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“No, Teach Yourself!”: College Women’s Expectations for White Men’s Awareness of Privilege and Oppression

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Addressing gender inequities in higher education must begin with the acknowledgement that men play a key role in creating change. The purpose of this qualitative study is to center and raise the experiences of women students, and to communicate to men who are students, faculty, and administrators what women students expect from them in terms of privilege and oppression awareness. Findings indicate that women students felt criticized, judged, and underestimated by men, and expected men to self-educate to become aware of and interrogate their own privileges. The authors provide recommendations for higher education teaching and learning, focusing on attitudes and behaviors of White men in the academy.

Gender inequities in higher education permeate the landscape from the classroom to administration, even though women undergraduates outnumber men in college enrollments and in any age, racial, and income group. In 2017, women were earning 57% of all baccalaureate degrees and 59% of master’s degrees in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Yet data indices such as graduation rates belie the lived experiences of women in higher education. Women faculty and staff face gender inequities in higher education overall workforce pay (McChesney, 2018) and positional leadership (Bichsel & McChesney, 2017), while women students experience chilly campus climates, sexism, gendered

microaggressions, joking, stereotype threat, as well as sexual harassment and assault (Allan & Madden, 2006; Picca & Feagin, 2007; Steele, 2011). On top of the effects of gender inequities, Women of Color on college campuses experience insidious oppression based on their race or ethnicity (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2008; Van Dyke & Tester, 2014). On the campuses of predominantly White institutions, the offenders of such harmful behaviors most often are White¹ men who are students, faculty, and staff. Many of them are generally oblivious to the difficulties women face in the academy and in society (Vianden, 2020).

Addressing gender inequities in higher education must begin with the acknowledgement that men play a key role in creating change. This requires the willingness to center women's voices and understand their experiences with inequities in higher education from an intersectional lens. The purpose of this article is twofold: 1) to center and raise the experiences of women students, and 2) to communicate to men who are students, faculty, and administrators what women students expect from them in terms of privilege and oppression awareness. Although extant literature discusses the oppression of women in higher education, it is rarer for publications to voice women's unfettered expectations for White men. To uncover the expectations of women, the following research questions guided this study: 1) how do women conceptualize their oppressed identities on their own campus, 2) what do they expect from White men at their institution relative to social justice awareness and advocacy?

¹ In this paper, we consciously chose to capitalize White, not to conform to APA standards, but to indicate White is a racialized identity. For more information, see Painter (2020). We also capitalize all other racial and ethnic identity categories to center the experiences and voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Literature Review

College women's experience with sexism or gender prejudice can generally be categorized in three separate themes: derogatory comments about women; indications that women ought to act according to traditional gender norms; and, sexual objectification (Brinkman et al., 2015). This oppressive treatment of women is rooted in widespread social power inequities and has a host of negative outcomes, including gender-based violence and pay inequity (Kilmartin et al., 2015). The intersection of racism and sexism exacerbates the negative experiences Women of Color face. For instance, in Latinx² culture the concepts of "machismo" and "marianismo" define gender specific behaviors expected of men and women (Gil & Vazquez, 1996). Marianismo, or the "Maria Paradox" focuses on "sacred duty, self-sacrifice, and chastity, as well as about dispensing care and pleasure, not receiving them" (Gil & Vazquez, 1996, p. 7). Black women encounter the "Strong Black Woman" stereotype which perpetuates a view of the Black woman "as naturally resilient, able to handle with ease all the stress, upset, and trauma life throws at her" (Donovan & West, 2015, p. 385). Asian American women are stereotyped as sexually exotic and as submissive or passive (Mukkamala & Suyemoto, 2018). Examples of these types of gender stereotypes can be found across media platforms, including TV programs and commercials, movies, and popular music.

On college campuses and in college classrooms, Women of Color and White women face rampant sexism and racism from men – including peers and faculty members. Sexist and racist acts are certainly not exclusive behaviors of college

² The authors use the pan-ethnic label *Latinx* (rather than *Latina/o*) "as an inclusive term that recognizes the intersectionality of sexuality, language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, and phenotype" (Salinas & Lozano, 2017, p. 9).

students alone; they are, however, almost exclusively men's behaviors (Feagin, 2013; Harper & Harris, 2010). Especially White men behave in these ways with alarming frequency and while women and People of Color condemn these acts as detrimental to their success and well-being, men tend to be reticent to change their behaviors, often saying "it was just a joke" or to rely on the Free Speech clause of the First Amendment (Cabrera, 2014; Picca & Feagin, 2007; Vianden, 2020).

Few research studies have focused on the expectations women students in higher education have of their peers. In their study of sense of belonging for women Students of Color at a predominantly White institution, Vaccaro et al. (2019) documented the "connection among cultural competency, unmet expectations, compositional and structural diversity, campus counterspaces and the development of a sense of belonging" (p. 54). But in this case, "unmet expectations" referred to general expectations that their cultural awareness would be valued on campus and that they would expand their own cultural competency through the college experience. Findings from this study indicated that sense of belonging was inhibited by the lack of cultural competency among the participants' White peers. Vaccaro et al. (2019) stress that it is the responsibility of the institution, not of Students of Color, to create a culturally competent student body, and that expecting Women of Color to perform this type of labor is a "cultural tax on their education" (p. 60). The authors also appropriately point out the lack of an examination of student "expectations" in studies of sense of belonging. However, a further gap exists in understanding women's expectations of *men* regarding addressing sexism and racism.

In one of her hallmark texts, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, bell hooks (1984) called on men to play a primary role in the feminist struggle to point out, challenge, and change the sexism of men peers. In a similar vein, Johnson (2000) stated, “the simple truth is that [social injustice] can’t be solved unless people who are heterosexual or male...or white or economically comfortable feel obligated to make the problem of privilege their problem and to do something about it” (p. 10). To make the necessary social change, men must first raise their critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), which includes acknowledging they are active participants in a system that perpetuates social ills against minoritized members of our society.

Raising such consciousness means White men develop awareness and personal concern for topics of social justice, which may result in actions to disturb or end systems of oppression (Landreman et al., 2007). Scholars assert that developing critical consciousness is the main step in contesting and altering the social status quo (Lazar, 2014). Brown and Perry (2011) suggested that to raise critical consciousness, individuals have to first understand and address how issues of power, privilege, and oppression, as well as gender and race (specifically in the context of this article), influence their own personal and professional goals and identities. This means that White men must interrogate how their own gender and racial identities, as well as those of their partners, families, friends, and colleagues influence who they are, how they conceive of themselves, and how they behave in a diverse society. This may be especially difficult for White men, who depending on their peer group may be actively discouraged from such consciousness raising because it is “not perceived as valuable and is indeed threatening to those in power” (Segal, 2011, p. 272). Developing this

responsibility rests on creating proximity to issues of gender and race and to improve familiarity with members of diverse gender communities or communities of color (Segal, 2011). This will result in social empathy men must have and maintain to live in this pluralistic society.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist theory, intersectionality, and White Followership provided lenses through which to view race and gender to explore and understand the participants' expectations of White college men. At its core, feminist philosophy positions itself in "opposition to women's subordinate social positions, spiritual authority, political rights, and/or economic opportunities" (McCann & Kim, 2017, p. 1). A feminist approach directs attention away from men; pays attention to roles and places of women; shines light on social issues overlooked by traditional and dominant men-focused viewpoint; and focuses on experiences and concerns of women and how those have been valued or undervalued. Assumptions undergirding feminist philosophy include the need to change unjust conditions women must contend with in their everyday lives, and that women will bring change to these conditions. Feminist theories critique and resist the subordination of women and call for political activism. McCann and Kim (2017) argued that informing effective politics is the most important purpose of feminist theory.

Taking a feminist approach to the present study, particularly during data analysis, was key to ensuring the focus remained sharply on the experiences of the women participants, even while they were sharing their expectations of White men. The definition of feminism provided by bell hooks (1984) was particularly insightful and reminded us of the intersections of sex, race and class: "Feminism is a struggle to end

sexist oppression. Therefore, it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture” (p. 24). In the context of our study, this domination mostly originates from White men in the academy.

While feminist philosophy guided the overall approach to the study, intersectionality provided a lens to examine the complexities of sexism as it relates to different populations and led to a more nuanced understanding of the findings. Crenshaw (1989) first coined the term intersectionality to draw attention to how interlocking systems of oppression (i.e., racism and sexism) work together in producing injustice for Black women in the workplace. She argued that a “single axis” or “silo” approach to addressing social justice issues ignored how systems of oppression operate in tandem to create obstacles for Black women. Intersectionality provided a lens which enabled us to “recognize the fact that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias, yet because we are simultaneously members of many groups, our complex identities can shape the specific way we each experience that bias” (African American Policy Forum, 2013, p. 3). Keeping in mind that our participants included both Women of Color and White women, we recognized the pervasiveness of sexism which we examined from a feminist perspective, while also using intersectionality to acknowledge and examine the intersection of sexism and racism experienced by some of the participants.

Finally, we draw on *White Followership* (Villalobos, 2015), a leadership model developed to resist hegemonic practices that center and elevate the voices of White people. Drawing from the concepts of White accountability, White humility, and White allyship, this model requires White people to “actively center the experiences,

sensibilities, interests, methods, critiques, and vision offered by Peoples and Communities of Color who are invested in making racial justice” (Villalobos, 2015, p. 167). The White Followership model includes six core principles necessary for White people to develop followership practice, the most critical of which are to center the voices of People of Color and to be self-reflective. Together, the six principles require Whites to engage in self-reflective work necessary to demonstrate followership while embracing a systemic approach to racial justice work. This model offers important insights for our study when a gendered lens is applied. Similar to Villalobos’s (2015) assertion that White supremacy serves to silence People of Color around issues of racism, we argue that White men’s patriarchy silences and renders invisible the voices and experiences of women, and especially those of Women of Color, around issues of sexism. Thus, by adapting the core principles of White Followership to apply specifically to White men, we gain insight into both the challenges and potential of White men taking a followership role while centering the voices and experiences of women.

Taken together, feminism, intersectionality, and White followership form what Abes (2009) refers to as a “borderland approach” to a theoretical framework, in which disparate theories/models are blended to explore underlying structures of power. Thus, while using a feminist lens, intersectionality compels us to move beyond a single-axis view to recognize how Women of Color experience sexism differently than White women. Feminism and intersectionality can be operationalized through our adaptation of White followership in which men “[interrogate] White supremacy and its effects on People of Color, to [engage] in critical humility, [to be] vulnerable, and [to focus] on the needs of People of Color without requiring recognition” (Vianden, 2020, p. 176).

Methods

A constructivist epistemology grounded the study assuming individuals seek to understand the world in which they live through subjective and lived experiences. At the same time, the researchers acknowledge that their own historical, cultural, and personal backgrounds shape how they interpret findings (Jones et al., 2014). A qualitative approach is suitable for the constructivist paradigm. According to Jones et al. (2014), qualitative studies explore participants' experiences in their natural settings, such as Women of Color and White women who are experiencing their specific institutions, campus climates, and interactions with White college men.

Authors' Reflexivity

The authors acknowledge their positionality as it connects to various aspects of this study. Lozano identifies as a cis-gender Latina of Mexican American heritage who attended predominantly/historically White institutions in the Midwest from kindergarten through doctoral studies. Her research has focused on the leadership development experiences of Latina students at historically white institutions. Vianden identifies as a cis-gender White man, who is an immigrant from a European country and dual American-home country citizen. His research has explored how straight White men in college felt part of diversity and social justice initiatives, and in which ways they could articulate their own awareness of privilege and oppression in inequitable systems such as higher education. Kieler identifies as a cis-gender White woman who attended a predominately White university for undergraduate and graduate school. As a White person, she has never been a target of racist microaggressions. She recognizes that

she both benefits from and is harmed by racist and sexist systems and strives to be aware of marginalization and privilege in her daily life.

Research Sites, Sampling, and Data Collection

The data furnishing this paper were collected as part of a larger qualitative focus-group study of 180 college students at 13 institutions around the U.S. Ninety-two of them identified as straight White men and 88 of them identified with at least one minoritized social group, including BIPOC students, women students, or students with gender-queer or transgender identities. The main research question guiding the larger study dealt with how college students with privileged and oppressed identities perceive campus and community diversity issues. Thirteen four-year institutions of higher education served as the research sites for the larger study. The institutions ranged from large public research institutions to small private liberal arts colleges. Most of the research sites were in the Midwest but included three institutions in the Intermountain West. All sites enrolled primarily White and mostly women-identified students. We used purposeful and expert nominator sampling strategies (Jones et al., 2014). Colleagues of one of the authors worked at the research sites and provided access to participants.

For the purposes of this article, selection criteria included identifying as women-identified undergraduates, and data from a total of 39 women were selected, 14 of whom identified as Women of Color. The researchers selected focus groups as the method of data collection. For the purposes of this article the authors drew data from nine focus groups, each ranging from 3 to 8 participants. The researchers of the original study digitally recorded each focus group, which lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and transcribed each verbatim. Focus groups were conducted mostly by the second author;

however, some were conducted by original members of the research team which included men- and women-identified researchers. In this article, we report the data from specific focus group questions on participants' experiences with racism and sexism on campus, as well as attitudes and behaviors the participants expected from White men faculty and students.

To incentivize participation, each participant received \$10 in cash. To ensure trustworthiness, the researchers performed member checks with participants to authenticate initial interpretations of focus group data, and maintained thick description of all focus groups, field notes, memos, and transcripts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis

Krueger and Casey (2000) suggested that data analysis of focus groups follow a systematic and sequential process. Although they emphasized that the best conditions for focus group data collection and analysis develop in a team of researchers, groups conducted and analyzed by a single researcher are not inappropriate or invalid (Krueger & Casey, 2000). After each focus group was transcribed, the second author engaged in open coding (Saldaña, 2016) using Dedoose, a cloud-based qualitative data analysis software. A graduate student trained in qualitative research methods assisted in this process. The round of open coding aimed to explore participant conceptualizations of identity, oppression, as well as interactions with and expectations of White men on campus.

The preliminary analysis resulted in a list of 36 codes for the two main questions about experiencing racism and sexism on campus as well as expectations for White men's awareness and advocacy. Sample codes included, *Being the Only One*, *Attitudes*

from Professors towards Women, Judging Women by Appearance, Criticizing Women for Behavior, Help Educate Men, Men Must Understand Privilege, Balancing Listening with Advocacy, or Sitting in Silence. Saturation of codes, or how many times a text excerpt, passage, or conversation among participants was included under the same code, ranged from 1 (Commiserating with other People of Color) to 39 (Experiencing Microaggressions on Campus).

After the open coding process, the researchers used axial coding (Saldaña, 2016) to categorize the data into larger themes. This included collapsing initial codes like Criticizing Women for Behavior, Victim of Sexual Assault, and Judging Women by Appearance into the larger data category of *Experiencing Discrimination as Women*. Thus, the 36 initial codes were subsumed into 11 larger data categories, including *Institutional Barriers, Not Fitting In, Men Accepting Others, Men Becoming Active, or Men Educating Self*.

Limitations

Although this study advances significant knowledge about college women's' interactions with and expectations of White men on campus, it does have limitations. First, the not all focus groups were conducted by the same researcher, although all members of the original research team were trained in focus group moderation. This potentially altered the way the data were collected and the ways in which the participants responded to the moderators. Second, many of the focus groups used for data analysis in this paper were conducted by a man. Even though he is trained in rapport building with qualitative research participants, some of the women in the focus groups may have reacted by not disclosing as much information as they may have with

a woman researcher. Finally, a limitation is the unequal number of participants in each focus group. For instance, a focus group with eight participants might have yielded deeper or richer data than a focus group with only three students.

Findings

The coding process revealed three distinct themes illuminating the participants' thoughts about their experiences on campus as women and the expectations they had for White men's awareness and advocacy: 1) Criticized, judged, and underestimated; 2) Be aware and self-educate; 3) "We need them on board": White men's advocacy.

Criticized, Judged, and Underestimated

The first theme describes the participants' experiences with microaggressions and men's sexism on their given campus. When the researchers asked the participants about issues of racism, sexism, or homophobia on their campus, the participants explained that most of this oppression originated from White men students and faculty. It is not known whether sexism the participants addressed could have also originated from Men of Color.

This theme includes three subcategories of data: judged by appearance or identity; criticized for their behavior; and, experiences with men who are professors. This theme features data provided by participants to the focus group question of what it felt like to the participants to be a woman on their specific campus.

Judged by appearance or identity. Participants felt judged by appearance and looks rather than by their character or identity as a college student: "Instead of [judging us] by our personality, way of life, or thinking, it's looks" (Kate, White woman). African American, Latina, and Asian American women participants also discussed experiencing

judgement because of appearance; however, they also alluded to race as identity present in these experiences. Nia, an African American woman shared this perception: “People automatically assume because I’m Black and because I am a woman [that] I’m just aggressive and angry. It makes me sad because people automatically are like, “I’m not going to talk to her,” even [though] I’m always smiling.”

Sherri, a biracial woman, described how White peers attempted to categorize her racially: “They will look at [my hair] and be like, ‘but if you’re mixed, why do you have White girl hair?’ I get that a lot and I’m like, ‘my brother has an afro.’” Following the discussion on how Black women may be judged by the appearance of their hair, Janelle, an African American woman, commented: “My [White friends] asked me ‘is that weave?’ I’m like, ‘Yes, it is weave.’ And [they said], ‘So do you not like your hair?’ It’s irritating because they feel like...: ‘Oh, they don’t like their appearance.’ I love my appearance.” In addition to being judged based solely on feminine appearance, the women of color participants also endured misinformed and racist assumptions and questions based on their Black/Brown bodies.

Criticized for our behavior. Most of the focus group conversations dealt with how society view women’s assertiveness as a problematic behavior. Grace, an Asian American woman graduate student, made this observation:

When I try to educate [men], they look at me like I am stuck up and tough. It just kind of puts my guard back up. I’m just going to go be...by myself again because [men] are too arrogant and ignorant to listen or consider how other people may feel.

In the same focus group, Kerri, a White woman, said:

One of the challenges that I face very often, especially as a woman is, if I am like stern or if I am “bossy,” or if I am just taking charge, [men] are like, “Oh, you are so aggressive.” If I was a man you would be like, “Oh, you are doing a great job.”

Kerri later added: “Since I identify as a woman [leader], they are like oh, you’re a bitch. You are too loud.” Kate, a White woman, shared a similar experience: [As a woman], if you talk about [diversity] in a serious way you come across as a bitchy feminist.”

Sofia, a Latina woman, noted how her emotions became raw when engaging in conversations with White men about gender discrimination: “I had to explain my situation like how I’ve been discriminated based on sex [to] White males. I’ve noticed myself apologizing a lot for crying or showing emotion, doubting how I feel. [This] is internalizing sexism.” As these data excerpts show, participants’ experiences with criticism and judgment for appearance and behavior as women held despite racial identity.

Experiences with men professors. Participants perceived that some men who were professors treated women stereotypically and without the level of respect they would give to men students. Lara, a White woman quipped: “My professors [are] talking all the time about women, like ‘let’s go to Starbucks, let’s walk in a group, let’s wear UGG boots’” as if to point out and ridicule women’s stereotypical preferences for food, dress, or ways to be in community. Confronting faculty on their sexism was difficult as Haley, a White woman, explained: “I really struggle with getting the courage to stand up and go up to him after class and be like, ‘[What you’re saying] really makes me uncomfortable,’ and I have hinted to him very, very subtly and probably not clearly enough that ‘Women [also] watch sports, just in case you were wondering.” Marla, a White woman, shared: “There still is, especially among older professors, this idea, ‘Wow, you are going to be a female doctor, that’s great!’ I’m like, ‘I’m [not] going to be a *female* doctor, I’m just going to be a doctor.’”

Annie, who identified as a queer White woman, noted this encounter with one of her instructors:

Yeah, he was awful, he was really rude and awful. [A] White guy, totally full of himself, thought he knew everything. You know, like, "I know everything, and you know nothing." I had my hand up like almost the whole class. I totally gave him rage-face, sitting in front of him. He wouldn't call on me.

Brynn, a White woman, shared: "[The professor] was talking about women not being the best scientists and the guys in the class looked at each other and chuckled. And I was literally sitting here and these two big guys...look over to me and they laugh."

The experiences of these participants highlight the power dynamics in the classroom when women students experience both subtle and overt sexist comments from male professors. The combined experiences of being criticized, judged, and underestimated places an undue burden on women students who simply want to be respected within the classroom environment. The participants demonstrated self-awareness regarding how they chose to respond to acts of sexism in the moment, while also recognizing the cause of the problem lies with the men themselves.

Self-Educate to Become Aware

The second theme includes three subcategories of data gathered from the experiences of women at the research sites who directed their expectations at White men: they should engage in self-education and learning; they should raise their self-awareness; and, they should interrogate and understand their privileges. Women participants thought of all White men in their communities with these expectations, including their student peers and White staff or professors who are men.

Men should educate themselves. Several of the participants expected men to engage in critical work to self-educate, rather than relying on minoritized individuals to

do the educating. During her focus group, Keiko, an Asian-American woman, stressed that White men needed to be responsible for their own education in issues of diversity and social justice:

I think with a lot of these [conversations around diversity men have] this attitude..., “Well we just don’t know anything about that, teach us!” And to that I would say, “No, teach yourself!”... If there is something that you don’t know how to do, then you yourself can go find out how to do that better. And I think [that] burden gets unfairly put on Students [of Color].

Isabella struggled to articulate her expectation of White men to self-educate:

“How do you tell someone to self-educate themselves? It’s almost like they do have to...interact with other identities. And that’s how they learn because they [begin to] know someone who is not just a White heterosexual male.”

Bree, a White woman, emphasized that White men should be active in their own education: “Actively seek out information around social justice and do some homework and research around things that are going on that maybe [White men] don’t necessarily see. So that when something happens, they can figure out how they can respond accordingly.” Jaden, an African American woman, observed motivation is key for White men students to self-educate:

They have to want that for themselves. You know, like just talking to people from different backgrounds, going into different offices, like the Pride Center or the Office of Multicultural Students, just putting yourself into those uncomfortable situations because you want to learn. I’m not going to bash anyone who comes to [my office] if you’re from a different background. If you’re here, I’m taking it as you want to learn more about me because I’m just going to show you me.

Readers will notice that some participants seemed reticent to help educate White men while others appeared to indicate that interacting with women in that education would bear fruit. This is the delicate balance to which we alluded earlier and achieving that balance in the education of White men around issues of gender and racial justice is

critical. It also means we as college educators must not expect women to aid in the self-education of men in our curricula and co-curricula.

Men should raise self-awareness. Salea, a Black woman, made this plea to White men: “Be more aware of everybody’s cultural backgrounds. I identify as Black, [but that] doesn’t mean that’s my whole culture. We do a lot of different things.” In the same focus group, Isabella, a Latina woman, added: “[A] homophobic slur, doesn’t just affect the gay, White, male you know [and] feel bad about and then say sorry to. It affects the transgender Woman of Color who’s getting killed every day...on the street [but] by the police.” Christie, a White woman, expressed the following expectation of White professors who are men at her university: “Learn why it matters and learn why it matters maybe to just one [underrepresented] student in your class. Maybe you only have one student that’s feeling offended by you but learn why it matters to them.” Sierra, a Latina woman, expected that White men needed to become aware of how offensive they may appear to others in classrooms: “Just be aware of [what they say] and keep that to themselves. They can find [someone] with similar opinions and they can find a place [to] share those comments, where it won’t hurt anyone or won’t discriminate against people.”

Alyssa and Enid, two White women, had the following exchange in which they discussed their expectation that men should gain sensitivity about their inappropriate behaviors:

Alyssa: I don’t think [men] share that sensitivity aspect where what they say jokingly could be taken negatively by somebody else.

Enid: Right, just, I would just again say more realization, like what you’re saying.

Brynn discussed how White men's inappropriate behavior perpetuates toxic masculinity and made this impassioned plea about what she expected from her college student peers: "[White men must] quit laughing about suffering and about Black people being killed by police. Quit laughing about women getting raped. Those jokes aren't funny and using that as a [male] bonding technique keeps it part of the culture." It is clear that the participants place a high value on the ability of men to demonstrate a deeper level of understanding and sensitivity towards those who hold marginalized social identities. At the same time, the participants recognize the role toxic masculinity plays in white men's behavior and attitudes towards women and Black people.

Men should interrogate and understand their privileges. This data category included women's expectations of men to interrogate and understand their social privileges. Greta, a Latina woman, explained that White men needed to recognize their racial privilege: "Having White privilege doesn't make you bad person, but like, you need to acknowledge the effect that White privilege will have on your life and will on the life of other people." During her focus group Maria, a Latina woman, voiced this expectation of White faculty who are men and hinted at the progression from awareness to action: "I think [professors need] cultural competence training. Just having some type of checking privileges and how not to oppress others. [Start with] this self-realization and then, okay, what are the next steps because realization isn't enough." Vida, a White woman discussed White men's responsibility to affect social change and challenging their social privileges:

[They must] know what the problem is for them to want to change it... I think a lot of males aren't as educated as they need to be with their privilege and if they were more educated, then I think they would be more likely to stick up for the people and then we could work from the inside out.

Annie expressed anger in her statement about how White men struggle to understand their privileges:

What have you done to lift up race relations today? Not a damn thing. I don't care if you are not running around kicking Black people [but] have you done anything? No. Are you actively looking at female candidates? No, because you don't care, because you don't even see the position that you hold. That's a big difference between being a minority and majority. The minority is always working... We want to lift each other up, we are all here together and [White men] are just up there partying.

In the second theme participants of this study expressed that men need to interrogate and understand their privileges to move to more action-oriented advocacy as the final theme shows. Their expectations demonstrate a complex and nuanced understanding that it is not enough for men to be passively self-aware. Men must actively demonstrate their support of women. Furthermore, when Isabella asked, "How do you tell someone to self-educate yourself?" – her use of the grammatically redundant "self-educate yourself" effectively calls for men to do the heavy lifting of self-education for themselves, rather than relying on women.

"We need them on Board": White Men's Advocacy

The third theme featured data the participants shared about the ways in which they expressed White men should advocate for issues of social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, for the disruption of systemic oppression, and for necessary social change. Two subthemes emerged: the need for men to listen and the expectation for men to become more active in confronting inappropriate language.

Men should listen more. During her focus group, Lorna, a queer White woman, shared: "I'd say the first thing is actually being open to listening before anything else. Like, that's the way you have to go about it in order for [men] to take you seriously is get

them to listen.” In the same focus group, Jaden communicated strategies for women when talking with men:

You have to sit [men] down and...be confident about what you're saying because they're not going to take you seriously as it is...say something that's going to like cause conviction with them and then they'll either take it or leave it but at least you know you've gotten that out there.

One of the authors had the following exchange with Marla, a queer White woman:

Marla: I think it depends on how that man handles [the conversation on diversity]. So, if he is like, “look at me, I'm so feminist,” I feel like that would be a huge turn-off. But if he did it in a much more humble [sic] way and really actively...listened to women. I feel like that's different. So, in a way it's kind of like, if he's actually like an ally for women versus if he's...

Vianden (researcher): ...seeks a pat on the back.

Marla: Yeah, right. Like if he wants credit for this. It's not about that.

Brynn emphasized the need for men to listen first, specifically in the context of issues men do not typically experience: “Hearing someone who has never experienced [objectification of women] talk about it in that way, [most argue] that [men] shouldn't say anything. And that makes [men] not want to say stuff, but they're the ones who can actually do stuff.” According to the participants, men need to actively listen to the experiences of women and at the same time, understand their own positions in society to make change. Genuine allyship is also desired by the women in this study, as men's performative involvement – “seeking a pat on the back” – is not constructive and only benefits themselves.

White men should actively confront and advocate. In her focus group Marla expressed men should confront each other on inappropriate language or behaviors:

I would say [men should] call each other out more because I feel like I always have to be the one calling people out. I feel like if those men do respect each other more than they respect women, hopefully they would listen to the men. I

mean ideally, they would listen to the women, but I think they might be more inclined to listen to another man.

Kelly, a White woman noted:

I think it's important for people who don't have a horse in the race to speak out. If a man says something that's sexist and a woman says, "that's sexist," he'll probably say, "well, you just think that because you're a woman." But if a man would be like, "no that's pretty sexist" they'd be like "oh dude, if you think that's sexist then [I better stop]."

Both of these excerpts speak to the idea that men may tend to listen more to men than to women. That is a sad reality of systemic sexism and important to discuss with men in collegiate environments in- and outside of classrooms. During the same focus group, Kelly added: "I would say [men] can talk big about believing in equality and respecting women but if you're laughing, you're still part of the problem. And there won't be societal change without White heterosexual men. We need them on board."

During a focus group, the following conversation ensued between two White women, Brynn and Kira, and a Latina woman, Felicia:

Brynn: I think something I would say is it is ok [for men] to speak up. This falls on us too, to not dismiss their opinion because they haven't experienced it. I've done this before, like if a White man is talking about police brutality like he knows what he's talking about. For a long time, I was like, "you don't need to be in that conversation, you don't know what you're talking about." But it's taken me a [while] to realize that they do need to be a part of that conversation.

Kira: Like you don't need to understand. I feel like a lot of difficult things happen because people feel they have to act enlightened or they need to talk like they know what they're talking about.

Felicia: It's better to hear their input than us pushing them away and not hearing them talk.

In this section, participants expect men to balance listening with action, depending on the context of the conversation. While men need to listen to women and their experiences, men cannot be passive, especially in conversations with their friends

who are men. They must understand and use their privilege to make change, while also recognizing when it is not their place to intervene.

As the themes and participant excerpts have shown college women continue to experience vast sexism and microaggressions on their campuses. In our case, this form of gender oppression emanated from White professors and White men students.

Participants of this study offered passionate pleas about their expectations for men to change their behaviors and to become more active in self-education, awareness, and advocacy behaviors.

Discussion

The themes we identified provide insights on how women experience oppression on college campuses. Moreover, by sharing these experiences, the women expressed their expectations of White men (students and faculty) about raising self-awareness and becoming advocates for social justice. The women's voices illuminate the intellectual, physical, and visceral reactions they experienced in response to everyday instances of sexism and racism both inside and outside of the classroom.

According to the participants and their experiences, sexist and racist White men faculty and peers forced them to navigate an oppressive campus climate. Importantly, race was present in the experiences with sexism made by our participating Women of Color. Whether by joking or microaggressions about women's assertiveness, their hair, appearance, or clothing, or about their apparent lack of understanding of academic or scientific content, our participants faced hostile environments on their campus (Allan & Madden, 2006; Harper & Harris, 2010; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Steele, 2011). Men, especially professors perpetuated these environments by sexist actions in their

classrooms. These are shameful behaviors by men faculty (and students who are men) that establish climates in which women students, staff, and faculty are unrepresented among leadership positions (McChesney, 2018) and in which they are ignored, or in which they experience judgement and criticism. Under men's rule, higher education actively silences women and their experiences, which in turn leads to a self-silencing process for women in the academy (Hurst & Beesly, 2013). As Vianden (2020) found, many men, especially White men, may be completely oblivious to how harmful their actions and words are to women and they must be held accountable for their oppression of women.

A second conclusion based on the findings points to the tension the participants experienced between "educating men," which requires women's labor, and their expectation for men to "self-educate," which requires self-motivation on the part of men. Viewing this tension through the lens of intersectionality requires a recognition of the ways in which women Students of Color are often expected to take on the emotional labor of educating White students (Crenshaw, 1989). They engage in this emotional labor even as they are viewed by their White peers in stereotypical ways such as the "strong Black woman" trope (Donavan & West, 2015, p. 385) or as the "angry Black woman" as one participant shared.

The participants insisted on being view as complex, multi-faceted individuals rather than as one-dimensional stereotypes, and believed this was a critical step in White men being willing to listen to them and move towards being in solidarity with women. Without this intentional shift in their view of women as more than sexist and/or racist stereotypes, men fall back on toxic behaviors and continue to be complicit in an

oppressive system at the very least. White men's self-education regarding their own social privilege, combined with listening to women regarding issues of oppression should result in men becoming accomplices to women as they fight for gender equity on college campuses.

Recommendations for Higher Education Teaching and Learning

To support the learning and success of women in college, we make the following recommendations for teaching and learning in higher education. Our definition of "success" moves beyond basic data indices such as graduation and retention rates, and instead centers on the lived experiences of women students, particularly as it relates to their right to move through higher education as full human beings worthy of respect from men. Thus, these recommendations focus on the attitudes and behaviors of White men in the academy who are students, staff, faculty, and administrators.

White Men's Accountability to End Sexism

Institutions of higher education have long committed to fostering diversity, inclusion, equity, and social justice on their campuses and in their communities. However, much of this commitment continues as espoused rather than lived values. As long as White men in college, including students and personnel, continue to display attitudes and behaviors that oppress students with minoritized identities, the commitment to social justice will remain un-institutionalized and ineffective.

White men must be held accountable to end sexism on college campuses. Repeatedly, the women in this study stated that White men need to recognize and acknowledge their racial and gender privilege. This includes requiring faculty and students who identify as White men to engage in critical self-work to interrogate their

own privileges and how these privileges manifest in their interactions with peers or students. As seen in the findings, faculty, especially those with privileged identities, should continuously participate in cultural competence trainings. Faculty need to be encouraged or incentivized to participate in professional development opportunities, workshops, webinars, or conferences to gain cultural competency in teaching. Deans and department chairs must assess faculty in classroom observations and through student assessments of teaching to gather whether faculty use bias-free language, behaviors, and pedagogy. If over the time of a semester or an academic year the professor continues to exhibit oppressive behaviors, they ought to be put on notice to improve or lose their appointment. At the same time tenure and promotion guidelines should be adjusted to reflect the requirements that college teaching must be free of all forms of overt or covert oppression.

Not only should faculty who continue teaching in oppressive ways be held accountable, but faculty who visibly commit to social justice should be supported and highlighted by the institution. This should include encouraging and rewarding instructors who engage in naming and addressing privilege and oppression in the classroom, on campus, in communities, and in their professions through their teaching, research, and service. Institutions should begin to offer grants, course releases, or professional development funds to incentivize faculty to engage in such content. Tenure and promotion guidelines should reflect the institutional commitment to social justice by highly regarding a faculty member's engagement in diversity, inclusion, equity, and social justice, thereby institutionalizing a lived rather than spoken value.

Inspire White Men's Responsibility for Education and Awareness

As our findings suggest, White men in college must learn how to listen and follow rather than to speak and feel the need to lead. The key for White men is to listen to conversations not to try to dominate them and to remain engaged in the topic (Allen & Rossatto, 2009). Truly listening involves Whites to allow minoritized experiences to surface and center, and to not expect women or other minoritized peers to teach White men. Participants' responses illustrated the need for White men to listen and utilize White Followership (Villalobos, 2015). While action is vital, White men must simultaneously listen to women's experiences. In college, White men must engage in critical self-work around issues of privilege and oppression and how these manifests in the institutions men are a part of, must relinquish their need for control and dominance, and must read and learn about non-White discourses (Vianden 2020). Faculty and other college educators (e.g., advisors, mentors, supervisors, counselors, coaches) should engage White men to accept this responsibility for their own education and awareness. This can happen inside and outside of classrooms and it must happen. Results may include White men who admit they are not experts, who support and follow their peers or others who have long been minoritized, and who react without defensiveness when they receive critical feedback.

How exactly to engage White men in this work remains elusive to answer. Increasing the proximity to peers who face daily oppression in college is a start. The women in this study suggested that men step outside of their comfort zones and White, cisgender friend groups. Whites who are not able to understand the suffering of people who are oppressed may fail to commit to their responsibility in the fight for social justice. Feagin (2013) offered strategies educators may use to attempt to garner White men's

engagement. First, appeal to their moral obligations toward their fellow humans. Love thy neighbor as thyself, as well as moral ideas from other faiths are hallmarks of prosocial human behavior. Invoking these principles in spiritual men could engage them more directly. Second, appeal to the liberty-and-justice frame Americans have ascribed to for centuries. White men may be committed to fairness, equality, and justice, specifically when their families or friends are concerned. Educators should remind White men that the fairness offered to them should also be afforded every other human being.

As we close, we must be clear that holding men accountable to end sexism and other forms of oppression as well as committing them to responsibility for self-work, education, and awareness are non-negotiable concepts in higher education. No college educator or student should continue to stand by and witness the oppression facing women in this society, or worse, be the originators of such behavior.

Conclusion

In this study, we sought to explore and understand women college students' expectations of peers and faculty members who are men relative to fighting sexism and racism. We used Feminist theory, intersectionality, and the White followership model to center women's voices while surfacing the intersecting issues of racism and sexism experienced by women Students of Color. Our findings indicated that even though women comprise over half of the higher education student population, they still experience regular and demeaning sexism in and out of the classroom by White men in higher education. While this is not surprising, it speaks to the need for unconventional approaches to dismantling the sexism experienced by women students and the intersecting systems of sexism and racism experienced by women Students of Color.

We call on White men college educators and students to begin this process as part of the larger project to moving higher education and their own communities towards more just and equitable institutions.

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