For some time, I have wanted to step back and assess where the workplace bullying “movement” is going and how our individual and collective efforts complement one another. My own work in this realm has concentrated on the legal and public policy implications of workplace bullying. In doing so, I have been continually enriched and enlightened by the work of scholars and practitioners in other fields who are committed to learning about, and fashioning responses to, this destructive phenomenon. These endeavors include academic research, public education, management training and consulting, psychotherapy, and employee advocacy.

This paper is an attempt to engage, however briefly, in a broader assessment of where we are and what we must do. I have used the terms “systems,” “synergy,” and “sweat” to frame this discussion, because I believe they capture well certain values and qualities behind our efforts.
Systems

**System** – “a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole” (MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY)

*Example 1: Health Systems -- What are the potential benefits of educating health-related stakeholders about workplace bullying?*
Example 2: Legal Systems -- What are the effects of enacting workplace bullying legislation in the form of the Healthy Workplace Bill?

These diagrams are works-in-progress; feedback is appreciated. Please do not use without permission. Developed with Inspiration 8.0b, at the suggestion of Denise Doherty, New Workplace Institute.
Synergy

**Synergy** – “a mutually advantageous conjunction or compatibility of distinct business participants or elements (as resources or efforts)” (MERRIAM-WEBSTER DICTIONARY)

**Prime Example**


**Section titles**
The Problem
The Evidence
Explaining the problem
Managing the problem: ‘best practice’
Remedial actions: a critical outlook

**Contributors**

**Professional fields and academic disciplines represented**
Education
Law, Public Policy, and Dispute Resolution
Management and Human Resources
Occupational Health
Organizational Behavior
Psychology (Clinical, Industrial/Organizational, Social)

**Impact**
- The first, and still the best, multidisciplinary anthology of research and analysis on workplace bullying – an excellent example of “intellectual synergy.”
- An excellent starting place for any budding researcher new to the topic.
- Articles demonstrate, individually and collectively, how workplace bullying is best understood, and responded to, in a multidisciplinary context.
Sweat

Sweat – “to manipulate or produce by hard work or drudgery” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

I. The Work of Gary and Ruth Namie
http://www.bullyinginstitute.org/

Founders of the Workplace Bullying Institute and predecessor initiatives

Major Projects/Activities
Public Education (website, publication, public speaking, media outreach)
Co-Authors, The Bully at Work
Partnerships with Academicians and Practitioners
Consulting, Advising, and Coaching Employers and Employees
Organized and sponsored First U.S. Conference on Workplace Bullying
Legislative Campaign – Healthy Workplace Bill

Major Accomplishments
- Leading role in placing workplace bullying into the vocabulary of U.S. employment relations through multifaceted research, writing, and public education work.
- Critical networking role, linking individuals engaged in research and practice.
- Spearheading anti-bullying legislative campaign at the state levels.

II. The Work of Kenneth Westhues
http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/~kwesthue/mobbing.htm

Significant Relevant Works (Mellen Press series)
Eliminating Professors
The Envy of Excellence
Workplace Mobbing in Academe
Winning, Losing, Moving On
Remedy and Prevention of Mobbing in Higher Education

Major Accomplishments
- Conducts cutting-edge research, analysis, and commentary on mobbing in academe.
- Underscores the importance of detailed narrative and engaged reflection towards understanding and responding to abusive behavior at work.
- Raises uncomfortable, necessary questions about the culture and politics of academic life and the potentially counterproductive effects of policies and legal intervention.
How effectively are we sharing and exchanging the fruits of our work?

As a community of scholars and practitioners interested in researching and responding to the phenomenon of workplace bullying, how are we doing in terms of crossing conventional lines of networking, communication, and education?

**Evaluation Scale:** Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent.

- **Scholar-practitioner dimension:** Scholars engaging practitioners, and vice versa. *Evaluation: Good/Very Good.*

- **Faculty-student dimension:** Faculty mentoring student research on the topic of workplace bullying. *Evaluation: Fair.*

- **Media dimension:** Scholars and practitioners accessing the mass media to educate the general public. *Evaluation: Good.*

- **Multidisciplinary dimension:** Researchers and practitioners sharing & using knowledge across disciplines. *Evaluation: Very Good.*

- **Employment relations “mainstreaming” dimension:** Moving bullying beyond a niche or silo topic, into the mainstream of employment relations. *Evaluation: Poor/Fair in U.S.; Good/Very Good in Canada, Australia, Europe, etc.*

- **Geographic dimension:** Thinking and acting on local, national, and global levels. *Evaluation: Poor/Fair at local levels; Very Good at national & global levels.*
Starting Points for Discussion:
Fashioning a Systemic, Synergistic, and “Sweaty” Agenda

This Place in Time
This is an issue whose time has come. Those of us who are addressing workplace bullying through research, education, advocacy, and practice are in a unique position to make a difference. It is a special opportunity and a sacred responsibility.

Information Dissemination
Research, analysis, and commentary on workplace bullying are growing fast. We need to find ways in which to make this information more accessible for scholars and practitioners alike.

Maintaining this Community
- Periodic gatherings such as this one are tremendously informative and empowering.
- Travel is becoming more expensive, and the Internet and e-mail are burdens as well as blessings. How can we stay usefully networked?
- How will we grow this community without losing our sense of community?

Reaching Out
- Underrepresented disciplines and fields, including public health, medicine & psychiatry, clinical psychology, labor studies;
- Undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional school students in pertinent disciplines;
- Opinion leaders in the realm of employment relations generally.

Avoiding Fruitless Pursuits
- Agreement on a singular term (bullying, mobbing, work trauma, workplace harassment, workplace abuse, etc.);
- Agreement on a singular definition;
- Agreement on a uniform set of measures.

Steadfast Commitment and Fellowship
We must appreciate that feelings of impatience, frustration, sadness, outrage, and despair are best engaged through the building of a vocationally, intellectually, and geographically diverse multidisciplinary community committed to dignity in the workplace.