

Absolution and Participation in Privilege: Gender-role Conflict for Men Student Affairs Professionals

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Methods

Large, research-intensive university in the South

Recruitment emails + snowball sampling

Two semi-structured focus groups

Analysis

- Dedoose to conduct emic coding
- Focusing on identifying rich themes to enable subsequent analysis
- After coding, we employed additional analysis to determine power ramifications

Participants

Two divisions represented: student affairs and diversity initiatives

Target population: participants who self-identified as men, full-time staff, and not currently a student

Demographics:

- 1 Latino, 1 Black, 1 Asian, 3 White, 1 bi-racial
- Ranged in age from 29-37
- 5 Heterosexual/straight, 2 Gay
- 4 – 9 years in the profession
- Student events, student conduct, residence life, diversity initiatives, leadership

Findings & Analysis

False Fronts

What is a False Front?

Strategic shifting
of positionality
through gender
performance
within conflicting
discourses

Types of False Fronts:

Camouflage

Diversions

Obfuscation

False Fronts: What We Talk About When We Talk About Other People

Tim: “To the gossip comment I would also say like sometimes I think that hurts us as men. I agree with your sentiment that I don’t want to get involved in that but I think that sometimes when you are not a part of those conversations you are missing out on important parts of the office dynamic.”

False Fronts: The Vexed Issue of Office Attire

John: “I know at least one of my colleagues specifically got called out by his boss for not, I don’t remember what it was, but for not wearing a belt or something like that, whereas I couldn’t imagine one of my female colleagues being called out for not wearing the right blouse or something.”

Adam: “I was told ‘well, if you want to wear man capris and sandals, go ahead.’”

False Fronts: Rationality Required

“Sometimes I’m the person that’s calming everyone down and being the rock for the staff. I’m tired of playing that role, I’m tired of playing that role where I’m constantly, “Okay so what’s going on? Let’s bring it back down.” –Michael

Absolution from Privilege: I'm not Ambitious, I'm a Man

“So, I definitely that I think I've been able to get away with things in my office that women just cannot get away with...because as a man I'm able to say things that, in my opinion, I get unfortunately taken more seriously I think within my office, and I'm also able to point things out and call things out that I feel if a female colleague said it either wouldn't get taken as seriously or it would come out as 'bitchy' or 'catty'” - Matthew

“Very similar to male teachers, male nurses, like the ability to get the recognition because I'm a male in a female dominated profession, so I own that. But I recognize that in terms of, I want to look out for number one in terms of my professional growth and success and climbing the ladder, how do I use that to my advantage and hopefully not disenfranchise others?” - Rufus

Absolution/Advantage

These examples represent both the experiences of our participants and the discursive impact of their behavior.

Men benefit both from the male privilege and from the discursive presentation of “rejecting” male privilege

The result of this cyclical relationship is a collective forgetting of the impact of male privilege within the discursive context of Student Affairs

“Every social order rests of on a forgetting of the exclusion practices through which one set of meaning has been institutionalised and various other possibilities...have been marginalised” (Shapiro, 2001)

We will take questions at the
end of the presentations

THANK YOU!