

The Psychological Implication of Cancel Culture

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Abstract: Cancel culture is a common social phenomenon recently. It affects people's academic life as well as social life. This research report mainly focuses on how cancel culture has a detrimental effect on academia and social media, and the urgency to alleviate the negative effect of cancel culture. The report also provides the possible solution to this may be a new and reasonable law to regulate this phenomenon.

Keywords: Cancel Culture; Academia Restriction; Social Media; Laws.

1. Introduction

According to ProCon.org, one of the "Top 25 Free Reference Websites of 2011" voted by the American Library Association, cancel culture has been one of the most controversial issues in the USA. It means "if someone, often a celebrity, does something either illegal or unethical, society is quick to "cancel" them, or lessen their celebrity standing or cultural capital" (Carr, 2020). Its spreading speed is so surprisingly fast that it may cancel someone immediately. Sacco is an employee at IAC in New York. She spoke some offensive words on Twitter, and in only 11 hours, she was criticized and canceled. (Ronson, 2015). Cancel culture made her life ruins. Cancel culture can also refer to historical people. Lincoln is one of the greatest presidents in history, and the cancel culture even tried to cancel him. The students at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and the San Francisco public school appealed to remove the statue of Lincoln for "his apparent mistreatment of Native Americans" (Kessler, 2021). The examples suggested that the cancel culture gave injustice punishment to people. People who were canceled will face painful experiences such as losing their job, dignity, or freedom. However, "there are numerous prominent examples of social media misuse. These cases should not disproportionately characterize the scope or potential of digital media participation as a whole" (Ng, 2020). Cases of cancel culture are increasing sharply, and as the number of victims is more significant, the issue should be paid more attention to. At this time, as the frequency of cancel culture and the negative consequences conflict acutely, we have to consider this question: Does cancel culture in the US lead to unjust punishment?

2. Restriction in Academia

The introduction refers to the consequences of cancel culture. This paragraph will focus on the academic field to determine whether cancel culture impacts academia and whether people should consider some action to control it. Academia should be a free place to express oneself opinion. Just because of this, our society can make progress. Through debate, we learn and improve. However, if cancel culture takes part, it will restrict freedom in academia, and the campus will lose its meaning. "The issues being discussed are not equally delegated and open to public spaces," and "the opposing party who does not stand in agreement with the adherents of cancel culture becomes the victim of the negative

campaign and open bullying." (Kurniawan, Ngawang, Alno, & Herianto, 2022). Because of canceled culture, students may be frightened and cannot express their opinions anymore. Mead experiences the cancel culture in academia. Some comments he made were expunged from the academic literature simply because his thoughts differed from others. "The extraordinary efforts made to retract Mead's opinion paper do not seem scholarly or open-minded" (Teixeira da Silva, 2021). "Cancel culture is a parasite in the exercise of academic freedom" (Kurniawan, Ngawang, Alno, & Herianto, 2022). Academia with this kind of parasite in will not make its function anymore. Think of Mead, that his article was expunged will destroy people's belief in the freedom of academia. Nobody will have the nerve to speak something differently and express his own opinion. It was a terrible phenomenon if cancel culture kept going deep into academia. "A healthy and free academic debate is where no predetermined right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable, exists." (Teixeira da Silva, 2021). A cancel culture should maintain the atmosphere. However, some professors and academics do not think cancel culture will influence their life. According to a survey by Pippa Norris, a political scientist and McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, she found that about 53% of people think their academic freedom does not reduce and even improved a lot.

Furthermore, "Leftwing faculty are more likely than those on the right to believe that there has been little or no change in respect for open academic debate and pressures to be politically correct" (Norris, 2020). Her survey suggests that many people feel their academic freedom is not threatened. People whose thoughts are more open do not find any restriction in open debate from cancel culture. Nevertheless, actually, "the issue of "cancel culture" in academia, including academic publishing, is not a clear-cut phenomenon." (Teixeira da Silva, 2021). Many people may not feel that cancel culture influences them because they may not realize them. Cancel culture may be in the incubation period for them. Although the restriction of cancel culture in academia is rare, only 47% of people have realized the issue's existence. Some people are indeed harmed by cancel culture. Besides Mead mentioned above, a high-profile cancer researcher at Ohio State University, Carlo M. Croce, was also canceled and brought into disrepute (Teixeira da Silva, 2021). Croce utilized some fake data in his article and should be punished. However, People should know the existence of cancel culture in the academic field. Moreover, although cancel culture can

help academics to boycott something, in most cases, it is also the most extreme form of criticism. If people let cancel culture grow up, the academic debate will become an attack, and the loser will be canceled. It is an acute problem in academia. People should allow people with various opinions and perspectives to analyze an issue differently. As Teixeira da Silva said, "A healthy and free academic debate is where no predetermined right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable, exists" (Teixeira da Silva, 2021). As a result, cancel culture is a potential virus in academia. If it exists, open debate and freedom will never appear anymore.

3. Restriction on Social Media

As technology grows, the Information era cannot be avoided. Social media, such as Twitter, plays a significant part in people's lives. However, people have lost their social media freedom due to canceled culture. "There are numerous prominent examples of social media" (Ng, 2020). For instance, Sacco was an employee of IAC in New York. Once, she traveled to Africa to meet her relatives. Just before she took flight, she tweeted a sentence which caused terrible consequences later: "Going to Africa. I hope I do not get AIDS. Just kidding. I am white!" The words may indeed be offensive to African people, but Sacco said the words at that time like a joke. During the 11 hours she shut down her phone, many people criticized her on Twitter.

Consequently, many people who wanted to despatch her succeeded. She could not bear being criticized and left the job she liked and moved away as far as she could. She finally failed to cry out her grievances (Ronson, 2015). Although Sacco did something wrong, she said something irreverent to Africans. However, is it fair to make Sacco lose her job and move away? Is it justice to make Sacco be punished like this? Should people let cancel culture harm her so much? It is unfair to her. Ronson, a journalist for New York Times, wanted to help her but was refused. The reason was that Sacco was frightened by social media and never wanted to appear in public anymore (Ronson, 2015). Cancel culture provides injustice punishment to people, restricts their freedom, and repels differences. The virus is aggressing society. Many social experts realized the problem and warned society not to let the phenomenon go on. They gathered in Harper's Magazine and published a letter on justice and open debate to show their voice. "Censoriousness is spreading more widely in our culture: an intolerance of opposing views, a vogue for public shaming and ostracism, and the tendency to dissolve complex policy issues in a blinding moral certainty."

Furthermore, "We [should] uphold the value of robust and even caustic counter-speech from all quarters." (Harper's Magazine, 2020). Freedom, from the Declaration of Independence, will be lost now. If action is not taken, the cancel culture will forever destroy society's freedom. Besides, with the help of social media, cancel culture has wings to spread more viciously. King is a security guard for Prairie Meadows Casino. Once, he got \$600, to his surprise, so he donated to Stead Family Children's Hospital, which is a philanthropic hospital for children. Then he wanted to help more children, so he encouraged people on social media to help. His encouragement was corresponded by many people, and they also started to donate. Soon King raised \$1 million for the hospital. However, a reporter for Des Moines Register, Aaron Calvin, found King's black history and published that, and the result changed. King was found to tweet two racists when he was 16 years old. As a result, King was within an

inch of being canceled (Carr, 2020). If Calvin succeeds, sick children will lose \$1 million and the opportunity to be cured. Although Calvin failed, how many Calvins may appear in society? Once the atmosphere is formed, it will be a catastrophe for people, and social media will not help King but will be an accomplice. As soon as cancel culture forms an atmosphere, injustice punishment, restriction of freedom, and loss of bravery to be kind will be a common situation in society, and social media will be the biggest accomplice. To avoid this terrible situation, canceling a cancel culture is reasonably necessary.

4. Conclusion

To conclude the article, the negative influences should be emphasized. Cancel culture restricts freedom in academia and on social media. Think about Mead, Sacco, and King; they are all victims of cancel culture. Do cancel culture give them justice punishment? Absolutely no. Like Sacco, she did something wrong, but the punishment for her is that she lost her job and had to leave her city, which is too heavy. Cancel culture promotes the injustice phenomenon in society. Carr, an assistant professor of business law and the Carande Family faculty fellow at California State University, provided ways to end cancel culture. If a victim wanted to conserve his right, Carr would provide some ways to charge the sponsor of cancel culture. Firstly, "the intentional interference torts might be applicable." Secondly, defamation or disparagement may be a manner, but it may not be successful. "That disparagement and interference with business expectancy is the type of conduct that should be subject to tort liability to deter such conduct in the future" (Carr, 2020). Besides stopping cancel culture through laws, people can still use social media to appeal to others not to follow or start any cancel culture cases. Hopefully, cancel culture will never harm any people anymore.

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