Responding to Bullying in the WPA Workplace

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This article reports on findings from interviews with WPAs and other stake-holders on their experiences with bullying in the WPA workplace. We argue that, although workplace bullying is a pressing problem in our field, it has been largely unaddressed in WPA scholarship and resources. As such, the main aims of this article are to serve as a call to action for our field and colleagues and to facilitate a necessary shift in culture through specific recommended actions. The article contains four narrative case studies that demonstrate the characteristics of bullying and the toll bullying takes on a writing program and the people within it. In response to these case studies, we offer five recommendations for agentive responses to workplace bullying.

In the edited collection *Defining, Locating, and Addressing Bullying in the WPA Workplace* (Elder and Davila), we argue that workplace bullying is a pressing problem in rhetoric and composition—one that has been, for the most part, unaddressed in our field's scholarship and resources. The collection's chapter authors draw on personal experiences to locate bullying across institution types and writing program spaces and to theorize and define bullying. Collectively, the chapters describe bullying that ranges from institutional racism, microaggressions, mobbing, "academic systemic incivility" (Griswold), and emotional abuse. These persistent, negative, and demeaning behaviors (including verbal abuse, rumors, and excessive criticism) fall within commonly agreed-upon definitions of workplace bullying (Fox and Cowan 124; Keashly and Neuman 49; Salin 1215; Vega and Comer 101). Bullying differs from disagreements or rudeness in that the behaviors represent a pattern, typically span a period of time (a common time frame referenced in the scholarship is three to six months), and can negatively impact a target's work performance and physical and mental health (Vega and Comer 106; Fox and Cowan 116). Additionally, according to Vega and Comer, workplace bullying "can create an environment of psychological threat" (101).

The first chapter of *Defining, Locating, and Addressing Bullying in the WPA Workplace* reports on the results of our national survey of stakeholders in the WPA workplace. Through the results of the survey, we learned that bullying in our field can span from exclusion and isolation to intimidation and threats. The behaviors are directed at WPAs by administrators, other faculty, and even students. Sometimes the WPA is the bully themselves (Davila and Elder 21–28). Moreover, approximately 85% of the 124 survey respondents indicated they had experienced bullying in the WPA workplace (Davila and Elder 21).[1] This high incidence, coupled with our field's silence on the issue, presents a problem that we argue our field can no longer ignore.

Themes that pervade our research on workplace bullying have been discussed recently in threads on the WPA-L but in terms of sexual harassment rather than bullying (see, for example, "Rubrics to Assess Writing Assignments," which originated on October 21, 2018). These themes include the almost audible frustration with the silence from those in positions of power to address the issue and the complicity of those who should be allies. As many respondents on the WPA-L are at a loss with how to respond to sexual harassment or assault—and that's if they've even noticed the problem—the same goes with workplace bullying, some patterns of which are described below. However, while the discussion on the listserv has brought much-needed attention to the issue of sexual harassment in our field and writing programs, the issue of bullying remains largely ignored or unaddressed. Although we do not equate bullying with sexual harassment (the latter has legal ramifications while the former, thus far, does not), we do believe that both are toxic parts of our field's culture and both require direct action.

This article extends the national survey findings referenced above with an analysis of qualitative data from interviews we conducted with WPAs and other stakeholders on their experiences with bullying in the WPA workplace. Additionally, we offer five recommendations for agentive responses as a result of these findings. Through this research, we aim to counter the avoidance that appears in each of our interviews under various guises: people (colleagues, mentors, administrators) offer advice in the face of bullying, telling targets to "keep their heads down" (i.e., become invisible), not to "poke the bear" (i.e., don't attract bullying or bring it upon themselves), or even to put on their "big girl pants" (i.e., grow accustomed to and accept the bullying). Targets are told to limit their interactions with their bullies, which often means they take a leave of absence, step down from an administrative position, take a position outside of their department, or find another job. All of these strategies, ultimately, are forms of avoidance. Of course, in some instances, these strategies are the only form

of agency a target has or, for various reasons, are the best approach for targets to take. Nonetheless, in the interviews we report on here and in the existing scholarship, we can see that avoidance does not solve the problem. Unaddressed bullying allows for additional bullying and can normalize the destructive behaviors as part of the culture (McDaniel, Ngala, and Leonard; Salin). Additionally, since bullying, like sexual harassment, is a pattern of behavior, avoidance may help one target deal with the bullying but does not stop the behavior itself. Instead, bullies move on to other targets—an unfortunate reality that is consistent across our interviews.

Our main aim in this article is to call our field and colleagues to action, to argue that inaction—especially among bystanders and allies with the ability to do something—is unethical, and to facilitate a necessary shift in culture through specific recommended actions. Below we provide four case studies that demonstrate characteristics of bullying and the toll bullying takes on a writing program and the people within it. In response to these case studies, we offer specific suggestions and recommendations for action one may take when witnessing or experiencing these kinds of bullying.

Methods

In this IRB-approved study (UNM protocol #866852-2), we interviewed twenty-two participants, including WPAs and other stakeholders in the WPA workplace, who had volunteered as a part of our national online survey on bullying in the WPA workplace. Of the twenty-two participants, 77% identified as female, 18% as male, and 5% as transgender. The participants were between the ages of 30 and 69; they were assistant professors (18%), associate professors (36%), full professors (18%), lecturers (14%), non-tenure-track administrators (5%), or they held positions that spanned these categories (9%). They worked at liberal arts colleges (36%), research institutions (50%), community colleges (5%), or institutions not represented by the categories we offered in the pre-interview survey (9%). The vast majority of our participants (95%) identified as white, and one participant (5%) identified as Mexican American. These demographics, which include different ages, multiple institutional types, varying faculty and administrative positions, and (though to a lesser extent) different races and genders, reveal the pervasiveness of bullying.

We began the interviews by asking participants to describe their experiences with bullying in the WPA workplace and followed up with clarifying questions as necessary. We also asked participants to confirm our understandings regarding their perceived agency in the situation and asked them,

with the benefit of hindsight, what they thought could have been done to improve the situation.

As co-principal investigators of this study, we performed the first nine interviews together to get a sense of the kinds of clarifying questions we wanted to ask and to ensure our protocol was specific enough that we could conduct interviews individually. We then split the remaining interviews between the two of us. We recorded the interviews with participants' approval and kept careful written notes for each one.

Because we analyzed our survey data in advance of analyzing the interviews (see Davila and Elder for a description of this analysis), we had a sense of the patterns in behaviors of bullying as they relate to the NAQ-R (Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised), a survey instrument designed to catalogue behaviors of bullying in workplaces (Einarsena, Hoelb, and Notelaersa; see the appendix for the slightly adapted list of NAQ-R behaviors as they were included in our survey[2]). For example, we knew that over half of our survey respondents

> indicated they frequently or occasionally experienced . . . bullying in one or more of the following ways: being ignored or excluded (67%), someone withholding information which affects your performance (59%), having your opinions ignored (59%), spreading of gossip and rumors about you (52%). (21)

Moreover, we knew that in the WPA workplace, some of these behaviors were directed at the writing program, not just the person (e.g., the category "spreading of gossip and rumors about you" often included "gossip and rumors related to a writing program") (Davila and Elder 24). Through our analysis, we wanted to know more about individuals' experiences with bullying, including what kinds of situations seem to give rise to bullying, how people respond to bullying, what the effects of bullying are, who the bullies are, if there are patterns in terms of contextual factors and bullying, and how we can advise our field to respond to bullying in the WPA workplace. As such, we first analyzed the interviews according to these questions.

In what follows, we offer four case studies coupled with five recommended responses for our field. The case studies each focus on different characteristics of bullying, including bullying by those who have long been known to be problematic but whose negative behaviors have never been adequately addressed within a department and institution, bullying by the chair of the department, bullying from those within our field, and bullying that extends beyond one individual and includes groups of people who bully other groups of people categorized by discipline, department, or program—a phenomenon that we describe as program mobbing and discuss

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in more detail in case #3 in this article. However, experiences with bullying rarely fall into tidy categories. As such, individual interviews (represented here by their interview numbers) might be used as evidence for multiple characteristics of bullying. Nonetheless, we've used the four cases described below to highlight the different patterns of bullying that emerged in our interviews and to identify possible responses to these behaviors.

In order to protect our participants' identities, we chose not to rely heavily on extended quotations. Instead, for these case studies, we drew from multiple, related interviews to write the narratives of different experiences with bullying. The intermixing of details in the case studies allows us to include specific details and representative examples while still protecting interviewees from identification and retaliation.[3] Moreover, because these case studies are organized around consistent patterns that emerged in the individual interviews as well as across interviews, we believe they allow us to effectively counter concerns about evaluating truth or representing the "other side of the story." While some readers might be tempted to wonder whether a respondent misinterpreted or misrepresented a situation or whether there could be a justification for the behavior described in the cases, we argue that because these patterns are reported across interviews, claims of bullying are validated.

Finally, it is important to note that no aspects of these accounts have been fictionalized. Rather, individual experiences have been aggregated, including our own experiences with bullying at our institution. Each narrative includes some context surrounding the bullying, the characteristics and effects of the behaviors, and the target's and institution's response (or lack thereof) to the bullying.

Case #1: When "Toxic" Behaviors Go Unchecked

"That's just the way she is." "Try to keep your head down." "Avoid her." This was the advice Maria received when she first started asking around about a fellow faculty member's unprofessional behavior.[4] Somehow her colleague Stephanie was allowed to scream at people in meetings and in hallways, slam doors, and pound on desks, all without repercussion. Perhaps worse than these public displays of aggression and intimidation were her more manipulative behaviors: the gossip that aimed to turn colleagues against someone, the formal and informal false charges made about people's credentials and professional backgrounds, and the pattern of unethical treatment of graduate students such as insisting a student lie in an IRB application (which the student ultimately refused to do), telling grad students to avoid one of their peers because he had a dangerous (unsubstantiated)

mental illness, and repeatedly backing out of writing recommendation letters for graduate students at the last minute. Despite widespread knowledge of these patterns of behavior, the department never confronted Stephanie.

Maria later learned that in addition to the yelling and undermining, Stephanie also regularly threatened to file suit against the department, the institution, and even specific colleagues, claiming in an ironic reversal that she was the target of bullying and deserved legal recourse. In fact, Stephanie did end up filing institutional complaints against Maria. Even though there was plenty of evidence of Stephanie's pattern of bullying behaviors and no objective evidence to substantiate her own claims of being bullied, no one wanted to risk the time and money of a lawsuit, so her unsupported claims protected her and forced Maria to prove Stephanie's charges were untrue; even more troubling, administrators refused to take action against the real bullying that was happening. What the department and institution seemed to have lost sight of was the enormous cost of the unchecked bullying. Stephanie lowered morale, undermined the WPA, and continually put graduate students in a horrible position of having to decide whether to report her and risk retaliation or to just try to pick up the pieces after she would turn against them midstream. Likewise, by not addressing the behaviors, the department and the institution provided tacit permission for the toxic behavior and contributed to the normalization of the bullying.

Maria wondered what she could do, as an assistant professor, to address the situation; Stephanie was tenured, and no one else seemed willing to act. Maria began by writing a cease and desist letter, naming Stephanie's behavior as workplace bullying and outlining specific ways it violated campus policy. Maria also asked administrators and tenured faculty to respond to Stephanie's behavior. Despite these efforts by Maria and the faculty who agreed to speak out about Stephanie's bullying, the behaviors persisted. Maria continued to work toward a balance of protecting herself in the tenure process and addressing the bullying so as not to let it negatively affect her and those with even less power than she had.

As case #1 illustrates, bullying like Stephanie's seems to be attributed, in part, to a pattern of toxic behavior or departmental culture that has been allowed to develop and run unchecked in the past. Those who reported experiences with this kind of bullying noted behaviors such as a faculty member threatening to mark her favorite classroom with urine to dissuade others from using it, telling junior faculty or lecturers that they weren't allowed to speak in meetings or that they weren't allowed to visit each other's offices, using threatening body language, swearing loudly and slamming doors, making demeaning comments and giving excessive criticism,

and using physical intimidation and making threats of violence (interviews 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 14, 16, 19, 20, and 21).

Additionally, some of the interviewees who experienced this kind of bullying considered competition over resources to be a contributing factor (interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 11, and 12). In a couple of the interviews (interviews 1 and 3), we learned about intense competition for administrative positions that provided faculty or instructors with teaching releases and some level of control over programs. In one of these instances, the bullies considered themselves to be better qualified for the WPA position than the WPA and used bullying tactics to try to claim the role for themselves. In these situations, bullies worked to undermine the target's authority, intimidate targets, verbally attack the target, threaten the target's job security—even in situations when the bully wasn't in a position of power over the target (interviews 1 and 3), and, in one case, physically threaten and attack the target (interview 3). In other cases, the competition was over control of department decisions and resources (interviews 4, 5, 11, and 12).

Interviewees had different ideas about how apparent the toxic behavior was to those within or outside of the department. One interviewee was unsure if everyone in the department knew the extent of the damaging behavior but noted that those outside of the department were aware of the bully's damaging behavior. Another person indicated the reverse—that those within the department recognized the behavior but those on the outside weren't likely to notice it. Regardless of whether everyone fully recognized the bullying, participants repeatedly mentioned the negative effect of the bully's behavior on their department or program. Many of these interviewees tried multiple approaches to respond to the bullying but finally left their institutions when their efforts failed. Some of the participants who did not leave their institutions did leave their administrative positions.

Recommendation #1: Document and Report Patterns of Bullying

As a response to the above kind of bullying, we turn to the power of documentation. Because there must be a pattern of behavior over time for it to fit the definition of bullying, targets should keep careful records of behavior, including dates, who was present, what occurred, the effect of the behavior in terms of one's ability to do their job and in terms of physical and emotional responses, and the relationship of the various instances. In addition to a report of the incidents, targets should also collect other types of materials, such as emails, when possible. For example, Maria saved and printed problematic or threatening emails from her bully as well as emails from other colleagues who noticed the abusive behavior in meetings and reached

out to her to offer support. She then used specific examples from this documentation when submitting her cease and desist letter. Of course, it can initially be hard to know whether certain instances count as bullying. In our research on the topic, we have heard people struggle with whether to define their experience as bullying, reporting that they only recognized it as such when someone else named or acknowledged it first (or they recognized the behavior as bullying as described in the NAQ-R survey), which is likely due to the normalization of bullying in our workplaces. Nonetheless, in an age of emails and electronic communication, it is often possible to retroactively document earlier experiences. Additionally, our research indicates that the bullying behavior won't stop without an intervention, so it is never too late to start collecting evidence.

This documentation can support targets if or when they file a claim against the bully. Moreover, the documentation can help targets counteract any claims the bully might make (as above when Stephanie claimed that she was being bullied). In Maria's case, she used her documentation to report Stephanie's bullying to the chair of the department, the dean of the college, and her faculty mentor. Additionally, a copy of Maria's cease and desist letter is included both in her own file and in Stephanie's file as protection should Stephanie try to sabotage Maria's tenure bid. However, Maria was unable to collect documentation of the unethical behavior against graduate students as the students were too afraid of retaliation to report their experiences officially. As such, we also recommend that WPAs investigate campus protocols for reporting behavior that provide vulnerable targets, such as graduate students, protection against retaliation by allowing them to remain anonymous. If no such reporting procedures exist, WPAs should work to create them.

At the University of New Mexico, graduate students can arrange a confidential meeting with the ombuds office in order to learn about the various avenues for reporting bullying. All people reporting violations are able to request anonymity; however, the university notes "making an anonymous report may limit a reporter's protection from retaliation and the University's ability to conduct a full and thorough investigation" ("Administrative Policies"). Additionally, if someone does file a report using their name, they are protected from retaliation by the campus "Whistleblower Protection Against Retaliation" policy, "regardless of whether or not an investigation confirms the misconduct" ("Administrative Policies"). We offer these specific examples from our university to help others look for similar policies at their own institutions and to provide example language should WPAs need to establish reporting procedures within their programs and departments.

Case #2: At the Pleasure of the Chair

When Scott began working as the WPA at a new institution, he quickly realized that working with the chair of the department was going to be a challenge. Scott faced persistent criticism and micromanaging; he was accused repeatedly of not doing his job, even though he was blocked from the resources he needed to do that very job. When he asked for prior assessment data for the program he was administering, he was told he couldn't have it or include it in any of his publications. When he was asked to teach the main course that was under his purview as an administrator, his colleagues would not allow him to use the curriculum that was already in place. And when he disagreed with a current practice, a graduate course was taken away from him as retaliation. The chair belittled Scott and the program repeatedly in meetings and in conversations with colleagues, which Scott described as public harassment. The chair was "unnecessarily mean-spirited" and cultivated negative feelings toward Scott among his colleagues through rumors and gossip, such as attributing new, unpopular policies (e.g., increased course caps and teaching loads) to Scott and the writing program even though they were dictated from above. Additionally, the chair expected Scott to bend to her will, treating him largely like a secretary and excluding him from discussions and meetings about his own program.

During his probationary review, Scott learned that the chair was only willing to put forward a positive vote (despite the overwhelming positive vote within the department) if he stepped down from his administrative role. Although Scott tried to get support from the dean, the dean responded that he was unwilling to get involved other than to take Scott out of the administrative position he was hired for as a form of protection from the bullying.

Scott turned to our field and his contacts at other institutions for support. Despite the bullying, he worked to do what he thought was best for the students in his program. These strategies helped, but Scott reported that the hostile work environment took a toll on his health and personal life, leaving him feeling demoralized and depressed. After being removed from his administrative position and watching the writing program move away from best practices in our field, Scott left the institution.

Case #2 represents a pattern of bullying between the WPA and the chair of the department that occurred in multiple interviews (interviews 5, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 20, and 22). This pattern often, but not always, occurs when the chair does not have WPA expertise. Sometimes this pattern of bullying was exacerbated by recent leadership changes (or attempted changes) in the program, department, or institution. Targets were told they

weren't able to do aspects of their WPA work (interviews 5, 7, 15, 17, and 20), had their authority undermined (interviews 5, 7, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 21), were verbally intimidated or attacked (interviews 7, 16, 17, 18, and 21), were excluded (interviews 10, 11, 16, and 20), and had their job security threatened (interviews 5, 7, 10, and 11). When writing programs are housed in English departments and the reporting lines dictate that the WPA reports to the chair, the authority and expertise of the WPA might go unrecognized as the chair makes decisions based on other factors and without sufficient knowledge of rhet-comp research.

Recommendation #2: Establish Written
Policies and Position Statements

We maintain that institutional policies on bullying are one of the key resources for those who are experiencing or witnessing bullying in their workplaces. These policies allow targets to file complaints, document behavior using institutionally recognized language, and name their experiences in order to encourage active responses. Additionally, these policies offer a partial response to another common contributing factor to bullying: hierarchical reporting lines. When it comes to workplace bullying and violations of institutional policies, it is no longer necessary or appropriate to follow established reporting lines that work to keep issues within departments or colleges. Instead, many workplace bullying policies have information about how to report these experiences that involve the bully's supervisor as opposed to the target's supervisor.

At the University of New Mexico, the policy on bullying falls under the "Respectful Campus Policy" ("C09: Respectful Campus"). The statement identifies "destructive actions," including "bullying," which is divided into several categories. The statement reads as follows: "Bullying is defined by the University as repeated mistreatment of one or more individuals or a pattern of mistreatment of more than one individual. This mistreatment can include, but is not limited to" verbal bullying, nonverbal bullying, threatening actions, and anonymous bullying. The policy then instructs faculty to report destructive actions first by informal processes, suggesting that this approach is ideal over formal processes and written complaints. Informal processes are described as reporting the behaviors to the bully's supervisor. The formal process includes writing a complaint, "preferably within 60 calendar days" of the action that includes "clear specific allegations," "dates, times, locations, and witnesses," "factual descriptions," "indication of how each incident made the complainant feel," "documentary evidence," and "description of action the complainant or others have already taken." This

formal complaint should be submitted to the bully's supervisor (not the target's supervisor) or through a process that includes whistleblower protection. According to these guidelines, the supervisor will then conduct an investigation into the formal complaint (C09: Respectful Campus).

In addition to asking our institutions to have written policies about workplace bullying, we need to do the same within our national organizations. In 2011, NCTE published the *Resolution on Confronting Bullying and Harassment.* However, this statement is directed at the need to make classroom spaces, particularly at the K–12 level, safe environments for students that are void of bullying and harassment. The resolution does not currently address the bullying that teachers and staff themselves may face. And while CCCC recently published in 2016 the *Position Statement on CCCC Standards for Ethical Conduct Regarding Sexual Violence, Sexual Harassment, and Hostile Environments*, the statement is specific to sexual violence and sexual harassment with only vague reference to what constitutes "hostile environments." The term "bullying" occurs only once, as "sexual bullying," in a citation to define "sexual violence." However, we would term this sexual assault, not bullying, and sexual assault is protected at the federal level, while bullying is not. Therefore, the 2016 statement leaves bullying unaddressed.[5] In September 2019, the CWPA Executive Board published the "CWPA Position Statement on Bullying in the Workplace," which includes a description of characteristics, effects, and responses to workplace bullying as well as a list of additional resources (Elder et al.).

Organizational position statements provide individuals with another document to cite when addressing bullying on their own campuses. Moreover, our research shows that when people within our field bully others, there can be considerable consequences for the target—particularly when the bully has significant stature within the field and the target is concerned about possible career-ending retaliation if they speak out against it. This is the kind of unacceptable circumstance that we must act against. As a field and an organization, we can decide to respond to bullying when it happens, resist its normalization, and refuse to protect it with silence.

Case #3: Program Mobbing

Laura faced hostility directly in response to her expertise in rhetoric and composition. In department meetings, she was silenced, shouted at, and her expertise was demeaned. Her colleagues worked together in advance of meetings in order to outvote Laura and her rhet-comp colleagues. She attributed this behavior to fear about the changing makeup of the department—the growing influence of writing faculty and programs and the fear

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that others would lose departmental power and, relatedly, tenure-track lines. When Laura spoke with the chair about the bullying, she was told to ignore it, that it wasn't that bad. The dean called it "departmental politics" and said that rhetoric and composition didn't constitute a protected class, so the behavior wasn't actionable. In short, there was no institutional response. However, for Laura (and, as she reports, many of her rhet-comp colleagues), this working environment was hostile, it negatively affected her health and her ability to do her job, and it put stress on her marriage. The situation was so intolerable that Laura considered leaving academia, feeling that it wasn't worth it. She was depressed and discouraged, so she—and many of the other rhet-comp faculty—left the institution.

Case #3 reflects what several interviewees (interviews 4, 5, 12, 17, and 20) described as competition between people and programs in relation to disciplinary differences, typically in a literature versus rhet-comp divide. In these instances, targets were excluded from departmental voting and decision making through systematic silencing (interviews 4, 12, and 20), were blocked from programmatic research (interview 5), were verbally intimidated and attacked (interviews 4 and 12), had their job security threatened (interview 5), were undermined (interviews 5, 17, and 20), and had aspects of their administrative work taken away from them (interviews 12, 17, and 20).

Recommendation #3: Reorganize as a Stand-Alone Writing Program or Department

In "The Professional *is* Personal: Institutional Bullying and the WPA," Amy Heckathorn describes at length the program mobbing she and her colleagues experienced at her institution. She goes on to argue that, at some point, there is "no…reasoning with a bully majority who has seen the power of its numbers," making change from within unlikely and even impossible (160). One solution, as Heckathorn suggests, is to separate from the English department and create a stand-alone writing program or department (see O'Neill and Schendel for a discussion of independent programs versus departments). In fact, many stand-alone programs came into being because of the kinds of program mobbing illustrated in case #3 and described by Heckathorn. In the introduction to the edited collection *A Field of Dreams: Independent Writing Programs and the Future of Composition Studies*, Angela Crow and Peggy O'Neill invoke Maxine Hairston's call for rhetoric and composition programs to claim their intellectual independence from the traditions, power, and practices of literature by "structurally separating from English" (2–3). As they explain,

> Some programs exist within English departments that have such skewed power relations that the composition and rhetoric profession-als have little or no control over administrative, pedagogical, and staffing issues—a situation that compromises the ability to create a viable writing program. (6)

Theresa Enos also attributes these conflicts to the unique position of rheto-ric and composition within English departments (Crow and O'Neill 3).

We recognize, as do Heckathorn and O'Neill, Crow, and Larry W. Burton, that transitioning to an independent program or department is not easy and is more of a long-term solution. Challenges to becoming inde-pendent, as originally detailed by Wendy Bishop and summarized here by Heckathorn, include the

> loss of potential 'English Studies' collaborations, concern that writ-ing departments [will] be thought of as service-only disciplines, the vulnerability of any new academic unit (as well as the students and faculty that inhabit it), potential territoriality that might arise among other departments/programs, the question of what areas reside within a writing department, [and] the possibility that one is merely relocat-ing departmental strife to a new location (168).

This list of challenges could, perhaps ironically, create conditions for addi-tional bullying as changes in administration (Lester xi; Salin 1224–25) and potential competition over resources (Lester xi) or merit-based rewards (Salin 1223) are some of the risk factors for workplace bullying in higher education more broadly. In fact, some of these challenges—such as "ter-ritoriality" and "department strife"—might actually be euphemisms for workplace bullying.

However, the possible advantages of becoming an independent program or department are promising. They include increased governance over the writing curriculum (Bishop; Maid); increased control over hiring (Hecka-thorn); increased control of tenure and promotion criteria (Bishop; Ever-ett and Hanganu-Bresch, "Introduction"); increased ability to distinguish writing studies from literary studies, particularly for our colleagues across campus (Everett and Hanganu-Bresch, "Introduction"); and improved pro-gram morale (Bishop). These gains in agency with the creation of an inde-pendent program or department can positively transform the experiences of all involved, including faculty, staff, students, and administration.

The case studies included in O'Neill, Crow, and Burton's aforemen-tioned *A Field of Dreams*, and most recently in Justin Everett and Cristina Hanganu-Bresch's *A Minefield of Dreams: Triumphs and Travails of Inde-pendent Writing Programs*, demonstrate that the design of, and options for,

independent programs and departments are as diverse as the institutional contexts in which they are found. There is no one-size-fits-all approach with this recommendation, as the establishment, sustainability, and success of an independent program or department relies on a number of factors. However, the "triumphs and travails" described in the scholarship by others in our field who have done this work, as well as the Independent Writing Departments and Programs Association, can offer support with these efforts.

Case # 4: Bullying from Within the Field

The WPA at Natasha's institution, who was also the chair of the stand-alone writing program, methodically chipped away at Natasha's job satisfaction and responsibilities—or, in Natasha's own words, "inch by inch things were taken away from me." Natasha, a lecturer who was well-established in our field, was monitored in a number of ways as she was required to inform the WPA of her time on campus (metaphorically punching in and out without a timeclock) and was only allowed to take lunch at specific times and not with colleagues; was made to run her emails by the WPA before sending them out and to have the WPA review her conference presentations before she was allowed to present at national conferences; and was told what to include in her syllabus, what words to use when talking about writing, and was eventually not allowed to speak in meetings. Despite the fact that Natasha initially went along with these demands—in part because she was new to the institution—her bully intensely criticized and publicly demeaned her, both within her institution and at professional meetings within the field. Like many of our interviewees, Natasha equated her relationship with her bully to that of an abusive partner, as she was isolated and her worth (including her research and administrative work) was constantly attacked (even while her research was well-recognized and valued by the field). Because Natasha reported directly to her bully, she had little access to others who might have recognized the problem and intervened. When she did go outside of the traditional reporting lines in order to make a complaint to the dean and the human resources (HR) department, she learned that, while they were sympathetic, they ultimately supported the WPA. Finally, Natasha felt that, as a lecturer, she did not have the same structures of support available to her as she would have had if she were tenure-line faculty (e.g., faculty senate for issues of academic freedom). Her only way out was to leave the institution, which she did.

As case #4 illustrates, WPAs can be bullies themselves. Moreover, bullying within the WPA workplace sometimes occurs between two members

of the rhet-comp field—regardless of their position at their institution. One interviewee had a particularly hard time knowing how to navigate the bullying precisely because her bully was within her field, stating "it's a small enough field where if you're getting bullied by someone in the field, it's hard to negotiate that." Interviewees reported nervousness about how their bully might speak about them to others, and, when the bully was more established than them, they questioned their worth in the field based on the ways their bullies undermined their strengths. Oftentimes bullies claimed that the interviewee's scholarship was substandard or didn't count as research at all and, at times, suggesting that the interviewee find other kinds of institutions (community colleges or teaching colleges) to work at instead—a suggestion that was condescending to the target and to community colleges and teaching colleges. Although Natasha was already well-established in the field, other respondents who reported this kind of bullying were not. Regardless of one's level of experience in the field, the behaviors described in this case study are examples of bullying. As those reading this article likely know firsthand, we can teach people who are less experienced without demeaning them; we can offer feedback on the way they talk about a topic without taking away their right to speak; we can be supportive instead of abusive. And we can, of course, learn from them ourselves.

Additionally, Natasha's case—and cases #2 and #3—show that hierarchical reporting lines are problematic when it comes to bullying; in fact, scholarship on workplace bullying identifies reporting lines as a risk factor for bullying (Salin 2003). In our interviews, many respondents noted reporting lines as a barrier to addressing the bullying they experienced (interviews 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18, 21, and 22). Without having other reporting lines available, the targets had few channels for responding to the bullying.

Recommendation #4: Provide Leadership Training

In response to Natasha's experiences, we recommend leadership training for present and future administrators. As Natasha's story illustrates, bullying is often perpetrated or enabled by administrators—whether they be WPAs, department chairs, directors of programs, deans, or others—and they have probably received little, if any, training before taking on these leadership roles. While we don't have control over the actions of institutions, we can offer leadership training for WPAs (and graduate students) through our field-specific organizations (like CWPA and CCCC) at conferences, in workshops, and in WPA institutes. It is important to encourage graduate students to participate in these trainings as well, and for institutions to

make it a part of graduate education programs, for it is in graduate school that bullying in the WPA workplace is often first experienced and normalized (see Matzke, Rankins-Robertson, and Garrett for a detailed discussion on this process). Additionally, graduate students need to be made aware of the kinds of situations they might face as WPAs or once they are working in the field—program mobbing of rhet-comp by literature, for example—as a way to help them more quickly recognize what is happening and develop possible avenues for response.

These trainings should provide people with information about what constitutes bullying, how to make sure they aren't being a bully, and how to respond if bullying happens in their programs. Trainings should also help WPAs consider how to support all of the constituents within their programs—students, (contingent) faculty, staff—by identifying multiple reporting lines and making those lines visible to everyone in the writing program. We also recommend that WPA leadership training programs include conflict resolution training that would prepare WPAs for difficult conversations about power and equity and cover scenarios in which litigious bullies create space for their destructive behavior by threatening lawsuits against individuals and departments.

Recommendation #5: Seek Support from Beyond the Institution

Natasha's case also demonstrates that HR departments are not always that helpful. Historically, HR policies and practices have subordinated the interests of the employee while privileging those of the business or institution (O'Riordan 4, 8, 10; "How to Become"). At most, HR is there to support senior management, therefore casting doubt on whether HR departments are either willing or able to assist individual targets with their complaints (King; Smith). Alternative HR models that may be more responsive to employee complaints include outsourcing HR to an independent third party or establishing HR as a hybrid, in which HR is left in charge at the institution but employees have the support of an independent, outside advisor (see Smith). Another resource that focuses on the individual instead of the institution is teacher unions. One of our interviewees turned to her union representative and was able to garner tremendous support through this avenue. The union rep sat in on meetings with her and helped her file a grievance against her bully, the chair of the department. Although this interviewee also participated in university-sponsored mediation, she found her experiences with the union representative to be more supportive and productive as she was able to ultimately have the chair step down from that position.

Where alternative HR models and unions are not an option, another possible avenue of support from beyond the institution is the WPA Consultant-Evaluator Service for Writing Programs. Part of the program's self-described mission is to "determine a program's unique strengths and weaknesses, help resolve local and individual problems, and improve programmatic effectiveness" ("WPA Consultant-Evaluator"). This service might act as a valuable resource for identifying the ills of a program, including bullying, and how to address them. Personally, we've found the consultants' reports to be persuasive to upper administration, carrying more ethos than our own arguments for change.

CONCLUSION

Across the interviews, there were patterns to the bullying, but there were also patterns to the ways people tried to cope with their experiences. Many interviewees noted that when faced with a hostile work environment, they turned to scholarship in the field about best practices in teaching writing and supporting students as a source of resilience. They reminded themselves they were beholden to their profession, not the department or the institution. When they were unable to enact the best practices of the field in their own departments, due to program mobbing or a chair of the department who was a bully, they turned to cross-campus relationships to find other avenues for their work. Some interviewees established relationships with and even became administrators of their centers for teaching and learning or divisions for faculty development. In addition to feeling supportive and offering some distance from the bullying, this kind of networking is also likely to be invaluable in the event programs want to work toward becoming their own departments at some point in the future. Participants also noted that they found allies at our field's conferences but lamented that they only happen once or twice a year.

We know personally how important it is to have allies or companions when facing bullying—we often mention to each other that, while we wish we never experienced the bullying, we are happy we had someone with whom to process the experiences and to validate our understanding of the situation. We also turned to each other to brainstorm possible responses and to find a way to be proactive in the face of workplace bullying. These conversations and brainstorming sessions led us to take several actions within our institution (described in some of the cases above) and to research the problem of bullying in the WPA workplace. Approaching these situations through our research helped us find agency, look for solutions, and connect with colleagues across the country, giving a voice to their experiences as well.

Because of this understandable impulse to find allies—particularly within our field and its scholarship—as a source of strength and sanity when faced with bullying, we encourage our field to research and write about bullying in the WPA workplace. We believe that, with more scholarship on the issue, targets of bullying could temper feelings of isolation and identify possible responses to their situations. Such scholarship could also offer inroads for changing cultural norms and practices that have thus far silenced concerns about bullying, for example when bullying is dismissed as institutional politics and working conditions or when targets —especially jWPAs—are blamed for not having the institutional experience and power to respond productively (Elder and Davila, "Bullying"). We believe that if we all commit our resources (time, brain power, journal space, time at conferences) to addressing bullying, we can rewrite our field's narrative about these destructive behaviors and help targets recognize they are not alone, that they don't need to simply learn to deal with it, or, worse yet, become bullies themselves. As one of our interviewees warned, "horrible situations change you."

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. Initially, 77 respondents (62%) indicated directly they had experienced bullying in relation to their work in the WPA workplace. However, additional respondents reported elsewhere in the survey they had indeed experienced bullying behaviors, bringing the incident rate to 85% (Davila and Elder).

2. We revised the list to conform to American spelling conventions and removed "holiday entitlement" from a list of parenthetical examples.

3. As an additional measure of both validity and protection for our participants, we shared this article with all of the interview participants to confirm that we did not include details that could reveal their identities and to ensure we did not misrepresent their experiences.

4. This article uses pseudonyms throughout, in agreement with our IRB protocol (University of New Mexico #866852-2).

5. At the time of publication of this article, the authors are working with a CCCC task force to revise the existing 2016 resolution to include workplace bullying.

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Appendix: Negative Acts Questionnaire-
Revised (NAQ-R), As Used in Survey

How many times have you experienced the following in the last 12 months? (1 = Never, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Monthly, 4 = Weekly, 5 = Daily):

1. Someone withholding information which affects your performance.
2. Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work.
3. Being ordered to work below your level of competence.
4. Having key areas of responsibilities removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks.
5. Spreading of gossip and rumors about you.
6. Being ignored or excluded.
7. Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, attitudes or your private life.
8. Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger.
9. Intimidating behaviors such as finger-pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking your way.
10. Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job.
11. Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes.
12. Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach.
13. Persistent criticism of your errors or mistakes.
14. Having your opinions ignored.
15. Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get along with.
16. Being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines.
17. Having allegations made against you.
18. Excessive monitoring of your work.
19. Pressure not to claim something to which by right you are entitled (sick leave, travel expenses, etc.)
20. Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm.
21. Being exposed to an unmanageable workload.
22. Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse.

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