Unsettling Trends in Academia: A Review of the Predicament of Minorities and Members of the LGBTQ Community in Higher Educational Institutions in America

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ABSTRACT

The current sociopolitical climate of the country (USA) is tumultuous and volatile. It is an era that recognizes and strives for change and open dialogue on topics that have otherwise been brushed under the rug. Such times call for open discussions on topics that may also be tabooed and bear a sense of unease and discomfort. Under this umbrella of racy and risky times emerged this study on the lived experiences and occurrences that have negatively impacted members of ethnic minorities and LGBTQ communities within academia. As an intellectual field that prides itself on its intensive research rigor and vitality, academia can no longer overlook this subject of workplace bullying in academia among faculty, staff, and students whose bullied experiences need to be addressed and shared by the mainstream population so we can all move forward together and seek to find a resolve to the existing atrocities that the members from these minority groups currently face.

KEYWORDS

Aggressive Workplace, Bullying, Homophobia, Intersectionalities, LGBTQ, Women in Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Academia as a place of employment is not immune to feelings of bias, prejudice and preferential treatment. In spite of being heavily regulated and highly stipulated in its actions, the feelings of animosity, exclusion and favoritism can be witnessed and experienced in higher educational institutions of America by professionals and students alike. As research focused the field of academics is, it is quite ironic to find the lack of research that is yet to initiate with regard to the topic of workplace bullying. The lack of attention to this topic is further fueled under the tension filled climate and recent uproar in the socio-political atmosphere of the country with events like the recent presidential elections, legalization of gay marriage in some states and a growing awareness for the rights and liberties of the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) and minority community in the Unites States of America. Under this climate of edginess and stiffness, the topic of discussion chosen for this study is relevant and pertinent to the times of today and is geared to initiate a dialogue on the preconceptions that are held about individuals who belong to the LGBTQ and minority community, their experiences, and their concerns about emerging out of the box and breaking the existing negative stereo-types that these individuals are constantly labeled under by society.

While there is a shortage of a systematic empirical research body that pertains to bullying in academic settings, this has not been the case in several popular online outlets and more traditional
trade publications. In terms of a respected and impactful industry publication, the Chronicle of Higher Education has distributed numerous articles on the aggression and maltreatment that occurs on campuses (e.g., Fogg, 2008; Gravois, 2006). This points to the fact that academic settings are equally susceptible and require a well-orchestrated effort on the part of its researchers to produce research that relays and recounts experiences of workplace aggression and bullying and how to alleviate the occurrences of the same (Keashly, & Neuman, 2010).

It is the aim of this study to reflect on the perils faced by minorities and members of the LGBTQ community in higher educational institutions in America either in their role as employees or students. Furthermore, this research hopes to break the unease associated with this subject that further discourages an open discussion or dialogue of this topic among the key participants of educational institutions (Macgillivray & Jennings, 2008), namely the so-called game-changers such as the administrators, policy makers, and other educational leaders. The lack of professional development programs and teacher preparatory programs within institutions further adds a sense of forbiddance to addressing this subject in an objective and free minded way.

An emerging body of research about the existence of a malicious workplace environment is beginning to surface at a rapidly growing rate. A malevolent work environment usually begins at the top, either through carelessness or an absence of character and truthfulness, usually initializing from an ingenuous oversight of the importance of how employees are handled. It is disconcerting to acknowledge that in some academic environments, toxic environments exist (Aguirre, 2000). Unhealthy environments may lead to poor productivity in the corporate world, poor morale and unnecessary stress. These attributes have a combined synergistic detrimental effect on employees and organizations alike. This increasingly negative and suppressed atmosphere that blankets higher educational institutions can make employees feel claustrophobic and confined in their ability to grow as leaders and researchers, thereby producing redundancy in their work ethic and productivity. Sometimes it may seem as if there is no remedy for the problem (Gardner, 2012). Personality conflicts and unavoidable stress can cause people to accept the situation. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. DOL) 146 million Americans were employed in July 2007. An estimated 54 million Americans have been bullied at work using the 37% rate. (Namie, 2007).

Namie (2003) define workplace bullying as the repeated, malicious, health-endangering mistreatment of one employee (the target) by one or more employees (the bully, bullies). The ill-treatment is psychosomatic violence, a mix of verbal and strategic assaults to prevent the target from performing work well. It is illegitimate conduct as it prevents work from getting done. Namie (2003) note that bullying impacts employee’s happiness both personally and in terms of job satisfaction and engagement. In providing a definition for workplace bullying in an organization, it is important to use a broad definition that allows for interpretation, acknowledging the subjective nature of experiencing inappropriate behaviors at work (Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2002). A number of terms are used to define essentially the same phenomenon. The most frequently used terms include mobbing (Leymann 1996), harassment (e.g. psychological harassment or workplace harassment) (Québec Commission 2006; European Agency for Health and Safety at Work 2006), and bullying (Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996). According to Einarsen and Mikkelsen (2003, p. 3) these terms all seem to refer to the same phenomenon, namely the systematic mistreatment of a subordinate, a colleague, or a superior, which, if continued, may cause severe social, psychological and psychosomatic problems in the victim.

Gardner (2012) in her article titled “I Couldn’t Wait to Leave the Toxic Environment”: A Mixed Methods Study of Women Faculty Satisfaction and Departure from One Research Institution” came to the anticipated realization that women were less contented with the amount of capital that was
Clustering Obsolete Computers to Reduce E-Waste
www.igi-global.com/chapter/clustering-obsolete-computers-reduce-waste/65000?camid=4v1a

Geocoding of Spatial Relationships Contained in Tweets
www.igi-global.com/article/geocoding-of-spatial-relationships-contained-in-tweets/149627?camid=4v1a