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The Beauty and the Abuse: A Workshop for Dialogue, Reflexivity, and Action

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The Beauty and the Abuse: A Workshop for Dialogue, Reflexivity, and Action

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Title: The Beauty and the Abuse: A Workshop for Dialogue, Reflexivity, and Action

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Session Type: Workshop

Abstract:

This workshop presents a handbook and a method to enhance dialogue, reflexivity, and action on the beauty and the abuse which characterizes human relationships and emotions in academic environments. Academic lives are often characterized by a blurring of boundaries between personal and professional spheres. The main aim of this workshop is to help create spaces of trust, where academics can reflect on experiences and complex issues, which are often considered taboo, shameful, or private, although these experiences have a major impact on our wellbeing and working lives. A series of vignettes inspired in real stories are presented. These stories all have in common that they deal with the lights and the shadows of how eroticism, love, sex, power, prejudice, and gendered academic identities and cultures shape our working environments and influence our career choices and trajectories. Each vignette section deals with one or several of the following themes: friendship love, romantic love, flirting, eroticism, sex, desire, dating cultures, committed relationships, paternalistic sexism, hostile sexism, sexual harassment, and jealousy.

The vignettes have been anonymized but provide veridical accounts of stories and experiences in academia. Each story consists of the vignette's narrative and the presentation of a personal dilemma for discussion. The handbook includes a thematic list of resources for inspiration and further action, which includes recommended readings, literature, and online materials, such as guidelines and policies, links to online forums, associations, and initiatives that can provide support.

Workshop Method

After a brief introduction, the participants will be divided into groups. The group activities (describing, reflecting, and sharing) will be facilitated by the authors:

Describing: The vignette narrative is read out loud.

Reflecting: The dilemma is presented, and participants are asked to write down their own feelings and thoughts related to the vignette narrative and to consider aspects such as these: *Embodiment and feeling.* How did they feel when listening to this story? Where did the emotion feel in their bodies? *Identification and empathy.* How do they think they would have felt or acted in relation to the narrative (1) if they were the protagonist of the story and (2) if they were a colleague who was a witness to the story?

Sharing: The facilitator moderates the dialogue and asks each of the participants to share what they have written and their thoughts and opinions.

The activity ends with pointing out the available resources and asking participants to share their knowledge about other resources they may know about which may benefit the group.

This workshop is developed as one of the initiatives of the online community Women Academics in Tourism.