

Editorial Foreword: Honoring the Pioneers

Many scholars have devoted their careers to the study of mobbing, among them Heinz Leymann (1932–1999, Germany/Sweden), René Girard (1923–2015, France/United States), and Kenneth Westhues (United States/Canada). Leymann is widely regarded as a pioneer in identifying and conceptualizing mobbing in the workplace. Girard, whose work explores the dynamics of collective violence and social scapegoating, referred to what Leymann termed "mobbing" as the "scapegoat mechanism," a concept he explored extensively in his writings. Westhues' research runs in close parallel with Girard's theory; the social dynamics that Westhues articulates with such clarity are deeply resonant with Girard's persecutory unconscious.

Building on the foundational work of Heinz Leymann, Kenneth Westhues—widely recognized as "the world's most renowned expert" on mobbing (Republik) and "the world's leading authority on academic mobbing" (The National Academy of Sciences)—has made extraordinary contributions to the global study of mobbing over the past three decades. Through his tireless research, Westhues has become a trusted voice for beleaguered professors, physicians, and other professionals worldwide, maintaining ongoing correspondence and receiving a steady stream of inquiries and expressions of gratitude. His sustained engagement has significantly shaped the contemporary international mobbing research community.

Westhues' enduring contributions continue to shape both the theoretical foundations and practical applications of workplace mobbing research. His legacy has provided a clear and robust platform for the scientific advancement and institutionalization of the field—culminating in the 2025 establishment of key initiatives: the Journal of Workplace Mobbing, the World Association for Research on Workplace Mobbing, the Annual Niagara Conference on Workplace Mobbing, and the Institute for Research on Workplace Mobbing.

Mobbing affects countless individuals in profoundly damaging ways. Despite decades of research across numerous disciplines—including psychology, sociology, education, consulting and applied psychology, psychiatry, mental health, occupational health, nursing, counseling, management, communication, human resources, law, and even the visual arts—the phenomenon of mobbing and its associated syndromes show no sign of abating.

Social division and the intolerance of dissent have increasingly become entrenched pathologies of our time. As a result, the study of mobbing has evolved from a niche curiosity to a pressing social

imperative—demanding rigorous scientific investigation. With a growing body of scholarship and an unceasing stream of case studies, it has become clear that mobbing is a distinct phenomenon, separate from other forms of mistreatment such as bullying or discrimination. Likewise, mobbing research has emerged as a multidisciplinary subfield in its own right.

What the study of mobbing urgently requires is a concerted effort to unify the many scholars working in this area and to consolidate the hundreds of research articles and case studies into a coherent, institutionalized field of inquiry—particularly within academic and professional settings. This will help ensure that mobbing is more effectively understood, addressed, and prevented. The inaugural 2024 Niagara Conference on Workplace Mobbing (NCWM) marks a critical step in this direction. The upcoming 2025 NCWM, along with future annual NCWM, can further strengthen this momentum. Likewise, the launch of the Journal of Workplace Mobbing provides a vital platform for connecting scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and lawmakers in advancing research and awareness in the field.

This inaugural issue owes a profound debt to the pioneering research of Leymann, Girard, and especially Kenneth Westhues. Deep gratitude is also extended to the many individuals and groups who have generously contributed their time and effort to bring this journal to fruition—including publishing partners, dedicated volunteers, university librarians, faculty and staff, IT professionals, higher education administrators, and numerous individual donors.

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