

Tweets, Threats, and Censorship: Campus Resources to Support Faculty Through Incidents of Targeted Harassment

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Introduction

Do you know faculty who have experienced targeted harassment by the public? According to *Inside Higher Ed*, “If this hasn’t happened to someone on your campus yet, chances are it will.” And the consequences have serious implications for free speech and faculty safety: an overall silencing effect, self-censorship, and threats of harm and violence. As high-profile political conflict is fueled both online and on the ground, a growing form of harassment looms that poses a specific threat to college and university faculty: the targeted harassment of faculty by members of the public.

Targeted harassment of faculty occurs when groups, organizations, or individuals engage in aggressive viral campaigns that are directed at faculty members. Such efforts might include a flood of contact via email, messaging, and social media, with the potential of escalating to include threats of violence, rape, or death. Harassment may also come in the form of phone calls and voicemails, letters or mail pieces, and in-person acts of intimidation. Targeted harassment may be based on a faculty member’s teaching materials, class lectures, research presentations, area of expertise, social media posts, personal identity markers, presence on professor watchlist sites, public appearances, or as a potential peril of engaging in public scholarship.

Threats to physical, emotional, and online safety have dire implications for both free speech on campus, and for publicly engaged scholars. The resulting “silencing effect” is two-fold: first, the potential self-censorship by the person who is targeted, followed by the potential for self-censorship by others who may witness and want to avoid these attacks. Both impact the ability for faculty to fully engage in academia, the profession, and with the public. Faculty should not have to navigate incidents of targeted harassment alone, and what follows is a series of interactive training sessions designed as a campus resource to better support faculty. Many thanks to the faculty who shared their stories and made this resource possible.

About the Sessions

The urgency for campuses to better support faculty through incidents of targeted harassment is undeniable. What follows is a campus resource that consists of information sessions, strategy sessions, and a workshop that are designed as part training, and part interactive facilitation. Each session includes session goals and a background based in research, along with ideas for dialogue questions, activities, and facilitator preparation notes.

These sessions are intended as building blocks for creating a training or workshop series that best suits the needs of an individual campus and their faculty. The importance of tailoring a training to meet specific campus needs with regard to this evolving issue is twofold. First, the wide variation of ways in which faculty experience targeted harassment by members of the public, coupled with the ways in which their respective campuses respond, suggests that a one-size-fits-all training misses the mark. For instance, incidents of targeted harassment can occur within the context of ongoing dynamics unique to the campus, or may have a specific regional focus. Likewise, colleges and universities take vastly different approaches to acknowledging, understanding, and responding to the issue. Therefore, it is essential that campuses are able to draw on the content that meets their needs, while engaging in a format that works best for their community.

Second, identifying the best ways to support faculty through these incidents, as well as to reduce or mitigate the negative implications related to safety, silencing, self-censorship, and more, requires acknowledging the asymmetry of knowledge that exists around this issue. The content included here is meant to scaffold trainings, workshops, and dialogue through which members of the campus community can share experiences and strategies, and work toward co-constructing a path forward that works best.

Although it would be ideal to approach and address this issue by developing a campus-wide initiative or as a policy priority for leadership teams, we know this isn't the case on many campuses. The research for this project revealed that faculty have very different experiences: some had the support of a senior-level administrator willing to take this issue head on, while others relied on department chairs when top-level support was absent. Still others turned to an informal constellation of colleagues, friends, and family at home when official campus support was nonexistent. This resource is meant to meet faculty needs, and to be used at any level from the individual to the institution. For instance, if top level administrative support is not an option, then use these sessions at the department level during faculty meetings or as a professional development series. If the campus climate feels unsafe for these discussions, then use them to guide dialogue among a small group of trusted colleagues.

Lastly, research for this project suggests that co-constructing and facilitating trainings or workshops around this issue may work best as a team effort, potentially consisting of university representatives, faculty members, union leaders, and perhaps even facilitated by an outside party who is familiar with the issue. The mix of on- and off-campus teammates would provide the best of both worlds: institutional knowledge, plus someone who isn't beholden to university politics. Additionally, this setup may avoid a scenario in which facilitating trainings becomes an added "to do" for someone's already full plate.

The Research

The content of these sessions is informed by the findings of a qualitative research study. The key research questions guiding the study inquired about the experiences of faculty who were the targets of harassment by the public, the forms of support they received through the duration of the incident, and the implications for silencing or self-censorship.

To meet the criteria for participation, faculty must have been harassed by members of the public, and they must have experienced an escalation in that harassment. The researcher contacted potential participants via email when their harassment stories were featured in publications such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* or *Inside Higher Ed*, or if their stories reached news outlets. Additionally, the researcher used personal networks and snowball sampling to reach out to additional participants. Dozens of potential participants unfortunately most did not meet the criteria for this study for one of two reasons: 1) because the harassment they experienced was by one or two known individuals who routinely engage with them (i.e. not the public at large), 2) the harassment did not escalate, or 3) because the harassment they experienced was not from members of the public, but rather from other people on campus, whether from other faculty members, administrators, staff, or even students. It's worth noting that harassment between members of a campus is not the focus here because there are often on-campus avenues for addressing this behavior, whereas when faculty are harassed by members of the public there are fewer options.

The final list of participants were from public and private institutions, and included 12 full and part-time lecturers, as well as tenure-track and tenured professors. They ranged in age from early 30s to those considering retirement. Participants were from fields including political science, law, sociology, psychology, philosophy, Chicano/Latino studies, and interdisciplinary scholars. More than half of the participants had families or partners who they lived with during the time of the harassment.

Participants completed in-depth interviews that lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Interview protocol explored the triggers for harassment, the types of harassment experienced, the stages of handling and processing the incident, official and unofficial sources of support, the post-incident experience of self-censorship or silencing, and lessons learned for future faculty. The interviews were then transcribed, coded, and analyzed. A second part of the research design involved reviewing existing campus policies about targeted harassment.

A significant finding is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to understanding this issue, and as such, the sessions that follow do not contain pre-recorded videos or pre-set PowerPoint slides. Instead, each consists of session goals, research-based content as background for the session, and ideas for workshop and dialogue activities, along with facilitator preparation notes.

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Session 1: Understanding the Issue – What is Targeted Harassment?

Goals of this session:

- Identify the different types of targeted harassment faculty may encounter
- Identify the drivers of targeted harassment

Background:

Faculty who experienced targeted harassment by members of the public reported enduring many different types of harassment, whether through social media, email, the mail, phone calls and messages, or other mechanisms. Faculty were targeted based on the content of their class lectures, video of their research talks, their writing, screenshots of their social media posts, public appearances, and more. Harassment varied based on the faculty member's gender, age, race, region of the country, and perceptions about other identity markers such as immigration status or religion.

- “What types of harassment didn't I receive, maybe that's easier. They were emailing me and my department, leaving messages on my work line, and then when that mailbox was full they called the department and other offices on campus. I received a few mail pieces, too. But the worst were the tweets. Hundreds, thousands. Some scary, some not, but all of them were directed at me.”
- “There is such a difference between someone retweeting with a nasty message and someone just sending you a DM [direct message]. That is so much more personal, and there's more intent – it's not just someone clicking retweet.”
- “I'm not on Twitter, so I had no idea what was happening there until a colleague started sending me screenshots.”
- “As soon as the story broke on local news, I started being harassed. But then once it was all over the alt right sites, my email inbox was unbearable. I was receiving an onslaught of messages, some with threats of violence.”
- “Between the tweets, emails, and messages, there were thousands of points of contact. It was completely overwhelming.”
- “I received a mail piece that included a printed out photo of myself, that they drew on.”
- “The messages I received on my office phone were really scary. It's one thing to read an email again and again, but to hear someone's voice telling you that you should die is... a lot.”
- “It wasn't just happening to me – I know they started calling my department and I just felt so bad that staff would have to go through this, too.”

Several faculty expressed concern that department or college staff might be subjected to phone calls and emails, which points to the need for ensuring that staff are included in trainings and have access to campus support resources. In addition to the different types of harassment directed at faculty, what drives targeted

harassment is also of concern. Several faculty identified specific ideological factors as the main drivers behind their harassment. For instance, one person noted that they've been the target of "cancel attempts on the left and the right," each with their own brand of ideological positioning.

- "Most of my harassment is from people who openly identify themselves as belonging to the far right or the alt right."
- "You can easily tell what kinds of ideology are driving these attacks when you look at the publications in which these stories appear. The whole experience feels like it is organized and coordinated and these outlets play a huge role."
- "The left is no better than the right. I know that might not be a popular stance, but it's true. Look at cancel culture."
- "You know it's ideology driving things when you see the political influencers who are championing these stories, encouraging the backlash."
- "Any time I receive this kind of harassment it's only from men. It's like I'm a placeholder for white male rage."

Facilitator Preparation:

Facilitators should be familiar with the range of harassment that is possible, along with the ideological drivers of harassment, so that they can answer questions as necessary. As an opening activity, take some time to set communication guidelines with the group – these are heavy topics and it is important to set expectations for how the group should communicate. Next, move into the discussion questions to facilitate a group dialogue.

Activities:

1) Setting communication guidelines.

Working together as a group, take some time to set communication guidelines with each other. How do you want to engage in dialogue and activities around these issues? What are your expectations? How will you handle conflict if it arises within the group? Some examples might include respecting confidentiality, being open to trying on new ideas, using "I" statements, or speaking for yourself instead of using generalizations.

2) Small group dialogue.

In small groups take time to consider the following questions:

- a. Have you heard about the issue of targeted harassment before? If so, what was your understanding of the issue?
- b. How would you describe targeted harassment to someone who is unfamiliar with the concept?
- c. Have you or anyone you know been the target of harassment by members of the public?
- d. What does learning about these experiences bring up for you?
- e. What stands out to you about the drivers of targeted harassment incidents?

Session 2: Power Dynamics and Harassment

Goals of this session:

- Identify ways in which power dynamics are present in targeted harassment
- Locate your own positionality in relation to privilege and campus power dynamics
- Brainstorm and name specific ways you can use your power and privilege to support colleagues

Targeted harassment incidents can be experienced differently based on privilege, positionality, and campus power dynamics. For instance, some participants shared the ways in which their identity markers related to sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, and immigration status were used against them as part of their harassment. In some cases, misperceptions or assumptions about their identities fueled their harassers. Other participants were quick to acknowledge the privileges they held and noted that their positionality as part of a dominant group meant they weren't subjected to the same types of harassment.

- “They assumed my coauthor and I were a couple, so the harassment we received was very homophobic. There were also assumptions based on our names that we were both immigrants, which added to the intensity of the harassment.”
- “When they thought I was a man, I received no sexualized or gender-based harassment. As soon as they realized I was a woman, it was over.”
- “I experienced pure white supremacist backlash, and on my campus there were no resources for Black faculty, no places to get any support. And I think we know that's true for most campuses. Where are the resources for Black faculty?”
- “I was targeted because of my involvement with an on campus group that supports Latinx students, so I was getting racialized and racist nativist comments. I was really worried about my students though, what this kind of harassment could do to a student.”
- “As a woman who does public television appearances, I've been called every sexualized name in the book. And as a woman with opinions and expertise who does public television appearances, I'm reminded constantly that because I'm a woman I couldn't possibly know what I'm talking about.”
- “Being Jewish was definitely something my harassers honed in on. I don't need to repeat some of the things they said and wrote.”

Campus or academic ladder power dynamics also play a role in how faculty respond to harassment. For example, lecturers and faculty without tenure expressed different concerns about job security, continuing forward progress toward tenure while navigating and processing a targeted incident, and whether they were at risk of being perceived as a problem because they were untenured. It's worth noting that even some tenured faculty shared these same concerns; however, several tenured faculty openly acknowledged that they felt protected in a way and were grateful this incident didn't happen while they were still working toward tenure.

Facilitator Preparation:

Facilitators should be familiar with power dynamics, systems of oppression, and be willing to engage in conversations around these topics. Activities in this session are both dialogue based and involve using a white board, flip chart paper, or poster boards. This is easily adapted to Zoom by using Jamboard or a similar online platform for sharing participant responses.

Activities:**1) Personal Privilege and Positionality.**

Take some time to journal or quick-write about your own positionality in relation to privilege and campus power dynamics. Consider your race, ethnicity, immigration status, ability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, country of origin, and age. Think about your role on campus, and the power dynamics attached to being staff, faculty, lecturer, or tenured professor. Are there some areas in which you hold more power and privilege, and others where you hold less?

2) Brainstorming Support Strategies.

In small groups take time to compare areas where you may have more or less power and privilege. Brainstorm ideas for how you can use the areas in which you have more privilege and power to better support colleagues. What strategies do you have in mind? What are specific examples? All groups should add their ideas to a master list from the session and commit to trying on one of these strategies.

Session 3: How Faculty Are Targeted and the Targeted Harassment Cycle

Goals of this session:

- Identify the ways in which a faculty member might be targeted
- Learn about the Targeted Harassment Cycle
- Examine variations of the Targeted Harassment Cycle
- Applying the Targeted Harassment Cycle to recent incidents

Background:

Faculty may become the targets of harassment by the public for many reasons, and through a variety of mechanisms. For instance, faculty may find themselves included on professor watchlists, or the subject of articles or posts by “watchdog” groups or organizations that purport to identify alleged bias in higher education. Faculty may also become recurring targets following an incident. In one example, a participant shared that she is targeted routinely because “people have email alerts set for when my OpEds are released.” After an initial OpEd drew attention, readers were able to set an alert for whenever future OpEds by this faculty member were published. In another example a faculty member experienced what they called “low level incidents” for several years before finally being targeted in a way that drew regional and then national attention.

- “I know exactly how I was targeted – a tip, if you want to call it that, was passed along to Campus Reform, which spun a distorted version of the classes I teach. From there things just went viral.”
- “I was targeted because of a manuscript that hadn’t even been published yet. A proof of the chapter was circulated and someone reported it and that’s how I became a target.”
- “A colleague found my name on a Professor Watchlist, but I don’t know if that’s how I was targeted. For a while I was kind of proud of it, thought I must be doing something right. Of course now it feels different.”
- “A complaint was filed at my university, and then we skipped the step of the story growing through blogs or local stories – it blew up overnight, straight to white supremacist groups.”

Faculty may also be targeted through the concept of piling on, meaning that once an incident goes viral outrage narratives may be explicitly championed by organizations, high profile individuals (or political influencers), or blogs and other websites. Targeting in this manner has the potential for exponential results due to the viral nature of the harassment coupled with the efforts of powerful organizations and influential figures online. For instance, one participant said they knew the harassment would continue piling on once Rush Limbaugh started dropping their name on his show and on social media.

- “Here’s what’s interesting: When Rush Limbaugh first started talking about my work, it was entirely about the content of my research, because my gender is unclear from my name. I think he assumed I

was a man. As soon as there was a photo attached to my name, the attacks and harassment were all about me as a woman – completely gendered, sexual, name calling.”

This example points to the power and influence of a political media figure such as Rush Limbaugh, as well as the way in which harassment shifts based on identity markers, or in this case even perceptions about one’s identity. When Rush Limbaugh was uncertain of this participant’s gender, he discussed the research and ideas, but once he knew she was a woman, the attacks changed and were gendered and sexual.

Based on faculty interviews and analyzing incidents of targeted harassment that made the news in recent years, many incidents appear to follow a similar trajectory, which is described below as the Targeted Harassment Cycle. However, the cycle may happen at different speeds, or stages of the cycle may be skipped altogether. First, faculty described how their harassment incidents unfolded in the following ways.

- “We now know that it was a student on campus who tipped off the right wing media outlet that made a story out of it – if you want to call it that – and went after me. From there, things escalated due to coverage on Fox, bloggers, people on Twitter.”
- “So, I was targeted for my involvement with a campus student organization, and someone made threats on our social media page. Within an hour of that post things escalated, and there was whole narrative around nationalism that fueled things. But the escalation was not only quick, it was straight to the top with death threats.”
- “In my case they skipped the step of growing a story in the conservative blogs – I was immediately attacked by white supremacists. But I’ve also been attacked on the left where things escalate in different ways – they go after your career. Social media fuels cancel culture in academia.”
- “I am often targeted when I make television appearances, especially national media appearances. I’m on TV, and that’s when the harassment happens – while I’m still on air -- so it’s a little different than watching things escalate slowly. People sometimes “hate watch” the shows, so they’re waiting for you to say a word that triggers their rage, and that’s when they tweet, while they’re watching me talk. The escalation does happen, fast, and it’s often gendered. I’m targeted for the most part by men.”
- “I was on winter break when I found out after the semester that there was a video of a talk I gave on white supremacy months before. Apparently a student sent a letter to Film Your Marxist Professor, and there was definitely some coordination between groups. Over the break I received emails, messages, and more. I was shocked and I tried to track down the video. Things escalated and they just didn’t die down. They had my home address. I ended up moving for many reasons, but this was part of it.”

Targeted Harassment Cycle



The first step of the Targeted Harassment Cycle is when incidents begin through *sharing*, a general term for when class materials, research products, writing, social media posts, or footage of a presentation or lecture is captured on video or through a screenshot and disseminated online. However, the sharing alone isn't enough to produce targeted harassment on a large scale. The second step is when an outrage narrative is attached to what the faculty member has said, written, or posted. An *outrage narrative* consists of a politicized message that is used to attract attention from members of the public. Often they include clear for and against positions, and are simply worded with language that is meant to trigger the receiver.

From here, the next step of the Targeted Harassment Cycle is *escalation*. An incident can escalate immediately, or might be a slow build over time. The escalation period itself might be short, perhaps lasting the duration of a live television appearance where the escalation curve might be quite short, or might last several weeks as a story gains traction, goes viral, and receives more media coverage from different types of outlets. Additionally, there might be several rounds of escalation. For instance, one faculty member interviewed during this project noted that their experience included what they described as several escalation "peaks" meaning the story went viral several times over the course of a few months. The last step of the cycle is when the *escalation* stage advances to the point of producing *threats of violence*. Whether via email, social media, mail, or phone, threats of violence may include death threats, rape threats, or the suggestion of other explicitly violent acts.

In a few cases, faculty noted that the *sharing* and sometimes even the *outrage* narrative stages were fueled by a student, or the efforts of a campus organization, which then produced the foundation necessary for moving to harassment by the public. This is worth noting because once networks like these are in place on campus, an

initial targeted harassment incident can lay the groundwork for future pushback, meaning that the infrastructure already exists to quickly escalate the incident.

Facilitator Preparation:

Facilitator selects a few recent news stories about incidents of targeted harassment, with links or copies ready to distribute to participants. Include a mix of stories from places like *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed*, as well as local, regional, and national news outlets. Alternatively, if you have more time for this exercise, then you may want participants to search online and find stories themselves (they could do this beforehand as preparation for the session, or during the session as a group activity). Allowing participants to find their own stories will also give the facilitator an idea of the types of stories to which participants are drawn.

Activities:

Now that you understand how the Targeted Harassment Cycle works, let's take some time to apply this concept to recent targeted harassment incidents. Take a moment to read through the recent stories of targeted harassment. Working with a small group, talk through the incident, and identify and map out each stage of the Targeted Harassment Cycle. How did the incident unfold? What was the trigger moment, meaning the item that was shared that kickstarted the harassment? Can you name the outrage narrative? What type of narrative is fueling the outrage? How did the incident escalate? Were threats of violence involved?

Session 4: Responding in Real Time

Goals of this session:

- Learn what faculty members experienced as their targeted harassment incident unfolded
- Identify strategies faculty members used as they responded in real time

Background:

Faculty with experiences with targeted harassment were asked to recall how they handled the incident, and to walk through the steps or stages of their response. Many people noted the changes in their responses as the incident unfolded, and had specific recollections about the complex and wide-ranging emotions and thoughts they had during this process.

- “When this happened it unfolded slowly, so by the time I realized that the video of me that was the center of this thing was still online, it had been up for months. I made multiple requests to have it removed and was met with nothing.”
- “The harassment lasted for three months, so my responses changed over time. At first I was shocked, unable to respond. By the second month I was ready to push back.”
- “At first I thought this was another minor incident, but when things escalated I was devastated. I wondered about if my job was in danger, and then I realized that I was on my own – my department chair was supportive, but the university didn’t support me at all as an institution. So I crafted my own messages, put together my own defense, and felt a productive anger that I then channeled into some of my activism.”
- “I was in shock at first, but not surprised. Shocked it was happening to me, but not surprised it was happening. I thought I must be doing something right. But I was worried for my students, and then this became a feeling of both numbness and hyper awareness of my surroundings. I felt a lot of guilt related to my daughter, because she didn’t ask for this and I worried I was putting her in harm’s way. I questioned if I should be as vocal in public or in my classes.”
- “There was so much silence around what was happening to me, even when I asked for support. It wasn’t good. Even our academic senate was divided on the issue of Academic Freedom and were really slow to issue a statement. I did receive some support from my chair and Dean, and went to the campus police with evidence of physical threats. By then the FBI was involved and some arrests were made.”
- “I have excellent colleagues who were my initial support. They suggested I go to the Campus Police Department first, which I did, and then I went to the Provost’s office and my dean. Things were already heightened on our campus, or at least it felt that way politically, so when this happened it just felt like part of the workplace risk.”
- “I was receiving so many media requests, and by the end I just learned not to respond to media requests, even when I wanted to.”

- “I had the support of my colleagues, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and our Academic Senate Chair. This gave me some space to breathe.”

Numerous faculty interviewed about their experiences reported using a service like DeleteMe, which for an annual fee will remove your personal or private information from search engines and data broker sites.

- “As I was going through the process I found myself worrying that the harassment network that is now in place will be reactivated, so I started using DeleteMe as one way to be ready if this happens again.”
- “Believe me, DeleteMe is your friend.”

Although some faculty expressed that they felt safer knowing that personal information such as their home address was no longer readily available, others wondered whether using these services might also decrease their visibility in general, especially as public scholars. One participant noted that “it’s hard to strike a balance with being a public scholar,” while another shared the tension between meeting campus expectations of being a publicly engaged scholar when the university support in the face of targeted harassment incidents may be absent.

Facilitator Preparation:

Facilitators should familiarize themselves with the experiences and strategies noted in the responses above and be ready to engage participants in dialogue. Remind participants about communication guidelines and expectations – acknowledge that these are heavy experiences to think about and discuss.

Activities:

- 1) Take some time to journal or quick write about the following prompts:
 - a. These are heavy experiences to hear about, and can be triggering. What are you feeling as you’re learning about these experiences?
 - b. If you or someone you knew experienced a targeted harassment incident this week, what strategies would you use as the incident unfolded? What is the first thing you would do? Who would you turn to on your campus for support? Why? Who wouldn’t you turn to? Why?
- 2) In small groups, take time to share your responses. What comes up for you as you’re talking about strategies and support?
- 3) Are there similarities in the strategies you’d use? What about the people you would approach for support? Are there differences? What do you make of these similarities and differences?

Session 5: Safety Implications

Goals of this session:

- Identify the range of personal safety concerns targeted faculty may face
- Brainstorm ways in which your university could better address these safety concerns
- Name specific strategies you would use if you were targeted for harassment

Background:

Nearly all faculty members interviewed for this project expressed that at some point during their targeted harassment incident, they experienced concern for their personal safety, the safety of their families, or the safety of other people on campus (i.e. staff, students). For some, perceptions about the lack of safety corresponded with the timeline of the incident unfolding; for others, safety concerns remained even after the incident had passed.

- “When this happened to me I didn’t know anyone else who had been through it (now I do, unfortunately), so it was really scary. I was worried all the time.”
- “They were posting photos of my kids. That was the moment when this wasn’t about my career, it was about my family. If they were willing to post those photos, what else were they going to do? I wasn’t about to wait and find out.”
- “Thankfully they never contacted me at home, but they did reach out to my department office, which had me really concerned about the staff there.”
- “After my family, my biggest worry was about whether these people would target my students next. I mean, they went after me for my involvement in a campus organization, it’s not beyond reason to think they would go after the students next.”
- “I wasn’t so worried about my personal safety – as in, I didn’t think anyone was actually going to physically attack me – but it doesn’t mean I wasn’t scared and disturbed by what harassers were saying about me online.”

Responses varied wildly when participants were asked about how they handled safety concerns, and whether their campus offered protection.

- “What did my campus do? That’s laughable. Absolutely nothing. I was on my own, full stop.”
- “My campus police were so good. They sat down with me, I felt confident in their approach. I trusted their expertise in terms of whether something was a real threat.”
- “I was contacted by the FBI, so I knew it was serious, but my campus seemed clueless about how to support anyone through something like this. And the university police took forever to do anything – I did my own internet research about the people threatening me and sent leads to the campus police.”

- “My university asked me to issue a statement that was essentially me backing down from comments, and I said no. I’m getting death threats and your response is for me to issue a statement to make you look better? You’ve got to be kidding me.”

Faculty also shared specific strategies they used in response to these concerns, or in an attempt to increase their sense of safety.

- “I changed up my routes to and from home and work. Tried to change all my usual routines for the gym, grocery shopping, running errands, where I parked on campus.”
- “I spent a year looking over my shoulder, and sometimes I still catch myself looking around for... what? I don’t know, but that feeling, it’s still there.”
- “Document, document, document. I documented everything as it was happening, and enlisted my friends to take screenshots of particularly nasty things they saw on Twitter.”
- “I shut everything down, all accounts on private, and didn’t answer the phone.”
- “I did what I could, but ultimately my best strategy was to move. So I did.”

Facilitator Preparation:

Facilitators should familiarize themselves with the safety concerns noted by faculty, and be prepared to answer questions related to campus-specific details. This may mean anticipating what participants will want to know about safety implications and resources on campus.

Activities:

This activity has three parts:

- 1) In pairs take some time to reflect and share your thoughts on the safety concerns you’ve learned about today. How do you feel learning about these experiences? Have you or anyone you know had similar experiences? What stood out to you? Be prepared to share out with the larger group.
- 2) Next, in small groups brainstorm ways in which you believe your campus could address these safety concerns. What existing resources can you think of that could be leveraged to support faculty through these incidents? What resources do you think are still needed?
- 3) Lastly, we’re going to take some time to prepare and plan ahead. If you experienced a targeted harassment incident this week, what personal safety strategies would you use? What would be your biggest concern? What would be your social media plan? Your family safety plan?

Session 6: Silencing and Self-Censorship Implications

Goals of this session:

- Identify the ways in which experiencing targeted harassment impacts how faculty teach, research, and engage publicly, such as through silencing or self-censorship.
- Explore the ways in which fear of potential harassment might shape how faculty teach, research, and engage publicly.

Background:

Many faculty participants shared that the experience of being targeted for harassment, and the subsequent threats to their safety and the safety of their families, led them to alter their teaching, research, and public engagement. For some people this meant self-editing, policing their phrasing, and putting an end to public engagement.

- “This shook me. It’s always on my mind. It changed what I teach, and I know that I kind of police my phrasing now.”
- “I’m careful, I edit myself. I anticipate responses. And I have tenure...”
- “I definitely self-censor. I don’t feel good about it, but I feel like I have to permanently approach everything with a sense of caution now. It’s unfortunate.”
- “It is certainly chilling. And there are some topics that I simply won’t engage out of fear of potential harassment.”
- “I wouldn’t say that I self-censor – content-wise I’m still teaching broadly around these topics – but the harassment has silenced my participation in public. I no longer want to write for mass media publications.”

One participant noted a key difference between how he perceived silencing versus self-censorship, saying that he experienced both in different ways after experiencing targeted harassment. For him, silencing happened first. Initially, he refused to engage around a specific issue out of fear for his family. Then, he slowly began self-censoring, which he described as adjusting how he spoke about certain topics, choosing his words carefully in an attempt to avoid any possible way his ideas and analysis could be misconstrued.

Facilitator Preparation:

The facilitator will need large sheets of poster paper, or large flip chart sheets that can stick to the wall, along with post-it notes. There should be three posters on the wall: one labeled Issues, one labeled Words, and one labeled Phrases. Participants should be given post-it notes to use for the activity.

Activity:

Think about your teaching, research, and/or public engagement. Are there issues, words, or phrases that you avoid using due to the potential for misunderstanding, being misconstrued, or because you’ve received actual

backlash or harassment? For instance, some faculty interviewed during this project shared that they carefully phrase their commentary about certain issues to avoid triggering potential harassment incidents.

Take a moment to think about what these issues, words, or phrases might be in your teaching, research, or public engagement. Write down as many as you can think of on the post-it notes, and add them to the posters. Once everyone has had a chance to add their contributions, take some time to walk around and review the posters. What have people said? Do you see similarities or themes? Share out and discuss.

Zoom/Online Adaptation:

Instead of a gallery walk with physical pieces of paper, use Jamboard or an equivalent online platform. In some ways, participants may feel freer to respond since they will be anonymous.

Strategy Session I: Official and/or Formal Sources of Support

Goals of this session:

- Learn about official and/or formal sources of university support
- Learn about faculty experiences with (or the absence of) official and/or formal sources of support
- Brainstorm and name specific official or formal strategies you would like to see on campus

Background:

During a targeted harassment incident two distinct categories of support emerge: 1) official or formal sources of support from the campus, and 2) unofficial or informal sources of support. Here we'll focus on official or formal sources of support. This category includes official university responses, efforts from campus police, and formal support on campus.

Faculty who held positive experiences with official or formal sources of university support often referenced engaging with the campus police, or identified specific individuals in administrative positions who they perceived as offering tangible support.

- “My campus police were great. I can't say enough about their formal response in terms of supporting me and making sure I felt safe.”
- “In my case local enforcement was not helpful, but the campus police were.”
- “On my campus the Faculty Senate worked together to issue a statement about academic freedom and free speech, but in fairness we haven't yet had another incident to test what difference this makes, if any.”
- “I wasn't impressed with the vague language of the official response from my university, but their timing was quick and the intention was there. I got the sense that the campus legal team watered down the statement.”
- “My campus is well aware of my public appearances, so I have a good relationship with both the campus police and my administrators.”
- “The administrative responses escalated after some other incidents on our campus, so by the time I was targeted the support was there – proactive and reflective.”

On the other hand, faculty in equal numbers reported either an absence of official and/or formal support from their campus, or negative experiences with campus police and administrators.

- “The most immediate official response was not someone checking in on me, but our campus PR and communications contacting me immediately. Although it was eventually helpful to have the comms team available, the order of operations here didn't work at all.”
- “I couldn't believe my university wanted me to make a statement backing away from my comments, my expertise. I laughed in disbelief.”

- “There was such a gendered aspect to the response from administrators, with assumptions that because this work was about community or activism it was less serious, and that more serious research would not produce this issue.”
- “Look, academia is a popularity contest, and if you aren’t popular, then when things like this happen you’re going to get different treatment than people who are.”
- “The Academic Senate at my school considered an activities statement, but unfortunately even that turned into a debate. There was no clear cut response from any academic leaders.”
- “I received substantial support from my Department Chair and even my Dean, but there was complete silence at the university level. Zero support, or even acknowledgement.”
- “I was extended sympathies for what was happening, but no official support.”

Several participants who were part of their faculty union expressed the need for more formalized union protections around issues related to academic freedom, censorship, and the overall issue of targeted harassment. As one person said, “I know this may not seem as pressing as salary concerns, but we need to add these issues to our union agenda – we need policy around this!”

Facilitator Preparation:

Facilitators should familiarize themselves with the safety concerns noted by faculty, and be prepared to answer questions related to campus-specific details. This may mean anticipating what participants will want to know about official or formal support policies, approaches, and resources on campus. If these answers are unavailable, or if there are no formal or official sources of support, then facilitate a dialogue around this absence before moving into brainstorming strategies participants would like to see on campus.

Activities:

- 1) In small groups, take time to discuss your perceptions of these experiences with formal or official sources of support, or the lack thereof.
 - a. What do you think the experience is, or would be, on your campus?
 - b. What types of formal or official support do you think are available to faculty (and staff and students)?
 - c. Do you think this support is different depending on your role on campus? How so?
 - d. Do you think official or formal support is different depending on privilege, and campus power dynamics?
- 2) What specific strategies would you like to see in terms of official or formal support?

Strategy Session II: Unofficial and/or Informal Sources of Support

Goals of this session:

- Learn about unofficial and/or informal sources of support faculty draw on during incidents of targeted harassment.
- Learn about faculty experiences with unofficial and/or informal sources of support
- Brainstorm and name specific ways in which you could support a friend or colleague.

Background:

During a targeted harassment incident two distinct categories of support emerge: 1) official or formal sources of support from the campus, and 2) unofficial or informal sources of support. Here we'll focus on unofficial or informal sources of support.

Nearly every faculty member reported that they relied on informal or unofficial support as they navigated through their targeted harassment incident. When asked what kinds of unofficial or informal sources of support they relied on, faculty shared:

- “The first thing I did was call a colleague who just said “breathe.” And I did. I relied on colleagues and friends so much during those few weeks.”
- “Conversations with colleagues, mentors, and friends were everything. I had no support or conversations from my department chair or the college, so these people were literally all I had as I was dealing with death threats at work.”
- “I was out of the country when I found out, so I received support from my family.”
- “The emotional toll is heavy, and that’s something you have to process with people close to you, not necessarily with official university representatives. At this point I’ve been targeted a few times, so I know what to expect and anticipate. In some ways that makes it easier.”
- “My wife has heard it all, and understands that this isn’t the time to back down. I don’t know what I’d do without her support.”

Several participants expressed feeling guilty or concerned that their informal networks of friends and family had to endure this harassment with them. Additionally, some participants also noted that they talked with an off-campus counselor or therapist, often because there were very few counseling resources available to faculty. In this sense, the absence of formal or official support forced faculty to find support beyond the campus.

Facilitator Preparation:

Facilitators should familiarize themselves with the safety concerns noted by faculty, and be prepared to answer questions. This may mean anticipating what participants may share about informal or unofficial support networks.

Activities:

- 1) In small groups, take time to discuss your perceptions of these experiences with informal or unofficial support.
 - a. What types of informal or unofficial support do you think are available to you?
 - b. Do you think this support is different depending on your role at home, or your connection to the area (i.e. are you new to the region? Did you move for work?).
 - c. Do you think unofficial or informal support is different depending on privilege, and campus power dynamics?
- 2) Take some time to brainstorm about informal or unofficial ways you could support friends or colleagues through a targeted harassment incident. Share out with the large group.

Workshop: Campus Asset Mapping

Goals of this workshop:

- Identifying campus resources for supporting people through incidents of targeted harassment
- Mapping these campus resources to create a visual of support
- Creating individual asset maps
- Creating an asset “wish list”
- Activating assets

Background:

The activities in this session are designed for use at multiple scales: campus, college, department, committee, or group of individuals. Asset mapping is a tool used across disciplines and professions to identify assets that are available to a community. Examples of assets include, but are not limited to, people, services, connections, resources, talents, skills, certifications, and access to meeting spaces.

Facilitator Preparation:

Facilitators should have stations set up around the room where participants can work in small groups. Each station should include physical copies of a campus map (preferably with buildings labeled) on which participants can write or draw. If possible, an editable version of the map should be projected and one facilitator can compile all of the assets identified by participants into a digital copy that can be shared. The asset “wish list” will be created as a large group, co-constructed by using white boards and giving each participant a dry erase marker, or by using poster paper. Blank sheets of paper can be used to create individual asset maps.

Facilitators should develop basic role play scenarios that are appropriate or timely based on recent incidents or the climate on your campus. For instance, facilitators might choose participants ahead of time to model specific scripts (i.e. a part time lecturer who is worried about job security following a targeted harassment incident, or a faculty member who is concerned about their safety). Alternatively, the facilitators may take turns doing the role play and talking participants through the experience. This will be a chance for participants to “try on” what it looks like to activate assets, to make asks for resources, or to practice supporting colleagues through these experiences.

Activities:

1) Campus Asset Mapping.

First, in small groups participants will brainstorm the assets they see available to them in the campus community during an incident of targeted harassment. Remember, examples of assets include, but are not limited to, people, services, connections, resources, talents, skills, certifications, and access to meeting spaces. Assets can be formal or official sources of support, or can be informal and unofficial

networks of support that exist within the campus. Be creative – what assets might be untapped? Unrecognized? Only used by certain groups on campus? Also, consider the needs of staff members and students.

Second, each group will take a copy of the campus map and physically map these assets and their locations onto the campus map. Lastly, one facilitator will compile all the assets from the groups and create a final Campus Asset Map.

2) **Creating individual asset maps.**

This activity applies the concept of Asset Mapping to an individual scale. Each participant will get time to create their own individual map of assets available to them, whether from their personal, academic, or professional lives. Using blank paper, map out the assets you have access to, the people or places you turn to for support, care, and guidance. On a personal level this might include family, religious spaces, therapists, or personal skills that support self-care regimens. At a professional level this might include colleagues on campus, people from professional organizations, or mentors. Your individual asset maps are meant as a preparation resource, in hopes that you'll never need to use them.

3) **Creating an asset “wish list”.**

For this activity the large group will brainstorm assets they believe should be available to faculty, students, and staff during incidents of targeted harassment. Remember, be creative! Either a facilitator or a participant can write the asset list wish on a white board or a flip chart so that all participants can see and discuss them simultaneously. After the list is complete, take a moment to reflect and plan: What would it take to make the items on this wish list a reality? How do we get there? What assets might we have as a group to put this process in motion?

4) **Activating Assets.**

For this activity participants will have a chance to engage in role play to “try on” what it looks like to activate assets, to make asks for resources, or to practice supporting colleagues through these experiences. Facilitators will walk participants through several scenarios, and after each scene the group will consider the following questions:

- How would you respond to a colleague who is having this experience? How might the scenario be different if that colleague was untenured? Or a lecturer?
- How might your response change if your colleague was receiving racialized harassment? Gender-based harassment? Harassment for their actual or perceived sexual orientation? Immigration status? Religion?
- How might you use the Campus Asset Map as a resource to support this colleague? How could you draw on your personal asset map to support this colleague?
- How might you approach department chairs, Deans, or other campus leaders about needed resources? Consider what you're asking for: time, money, programming, policy, space? If you're not the best person to make the ask, then how could you approach someone who is in a better position? What strategies for making an ask have worked in the past?

Conclusion

Research about the targeted harassment of faculty is ongoing, and future studies are needed to help further our understanding, develop more effective strategies at institutional and individual levels, and to better inform policy making. For instance, in this study reviewing existing campus policies and procedures about the issue of targeted harassment provided few concrete answers, but instead raised important and necessary questions about what such policies should include, who the policy is meant to serve, whether the policy exists to support faculty or as a protective measure for the campus, and whether policies are followed during incidents of targeted harassment. A future study could include interviews with faculty members who work for campuses with these policies in place and who experienced a targeted harassment incident. Such a study could reveal more about whether the campus followed the policy during an incident, whether the policy was effective as designed, and importantly whether the faculty member felt supported through the policy.

One thing we do know: faculty need better support through incidents of targeted harassment. As closing questions during their interviews, faculty were asked about what they needed during that time, the types of support they wished they had, and what advice they might offer other faculty who are facing similar situations. Here they are in their own words.

- “It is so, so simple for universities to make these experiences easier for faculty. We shouldn’t have to endure this on our own.”
- “We need a more systematic messaging strategy – no one should have to message away their own harassment, or rely on vague university language.”
- “Please, please start addressing this issue during the new faculty orientation. I can guarantee you this issue is not going away.”
- “Remember that this affects students, too. They need support because sometimes we’re experiencing joint harassment where both faculty and students are targeted.”
- “Every campus needs to address the Academic Freedom issues. Safety is front and center as it should be, but Academic Freedom is everything.”
- “Campuses need to make public statements immediately in support of faculty, Academic Freedom, the exchange of ideas, etc. Stop throwing faculty under the bus.”
- “Remember to tell yourself ‘it’s not about me.’ When I look back at some of the tweets and messages over the years, this is about something much bigger than me. This is anti-intellectualism and hate watching and being a placeholder for other issues.”
- “Document everything! Document, document, document. Take screenshots. Enlist friends to be on the lookout. You never know what will be important, and you never know what someone might delete. Screenshot.”

- “Take a look at your social media set-up now, before an incident. What’s private, what isn’t? Clean up your friends list. I was scrambling as things were unfolding and it was an added stress.”
- “I was so overwhelmed, I needed emotional support, even for small logistics.”
- “You know what I could have used? An email review service. Someone who would just glance through the inbox and delete or file away the nasty messages.”
- “DeleteMe is a lifesaver.”
- **“I can tell you exactly what I needed: Support, and lots of it.”**