How Do They See Me? Examining The Experiences of Faculty In The Context of Classroom Whiteness Factors

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About the Author(s)

(y and transdisciplinary context to enhance motivation, engagement, cognition and performance outcomes.

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Keywords

CRT, microaggression, faculty and student relationships, equity, diversity, inclusivity, bias

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Abstract

Today polarized attitudes and aptitudes have created a subtle but steady paradigm shift in how equity, diversity, and stakeholders see inclusivity (EDI) issues. As a result, focusing on critical aspects of equity relationships and the fallout from discriminatory attitudes towards marginalized groups has become ever more needed. While diversity issues exist in all societal, professional, and personal realms, the impact within educational institutions is perhaps the most profound. This Hermeneutic Phenomenology study examines the experiences of six higher education faculty who teach predominantly white student classrooms to identify issues and recommendations for their relationship with students when such teachers belong to a group that is not the majority group representative of the students. This is an important topic to investigate, given the dynamic role faculty and student relationships play in the context of EDI issues. Data suggests that while gender disparities drive students' behavior towards faculty, the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of faculty are an even greater driving force for discrimination. Recommendations to deal with the fallout of students' oppression of faculty based on equity, diversity, and inclusivity lenses and future implications are also discussed.

Keywords: CRT, microaggression, faculty and student relationships, equity, diversity, inclusivity, bias

Introduction

While equity, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI) issue are pervasive, their impact on educational institutions is perhaps the most profound. However, when examining issues of EDI and associated discrimination, researchers tend to focus on students' experiences within educational institutions, examining the psychological, physiological, financial, and academic repercussions of students experiencing discrimination and marginalization in educational

environments (Ching et al., 2020; Del Toro & Hughes, 2019; McGee, 2020; Mills, 2020; Robinson-Perez et al., 2019; Trent et al., 2021). When it comes to research on faculty experiences, there is a significant gap in the investigation of teachers who teach predominantly white classrooms and any associated issues and repercussions emanating from students' perceptions of faculty using an EDI lens. An example of this could be an African American faculty member teaching in a predominantly white classroom. The dynamics of the interplay between ethnic differences and their representation in the eyes of the 'other' within such classrooms could have severe and long-lasting implications, impacting the success of the students and the faculty. This is an important topic to investigate, given the role of faculty and student relationships in EDI.

It is important to examine if there are consequences for placing faculty members from metrically different backgrounds than most students in a classroom. This knowledge may be helpful across multifaceted training and faculty and student preparedness for global cultural competency. This study seeks to examine and highlight the circumstances and consequences of such situations. The research questions the study seeks to answer are as follows:

1. What are faculty experiences of teaching within a predominantly white classroom?
2. What challenges are faced by faculty placed in predominantly white classrooms?
3. What recommendations do such faculty have to mitigate such challenges?

Background

Theoretical Frames

This study's focus on EDI in the context of 'whiteness' experiences reverberate complex paradigms and issues that require a profoundly holistic framework to work upon, requiring multiple theoretical frames. Using multiple theoretical frames can help researchers make sense of the multiple facets of identity and socio-cultural dynamics germane to this investigation and is a process that has precedence in the literature. For instance, Mills and Bettis (2015) used multiple theoretical frameworks that helped better understand faculty perceptions, Fisher et al. (2018) relied on a similar approach to understand multilingual identity construction, and Barrow et al. (2020) mapped multiple theoretical frames to understand academic identities research.

The Expectation Theory

This postulates that specific behavior patterns are contingent upon specific beliefs about specific outcomes, self-confidence in the ability to achieve said outcomes, and the interest or attraction towards the ability of such outcomes to lead to better, secondary outcomes (Caulfield, 2007). In the context of this study, the Expectancy theory principles can be extrapolated to the understanding of how being placed in a discriminatory classroom environment could impact the motivation of faculty and students across multiple facets of teaching, learning, and socializing. The adverse effects of pre-existing racial bias on motivation have been studied extensively in the literature, revealing that despite the benefits of ethnic-racial socialization, such processes may not necessarily help diffuse mistrust between contrasting ethnic groups within situations of power (Copur-Gencturk et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019). A recent study found that it is crucial for faculty to be motivated to *be* genuinely and intrinsically unprejudiced and not just show that they are unprejudiced because it is expected or politically correct to do so (Kumar et al., 2021).

The Pygmalion Effect

This refers to "the effects of interpersonal expectancies, that is, the finding that what one person expects of another can serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy" (Rosenthal, 2010, p. 1398). Expectations influence achievements in the context of student-teacher relationships. For example, when a teacher has high expectations for students, regards them as capable, and expects them to do well, that teacher may attempt to teach more and create a more positive atmosphere, leading to higher achievements (GÜNDÜZALP & Boydak Özan, 2019; Saha, 2020). Similarly, cultural factors deeply influence how students view faculty and faculty behavior (Andre et al., 2020), and there is a marked inclination for positive perceptions related to white faculty versus those of color (La Salle et al., 2019), leading to cultural trauma experiences by nonwhite faculty (Souto-Manning & Emdin, 2020). Thus, there is evidence that "the impact of student-teacher racial matching would affect any student whose race is not represented by their schoolteachers, including White students" (La Salle et al., 2019, p.317).

Critical Race Theory Tenets

CRT provides a transformative process to examine racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of marginalized communities and has been used to analyze the experiences of marginalized communities in higher education, particularly the examination of racial

microaggressions (Pittman, 2012; Solorzano & Yasso, 2001). Three CRT tenets used to examine the experiences of faculty of color in this study are (i) counter-storytelling, (ii) the permanence of racism, and (iii) intersectionality.

Counter-Storytelling/Counter Narratives.

Counter-narratives mean offering an opportunity to hear/learn from the histories and experiences of oppression from people of color as sources of strength. It facilitates an understanding of the experiences of faculty of color, so we can improve their working conditions and provide adequate support (Pittman, 2012). While numerous studies focus on the experiences of students of color with faculty, there is a need for more research that focuses on the experiences of faculty of color with students, specifically in which faculty teach students from a different racial or ethnic group. Hearing the stories directly from people of color experiencing the oppressive nature of an organization provides a critical lens from which to challenge the institutional racism within our systems (Blaisdell, 2020). There are multiple overlapping functions of counternarratives which include providing new (often untold) narratives to understand power, deconstructing majoritarian narratives on race, serving as a cure for silencing, fostering activism, and building community among marginalized communities (Blaisdell, 2020; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

By adding to collective memory, according to Alemán (2017), counter-storytelling can support bonding and liberation as it helps to affirm the experiences of people of color. As an analysis tool, the counter-narrative explicitly deconstructs the idea that racial disparity results from every day or justifiable occurrences (Blaisdell, 2020). Counter-narrative is used in this study to elevate and validate the voices as well as experiences of faculty of color as "…a tool for conducting policy analysis by challenging normative assumptions of race and politics that go unnoticed or unquestioned" (Atwood & López, 2014 p. 1138).

The Permanence of Racism

This is the recognition that racism is endemic to American society and is ingrained in all aspects of U.S. civilization, including the social, political, economic, and educational institutions (Bell, 1995). Racism is preserved in higher education institutions where Black people have a higher risk of experiencing racial discrimination (Offermann et al., 2014). Racism continues to be unrecognized, unconscious, and unacknowledged, as it is perpetrated by policies, procedures,

pedagogy, climate, and culture that are potentially racist (Gusa, 2010). While predominantly white institutions have demonstrated hostility toward people of color or marginalized communities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have also inherited many racist structures and systems that perpetuate white supremacy (Blackshear & Hollis, 2021).

Intersectionality

This is primarily based on the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and is a lens for seeing how various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. Intersectionality focuses on the experiences lived at the intersection of the vectors where the identities are cojoined and not additive (Ash et al., 2020; Crenshaw, 1989). "Intersecting oppressions can impact interactions exacerbated when there is a lack of structural support. For example, stereotypes and prejudices that permeate the culture often are reinforced through teacher-student and peer interactions in various educational settings" (Yang, 2008, p. 2).

Nichols and Stahl's (2019) systematic literature review reveals that the concept of intersectionality has been studied across multiple contexts within higher education, including both professional and personal experiences for students and staff. In the 50 studies examined, gender, race, social class, and sexuality were the primary identity vectors, appearing most frequently in respective order. Of the 50 studies, 23 focused on the intersections of race, gender, and social class within higher education and academic experiences, excluding social and personal contexts. This suggests expanding examining intersectionality impact beyond the professional to social and personal contexts.

Student-Faculty Relationship Dynamics

Positive student-faculty relationships in higher education can contribute to students' involvement and achievement, including higher student retention rates, enhanced performance, and a sense of belonging (Cress, 2008; Miller, 2020; Snidjers et al., 2020). On the flip side, students' negative perceptions of their faculty can result due to implicit association bias or "the automatic cognitive associations people have between a given social group and certain feelings, concepts, and evaluations" (Warikoo et al., 2016, p. 508). Such perceived biases taint the classroom environment, reducing or destroying the positive effects of student-faculty relationships.

There is evidence in the literature that indicates the critical impact of perceptions on relationships between students and faculty. These perceptions can relate to gender, personal appearance, accent, knowledge of the background, and ethnic or cultural elements (Brown et al., 2020; Iheduru-Anderson, 2020; Keng, 2020). Biases related to such perceptions become evident in student evaluations of the faculty (Keng, 2020) and the faculty evaluation of student performance. Although student-faculty interaction is encouraged and is considered highly useful for students, such interactions can be detrimental and produce adverse outcomes, including lower GPAs for students of color as opposed to white students when the faculty and students do not belong to the same cultural background (Park et al., 2020). In addition, when faculty of color seek to teach lessons about racism, the resistance faced by white students disrupts teaching and learning (Evans-Winters & Hines, 2019). Reinsch et al. (2020) display how biases regarding faculty race, gender, and ethnicity impact student evaluations during faculty hiring processes.

Faculty of Color

Despite the public display of responsibility from colleges nationwide who are publicizing commitment to EDI, the racial and ethnic diversity among faculty of color remains low. Considering full-time faculty only, in the fall of 2020, nearly three-quarters of faculty were White, while only four percent of full-time faculty were Black females, and three percent each were Black and Hispanic males and Hispanic females (National Center for Education Statistics,2022). The college campus often provides the first opportunity for significant cross-cultural and cross-racial interactions for many white students who encounter faculty of color for the first time—such faculty experience challenges on predominantly white college campuses related to racial and cultural differences. Settles et al. (2019) identified six themes related to the invisibility and hypervisibility of faculty of color, which include tokenism, social and professional exclusion, and epistemic exclusion. The remaining three themes included the faculty of color's responses to tokenism and exclusion: invisibility behaviors, specifically, strategic invisibility, working harder, and disengagement. Racially discriminatory experiences are potential social risk factors that negatively influence psychological and physical well-being in the form of depression, stress, and anger (Chakraborty & McKenzie, 2002; Kim, 2002).

Racial Microaggressions in Higher Education

Higher education is wrought with racial microaggressions, which are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, intentional and unintentional, communicating hostile, derogatory, or harmful racial slights toward people of color (Sue et al., 2007). Generally, microaggressions are based on stereotypes. Although these interactions are described as "micro" due to their less overt demonstration of racism, they can inflict long-term trauma through exclusionary and biased behaviors (Jones et al., 2016; Tulshyan, 2022).

In the work environment, microaggressions undermine EDI efforts, negatively impact workplace attitudes, decrease performance, and increase turnover (Jones et al., 2016). Many people from marginalized communities can attest to racial microaggressions daily as an insidious part of our culture. If microaggressions are not addressed or unresolved, they can increase mistrust and further increase stereotypes while simultaneously causing harm and psychological distress for people of color.

According to Sue et al. (2007), microaggressions appear in three forms: micro-assault (behavior that involves name-calling, avoidance, or purposeful discrimination); microinsult (rude, insensitive, or demeaning remarks about a person's social group, identity, or heritage); and micro-invalidation (negating or excluding the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of marginalized groups through various forms of communication). The prevalence, along with the deleterious effects of racial microaggressions in higher education, has been well documented (Midgette & Mulvey, 2022; Ogunyemi et al., 2020; Solórzano et al., 2002), as these experiences have impacted faculty (Peterson et al., 2004; Murdoch-Kinch et al., 2017;), students (Allen & Solorzano, 2001; Howie & Mathur, 2018; McCann, Lacy and Miller, 2014), and teaching assistants (Gomex, Khurshid, Freitag, & Lachuck, 2011). Microaggressions directed at black faculty by colleagues can lead to feelings of invisibility, perceptions of incompetence, and insufficient mentoring (Constantine et al.,2008). Ogunyemi et al.'s (2020) systematic review of microaggressions in the higher education learning environment examined 40 studies. Only one of the studies focused on the experiences of faculty only, indicating the need for further investigation of this topic.

<div align="center">**Methodology**</div>

Hermeneutic Phenomenology (H.P.) Framework

"A phenomenologically and hermeneutically grounded research endeavor needs to navigate the debates, theories, philosophical and epistemological positions, as well as the momentous issue of meaning" (Suddick et al., 2020, p.2). This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of perspectives generated through the unique lived experiences of the participants as faculty members placed in classrooms with a contrasting cultural environment, which is why a Hermeneutic Phenomenology (H.P.) frame was considered most appropriate (Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Suddick et al., 2020; Heidegger, 1988). The H.P. frame is closely associated with the ontological underpinnings of a phenomenon, using an interpretive lens that allows us to ascertain perceptions and interpretations of experiences that are situated within unique situations without confining them to specific categories (Crowther & Thomson, 2020; Suddick et al., 2020). "In the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, our every experience needs to be interpreted against the influence of our backgrounds" (Nigar, 2019, p. 12). Interpretations are drawn from the expression of experiences and the deciphering of meanings from the texts of such expressions. In the context of this study, researchers sought to identify deeper meanings associated with the phenomenon.

Participant Selection

After IRB approval, a small, purposive sampling was used to select six (6) faculty members who had taught in classrooms with predominantly White students. Additional criteria were to find faculty participants who represented a variety of cultural backgrounds ranging from African American, Asian American, and Caucasian. The interpretive/ hermeneutic phenomenological approaches encourage a small purposive sampling since it is "most coherent with phenomenological studies' main objective of uncovering the multiple layers of the hiddenness of a phenomenon within its context" (Frechette et al., 2020, p.6).

Participants were informed of the confidential and voluntary nature of the participation. The high level of participant backgrounds is below, using pseudonyms.

1. Q.H.: Pakistani-American Muslim, man. Ph.D. in Political History has taught at the higher education level for over 20 years. Student backgrounds are predominantly White, with a small "mixture of Asian, African American, and international students

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2. R.G.: Asian American woman. Master in English Literature and Ph.D. in Technical communication has taught at higher education level for over 15 years. Student backgrounds are predominantly White, with some "black or Hispanic student populations.

3. CA: African American woman. Ph.D. in Black history Early America has taught at higher education level for 19 years. Student backgrounds are predominantly White, with sparse numbers from other segments. "On a good day, I get three students of color."

4. BA: Asian man with a master's degree in business administration who has taught at a higher education level for seven years. Student backgrounds are predominantly White, with some "Latino, Indian, and African backgrounds.

5. S.A.: Asian man with a master's degree in business administration who has taught at a higher education level for more than 20 years. Student backgrounds are predominantly White, with some "Latino, Indian, and African backgrounds.

6. J.L.: White man. Ph. D. in Curriculum and Instruction. Involved at higher education level for more than 44 years. Student backgrounds are predominantly White.

Data Gathering

Participants were contacted one on one by the researchers and informed of the study's background and its voluntary and confidential nature. The primary instrument was unstructured interviews, with questions designed to provide answers addressing the core research questions and elicit information about the phenomenon under investigation. Additionally, they related to participant background, perception, feelings, and knowledge about the phenomenon (Crowther & Thompson, 2020; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

The data were gathered using face-to-face, semi-structured interviews for two and email exchanges for four, per the participants' preferences. For the interviews, the participants were asked an initial set of questions and followed-up questions based on their initial responses. By intent, the formal interview process gravitated towards an informal perspective exchange. Thus, the transcripts became "texts" taken from the pages of the researcher and the participants' lives. This is an ideal way to conduct interviews using an interpretive/hermeneutic approach that encourages dynamic co-construction of data between the researcher and the participant

(Frechette et al., 2020). Additionally, the first author memoed thought provokers and emotive responses (items and emotions that surprised, moved, and were intriguing) as the initial reactions to reading the raw transcripts.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Hermeneutic Circle lenses of researchers' and participants' worldviews to find hidden revelations on the phenomenon being studied. The Hermeneutic Circle concept is closely associated with Gadamer (1988) and Heidegger (1988, 2010). Gadamer (1988) suggested that the circle's task "is to expand in concentric circles the unity of the understood meaning. Harmonizing all the particulars with the whole is at each stage the criterion of correct understanding" (p. 68). Essentially, this circle is a process by which researchers can reflect on the "ongoing, attentive, circular movement between part and whole" of experiences, allowing for a complete understanding of a phenomenon (Suddick et al., 2020, p. 3). The concept of the circle Heidegger (2010) related to "the anticipatory movement of fore-understanding/fore-structure as the expression of meaningful existential" (Suddick, 2020, p.3).

This accorded more accurate understandings, emanating only through language's interpretations and descriptions. Crowther and Thomson (2020) discuss how the hermeneutic circle 'life-world' (p.3) unpacks three circular items:

1. Background context of pre-understandings through 'fore-having'
2. A protagonist relies on specific viewpoints when entering an experience through 'foresight.'
3. Anticipated interpretations are made as a natural outcome of foresight through 'fore-conception.'

When analyzing data for this study, the three circular items inspired the interpretations using the researcher's and participants' backgrounds. First, the researcher's background as representatives of the faculty of color, who teach primarily white students, allowed for fore-having generated through a preunderstanding of the challenges of being such a representative in the research context. The researchers' experiences and data transcripts allowed for building fore-sight generated in hypothecation of the challenges, based on the fore-having. Finally, a precoding process where the researchers analyzed the richest interview content and noted possible themes emergent from the other transcripts as the interviews progressed allowed for fore-conception.

Analyzing the transcripts was done using a three-level approach inspired by the three circles (Bawa, 2021). Level one related to close- reading the raw transcription, line by line, highlighting narrative chunks answering questions about background, roles, and scope of influences. This achieved the fore-having through insightful narratives into the participants' backgrounds. Level two related to dual coding, where the first researcher dived deeper into the narratives, ascertaining patterns of perception for each transcript. At this point, the memo notes that the first author matched the second code findings, allowing more profound insights into the philosophical underpinnings of the participant narratives. This constituted foresight, leading to the third level. The first researcher shared the first coding outcomes with the second researcher, and after that, both researchers exchanged their codes, leading to the third level. Level three related to third coding, where researchers fused the patterns found earlier with personal understandings and philosophical foundations to achieve fore-conceptions from all vantage points. At this level, the stories of the researched and researcher gained symbiosis, achieving "interpreted meaning surfaced by a researcher (interpreter)" (Crowther & Thompson, 2022, p. 3).

To establish credibility for the findings, the first and second researchers completed the first coding separately and then shared their codes. The analysis process followed Frechette et al. (2020) circle parameters in that "Phenomenological analysis necessarily immerses the researcher in the study data—listening to interview recordings and reading observation, document, and interview transcripts/ notes on multiple occasions in their entirety and then zooming in to key sections (hermeneutic circle)" (p. 10). General coding used Saldaña's (2009) recommendations, leading to a final master code book that emerged from the first descriptive codebook based on the keyword searches during level two of the analysis. Before finalizing the master codebook, one outside coder was used to check the reliability of the initial coding. The coder was given the deidentified transcripts and asked to develop their descriptive codebook using the exact keywords. The three codebooks (first, second researchers, and outside coders) were compared, and the most common codes were selected. The excerpts were divided into categories and subcategories (Saldaña, 2009). The finalization of codes was accomplished after the researchers imbued the codes with reflexive comments for discussion, competing with the interpretation cycle of overt and covert meanings.

Despite the linear description of the coding process, the analysis events overlapped and were cyclical as the researcher exchanged thoughts, traversing between new gleanings and earlier reflections to arrive at the deepest levels of understanding. This was essential to align with the H.P. frame wherein "the researcher cycles from preunderstandings to new understandings, which are integrated with future preunderstandings as the analysis continues" (Frechette et al., 2020, p. 9).

Researcher Positionality, Validity, and Rigor

As a brown faculty teaching white populations in a global arena, the first researcher is closely familiar with the classroom whiteness factors, creating uniquely intuitive understandings of the benefits and fallouts of the phenomenon. As explained earlier, this meets the fore-having concept of the H.P. circle. The first researcher's personal experiences were mirrored in some of the literature, fueling a passion for engendering a more conspicuous discussion of the issues while also using the stakeholders' views to find viable and desirable solutions. The awareness of this connection to the phenomenon warranted refraining from imposing any core personal views on interpreting the findings. However, it also enhanced the depth of engagement through a deep and personal interest, creating an asset to broadening understanding of the phenomenon in reporting as expected in H.P. traditions (Gyollai, 2020).

Being a Black woman faculty member on a predominantly White college campus, the classroom has been a prime arena for the manifestation of whiteness and microaggressions. The second researcher strongly identifies with many of the unpleasant and oppressive experiences of faculty of color in higher education. The intersectionality of race and gender impact personal and professional experiences as these vectors of identity are often disadvantageous in higher education. Even though microaggressions are pervasive, the lack of support to address these challenges resonates with the second researcher.

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Results

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Gender Matters, But Race Matters More?

The data revealed similarities and dissimilarities between the faculty members' experiences teaching in a predominantly white classroom. However, the most significant difference between the experiences was gender and ethnicity oriented, indicating two things. First, male faculty members are less likely to receive negative perceptions from students than

female members. Second, and as an exception to the first finding, is that the ethnic orientation of faculty may be instrumental in suspending the concessions of gender orientation.

The participants were two women and four men. The experiences of most of the male participants were generally positive. However, one male participant of Muslim origin, Q.H., faced several negative experiences, inducing pushback, disrespect, and race-based mistrust. On the contrary, the remaining two Asian and one White male participant had pleasant experiences, irrespective of their racial background differentials. Interestingly, these three male faculty members' descriptions of experiences were very similar in verbiage, tone, and attitude. B.A. and S.A., male faculty from Asian backgrounds, did not find anything awry or untoward when teaching a predominantly White student body and did not believe they were the subject of prejudiced perceptions. The one White male participant, JL, considered it a normal reaction that his students were not judgmental of his presence in the classroom. "Yes, I think that people are used to seeing a tall White male and giving them power. People are used to that. I recognize that privilege".

Contrary to this, Q.H. faced significant issues, despite being a male. His sharing indicated that this could be due to his Islamic background. "I hear judgments from students that my work is biased; it is too lenient toward Middle Eastern and South Asian studies." Interestingly, Q.H. also mirrored what JL, the white male professor, viewed as gender-related stereotype bias when he said, "I knew some students thought that a 'good professor' was an older wise Caucasian man with lots of old stories."

The experiences of the two women faculty of color were diametrically opposite to those of the male participants and primarily negative. In varying degrees and details, C.A. and R.G. discussed some highly traumatic and negative experiences they had when teaching predominantly white classrooms. These experiences ranged from being called unsavory names, exposed to micro-aggressive comments, and judged as someone who favors their cultural background. An interesting outlier to this was provided by R.G., who believed that male students were less critical of her presence than female students. "Males are generally more friendly, less aggressive, and some of my worst experiences have been with White women students." In one of her comments, she alluded to the fact that there was greater disrespect from online students than from face-to-face ones. C.A. described how she was perceived as 'angry' and how her appearance

intimidated students. "I am a Black-skinned woman of size, so they are slightly intimidated. They think we are angry". She believed that students challenged her because they did not see her as an authority figure.

Grade Levels Matter

Another difference was student profile differences, particularly between graduate and undergraduate levels. Specific comments related to level differentiation in the context of the phenomena came from two participants. QH Felt that undergrad students were least dedicated to their work. However, there were also less articulate about their biases because "Undergraduates do not want to be embarrassed or appear unknowledgeable, so they rather not take the risk to answer publicly" (Q.H. excerpt). This was in direct contrast to the experiences of R.G., who mentioned, "I have on several occasions experienced direct and indirect disrespect and animosity from students. Unfortunately, I find this more prevalent in the undergraduate population."

Stereotype Biases Shape the Class Dynamics

A recurring theme within the experience recollections of the participants related to being the target of stereotype biases. This ranged from a display of apathy and poor knowledge about other cultures, judgment, and expectations based on stereotypes of cultures, as well as animosity and mistrust generated from misconceived notions of other cultures. For example, Q.H. faced recrimination based on his Islamic heritage, as his students and colleagues inferred that "my ethnic background or identity is somehow informing my professional discipline, or that I am using this subject to provide a 'better' image of the culture." He also felt that preconceived biases against his culture shaped the classroom dynamics.

R.G. faced similar situations, both in online and face-to-face settings, while C.A. experienced bias seeping into perceptions of who should be in authority, "…they are more likely to take that kind of approach and seize the opportunity to pose a challenge to someone like me, whom they may perceive to be less of an authority figure…."

Defensive Stance of Whiteness

A critical finding from the experiences was the propensity of faculty of color to generate defensive feelings in White student bodies, particularly in cross-cultural conflict histories. Moreover, the results indicate that these defensive maneuvers often manifest in offensive behaviors. For example, Q.H.'s Muslim background generated discomfort amongst his students

when engaging in lessons on political history dealing with 9.11. "Especially after the decade of the September 11 attacks on the U.S., the topics of Middle Eastern history, terrorism, religion, the politics of religion were very tense in the classroom… The classroom was their political platform, as well as to project their 'Americanness.'

Interestingly, R.G. faced the negative consequences of being seen as a Muslim due to her appearance, even though she was not from an Islamic background. "Also, it bothers me when students ask me if I am a Muslim or believe in Islam. My name and looks make me a target for being judged and rejected". She also faced pushback from White students when trying to reform the curriculum to be more inclusive. C.A.'s experiences were related to her being Black, with the assumption that she would not be as credible as some of her White male counterparts. "There is a sense that they own more of my time and my accepting their answer to things…".

Microaggressions: Microinsults and Microinvalidations

This study's participants shared experiences that add to the literature on microinsults or verbal comments/behavioral actions that convey rudeness and insensitivity resulting in the disparagement of a person's racial heritage, or identity (Sue et al., 2007) and are common in higher education (Ogunyemi et al., 2020; Pitman, 2012).

Eighty-three percent of the 40 microaggressions studies reviewed by Ogunyemi et al. (2020) reported microinsults between faculty and students, whereas microinvalidations were mainly revealed in interactions among faculty. Similarly, in this investigation, Q.H., CA, and R.G. discussed several examples of microinsults related to their interactions with students. The various microinsults included "second-class citizen," the ascription of intelligence, pathologizing cultural values and communication styles, and the assumption of criminal status. The experiences shared in this study mainly focused on all of these except the "assumption of criminal status." These experiences are often reported by faculty of color in predominantly White institutions (Ogunyemi, 2020; Pittman, 2012). Student interactions also included microinvalidations as "aliens in their land," where faculty of color are viewed as foreigners. For example, R.G. describes student comments that focus on her ability to teach English.

The discussion of institutional support aligns with the concept of microinvalidations evident in the lack of support provided by institutions, as this can negate and nullify the experiential reality of racism for faculty of color. The lack of action and systems to address these

oppressive behaviors denotes denial of individual racism, a specific type of microinvalidation. This type of microaggression is at the macro level as they are institutional and environmental.

Institutional Plus Collegiate Apathy and Low Resources

A key challenge discussed by several participants was their workplace institutions' lack of rigor and focus in dealing with issues faced by faculty in predominantly White classrooms. Participants described this as institutional apathy generated by multiple factors such as hesitation for change, overreliance on conservative, slow-moving processes, and a non-caring attitude toward other professionals, colleagues, and students. "On campus, most professors are ambivalent to these issues and do not want to get pulled into overly sensitive issues."

The stereotype bias and lack of cultural competencies of stakeholders were also seen as possible reasons for this apathy. "I have found that many students from America have no cultural competence or clue about what is out there globally. I have had students who have never stepped out of their state, and many resent people from outside" (R.G. excerpt). As a result of such indifference and lack of interest, participants felt that there was a marked lack of resources they could access to handle their problems. "There are few resources on campus for teachers to deal with these issues."

Student Evaluations

One daunting challenge discussed by several participants was the role of student evaluations in perpetrating and feeding the targeted negativity towards nonwhite faculty teaching mostly White student bodies. Participants discussed how the anonymity of evaluations allowed their exploitation by students who used these instruments to either vent and disrespect their faculty or show a lack of interest in honest and robust feedback. These issues were found in both face-to-face and online evaluations. For example, Q.H. pointed out that face-to-face evaluations were completed rapidly by students with little thought behind the process. R.G. described how she was victimized through harrowing comments that attacked her gender and race. "I have often been questioned about my Indian background and derogatory ways (how come you are teaching English writing, or I have a problem with your accent, are some items that have bothered me). On more than one occasion, I have received horrible comments in the evaluations focusing on my gender and race (Go back to elephant land; it is a shame that we have a foreigner teaching us how to write… are some signature comments that come to mind)".

Like the findings for R.Q. 1, most male counterparts had fewer or no negative responses within evaluations. As B.A. admitted, "Based on student evaluation and interaction in class, I would say they have a positive impression of me as their teacher and a friendly attitude towards me." These findings are consistent with previous research noting that faculty of color receive more negative student evaluations than white male faculty, and faculty of color who are women receive even less favorable evaluations compared to white women and men of color (Fires & McNinch, 2003; Lin & Kennett, 2022; Pittman, 2010; Pittman, 2012)

Self-recrimination and Denial: Emotional Fallout

The most compelling data related to the emotional fallout and demotivation challenges women faculty faced when experiencing the phenomenon. Both women participants described, in detail, how the misbehaviors of students and apathy of other stakeholders shaped perceptions of their professional selves and led to severe psychological ramifications such as denial or acceptance that the sordid realities of their workplace experience were somehow of their own doing. A notable and deeply concerning emotional challenge was the denial and desensitization attempts on the part of these participants, displayed through comments inferring that despite all the bad things they faced, things were normal.

Emotional dialogues hinted at self-recriminations and feelings of trauma. In multiple ways, participants expressed their beliefs that the challenges they experienced were a part of their jobs and a result of their racial limitations. "At some point, I had to acknowledge these obstacles as essential components of the work environment and my limitations" (Q.H.). "… there is that loneliness, isolation, and fear I did not deal with well and I struggled, and you are like dying, and that is part of the process" (C.A.).

Institutional Level Strategies Needed

All participants, male and female, articulated the need for substantial institutional reforms to mitigate and eradicate the negative experiences and challenges faced by faculty teaching predominantly White classrooms. Some specific recommendations provided are listed below:

- Administrators and faculty members need to see it as a long-term mitigation strategy.
- Institutions must make it compulsory for the program to have diversity-related learning tools in courses, even if they are unrelated to multicultural programs.
- Institutions must make stricter conduct policies with actionable reprimands for violations.

- Raise awareness in the student body to make them more culturally aware.

- Provide diversity coaching and somebody to talk to

- Create networks of survivors and those who are taking risks. We need to hear more from them.

- More conscious efforts by organizations to encourage support of people who have such experiences, as well as offer protection if they want to use certain materials that may be politically uncomfortable for some people.

Fostering Attitudinal Fortitude

Participants discussed different ways in which people targeted by the phenomenon could bolster their affective fortitude. The key items proposed are listed below:

- Black faculty at predominantly White colleges need to do more to collaborate, even if they are in different disciplines and departments.

- Be persistent in learning new ways of finding reasonable solutions and try new approaches in case one fails.

- Engage in professional development by researching online articles and videos on dealing with bias in the classroom and ways to work with the situation, as well as attend seminars on improving teaching and understanding better learning techniques.

- Forge a positive attitude, be self-confident, and not let perpetrators walk away.

Collaborate with People from Similar Backgrounds

Several participants discussed how working together with others who are in similar situations can lend a big boost to morale and provide ways to deal with issues. Having dialogues on these sensitive topics with the younger generations can also help. "I believe there is a strong need to inculcate acceptance of people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds in children from the very start." Reaching out to others and sharing experiences leads to more learning, understanding, and professional satisfaction. "I felt a sense of professional satisfaction of self-improving and connecting with others who know exactly what I am feeling." C.A. discussed how being a part of a group later in her career helped her and made her feel supported and regretted that she did not have such support earlier in her career, which harmed her self-confidence and performance. Thus, she felt, "For a coping mechanism, that is one of the things we need to do."

Similarly, R.G. shared, "I have a few colleagues in the same boat. We meet, chat, and generally support one another."

Curricular Reforms

The final nugget of recommendations came from curriculum management and reform strategies. Q.H. suggested using any constructive evaluation feedback to identify areas of student concerns and deal with them through curriculum revision. "The judgments I read in the evaluations, I try to learn from them and inform my perspectives of where the students are coming from," R.G. suggested clarifying the institution's diversity policies and other related items in the syllabus to help mitigate things. Another suggestion is to insert, within the curriculum, some activities that can teach students about cultural competency. "I have noticed positive outlook and curiosity by many when exposed to such lessons." B.A.'s strategy of choice was to "amend my syllabus by punishing students who do not follow the code of conduct." C.A. inferred that, if applicable, the curriculum and syllabus should reflect the actual characteristics of the course. In the context of discussing how collaborating with others and sharing their experiences have helped her teaching, C.A. mentioned ", in the fact that I am bolder about in saying things like "My syllabus is all Black women. Those conversations with others who felt how I felt empowered me…".

<center>Discussion and Implications</center>

A Paradigm of Contrasting Cultural Classroom Environment (CCCE)

The study revealed significant parameters of faculty members' experiences teaching predominantly White classrooms. Based on a critical review of the findings, the first researcher coined the phrase 'contrasting cultural classroom environments or CCCE' to identify a historical yet emergent paradigm within the landscape of EDI research and literature. While there have been copious discussions on the topics of culturally generated biases, stigmas, and victimizations, most of the focus of such discussions and research has been on student issues and as perceived and reported by the students (DeCuir-Gunby & Bindra, 2022; Fan et al., 2019; Lewis et al., 2019; Mills, 2020; Nieblas-Bedolla et al., 2020; Zhitomirsky-Geffet et al., 2022). However, because faculty members are an integral part of the student learning process, there needs to be a dimension or paradigm that identifies and houses EDI concerns emanating from the experience of faculty members. The stories shared by the participants indicate that there are

definitive and negative consequences of being a faculty of color facing a predominantly White classroom. Given the low coverage of this phenomenon in the literature, this problem is esoteric, highlighting the need for robust and continual discussions handling the challenges such a phenomenon presents to any learning environment.

The fact that a robust student-faculty relationship is crucial to motivation, engagement, and higher performance outcomes further accentuates the need to take care of contingencies arising from negative faculty-student relationships based on the contrasting cultural environment in the classrooms (Raposa et al., 2020; Rizkallah & Seitz, 2017; Snijders et al., 2021). In addition, student-teacher relationships have impacted engagement among multiple cultural communities, including Black student communities (Beasley, 2021; Llamas et al., 2019) and Asian students (Sofyan et al., 2021; Lewis et al., 2021).

This paradigm proposal draws from and builds on the earlier work of Evans-Winters and Hines (2019) as a supporting narrative, wherein the authors analyze acts of White resistance perpetrated against Black female professors by students resisting anti-racist teacher education courses. Evans-Winters and Hines's (2019) study uses experiences of Black women faculty working in predominantly White institutions, where they are subjected to passive-aggression, negative groupthink, and apathy. Additionally, Pittman's (2010) research on gendered racism focused on the experiences of women faculty of color's classroom interaction with White males, revealing such faculty's oppressive experiences.

Islamophobia

The study strongly supported and added to the literature regarding passive and covert Islamophobia (Abu Khalaf et al., 2022; Aguilera-Carnerero & Azeez, 2016), particularly in the context of hypervisibility targeted at Muslim individuals (Chaudry, 2020). Hypervisibility is the feeling of being too visible to others and standing out in a community due to racial backgrounds, leading to extreme anxiety caused by subtle forms of racism (Chaudry, 2020; Settles et al., 2019). The evidence was generated from the passive-aggressive and negative reactions of students to QH, a person of Muslim origin as well as R.G., who was targeted because she had the physical appearance that made students mistake her for being a Muslim, even though she was not! There is evidence in the literature regarding stereotype bias emanating from the physical appearances of victims and miscommunication of cultural backgrounds that can lead to

haranguing consequences (Kazi, 2021). In the case of Q.H., the evidence was supportive of Islamophobia, both in the context of how his experiences did not mesh with the experiences of the other male participants, as well as how his students distrusted his teaching and suspected him of underplaying the role of the Islamic world in the context of terrorism.

Genderism Versus Culturalism

The study showcased a unique angle of the impact of gender-based versus culture-based aggression, raising questions about how we must approach these complex phenomena and what we can do to mitigate these prominent forms of discrimination. While the relationship between gender, culture, and bias, including racism, has been discussed at some length in the literature, there needs to be more examinations of where the dynamics of power change and what prompts such changes (Ali, 2020; Berger & Miller, 2021; Page et al., 2022; Young et al., 2020). Cultural differences can sprout biases at all levels, including cognitive, physical, psychological, social, and political (Lucy & Bamman, 2021; White et al., 2021; Young et al., 2020).

This study's results indicate that gender failed to protect a person from negative perceptions and passive persecutions generated by his Islamic background. Even more interesting was the contrast presented by his peers of Asian background who were protected by their maleness. Does this mean that some marginalized races are more prone to persecution? This question needs severe examination to untangle, in some measure, the Gordian knot of discrimination. The intersectionality framework asserts that these experiences cannot be reduced to one form of oppression, racism, or sexism, but it is a unique form of oppression that is multifaceted. For example, women of color do not experience one form of oppression but experience oppression at the intersection of race and gender (Pittman, 2010).

Modeling Instructional Reforms

Based on the discussions above, a significant outcome of the results of this study relates to the desperate and immediate need for modeling instructional and institutional reforms with the intent to train stakeholders about EDI awareness, as well as update the curriculum to be more effective vehicles for change in the context of handling bias and prejudice. In close collusion with this is the need to use a judicious fusion of technology and pedagogy to model such instructional reforms and generate a hefty push towards greater institutional culpability towards positive outcomes in this context. Taking a cue from the suggestion made by participants

towards curricular and instructional reform by inserting some activities that can teach students about cultural competency, it may be helpful to consider the insertion of video games and simulations, as well as collaborative activities, to foster cultural competency across courses, even if the subject matter of set courses are not directly related to multiculturalism. There is evidence in the literature indicating the dynamic and long-term effects on affective cognitions and diversity awareness of learners when using video games, multiple realities, artificial intelligence-generated learning schemas, and simulations (Kohli et al., 2021; Pallavicini & Pepe, 2020; Porayska-Pomsta & Rajendran, 2019; Zayeni et al., 2020). Institutions and faculty should look for innovative ways to reformat curriculum and instruction to help deal with the elements of CCCE.

Addressing/Mitigating Racial Microaggressions

Racial microaggressions are pervasive and undermine efforts toward EDI. Higher education must address the lack of awareness of the various racial microaggressions. Identifying the policies and programs that successfully support faculty of color is important. All stakeholders at the university level must be required to increase awareness of racial microaggressions and how they are manifested in daily interactions. Students, faculty, and staff must have mechanisms and systems to report these experiences.

Addressing racial microaggressions can help mitigate them since both perpetrators and victims will be able to see the institution acknowledge and focus on this type of oppression. Given that the classroom environment can be oppressive for faculty of color, particularly women faculty of color, these issues must be acknowledged and addressed. Women of color require protection as these interactions in this challenging classroom environment potentially impact their success and well-being as faculty. Higher education institutions must reflect on their goals for EDI and how these are measured in terms of the racial climate inside and outside the classroom.

Limitations and Conclusion

While this study generated some stellar details regarding the experience of the phenomenon by the target participants, it was limited in scope in the context of using a wider variety of cultural parameters. Nevertheless, the results indicate that the contrasting cultural classroom environments have a detrimental effect on faculty morale and motivation, which could

severely negatively impact the teaching and learning environments to which students are exposed. Thus, the study opens venues for future research by investigating faculty from diverse cultural and global backgrounds. Additionally, and to do justice to the full spectrum of the contrasting cultural classroom environment paradigm, it will be essential to examine the experiences of White faculty members teaching in a predominantly nonwhite environment. This examination will provide clarity and insights into the juxtaposition of cultural palettes and their impacts on the teaching and learning experiences of faculty, students, and administrators.

Additionally, the study provides scope for future instructional and curriculum redesign research to foster greater awareness of diversity issues. Finally, research to find mitigation solutions for marginalized issues within contrasting cultural classrooms can create teaching and learning environments of positivity, harmonize student-faculty relationships and contribute to societal well-being. This study was a small step in this direction.

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