

Hierarchism's Obstacles to Academic Freedom

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Abstract

Hierarchism is one of the five fear generators that has been identified as a threat to academic freedom. The other four fear generators are perfectionism, anti/intellectualism, pugilism, and short-termism. The focus of this manuscript was on "hierarchism." A hierarchy is a system where people are ranked based upon assigned importance. This manuscript operationalized academic freedom as the freedom to engage in teaching (lehrfreiheit), learning (lernfreiheit), inquiry, expression (internal and external), and service. After a brief history of modern academic freedoms, the manuscript explored traditional hierarchies in U.S. academic faculty and students. Both internal and external (to the traditional academic hierarchy) are studied by the author. Common examples of the traditional academic hierarchies and non-traditional academic hierarchies impeding academic freedoms are discussed. Next, the manuscript considered the pros and cons of utilizing a holocracy as a popular alternative to hierarchies in academia. However, the author refrained from fully committing to the use of a holocracy and determines that a hierarchy might be beneficial if hierarchies in academia are conducted with a healthier relationship in regards to academic freedoms. The author offers suggestions for developing an academic hierarchy that allows for more freedom. Finally, the manuscript concludes with the author claiming that hierarchies in academia have encroached on academic freedoms of faculty and students and there needs to be a way to address the hierarchies while preserving freedoms.

1. Introduction

Inciting fear to achieve political or workplace goals through emotional bias is how Efron [1] defines a culture of fear. In academia, both students and academic faculty have reported experiencing a culture of fear. Mellon [2] asserts that a culture of fear originates from five specific variables: 1) Anti/Intellectualism, 2) Perfectionism, 3) Pugilism, 4) Short-termism, and 5) Hierarchism. Hierarchism will be the focus of this manuscript. After a brief history of modern academic freedom, the author will explore hierarchies that affect both student and faculty academic freedoms. The hierarchies explored by the

author is divided into the traditional/formal internal hierarchies and the non-traditional/less formal external hierarchies that have developed in the academic context.

Next, the author examines information regarding a common alternative to hierarchies that is known as a holocracy (a flat organizational structure). The author, while suggesting each individual academic institution consider exploring a holocracy, will not fully commit to replacing a hierarchy due to the pros and cons of both.

Finally, this manuscript will conclude with the author making recommendations on how colleges and universities can continue to operate within the boundaries of the traditionally accepted academic hierarchies while also allowing for academic freedoms. The author concludes the manuscript by determining that hierarchies have had a negative effect on academic freedoms for both students and faculty and challenges the reader to monitor and institute healthier hierarchies.

2. Academic Freedom and Hierarchism

In the 19th century, a Prussian named Willem von Humboldt opened a university in Berlin. That university, at the time of its opening, was unique in that it was not obligated to either the government or a religious organization. Instead, Humboldt's university was committed to the tenets of lernfreiheit (the freedom to learn) and lehrfreiheit (the freedom to teach) claims Commanger [3]. This disposition differed from other European universities because other universities were operated/managed by either the government or religious organizations. Humboldt's commitment to the freedoms to teach and learn (lehrfreiheit and lernfreiheit) without a commitment to religion or government became very popular especially with foreigners [4]. Foreigners, became increasingly interested in attending a university that was only committed to pursuing academic work and scholars were allowed the freedom to pursue that work without interference from the government and/or the dominant religious establishments. The philosophies of lehrfreiheit and lernfreiheit, then, began to spread world-wide due to those foreign scholars returning to their home

countries with a new disposition on scholarly pursuits.

Despite the popularity of Humboldt's academic philosophies and commitments to freely pursue academic work, Europe witnessed a halt in the growing popularity due to the rise of two totalitarian governments (Communism and Fascism) and two world wars. Thereby, several universities that had transitioned to the philosophical dispositions of *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* began to eliminate established policies or even created adverse policies. In 1915, however, the philosophies had spread and become popular in North America. Specifically, U.S. and Canadian colleges and universities began forming organizations that would advocate for academic freedoms throughout the Americas such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

The concepts of *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* were, therefore, preserved in North American universities until flourishing again in Europe after the cold-war [4]. In 1997, according to Dea [4], the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) similarly committed to academic freedom and AAUP's four primary tenets to academic freedom world-wide. Those four tenets are: 1) the freedom to teach, 2) the freedom to learn, 3) the freedom of inquiry, and 4) the freedom of both intramural and extramural expression. Regardless of commitments to academic freedoms, there remains impediments to the basic tenets. Therefore, AAUP, UNESCO and other advocacy organizations consistently monitor and resist intrusions to scholars' academic freedoms.

Mellon [2] has indicated that hierarchism is one of five fear generators causing fear in organizations which include colleges and universities. And, Morgan [5] identifies a hierarchy as the most commonly used organizational structure. Therefore, it is likely that a majority of students and faculty both have experienced (or are currently experiencing) a hierarchy. A hierarchy is a "ladder" of decision-making process assigned by perceived importance [5]. Each person on the ladder reports to the next person above them on the ladder.

This author will explore how the fear generated from hierarchism interferes with both faculty and students' freedom to pursue academic work. *Lehrfreiheit* will be used throughout the manuscript interchangeably with faculty academic freedoms and *lernfreiheit* will be used by the author to describe the academic freedoms of the student.

3. Hierarchies in the Students

Students enrolled in colleges in the U.S. have a common (traditional) and formal student hierarchy that is internal to the college / university. This author has provided a definition of each rank in Table 1. The common internal hierarchy in U.S. college students begins in their first year with the rank of "Freshman".

Table 1. Traditional student hierarchy in the U.S.

Rank (Low to High)	Definition
Freshman	First year in college
Sophomore	Second year in college
Junior	Third year in college
Senior	Final year in college
Graduate Student	Post-undergraduate degree student

This hierarchical rank is followed by "Sophomore," "Junior," and "Senior" for undergraduate students. A graduate student is referred to as a "Grad" student." At most universities "freshman" and "sophomore" are referred to as lower-classmen, while "juniors" and "seniors" are commonly thought to be "upper-classmen".

Hierarchies are also informally developed amongst students without the traditional student ranking. Threats to students' freedoms from non-traditional or external hierarchies are frequently based upon social status. In the following sub-sections, the author will explore both the formally accepted student hierarchy and the informal hierarchies that infringe on the students' *lernfreiheit*.

3.1. Student Formal Hierarchies

The formal / traditional student hierarchy causes fears in the student population that impedes their freedom to learn.

The traditional class rank has been used internally, for example, to assign parking privileges at some universities, thus causing obstacles to students' *lernfreiheit* [6]. At this author's school, it is interesting to note that parking permits are sold to higher ranking classmen, first. Thereby, some lower-classmen are not afforded the courtesy of a parking permit, if permits sell out prior to their opportunity to purchase. And, just because upper-classmen bought a permit does not necessarily mean that they were "in need" or will use after purchase. Instead of parking permits being sold by an established "need," they are sold based upon the traditional class hierarchy.

A freshman, for instance, who commutes 20 miles could experience roadblocks to freely pursuing their studies if they fear they will not make class due to their inability to park (commuter student). Instead, a parking permit was, hypothetically, sold to a senior that lives one block from campus and is located on the city bus route. While the freshman, in this example, has established "need," the permit was sold to the senior due to class hierarchy.

Thibeault [6], for example, criticizes her college parking hierarchies because she documented parking lots and spaces with availability, while her assigned lot was always full. Or, some students have questioned why college parking, like any other commodities (i.e., seats at sporting events, musical

concerts, movie theatres, etc.) cannot be sold on a first-come, first-serve basis [6]? A traditional class hierarchy in such a situation creates apprehension in lower-classmen who worry about getting to class and impedes their abilities to pursue academic enrichment. Likewise, upper-classmen at several universities have priority in choosing campus housing according to Wood [7]. Similar to the parking issue, a living arrangement (campus housing) can also be debilitating to a student's academic freedoms if based on the traditional class ranking system rather than an objective identifiable "need." For example, lower-classmen might be assigned campus housing that does not cater to their needs of a night-time clinical experiences (which accompanies disciplinary areas such as "Nursing" where medical placements can occur over 24 hours). Instead of having quiet hours while said students are conducting their internship, the dorms are allowed to be loud/noisy at the times that the intern needs to be sleeping, thereby, not accommodating night students.

Traditional hierarchies amongst students also cause issues with curricular completion. For example, upper-classmen are allowed, at some institutions, to choose their academic advisors while lower-classmen are randomly assigned academic advisors. Lower ranking students, then, could find it difficult to locate advising that guides them in their best academic interest. Comparably, some instructors allow for assignment choices to be made via traditional hierarchy, again affecting the freedoms of lower-classmen to choose meaningful academic study.

Noam [8] makes the claim that students need to be free to enroll in the courses that benefit their chosen discipline. However, students have their *lernfreiheit* impeded when internal hierarchies exist based upon the traditional class ranking. If a student is incapable of attending classes frequently due to parking issues, cannot adequately function during required internships due to living arrangements, and/or are unable to seek academic advising or the assignments that best prepare them for success; then, the students' *lernfreiheit* has been negatively affected. This author questions why colleges / universities have not intervened to resolve the challenges to *lernfreiheit* that have been fostered through the traditional student hierarchy?

3.2. Student Informal Hierarchies

Student freedoms can also be affected from informal or non-traditional hierarchies, and they, too, can negatively affect the *lernfreiheit* of the student. Many of the informal hierarchies that fall outside the traditional student hierarchy (class rank) are based on the student's social status asserts Herras [9].

A common example that exists in U.S. colleges is that athletes are often afforded privileges that sacrifice the academic freedoms of non-athletic students. For

example, Holt [10] explains that at several U.S. institutions, athletes are given the right to "priority registration." This is an inequitable hierarchy and has caused high amounts of frustration at multiple U.S. universities [11]. There are instances where a popular class has been filled to capacity with athletes and not with the tuition-paying students that actually "need" the class. Smith [12] reports on the controversy that this informal hierarchy has caused at one U.S. university. In fact, Smith [12] denotes the anger and fear that many non-athlete students have indicated because their courses fill to capacity with athletes prior to their assigned registration time. And, Kohn [11] explains how priority registration for athletes at another U.S. university has unfairly prioritized athletes as "more important" than other students, creating a culture of inferiority amongst the students. Another example of informal student hierarchy is attributed to the Greek system (fraternities and sororities). Herreras [9] identifies members of campus fraternities and sororities as a higher level of "social" hierarchy and as a way for members to publicize their social status (perceived importance). Indeed, Herreras [9] has compared joining the Greek system as a form of societal segregation.

While this homogenous social membership may appear harmless in regard to most academic freedoms; Eidell [13] describes how fraternity and sorority members at a few U.S. colleges / universities have commandeered the student governing body on campus. Non-fraternity / sorority students miss out on the entire process to choose their student leaders (e.g., student body president, treasurer, etc.). This eliminates the academic freedom of democratic choice from college students and keeps them from participating in their elections since the elections (and subsequent appointed bodies) are manufactured by "select students" from the beginning.

Konnikova [14] underscores the (social) hierarchy that is present on campuses with large Greek membership by reporting findings about the U.S. government. At the time of publication, Konnikova [14] revealed that 85% of the U.S. Supreme Court were members of the college Greek system. Concurrently, 63% of all presidential cabinet appointees since 1900 were fraternity or sorority members. Over three-fourths of the U.S. Senate (76%) were members of the Greek system and 85% of Fortune 500 Chief Executive Officers (CEO) were formerly fraternity and sorority members. Presidents and their cabinets, Justices, Senators and top company CEO's are at the top of U.S. decision-making hierarchy. Therefore, this author questions if Greek hierarchies based on social status have not exceeded campus culture? This author notes that there appears to be a disadvantage for non-Greek students when comparing their freedoms.

Another non-traditional hierarchy that can cause fear and hamper the students *lernfreiheit* is the

hierarchy that exists between the teacher and the student. Traditionally, the instructor provided students with information and the students retained that information. However, Noam [8] points out that students in college are no longer viewing the teacher / instructor as the “only” source of information. Textbooks, videos, media publications, web-sites, etc. all are acting as conveyers of information. Faculty, then, have become “curators” of information [8], meaning that the faculty collects and guides the students to resources. This author finds this analogy interesting because it indicates that the hierarchical structure that was once seen in the classroom between teachers and students (where the teacher gives instructions, and the students take notes) has become replaced with an environment that is more conducive to student *lernfreiheit*. In this new classroom representation, students are guided to the information and expected to apply the information to tasks rather than didactically being lectured and assessed. Thereby, a hierarchy has been upended with students seeking learning from other available resources.

In order to preserve *lernfreiheit*, this author notes that non-traditional / informal hierarchies that are predominately based on social status need to be reduced because students are sacrificing academic work in lieu of social standing.

4. Hierarchies in the Faculty

Greer [15] claims that hierarchies within our work environment influences our interactions, changes how we speak to others, determines if/when we speak up, and whether we are willing to engage in conflict. Concurrently, Larrick [16] reports that it is less likely that subordinates will speak up, voice opinions, offer opposing views, or engage in creative activities when hierarchies exist. Academics are no exception.

The common internal/traditional faculty hierarchy in the U.S. is, according to Edwards [17], similar to other countries, but not necessarily the same. Individuals in the U.S. are likely to witness the following faculty hierarchy: Teaching/Research Assistant, Adjunct Professor, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Full Professor, or an Emeritus Professor. This author includes the common U.S. faculty hierarchy and characteristics in Table 2.

Hierarchies within the faculty exist both internally (within the college) and externally (outside the college/university). Both external and internal hierarchies can cause fears within the faculty that interrupt academic freedoms. This author will discuss internal and external hierarchies that negatively affect faculty *lerhfreiheit* in the succeeding sub-sections.

4.1. Faculty Internal Hierarchies

Internally, faculty members experience formal

Table 2. Traditional faculty hierarchy in the U.S.

Rank (Low to High)	Definition / Characteristics
Teaching/Research Assistant	Likely a graduate student that is not the instructor of record for a course. They complete assigned tasks issued by the instructor of record.
Adjunct Professor	Part-time teaching or research position.
Lecturer	Full-time faculty with renewable 1,2, or 3-year contracts. Usually, they are limited to teaching courses.
Senior Lecturer	A lecturer that has been offered permanent status on the faculty.
Assistant Professor	Tenure-track professor who has not yet achieved tenure. Typically, a requirement of teaching, scholarship, and service are required to obtain tenure. These faculty have usually earned a terminal degree in their field of study and are pursuing recognition in their field.
Associate Professor	A professor that has achieved tenure and typically has become recognized as an expert in the related discipline.
Full Professor	A professor that has made a significant impression on the field of study.
Emeritus	A professor that has retired (or left academia for other reasons such as health) but still afforded faculty distinction amongst the college which could include voting rights.

hierarchies imposed by line of reporting (chain-of-command) decision-makers. Mellon [2] claims that within colleges/universities, hierarchism hassles faculty freedoms by delaying necessary decisions needed to pursue academic work. Faculty members

that suffer from hierarchical decision-making, according to Holt [10], frequently hear comments that are similar (or exactly) like: “if it were up to me,” “Let’s consider all options,” “I will check with my supervisor,” etc. Comments like these are due to a hierarchy where the decision-makers are either unclear as to their responsibilities and/or the decision-makers wish to avoid criticism and eliminate some of the culpability of making potentially incorrect decisions. Often, this never-ending chain-of-command acts as a form of permission seeking that inhibits or indefinitely delays academic faculty from making necessary decisions affecting the faculty members. Faculty freedoms are affected when they have to await permission to freely make those decisions.

Will [18] has described a current trend in U.S. colleges where there is growth in the employment of non-faculty positions that have been afforded decision-making responsibilities, thereby deterring faculty from making free decisions. For instance, the Manhattan Institute showed a ten year increase of 125% in non-faculty positions (many possessing unclear and vague titles) at California colleges [18]; while at the same time, academic faculty only increased by a disproportional 24%. Skeptically, Will [18] questions the need for such an increase in these positions without a similar need for academic faculty. Many of these administrators, explains Holt [10], exist for the purpose of managing faculty decisions. More frequently, colleges and universities are hiring non-faculty with ambiguously defined responsibilities for the purpose of “managing” campus social structures rather than enriching academic studies. These individuals are not prioritizing academic freedoms while attempting to fulfill their non-academic responsibilities. And, this creates fear amongst the faculty while they self-suppress their decision-making freedoms because they do not wish to run afoul of the internal hierarchy.

To the point, Miller et al. [19] examined faculty satisfaction within U.S. higher education. Miller et al. [19] found that, overall, higher ranking faculty were less satisfied with internal leadership. In other words, full professors are more dissatisfied with their college decision-makers than associate professors, who are more dissatisfied with decision-makers than assistant professors, etc. It would appear that the higher-ranking faculty are more dissatisfied with their internal administrations than younger/less experienced ranks. This author surmises that older generations of faculty are finding the excessively growing number of administrators and vaguely defined non-faculty positions described by Will [18] to be limiting to their accustomed decision-making freedoms.

The traditional/internal faculty hierarchy has been used to determine which faculty member teaches a course, serves on a committee, or chairs committees.

Tenured faculty (at the associate professor level or above), for instance, get to provide input into the tenure process that non-tenured faculty have yet to experience. Thus, a hierarchy has been created in which those faculty already through the process have some authority to modify the process for future tenured faculty. This creates stress and fear amongst junior faculty members wanting to pursue tenure since the criteria is fluid and changing based on input of higher-ranking faculty.

Traditional internal academic hierarchies have the potential, when abused by university decision-makers, to hinder and limit the freedoms of the faculty. If faculty are deterred from making decisions due to the internal hierarchy, then their freedoms have been negatively affected.

4.2. Faculty External Hierarchies

Faculty can also face external hierarchies that impede their academic freedoms. These hierarchies occur outside college or university. Many external hierarchies that faculty encounter are due to perceived reputation and image.

Non-traditional hierarchies can exist externally in the form of hiring committees. Clauset et al. [20] and Wapman et al. [21] both conducted studies on the perceptions that go into hiring a new faculty member. In both studies, it was determined that a hierarchy based on image existed when choosing a faculty candidate due to a college’s assumed reputation or context (such as subjective rigor or visibility). Hiring committees were found to be ranking potential candidates based on which school/s they graduated. For instance, a faculty job candidate who studied at college “A” may be rated higher than a potential candidate who graduated from college “B” because college “A” has more “prestige” surrounding its name. Unfortunately, hierarchies based on subjective image instead of a candidate’s objective achievements frequently leads to hiring the weaker candidate according to Clauset et al. [20]. The researchers illustrated that hiring committees are prioritizing (or creating a hierarchy) based entirely on subjective image. The result, however, is that the candidate is not always “better” because the school is perceived as “better.”

Similarly, explains Wapman et al. [21], a hierarchical bias is created for job candidates if they have acquired a reference from someone who the search committee has subjectively rated as a “better” reference. This logic for hiring external candidates and faculty, however, is flawed; these hierarchies are developed in the biases of the search committee. And, these hierarchies negatively affect faculty *lerhfreiheit* because individual job candidates are no longer being evaluated on their performance or their academic achievements but rather their “connections” with people and colleges/departments. These job

candidates, implies Wapman et al. [21], are now sacrificing their academic freedoms (such as freedom of inquiry) in order to pursue relationships with people and/or colleges / departments that have established a subjective hierarchical image. Thereby, faculty sacrifice their own academic work to connect with “popular” researchers.

Hierarchies also exist externally in professional organizations or governing bodies. For example, many academic organizations have an elected or appointed decision-making body that rely on hierarchies. Those hierarchies, if appointed, are capable of causing fear that disrupts the academic’s *lehrfreiheit*. For example, primary school educators may be held accountable to elected / appointed officials who are not members of the professional academy (such as a school board) and therefore decisions are being ultimately made at the top of the hierarchy without any concern for the very academics they make decisions for. Likewise, many college disciplines are beholden to an elite group of elected/appointed people making the decisions as to rather a discipline will be accredited in individual U.S. colleges/universities. They, too, are usually not members of the academy that they oversee.

External hierarchies potentially impede the *lehrfreiheit* of the faculty members. Faculty, even when not bound by the traditional hierarchy, are still experiencing hierarchies based upon perceptions that affect their freedoms to pursue academic work.

5. A Holocracy as an Alternative?

Some colleges have attempted to move away from a hierarchy through the recommendation of a holocracy. A holocracy is, according to Ramage [22], an organizational structure that distributes decision-making authority throughout the organization and thereby empowers each member to complete their roles with autonomy. In a holocracy, roles and responsibilities are defined, and decisions are made without the need for a hierarchical relationship because each member of the holocracy is provided the freedom and space to complete his/her task.

Holocracies are organizational structures that are considered “flat” and differ from hierarchies in that each individual (or team) is operating independently and self-sufficiently of others but are working toward a common goal. Many business organizations have adopted a holocracy as their preferred model and have noted experiencing more freedoms. Academics have seen holocracies outside academia and are eager to attempt implementing in academia for the benefit of more academic freedoms [23]. Paltoglou [23], therefore, suggests that faculties explore a holocracy within colleges and universities to determine if it is a good fit.

Ramage [22], however, claims that a holocracy is not suitable for every structure. It is reported that

many businesses that were quick to adopt the method of a holocracy have since moved away from the approach [24]. Swanner [24] criticizes the holocracy as ineffective because providing everyone with decision making autonomy has led to more litigation and co-dependency amongst employees since everyone feels their opinion/s need equal consideration prior to deciding on a course of action. Concurrently, the Indeed Editorial Team [25] recently cautions against selecting a holocracy as the predominate way of structuring an organization due to the decision paralysis that accompanies the loss of a hierarchy. A holocracy, then, can be the antithesis of what was initially intended. Even Paltoglou [23], who proposes exploring a holocracy in academia, also claims that it is unfamiliar to most academics, and they often revert back to the more familiar hierarchy.

Greer [15] suggests trying a holocracy but realizes that hierarchies will not be fully eliminated or replaced. This author, then, while conceding to the possibility of a holocracy in academia, is aware that abandonment of hierarchies in colleges/universities is unlikely to happen in the near future. Therefore, this author will offer recommendations for continuing hierarchies while maintaining academic freedoms.

6. Recommendations

This author realizes that hierarchies despite any potential encroachments on academic freedoms are not vanishing. In fact, the Indeed Editorial Team [25] claims that hierarchies are beneficial if implemented correctly. They even list five advantages to using a hierarchy in one’s structure: 1) hierarchies offer a clear path of promotion; 2) hierarchies perpetuate a sense of loyalty; 3) hierarchies are efficient in communicating; 4) hierarchies clearly delegate responsibility; and 5) hierarchies encourage specialization [25]. Hierarchies, thereby, cannot always be avoided in colleges and universities, but they can be made healthier. Greer [15] suggests four keys to making a hierarchy healthier: 1) building hierarchies based on expertise, 2) give faculty/students areas of ownership, 3) create a triangle/pyramid rather than a ladder, and 4) reduce the distance in power amongst decision-makers. This author has included Greer’s [15] recommendations in Table 3. This author echo’s Greer’s [15] suggestions about building hierarchies upon expertise. Holt [10] suggests that expertise is essential for determining the top decision-makers at an institution.

In prior experiments designed to assess team survival abilities, Greer [15] explains that decision-makers chosen based on variables other than experience, failed to achieve the objectives. Existing hierarchies, therefore, are not the problem. Rather the problem exists with hierarchies being based on variables other than expertise. Objective criteria need to be created to monitor who becomes the top

Table 3. Suggestions for healthier hierarchy [15]

Suggestions	Definitions
Build hierarchies based on expertise	Hierarchy itself is not problematic. The associated problems come from those at the top of the ladder. If they are not experienced they will likely fail to obtain the desired objective.
Give employees areas of ownership	Students or faculty who have ownership of courses, assignments, scholarships, etc. have a vested interest in the success of the college.
Create a triangle rather than a ladder	Instead of each and every person reporting to someone above, a team would report to another smaller team above.
Reduce the power distance	Reduce the amount of decision-making authority given ranks.

decision-makers. When recommending academic ownership, she indicated that a member of the academic faculty at a university and explains that while she reports to a department chair, she has ownership of her courses. Therefore, her freedoms have been preserved. These freedoms include decisions on assignments, grades, feedback, course objectives, materials/resources to use, etc. Allowing for ownership of academic items like curriculum, courses, textbooks, research direction, etc. continues to preserve decision-making freedoms.

A hierarchy can take the shape of a ladder or a pyramid. A ladder shape would be reflective of a hierarchy in which each person reports to another person above them, while a pyramid shape reflects a practice where each successive level becomes slightly smaller, but the base level is necessary for the pyramid. This author notes that much of academia is similar to a pyramid in that lecturers and assistant professors seem to outnumber associate and full professors at most universities making up the base of the pyramid. In her experiences, Greer [15] determined that hierarchies are more successful and productive when there are multiple individuals at each level of the pyramid. And each of these groups report to a smaller group above.

Finally, Greer [15] recommends reducing the power distance between hierarchical ranks. Lower members of the hierarchy would be allowed more decision-making freedoms and responsibilities while their supervisors have fewer decision-making

freedoms and responsibilities. Each level of the pyramid should be made wider not taller. In other words, the amount of decision-making responsibility from one level to the next is minimal.

This author believes that hierarchies can be maintained while also allowing both students and faculty to freely pursue academic work. It is unlikely that the familiar hierarchies currently experienced in academia are going to be replaced. Therefore, this manuscript recommends implementing Greer's [15] suggestions for evolving the hierarchies into an advantageous structure that continues to allow for *lerhfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* of the academic community.

7. Conclusion

This author concludes that hierarchism has created fears amongst both the student body and the faculty. While hierarchies have alternative organizational models, such as holocracy, it is farfetched to think that academia is going to eliminate the traditional faculty and student hierarchical relationships in the immediate future. Therefore, this author has concluded that the best course of action in preserving *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* will be to make hierarchies healthier by examining and monitoring potential interferences with academic freedoms and adjust to those hierarchies to accommodate more academic freedoms for students and faculty.

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