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Academic mobbing

What university management needs to know

Ian Pace

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About the author

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Introduction

The judgment in January 2024[1] by the employment tribunal in the case of Professor Jo Phoenix v Open University was a watershed. Phoenix's claims of direct discrimination by the OU on grounds of "gender-critical" beliefs (that is, that sex is real, binary and immutable, and in some situations important), harassment by colleagues and the OU management, constructive dismissal and victimisation were all upheld. The 156-page judgment severely criticised the behaviour of the OU, raised questions about the commitment of some academics to scholarly rigour and concluded that accusations of "transphobia" or being a "TERF" (trans-exclusionary radical feminist, often used as a slur) can constitute harassment. It also shed light on a wider academic culture that allows, even enables, a type of toxic behaviour known as "workplace mobbing".

Phoenix's tribulations started in 2018, after a conference planned for the following year was cancelled because one of the organisers was accused of "transphobia". She then told colleagues she was gender-critical, regarding sex as a meaningful variable in her field of criminology, for instance in decisions about prison placement. Accusations of transphobia and the like, she said, were being used to silence and cancel academics and had no place in scholarly debate.

The head of social policy and criminology at the OU, Louise Westmarland, then compared Phoenix to a "racist uncle", and Phoenix was ostracised in her department. She was prevented from speaking at departmental meetings about her research on trans rights and the criminal-justice system, shunned by colleagues and pointedly denied recognition for her work. Other colleagues said nothing to her face but complained about her to the dean, Professor Ian William Fribbance. The atmosphere became even more hostile when she and colleagues launched a gender-critical research network (GCRN) in 2021,[2] with 368 OU staff members and postgraduates signing an open letter[3] calling for the university to withdraw any support for the group. For a fuller account of Phoenix's experiences, read the Sex Matters briefing on her case.[4]

The pressure caused Phoenix such distress that she had to take sick leave, after which she lodged a workplace grievance. Speaking on BBC Radio 4 *Woman's Hour* shortly after the

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[1] J Phoenix v The Open University and others [2024] UKET 3322700/2021.

[2] Open University (2021). 'Gender Critical Research Network' (accessed 4th May 2024).

[3] Open University (2021). 'Open letter from OU staff and postgraduate research students – response to the launch of the Gender Critical Research Network'.

[4] Sex Matters (2024). *Learning from the Jo Phoenix case: what universities and their regulators need to know and do*.

judgment,[5] Phoenix recalled the trauma of being raped as a teenager and going through the criminal-justice process. Her experiences at the OU and during the employment-tribunal hearing, she said, had been worse.

To understand the distress experienced by Phoenix, and the OU's ineffectual institutional response, you need to understand the phenomenon of workplace mobbing. At its heart is a simple calculation: will an institution pursue disciplinary proceedings against hundreds of staff who have ganged up on a colleague, or will it blame the victim? Even dissociating from the mob and coming out publicly in support of academic freedom for its target requires moral clarity and a backbone. Compared with other sorts of workplace discrimination and harassment, in mobbing the gap between what is right and what is expedient is particularly wide. The pernicious consequences are compounded by a general failure by sectoral leaders and HR departments to understand employment law.

This document explains how mobbing happens, drawing on studies of dissent under totalitarian regimes and of the phenomenon of groupthink to illuminate how people who have done no harm and broken no rule can end up being cast out of their tribe, whether with physical brutality, as in dictatorships, or by the destruction of their careers and intellectual reputations, as in academia. It then explores why mobbing seems to be on the rise in universities, with consequences that go far beyond the victims, creating a chilling effect that harms academic freedom right across the sector. And lastly, it considers what can be done to fight back.

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[5] BBC Radio 4 (2024). _Woman's Hour, 27th January 2024_.

Workplace mobbing

Phoenix is not the first academic to be singled out and shamed using mass petitions and open letters. Other examples include Czech linguist Jan Čulík at the University of Glasgow in 2016,[6] Kathleen Stock in 2021 (Stock ended up resigning as a result of the bullying),[7] and historian Russell Rickford of Cornell[8] and Joseph Massad of Columbia in 2023.[9] This year jazz saxophonist Martin Speake of Trinity Laban Conservatoire was placed on leave following a petition from students seeking his sacking.[10] My point here is not to defend the opinions of any or all, but to defend their right to express them (I abhor those of Rickford and Massad, but they are legal).

Petitions, whether public or private, are a common component of mobbing campaigns: an individual who has neither fallen demonstrably short in doing their job nor broken any rule is nevertheless targeted by colleagues. The phenomenon was named in an adult context for the first time in the 1980s by psychologist Heinz Leymann,[11] who studied nurses who killed themselves after distressing workplace experiences.[12] He borrowed the term from Austrian zoologist and ethologist Konrad Lorenz, who used it for similar behaviour in animals, including jackdaws, geese and zebras, usually towards a predator viewed as a threat.[13] That work in turn drew on an earlier study of similar behaviour in chaffinches,[14] and the work of Swedish physician Peter Paul Heinemann, who had studied isolation and ostracisation among children.[15]

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[6] Change.org (2016). 'Jan Culik dismissal from the position of senior lecturer in Czech on University of Glasgow'.

[7] Nicola Woolcock (2021). 'Sussex University students campaign to have "transphobic" professor Kathleen Stock sacked', *The Times*.

[8] iPetitions (2023). 'Cornell University Community demands the Dismissal of Professor Russell Rickford'.

[9] Noah Bernstein (2023). 'Petition calling for removal of MESAAS Professor Joseph Massad garners over 47,000 signatures', *Columbia Spectator*.

[10] Phil Croydon (2024). 'Jazz professor boycotted by London students', *Music Teacher*.

[11] The first major text to deal more widely with bullying and harassment at work is generally thought to be Carroll M. Brodsky (1976), *The Harassed Worker,* Lexington Books.

[12] Heinz Leymann and Annelie Gustaffson (2014, Swedish original 1998). *Why Nurses Commit Suicide: Mobbing in Health Care Institutions,* translated Sue Baxter, with preface by Kenneth Westhues, The Edwin Mellen Press.

[13] Konrad Lorenz (1966, German original 1963). *On Aggression,* translated by Marjorie Latzke, with foreword by Sir Julian Huxley, Methuen & Co.: 19-22.

[14] R.A. Hinde (1954), 'Factors governing the changes in strength of a partially inborn response, as shown by the mobbing behaviour of the chaffinch (Fringilla coelebs). II. The waning of the response', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Biological Sciences:* 306-331.

[15] Peter-Paul Heinemann (1969). 'Apartheid', *Liberal Debatt*: 3-14; cited in Cecile Boge and Anna Larsson (2018). 'Understanding Pupil Violence; Bullying Theory as Technoscience in Sweden and Norway', *Nordic Journal of Educational History:* 131-149.

In an essay from 1990 that summarised his findings,[16] Leyman defined mobbing as a phenomenon in which:

> "The victim is subjected to a systematic stigmatizing through, inter alia, injustices (encroachment of a person's rights), which after a few years can mean that the person in question is unable to find employment in his/her specific trade. Those responsible for this tragic destiny can either be workmates or management."[17]

And he gave an operational definition:

> "Psychical terror or mobbing in working life means hostile and unethical communication which is directed in a systematic way by one or a number of persons mainly toward one individual. There are also cases where such mobbing is mutual until one of the participants becomes the underdog. These actions take place often (almost every day) and over a long period (at least for six months) and, because of this frequency and duration, result in considerable psychic, psychosomatic and social misery."[18]

Many subsequent commentators emphasise the importance of the sustained nature of mobbing, which makes its impact especially devastating. The process Lehmann traced begins with a critical incident, after which a group mobilises to "get at" and punish an individual. The tools used include slurring the victim's reputation, manipulating their social circumstances, distorting work assignments (such as removing work or giving them demeaning tasks) and threatening or committing violence. Often the victim responds defensively, at which point the case is taken up by human-resources departments that buy into the mob's characterisation of the victim as deviant and deserving of what they have experienced.

The victim often ends up taking long-term sick leave, is sometimes reassigned to lower-grade or degrading work and may end up needing psychiatric treatment. It then becomes very hard to find further work. The wider consequences include social isolation, voluntary unemployment, feelings of inability to cope, depression, compulsive behaviour and rage at the lack of legal remedies.[19] Various studies point to a majority of victims suffering post-traumatic stress disorder.[20]

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[16] Heinz Leymann (1990), 'Mobbing and Psychological Terror at Workplaces', *Violence and Victims:* 119-126.

[17] As above: 119.

[18] As above: 120.

[19] As above: 121-123.

[20] Heinz Leymann and Annelie Gustaffson (1996). 'Mobbing at work and the development of post-traumatic stress disorders', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology:* 251-275.

Leymann found that those who are in a sexual minority at work (whether women in a male-dominated environment or men in a female-dominated one) are especially at risk of being mobbed.[21] Others at elevated risk include people with disabilities.[22]

A checklist created by Leymann, the Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror,[23] lists 45 mobbing actions and sets a threshold for deeming that mobbing has taken place if one or more happens around once a week over at least a year. These actions can be grouped into five broad categories, each centred on a aspect of the victim's life that is harmed:

- **self-expression and communication** (such as being denied expression, facing continuous criticism, threats and denial of contact)
- **social contacts** (being ostracised from colleagues)
- **personal reputation** (malicious rumour-mongering, being treated as if mentally ill, being ridiculed in terms of beliefs, private life, nationality and other characteristics, suffering sexual innuendos)
- **occupational situation and quality of life** (being denied prestigious or new tasks, being given jobs that are meaningless or low-status)
- **physical health** (made to do physically strenuous work, physical threats or abuse, damage to property and sexual harassment).

The major English translations of Leymann's works are out of print. But for anyone who thinks they may have experienced workplace mobbing, the books and articles referred to in the text and the annex of further reading should prove useful.

In the first book-length study of the phenomenon written in English, *Mobbing: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace*,[24] Noa Davenport, Ruth Distler Schwartz and Gail Pursell Elliott provide a slightly revised and very workable definition:

> "The mobbing syndrome is a malicious attempt to force a person out of the work-place through unjustified accusations, humiliation, general harassment, emotional abuse, and/or terror.

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[21] Heinz Leymann (1996). 'The Content and Development of Mobbing at Work', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology:* 165-184 (see 175).

[22] A range of international studies showing this are referenced in Elif Özlim Özçatal and Umur Aşkin (2022), 'Disabled Employees as A Vulnerable Group in the Labor Market and Mobbing: A Qualitative Research in Tokat Province', *Sosyal Siyaset Konferanslan Dergisi/Journal of Social Policy Conferences:* 39-100.

[23] Anti-Mobbing Help For Scientists (no date). 'Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror (LIPT)', taken from Heinz Leymann (1990). *Handbok för användning av LIPT-formuläret för kartläggning av risker för psykiskt våld,* Violen.

[24] Noa Davenport, Ruth Distler Schwarz and Gail Pursell Elliott (1999, rev. 2002). *Mobbing: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace,* Civil Society Publishing.

> "It is a "ganging up" by the leader(s) – organization, superior, co-worker, or sub-ordinate—who rallies others into systematic and frequent 'mob-like' behavior.
>
> "Because the organization ignores, condones or even instigates the behavior, it can be said that the victim, seemingly helpless against the powerful and many, is indeed 'mobbed.' The result is always injury— physical or mental distress or illness and social misery and, most often, expulsion from the workplace."[25]

Although mobbing has been studied for some decades, there is a surprising lack of awareness of it as a phenomenon distinct from the bullying of subordinates by unpleasant bosses or simply bullying by several people. In 'Workplace mobbing: Expulsion, exclusion, and transformation', an article published in 2008, Linda Shallcross, Sheryl Ramsay and Michelle Barker found a lack of understanding of the concept in the English-speaking world in particular.[26] Janice Harper, in her recent book *Mobbed!: What to Do When They Really Are Out to Get You*,[27] mentions her frustration that purported overviews of bullying do not understand mobbing (especially not the group dynamics involved), and that some of the countermeasures suggested, such as reporting, talking to others and filing lawsuits, may make mobbing worse. Other proposed countermeasures, such as trying to recruit others to join in campaigns against bullies, may even end up causing mobbing.

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[25] Noa Davenport, Ruth Distler Schwarz and Gail Pursell Elliott (1999, rev. 2002). *Mobbing: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace,* Civil Society Publishing: 40.

[26] Linda Shallcross, Sheryl Ramsay and Michelle Barker (2008). 'Workplace Mobbing: Expulsion, Exclusion and Transformation'. In Marie Wilson (ed.). *Managing in the Pacific Century: Proceedings of the 22nd Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management,* University of Auckland: 1-22.

[27] Janice Harper (2013, rev. 2016). *Mobbed!: What to Do When They Really Are Out to Get You,* Backdoor Press.

Mobbing and denunciation in totalitarian regimes

A range of scholars and writers have investigated the group dynamics that lead seemingly ordinary citizens to denounce others in dictatorships. There are parallels with parts of the mobbing process, in which groups turn on individuals.

Historians Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately studied denunciation in modern Europe,[28] focusing on Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. Their definition of "denunciation" relates to "spontaneous communications from individual citizens" to the state or other authority, making accusations about others and calling for punishment. The end of communism in Eastern Europe resulted in the release of many files revealing the nature and extent of such practices.

In both fascist and communist societies, recent historical scholarship has shifted its focus from models of control and authority to active or passive popular consent and cooperation. Ordinary citizens, by no means necessarily facing coercion, would frequently denounce others as ideological enemies, readily supplying information for example to the Gestapo. In Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, concepts of loyalty to Führer or Party were seen to legitimise denunciation, even of family members. Denunciations attracted little stigma, and various scholars have suggested they were used to settle private scores or gain personal advantage. In East Germany, in particular, huge numbers of citizens were recruited as informers.

Fitzpatrick and Gellately, who focus respectively on the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, their own areas of expertise,[29], note that many of those denounced were construed as "enemies of the people". Writing about communist Poland in *The Captive Mind*, Czesław Miłosz noted how much the Party had learned from the Church about the zealous use of doctrine, creating pressure for others to submit to the collective rhythm of the club in factories, schools and offices, and to brand anyone who did not share the Party's viewpoint as an enemy.[30]

Such enemies must be banished to the margins of society, Miłosz said, because of an inherent guilt: they are condemned for what they are, not what they do. People are separated

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[28] Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately (1996). 'Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History', *Journal of Modern History*: 747-767.

[29] See in particular Sheila Fitzpatrick (1999), *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, Oxford University Press; and Fitzpatrick (2015) *On Stalin's Team: The Years of Living Dangerously in Soviet Politics*, Princeton University Press; Robert Gellately (1991), *The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy 1933-1945*, Oxford University Press; and Gellately (2002), *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany*, Oxford University Press.

[30] Czesław Miłosz (1953, Polish original 1953). *The Captive Mind*, translated Jane Zielonko, Secker & Warburg: 190-197.

into loyalists and criminals, and "a premium is placed on every type of conformist, coward, and hireling".[31]

In his famous essay 'The Power of the Powerless', Václav Havel gives the example of the greengrocer who unthinkingly places a sign saying "Workers of the world, unite!" in his window "simply because it has been done that way for years, because everyone does it, and because that is the way it has to be. If he were to refuse, there could be trouble."[32] In an open letter to Gustáv Husák,[33] Havel argued that the Czech regime encouraged automatism, laziness, selfishness and careerism.

Under such regimes, many citizens were caught up in social dynamics that rewarded and encouraged behaviours based on thinking of others as worthy only of being marginalised and even eliminated. Although they are extreme examples, other environments can encourage similar behaviours by discouraging the expression of dissenting views, rewarding deference towards the powerful and punishing those who refuse to show such deference. When this happens in academia, where fearless and open inquiry is supposed to be encouraged, the result is especially destructive.

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[31] Czesław Miłosz (1953, Polish original 1953). *The Captive Mind*, translated Jane Zielonko, Secker & Warburg: 200.

[32] Václav Havel (2018, Czech original 1978). *The Power of the Powerless*, with introduction by Timothy Snyder, Random House: 21.

[33] Václav Havel (1986). 'Letter to Dr Gustáv Husák, General Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party'. In Václav Havel, *Living in Truth: Twenty-two essays published on the occasion of the award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel,* edited Jan Vladislav. Faber and Faber: 3-35

Mobbing in academia

When mobbing happens in universities, it is focused on a person's intellectual rather than political standing. But the way events unfold is often strikingly similar.

In a series of books, articles and lectures (see the annex for further reading), Kenneth Westhues,[34] the major scholar of mobbing in academia, traces a series of cases in universities. As described in one of Westhues's early writings on the subject, a parody entitled *Eliminating Professors: A Guide to the Dismissal Process,* mobbers often seize upon a specific incident, sometimes real but sometimes fabricated, which is then used as justification to argue that the victim is unfit to participate in the usual processes of academic life.[35] The sociologist Harold Garfinkel, writing in 1956, defined a "degradation ceremony" as "any communicative work between persons, whereby the public identity of an actor is transformed into something looked on as lower in the local scheme of social types".[36] Garfinkel's model has been used by other writers, in particular Maureen Duffy and Len Sperry, as a template for this sort of casting out in wider contexts.[37]

In the academic setting the aim is to inspire public censure and frequently formal dismissal, branding the victim with a lifelong stigma. Westhues drew a link between a willingness to mob and disdain for academic freedom. He considered processes specific to academia, such as the granting of tenure, which distinguish mobbing in universities from its use elsewhere.

He also identified personal characteristics that make academics more vulnerable to mobbing.[38] These include:

1. foreign birth and upbringing, especially where this is clear through accent
2. other differences such as sex, sexual orientation, skin colour, ethnicity and class origin

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[34] For lots of information, see his website, *Workplace Mobbing in Academe & Beyond*.

[35] Kenneth Westhues (1998). *Eliminating Professors: A Guide to the Dismissal Process,* Edwin Mellen Press: 53-108.

[36] Harold Garfinkel (1956). 'Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies', *American Journal of Sociology*: 420-424: quote 420.

[37] Maureen Duffy and Len Sperry (2012). *Mobbing: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions,* Oxford University Press: xii.

[38] Kenneth Westhues (2006), 'The Unkindly Art of Mobbing', *Academic Matters: The Journal of Higher Education*: 18-19.

3. working in disciplines with ambiguous standards and objectives, especially those informed by postmodernism[39]
4. working under a dean or administrator who is keen on using disciplinary processes
5. having opposed a candidate who has come to have a position of authority over them
6. having been highly successful in teaching and research, generating envy
7. having made clear their dissent from politicised views held as sacred by some on campus
8. having defended someone who is otherwise a pariah
9. having blown the whistle on others with power, for serious wrongdoing.

Points 6 to 9 imply a major disincentive to be a high achiever or to act, think or write according to principles rather than taking the path of least resistance. In the modern university, point 7 is relevant to departments or institutions that formally support the tenets of either gender-identity ideology or critical race theory, for example in statements on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), criteria for hiring or promotion or by membership of external benchmarking schemes such as those run by Stonewall and Athena Swan.[40] Point 3 is common in arts and humanities (Westhues specifically cites music and literature).[41]

A chapter in the book *A Brief Guide to Academic Bullying* by a group of American, British and German scholars[42] presents a model of mobbing that differs slightly from Leymann's, and which breaks down the manipulation of the victim's reputation into successive stages:

● indirect negative communications, rumours and lies
● negative communications in which the target is confronted overtly
● a toxic atmosphere pervading the whole department that leads onlookers to join the originally active group.

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[39] For more on postmodernism in this context, which Westhues links to "relativism, cultural Marxism, social constructionism, critical race theory, and identity politics", in which context he argues "A key tenet is that the truth of an idea does not depend on how well it fits real life but on who has power and privilege", see Kenneth Westhues (2020). *Update to The Envy of Excellence, two decades later, 2020*, 21-25 (quote 21). See also Westhues (2004). *Administrative Mobbing at the University of Toronto: The Trial, Degradation and Dismissal of a Professor during the Presidency of J. Robert S. Prichard,* Edwin Mellen Press: 81-84.

[40] On this, see in particular Alice Sullivan (2022). 'Why UCL are shutting the door on Stonewall', *The Critic,* and John Armstrong and Alice Sullivan (2023). 'A Critical Analysis of Athena Swan as a Policy-Scoring Scheme', *SSRN.*

[41] No comprehensive study of bullying and mobbing specifically in the arts and humanities has yet been published, to my knowledge, but such a study could be extremely important.

[42] Mehdi Kamali, Saman Hosseinpour, Jennifer Swann, Hossein Pooya Sareh and Morteza Mahmoudi, 'Mobbing in Academia' (2022). In Mortez Hamoudi (ed.), *A Brief Guide to Academic Bullying*, Jenny Stanford Publishing: 45-59.

The authors point out the fallacy of the *argumentum ad populum* (appeal to the people) by which whatever a majority believes must be true, noting the case of a 1931 booklet entitled *A Hundred Authors Against Einstein*, none of whose editors were active scientists.[43]

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[43] Mehdi Kamali, Saman Hosseinpour, Jennifer Swann, Hossein Pooya Sareh and Morteza Mahmoudi, 'Mobbing in Academia' (2022). In Mortez Hamoudi (ed.), *A Brief Guide to Academic Bullying*, Jenny Stanford Publishing: 55-57; citing in particular Douglas N. Walton (1999). *Appeal to Popular Opinion*, Penn State Press; and Hubert Goenner (2008), 'The Reaction to Relativity Theory I: The Anti-Einstein Campaign in Germany in 1920', *Science in Context*: 107-133.

Groupthink

This term was coined by sociologist William H. Whyte in 1952 to describe a type of "rationalized conformity – an open, articulate philosophy which holds that group values are not only expedient but right and good as well".[44] He argued that it was facilitated by moral relativism and prioritisation of group harmony. Whyte expressed some concern about this direction in society, and the absolutist view of science and scientific methods employed by groupthinkers, which he thought meant excluding outsiders.

But the theory attracted little attention until the influential thinker Irving Janis wrote an article in *Psychology Today* in 1971[45] and then a highly influential book, *Victims of Groupthink*, in 1972.[46] He defined groupthink as "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action".[47] Janis's theories have been cited widely – and attracted plenty of criticism.[48] But their description of group dynamics, considered separately from whether groups make good decisions or bad ones, are useful in understanding the preconditions for mobbing and how a mob can develop.

Janis considered major military and political examples of bad decision-making: the Bay of Pigs invasion; the US invasion of North Korea; the lack of readiness before Pearl Harbour; and the escalation of the Vietnam War. He took as counterpoints the successful resolution of the Cuban missile crisis and the design and implementation of the Marshall Plan. The bad decisions, Janis argued, were caused by groupthink, and he emphasised a "clubby" in-group atmosphere and the prestige members felt they gained from being part of an elite.

In subsequent works, Janis elaborated further a collection of predisposing conditions.[49] First among them was high cohesiveness. After that came insulation of the group; lack of methodical procedures for search and appraisal; directive leadership; and high levels of stress accompanied by pessimism regarding the possibility of finding a better solution than one which had already been proffered by a leader or others. These together, he said, led to a "concurrence-seeking tendency" (eventually the term "concurrence-seeking" came to

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[44] William H. Whyte (1952), 'Groupthink', *Fortune*.

[45] Irving L. Janis (1971). 'Groupthink', *Psychology Today*: 43-44, 46, 74-76.

[46] Irving L. Janis (1972). *Victims of Groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascos*, Houghton Mifflin Company.
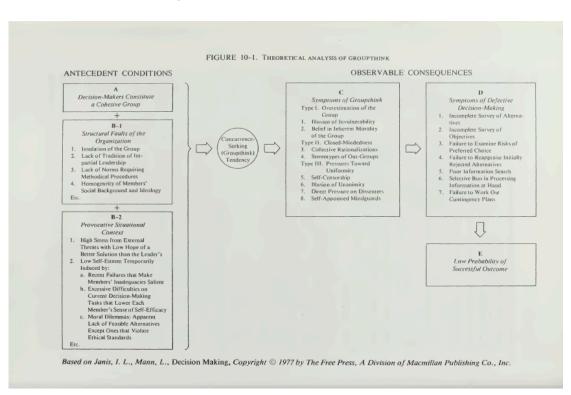
[47] As above: 9.

[48] See the annex of further reading for more detail.

[49] Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann (1977). *Decision Making: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice, and Commitment*, The Free Press.

supplant "groupthink" for Janis). He also listed symptoms of groupthink, which included illusions of invulnerability, collective rationalisation, belief in the inherent morality of the group, stereotypes of "out groups", pressure on dissenters, self-censorship, the illusion of unanimity and self-appointed "mind guards" (defined by Janis and Leon Mann as "members who protect the group from adverse information that might shatter their shared complacency about the effectiveness and morality of their decisions").[50]

This chart was drawn up by Janis in 1982.[51]

Janis's theories flew in the face of conventional wisdom about cohesion being desirable for group decision-making. He argued that, to the contrary, it created the conditions most likely to produce groupthink and thus defective decision-making.

But only a few empirical studies appeared in the decade after Janis's original work, and with them came a range of detailed and cogent critiques, beginning with that published in 1980 by

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[50] Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann (1977). *Decible Making: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice, and Commitment*, The Free Press: 130-131 (quote 131).

[51] Irving L. Janis (1982). *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (revised and enlarged version of *Victims of Groupthink*), Houghton Mifflin Company: 244. This is a more sophisticated version of a diagram in Janis and Mann, *Decision Making:* 132.

Jeanne Longley and Dean G. Pruitt.[52] These questioned various of Janis's concepts as well as the links between the stages of the process he outlined. They included consideration of studies by others of decision-making in major crises such as the Watergate scandal,[53] the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979–81,[54] the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands,[55] the launch of the space shuttle Challenger,[56] and the Iran-Contra affair,[57] as well as situations of less consequence.

It is not because a large number of scholars broadly agree on the importance of the concept of groupthink that I raise it here – indeed, that would be ironic. It is because studies of groupthink repeatedly identify aspects of group decision-making that stand independently of any claims about the quality of the decisions, and that cast light on how mobbing plays out. These include the sidelining of individuals who question a group's dominant thinking, such as former US Defence Secretary Robert McNamara when he started to question the Vietnam War;[58] self-censorship, especially by group members who feel insecure; submission to a leader; factional domination; and unwillingness to question pre-existing norms and assumptions.

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[52] Jeanne Longley and Dean G. Pruitt (1980), 'Groupthink: A Critique of Janis's Theory', in Ladd Wheeler (ed.). _Review of Personality and Social Psychology: 1_, Sage: 74-93. Other key critiques are Gregory Moorhead and John R. Montanari (1986). 'An Empirical Investigation of the Groupthink Phenomenon', _Human Relations_: 399-410; Clark McCauley (1989). 'The Nature of Social Influence in Groupthink: Compliance and Internalization', _Journal of Personality and Social Psychology_: 250-260; and Philip E. Tetlock, Randall S. Peterson, Charles McGuire, Shi-jie Chang and Peter Feld (1992). 'Assessing Political Group Dynamics: A Test of the Groupthink Model', _Journal of Personality and Social Psychology_: 403-425. Harsher critiques advocating wholesale rejection of Janis's model in favour of others are relatively few; they include Glen Whyte (1989). 'Groupthink Reconsidered', _The Academy of Management Review_: 40-56; and Raymond J. Aldag and Sally Riggs Fuller (1993). 'Beyond Fiasco: A Reappraisal of the Groupthink Phenomenon and a New Model of Group Decision Processes', _Psychological Bulletin_: 533-552.

[53] Bertram H. Raven (1974). 'The Nixon Group', _Journal of Social Issues_: 297-320, was the first major study of this.

[54] Steve Smith (1985). 'Groupthink and the Hostage Rescue Mission', _British Journal of Political Science_: 117-123.

[55] Groupthink was evoked as a possible explanation for the Thatcher government's actions relating to the Falklands War in Frank Heller (1983). 'The dangers of groupthink', _The Guardian_, 13 January. I am not aware of a more comprehensive scholarly study having been undertaken on this, though the Falklands is one of a large range of cases used to derive quantitative measures of national interests and the level of international conflict in Mark Schafer and Scott Crichlow (2002). 'The _Process-Outcome_ Connection in Foreign Policy Decision Making: A Quantitative Study Building on Groupthink', _International Studies Quarterly_, 45-68; and Mark Schafer and Scott Crichlow (2010). _Groupthink vs. High-Quality Decision Making in International Relations_, Columbia University Press.

[56] James Esser and Joanne Linoerfer (1989). 'Groupthink and the Space Shuttle _Challenger_ Accident: Toward a Quantitative Case Analysis', _Journal of Behavioral Decision Making_: 167-177.

[57] Paul 't Hart (1990). _Groupthink in Government: A Study of Small Groups and Policy Failure_, Swets & Zeitlinger: 215-271.

[58] Irving L. Janis (1972). _Victims of Groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascos_, Houghton Mifflin Company: 120-125.

One of the most telling studies, 'Heuristic Models of Groupthink' by Ivan D. Steiner,[59] published in 1982, considers data collected in studies of lynchings. These are found to spread when members of groups become privately convinced by rumours (often false) of rapes, killings, imminent uprisings and so on, and conclude that the only way to prevent harm is to take the law into their own hands. The support they expect to receive from others overrides their awareness of social codes that forbid vigilante action.

The sequence of events often begins with impromptu speeches about the "crime" or perpetrator. Next someone "breaks the ice" by declaring that the person should be lynched. No-one contradicts them, a "spiralling process" begins and its energy draws others along.

Sometimes people try to remonstrate, but they usually wait until after the spiralling has begun and are suppressed or intimidated. Drawing upon a classic study by Solomon E. Asch published in 1956,[60] Steiner observes how people often try to avoid social pressures by "going along". This creates an "impression of universality" – an exhibition of cohesion within a crowd – which can become festive, with the singing of hymns or other songs. Crowd members gain an illusion of invulnerability and believe themselves to be immune from prosecution or censure. They think that what they are doing is right, and that even if it is not, they will not be held personally responsible.

Such groups are often ad hoc and transitory, Steiner notes, consisting of relative strangers. They use information and misinformation selectively. Certain opinions are suppressed or self-censored. Some group members are more influential than others, and the desire to create cohesion where it did not previously exist promotes groupthink (this view is distinct from that of Janis, who stipulates the importance of prior cohesion).[61] Obviously a lynching is more serious than a workplace mobbing, but the processes are extremely similar.

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[59] Ivan D. Steiner (1982). 'Heuristic Models of Groupthink'. In Hermann Brandstätter, James H. Davis and Gisela Stocker-Kreichgauer (eds.), _Group Decision Making,_ Academic Press: 503-524 (517-520 on lynchings).

[60] Solomon E. Asch (1956). 'Studies of Independence and Conformity: I. A Minority of One Against a Unanimous Majority', _Psychological Monographs: General and Applied_: 1-70.

[61] Steiner, 'Heuristic Models of Groupthink', 520-521.

Groupthink in academia

The major study of these dynamics in academia is by Daniel B. Klein and Charlotta Stern, published in 2009.[62] The authors were motivated by their belief that classic liberal views were being squeezed out of various areas in the humanities and social sciences. They noted that academic groups are often larger, less well-defined, less centralised and significantly less oriented towards specific actions than groups formed for the purpose of policy-making. Other differences, they argued, include that academic groups generally operate under conditions of less stress, urgency, risk and danger, and that the "bad beliefs" which inform groupthink in academia are "much deeper, more complex, and more incorrigible – more in the nature of moral, political and aesthetic values".[63]

Some of these characterisations are open to debate. But more to the point are the broader features of academic life the authors identified that predispose academics to intellectual conformity, and to turning on intellectual dissenters.

One is that many decisions in academia are in some way linked to scholarly investigation, meaning that when someone in an academic group dissents from a decision of any kind, it is easy to blame that dissent on a failure of scholarly judgement. Since academics' beliefs are typically connected to their sense of self and identity, the stakes are high.

Academic life also features mechanisms that build conformity across entire disciplines. When recruiting new colleagues, or mentoring and reviewing articles submitted to scholarly journals, academic elites end up reproducing themselves. They seek concurrence and validation for their own position, and exclude views that challenge their own thinking or run contrary to core ideologies. Decisions on hiring, firing, promotion, peer review and research funding are usually made by committee, which often results in the creation of "in-groups" and penalisation of dissenters. In addition to the factors identified by Klein and Stern, the use of key performance indicators (KPIs) and measures of research impact and student satisfaction to keep academics in line exacerbates this process.

And finally, drawing upon concepts from Janis, Klein and Stern identified several outcomes that they argued were symptoms of groupthink in academia:[64]

- illusions of invulnerability
- belief in inherent morality

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[62] Daniel B. Klein and Charlotta Stern (2009). 'Groupthink in Academia: Majoritarian Departmental Politics and the Professional Pyramid', *The Independent Review*: 585-600.

[63] As above: 588.

[64] As above: 596-597.

- collective rationalisations
- stereotyping of out-groups
- self-censorship
- direct pressure on dissenters.

The characteristics of academic life identified by Klein and Stern are not new. But groupthink and mobbing appear to be becoming more common. What has changed? One possible culprit is the unintended side effects of measures that were intended to make academia more welcoming to a wider range of people.

In an article published in *UnHerd* in 2022,[65] philosopher Kathleen Stock described the atmosphere she experienced as a graduate student in the 1990s, with colleagues (mostly male) gleefully tearing guest speakers' arguments to pieces and demonstrating contempt by turning their backs or holding their heads in their hands. Women in Philosophy in the UK,[66] in a report published in 2011, argued among other things that women were put off philosophy by such "stereotypically male behaviour" in the seminar room. Around the same time, similar reports in other academic fields came to much the same conclusions.

Among the consequences, Stock argues, is that in philosophy and other once-gladiatorial disciplines, new codes of practice became enshrined that led to an "implausible degree of positivity", complete with Australian soap-opera-style upward inflections, and a "folksy informality", such as audience members bringing their knitting to talks. Cogent, rigorous arguments gave way to speakers name-dropping and listeners heaping praise on them rather than actually asking questions.

Scholarly aggression, however, did not vanish but became channelled in other ways. Instead of confronting speakers directly, academics turned to the internet, using emotive rhetoric to exhort everyone to "listen" to what some marginalised group or other apparently thought and displaying a marked intolerance towards anyone dissenting even mildly from the in-group.

Stock argued that these dynamics communicated to young academics that flaunting assumed victimhood was a good career move and that "self-aggrandising and bullying others was acceptable in the philosophy profession as long as it was in the name of social justice". The result was the replacement of well-established modes of argument and debate by long-discredited ones: ad hominem; distortions and wilful misreadings; extrapolation on the

[65] Kathleen Stock (2022). 'How philosophy sacrificed the truth. Victimhood is more important than biological reality', *UnHerd*. See also Stock (2024). 'How universities killed the academic. Flamboyant brilliance has been purged', *UnHerd*.

[66] British Philosophical Association and Society for Women in Philosophy UK (2011). *Women in Philosophy in the UK: A report by the British Philosophical association and the Society for Women in Philosophy UK*.

basis of vague similarity; straw-man caricatures of positions no-one really holds; claims that because a writer holds one heterodox opinion all their work can be condemned out of hand, and so on.

To take a single instance, in 2017 philosopher Rebecca Tuvel published a paper arguing that claims that transwomen were women could be mapped across to support the identity claims of "trans-racial" people.[67] That led to mass denunciations on social media, an open letter alleging that Tuvel was incompetent as a researcher and a public apology from the journal, *Hypatia*, where her paper appeared.

Another consequence of the attempt to get rid of perceived toxic behaviour in academia is the spread of schemes aimed at making it easier to report it without suffering unjust reprisals. Unfortunately, these are easily subverted by those seeking to settle ideological scores. The "Report + Support" programmes adopted by many universities[68] permit anonymous denunciations, enabling staff and students to inflict misery on others without any risk of being held accountable for doing so. It would be naïve to think this will not happen, especially when reporting one's ideological enemies comes with the ready-made self-justification that it serves the greater cause of social justice.

The writer and former academic David Lodge has noted the stark contrast between the high ideals of a university and the reality that academics gossip and bitch, feel jealousy and resentment, toady up to superiors and are generally normal, flawed human beings.[69] But self-correcting processes, including peer review, published critical commentaries, and critical questioning in conferences and other events, kept these failings in check, by and large ensuring that advancement did not depend on parroting the views of big names and personal animosity did not destroy careers. Most importantly, flawed work was weeded out.

These processes are coming under unprecedented strain for several reasons. Alongside the decline in robust debate described by Stock, there is the growth of postmodern relativising thought in some fields, which can make it practically impossible for people with different standpoints, identities and political ideologies to agree on objective facts and standards, rendering conflict inevitable and unresolvable.[70]

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[67] Rebecca Tuvel (2017). 'In Defense of Transracialism', *Hypatia*: 263-278.

[68] For example 'Report + Support' at the University of Liverpool website. (accessed 6th May 2024).

[69] David Lodge interviewed in Aida Edemariam (2004). 'Who's afraid of the campus novel?', *The Guardian*.

[70] The most comprehensive model of this epistemological shift is found in Helen Pluckrose and James A. Lindsay (2020). *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity – and Why This Harms Everybody*, Pitchstone Publishing. A similar broad view can be found in Yascha Mounk (2023). *The Identity Trap: A Story of Ideas and Power in Our Time*, Penguin. The primary role of postmodernism in the models of Pluckrose and Lindsay, and Mounk, is one I question in Ian Pace (2024). 'The Roots of Academic Irrationality', *The Critic*. Alternative views, seeking roots instead in earlier post-colonial and decolonisation theory, can be found

Among the contested ideologies now being institutionalised in academia are gender-identity ideology and critical race theory, in part exacerbated by standpoint epistemology.[71] Michelle Marder Kamhi notes how now-dominant narratives about race and transgenderism are taken by those who hold them to be axiomatically true, requiring no testing against empirical evidence.[72] Questions and objections are dismissed out of hand, and those who raise them risk being stigmatised as racist, transphobic, privileged or simply "uncollegiate".

In the field of education a commitment to a certain version of "social justice" is strictly enforced. According to Dennis Hayes, a professor of education at the University of Derby, groupthink has taken such a hold that education departments would now be unlikely to employ someone who believed in a "knowledge-based curriculum".[73] Dissent from a particular vision of "inclusion" is even more stigmatised in the field.

Another relatively new phenomenon is the outsourcing of EDI policies to external accreditation schemes. As a consequence, the job of enforcing compliance with favoured narratives is increasingly played by non-academics. John Armstrong and Alice Sullivan describe the impact of one of these schemes, Athena Swan, in promoting groupthink.[74] Armstrong, a reader in mathematics at King's College London, is challenging his university's criteria for promotion, which reward adherence to the gender-identity beliefs promoted by Stonewall's Diversity Champions scheme.[75]

At the same time, increasingly bloated management creates new hierarchies between university administrators and academics who focus on teaching and research. The marketisation of higher education means universities are being reconceived as businesses, and students as consumers, with customer satisfaction trumping scholarly ideals. This is

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in Doug Stokes (2023). *Against Decolonisation: Campus Culture Wars and the Decline of the West*, Polity Press; and Katy Barnett (2023), 'Unsafe spaces: Freedom of debate and universities', *What Katy Did*.

[71] On critical race theory in this context, see Stokes, *Against Decolonisation*: 16-34; Mounk, *The Identity Trap*: 49-62; and on this and the wider DEI/EDI context, Ian Pace (2024). 'Exhausting, divisive and irrational', *The Critic*; and Heather Mac Donald (2023), 'The Academy at the Crossroads', *City Journal*.

[72] Michelle Marder Kamhi (2021), 'Confront Woke Groupthink in Art Education', *National Association of Scholars*.

[73] Dennis Hayes (2021). 'How the University Lost Its Way: Sixteen threats to Academic Freedom', *Postdigital Science and Education*: 7-14.

[74] John Armstrong and Alice Sullivan (2023). 'A Critical Analysis of Athena Swan as a Policy-Scoring Scheme', *SSRN*. See also Alice Sullivan (2022). 'Why UCL are shutting the door on Stonewall', *The Critic*; Alice Sullivan and John Armstrong (2022). 'The subversion of Athena Swan', *The Critic*; and Alice Sullivan and Judith Suissa (2022). 'The EDI Opponents of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion', *Illiberalism*.

[75] Sex Matters (2024). 'Legal opinion says promotion policy discriminates on basis of gender-critical beliefs'.

compounded by a large influx of students from countries such as China that do not pay even lip service to academic freedom.[76]

And finally, a growing number of academics make no distinction between scholarship and activism,[77] and treat ideological opponents as enemies, not to be debated but to be personally destroyed. In some fields the standard forms of engagement between those who differ are now complaints and mobbing. The internet has made it much easier to gather a large mob speedily, and for it to include people outside the victim's institution and even their country. As the cases of Phoenix, Stock, Tuvel and numerous others illustrate, the perpetrators can change the culture of entire institutions, especially when managers, human-resources departments and others find it expedient to align with the mob.

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[76] See in particular the case of Michelle Shipworth at University College London, reported in Sadiya Chowdhury (2024), 'UCL lecturer warns academic freedom at risk as module removed after student complaints', *Sky News*.

[77] For one commentary on this, see Katy Barnett (2022). 'Activist scholarship risks turning the academy into an echo chamber', *Times Higher Education*. For a defence of activist scholarship, see Carmen Geha (2022). 'Activism is a legitimate and necessary form of scholarship', *Times Higher Education*. There are many other writings on this subject, mostly in defence of activist scholarship. For a discussion of the wider question of 'value-free' or committed work in the context of sociology, see Bradley Campbell (2024). *How to Think Better about Social Justice: Why Good Sociology Matters,* Routledge: 44-57.

What can be done?

Westhues notes that a single person of strong character can sometimes call a halt to a mobbing.[78] Stepping up can be hard for staff in junior or vulnerable positions, but there are few excuses for senior academics and managers – or indeed those working in HR, for whom this should be part of their job. Every academic in a management role and everyone in university HR needs to understand that mobbing is a toxic form of behaviour, which overlaps with, but is more than a mere extension of, workplace bullying, to be treated every bit as seriously as other forms of sustained abuse and harassment.

That means training in identifying mobbing, and in the importance of acting quickly at the first sign that a mobbing is gaining momentum. Once a mobbing has progressed far enough the harm can be at best mitigated. That is suboptimal for the victim – and potentially very expensive for the institution, since it may involve a costly legal hearing and significant compensation.

In some countries, including Germany and various Scandinavian countries, an employer who allows mobbing can face criminal charges;[79] in some jurisdictions, including Poland, an individual who participates in a mobbing can face criminal charges for bullying.[80] In the UK, the burden is squarely on employers,[81] and the main avenue for legal redress is the employment tribunal.[82] People who were sacked unjustly may be reinstated, but victims typically find it hard to return to working with their tormentors. However, a successful case can help restore the victim's reputation, as happened with Phoenix (who left the OU in what the tribunal recognised was a case of constructive dismissal, and now works at the University of Reading), and thus also their self-esteem. Negative publicity for institutions and the people working within them may also act as a future deterrent.

If you are at risk of a mobbing, or already experiencing one, here are some steps you can take to limit the effects. Refuse ever to meet anyone involved unless you have a companion of your choice or the meeting is being recorded. Avoid at all costs being alone with multiple

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[78] Kenneth Westhues (2009). 'Workplace Mobbing, Ten Years after Leymann's Death'. In Joan E. Friedenberg, Mark A. Schenider and Kenneth Westhues, '_Mobbing as a factor in faculty work life_', joint presentation.

[79] Philipp Fischinger (2011). '"Mobbing": The German Law of Bullying', _Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal: 153-184_; Maria Isabel S. Guerrero (2001). 'The Development of Moral Harassment (or Mobbing) Law in Sweden and France as a Step towards EU Legislation', _Boston College International & Comparative Law Review_: 477-500; Swedish National Board of Occupational Safety and Health (1993). 'Victimization at Work'; Tekna (2023). 'Mobbing in the Workplace'.

[80] Business in Poland (2024). 'Mobbing in the workplace'.

[81] CIPD (2023). 'Bullying and harassment: UK employment law'.

[82] UK Government (no date). 'Workplace bullying and harassment'.

members of the mob; any manager or HR representative should know better than to facilitate or even allow such a situation. Give up any idea that someone participating in a mobbing can be talked into seeing reason; they have chosen their side and this is unlikely to change.

Be cautious about whom you trust, and whom you will talk to about your situation, as they may share it with the mobbers. Remember that HR staff work for management. Do not put faith in those you have previously helped; your goodwill may not be reciprocated. Bear in mind that academics prepared to stand up on a point of principle are the exception rather than the rule. Unions can be a huge support in workplace disputes, but some have acted reprehensibly when mobbing is directed against someone who believes something they reject, as in the case of Stock.[83] Social support is best found outside your institution (and be wary of academics from elsewhere who might be friendly with some of the mobbers), but is very important to help withstand the pressure. If you have a partner, try not to put all the strain on them: better to distribute it among friends, who do not have to be with you all the time.

As Westhues pointed out, academic mobbings can be reduced by protecting academic freedom.[84] Whatever a mob's ostensible motive, the true one is to silence or discredit the target because of what they say or stand for. That means measures to strengthen academic freedom may have the welcome side-effect of limiting the power of mobs.

Draft guidance from the UK Office for Students,[85] released in March 2024 for consultation until May, goes a long way in the right direction,[86] while recommendations from the Heterodox Academy provide good guidance on identifying the rare instances when letters of denunciation might be justified.[87] And universities should provide proper induction in academic freedom and intellectual diversity for all early-career academics. People who cannot handle intellectual differences, or whose activism makes them see anyone of a different view as a mortal enemy, do not belong in academia.

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[83] See Richard Adams (2021). '<u>Professor says career "effectively ended" by union's transphobia claims</u>', *The Guardian*.

[84] Kenneth Westhues (2009). 'Correction of Mobbing Episodes in Higher Education'. In Joan E. Friedenberg, Mark A. Schenider and Kenneth Westhues, '<u>Mobbing as a factor in faculty work life</u>', joint presentation.

[85] Office for Students (2024). '<u>Consultations on free speech</u>'.

[86] See my commentary at Ian Pace (2024). '<u>Reclaiming free speech in academia</u>', *The Critic*.

[87] Heterodox Academy (2020). '<u>Letters of Denunciation (If You Must)</u>'.

ANNEX: Further reading

The article above draws upon a wide range of scholarly and other literature relating to different subjects. For those concerned about the issues, here are my suggestions of the most significant texts.

Mobbing – general

Of literature on mobbing, the work of Heinz Leymann is absolutely central and essential reading. A good place to begin is his article 'Mobbing and psychological terror at workplaces',[88] and then 'The Content and Development of Mobbing at Work'.[89] A useful range of resources can be found at the Mobbing Portal website and its subsite, the Heinz Leymann Memorial Website[90]. In particular, the 'Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror' (LIPT), which gives 45 actions which, if present about once a week and for over a year, satisfies Leymann's definition of bullying, is essential reading.[91] The Swedish website *Leymann.se* can be translated online from Swedish to understand the essential points, and the site has a page of translated articles and another with a selection of articles in English that informed Leymann's research.[92]

Various of Leymann's writings were translated into English by Sue Baxter and published by Edwin Mellen Press. These are generally hard to find today, but worth seeking out in libraries and elsewhere. His first major book on the subject was in Swedish: *Vuxenmobbing – om psykist vald I arbetslivet* (Adult Mobbing: on Mental Violence in Working Life),[93] which to my knowledge has never been translated into another language. There are, however, English translations of his *Från mobbning til utslagning i arbetlivet* (From Mobbing to Elimination in Working Life) as *Workplace Mobbing as Psychological Terrorism: How Groups Eliminate Unwanted Members;*[94] and pioneering study of suicide among nurses: Heinz Leymann and Annelie Gustafsson *Självmordsfabriken: Om de stora risker som sjukskoterskor uts;aats for i*

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[88] Heinz Leymann (1990). 'Mobbing and psychological terror at workplaces', *Violence and Victims*: 119-126.

[89] Heinz Leymann (1996). 'The Content and Development of Mobbing at Work', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*: vol. 5, no. 2 (1996), 165-184.

[90] *The Mobbing Portal*.

[91] Anti-Mobbing Help For Scientists (no date). 'Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror (LIPT)', taken from Heinz Leymann (1990). *Handbok för användning av LIPT-formuläret för kartläggning av risker för psykiskt våld,* Violen.

[92] Leymann.se (no date). 'Leyman in English' and 'A Selection of English Literature on Mobbing'.

[93] Heinz Leymann (1986). *Vuxenmobbing – om psykist vald I arbetslivet*, Studentlitterateur.

[94] Heinz Leymann (2010, Swedish original 1992). *Workplace Mobbing as Psychological Terrorism: How Groups Eliminate Unwanted Members*, translated Sue Baxter, The Edwin Mellen Press.

arbetslivet as *Why Nurses Commit Suicide: Mobbing in Health Care Institutions*.[95] Both provide comprehensive, detailed accounts of the process of mobbing based on examination of specific cases and are essential reading for those wishing to know more.

Edwin Mellen Press have promised English translations of *Ingen annvan utvag* (No Other Way out)[96] and *När livet slårtill* (When Life Strikes)[97] (Lund: Natur och Kultur, 1989) at some future date. There are also translations of Leymann's work into French and German for those unable to either locate the English texts or read Swedish, but able to read those languages.[98] See also the feature on Leymann (in German) produced by Westdeutscher Rundfunk.[99]

The influence of Leymann's work is huge, and can be found in the majority of writing on the subject. Among important early developments of this are Dieter Zapf, Carmen Knorz and Matthias Kulla, 'On the Relationship between Mobbing Factors, and Job Content, Social Work Environment, and Health Outcomes'.[100] This also draws upon a range of preceding empirical studies, including those of Leymann but also others in Swedish and German.[101] The authors explore whether cases of mobbing are homogenous are not, and how they relate to job content, the nature of the social work environment and psychological health.On the second question, Leymann had argued that mobbing reflected more about the job and the environment than characteristics of the victim. Using a non-random sample (because of the difficulties of access to victims), they measured mobbing in part using the LIPT index, and other measures from the Instrument for Stress-oriented Job Analysis, as well as some measures of psychological distress taken from German scholarship.

Zapf et al found that very overt attacks and physical violence were relatively rare, and mobbing proceeds by more surreptitious means; mobbing is especially prevalent in public administration, health services, schools and office in general, less so for industrial workers.

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[95] Heinz Leymann and Annelie Gustafsson (2014, Swedish original 1998). *Why Nurses Commit Suicide: Mobbing in Health Care Institutions,* translated Sue Baxter, with preface by Kenneth Westhues, The Edwin Mellen Press.

[96] Heinz Leymann (1988). *Ingen annvan utvag.* Wahlström & Widstrand.

[97] Heinz Leymann (1989). *När livet slårtill,* Natur och Kultur.

[98] Heinz Leymann (2013, Swedish original 1992). *Mobbing: Psychoterror am Arbeitsplatz und wie man sich dagegen wehren kann,* Rowohlt.

[99] WDR (2022). '17. Juli 1932 – Der Mobbing-Forscher Heinz Leymann wird geboren'.

[100] Dieter Zapf, Carmen Knorz and Matthias Kulla (1996), 'On the Relationship between Mobbing Factors, and Job Content, Social Work Environment, and Health Outcomes', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*: 215-237.

[101] Kaj Björkqvist (1992). 'Trakasssering förekommer bland anställda vid Åa', *Meddelanden från Åbo Akademi*: 14-17; Maarit Vartia (1993). 'Psychological harassment (bullying, mobbing) at work'. In Kauppinen-Toropainen (ed.) *OECD Panel group on women, work, and health.* Ministry of Social Affairs and Health [Helsinki]: 149-152; Klaus Niedl (1995). *Mobbing/Bullying am Arbeitsplatz. Eine empirische Analyse zum Phänomen sowie zu personalwirtschaftlich relevanten Effekten von systematischen Feindseligkeiten*, Hampp.

They also allowed for the possibility of the victim's personality being a factor in mobbing, as those lacking certain social competencies may be more vulnerable. Such conclusions were bolstered in a later study which also disagreed with Leymann on this matter, by Stig Berge Matthiesen and Ståle Einarsen,[102] which through exploration of a range of victim profiles suggests that victims are at least more sensitive or react more dramatically. This raises the possibility that they are more likely to be targeted for this reason, lending the mobbers the opportunity for more sadistic pleasure in observing the intensity of their victims' reactions.

This was part of a special issue of the journal devoted to the subject, including Leymann's 'The Content and Development of Mobbing at Work', which made available in English various work by German and Scandinavian scholars. Some deal more broadly with workplace bullying; most of interest in this context are Klaus Niedl, 'Mobbing and Well-being: Economic and Personnel Development Implications',[103] which looks at the costs to the actual organisations and workplaces where mobbing occurs; and another article by Leymann and Annelie Gustaffson, 'Mobbing at Work and the Development of Post-traumatic Stress Disorders',[104] which surveys in some detail the extreme and lasting physical and mental symptoms experienced by victims (much more severe than, as they observe, those experienced by a train driver who has run over a suicidal person), even when removed from the environment of the mobbing, if they do not receive effective support. Dieter Groeblinghoff and Michael Becker, 'A Case Study of Mobbing and the Clinical Treatment of Mobbing Victims',[105] considers means to treat two individuals mobbed over a long period at the same institutions, using techniques of anamnesis and other therapeutic techniques; Martin Resch and Marion Schubinski, 'Mobbing-prevention and management in organizations',[106] looks at strategies implemented by organisations in light of then relatively early research into the subject, finding quite mixed results and only relatively few companies dealing with it actively.

The first major book-length study of mobbing published in English, deeply indebted to Leymann's work, is Nao Davenport, Ruth Distler Schwarz and Gail Pursell Elliott, *Mobbing:*

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[102] Stig Berge Matthiesen and Ståle Einarsen (2001). 'MMPI-2 configurations among victims of bullying at work', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*: 467-484.

[103] Klaus Niedl (1996). 'Mobbing and Well-being: Economic and Personnel Development Implications', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*: 239-249.

[104] Heinz Leymann and Annelie Gustaffson (1996). 'Mobbing at Work and the Development of Post-traumatic Stress Disorders', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*: 251-275.

[105] Dieter Groeblinghoff and Michael Becker (1996). 'A Case Study of Mobbing and the Clinical Treatment of Mobbing Victims', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*: 277-294.

[106] Martin Resch and Marion Schubinski (1996). 'Mobbing-prevention and management in organizations', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*: 295-307.

Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace,[107] which is a very good longer read for those wanting a good overview of thought on the issue at the time of writing. Like other commentators, the authors note how the term mobbing is not always used in the English-speaking world, in comparison to bullying, and some research on what they would consider mobbing is incorporated into the latter category. They consider mobbing a category of its own relating to abuse-group behaviour. They note the frequency with which victims of mobbing are older (in their forties or fifties) and will find it harder to re-enter the workplace when forced out of a job. The book draws upon a range of interviews, mostly of professionals of these ages. The authors adopt Leymann's model of five phases to the mobbing process (conflict – aggressive acts – management involvement – branding of victims as difficult or mentally ill – expulsion), and also distinguish three degrees – where the individual manages to resist or escape, when they are unable to and suffer prolonged mental or physical disability, or when the damage is so severe that they are unable to re-enter the workforce. They determine ten key factors of the mobbing syndrome, and elaborate these through examples from testimonies. They also consider the personality traits which lead to mobbing (while noting that this is to be considered a group rather than individual phenomenon), and bad management techniques, drawing upon Carroll Brodsky's classic study *The Harassed Worker*.[108] Furthermore, they give some detail on common symptoms of different degrees of mobbing, and some coping strategies, though some of their views on whistle-blowing or using conflict-management strategies in a workplace might be viewed with some scepticism by subsequent writers. However, they do set out a sample anti-mobbing policy which is helpful, and show some actual existing policies from Sweden and elsewhere.

Vittorio di Martino, Helge Hoel and Cary L. Cooper, *Preventing violence and harassment in the workplace* is very important reading for its detailing of legal measures in various European countries to deal with mobbing.[109] A study of bullying in general, Margaretha Strandmark and Lillemor R.-M. Hallberg, 'The origin of workplace bullying',[110] is notable for its foregrounding of "professional and personal value conflicts" in a public-sector context as a major motivator of bullying, especially in the context of workplace reorganisation. This is equally applicable in an academic context, as conflicting values can be experienced by some as a threat, and is a

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[107] Nao Davenport, Ruth Distler Schwarz and Gail Pursell Elliott (1999, minor revisions 2002). *Mobbing: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace,* Civil Society Publishing.

[108] Carroll Brodsky (1976). *The Harassed Worker*. D.C. Heath.

[109] Vittorio di Martino, Helge Hoel and Cary L. Cooper (2003). 'Preventing violence and harassment in the workplace', *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions*. For a more detailed consideration of French law and obligations on employers, see Philippe Thomas (2013). 'French Law prohibiting Bullying in the Workplace', *HR Director*.

[110] Margaretha Strandmark K and Lillemor R.-M. Hallberg (2007). 'The origin of workplace bullying: experiences from the perspective of bully victims in the public service sector', *Journal of Nursing Management*: 332-341.

reason why the promotion and protection of academic freedom and robust debate are one necessary factor in combating mobbing.

A group of Australian scholars at Griffith University, Linda Shallcross, Sheryl Ramsay and Michelle Barker,[111] take a primarily sociological rather than psychological approach, unusual in this body of literature (though Westhues also comes at it from a sociologist's perspective), and draw upon models of "action research", relating to processes of change planning, implementation, reflection and then replanning, to explore victims' experience of mobbing, how they can respond, how organisations respond, and what can be done to prevent and address the problem. They identified as major issues for further research: toxic public sector culture, the role of gossip, lack of organisational justice, inadequate support systems, factors of gender, and social exclusion.

A special 2009 issue of *Consulting Psychology Journal* was dedicated to a range of articles on mobbing. Patricia A. Ferris, in 'The Role of the Consulting Psychologist in the Prevention, Detection, and Correction of Bullying and Mobbing in the Workplace',[112] reviewed, as well as a range of existing literature, files of 35 individuals she had seen for bullying or mobbing, with some additional information provided by occupational health professionals. Among her findings was the negative role of HR personnel in the process, and she explored further the negative effect upon both victims and workplaces and also the aspects of work and organisational culture that make mobbing likely. She also investigates a triumvirate of potential organisational responses (as outlined in an earlier article):

1. "see no evil" (not recognizing bullying and mobbing as anything wrong)
2. "hear no evil" (which writes these things off as personality conflicts)
3. "speak no evil" (the most positive, recognizing the destructiveness of such behaviours, and looking for resolutions).

Most importantly, she outlines a range of interventions and training to prevent bullying and mobbing occurring.

Len Sperry, in 'Mobbing and Bullying: The Influence of Individual, Work Group, and Organizational Dynamics on Abusive Workplace Behaviour',[113] identifies two organisational contexts in which mobbing occurs – one with moderately abusive behaviour or actions from

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[111] Linda Shallcross, Sheryl Ramsay and Michelle Barker (2008). 'Workplace Mobbing: Expulsion, Exclusion and Transformation'. In Marie Wilson (ed.), *Managing in the Pacific Century: Proceedings of the 22nd Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management,* University of Auckland: 1-22.

[112] Patricia A. Ferris (2009). 'The Role of the Consulting Psychologist in the Prevention, Detection, and Correction of Bullying and Mobbing in the Workplace', *Consulting Psychology Journal*: 169-189.

[113] Len Sperry (2009). 'Mobbing and Bullying: The Influence of Individual, Work Group, and Organisational Dynamics on Abusive Workplace Behaviour', *Consulting Psychology Journal*: 190-201.

two or more members of a work group, with indirect involvement or collusion of the group's supervisor and the organisation – *Mobbing I*. More severe is *Mobbing II*, with much greater intensity of action and direct involvement or complicity of the organisation. Victims of Mobbing I may recover, even return to their position, whereas those of Mobbing II may become disabled and unable to find employment anywhere else. Sperry also brings together a digest of scholarship on the characteristics of individuals involved (finding much less on perpetrators than victims), "work orientation", how individuals see the relationship between their job and wider self, which can affect both the nature of mobbing and the individuals' responses to it, the nature of work group dynamics, including considerations of cohesiveness and the formality or otherwise of work groups, and organisational dynamics once again. All of these factors are then brought to bear on consideration of a case study of mobbed personal banker (a case of Mobbing I, the effects on the victim being somewhat alleviated by the fact that his primary passions lay outside his work), with sound recommendations from a consultant as to means to deal retrospectively with the situation. A model of aggression in terms of threatened egotism, as a result of inflated, unstable or tentative beliefs in the self's superiority, laid out by Roy F. Baumeister, Laura Smart and Joseph M. Boden,[114] is used to explore mobbing and found reliable in Tanja S. Stucke, 'Persönlichkeitskorrelate von Mobbing. Narzissmus und Selbstkonzeptklarkeit als Persönlichkeitsmerkmale bei Mobbingtätern'.[115]

The next major monograph on mobbing, Maureen Duffy and Len Sperry, *Mobbing: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions*,[116] engages with similar issues to Davenport et al. They are even more unequivocal than the former authors on the importance of not confusing mobbing and bullying. Again, they draw upon evidence from a range of real cases, but also integrate school cases and compare the Salem witch trials, emphasising in all cases the group dynamics rather than simply individual bullies. In common with various other writers, they have little faith in the likelihood of HR departments playing any positive role in such cases.

The most distinctive aspect of this book is its consideration of the development of mobbing. As well as drawing upon Harold Garfinkel's conception of a "degradation ceremony"[117] as a wider model for the mobbing process, the authors also explore further models for mobbing, drawing upon cybernetics and communication studies. They also continue to note the

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[114] Roy F. Baumeister, Laura Smart and Joseph M. Boden (1996). 'Relation of Threatened Egotism to Violence and Aggression: The Dark Side of High Self-Esteem', *Psychological Review*: 5-33.

[115] Tanja S. Stucke (2002). 'Persönlichkeitskorrelate von Mobbing. Narzissmus und Selbstkonzeptklarkeit als Persönlichkeitsmerkmale bei Mobbingtätern', *Zeitschrift für Arbeits und Organisationspsychologies*: 216-221.

[116] Maureen Duffy and Len Sperry (2012). *Mobbing: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions*. Oxford University Press.

[117] Harold Garfinkel (1956). 'Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies', *American Journal of Sociology*: 420-424.

relative lack of studies of the personalities of bullies, the small amount of research suggesting a mixture of aggression and deference to superiors. When surveying work on toxic leadership, they note qualities of narcissism and motivations of hate, wishing to destroy rivals and enemies. The most likely perpetrators of mobbing, according to Duffy and Sperry, drawing upon the US Workplace Bullying Survey, are supervisors and managers, and the worst of these, categorised as "abrasive", prioritise their own survival and self-perceptions of supercompetence by blaming all other things on character flaws of workers; and use overcontrol, threats, public humiliation, condescension and over-reaction. In terms of group dynamics, the authors identify group pride as a type of group narcissism, and cohesiveness as often focused upon hatred of an external enemy. Importantly, Duffy and Sperry consider environments in which mobbing is unlikely, arguing for the importance of job security and organisational coherence, proper managerial communication, opportunities for skills development, organisational justice, and lack of work overload, unfairness and conflict of values as among the qualities most likely of such workplaces.

Duffy and Sperry followed up with a further book, *Overcoming Mobbing: A Recovery Guide for Workplace Aggression and Bullying*,[118] somewhat more accessible to a general reader. They insist that mobbing always involves an organisational dimension, and lay out a model of the causes of mobbing in terms of individual dynamics, work group dynamics, and organisational dynamics, and describe factors involved in all three of these (presciently noting the role of social distancing in making targets feel isolated and ostracised). Especially vivid, for those who have undergone it, is the chapter on 'What It's Like to be Mobbed'. Duffy and Sperry lay out the devastating consequences of mobbing, not only to victims, but also families, coworkers and companies, but also add some meaningful suggestions for recovery, focusing on establishing a support team, understanding the effects of mobbing upon oneself, rethinking priorities in life, and tracking the recovery process. This is perhaps the best book to read first for anyone new to the subject.

Janice Harper's *Mobbed!: What to Do When They Really Are Out to Get You*,[119] is written in an even more informal style, but is very well researched, drawing upon a range of testimonies, and has been reviewed favourably in psychological journals. Harper is deeply sceptical, sometimes withering, about much conventional wisdom on workplace bullying and proffered solutions, suggesting these will often exacerbate rather than help someone who is mobbed. She describes frighteningly plausible mobbing scenarios and is realistic and unsentimental in making suggestions for what those experiencing these should do. The book is written from a

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[118] Maureen Duffy and Len Sperry (2014). *Overcoming Mobbing: A Recovery Guide for Workplace Aggression and Bullying*: Oxford University Press.

[119] Janice Harper (2013, rev. 2016). *Mobbed!: What to Do When They Really Are Out to Get You*. Backdoor Press.

US perspective, and some of the details relating to US law and the role of lawyers, and the central role she affords to Affirmative Action offices, are not necessarily wholly applicable in other jurisdictions.

A good deal of other scholarship on mobbing is written by international scholars in non-Anglophone countries. Sometimes other terms are used – *harcèlement moral* in French, *acoso* or *maltrato psicológico* in Spanish, *coacção moral* in Portuguese and *molestie psicologiche* in Italian, though as Di Martino, Hoel and Cooper point out, the terms "mobbing" and "bullying" were at the time of writing becoming more common in other languages.[120] Some overviews of this range of work are available in English, including Ståle Einarsen, Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf and Cary Cooper, 'The concept of bullying at work: the European tradition'.[121] Another which draws extensively upon international scholarship is Dieter Zapf and Ståle Einarsen, 'Mobbing at Work: Escalated Conflicts in Organisations'.[122] Pointers to Spanish-language scholarship in studies by M. Ángeles López-Cabarcos and Paul Vázques-Rodríguez; Mara Maricela Trujillo Flores; José Luis Rojas-Solís, Brandon Enrique Bernardingo García-Ramírez and Manuel Edgardo Hernández-Corona (also referencing some scholarship in Portuguese); and a study by a range of Argentinian and Ecuadorian scholars, Telly Yarita Macías Zambrano, Carmen Liliana Mera Plaza, Johanna Melissa Aguayo Joza, Shirley Elizabeth Pizarro Anchundia and Gladys Varinia Salazar Cobeñia.[123] Various work in German and Swedish, up to the date of the article, is surveyed by Dieter Zapf, 'Mobbing in Organisationen. Überblick zum Stand der Forschung'.[124] A range of pointers to literature in Polish can be found in a study by Krystyna Kowalczuk and others,[125] though in some cases

[120] Di Martino, Hoel and Cooper, *Preventing violence and harassment in the workplace*: 6.

[121] Ståle Einarsen, Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf and Cary Cooper (2003). 'The concept of bullying at work: the European tradition'. In Ståle Einarsen, Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf and Cary Cooper (eds.), *Bullying and Emotional Abuse in the Workplace: International Perspectives in research and practice,* Taylor & Francis: 3-30.

[122] Dieter Zapf and Ståle Einarsen (2005). 'Mobbing at Work: Escalated Conflicts in Organisations'. In Suzy Fox and Paul E. Spector (eds.), *Counterproductive Work Behavior: Investigations of Actors and Targets,* American Psychological Association: 237-270.

[123] M. Ángeles López-Cabarcos and Paul Vázques-Rodríguez (2006). 'Psychological harassment in the Spanish public university system', *Academy of Health Care Management Journal*: 21-39; Mara Maricela Trujillo Flores (2014). 'Mobbing: A theoretical model quantifying factors affecting the role of women executives in the institutions of public education in Mexico', *Contaduría y Administración*: 195-228; José Luis Rojas-Solís, Brandon Enrique Bernardingo García-Ramírez and Manuel Edgardo Hernández-Corona (2019). 'Mobbing on University Staff: A Systematic Review', *Propósitos y Representaciones*: 354-382; Telly Yarita Macías Zambrano, Carmen Liliana Mera Plaza, Johanna Melissa Aguayo Joza, Shirley Elizabeth Pizarro Anchundia and Gladys Varinia Salazar Cobeñia (2022). 'Mobbing in higher education institutions', *International Journal of Health Sciences*: 3787-3802.

[124] Dieter Zapf (1999). 'Mobbing in Organisationen. Überblick zum Stand der Forschung', *Zeitschrift für Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie*, vol. 43 (1999), pp. 1-25.

[125] Krystyna Kowalczuk, Barbara Jankowiak, Elżbieta Krajewska-Kułak, Katarzyna van Damme-Ostapowicz and Beata Kowalewska (2011). 'Comparison of the Level of Aggression towards Healthcare Workers within Poldaskie Voivodeship', *International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health*: 267-274.

"mobbing" may simply be used in a manner synonymous with bullying in general. Further pointers to Polish literature can be found in Wojciech B. Gulin's study of workplace mobbing,[126] which is considerably better-versed in the work of Leymann and others, though does not really add much.

Non-Anglophone books and other writings which have received some attention in other important scholarship include works of Iñaki Piñuel y Zalaba, Marie-France Hirigoyen, Luis de Rivera, M. Ángeles López-Cabarcos and Paul Vázques-Rodríguez, Brigitte Huber, Klaus Niedl, Oswald Neuberger, S. Mackensen von Astfeld, Bärbel Meschkutat, Martina Stackelbeck and Georg Langehoff, Thomas Rammsayer and Kathrin Schmiga, Harald Ege, Isabelle Corradini, Silvia Carlucci, Giovanni Nolfe and Luigi M. Sicca.[127]

Mobbing and denunciation in totalitarian regimes

A range of texts which are worth reading on the processes which lead to denunciation and mobbing under totalitarian regimes were mentioned in the main text, by Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately, Czesław Miłosz and Václav Havel.[128] There are many other examples; I

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[126] Wojciech B. Gulin (2019). 'Mobbing in the Workplace – Causes and Consequences', *21st Century Pedagogy*: 14-19.

[127] Iñaki Piñuel y Zalaba (2001). *Mobbing: como sobrevivir al acoso psicológico en el trabajo,* Sal Terrae; Marie-France Hirigoyen (2001). *El acoso moral en el trabajo: Distinguir lo verdadero de lo falso*, Paidós; Luis de Rivera (2002). *El maltrato psicológico,* Esposa; M. Ángeles López-Cabarcos and Paul Vázques-Rodríguez (2003). *Mobbing. Como prevenir, identificar y solucionar el acoso psicológico en el trabajo*, Pirámide; Brigitte Huber (1993). *Psychoterror am Arbeitsplatz – Mobbing,* Falken; Klaus Niedl (1995). *Mobbing/Bullying am Arbeitsplatz. Eine empirische Analyse zum Phänomen sowie zu personalwirtschaftlich relevanten Effekten von systematischen Feindseligkeiten,* Hampp (some of Niedl's findings are presented in briefer form in his 1996 'Mobbing and Well-being: Economic and Personnel Development Indications', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*: 239-249); Oswald Neuberger (1999). *Mobbing. Übel mitspielen in Organisationen*, third edition, Hampp; S. Mackensen von Astfeld (2000). *Das Sick-Building-Syndrom unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Einflusses von Mobbing,* Dr. Kovac; Bärbel Meschkutat, Martina Stackelbeck and Georg Langehoff (2002). <u>*Der Mobbing-Report. Repräsentativstudie für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Schriftenreihe der Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizing, Forschungsbericht Fb 951*</u>, Wirtschaftsverlag; Thomas Rammsayer and Kathrin Schmiga (2003). 'Mobbing und Persönlichkeit – Unterschiede in grundlegenden Persönlichkeitsdiemsnionen zwischen Mobbing-Betroffenen und Nicht-Betroffenen', *Wirtschaftspsychologies*: 3-11; Harald Ege (1996). *Mobbing. Che cos'è il terrore psicologico sul posto di lavoro*, Pitagora; Isabelle Corradini (2003). *Il Mobbing: Aspetti psicologici e giuiridici,* Edizioni Europolis; and Corradini (2005). *I Mobbings: Mobbing e Bossing, modelli di organizzazione del lavoro,* Edizioni Europolis; Silvia Carlucci (2009). *Mobbing e organizzazioni di personalità: Aspetti clinici e dinamici*, FrancoAngeli s.r.l. (a book with a strong theoretical core); Giovanni Nolfe and Luigi M. Sicca (2020). *Mobbing. Narrazioni individuali e organizzative*, with preface by Barbara Czarniawska and postscript by Barbara Poggio, Editoriale scientifica.

[128] Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately (1996). 'Introduction to the Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History', *Journal of Modern History*: 747-77; Czesław Miłosz (1953). *The Captive Mind*, translated by Jane Zielonko, Secker & Warburg; and Václav Havel (2018). *The Power of the Powerless*, with introduction by Timothy Snyder, Random House.

would also recommend Sándor Márai, *Memoir of Hungary 1944–1948*,[129] and above all the literature on the terrifying examples of China during the Cultural Revolution during its height, especially Youqin Wang, 'Student Attacks Against Teachers: The Revolution of 1966';[130] and Frank Dikötter, *The Cultural Revolution: A People's History 1962-1976*,[131] especially Chapter 3, 'War on the Cultural Front', and Chapter 6, 'Red August'. Recent publications with a great many eyewitness accounts which convey something of the horror and the dynamics are Wang's *Victims of the Cultural Revolution: Testimonies of China's Tragedy*, the most comprehensive book of its type, focusing on those who were teachers or students at the time, and Tania Branigan, *Red Memory: Living, Remembering and Forgetting China's Cultural Revolution*.[132]

Mobbing in academia

An early relevant study of mobbing in academia is Kaj Björkqvist, Karin Österman and Monika Hjelt-Bäck, 'Aggression among university employees'.[133] This alludes to Leymann, and looks at sustained forms of harassment. But while the subjects investigated are in a university environment, this study has little to say about the specific characteristics of this type of workplace.

The work of Kenneth Westhues, who himself suffered mobbing at the University of Waterloo, though was later exonerated, is utterly central to mobbing in academia, as much so as Leymann for mobbing in general, and Irving L. Janis for groupthink. His website, with many links to relevant writings and other resources[134] is as essential reading as that dedicated to Leymann's work. The best place to start is with his 2006 article 'The Unkindly Art of Mobbing'.[135] This summarises Leymann's model and relates it to the knowledge from

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[129] Sándor Márai (2000). *Memoir of Hungary 1944–1948*, translated with introduction and notes by Albert Tezla, Corvina Books.

[130] Youqin Wang (2001). 'Student Attacks Against Teachers: The Revolution of 1966', Issues & Studies: xx-xxx.

[131] Frank Dikötter (2016). *The Cultural Revolution: A People's History 1962–1976*, Bloomsbury.

[132] Youqin Wang (2023). *Victims of the Cultural Revolution: Testimonies of China's Tragedy,* Oneworld Academic; Tania Branigan (2023). *Red Memory: Living, Remembering and Forgetting China's Cultural Revolution,* Faber & Faber.

[133] Kaj Björkqvist, Karin Österman and Monika Hjelt-Bäck (1994). 'Aggression among university employees', *Aggressive Behavior*: vol. 20 (1994), 173-184.

[134] *Writings and teachings: Kenneth Westhues*.

[135] Kenneth Westhues (2006). 'The Unkindly Art of Mobbing', *Academic Matters: the Journal of Higher Education*: 18-19.

examining around a hundred cases in academia.[136] In particular he notes some key cases he has written about elsewhere – that of neuropsychologist Justine Sergent at McGill University, who took her own life, together with that of her husband, after allegations about her were leaked anonymously to a local newspaper, and theologian Herbert Richardson at St Michael's College, University of Toronto (see below). Many others have wanted to believe the world is just, and so the mobbings were legitimate. Westhues goes on to list the key conditions which increase vulnerability to mobbing, as mentioned in the main text of this article, and notes ominously that:

> "The target of intense, collective humiliation is ordinarily scarred for life."

Westhues's first major book on the subject was the tongue-in-cheek *Eliminating Professors: A Guide to the Dismissal Process*.[137] Westhues tells a narrative about how to remove an imaginary Dr PITA (Pain In The Ass), who could be either male or female, in great detail. He draws upon lots of information from real cases to construct this fictional narrative, and the theoretical framework provided by Leymann (in one section with great sarcasm dwelling on Leymann's failings when "the collective humiliation of a misfit" can be valuable "for building team spirit and enhancing productivity" (p. 73). The process is rationalised in a manner which sidelines any human issues, is extremely dark in tone,[138] and worth relating in some detail. For example, while noting that murder is a capital offence in most of America, the book notes that:

> "By increasing the level of PITA's work-related stress, you improve the odds that he will succumb to a stress-related illness like heart attack or stroke. Alternatively, he may take his own life. By staying constantly 'on his case,' you lower the ability of PITA's immune system to resist disease." (p. 19).

Long-term disability and physical or mental illness are equally presented as favourable options. Dr PITA is said to be committed to views contrary to those ingrained in the department, faculty, or university, and takes positions of various types – that social-sciences professors should rely more wisdom of everyday people than expert opinion, that most canons in the humanities are biased towards dead white males, that racial IQ differences are real, or simultaneously that ethnographic social research is better than quantitative and

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[136] Westhues also notes that various cases detailed in Michiel Horn (1999). *Academic Freedom in Canada: A History*, University of Toronto Press Incorporated, should be classified as mobbing.

[137] Kenneth Westhues (1998). *Eliminating Professors: A Guide to the Dismissal Process*, The Edwin Mellen Press.

[138] As witnessed by Westhues's allusion to Daniel Jonas Goldhagen's concept of "eliminationist antisemitism" in Germany (Daniel Jonas Goldhagen (1996). *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Alfred A. Knopf) as part of the source for his title (Westhues, *Eliminating Professors*: viii). While, as a scholar of Nazi Germany, I find Goldhagen's book immensely problematic, nonetheless the allusion is telling in a wider sense.

statistical work, and the opposite view. They are not simply a devil's advocate who will come in line with the 'collegial consensus' (p. 24) but are really committed to alternative views. Then it is detailed how PITA's ostracisation must be approached surreptitiously, but with the assistance of various others, ensuring they are kept away from any positions of responsibility, are always in a losing minority on crucial votes in faculty meetings, that most interventions are ignored, and that mocking comments are made about PITA whenever their name is mentioned among colleagues. Then actions are taken against PITA with the tacit consent of subordinates, in terms of their salary increments, evaluations of their work, the physical space in which they work, the courses they get to teach and their scheduling, the administrative tasks to which they are assigned, their promotion prospects, nomination for internal grants and awards, approval of expenses, provision of teaching assistance, sabbatical allowance, and any special requests. Furthermore, all sorts of delaying and stalling tactics can be employed to frustrate PITA's working life. Some commitment to the Palestinian cause is used to brand PITA as antisemitic, and construction of a special lab relating to a major grant received by PITA is abandoned. All of this will lead to much stress on PITA's part, which in turn may lead them to seek psychiatric help, and exhibit paranoid tendencies.

If these measures do not in themselves succeed in making PITA take early retirement, become sick, or even die, then more formal measures may become necessary, which should themselves exploit wider public opinion. In some contexts in the past, any sign of Jewish ancestry, belief in Darwin, in interracial marriage, or in communism, would serve further to mark out PITA as undesirable in climates of hysteria. Best of all would be anything which associates PITA with violence or sexual predation. Any cases where they have expressed rage would be helpful for this purpose, as would an occasion on which they have kissed or embraced someone who was unhappy with this. Eventually this can all be brought to bear upon a formal investigation conducted by an Outside Judge. This will be protracted beyond policy deadlines, but a verdict that PITA should leave will be operative almost immediately.

Westhues then alludes to a case from 1992 in which Dr Valery Fabrikant, an Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Concordia University, Montreal, shot four other professors dead and wounded another. This led to investigations, including an investigation of Fabrikant's allegations of corruption in his faculty. Various events had led to Fabrikant being viewed as a problem – a rape charge which was later dropped, a run-in with another instructor, a rage when a laser printer arrived late, and general complaints about unfair treatment. By 1990 there was an advanced campaign to try and make Fabrikant's working life so unpleasant that he would leave. He did not receive proper replies to queries about teaching and sabbatical, disciplinary measures were threatened, and was not considered for tenure. A vice-rector commenced a more advanced stage of his elimination while he still had

some support from colleagues. He in turn came to circulate emails alleging serious academic misconduct by other engineering professors. These were not seriously investigated but he was told the charges were unfounded. The dean attempted to reclaim grant money, Fabrikant was assigned to teach courses outside of his interests and expertise, and a formal letter was sent threatening him with dismissal and court proceedings unless he stopped his complaints. This led to the shooting action, after which the subsequent investigation found most of his accusations were actually true, but his criminal action was not argued to be connected to this.

Returning to the case of PITA, Westhues conceptualises this in stages: Stage One is informal ostracization; Stage Two involves administrative put-downs and wider hassles, legitimised through claims of routine decision-making; Stage Three involves a particular incident, possibly kept secret (and so the subject of campus gossip) which it is said "brings things out into the open" (p. 53). This then involves higher levels of administrators who may not previously have even known who PITA was. Typical charges are sexual or racial harassment or abuse, threats of violence, financial wrongdoing, research fraud, unauthorised absence, or neglect of key job requirements – sometimes several of these. In some cases small incidents are used collectively to build a bigger case. Very common is a charge of "uncollegiality",[139] used to mean disagreement with colleagues over theoretical or administrative issues. PITA is portrayed as selfish, anti-social and unwilling or unable to take into account others' interests and feelings, as part of a Garfinkel-style "degradation ceremony".

During Stage Three, a senior administrator takes up the central role of eliminating PITA. There is no prospect of a genuinely fair trial; their task is to ensure PITA is found guilty of serious misconduct and sanctioned. Outright dismissal may be too risky in a tenured environment, so what is preferred is a series of progressive humiliations so that PITA will simply not wish to remain. This has already occurred at a local level, but now it is imposed from higher up. They are required to seek counselling, to apologise, to avoid discussing grievances with anyone inside or outside the institution, to demonstrate willingness to reach agreements with the administration, to accept the needs and interests of the college, and develop tolerance for the mistakes and insensitivities of others. Otherwise, they should find work elsewhere. They are given a one-year appointment with the possibility that at the end

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[139] The best definition I know for this much-abused term comes from UNESCO in 1997: "The principles of collegiality include academic freedom, shared responsibility, participation of all concerned in internal decision making structures and practices, and the development of consultative mechanisms. Collegial decision-making should encompass decisions regarding the administration and determination of policies of higher education, curricula, research, extension work, the allocation of resources and other related activities, in order to improve academic excellence and quality for the benefit of society at large." See UNESCO (1997), 'Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel'.

they can return to the tenure stream. Any student complaints can also be weaponised to great effect.

In the face of protests that this is not the truth, arbitrators could potentially draw upon the existence of multiple witnesses, prior record, character witnesses, official findings, PITA's admissions, and physical evidence. The latter is usually discarded, together with presumption of innocence and requirement of proof. Instead, charges should be accumulated which do not require such evidence, using accusations such as bullying, leering, threats, abuse, incivility, uncollegiality, misrepresentation, breach of trust, and so on. These should be enough to mark out PITA as an 'enemy of the people', in the manner found under communism. Anyone who might help with testimonies to these charges will be coddled, especially if they are young, feminine, from a minority group, and so on. Institutional yardsticks will also be emphasised, and civil rather than criminal standards of proof applied. Other options can involve the initiation of particular financial reports which indicate the need for elimination of one faculty position.

Stage Four of the process involves dismissal hearings, and the importance of keeping a case closed in the face of appeals, petitions, and so on. In this context, and the need for unanimity among those involved in the elimination process, Westhues evokes Irving L. Janis and groupthink (preferring to call it "unit-think"), drawing upon Janis's key characteristics (pp. 113–116). He also notes the importance of obtaining the support of senior managers in the dismissal decision, to limit the scope for appeal, framing appeals as being against the whole administrative hierarchy. Champions of the underdog, protectors of academic freedom and due process are said to have little influence and are mostly irritants, and the same applies to external colleagues or former students. Then there is the possibility of broader external pressure, or to the governing board as something relatively external to the rest of the institution, so they need to be kept out of the process as far as possible. Westhues also notes the conflict between distinct conceptions of academic freedom: one about the freedom of institutions from external interference, the other about freedom for individual academics, and how courts tend to prioritise the former. Arbitrators are a real risk for institutions, and process needs to be evoked to keep them away, though there are other measures for guarding against them. There are further strategies for dealing with unwelcome media interest, including noting a lack of public sympathy for those who step out of line.

Stage Five is the final elimination. For those who will not give up, language claiming mental illness or a personality disorder on their part is one thing which can work. Westhues notes, echoing Leymann, that in no case he has considered has a university both provided an apology and readmitted a member of staff to full respectability – this would mean the institution would suffer the same humiliation as the individual. Most cases have involved

dismissal, early retirement, resignation, death or long-term disability. Any subsequent court cases have led to only modest compensation. Where some have been exonerated against some questionable sexual charges, the reputational damage sticks nonetheless and they find it easier to resign.

Elsewhere in the book, Westhues parodies the view that mobbing of undesirable workers is necessary in organisations facing global competition, portraying a situation in which real complaints about sexual harassment are ignored and harassers protected when their victims are also being mobbed, as well as accusations being used maliciously for mobbing purposes and process skewered to ensure certain results; those who look different or speak with a foreign accent are especially at risk, or those who resist marketisation and subservience to corporate power.

Westhues followed up with a book, *Administrative Mobbing at the University of Toronto*, involving an extremely detailed account, based on a wide range of primary sources and other documents, of Herbert Richardson, Professor of Religious Studies, from a Protestant background but working at a Catholic faculty (remaining a Protestant theological there), who was hugely productive and popular with students.[140] This is a long book, but worth reading for those who want to understand the intricacies of a now notorious case. The mobbing was provoked this time by theological and social issues. Richardson was a deeply morally and intellectually driven individual who sought to do meaningful work in the modern world. Back in the 1960s, he had foreseen a time when all arguments would be written off as purely the function of social position, and sought to combat this postmodern position with religious faith shaped in response to the times by expert theologians. This position led to opposition from traditionalists, some motivated by a visit by then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), who was a leading advocate of the policies of Pope John Paul II against the spirit of the Second Vatican Council.[141]

Richardson did not support abortion being illegal, wrote a book about sex in America, and did not personally support official Catholic teaching on virginity and premarital sex, without calling for it to be changed. He also co-edited a collection of sources of Christian feminist thought.[142] Other factors held against him included his testimony on behalf of the Unification

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[140] Kenneth Westhues (2004). *Administrative Mobbing at the University of Toronto: The Trial, Degradation and Dismissal of a Professor during the Presidency of J. Robert S. Prichard*, The Edwin Mellen Press. This is the Canadian version of the book which was published the following year as Kenneth Westhues (2005). *The Envy of Excellence: Administrative Mobbing of High-Achieving Professors*, The Edwin Mellen Press.

[141] See also Kenneth Westhues (2005). *The Pope versus the Professor: Benedict XVI and the Legitimation of Mobbing*, The Edwin Mellen Press.

[142] Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson (eds.) (1977). *Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought*, Harper & Row.

Church of Reverend Sun Myung Moon, thought by many others to be a cult (Westhues makes clear that he himself feels differently to Richardson on this), and also his running a major publishing house, Edwin Mellen Press, which after Richardson's dismissal would go on to publish many major books on mobbing, including *Administrative Mobbing*. Attacks on the press would be used as a proxy for attacks on Richardson. Westhues also relates Richardson's situation to the growth of major new layers of professional administrators at universities, often in opposition to the professoriate. This in turn he further relates to the advent of postmodernism, because when academic standards are relative, there remains only power (he also makes reference to critiques of postmodernist culture including Christopher Lasch and Alan Sokal). He supplies full details of those who participated in the mobbing, ten figures in particular, who I wish to name here: Michael Fahey, Richard Alway, Joanne McWilliam, Donald Dewees, Joseph Boyle, Robert West, Robert Prichard (the president of the university), John Evans, Barry Brown and Robert Tully. This was not the first case of mobbing at the University of Toronto – in 1988 there had been a movement to drive out Marsh Hewitt, assistant professor of Social Ethics, then in 1990 dean of Divinity Peter Slater became a target.

Richardson was progressively ostracised by colleagues, which Westhues characterises as the breakdown of the "covenant" that exists between colleagues, which usually happens gradually, in stages. Richardson was first denied a sabbatical (a year in which he would not draw a salary – there were not many teaching responsibilities which would need to be covered), and it was suggested in the 1987 rejection letter that he might consider resignation. Then in 1989 he refused to sign some theological bylaws, involving greater submission to the Vatican, on grounds of academic freedom.

After working at Toronto for nineteen years, from 1968 until 1987, the request for his resignation came after five years of marginalisation, isolation and harassment, then a further two-year period culminating in his dismissal in 1994. A formal move to dismiss him (after attempts to get him to take early retirement) began in 1993 on the basis of a case which had been accumulated for the previous eighteen months, on four charges, of which two were upheld – abuse of a medical leave and failure to report outside related activities. Other extremely flimsy and petty charges of inadequate teaching (including a charge that he used traditional meanings of "matriarchal" and "patriarchal" simply to indicate roles of mothers and fathers, rather than to interrogate power) and scholarly misconduct (in part due to the fact that some of his publications appeared from his own press) were dismissed.

Interestingly, in this book Westhues makes clear that he does not support new anti-mobbing laws, as many others had been advocating around the time of writing. This is in part because he thinks that the sorts of behaviours involved would easily be turned back against the target

– a concern some have found about reporting bullying.[143] More widely, Westhues is concerned about strategies for social engineering such as are implicit in such laws. Instead, he advocates education about the concept and processes.

A subsequent collection edited by Westhues, *Workplace Mobbing in Academe*, looked at a range of reports from twenty universities.[144] After outlines of the basic concepts, the book includes a range of first-person and third-person accounts of mobbing, a series of essays on why mobbings occur, on techniques used by mobbers, and on those with which targets fight back, and a series of essays on how mobbing can be prevented. Westhues describes mobbing as "possibly the gravest threat most workers face" (p. 4), and notes how it is rare for workers who can easily relocate. The cases include an Indian professor, Dhiraj K. Pradhan, dismissed from his position at Texas A&M University, facing racial prejudice, questioning of his right to citizenship, and malicious lies about his earlier jobs, then progressive harassment and sidelining from colleagues.[145] After a new policy was brought in to review tenure, ending the permanency which had been a condition of his taking the job, he sent a memo opposing this policy, after which his computer was seized, documents removed, personal bank records obtained (and those of the professor's students), then a suspension without a hearing. Trumped-up charges were brought relating to a gift made for technology transfer (made *to* the university), leading to indictment and plea bargaining, further arrest and 30 days spent in jail, then a civil suit brought by the professor which was lost, leading to huge costs. Happily, Pradhan was later appointed to a chair at the University of Bristol.[146]

Among the other most notable chapters are that by anthropologist Melvin D. Williams, who has previously written two books on academia itself, and describes something of the wider culture of academia which makes mobbing possible.[147] He suggests some pathological tendencies among those who undergo the extensive education required to enter academia, and how the insecurities involved can easily translate into power and inferiority complexes when some gain positions of authority. He describes all types of petty and vindictive cruelties enacted by some academics upon others, as for example when one dean whose faculty did not back his support for promotion of the wife of a colleague turned vindictive against them,

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[143] This is a recurrent concern of Harper, who found that when she reported bullying it was not long before she was being called the bully.

[144] Kenneth Westhues (ed.) (2004). *Workplace Mobbing in Academe*, The Edwin Mellen Press.

[145] Dhiraj K. Pradhan (2004). 'A Dream Professorship, Turned Nightmare'. In Westhues, *Workplace Mobbing in Academia*: 23-36.

[146] Department of Computer Science, University of Bristol (2008). '<u>Prof. Dhiraj K. Pradhan</u>' (accessed 7th May 2024).

[147] Melvin D. Williams (2004). 'The Power and Powerlessness of Academe: Toward a General Theory of Human Behavior'. In Westhues, *Workplace Mobbing in Academia*: 157-173.

forcing one to move his family and belongings. Many faculty members tolerate these behaviours because they aspire to hold similar positions themselves. Nathan Young elaborates further on the postmodern dimension, as potentially challenging the whole ideas of education, but finding examples of postmodern teaching in practice are not necessarily of this type.[148] Nonetheless, he is concerned about the focus on the mechanics of language, knowledge and action and how these can limit some interpersonal possibilities, as when discourse theories focus on the context of speech rather than its substantive content, and when knowledge is tied to privilege, and this is used to induce shame. All of this can inhibit meaningful and fruitful interactions, and induce a climate of distrust and fear instead.

The discussion of elimination techniques include the employment of outside consultants, akin to private investigators, and exploitation of issues over research ethics. A chapter by Kathleen Kufeldt,[149] drawing upon studies of mobbing in schools, considers markers of bullies: a power imbalance, intent to harm, threat of further aggression, and sometimes induced terror; in contrast, those bullied tend to be those unwilling to fight, disdained for race, ethnicity or religion, or through being especially gifted, or independent, unconcerned with social status. Importantly, she also considers bystanders, some active participants, with some inclined to blame the victim, and passive ones, some who enjoy the scene, some guilty but afraid, and just a few who will defend the one targeted. But she also draws upon scholarship showing how individuals can devise strategies for resilience, including healthy self-compassion, placing the responsibility on the abusers, healing among others, having positive role models, affiliating to supportive communities, and so on. Roman Dubinski is one author prepared to take issue with Westhues, arguing that some of his ideals are unrealistic in large institutions with many diverse faculties, and subject to corporate influence.[150] For this reason, Dubinski believes collective agreements are needed, enforced through labour law; on this issue I am inclined to agree with him.

Westhues's work did receive some wider attention, including an important article in *The Guardian*,[151] noting all the reasons given to justify mobbing, and the lack of the term in common parlance in English. There were a few other writings from the time, such as a 2004 article by Duncan Lewis,[152] which has broad value, especially in tracing the effects of bullying

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[148] Nathan Young (2004). 'The Postmodern Classroom: Risk and Shame in Higher Education'. In Westhues, *Workplace Mobbing in Academia*: 238-255.

[149] Kathleen Kufeldt (2004). 'Eliminated but not Annihilated'. In Westhues, *Workplace Mobbing in Academia*: 331-343.

[150] Roman Dubinski (2004). 'How to Minimize Workplace Mobbing: a Critique of Westhues'. In Westhues, *Workplace Mobbing in Academia*: 354-367.

[151] John Sutherland (2006). 'Not strictly for the birds', *The Guardian*, 10 May.
[152] Duncan Lewis (2004). 'Bullying at Work: The Impact of Shame amongst University and College Lecturers', *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*: 281-299.

among victims, but lacks any engagement with wider group dynamics and processes. Another study of mobbing in the Spanish public university system (using the International Labour Organisation term "psychological harassment") has sound findings on typical victims, behaviours, victims postulations for the motivations behind the mobbing and associated feelings, but little of what is specific to the academic environment.[153]

After Westhues's major works, though, a whole series of subsequent scholarship on mobbing in academia emerged in multiple countries, some of it very important. Thomas E. Hecker considered mobbing among librarians, drawing upon both Leymann and Westhues (also Davenport et al) and largely echoing their findings.[154] Piper Fogg, while ostensibly discussing bullying, described some cases in which this became part of a wider toxic workplace culture embroiling numerous people, some feeling this was just inevitable.[155] Fogg draws upon a study that had just been undertaken by Loraleigh Keashly and Joel H. Neuman, which said that between a quarter and a third of academics had experienced bullying. Keashly and Neuman themselves, in an important 2010 article drawing on their survey,[156] acknowledge mobbing and Westhues's work, and find that faculty are more likely to identify colleagues as bullies, and frontline staff are more likely to identify superiors as bullies. Student incivility is a less prominent factor than some others have suggested. They also find from their survey that faculty members are about twice as likely as other staff to report being the victims of mobbing by three or more actors. There is little more specifically on mobbing, but the most significant part of the article considers the values of academic freedom, autonomy, tenure and collegiality, finding in particular that toxic academic cultures relate to interpretation of and interaction between collegiality and autonomy, especially when this involves any type of negative feedback. Furthermore, such values can be interpreted as preventing problematic behaviours from being addressed.

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[153] M. Ángeles López-Cabarcos and Paul Vázques-Rodríguez (2006). 'Psychological harassment in the Spanish public university system', *Academy of Health Care Management Journal*: 21-39.

[154] Thomas E. Hecker (2007). 'Workplace Mobbing: A Discussion for Librarians', *Journal of Academic Librarianship*: 439-445.

[155] Piper Fogg (2008). 'Academic Bullies', *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

[156] Loraleigh Keashly and Joel H. Neuman (2010). 'Faculty Experiences with Bullying in Higher Education: Causes, Consequences, and Management', *Administrative Theory & Praxis*: 48-70.

Another important 2008 study by Ruth McKay and others considers in particular bullying coming from students, but again lacks consideration of group dynamics.[157] A 2012 article by Claudia Lampman,[158] using a random sample of 524 professors from 100 institutions across the US, looks more broadly at bullying and incivility from students, including sexual behaviour and threats of violence. She finds that between 10% and 15% of faculty members had experienced bullying from students, and that major predictors of bullying or incivility including being a woman, being of a racial or ethnic minority, being younger, and not having a doctorate. In a literature review, Chad Prevost and Elena Hunt note that these findings are echoed in a range of other studies.[159]

A study from Pakistan by Salma Ahmad and Rukhsana Kalim, using a sample of academics in a large Pakistani province, found widespread excessive work-monitoring, undermining of professional competence, lack of recognition of contributions to work and obstruction of various matters.[160] A 2009 Turkish study by Elvin Yelgecen Tigrel and Ozgur Kokalan is more strongly rooted in Leymann's work.[161] Over half the article is devoted to an overview of mobbing in general, but then they report the findings of a survey of 103 people who work in three public and two private universities in Istanbul. They found much familiarity with the concept, and 12 participants who said they had suffered from mobbing, of which they interviewed six. Some reported malicious gossip, being ignored, being assigned trivial duties, being unable to see important information relating to work, being undervalued; others being called an "idiot", through to a view that associates organised for students to mob them. All had experienced depression and other psychological disorders as a result, and all wanted to change their jobs when possible. Another study undertaken in Malaysia, using Leymann and Gustafsson as a model, and focusing on the health consequences, is really just a digest of

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[157] Ruth McKay, Diane Huberman Arnold, Jae Fratzl and Roland Thomas (2008). 'Workplace Bullying in Academia: A Canadian Study', *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*: 77-110. This is also true of the later Mexican study, José Luis Rojas-Solís, Brandon Enrique Bernardino García-Ramírez and Manuel Edgardo Hernández-Corona (2019). 'Mobbing on University Staff: a Systematic Review/El Mobbing en trabajadores universitarios: Una revisión sistemática', *Propósitos y Representaciones*: 354-382. This makes repeated mention of the term mobbing, but with only limited understanding of the wider concept.

[158] Claudia Lampman (2012). 'Women Faculty at Risk: U.S. Professors Report on their Experiences with Student Incivility, Bullying, Aggression, and Sexual Attention', *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, 184-208.

[159] Chad Prevost and Elena Hunt (2018). 'Bullying and Mobbing in Academe: A Literature Review', *European Scientific Journal*. Another valuable literature review is Rugayah Hashim, Zaidi Mohd Aminuddin, Ayu Rohaidah Ghazali and Norfadzilah Abd Razak (2019). 'Reviewing the Silent Enemy of Faculty Mobbing', *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*: 87-91.

[160] Salma Ahmad and Rukhsana Kalim (2017). 'Academics' perceptions of bullying at work: insights from Pakistan', *International Journal of Educational Management*: 204-220.

[161] Elvin Yelgecen Tigrel and Ozgur Kokalan (2009). 'Academic Mobbing in Turkey', *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology*: 1473-1481.

earlier scholarship rather than featuring any new data, but important in demonstrating awareness of the phenomenon globally.[162]

Of other global studies, some of the most remarkable recent work comes out of a Mexican article on the relationship between universities and wider globalised processes, creating new types of environments emphasising efficiency and effectiveness, increasing the possibility and likelihood of "horizontal" mobbing between academic staff.[163] Another study drawing upon this considers Zambrano et al (most recent study). Drawing upon Sonia Villagrán Rueda's work, they consider that mobbing has become a "universal pandemic" in higher-education institutions, which as a result of globalising and other transforming processes have gone from being about the construction of knowledge towards being educational providers, at the behest of "organizational theories contextualized in environments of effectiveness and efficiency".[164]

An article by Jeanmarie Keim and J. Cynthia McDermott,[165] brings in some important statistics from conference papers and various government publications for figures of 53% of employees as victims of mobbing or workplace psychological violence, and 78% as witnesses (which seem extraordinary numbers)[166] and rates of 15% in the European Union, with 33% in Spain. Furthermore, they draw upon other scholarship finding that education is a place with very high levels of workplace violence (of various types, not just physical) in general. Victims usually have lower self-esteem and are socially anxious, though it is not clear whether this was the case before the action against them began. Keim and McDermott give a distinctive list of behaviours, including supervisors meeting a group of colleagues socially with one excluded, wrangling with course times to cause inconvenience, retaliatory measures when victims seek assistance, removal from committees, selective expectation to work in holidays, and holding up paperwork. In terms of responses, they emphasise (drawing upon Westhues) the importance of maintaining composure, also seeking legal counsel, and maintaining documentation, kept privately.

Another article by Macgorine A. Cassell draws upon Westhues's case studies and a range of others that were shared at a 2010 American Association of University Professors

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[162] Siew Beng Koo (2010). 'Academic Mobbing: Hidden Health Hazard at Workplace', *Malays Fam Physician*: 61-67.

[163] Sonia Villagrán Rueda (2017). 'Mobbing Docente. Daño físico, económico y psicológico, caso en una Universidad Pública', *Revista Iberoamericana de Ciencias*: 104-117.

[164] Telly Yarita Macías Zambrano, Carmen Liliana Mera Plaza, Johanna Melissa Aguayo Joza, Shirley Elizabeth Pizarro Anchundia and Gladys Varinia Salazar Cobeña (2022). 'Mobbing in higher education institutions, *International Journal of Health Sciences*: 3787-3802.

[165] Jeanmarie Keim and J. Cynthia McDermott (2010). 'Mobbing: Workplace Violence in the Academy', *The Educational Forum*: 167-173.

[166] These come from an unpublished conference paper given by Vittorio Di Martino in 2000 at Johannesburg.

conference.[167] It notes how administrators are argued by some to be as likely to join a mob as try and stop one, preferring to have one unhappy person than a group, and in general blames bullying and mobbing on very poor leadership (with little training for academic leaders in dealing with such things)[168] and wider academic culture. A notable diagram (see next page) vividly illustrates the chain of actions and symptoms.

A different angle is taken by João Ricardo Faria, Franklin G. Mixon Jr. and Sean P. Salter, who develop an economic model of academic mobbing, which they note can often be a response to a professor exercising their academic freedom or criticising university officials.[169] On the base of quantitative techniques and a range of formulas taken from a Stackelberg differential game, they note the importance of mobbed academics increasing their research to help job mobility, but also how mobbing can succeed if sufficiently intense to exceed considerations of optimal salary and threshold for quitting (using ways of measuring all of these) – though institutions lose out if a professor's replacements have lesser research productivity.

Another Turkish study, published in a Japanese journal, by Betul Taspinar and others, is a detailed study of the relationship between academic mobbing and experience of musculoskeletal discomfort, finding a connection on the basis of studying 100 academics.[170] A US study of three white women who experienced academic bullying and mobbing, with harsh undermining of their research, and esteem relating to competence and teaching, notes the prevalence of woman-on-woman bullying (women are also bullied by men commonly, but 80% of female bullies target other women).[171] A short journalistic article by Eve Seguin,[172] much praised by Westhues,[173] emphasises the culpability of institutions as well as individuals, and as with my analogies to communism earlier, compares the process to get rid of an employee with Stalin's Moscow Trials – conviction comes first, and evidence found

[167] Macgorine A. Cassell (2011). 'Bullying in Academe: Prevalent, Significant, and Incessant', *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*: 33-44.

[168] A later study, Burcu Erdemir, Cennet Engin Demir, Jülide Yıldırım Öcal & Yaşar Kondakçı (2020). 'Academic Mobbing in Relation to Leadership Practices: A new Perspective on an Old Issue', *The Educational Forum*: 126-139 uses quantitative methods to establish the link between leadership and mobbing on a firmer scholarly footing.

[169] João Ricardo Faria, Franklin G. Mixon Jr. and Sean P. Salter (2012). 'An economic model of workplace mobbing in academe', *Economics of Education Review*; 720-726.

[170] Betul Taspinar, Ferruhr Taspinar, Sultan Guclu, Abdurrahman Nalbant, Bilge Basakci Calik, Ahmet Uslu and Sermet Inal (2013). 'Investigation of the association between mobbing and musculoskeletal discomfort in academicians', *Japanese Psychological Research*: 400-408.

[171] Audrey M. Dentith, Robin Redmon Wright and Joellen Coryell (2014). 'Those Mean Girls and Their Friends', *Adult Learning*: 28-34.

[172] Eve Seguin (2016). '<u>Academic mobbing, or how to become campus tormentors</u>', *University Affairs*.

[173] See Westhues, 'Update to *The Envy of Excellence*': 14. Westhues says this article 'will be cited as a classic half a century from now'.

![sexmatters]

A concept map of Academic Bullying with the following branches:

- **Academic Bullying**
  - **Prevalent** → **Manner Manifested**
    - **Inaction**: Silent Treatment, Withholding Praise, Withholding Feedback, Withholding Information, Delaying Actions of Importance
    - **Subtle Action**: Glaring in a Hostile Manner, Eye Rolling, Interruptions During Meetings, Exclusion from Conversations
    - **Action**: Target of Practical Jokes, Excessive Monitoring, Rude/Disrespectful Behavior, Interferences with Work, Differential Treatement, Swearing, Shouting, Humuliating, Name Calling, Lying, Blaming Without Justification, Unwarranted/Invalid Criticism, Undermining Credibility, Sabotage
    - **Evidentiary Report**
  - **Significant** → **Impact on Professor** → **Impact on Department/University**
    - **Impact on Professor:** Stress, Depression, Suicidal Thoughts, Reduced Self Esteem, Self-Blame, Phobias, Sleep Disturbances, Digestive Problems, Muscoskeletal Problems, Social Isolation, Family Problems, Post Traumatic Stress
    - **Impact on Department/University:** Inability to Attract New Hires, Dysfunctional Work Environment, Med. & Workers' Comp. Claims, Decreased Productivity, Decreased Employee Morale, Decreased Loyalty, Acts of Sabotage/Revenge, Lawsuits
  - **Incessant**
    - Insufficient Legal Recourse/Detterent
    - Leadership
    - Nature of Academe

afterwards to support it. She notes again how some would be surprised to think of universities, because of their values (echoing the view of David Lodge mentioned earlier), which is in contrast to what she claims are toxic environments despite claiming to foster

well-being, in which employers give little if any help to mobbed professors. Typical "psychological harassment" policies are found insufficient.

The most important collection of essays on the subject since those edited by Westhues is *Confronting Academic Mobbing in Higher Education*, edited by Caroline M. Crawford.[174] This includes a chapter by Janelle Christine Simmons ('Overcoming the Onslaught: A Tale of Woe from One Adjunct Professor') which features the most comprehensive overview to date of existing scholarship on academic mobbing.[175] Among the other most distinctive contributions to this volume is a study of "passive evil" whereby a process of "downward academic mobbing" is initiated by unethical administrators looking to frame a faculty victim, finding that colleagues either fail to support the victim or actively join in the targeting for their own personal advantage.[176] The authors note how little success has been achieved in combating this phenomenon, and how difficult it is to encourage colleagues to act in support of each other, suggesting that at least education in this, and active roles for trade unions, might help. A further article by Mexican scholars links mobbing and bullying to wider neoliberal policies and corrupt hiring processes,[177] while two US scholars identify the conflicting motivations of academics (often very self-absorbed, in a culture which may neither encourage communication nor monitor awareness and behaviour) and various power differentials as inciting or at least allowing incivility, coining the term "mobbability" for a workplace in this context, and linking this to an infectious disease.[178] They provide many useful solutions for tackling such a culture (including one issue which should be obvious but is not to many – that academic conflict is not at all the same thing as bullying).

One further important recent study by Turkish academics Aslıhan Keskin Çakı and Evrim Erol uses quantitative techniques, in particular the t-test, ANOVA and regression analysis, on data taken from 489 Turkish academics, to gauge the relationship between academic mobbing and meaningful work.[179] Unsurprisingly, they find that academics who are mobbed have low

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[174] Caroline M. Crawford (ed.) (2020). *Confronting Academic Mobbing in Higher Education: Personal Accounts and Administrative Action*, IGI Global.

[175] Janelle Christine Simmons (2020). 'Overcoming the Onslaught: A Tale of Woe from One Adjunct Professor'. In Crawford, *Confronting Academic Mobbing*: 1-28.

[176] Theodore W. McDonald, Sandina Begic and R. Eric Landrum (2020). 'The Role of Passive Evil in Perpetuating Downward Academic Mobbing'. In Crawford, *Confronting Academic Mobbing*: 44-67.

[177] Silvia Karla Fernández Marín and Florencia Peña-Saint-Martin (2020). 'Neoliberal Technocracy and Opposition Exams for Hiring Tenured Full-Time Professors in a Mexican Public University'. In Crawford, *Confronting Academic Mobbing*: 132-158.

[178] Naomi Jeffery Peterse and Rebecca L. Pearson (2020). 'Mobbability: Understanding How a Vulnerable Academic Can Be Healthier'. In Crawford, *Confronting Academic Mobbing*: 104-131.

[179] Aslıhan Keskin Çakı and Evrim Erol (2022). 'Examining the Relationship between Academic Mobbing and Meaningful Work in Universities', *E-International Journal of Educational Research*: 138-155.

perceptions of the meaningfulness of their work, but they also consider the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, which overlapped with their study in part, and sheltered some from mobbing. The results also varied by sex (female academics finding their work less meaningful), contradicting some earlier studies, but they filter in the particularities of patriarchal attitudes in Turkey. One other study by Loraleigh Keashly, from 2023, engages further surveys and case studies, as well as considering such factors as cyberbullying (the relationship between mobbing and social media is calling out for more work). It frames bullying more widely to incorporate attacks not only from students but external individuals and other members of the public.[180] Keashly argues strongly that education to a wider public about academic freedom, the values of critical thinking, and the social benefits of academic work, is vital.

This survey does not contain everything written on academic mobbing, but does feature a relatively large and representative sample. There is a remarkable degree of consensus among scholars as to causes, institutional environments, types of targets, the specifics of mobbing, and the nature of the process, and the effects upon victims. To some extent this may be because of the overwhelming influence of Leymann and Westhues, and other schools of thought may emerge in time. But there is enough scholarship out there that no academic with a leadership role should be able to remain ignorant of it.

Groupthink

The literature on groupthink is extensive and generally belongs within the more intensively data-oriented or experimental social sciences. For those looking to learn more about this and consider its wider application to mobbing, it is necessary to read a range of studies and critiques in order to grasp this field of study as a whole. Here I will try and list the most important writings with which to engage.

The first use of the term can be found in William H. Whyte's 1952 article.[181] Then Irving L. Janis's work begins with his 1971 article 'Groupthink',[182] in which he lays out the foundations of his ideas, defining groupthink as a situation when concurrence-seeking becomes highly dominant in a cohesive ingroup, overriding more realistic appraisal of alternatives. He alludes back to George Orwell and *1984*, listing principles including "kill" (hostility towards outgroups), "norms" (conformity to these within a group), "stress" as a factor, then various

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[180] Loraleigh Keashly (2023). 'When faculty are bullied: the unacceptable costs of doing our job and what universities can and should do', *The Scientists' Forum*: 339-343.

[181] William H. Whyte (1952). 'Groupthink', *Fortune*.

[182] Irving L. Janis (1971). 'Groupthink', *Psychology Today*: 43-44, 46, 74-76.

symptoms which he observes in high-level governmental and military decisions: invulnerability, rationale, morality, stereotypes, pressure, self-censorship, unanimity and mindguards. He also considers products of and remedies for groupthink, using the Marshall Plan and the handling of the Cuban missile crisis as counter-examples. Then Janis's first monograph on the subject was *Victims of Groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascos*,[183] which is essentially a huge expansion of the basic ideas contained in the article. The book contains four major case studies – the failure to be prepared for the attack on Pearl Harbour; the invasion of North Korea; the Bay of Pigs invasion; and the escalation of the Vietnam War – then presents the earlier counter-examples in much more detail. He uses these to posit a generalised model of "Who succumbs, when and why", mentioning possible European examples to consider as well as the American ones he has provided, looking in some detail at the failure of appeasement of Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Then Janis sets down the eight key symptoms once again, and his view (later contested by others) that a high degree of group cohesiveness is conducive towards groupthink. There follows some consideration of psychological factors, and how groupthink might be prevented.

A range of further empirical studies followed. Bertram H. Raven, 'The Nixon Group'[184] was the first to use this model to analyse the actions of Nixon's advisory group, using sociometric techniques. He finds Janis's symptoms to be present, not necessarily the range of factors (mutual attraction, admiration and identification) which Janis saw as important pre-conditions, but nonetheless cohesiveness. Matie L. Flowers, in 'A Laboratory Test of Some Implications of Janis's Groupthink Hypothesis',[185] situates Janis's work in the context of wider literature on group decision-making, and analyses the result of an experiment conducted with 120 undergraduate students in two universities, forming 40 experimental teams with 32 leaders. She considers the effects of differing leadership styles and levels of cohesiveness, finding a correlation between the former and a predilection for groupthink, but not with the latter. John Courtright, 'A laboratory investigation of groupthink',[186] constructs a laboratory analogue with volunteers from the University of Iowa to form experimental groups inducted in particular ways, in order to recreate the most significant elements of Janis's theory, and finds much support for the latter, concluding that the absence of disagreement is the clearest indicator of groupthink or otherwise.

[183] Irving L. Janis (1972). *Victims of Groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes,* Houghton Mifflin Company. The second revised edition of this is Irving L. Janis (1982). *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes,* Houghton Mifflin Company.

[184] Bertram H. Raven (1974). 'The Nixon Group', *Journal of Social Issues*: 297-320.

[185] Matie L. Flowers (1977). 'A Laboratory Test of Some Implications of Janis's Groupthink Hypothesis', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*: 888-896.

[186] John Courtright (1976). 'A laboratory investigation of groupthink', *Communications Monographs*: 229-246.

Most scientifically rigorous for its time was Philip E. Tetlock, 'Identifying victims of Groupthink from Public Statements of Decision Makers',[187] which uses techniques of integrative-complexity coding and evaluative assertion analysis upon material drawn from public statements by decision-makers in US foreign-policy crises (all previously analysed – Marshall Plan, North Korea invasion; Bay of Pigs invasion; Cuban missile crisis; Vietnam War), finding much support for Janis's conclusions, but not ruling out alternative explanations. Other significant studies include Richard C. Huseman and Russell W. Driver, 'Groupthink: Implications for Small-Group Decision Making in Business', considering briefly two cases in the US stock market; Carrie R. Leana, 'A Partial Test of Janis' Groupthink Model Effects of Group Cohesiveness and Leader Behavior on Defective Decision Making', in which 208 college students were made to solve a hypothetical business problem; Steve Smith, 'Groupthink and the Hostage Rescue Mission', on the failed US hostage rescue mission in Tehran in 1980; Thomas R. Hensley and Glen W. Griffin, 'Victims of Groupthink: The Kent State University Board of Trustees and the 1997 Gymnasium Controversy'; and James K. Esser and Joanne S. Lindoerfer, 'Groupthink and the Space Shuttle Challenger Accident: Toward a Quantitative Case Analysis'.[188]

After Janis's works, the most important book-length study is Paul 't Hart, *Groupthink in Government: A Study of Small Groups and Policy Failure*,[189] which draws extensively but not uncritically upon Janis and others including Raven, Tetlock, Hensley and Griffin, and McCauley to explore groupthink in "high" political decision-making in detail, adding a new empirical study relating to the Iran-Contra affair. Hart follows Flowers in considering Janis's work in the context of wider scholarship on group dynamics. Hart's article 'Victims of Groupthink'[190] is an especially readable summary of the debates on groupthink up until that point, concluding that Janis's models remain important but that other factors also need to be incorporated to make models have wider application.

[187] Philip E. Tetlock (1979). 'Identifying victims of Groupthink from Public Statements of Decision Makers', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*: 1314-1324.

[188] Richard C. Huseman and Russell W. Driver (1979). 'Groupthink: Implications for Small-Group Decision Making in Business'. In Richard C. Huseman and Archie B. Carroll (eds.), *Readings in Organizational Behavior: Dimensions of Management Actions*, Allyn and Bacon, Inc.: 100-110; Carrie R. Leana (1985). 'A Partial Test of Janis' Groupthink Model Effects of Group Cohesiveness and Leader Behavior on Defective Decision Making', *Journal of Management*: 5-17; Steve Smith (1984). 'Groupthink and the Hostage Rescue Mission', *British Journal of Political Science*: 117-126; Thomas R. Hensley and Glen W. Griffin (1986). 'Victims of Groupthink: The Kent State University Board of Trustees and the 1997 Gymnasium Controversy', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*: 497-531; and James K. Esser and Joanne S. Lindoerfer (1989). 'Groupthink and the Space Shuttle Challenger Accident: Toward a Quantitative Case Analysis', *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*: 167-177.

[189] Paul 't Hart (1990). *Groupthink in Government: A Study of Small Groups and Policy Failure*, Swets & Zeitlinger.

[190] Paul 't Hart (1991). 'Victims of Groupthink', *Political Psychology*: 247-278.

The first major critique of Janis's theories was Jeanne Longley and Dean G. Pruitt. 'Groupthink: A Critique of Janis's Theory'.[191] Longley and Pruitt criticise in detail perceived inadequacies of Janis's definitions and evaluations while acknowledging some modifications to the 1972 book found in Janis and Leon Mann's 1977 book *Decision Making*.[192] They also criticise Janis's primarily negative view, arguing that some of Janis's symptoms are eventually necessary in much decision-making, and that insufficient attention is paid to the type of decision task. In this context, they allude to another important text from a different perspective, Daniel Katz and Robert Louis Kahn, *The Social Psychology of Organizations*.[193] Where Janis argued that his set of symptoms were linked, Longley and Pruitt counter that they "appear to be a loose bag of partially related ideas". They also question Janis's belief that group cohesiveness leads to diminished self-censorship, positing types of groups where this would be unlikely to be the case. Furthermore, they bring groupthink into a dialogue with theories of *group stage theory*, which analyse the development of groups.[194]

Ivan D. Steiner, 'Heuristic Models of Groupthink', in Hermann Brandstätter, James H. Davis and Gisela Stocker-Kreichgauer (eds.), *Group Decision Making*[195] contains the analysis of lynching discussed above, Steiner is also critical of Janis, arguing that cohesion is not always as high as Janis maintains, and should be considered a consequence, rather than a cause, of behavioural harmony. Nonetheless, he still finds value in groupthink as a concept, and considers it alongside other established models from the social sciences, "horse-trading", "risky-shift", and "normative", drawing upon specific examples using these, and finds something like groupthink to be present in all cases.

There are several other particularly significant critiques worth reading for those wanting to know more of the critical discourse around groupthink. Gregory Moorhead and John R. Montanari, 'An Empirical Investigation of the Groupthink Phenomenon',[196] argues that the empirical studies conducted up to that point do not provide strong support for the groupthink model. They use highly detailed quantitative methods to test various antecedent conditions

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[191] Jeanne Longley and Dean G. Pruitt (1980). 'Groupthink: A Critique of Janis's Theory'. In Ladd Wheeler (ed.), *Review of Personality and Social Psychology*: 1: Sage: 74-93.

[192] Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann (1977). *Decision Making: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice, and Commitment*, The Free Press.

[193] Daniel Katz and Robert Louis Kahn (1978). *The Social Psychology of Organizations*, Wiley.

[194] As found in B. Aubrey Fisher (1974). *Small Group Decision Making*, McGraw Hill; and Arthur M. Cohen and R. Douglas Smith (1976). *The Critical Incident in Growth Groups: A Manual for Group Leaders*, University Associates, Inc.

[195] Ivan D. Steiner (1982). 'Heuristic Models of Groupthink'. In Hermann Brandstätter, James H. Davis and Gisela Stocker-Kreichgauer (eds.), *Group Decision Making*: 503-524.

[196] Gregory Moorhead and John R. Montanari (1986). 'An Empirical Investigation of the Groupthink Phenomenon', *Human Relations*: 399-410.

and observable consequences, finding that several key linkages in Janis are supported, but for others the results are opposite to that in the model, suggesting other variables need to be considered. Clark McCauley, 'The Nature of Social Influence in Groupthink: Compliance and Internalization',[197] adds wider perspectives on internalisation – whether some may go along with a theory without believing it. McCauley is not clear that compliance decreases with increases in group cohesion, as Janis had claimed, and finds other factors do not correlate. Philip E. Tetlock, Randall S. Peterson, Charles McGuire, Shi-jie Chang and Peter Feld, 'Assessing Political Group Dynamics: A Test of the Groupthink Model'[198] is exceptionally scientifically rigorous, employing Q-sort techniques, and considers Janis's original seven cases, and three he had suggested in 1982, all subjected to highly detailed quantitative tests, once again concluding that some of Janis's key antecedents, such as group cohesiveness and situational stressors, are neither necessary nor sufficient causes of groupthink. While acknowledging that Janis had at one point conceded (in his *Crucial Decisions: Leadership in Policy-Making and Management)*[199] that the empirical linkage he had claimed between soundness of decision-making processes and value of outcomes was probabilistic, they note that some new results demonstrated different processes, with decision-makers more vigilant, and this needed more accounting for. Christopher P. Neck and Gregory Moorhead, in 'Groupthink Remodeled: The Importance of Leadership, Time Pressure, and Methodical Decision-Making Procedures',[200] argue for an expanded set of parameters, while another partial acceptance on the basis of comprehensive testing can be found in Won-Woo Park, 'A Comprehensive Empirical Investigation of the Relationships among Variables of the Groupthink Model'.[201]

If all of these studies concluded that Janis's model needed modifying but not rejecting, full rejection can be found in a few others, in particular Glen Whyte, who maintains, in 'Groupthink Reconsidered',[202] that prospect theory is more fruitful for explaining group decision-making leading to fiascos, and Raymond J. Aldag and Sally Riggs Fuller, 'Beyond Fiasco; A Reappraisal of the Groupthink Phenomenon and a New Model of Group Decision

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[197] Clark McCauley (1989). 'The Nature of Social Influence in Groupthink: Compliance and Internalization', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*: 250-260.

[198] Philip E. Tetlock, Randall S. Peterson, Charles McGuire, Shi-jie Chang and Peter Feld (1992). 'Assessing Political Group Dynamics: A Test of the Groupthink Model', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*: 403-425.

[199] Irving L. Janis (1989). *Crucial Decisions: Leadership in Policy-Making and Management*, Free Press.

[200] Christopher P. Neck and Gregory Moorhead (1995). 'Groupthink Remodeled: The Importance of Leadership, Time Pressure, and Methodical Decision-Making Procedures', *Human Relations*: 537-557.

[201] Won-Woo Park (2000). 'A Comprehensive Empirical Investigation of the Relationships among Variables of the Groupthink Model', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*: 873-887.

[202] Glen Whyte (1989). 'Groupthink Reconsidered', *The Academy of Management Review*: 40-56.

Processes',[203] who think that groupthink "has been accepted more because of its intuitive appeal than because of solid evidence" (p. 547). They propose instead what they call the "general group problem-solving model", with different antecedent conditions, emerging group characteristics, decision process characteristics, and group decision outcomes. Nonetheless, these wholescale rejections are the exception rather than the rule.

A relatively recent summary of research is James D. Rose, 'Diverse Perspectives on the Groupthink Theory – A Literary Review'.[204]

Groupthink in academia

As mentioned in the article, the major study of groupthink in academia is Daniel B. Klein and Charlotta Stern, 'Groupthink in Academia: Majoritarian Departmental Politics and the Professional Pyramid'.[205] An earlier book, David Bromwich, *Politics by Other Means: Higher Education and Group Thinking*),[206] is more polemical in nature and does not draw on the theoretical literature on the subject. The same is true of K.C. Johnson, 'The Perils of Academic Groupthink',[207] a specific study of a case where three members of a lacrosse team at Duke University were falsely accused of rape, though this does have interesting observations on the charged and sometimes toxic atmosphere on US campuses when dealing with any matters relating to sex and race, and reluctance of many to challenge orthodoxies on these issues. However, Johnson's PhD thesis, 'Educational decision-making: An explanation of Janis' groupthink model',[208] shows full awareness of Janis et al and applies sophisticated statistical techniques to undertake an empirical study using a questionnaire developed by Won-Woo Park.[209] Nonetheless, this deals with school boards, so is not directly related to higher education.

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[203] Raymond J. Aldag and Sally Riggs Fuller (1993). 'Beyond Fiasco; A Reappraisal of the Groupthink Phenomenon and a New Model of Group Decision Processes', *Psychological Bulletin*: 533-552.

[204] James D. Rose (2011). 'Diverse Perspectives on the Groupthink Theory – A Literary Review', *Emerging Leadership Journeys*.

[205] Daniel B. Klein and Charlotta Stern (2009). 'Groupthink in Academia: Majoritarian Departmental Politics and the Professional Pyramid', *The Independent Review*: 585-600.

[206] David Bromwich (1992). *Politics by Other Means: Higher Education and Group Thinking*: Yale University Press.

[207] K.C. Johnson (2016). 'The Perils of Academic Groupthink'. In Howard M. Wassermann (ed.), *Institutional Failure*, Routledge: 67-88.

[208] K.C. Johnson (1998). *Educational decision-making: An explanation of Janis' groupthink model*, PhD thesis, University of Arizona.

[209] Won-Woo Park (1989). *A comprehensive study of Janis's groupthink model: Questionnaire development and empirical tests*, PhD thesis: University of Pittsburgh.

Alan Brady, in 'Groupthink – Dealing with Conflict or Maintaining the Status Quo: Implications for Higher Education',[210] is more theoretically aware in general, and works with a Social Identity Maintenance (SIM) model of groupthink,[211] relating to attempts to maintain a positive image of a group. He identifies conditions for concurrence-seeking in this respect, and seeks to find tactics to mitigate against the detrimental consequences of groupthink. Brady applies this to Japanese socio-cultural and higher educational contexts, and discerns evidence of privileging of morale over critical thinking.

Conclusion

Finally, two films in particular are recommended for vivid portrayals of mobbing: the first is an Italian film, *Mi piace lavorare: Mobbing* (Francesca Comencini, 2004),[212] showing a vulnerable middle-aged single mother relentlessly victimised and humiliated by both managers and co-workers, drawing upon accounts reported by Italian unions. The second is the American documentary film *Murder by Proxy: How American Went Postal* (Emil Chiaberi, 2010),[213] in which a thoroughly toxic workplace, whose origins are argued to be in the US Postal Service following its reorganisation in 1971, is linked to spree killings. Sadly, Harper argues that:

> "The single most predictable factor in identifying potential workplace shootings would be a male gun owner who has little or no social support outside the workplace and who is a target of workplace mobbing, shunning, ridicule and/or internal investigations".[214]

Mobbing remains a concept and an activity far too little understood. Nobody working in a management role, HR, or another relevant position should be deficient in their knowledge of this phenomenon. It is imperative that all such individuals should read thoroughly about this upsetting, sometimes life-destroying, but alas common, activity, and that new approaches to the workplace, and new laws, are developed as a result.

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[210] Alan Brady (2000). *Groupthink – Dealing with Conflict or Maintaining the Status Quo: Implications for Higher Education*.

[211] Taken from Marlene E. Turner and Anthony R. Pratkanis (1998). 'A Social Identity Maintenance Model of Groupthink', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*: 210-235.

[212] Francesca Comencini (dir.) (2004). *Mi piace lavorare: Mobbing*.

[213] Emil Chiaberi (dir.) (2010). *Murder by Proxy: How American Went Postal*.

[214] Janice Harper (2013, rev. 2016). *Mobbed!: What to Do When They Really Are Out to Get You*. Backdoor Press: 98 n.1.