

Overview of the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C)

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Counterproductive work behavior (CWB) consists of acts that harm or are intended to harm organizations. They include acts directed toward both organizations and individuals, including aggression (physical and verbal), sabotage, theft, and withdrawal. The Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C) comes in two versions. The full 45-item was designed to be scored as either overall CWB (all items), or as two subscales (43 items) that are classified into CWB directed toward the organization versus people. The 32-item version produces 5 subscales of abuse (harmful and nasty behaviors that affect other people), production deviance (purposely doing the job incorrectly or allowing errors to occur), sabotage (destroying the physical environment), theft, and withdrawal (avoiding work through being absent or late). Responses are made on a 5-point frequency scale *Never, Once or twice, Once or twice per month, Once or twice per week, Every day*. Details of the scale's development and history can be found in Spector, P. E., Fox, S., Penney, L. M., Bruursema, K., Goh, A., & Kessler, S. (2006). The dimensionality of counterproductivity: Are all counterproductive behaviors created equal? *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 68*, 446-460.

Reliability

Internal consistency reliability estimates (coefficient alpha) are available from 3 combined samples in Spector et al. (2006).

Subscale	n	Mean	SD	Observed Range	Possible Range	Coefficient Alpha
Abuse	736	22.1	6.2	17-77	17-85	.85
Production deviance	737	3.7	1.3	3-12	3-15	.63
Sabotage	738	3.6	1.1	3-11	3-15	.55
Theft	738	5.8	1.5	5-20	5-25	.63
Withdrawal	738	6.9	2.3	4-16	4-20	.64
CWB-Organization	735	31.1	7.4	21-81	21-105	.86
CWB-Person	735	26.3	6.3	22-88	22-110	.86
CWB-Total	731	58.9	12.6	44-173	44-220	.90

N = 731-738 for all but Abuse, CWB-Person, and CWB-Total where n = 460 due to missing data. Alphas revised since the 2006 paper to account for deleting item 4 from Abuse and reporting standardized alpha.

Scoring

To score the CWB-C, simply sum the responses to appropriate items, where 1 = the least frequent response (*Never*) and 5 = the most frequent response (*Every day*). The total score is the sum of all 45 items. The table shows the items by subscale. For more discussion see Spector et al. (2006).

Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist Items By Subscale

How often have you done each of the following things on your present job?

1=Never 2=Once or twice 3=Once or twice per month 4=Once or twice per week 5=Every day

CWB Item Number and Item	2 Factor	5 Factor
1 Purposely wasted your employer's materials/supplies	CWB-O	Sabotage

8 Purposely damaged a piece of equipment or property	CWB-O	Sabotage
9 Purposely dirtied or littered your place of work	CWB-O	Sabotage
6 Came to work late without permission	CWB-O	Withdrawal
7 Stayed home from work and said you were sick when you weren't	CWB-O	Withdrawal
17 Taken a longer break than you were allowed to take	CWB-O	Withdrawal
19 Left work earlier than you were allowed to	CWB-O	Withdrawal
5 Purposely did your work incorrectly	CWB-O	Production deviance
13 Purposely worked slowly when things needed to get done	CWB-O	Production deviance
18 Purposely failed to follow instructions	CWB-O	Production deviance
10 Stolen something belonging to your employer	CWB-O	Theft
22 Took supplies or tools home without permission	CWB-O	Theft
24 Put in to be paid for more hours than you worked	CWB-O	Theft
25 Took money from your employer without permission	CWB-O	Theft
32 Stole something belonging to someone at work	CWB-P	Theft
2 Daydreamed rather than did your work	CWB-O	
3 Complained about insignificant things at work	CWB-O	
14 Refused to take on an assignment when asked	CWB-O	
15 Purposely came late to an appointment or meeting	CWB-O	
16 Failed to report a problem so it would get worse	CWB-O	
23 Tried to look busy while doing nothing	CWB-O	
4 Told people outside the job what a lousy place you work for	CWB-O	
11 Started or continued a damaging or harmful rumor at work	CWB-P	Abuse
12 Been nasty or rude to a client or customer		Abuse
20 Insulted someone about their job performance	CWB-P	Abuse
21 Made fun of someone's personal life	CWB-P	Abuse
26 Ignored someone at work	CWB-P	Abuse
30 Blamed someone at work for error you made	CWB-P	Abuse
31 Started an argument with someone at work	CWB-P	Abuse
33 Verbally abused someone at work	CWB-P	Abuse
34 Made an obscene gesture (the finger) to someone at work	CWB-P	Abuse
35 Threatened someone at work with violence	CWB-P	Abuse
36 Threatened someone at work, but not physically	CWB-P	Abuse
37 Said something obscene to someone at work to make them feel bad	CWB-P	Abuse
39 Did something to make someone at work look bad	CWB-P	Abuse
40 Played a mean prank to embarrass someone at work	CWB-P	Abuse
42 Looked at someone at work's private mail/property without permission	CWB-P	Abuse
43 Hit or pushed someone at work	CWB-P	Abuse
44 Insulted or made fun of someone at work	CWB-P	Abuse
27 Refused to help someone at work	CWB-P	
28 Withheld needed information from someone at work	CWB-P	

29 Purposely interfered with someone at work doing his/her job	CWB-P	
38 Hid something so someone at work couldn't find it	CWB-P	
41 Destroyed property belonging to someone at work	CWB-P	
45 Avoided returning a phone call to someone you should at work		

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Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C) (45-item)

How often have you done each of the following things on your present job?					
	Every day	Once or twice per week	Once or Twice per month	Once or Twice	Never
1. Purposely wasted your employer's materials/supplies	1	2	3	4	5
2. Daydreamed rather than did your work	1	2	3	4	5
3. Complained about insignificant things at work	1	2	3	4	5
4. Told people outside the job what a lousy place you work for	1	2	3	4	5
5. Purposely did your work incorrectly	1	2	3	4	5
6. Came to work late without permission	1	2	3	4	5
7. Stayed home from work and said you were sick when you weren't	1	2	3	4	5
8. Purposely damaged a piece of equipment or property	1	2	3	4	5
9. Purposely dirtied or littered your place of work	1	2	3	4	5
10. Stolen something belonging to your employer	1	2	3	4	5
11. Started or continued a damaging or harmful rumor at work	1	2	3	4	5
12. Been nasty or rude to a client or customer	1	2	3	4	5
13. Purposely worked slowly when things needed to get done	1	2	3	4	5
14. Refused to take on an assignment when asked	1	2	3	4	5
15. Purposely came late to an appointment or meeting	1	2	3	4	5
16. Failed to report a problem so it would get worse	1	2	3	4	5
17. Taken a longer break than you were allowed to take	1	2	3	4	5
18. Purposely failed to follow instructions	1	2	3	4	5
19. Left work earlier than you were allowed to	1	2	3	4	5
20. Insulted someone about their job performance	1	2	3	4	5
21. Made fun of someone's personal life	1	2	3	4	5

22.	Took supplies or tools home without permission	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Tried to look busy while doing nothing	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Put in to be paid for more hours than you worked	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Took money from your employer without permission	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Ignored someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Refused to help someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
28.	Withheld needed information from someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Purposely interfered with someone at work doing his/her job	1	2	3	4	5
30.	Blamed someone at work for error you made	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Started an argument with someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
32.	Stole something belonging to someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
33.	Verbally abused someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
34.	Made an obscene gesture (the finger) to someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
35.	Threatened someone at work with violence	1	2	3	4	5
How often have you done each of the following things on your present job?						
				Every day	Once or twice per week	Once or Twice per month
						Once or Twice
						Never
36.	Threatened someone at work, but not physically	1	2	3	4	5
37.	Said something obscene to someone at work to make them feel bad	1	2	3	4	5
38.	Hid something so someone at work couldn't find it	1	2	3	4	5
39.	Did something to make someone at work look bad	1	2	3	4	5
40.	Played a mean prank to embarrass someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
41.	Destroyed property belonging to someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
42.	Looked at someone at work's private mail/property without permission	1	2	3	4	5
43.	Hit or pushed someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
44.	Insulted or made fun of someone at work	1	2	3	4	5

45. Avoided returning a phone call to someone you should at work

1 2 3 4 5

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CWB-C 45-Item Scoring

To score the CWB-C, sum responses to items shown below for each subscale (organizational versus person), or all the items for the total score.

CWB organization: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25.

CWB person: 11, 20, 21, 26-44.

The Waterloo Strategy for Prevention of Mobbing in Higher Education

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"Conclusion," pp. 235-248, of *The Remedy and Prevention of Mobbing in Higher Education* (Mellen, 2006). Earlier version presented in the session on "Institutional Power and Equity (or Fairness): Taming Academic Imperialism," sponsored jointly by the Canadian Societies for the Study of Education, Higher Education, and Educational Administration, at the Congress of the Canadian Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Western Ontario, London, 2005. Thanks to Nancy Fenton (Brock), Joan Friedenbergl (Southern Illinois), and Jan Gregersen (Akershus) for their comments on the earlier paper.

The Ten Recommended Administrative Measures

- 1. "Focus on the situation, issue, or behaviour, not the person."**
- 2. Replace quasi-judicial campus tribunals with administrative decision-making.**
- 3. Unless evidence compels them, avoid forensic words like allegations and charges.**
- 4. Keep the rules clear, fair, and simple; keep policy and procedure manuals short.**
- 5. In the face of demands that a professor be punished, entertain not just the null hypothesis but the mobbing hypothesis.**
- 6. Seek proximate, specific, depersonalized explanations for why some professor is on the outs, as opposed to distant, general, personal explanations.**
- 7. Encourage mindfulness of all the bases on which academic mobbings occur.**
- 8. Defend free expression and encourage dialogic outlets for it on campus.**
- 9. Keep administration open and loose.**
- 10. Answer internal mail.**

In this final chapter, my aim is not to summarize the earlier ones or my own and others' previous work, nor to document the pathology further, but to draw lessons from the cases of academic mobbing I have studied. The lessons offered here are not so much for personal defense. Suggestions of this kind are found mainly in other volumes of this series, especially Part Six of *Workplace Mobbing in Academe* (2004) and the chapter by Ross A. Klein in *Winning, Losing, Moving On* (2005). See also the essay by Hector Hammerly, published posthumously on the web. The focus here, by contrast, is on practical implications mainly at the organizational level: ten specific administrative measures for prevention of this bizarre social process, and beyond that, for making academic workplaces more truthful, productive, and decent.

I assume here that the preceding chapters have conveyed, from varied points of view and through diverse examples, an understanding of what workplace mobbing is and how it happens. Readers still in doubt or seeking further evidence can consult the other books in this series and the wider research literature. References given at the end of the introductory chapter are useful starting points.

I assume here also, and trust readers will agree, that workplace mobbing is not inevitable, that its occurrence can be reduced through reasoned human intervention. Lynchings, duels, and blood feuds were at one time counted regrettable but common and ineradicable realities of life, part of human nature. By now in North America, they rarely happen. Yet mobbing is today widely accepted as part of normal academic politics, as if nothing can be done about it except try to escape being targeted oneself. This concluding chapter, even more than the preceding ones, is founded on a rejection of this view, a confidence that by reasoned study of workplace mobbing, we can devise ways of lowering its incidence, as was earlier achieved for certain other kinds of harm.

Yet a third assumption bears mention: that the way to prevent mobbing is to change the structure of the workplace, the conduct of governance and administration. This is not to deny the importance of good will and good faith; it is to steer attention away from motives and mental states to actual practice. The proposals made here are pragmatic in William James's sense: focussed on behavioural, organizational measures that promise to achieve the desired outcome even when people's motives are mixed and their intentions are not altogether pure. This paper is not a call to repent of wickedness, but a plan for holding in check the wickedness that lurks in all of us.

To anyone willing to grant these three assumptions – that mobbing in universities is a real pathology, that it is not inevitable, and that identifiable administrative techniques can make it less prevalent – the concluding important question is, “Which techniques?”

The Waterloo Strategy vs. the Criminalization Strategy

The ten interrelated techniques proposed below constitute what I call the Waterloo Strategy for prevention of mobbing. I do not mean to suggest that my home university is a paragon of virtue or has formally adopted this strategy. The two basic measures on the list, to which most of the others are corollary, have been officially adopted by Waterloo's administration. Mainly, I have packaged these ten measures as the Waterloo Strategy in grateful recognition of the university that has hosted and supported my research over the past dozen years – rarely with enthusiasm, but faithfully even so.

Calling this package the Waterloo Strategy is also a shorthand way of contrasting it to a different preventive strategy that is widely proposed, what might be called the Criminalization Strategy. The latter rests on the same three assumptions (those listed above) as the former, but its defining tactic for preventing mobbing is to formally proscribe it in an anti-mobbing policy, an anti-mobbing clause of a collective agreement, or an anti-mobbing law at the state, provincial, or national level – in much the same way as sexual harassment has been criminalized in many jurisdictions.

Psychologists Gary and Ruth Namie are leading proponents of the Criminalization Strategy in the United States, and law professor David Yamada has drafted a model statute against what he calls “status-blind harassment.” The idea is to define mobbing empirically and then outlaw it. The anti-mobbing policy, clause, or law typically provides for the adjudication of alleged violations by a quasi-judicial tribunal, arbitrator, or court, and mandates penalties up to and including dismissal for participation in mobbing activities.

The Criminalization Strategy has been adopted by numerous corporations in Europe, notably Volkswagen A G, and at the state level by France and Italy. In 2004, Quebec became the first North American jurisdiction to pass anti-mobbing legislation, which has been introduced in the legislatures also of Ontario and several American states. Policies against mobbing and bullying have also been established in some branches of the public service.

While respecting the good intentions that lay behind the Criminalization Strategy and while granting its value for raising awareness of the problem, I doubt that it works: that is, reduces the

incidence of mobbing or raises levels of decency and productivity on the job. Clogged courts, wasted resources, subtler mobbing techniques, distrust and hard feelings are more likely consequences, as have been observed in France since enactment of anti-mobbing legislation.

The concluding chapter of my book, *The Envy of Excellence* (2005), spelled out my reservations about the Criminalization Strategy. Here, in a more positive vein, I suggest some elements of a different approach, the Waterloo Strategy, which emphasizes practice more than policy, politics more than law, and administrative as opposed to judicial or quasi-judicial procedures.

Ten Administrative Measures

1. "Focus on the situation, issue, or behaviour, not the person."

This first measure is in quotation marks because this is how it is succinctly phrased on the webpage of Waterloo's human resources department and in posters displayed across campus, which identify it as the first principle for the UW workplace. By definition, only a person can be mobbed. A situation can be remedied, an issue sorted out, a behaviour corrected, and a problem solved, but none of these can be mobbed. That is why these matters should occupy our minds rather than the personalities of our co-workers. Workplace mobbing represents a collective turning inward, a shift of energy and attention away from situations and issues, away from extrinsic organizational objectives, toward going after the SOB down the corridor. At the most basic level, prevention of mobbing requires us academics to keep our minds, day after grueling day, on getting the work of teaching and research done, rather than on separating bad guys from good guys.

Professors X and Y are at loggerheads, disagreeing sharply about something or other. X goes to the dean. Here are three responses by which the dean can set the stage for a mobbing: (a) "Y is a woman of impeccable integrity; I cannot believe she is acting in anything but good faith"; (b) "Y is a perpetual malcontent and there is no way to please her"; or even (c) "I'm not sure what to do, because I like you, but I like Y, too." Instead of inept responses like these, which focus on Y's personal character and lay groundwork for mobbing either her or her opponent, a dean mindful of the first anti-mobbing measure hones in on the specific issue that X and Y at this moment are fighting over, brings evidence and reason to bear on it, seeks out and weighs conflicting viewpoints, looks for common ground, searches for whatever solution will best serve the university's purposes. X, Y, and the dean all live to fight another day, and no witch gets burned.

2. Replace quasi-judicial campus tribunals with administrative decision-making.

An adversarial, court-like proceeding wherein an accused person is indicted, tried, and judged, is the single best example of what sociologist Harold Garfinkel called, in his classic article (*American Journal of Sociology*, 1956), a "degradation ceremony." It is a sweetly effective tool for transporting a disliked colleague into disrepute. Removing such proceedings from university governance structures therefore deprives prospective mobbers of one of their most effective tools, and lowers the odds that any professor will be mobbed. This anti-mobbing measure is generically similar to gun control as a means of reducing the murder rate or nuclear disarmament for lowering the risk of total war. By making the tool for doing harm less available, less harm is done.

So enamoured of courts has our society become that this proposal to do without courts on campus may seem utopian. Our actual experience at Waterloo therefore deserves emphasis: that in 1998, the Board of Governors of the University of Waterloo abolished our campus tribunal, the UW ethics committee, that had for sixteen years been adjudicating complaints of sexual harassment, racial discrimination, and similar ethical violations (see my detailed documentary history of the tribunal). In the eight years that have passed (at this writing) since 1998, such complaints have been handled

by chairs, deans, and other administrators in the routine course of their jobs. The sky has not fallen. Professors and students have not run ethically amok. We now lack, moreover, an intoxicating organizational instrument by which to run collectively amok in mobbing a colleague.

Court procedures for deciding disputes are usefully compared to surgical procedures for healing diseases. The former, like the latter, are sometimes the best alternative in the circumstance at hand. All agree, however, that no surgical procedure should even be attempted unless stringent specific conditions are all met: careful diagnosis and pre-operative preparation of the patient, an absolutely sterile and well-fitted operating room, a surgeon, anesthetist, and nurses who are highly skilled, rested and focussed, freedom from interruption, careful observance of tried and true techniques, all the necessary tools and equipment, a recovery room, and after-care. We insist on these conditions because for all its possible benefits, surgery is risky and dangerous, and can easily do more harm than good. The patient may die. This same logic should be applied to any court or court-like procedure wherein a professor's name and position are at stake. Adjudication will likely do more harm than good unless all the requisite conditions are met: careful diagnosis that this procedure is appropriate for this case, careful preparation by both sides, an absolutely unbiased setting, judges who are impartial, learned, wise, rested and focussed, freedom from interruption, meticulous observance of due process, all the necessary documentation, a functioning tape recorder, time for recovery, and so on.

That these stringent conditions are often unmet in public courts is demonstrated by the frequency of wrongful convictions and of decisions overturned by appellate courts. But in campus tribunals, these conditions are virtually never met, despite the best of intentions on everybody's part. They were certainly not met in the cases of Therese Warden and Uhuru Watson at Medaille College, nor in the case of Herbert Richardson at the University of Toronto. It is easy to find professors willing to sit in judgment of their colleagues, especially when importuned to do so by university authorities – a circumstance that by itself undermines impartiality. It is almost impossible to satisfy the conditions that would raise campus tribunals above the level of kangaroo courts. That is why quasi-judicial procedures should have no place within a university.

Currently at Waterloo, disputes that are not resolved through normal administrative decision-making (negotiation, mediation, horse-trading, cajoling, compromise) may be taken to external arbitration – or in the case of criminal conduct, to public courts. This system is not perfect, but it affords at least some distance from campus politics, it is usually public, and rules of evidence and due process are generally observed. Empirically, it has proven more successful than our earlier system of internal ethics and grievance tribunals. I played a significant part in this procedural overhaul, and I am proud to have done so. Any would-be defender of campus tribunals should walk in the shoes of Warden and Watson at Medaille, or of Richardson at Toronto, or in my own shoes as I was going through the three tribunal proceedings at Waterloo years ago. The experience was akin to undergoing a major surgical procedure in a toolshed at the hands of a drunken dropout from medical school who is not wearing scrubs and has not washed his hands in a week.

Administrators' decisions are more likely to be wise, of course, when they are subject to the countervailing power of senate, board, media, faculty association, and the varied committees through which faculty and students share in university governance. When reasoned, dialogic, nonforensic mechanisms of dispute resolution are in place, the need for court procedures is greatly reduced – just as healthy lifestyles and appropriate medications greatly reduce the need for expensive, invasive, life-threatening surgical procedures. Tribunals and courts should always be a last resort for resolving administrative issues in a university, always external to its own hierarchy of authority, and never even contemplated unless the full list of stringent specific conditions has been met.

3. Unless evidence compels them, avoid forensic words like allegations and charges.

This third technique for preventing mobbing follows closely on the first two. The use in academic discourse of language drawn from courts of law distracts from solving problems and threatens people personally. It is a step toward squaring off for a fight.

Professors disagree a lot. They take offense and get angry. In the realm of ideas, disputes can be fierce. In such a context, skilled administrators refrain from gratuitously imposing forensic language on diffuse statements of concern, as in, “Even if not explicitly, Professor X, you have made allegations of serious misconduct against Professor Y, and I am therefore obliged to commence an investigation of these charges according to university policy.” Far better to solve the problem, to sort out and resolve Professor X’s concerns. In universities (unlike in courts), disputes need not be win-lose. Rarely is there need to pronounce anyone guilty of anything. Even the threat of such pronouncement casts a pall on the lively, free-wheeling inquiry, discourse and debate by which academics (on good days) reach new thresholds of truth.

I count myself lucky to have been able to observe closely for many years an exceedingly effective principal of a successful private school. How did he manage so well? By ignoring many of the squabbles parents and teachers got into, by resolving some squabbles creatively, by recoiling from forensic language – meanwhile focussing fanatically with consummate skill on educating every child. And when one boy brought a gun to school and sold it to another boy, the principal calmly phoned the police and expelled both boys. All academic administrators should have his sense of when forensic language is and is not appropriate.

4. Keep the rules clear, fair, and simple; keep policy and procedure manuals short.

Like all bureaucracies, universities need to codify rules. I have read dozens of different manuals of policy and procedure, some better than others, in the course of studying mobbing cases in varied universities. Yet not a single mobbing in my research is explained by bad policies, faults in written rules. The explanation lies instead in the ignoring, twisting, or misapplication of reasonable rules by academics who have identified an enemy and aim to get rid of him or her.

Often, after a mobbing hits the news and embarrasses a university, authorities both inside and outside admit that “the matter was handled badly,” but they are loath to blame the mob, which after all was composed of respected scholars. They recoil from saying, “Dean A, and Professors B, C, and D got carried away on this occasion and lost their usual good sense; their attack on Professor E was over the top.” The blame instead is placed on faulty rules, the poor wording of one policy or the inadequate provisions of another. Committees are therefore struck to revise the rules, and a great flurry of activity ensues, typically resulting in longer policies and more detailed procedures that are said to be far superior to the previous ones. This appears to have occurred at Medaille College, in the wake of the Warden and Watson dismissals.

Ironically, the multiplication of procedural rules may do more harm than good, setting the stage for future mobbings. Once the period of adoption has passed, academics tend not to take time to read long, complicated policies, and their actual behaviour may end up less rule-bound than before. Further, when a dispute arises, it may be exacerbated and its resolution prevented by interminable argument over conflicting interpretations of rules and procedures, while the substance of the dispute is lost. Still worse, a line here or there in a byzantine policy can be lifted out of context and used as a weapon against an enemy.

Rules matter. The current campaign of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) to get rid of ill-written speech codes that inhibit free expression highlights how important it is to have good rules: clear, fair, short and simple.

5. In the face of demands that a professor be punished, entertain not just the null hypothesis but the mobbing hypothesis.

Often, an issue is already couched in exclusionary, stigmatizing, forensic language by the time one learns of it. Waterloo philosopher Jan Narveson has nicely phrased a request commonly brought to university administrators: "Git my enemies!" Chair or dean receives a delegation that says essentially, "Professor Z is a racist [sexist, plagiarist, thief, bully, abuser, harasser, nutbar, terrorist, or some other discrediting label]. This has to stop. Do something."

Faced with this proffered hypothesis of Professor Z's guilt of some offense, an unskilled administrator simply accepts it out of personal respect for its authors or personal aversion to Z: "I'm sorry to hear this about Z, but it does not surprise me. I admire your courage and good faith in coming here. What can I do to help Z's victims and prevent there being more of them?"

A somewhat more skilled administrator acknowledges the proffered hypothesis but weighs it against the contrary or null hypothesis, that Z has not in fact behaved in a way that warrants administrative interference with Z's work: "I understand your concerns and I will look into the matter. Possibly you are right, but possibly there has been some misunderstanding."

A highly skilled administrator entertains the first two hypotheses but also a third one, that this is no mere misunderstanding, that Z's accusers are caught up in a panic or hysteria that prevents them from thinking and seeing straight, that their zealous demand for Z's punishment fits the bill of what researchers call workplace mobbing.

The advantage of knowing this third hypothesis is that it broadens the range of possible interpretations to place on the usually confusing data of disputes. Mobbing is prevented to the extent that administrators and rank-and-file professors know its signs and indicators and keep in mind the possibility that it is happening before their eyes. This helps avoid being naively drawn into an incipient mob, like the unskilled administrator in this example.

6. Seek proximate, specific, depersonalized explanations for why some professor is on the outs, as opposed to distant, general, personal explanations.

Mobbings begin with one professor set apart from and clashing with the majority and with the relevant administrators on what is typically a series of issues: performance evaluation, promotion, course assignments, space allocation, program requirements, mailbox location, and so on and on. (The Richardson case is an archetype in this respect.) As the pattern begins to be obvious, some kind of meeting is likely to be scheduled to try to make things better. This may be at the beleaguered professor's request, or that of a concerned administrator. The meeting is often ad hoc, often in the dean's office, but it may occur as part of a faculty retreat, strategic planning exercise, department meeting, or mediation.

Mobbing is promoted and lasting harm can be done if the meeting yields an explanation of the conflict in terms of some personal characterization of the professor on the outs: his or her sexual or racial identity, an ideological label, traumatic childhood experiences, upbringing, mental health, personality traits, or general disposition. Such an explanation isolates the professor more than ever, no matter whether voiced with sympathy, pity, anger, puzzlement, or dismay.

To nip a mobbing in the bud, the conflict needs to be depersonalized and attention directed to academic objectives. The agenda for such a meeting should be the specific, immediate issues in dispute, even if there are 17 of them. The presider should insist that these issues be reasonably discussed, one by one, with the easiest first, and rule out of order personal characterizations of any

of the parties in dispute. This can be hard. Depersonalizing a conflict and breaking it into manageable parts is a skill that must be learned. Exercising this skill when academics are riled up takes discipline and presence of mind. The price for forgetting it in such a meeting can be years of court proceedings, therapy sessions, doctors' visits, and hospital stays. The price can be the chronic disability or death of a scholar who has much to give.

7. Encourage mindfulness of all the bases on which academic mobbings occur.

In keeping with a value on human equality, most academics in our time know the vulnerability of women, visible minorities, people with disabilities, and homosexuals to unfair treatment. Today as in the past, a mobbing can be rooted in prejudice against people in any of these categories.

Research shows that a person can also be singled out and ganged up on for a number of other reasons, which need also to be kept in mind as possible explanations when a conflict arises. Any factor that sets a person radically apart from others in an academic unit is a possible basis of mobbing. Whistle-blowing is a common basis: wagons get circled when somebody publicly exposes low conduct in high places.

Envy is a powerful force in human affairs. Any professor who shows others up, even unwittingly, by excellence in teaching, research, credentials, looks, sports, connections, indeed in any way at all, can elicit collegial effort to teach that professor a lesson, trim that colleague down to size.

In the majority of academic mobbings I have studied, one of the leaders of the mob is an administrator – a department chair, dean, vice-president, or president – whose appointment to a position of leadership was opposed by the professor who is targeted. Both the Medaille and Toronto cases exemplify this pattern: Warden had let Donohue know she could not support him as permanent president, and Richardson was on record as opposing Joanne McWilliam as chair of religious studies. A professor who has landed a coveted administrative post sometimes displays almost a compulsion to go after a colleague who supported somebody else, as if to say: "I went out on a limb and risked losing face by letting my name stand. You tried to shame me. Therefore now I will shame you."

The prevention of mobbing in universities depends on us academics doing what we are supposed to be especially skilled at: keeping ourselves conscious of a wide variety of possible factors for explaining what is going on, even for explaining our own initial impulses as to what to do, before we took time to reflect.

8. Defend free expression and encourage dialogic outlets for it on campus.

In their important book, *The Shadow University* (Free Press, 1998), Alan Kors and Harvey Silverglate quote approvingly the famous sentiment of Justice Louis Brandeis, that sunlight is the best disinfectant. Like a fungus, mobbing thrives in the dark, hidden by rules of confidentiality, anonymity, secrecy. The prospect of public exposure discourages not only mobbing, but other kinds of nefarious academic shenanigans. Freedom of speech and press are therefore essential to any preventive strategy.

As stewards of an institution dependent on public support, university administrators rightly value good press, and wince at the airing of campus dirty laundry in public media. Yet if a university is to achieve its purpose of seeking and spreading truth, fostering a positive public image must always have lower priority than upholding every professor's right and duty to tell the truth as he or she sees it, arguing points reasonably in light of evidence.

The main technology for free expression is shifting rapidly from print to electronic media. At Waterloo, our campus newspaper, the Gazette, ceased publication in June of 2004. Here as elsewhere, academics look increasingly to the web for information and opinion. Websites are commonly used to put before the public cases of allegedly wrongful conviction. To foster an intelligent, dialogic campus climate, universities not only defend individuals' rights to publish websites in the free-for-all of cyberspace, but also supplement personal websites with electronic newspapers and magazines, local counterparts to nation-wide initiatives like insidehighered, that serve freedom of expression at higher calibre.

9. Keep administration open and loose.

To the extent the eight measures suggested so far are set in place, they define a campus culture inconducive to mobbing anyone – not a safe or benign culture, since seeking truth is hard and risky work, but an open culture where academics find better things to do than look for witches. Such a culture is a necessarily collaborative creation. It cannot be imposed from the top down. If the senior administration is apart from rather than in solidarity with the professoriate, any trappings of an open culture are fake, and mobbings arise among professors estranged from the administration, also among administrators annoyed by professors who trumpet politically incorrect truths or who claim their right to share in university governance.

The maintenance of an open, participatory campus culture is a challenge for us at Waterloo, as for our colleagues elsewhere. I wish I could say that the first two measures on this list came to be adopted at Waterloo as a result of broad, vigorous dialogue and debate on campus. Not so. The first principle for the UW workplace, so excellent a formulation, was proposed by a management consulting firm. It was announced before the faculty had heard of it. The Board of Governors abolished Waterloo's ethics committee in the midst of a governance crisis, after that committee's decisions had publicly embarrassed the university. Abolition would have been a still more splendid move, had it been rooted in a more democratic process.

The archetypal setting for workplace mobbing, reflected in novels like *Billy Budd*, poems like "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner," and films like *The Caine Mutiny*, is the tight ship: intensely hierarchical, strictly disciplined, with little time for reflection, talk or liberty. Historically, survival on the high seas required a closed, rigid organization, and occasional mobbings were a by-product, a cost that few ships escaped. In a university, by contrast, which cannot achieve its scholarly goals except with time for reflection, talk, and liberty, workplace mobbing is not an inevitable cost but senseless waste. By keeping academic administration open and loose, a university not only minimizes this particular form of cruelty but also better serves its intellectual purposes in general.

10. Answer internal mail.

Anybody in a position of even a little prominence – as an author of books, for instance, or subject of a news story – is easily overwhelmed by external mail: letters, phone calls, or emails from people he or she does not know. He or she must be forgiven for failing to respond to every single communication received. At least I hope so, since I have sometimes failed in this respect, despite my intention to give some brief answer to anyone kind enough to write to me. Nobody has a legal or moral obligation to respond to unsolicited mail from strangers.

It is different with internal mail: letters, memos, calls or emails from people in the same network of social relations as the recipient – the same workplace, for instance. The duty to respond applies in particular to communications sent by a co-worker or by a subordinate to a superordinate (student to course instructor, for instance, or professor to dean). And the more heartfelt the communication is, the more important that it receive some kind of response.

One of the early warning signs that a professor is being mobbed is that his or her earnest messages to colleagues or to administrative superiors are simply ignored. They go unanswered. This amounts to the “silent treatment,” what is called in German *todschweigen*, death by silence. As a professor and former administrator, I know how often professors get bees in their bonnets and inflict on colleagues and superiors long, unwanted missives that are exceedingly hard to respond to. I have both sent and received such communications. As postmodern influences have penetrated universities, as epistemologies have become more plural, and as power has become more centralized, the problem of not knowing how to respond to messages is probably worse now than in decades past. That is all the more reason to give some kind of respectful response, however brief, if only to affirm the common, collegial bond between sender and recipient that is the academy’s one foundation.

Conclusion

There is nothing sacred about the practical techniques or measures with which this book concludes. The list can be expanded or reduced, the items on it combined or broken down further. The heuristic purpose of this book that was emphasized at the start, bears repeating here at the end. My aim has been to raise questions and provoke thought, more than to answer questions or have any kind of last word. Collectively, the measures listed above reflect the general thrust of my research so far, and outline a practical strategy for lessening the number of horror stories in academe and for making the working lives of all of us – administrators, professors, staff, students – more productive, constructive, fun, and in a phrase from Pope John XXIII, “a little less sad.”