing victim who paid the price for speaking her truth. As discussed by Davenport (2013), after describing Eichmann as an ordinary man (albeit one who was a willing participant in a murderous bureaucratic machine) rather than a dispositional monster, Arendt was subjected to name calling, ostracism, banishment from her Jewish community of friends and fellow thinkers and threatened with the loss of her lecturership at the New School of Social Research. This is a textbook example of how quickly people can abandon an individual, through action and inaction (in the latter case, failing to speak up on behalf of the person being mobbed) when that individual is courageous enough to challenge the system or otherwise question the institutionally sanctioned way of thinking.

Researchers demonstrate through a rich literature that the line between active (whether banal or not) and passive evil is very thin, and often blurred. In any case, they are highly interrelated: Through passive evil, people enable active evil. As noted by Augustein (as cited in Welz, 2018), “people who look away do not stop the crime but join in it: through *Weggucken* [looking away] and *Mitmachen* [partaking] one tolerates evil, to say the least, or even causes it” (p. 65; bracketed translations added). Indeed, Welz (2018) asserts that thoughtlessness can be a root of evil: When people do not think about their actions or inaction, they engage in “absence of thought,” which may lead to wickedness or allow it perpetuate. Welz (2018) argues that *Nachdenken*, or thinking about one’s deeds, relationships, and events happening may be an antidote for the banality of evil. In our discussion of downward academic mobbing, such critical self- and other-awareness may be an antidote to the passive evil of silent acquiescence to administrative bullying.

Many people remember social psychologist Phillip Zimbardo for his classic study of destructive obedience in the Stanford Prison Experiment. Certainly, destructive obedience to malignant workplace norms is related to our discussion of

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passive evil in the context of downward academic mobbing, however another area of Zimbardo's scholarship, for which he is less well known, is even more relevant to this exploration. This area involves his investigation of institutionalized evil as it manifested itself in the administration of the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, as well as other workplace settings; these manifestations are described in detail in his (2007) book titled *The Lucifer Effect*. Zimbardo (2007) spends ample effort discussing the evil acts (e.g., beatings, torture, humiliation, rape) perpetrated on the Abu Ghraib prisoners, however he also focuses considerable attention on those who watched or were aware of what was being done, but said or did nothing to stop it. He also writes at length about the experience of Joseph Darby, who was the "whistle-blower" that provided evidence which sparked the investigation. Instead of being hailed as a hero for exposing human rights violations, Darby was shunned, pilloried as a traitor, and received death threats for his efforts (Zimbardo, 2007). This case may seem extreme, however Zimbardo (2007) argues that the institutionalized evil of inaction is common, involving perpetrators, victims, and observers "who know what is going on and do not intervene to help or challenge the evil and thereby enable it to persist by their inaction" (p. 317). Illustratively, he provides some examples in other workplace settings:

It is the good cops who never oppose the brutality of their buddies beating up minorities on the street or in the back room of the station house. It was the good bishops and cardinals who covered over the sins of their predatory parish priests because of their overriding concern for the image of the Catholic Church. They knew what was wrong and did nothing to really confront that evil, thereby enabling these pederasts to continue sinning for years on end (Zimbardo, 2007, p. 318).

Perhaps the foremost author on forms of passive evil that occur specifically in educational contexts is Samier (2008), who provided an excellent overview of the philosophical and ethical considerations in both administrative and passive evil in educational settings. She begins with several quotes on the consequences of passive evil, including one attributed to German Lutheran pastor and concentration camp survivor Martin Niemöller:

In Germany they first came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up (Samier, 2008, p. 2).

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This quote is perhaps the best possible summary of the nature of passive evil, because it highlights the unthinking self-centeredness of it all. At its core, passive evil is acceptance of massive wrongdoing provided it does not directly harm oneself. However, as Samier (2008) articulated, there is much more to passive evil than that. It would be far too easy to think of passive evil as only unthinking self-centeredness. Engaging in passive evil requires choices. One of the choices is to deceive oneself to accept that the evildoers, as administrators or leaders of some supposedly morally legitimate bureaucracy (whether a government, a military, or a university), have the right to act as they do, even (or perhaps especially) when it harms undeserving victims. Another is avoidance, often of both the perpetrator and the victim. Several of the avoidance techniques articulated by Samier (2008) are paraphrased below:

1. Rationalizing that the perpetrator will not always be in his or her position and disregarding the personal and professional damage he or she will cause in the meantime (“She won’t be here forever...it’s best to just ride this out!”)
2. Infantilizing the perpetrator as too emotional or hypersensitive, and therefore somehow excusing the damage he or she causes (“That’s just how Jim is!”)
3. Inflicting or focusing on suffering within oneself (“I’ve lost so much sleep over this!”) but doing nothing to meaningfully address the problem or protect the victim
4. Avoiding the victim so as to not know about the (often gory) details of the persecution, as this enables one to feign ignorance about the seriousness of the situation and therefore feel morally uncompelled to act (“If only I had known!”)

Samier (2008) makes it quite clear that engaging in passive evil is, in many respects, less passive than it seems. It requires an abdication of moral responsibility—a process social psychologist Bandura (1990; as discussed in Samier, 2008) referred to as “selective moral disengagement.” Several key ways people engage in this process are known as moral justification, euphemistic labeling, and dehumanization. In the context of a downward academic mobbing episode, moral justification could involve justifying the punishment of a professor who complained about policy violations and lack of due process because he or she was “standing in the way of progress,” or “reducing efficiency” or “being unreasonable” by demanding that policy be followed. In essence, it involves justifying the evil (as unfortunate as it may be) as necessary for “the good of the organization.” In the same context, euphemistic labeling could involve stripping away the emotion from the mobbing as an act of interpersonal

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aggression, by referring instead to a sanitized euphemism such as “a disciplinary action.” Dehumanization involves distancing oneself from the victim as a human being morally undeserving of maltreatment by discussing the act of mobbing in technical or economic terms (e.g., “He was just another cog in the wheel...”). In all cases, selective moral disengagement is a self-protective process that allows ordinarily caring people to commit passive evil.

Passive evil creates harm primarily through two separate but interrelated mechanisms. The first is that it causes irreparable, *additional* damage to the victim—in our case, the faculty member who has already been personally and professionally devastated through active evil (i.e., downward academic mobbing). Second, and much closer to the major thrust of this chapter, is that *it encourages further acts of mobbing* (Meiyun, Huawei, & Guoan, 2014). Because the personal harm caused by the passive evil has sometimes been described as being as great or greater than the mobbing itself, it warrants discussion here before embarking on the more targeted thesis. A number of researchers focusing on workplace bullying and downward mobbing from the perspective of the victim have noted the existential shock, epic disappointment, and sense of intimate, relational betrayal victims experience when their colleagues—many of whom they have known, helped, and cared for over the course of years—fail to support them, or even acknowledge what happened to them, after they have been bullied or mobbed (Hodgins & McNamara, 2017).

One common feature of downward mobbing, and one that perhaps encourages passive evil, is that the perpetrator deliberately uses victim isolation as part of the mobbing strategy (Hodgins & McNamara, 2017; Scott, 2018). Frequently, victims are banned from meetings, forbidden to communicate with colleagues, or in extreme cases have their workspaces physically relocated to secluded locations where they are unlikely to have contact with others in their workgroup. In such cases, it is perhaps more understandable that mobbing witnesses do not provide much social or material support. However, more often witnesses simply withdraw from or avoid communicating with the victim even though they are proximally near, depriving the victim of the types of supports that are known to mediate the harmful effects of bullying (and by doing so, magnify the negative health and emotional consequences of their victimization; Scott, 2018; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). Both the mobbing and the social isolation lead to what Lewis and Oxford (2005), based on interviews of 10 mobbing victims, characterized as a ripple effect—cascading, expanding waves of life disruption resulting from the damage inflicted on the victim. A quote from one of their respondents is particularly poignant: “They [employers] have dashed everything, they’ve just destroyed everything, and it’s had a terrible ripple effect, my

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daughters, my daughter in law, my son, my sisters, my friends, its affected” (Lewis & Oxford, 2005, p. 37). The same respondent later stated, “They’ve [employers] shattered everything that I have ever believed in, that I have ever worked to try and put right. The relationship with colleagues, the relationship with family, my whole reasoning, everything” (Lewis & Oxford, 2005, p. 40). What is left unsaid is that had the respondent’s colleagues had the courage/or and moral fiber to protect him or her, the ripple effect that ‘shattered’ the victim’s life and relationships may have been avoided or at the very least dramatically attenuated. Through their lack of fortitude and moral disengagement, they not only sanctioned the damage, they intensified it. Such, it seems, is always the case with passive evil.

HOW PASSIVE EVIL HELPS PERPETUATE FUTURE MOBING

As noted in the previous section, the literature on passive evil seems quite clear that many people who engage in it do so because it is thought to be self-protective. The thinking seems to be that if one does not directly engage the active evildoer(s), then he or she will be safe from personal victimization himself or herself. Such thinking is clearly lazy, shortsighted and craven, however, it seems it would be at least somewhat justifiable (e.g., as an evolutionary survival mechanism) if it was often accurate. However, as the earlier quote attributed to Niemoller attests, feigning ignorance and bearing passive witness to evil is not often protective; it may delay personal victimization, but it certainly does not guarantee safety. It does, however, ensure that there will be more victims before the evil runs its course (if/when it ever does). In the next section of the chapter, the authors present the argument that selective moral disengagement and all other forms of passive evil perpetuate active evil through assuring the perpetrators that he/she/they can act with impunity.

One of the primary reasons that bearing silent witness to downward academic mobbing perpetuates further mobbing is that perpetrators—experiencing no negative consequences for their unethical behavior—come to see mobbing as a successful management strategy. In fact, they may not even recognize that their behavior is widely considered pathological. As Piotrowski and King (2016) noted, “many supervisors... consider their domineering and controlling management style as laudatory” (p. 301); this manner of thinking is referred to as ‘moral inversion’ (Adams, 2011). As such, administrative bullies engage in downward mobbing because it works: They disparage and damage the victim (often a model faculty member and the only one with the courage to stand up to them; Khoo, 2010) so as to silence him or her,

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cow the witnesses, and face no consequences for doing it (Parker, 2014). Thus, it seems an efficient strategy (and in particularly toxic organizations, may even be rewarded by equally destructive superiors; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011; Parker, 2014; Piotrowski & King, 2016). This type of efficiency must seem attractive to unethical, corporate-minded mid-level academic administrators, as the traditional university environment—valuing considerable shared governance that encourages faculty members to be meaningfully involved in decision making processes—likely seems “too slow” to them and, when administrators participate in such shared governance, they sometimes have to compromise or accept not being able to “get what they want.” Thus, frequently downward academic mobbing is often initiated *precisely to intimidate the faculty as a whole and discourage them from engaging in their rights to shared governance*; in this respect, destroying a particular victim’s career and personal health is not necessarily the goal but rather a convenient means to an end (Vega & Comer, 2005).

Another reason that faculty witnesses’ engagement in passive evil perpetuates future mobbing is that if the faculty (often with their union and/or legal representatives) will not confront the bully, it is very likely that Human Resources (HR) staff and/or higher-level university administrators (e.g., vice presidents, provosts, and presidents) will not do so, either. One of the most disheartening findings in many published studies on downward academic mobbing is that university HR departments, in particular, are not only unhelpful to victims (either by failing to recognize the mobbing or mismanaging the cases brought before them) but in many cases *actually protect and assist* unethical administrators in their framing and abuse of targets (Barratt-Pugh & Krestlica, 2018; Catley, Blackwood, Forsyth, Tappin, & Bentley, 2017; Hodgins & McNamara, 2017; Parker, 2014). In his excellent commentary, Adams (2011) argued that modern organizations, especially those with hierarchical structures and diffused/fragmented roles, responsibilities, and sources of information, are particularly prone to administrative evil and the cannibalization of their workers (for further discussion of how organizational attributes relate to supervisory bullying, see also Roscigno, Lopez, & Hodson, 2009). To the extent that universities continue to be infused (or infected) with corporate values, and university employees are viewed simply as means of production (Adams, 2011), faculty can sadly expect more mobbing from their mid-level administrators, and less help and protection from HR professionals and their higher-level administrators.

Many universities make at least a pretense of protecting their employees from adverse treatment, however it is difficult to discern how much of this is ‘window-dressing.’ As noted earlier, there is a shameful lack of institutional action against

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administrative bullies (indeed, sources such as Barratt-Pugh & Krestelica [2018] and Namie [2017] report that less than 3% of reported cases involve any action against perpetrators). In those rare cases in which there is a genuine organizational intention to stop bullying, there is often little success in doing so—for when universities have policies against bullying, in the absence of willingness to enforce them, these policies themselves will be violated and therefore have no value at all (indeed, as McDonald et al. [2018] recently noted, one of the most common reasons that unethical mid-level administrators engage in downward academic mobbing is to punish faculty who protested the fact that the administrators were violating a policy in the first place). Barratt-Pugh and Kreselica (2018) argue that nothing less than an organizational culture change, which could (and should) be initiated from upper levels of university administration, is likely to serve as an institutional deterrent to downward academic mobbing. In a similar vein, Duffy (2009) noted:

In workplaces characterized by fear and mutual mistrust, low morale, high levels of competitiveness, lack of operational openness and transparency, poorly disseminated and understood organizational structure and policies, and limited opportunities for innovation, tacking on an antimobbing or antibullying policy to this already dismal mix is unlikely to result in the desired outcomes of preventing and reducing mobbing behaviors and their devastating impact on victims. (p. 249)

A third reason that passive evil leads to further mobbing is related to the last, though it goes considerably beyond. It has been established that organizations will typically not stop the bully (and may actually reward him or her). Some people who morally disengage and allow a colleague to be bullied may do so because they make one of the most common errors in bully perception—they assume the bullying is the result of a “personality clash” between two people (albeit an unbalanced one, with one person [the bully] with the power to harm, and the other [the victim] without) and that the bullying will end as soon as the victim is silenced, quits the place of employment, or succumbs to mental exhaustion (or takes his or her own life; as Pompili et al. [2008] demonstrated, bullied employees have a considerably elevated rate of suicide). They fail to understand that bullying is a process and a strategy, and that *bullies will not stop bullying under their own volition*. As discussed earlier, bullies tend to be competitive, domineering, amoral, arrogant, and entitled people (Glendinning, 2001; Young, 2017). They enjoy power and they enjoy abusing it, and they also enjoy abusing subordinates, whom they legitimately perceive as inferior

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to themselves (Glendinning, 2001). Because they enjoy what they are doing and they believe it makes them look powerful, they will continue their behavior until it is stopped by others. Because selective moral disengagement—as a form of passive evil—will not stop them, active resistance and a concerted effort by the victim and his or her colleagues is the only appropriate response.

CONCLUSION

Workplace bullying is, sadly, a highly common phenomenon. Bullying in academia—often known as downward academic mobbing—appears the most common manifestation of all workplace bullying. Given that bullying creates a toxic work environment, and causes adverse outcomes for targets (including mental and physical health problems, as well as early death), witnesses, and the workplace itself, it is important to combat it with all strategies available.

In this chapter, it has been made clear that up to the present, very little success has been achieved in combating downward academic mobbing. The main premise of the chapter is that much of the lack of success can be attributed to the passive evil perpetrated by faculty colleagues who observe unethical mid-level administrators bully and mob one of their own (in most cases, the most principled, accomplished, and courageous among them), and do nothing (or in some cases, due either to their own lack of scruples or in an effort for personal gain, join in the mobbing). This calls the question: How does one exhort colleagues, who clearly default toward selective moral disengagement, to act in defense of each other (or even—because it is clear that bullies will not stop and will typically find new victims in the future—in proactive defense of themselves)? Directly asking others to have courage is not likely to be an effective strategy. Other ways seem necessary, and in this final section of the chapter, several possible ways will be discussed.

One potentially promising avenue for combating academic mobbing is to communicate to faculty members just how prevalent—and how damaging—the problem is. It seems likely that many faculty members are not aware that the higher education sector is the one in which bullying and mobbing is most likely to occur. As noted earlier, many witnesses to bullying/mobbing make a fundamental error in perceiving bullying and mobbing to be isolated events, often occurring as the result of a “personality clash” between bullies and their victims, rather than understanding bullying as a frequently used management strategy adopted by toxic leaders to devastate dissenters and intimidate witnesses (thereby discouraging future

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dissent). If faculty members were able and willing to recognize this, it seems they might be more willing to defend victims and collectively confront bullies, if not out of moral strength or genuine compassion for the victim, at least out of a drive for self-preservation (i.e., to reduce the likelihood the bullies target them in the future). One way to communicate the prevalence and perniciousness of downward academic mobbing would be for local chapters of the AAUP and unions to hold highly advertised campus workshops on these topics. Excellent resources exist through organizations such as The Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI; www.workplacebullying.org), which offers online resources, support, intensive training, victim coaching, and other valuable services; one particularly attractive feature of the WBI is that its founders, Drs. Gary and Ruth Namie, are among the foremost authors on workplace bullying and, as they have both worked widely in academic settings, know mobbing in this sector well. The axiom “Knowledge is power” may not fully apply with respect to fighting passive evil (as passive evildoers are known to self-deceive and feign ignorance about what is happening around them), however, disseminating knowledge certainly seems a good place to start.

Trade organizations also have an important role to play in combating downward academic mobbing. “There is strength in numbers” is another axiom, and it seems to apply more fully in the present context. One of the ways academic bullies work is through systematically eliminating (Namie & Namie, 2011; Parker, 2014) whom they perceive to be dissenters—that is, they attempt to “pick them off” one at a time (from an efficiency standpoint, eliminating only one and intimidating all others is almost certainly the preferred outcome, however, if other dissenters emerge they are typically targeted in succession). Local AAUP and union chapters, if they act immediately and call attention at the first sign of mobbing, can fight passive evil by correctly characterizing the mobbing as “a methodological crusade of interpersonal destruction” (Parker, 2014, p. 171) and ‘circling the wagons,’ so to speak, for a common defense. Most trade organizations have legal defense funds, and many will help identify or employ labor/employment legal firms that specialize in fighting workplace bullying. Of course, it would be desirable to handle bullying/mobbing incidences within the university, however, as it has been demonstrated here, university HR departments and higher-level administrators have, at least historically, defended or abetted the bullies and ignored or disparaged their victims (WBI, n.d.). As a result, collective action among faculty members and the use of off-campus resources may often be necessary to stop/punish occurrences of downward academic mobbing.

One other way that faculty, perhaps working in unison with members of trade organizations, could work to decrease the prevalence of downward academic mobbing, is to be very active in the recruitment and selection of mid-level academic

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administrators (Sepler, 2015). Typically, these processes are dominated by higher-level administrators and HR personnel, who often exercise almost exclusive control over the search processes (e.g., use of a search firm) and the questions asked of candidates (Glendinning, 2001). Faculty members must (again, perhaps through their trade organizations so as not to make themselves individual targets for bullying) agitate for an active role in screening candidates and for the inclusion of language in the position description that makes clear that bullies need not apply. As Flynn (1999) noted (cited in Glendinning, 2001):

To begin with, make sure job descriptions include treating employees in a dignified and appropriate manner. Include behaviors that won't be tolerated, and hold them accountable for turnover. This not only makes the company's stance very clear, but it emphasizes the importance of treating people well. Once the job description includes behavior, HR can effectively reward or discipline managers through performance reviews. (p. 283)

During the interview itself, questions should be crafted that ask directly about mobbing behaviors, in an effort to ferret out potential bullies. Finally, faculty members should be involved in the process of checking references (Flynn, 1999), with a special focus on learning about how candidates handle conflict and their level of respect for meaningful faculty involvement in shared governance. Through these processes, faculty may be able to reduce the likelihood that bullies enter the university in the first place (Sepler, 2015).

A more systemic way to combat workplace bullying and mobbing is to address these problems at the legislative level. According to the WBI (n.d.), unlike some other countries, the U.S. does not have a national law providing legal protections against workplace bullying (several states, fortunately, are working on their own laws), and as such, according to Duffy (2009), victims “must rely on organizations to ‘do the right thing’ in the event of complaints of mobbing and bullying” (p. 242). As has been demonstrated, most universities have historically not “done the right thing,” and regardless of whether they have internal policies against bullying, they have generally been consistent in “doing the *wrong* thing” by ignoring or further damaging victims and defending or abetting their bullies (WBI, n.d.). Compliance with a state or national law would be a stronger inducement to avoid bullying for unethical mid-level academic administrators than following an internal policy—especially given that most internal policies on employee behaviors do not specifically address bullying/mobbing (Duffy, 2009) and that unethical administrators seem

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almost compulsive policy violators themselves (McDonald et al., 2018). The Healthy Workplace Bill (WBI, n.d.), championed by the WBI and a host of others, may be the best step forward to compel universities to take bullying and mobbing seriously, as it has clear consequences, not only for employers but also for the individual perpetrators themselves (see Table 2).

Downward academic mobbing is a major problem; it appears to be the most common form of workplace bullying in existence. It is perpetuated largely by the passive evil of faculty colleagues who could collectively confront it, decreasing the future likelihood that it happens to others as well as themselves. Fortunately, bullying and mobbing can be stopped. It requires courage and character, however through the organizational, legal, and legislative strategies discussed here, perhaps future academic settings will be largely free of the toxic climate and personal and professional harm so many faculty members experience today.

Table 2.

<p><i>Summary of Proposed Benefits of the Healthy Workplace Bill (HWB) for Employers and Workers, as Well as What Negative Consequences it Will Not Cause</i></p> <hr/> <p>What the Healthy Workplace Bill Does for Employers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Precisely defines an “abusive workplace environment” – it is a high standard for misconduct2. Requires proof of health harm by licensed health or mental health professionals3. Protects conscientious employers from vicarious liability risk when internal correction and prevention mechanisms are in effect4. Gives employers the reason to terminate or sanction offenders5. Requires plaintiffs to use private attorneys6. Plugs the gaps in current state and federal civil rights protections <p>What the Healthy Workplace Bill Does for Workers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provides an avenue for legal redress for health harming cruelty at work2. Allows you to sue the bully as an individual3. Holds the employer accountable4. Seeks restoration of lost wages and benefits5. Compels employers to prevent and correct future instances <p>What the Healthy Workplace Bill Does Not Do</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Involve state agencies to enforce any provisions of the law2. Incur costs for adopting states3. Require plaintiffs to be members of protected status groups (it is “status-blind”)4. Use the term “workplace bullying” <hr/> <p><i>Note.</i> Source: http://healthyworkplacebill.org/bill/</p>
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