



Volume 6, Issue 1

Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs

# Angry White Men on Campus

## Theoretical Perspectives and Recommended Responses

RESEARCH-IN-BRIEF

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ISSN 2377-1306

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**Q** What was the motivation for creating this article for the JCSHESA? How did you approach the writing for this article?

**A** **Dr. Sasso:** Initially, this began when I was looking for collaborators to work on a book chapter examining whiteness as a masculine performativity to build on some of my earlier critical scholarship related to college men and masculinities when I was the ACPA Emerging Scholar in Residence. Moreover, I met Dr. Kyle Ashlee at the ACPA/NASPA Conference on College Men at Washington University in St. Louis in 2017, and I previously knew Dr. Christina Witkowicki from working in fraternity/sorority life. I felt like they would both be wonderful collaborators as their lines of activist and critical scholarship challenge us to rethink the experiences of white college men. Our partnership evolved into two distinct projects, one that was a book chapter and another that was this wonderful article that we feel furthers the scholarship related to our understanding of why white college men fail to understand their own privilege when obscured by their own lack of self-awareness in their assumption of marginality. The resulting scholarly collaborations have really been such a joy to engage in, and the developmental feedback from JCHESA is a model for other peer-reviewed, higher education journals. It pushed us to rethink some of the connections to our theoretical framework to develop a more coherent and cohesive manuscript.

**Dr. Ashlee:** This article came together through a confluence of several different areas of research that the three co-authors had been working on independently. For my dissertation, I studied the impact of a Critical Whiteness course on the professional socialization of student affairs graduate students. Additionally, I have an extensive scholarly and professional background related to engaging college men. When I saw a post on Facebook from Dr. Sasso about a project he was working on related to White College Men, I jumped at the opportunity. Dr. Sasso and I had done some work together through a college men and masculinity

professional association in the past and I knew that our interests would align well for a collaborative project. After I contacted him, he introduced me to Dr. Witkowicki, and I was thrilled to learn more about her research on the perceptions of college men in fraternities about their masculinity on campus. Once we decided on a focus of the article, we each went about writing our own individual parts of the paper based on our previous research and experience. At first the paper was mostly theoretical in nature. After a few rounds of revisions, the focus of the paper evolved and became more focused on practical implications. In total, we've been working on this paper for over a year and it has been an incredibly rewarding process for me, both personally and professionally. I've learned so much from these two incredible scholars, and I believe we are making a meaningful contribution to the current body of scholarship.

**Dr. Witkowicki:** This article started with a Facebook post! I had just defended my dissertation and was starting to think about submitting for publication. I've known Dr. Sasso through the field of fraternity and sorority life for a number of years and he posted about a call for abstracts on a new publication and was looking for co-writers on the topic of men and masculinity. I immediately commented, and he set up a call for the three of us. I had never met Dr. Ashlee but, knowing Pete, I was excited to get to know and work with him. Our topics and research fit so well together that the first draft was relatively easy to piece together—each took their area of expertise. I think the mix of faculty and student affairs practitioners on our team helped to give a well-rounded view of the topic. Our strengths really complemented each other. After a few rounds of edits, we had an accepted submission but also a new team moving forward. I genuinely appreciate Dr. Sasso's intent of connecting with newer writers. Having never been through the publication process prior, this gave me the experience I needed to continue moving forward. Having someone so willing to open doors for newer scholars is truly significant.

**Q** What was your biggest challenge when writing this article and how did you overcome it?

**A** **Dr. Sasso:** The biggest challenge was ensuring some degree of authenticity in approaching this project. I wanted to guarantee that this scholarship painted a portrait of a specific cohort of college white men in their expressions of privilege and performativity. Connecting the concepts of protest masculinity with hegemonic masculinity with its layering of complexity was a significant accomplishment. It was essential in this manuscript and posed the biggest challenge in ensuring this commitment towards authenticity.

**Dr. Ashlee:** I think the biggest challenge was figuring out how to weave our three unique scholarly voices and content, together in one coherent paper. Ironically, I think this challenge also enabled the paper to improve and become something meaningful for us as scholars, and hopefully something worthwhile for readers as well. We each brought such rich ideas to the project, and it took some time to allow those ideas to grow together. It didn't happen overnight. Through lots of feedback and several rounds of revisions, we were able to find a common vision for the paper and blend our scholarly voices in a way that enhanced each of our individual perspectives.

**Dr. Witkowicki:** I also found bringing together our three distinct styles and voices into one cohesive article to be the greatest challenge. Recognizing that content is professional while style is more personal can be a difficult piece to reflect upon when providing critical feedback to co-authors, especially when you are friends with your co-authors. I do agree with Dr. Ashlee's assessment, however, that this led to a quality article as well as also an opportunity to reflect on my own writing style evolution.

**Q** What was one big takeaway from writing this article?

**A** **Dr. Sasso:** My biggest take-away was probably discovering how to better integrate the concepts of protest masculinity, which is part of the theoretical framework, to help better explain white male assumptions of marginality in the contemporary context. This is a working-class concept that I feel stunningly conceptualizes this notion of male gender performance in college white men in their response to programming and approaches by student affairs professionals.

**Dr. Ashlee:** For me, the biggest takeaway from writing this article is that writing collaboratively is an incredibly fulfilling and meaningful process. Not only did I learn a ton, I also made two new friends and trusted colleagues. The three of us met for dinner one night during a conference several months back to discuss another round of revisions, and it ended up being such a joyful evening. We didn't end up talking much about the article, but we did something more important than that. We laughed and told stories. We shared challenges and frustrations that we were experiencing in our lives. We made a genuine connection with each other. After that dinner, I returned to the project feeling refreshed, and with a newfound sense of trust and accountability to the others on the team. I got the sense that I wasn't alone in this feeling of connection. Low and behold, it was just a few weeks after that meeting that we finished the final draft of the paper that will be published through JCSHESA. I couldn't be more grateful for the opportunity and for the friends I've made along the way.

**Dr. Witkowicki:** I feel the biggest takeaway was the relationships I developed with my fellow authors. While I had known Dr. Sasso for many years, Dr. Ashlee was a new connection. That new connection felt like a long-term friendship almost immediately. As this was my first article submission, I felt supported in this new endeavor by these trusted friends throughout the process. Further, as most writers have every intention of submitting manuscripts, I had outlined a number of potential articles but never made headway. The shared social expectations of writing with others,

especially others whose trust you value, pushes you to complete tasks. I am proud that my first publication was with these two friends

**Q** What was the most helpful feedback you received when revising this article for publication?

**A** **Dr. Sasso:** The several rounds of revision in a developmental feedback approach by the JCSHESA editorial board was helpful for us to better conceptualize our very complicated weaving together of several theoretical constructs so they were more seamless.

**Dr. Ashlee:** As I said, the JCSHESA editorial team encouraged us to focus on the practical implications of the theoretical perspectives being offered that compelled us to transform the paper. I think this emphasis on implications for practice is incredibly important for research in general, but especially for scholarship in the field of student affairs, which is so practical in nature. The feedback we received throughout the process encouraged us to keep the practitioner in mind, and I truly believe the paper is better for it.

**Dr. Witkowicki:** I have always heard the dreaded critical feedback from the infamous ‘Reviewer 2’ and expected some harsh criticism, particularly since the first draft did have some struggles of marrying the various styles and voices, let alone content. However, I found each piece of feedback to be relevant, thoughtful, and incredibly helpful, not just in the published paper but in my future writing approach. The focus on the application helped to remind me that research is at the height of its relevancy and helpfulness when it can lead to practical application in the field.

### Author Biographies

**Kyle C. Ashlee, Ph.D.**, is a professor of Higher Education at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. His research interests include college men and masculinities, critical whiteness studies, as well as neoliberalism in higher education. He has authored several peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, and an award-winning book. His dissertation research examined how participating in a Critical Whiteness Studies graduate course informs the professional socialization of White student affairs graduate students. Kyle has developed and led educational programs at colleges and universities around the world, including award-winning college men and masculinities initiatives, men and masculinities academic courses, and a college men and masculinities professional organization. He currently serves as the Chair of the Coalition on Men and Masculinities within ACPA - College Educators International.

**Pietro A. Sasso, Ph.D.**, is an educator, critical scholar, and an Assistant Professor of College Student Personnel Administration at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. His research interests are centered around the impact of the college fraternity/sorority experience, academic advising, as well as college men and masculinity in higher education. Currently, he has a continuous record of scholarship with seven published books, more than 40 scholarly publications, and over 40 conference presentations. He is also the senior co-editor of Culture & Society in Higher Education text series for Stylus Publishing/Myers Education Press.

**Christine Witkowicki, Ed.D.**, is the chief learning officer for LaunchPoint, an online education development and consulting company. Serving as a student affairs professional since 2004, she works primarily with fraternities and sororities, student engagement, and student involvement. As a woman serving as the

primary campus or chapter advisor for fraternities, she became interested in gender role norms, gender dynamics, and leadership style development in college men. In her work with LaunchPoint, Dr. Witkowicki develops leadership curriculum and recruitment training for campuses and national organizations, consults with communities and organizations, and coaches student leaders.

#### Recommended Citation:

Ashlee, K. C., Sasso, P. A., & Witkowicki, C. (2020). Angry White men on campus: Theoretical perspectives and recommended responses. *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs*, 5(2), 40-51.

