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Academic Trolling: Exposing Educational Corruption

The ability to push a political and ideological bias and agenda in institutions of higher learning can affect how people think and believe. Attending college or a university has become an extremely popular option for people after completing high school. Since the 20th century, there has been an uptick in college enrollment rates, especially of recent high school graduates where in 2015, college enrollment rates increased to 69.7 percent, where 9 out of 10 students were full-time students. (bls.com Accessed 24 November 2018) Post-Secondary education is now where people are expected to go to in order to get a job when that was not the case decades before. There are a vast amount of degrees and careers for people to choose from, ranging from the social sciences, engineering, law, etc. It would be worrying if post-secondary education could be used in a malicious manner to spread a political and ideological agenda influencing the minds of young adults of today. This worry may either be a simple exaggeration; that such agendas are not leaking into university and college level resources, or, fears created by such a claim is possible and is happening right now.

There has been growing concern as to if colleges and universities have become corrupted due to professors and scholars promoting harmful ideas of social justice (promoting ideas in society that goes against perceived general social injustices). Advocating for any form of social justice, good and bad, can lead to activism because it stirs people's emotions to create change they deem necessary. Such

activism has become extremely popular in recent years as seen in the American Freshman Survey where approximately 9 percent of incoming college freshman say they have a “very good chance” of participating in student protests, a 2.9 percent increase from last year. (insidehighered.com Accessed 3 December 2018) Recent student protests to promote social justice attempts to go against hate speech (speech that attacks people through discrimination). A way that students prevent those who express what the students deem as hate speech, is to stop people who spout hate speech from speaking in college or university campuses. A 2016 Gallup study showed that 52 percent of students believed that institutions should forbid those who spread what is deemed as hate speech on campuses. (voanews.com Accessed 3 December 2018) For example, Middlebury College invited Charles Murray; a political scientist and associated with the conservative American Enterprise Institute. He was met with student protests where protesters yelled over him when Charles was talking. Charles was later escorted out of the building he was meant to speak in and went into a different building to broadcast his speech online. However, when Murray entered his car to leave the college, protesters appeared, where they rocked, jumped, and pounded his car. (voanews.com Accessed 4 December 2018) He was previously regarded as a white nationalist by the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that claims to fight hate and bigotry. (voanews.com Accessed 3 December 2018) Some people have become worried that violent forms of protests are taking over institutions of learning while restricting free speech. Others believe that it’s important to silence those who are viewed as having harmful opinions from spreading their ideas. At times it can be unclear as to who is truly in the right but what is clear is that such activism in college and university campuses is something that was never popular before in the United States.

Activism in higher institutions today makes some people wonder, where does it stem from. Considering that such activism was occurring on college and university campuses, it’s possible that it may stem from there. Three people took notice of what was occurring and decided to look into the sudden rise in student activism for social justice. James Lindsay, Peter Boghossian, and Helen

Pluckrose; are now known as the academics who exposed “grievance studies”. Grievance studies is a term they defined as studies that have a “common goal of problematizing aspects of culture in minute detail in order to attempt diagnoses of power imbalances and oppression rooted in identity.”

(areomagazine.com Accessed 24 November 2018) James claims that grievance studies have affected mostly the social sciences such as women, gender, sexuality, race studies among others because those specific majors focus on themes of women, blacks, LGBTQ, and other perceived minority groups being oppressed in present and past societies. (youtube.com Accessed 4 December 2018) This makes social justice important because it is meant to help empower and correct the injustices supposed minority groups face. The three academics wrote to Areo in early October that James, Peter, and Helen wrote multiple papers for multiple academic journals in the social sciences. When examining and engaging with the work in grievance studies, they began to learn trends that appeared in other grievance study entries. For example, on a YouTube video, James said, “The best I can tap into is there’s this kind of religious architecture in their mind where privilege is sin. Privilege is evil. And then they’ve identified education as the place where it had to be fixed.” (youtube.com Accessed 24 November 2018)

Education that teaches about injustices such as privilege is available at many colleges and universities. Lindsey exclaims that privilege refers to things such as capitalism, catholics, cisgenders, men, conservatives, and caucasians and it is alarming to those skeptical of colleges and universities because many professors have been shown on record for speaking out against privilege in a way that seems outlandish. For example, from a Facebook account, “Film Your Marxist Professors”, a compilation of professors spouting anti-white rhetoric such as a Trinity College professor saying “White people are inhuman. Let them f---ing die.” and a USC professor calling for a holocaust against all white people, to name a few. (facebook.com Accessed 24 November 2018) These comments also seem to correlate well with James’ other findings when he also said following his previous quote, “So you come up with these really nasty arguments, like let’s put white kids in chains on the floor at school

as an educational opportunity. And if you frame it in terms of overcoming privilege, [...] If you frame that in terms of ‘oh they only complain about that because they’re privilege and they can’t handle it because their privilege made them weak, then it fits right in.’ by framing absurd comments in such a way that it promotes social justice, journal entries can be validated at highly academic journals.”

(youtube.com Accessed 24 November 2018) These journal entries get passed on to higher levels of learning such as college where professors express statements in the name of social justice since topics such as white people, men, etc., among many others are deemed as privileged by society today.

To understand the heart of the problem James and the others perceived, extensive research was done. Twenty papers were written beginning from June 2017, where at first their papers were rejected. However, when the academics began to look into other papers in the field, things began to change. James, Helen, and Peter began to derive their journal entries from other entries in the same academic journals in order for the academics’ entries to blend in. At the time of writing, at least 7 journal entries were accepted by multiple social science journals. The study abruptly ended when the academics were forced to go public by a journalist from the Wall Street Journal. (areomagazine.com Accessed 4 December 2018) To name a few: *Human Reactions to Rape Culture and Queer Performativity in Urban Dog Parks in Portland, Oregon*, also nicknamed *Dog Park* by Helen (who went under a fake last name) was accepted, recognized for excellence, and published by *Gender, Place, and Culture*; a feminist journal. The thesis of *Dog Park* was that dog parks where dogs hump each other are rape-condoning spaces and places of rampant canine rape culture. The paper then makes a call to action that men should be trained like dogs out of sexual violence and bigotry because men are prone to rape. Another one, *Our Struggle is My Struggle: Solidarity Feminism as an Intersectional Reply to Neoliberal and Choice Feminism*, also known as *Feminist Mein Kampf* uses a rewritten chapter of *Mein Kampf* by Adolf Hitler that discussed the beginnings of the development of the Nazi party. The journal entry sneakily switched in some words and replaced them with buzzwords such as marginalized

and victimhood. The thesis of *Feminist Mein Kampf* was that feminism that focuses on choice and responsibility can be countered by a feminism focusing on solidarity around victimhood of the most marginalized women. It was accepted by *Affilia*, a feminist journal. *Affilia*'s comments referring to Dog Park appeared impressed such as, "This is an interesting paper seeking to further the aims of inclusive feminism by attending to the issue of allyship/solidarity." Another comment applauded the journal entry for its research, "As I read your manuscript, I found your framing and treatment of both neoliberal and choice feminisms well grounded." (areomagazine.com Accessed 24 November 2018) The purpose of these journal entries among many others was to see if concepts such as toxic masculinity and rape culture can be expressed in such a way that some papers could also be considered bigoted themselves, but be accepted and highly regarded as a work from an expert in the field of grievance studies.

Academic journals are references that are deemed to be the work of professionals. Some can be referred to in academia especially majors and curriculums that require reading or using a source from a journal. Journals are perceived to be articles that hold truth and the inputs of experts in specific fields. However, James, Helen, and Peter have showed that these same academic journals can be subject to entries that are faulty in its claims, research, and thesis. This begs the question as to how many college and university students have become influenced by grievance studies, and who are the "experts" that reviewed and thought that the fake papers was from the work of another expert in the same field. In response to the hoax, some attacked the three academics for their actions. A gender studies professor at the University of Sussex tweeted that it was a "coordinated attack from the right, supported by 'gender critical' feminists angry that Gender Studies is trans-inclusive". (thestranger.com Accessed 3 December 2018) A historian alleged that the scholars were suspect because the journal entries excluded straight white men. (thestranger.com Accessed November 25, 2018) It is possible that there are other journal entries similar to the entries made by James and the others. Journal entries that come from other

academics can hold similar views, however, the writers were honest in their writing. What is being regarded as a source of information can influence people to take action for social justice in ways that are both helpful and harmful. However, it is also possible that such grievance studies are not corrupting people's minds and that the experiment by James and the others lead to nothing conclusive. If nothing is done to look further into this "ideological corruption", then what could it lead to in the near future and if it isn't the academic journals causing ideological corruption, then what is?

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