

Academic Bullying Case Study #5 - Faculty bullies Faculty

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Faculty bullies Faculty

- **Side One (Dr. Smith):** Dr. Smith has been working for the department for over five years. Dr. Smith performs well, always gets excellent year-end reviews, and is well-liked by both other faculty and students. However, there is one faculty member (Dr. Johnson) who obviously dislikes Dr. Smith. One day, a group of three faculty members are hosting a faculty candidate for a dinner during the interview process. Dr. Johnson, the senior faculty member who is the current program chair, tries to establish power by putting down others that are either not present or who may be seen as threatening to their position. During the dinner, the conversation about transcribing research interviews comes up. Dr. Smith shares a product that provides transcription services and describes a method for ensuring validity. Dr. Johnson interjects with a comment of, “a typical, white male that looks for others to do their work for them.” This shuts down the conversation.
 - **What are your thoughts about Dr. Smith’s experience?**
 - **If you were Dr. Smith, how would you feel? What outcomes would you want to see happen?**
 - **Why do you think Alex acted in this way?**
 - **What actions do you think could be taken to address Dr. Smith’s concerns?**
 - **Whom do you think Dr. Smith could talk to in order to get perspective on Alex’s actions?**
 - **What do you think would be some possible outcomes if Dr. Smith talked to other faculty members about their experiences with upset students?**

- **Side Two (Dr. Johnson):** As a non-Caucasian senior faculty within a highly male and white faculty, Dr. Johnson is no stranger to discrimination. To cope with these feelings, Dr. Johnson has learned to grasp and exert power by diminishing the perceived power of others. Dr. Johnson sees this behavior as a way to build relationships with the intention of gaining allies to correct perceived injustices. When Dr. Smith makes a comment at an interview-dinner that Dr. Johnson perceives as insensitive to those who are not white, Dr. Johnson inserts an opinion that the statement is indicative of white privilege. Dr. Johnson believes that it is necessary to act this way to gain and maintain respect within the department and that there is a duty to defend minorities.
 - **What are your thoughts about this situation after hearing Dr. Johnson’s side?**
 - **If you were Dr. Johnson, how would you feel if Dr. Smith approached you with these concerns?**
 - **Have your opinions on how the situation should be handled changed since hearing side 2? If so, how?**
 - **What do you think could be done in the short term to resolve the immediate tension and what would have to change long term in order to create a working relationships between Dr. Smith and Dr. Johnson?**

- **Case Study 5: Final Thoughts**
 - **How does this case resonate with your experiences at Virginia Tech?**
 - **What level of support would allow you to move forward in a positive direction?**