

Ellen M. Broido
Kirsten R. Brown
Katherine N. Stygles
JE Ryan H. Bronkema

Responding to Gendered Dynamics: Experiences of Women Working Over 25 Years at One University

In this feminist, constructivist case study we explored how 28 classified, administrative, and faculty women's experiences working at one university for 25–40 years have changed. Participants ranged from 45- to 70-years-old at the time of their interview, with more than half older than 60, and 84% identified as White. Women with extended history of service to a single institution provide a unique lens for examining institutional change and gendered structures as they have, in their longevity, thrived or survived. In this article we explore a subset of the findings focused on how women recognize gendered dynamics within the university, and how women respond to inequitable dynamics. Women's descriptions of the climate include experiences of modern and benevolent forms of sexism in this institution; however, few participants identified these behaviors as sexist. We extend current understandings by documenting modern sexism in higher education and identifying patterns of description and denial of sexism, as well as adaptation and resistance to gendered dynamics. We demonstrate that climate cannot be measured solely by reports of sexual harassment, and explain why sexism is likely to be underreported.

Keywords: higher education, women, sexism, modern sexism, climate, resistance, qualitative

Over the last 40 years, the passage of Title IX, the marked expansion of middle and upper-class women in the paid workforce, and greater control over fertility have dramatically shifted women's experiences in the United States. Significant changes have taken place in the context of higher education, including women surpassing men's enrollment at

Ellen M. Broido is an Associate Professor of Higher Education and Student Affairs at Bowling Green State University; ebroido@bgsu.edu. Kirsten R. Brown is Undergraduate Program Coordinator for the International Studies Major at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. Katherine N. Stygles is a doctoral student at Bowling Green State University. Ryan H. Bronkema is an Assistant Professor of Counselor Education and College Student Affairs at the University of West Georgia.

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bachelors, masters, and doctoral levels, and women's proportion of faculty roles more than doubling between 1969 and 2009 (Snyder & Dillow, 2012), although these gains vary by institutional type, discipline, and position in the institution (Allan, 2011). In the larger study from which this article is drawn we explore how women's experiences working at one university have changed over this timeframe. Classified, administrative, and faculty women with extended history of service to a single university provide a unique lens for examining institutional change and gendered structures. In the study as a whole we explore patterns of continuity and change in women's career development and responsibilities, opportunities for advancement, ability to negotiate work and family responsibilities, and experiences with sexism. In this article we examine a subset of the findings focused on how women challenge, negotiate, or work within this gendered organization, and how women respond to inequitable dynamics. Understanding how women at all levels perceive and react to the institution's gendered climate is critical to understanding their ability to survive and thrive in higher education.

Theoretical Framework

Three theoretical frameworks inform this study: Acker's (1990, 2006) theory of gendered organizations, theories of contemporary sexism (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995; Swim & Cohen, 1997), and gender schema theory (e.g., Bem, 1981; Valian, 1998 & 2005). These theories address gender inequalities, negative views about women and the manifestation of those views, and the lower status of women in organizations.

Gendered Organizations

Acker (1990) noted that "the gender segregation of work . . . is partly created through organizational practices" (p. 140), and argued that organizations assume that the ideal worker, theoretically a gender-neutral concept, has characteristics that are more often found in men than in women, in particular, a spouse who has responsibility for managing a household and raising children. Additionally, in gendered organizations "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (p. 146).

Acker (1990) identified five ways gender inequalities manifest in organizations. First, hierarchical structures routinely favor men. Second, "Organizational processes construct symbols and images that support gender differences in organizations—the masterful business leader, the

difficult female boss” (Wonser, n.d., p. 20). Third, the ways in which people interact produces dominant and submissive constructions of gender roles, resulting in gendered images of women as providers of “emotional support” (Acker, 1990, p. 147) and men as having the capacity to make decisions. Fourth, these patterns of interaction and the resulting gendered images influence how people construct gender identity, including their decisions about suitable types of employment, and the proper language and attire accordant with their gender. Fifth, organizational logic (e.g., “work rules, labor contracts, and other documents”) reveals inherent gendered dynamics (Wonser, n.d., p. 20). Acker’s (2006) later writing on the intersection of gender, class, and race in organizations highlighted the inadequacy of considering any single aspect of social identity in isolation from other aspects of a person’s identity. Specifically, she noted that the intersection of these identities played an important role in how people experience inequality regimes. The “ideal worker” was now defined as “a White man who is totally dedicated to the work and who has no responsibilities for children or family demands other than earning a living” (Acker, 2006, p. 448). Additionally, Acker called attention to tendencies to devalue the work done by clerical and secretarial women, particularly in the formal job descriptions that define the compensation level of those jobs, and the conflation of the positions of those doing highly complex work with those doing simpler work. Men’s jobs, by contrast, were much more narrowly and explicitly defined, allowing for greater compensation for those performing more complex work.

Contemporary Sexism

We utilized a second body of theories, those of contemporary sexism, as an additional theoretical framework for the study. Sexism is commonly understood to be

a system of advantages that serves to privilege men, subordinate women, denigrate women-identified values and practices, enforce male dominance and control, and reinforce forms of masculinity that are dehumanizing and damaging to men. Sexism functions through individual beliefs and practices, institutions, images, and ideas, and is enforced by economic structures, violence, and homophobia. (Botkin, Jones, & Kachwaha, 2007, p. 174)

Over the last 20 years greater attention has been given to contemporary manifestations of sexism, variously characterized as benevolent, rather than hostile (Glick & Fiske, 1996); modern, versus traditional (Swim, et al., 1995); and overt, covert, and subtle (Swim & Cohen, 1997).

Glick and Fiske (1996) defined

benevolent sexism as a set of interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles but that are subjectively positive in feeling tone (for the perceiver) and also tend to elicit behaviors typically categorized as prosocial (e.g., helping) or intimacy seeking (e.g., self-disclosure). (p. 491)

Benevolent sexism is problematic because “its underpinnings lie in traditional stereotyping and masculine dominance (e.g., the man as the provider and woman as his dependent), and its consequences are often damaging. Benevolent sexism is not necessarily experienced as benevolent by the recipient” (Glick & Fiske, 1996, pp. 491–492). Benevolent sexism is harmful because it helps to maintain gender inequality, limits the roles available to women and men, and justifies “conforming to a patriarchal status quo” (Glick & Fisk, 2001, p. 109).

Modern sexism describes the shift away from overt expressions of sexism resulting from the holder’s negative views about women. Swim and Cohen (1997) noted that women and men exhibiting modern sexism do not believe themselves to be sexist because “they do not perceive that certain beliefs or behaviors are indicative of prejudice” (p. 105), and believe “gender segregation is a function of ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ processes” (p. 106).

Gender Schemas

Another framework for understanding gender differences and roles is gender schemas. Gender schemas are cognitive structures that inform a person’s perceptions of gender, and typically socialize people into dichotomous gender roles. Valian (2005) argued that women’s lower status in academic contexts can be explained by gender schemas that are enacted in seemingly minor thought processes and actions that overvalue men and undervalue women. These tiny disparities “accumulate over time to provide men with more advantages than women” (Valian, 2005, p. 198). Valian’s argument aligns with the modern sexism theorists in that “it is intended to explain what goes wrong in environments where nothing seems to be wrong, where people genuinely and sincerely espouse egalitarian beliefs and are well-intentioned, where few men or women overtly harass women” (Valian, 2005, p. 199). According to Valian, evaluating and labeling the differences between men and women differently is sexist, and is the core problem in these otherwise egalitarian environments.

Related Literature

The early 1970s saw large legal advances for women working in higher education (Adair, 2002). Despite these legal gains, campus climates present challenges for women as students, faculty, and staff. Vaccaro (2010) noted women continue to experience sexual objectification, second-class citizenship, assumptions of inferiority, assumptions of traditional gender roles, sexist and degrading language, denial of their experiences of sexism, men denying their behavior is sexist, and environmental microaggressions, that “communicate to women that they are inferior or less deserving” (para. 5).

Women remain clustered in particular segments of the higher education work force. For example, women faculty are overrepresented in non-tenure track positions and the humanities and social sciences and underrepresented in STEM or business fields (Touchton, Musil, & Campbell, 2008). Clustering extends to classified staff, with women holding roughly 87% of clerical/secretarial jobs but only 7% of skilled trades positions (Johnsrud & Inoshita, 2002, p. 509). Within each category, women are paid less than men (Johnsrud & Inoshita, 2002). Although “women have made gains both in terms of absolute numbers of women and women of color serving in administrative positions and in terms of percentage of the total positions held” (Twombly & Rosser, 2002, p. 461), they remain underrepresented at senior administrative levels (Touchton, et al., 2008).

In light of the gender inequity described above, the remainder of this literature review explores women’s recognition of and response to sexism. Women are not always in agreement on what is or could be considered sexist behavior (Kilianski & Rudman, 1998). Frye (1998/1983) used the analogy of a birdcage to explain why identifying sexism is difficult and why it should be viewed as a social system of oppression. Like the wires of a birdcage, when one examines the individual manifestations of sexism too closely, only single actions directly in front of the viewer are visible. Therefore, it is possible to believe mistakenly that one can navigate around the sexist action. However, by stepping back and observing the larger, complex scheme, “a network of forces and barriers which are systematically related and which conspire to the immobilization, reduction, and molding of women” becomes evident (p. 148). Women, as well as men, often mistakenly look at sexist dynamics one at a time, and do not recognize the constraints of an interlocking system of oppression (Botkin, et al., 2007).

It also is difficult for people to connect their individual experience to their membership in social groups. Social psychology literature con-

firms that people tend to avoid ascribing negative outcomes to group-based discrimination. "Evidence suggests that unless people are told explicitly that discrimination is causal, they attribute their negative outcomes to their personal qualities or abilities" (Kappen & Branscombe, 2001, p. 295), in part because "acknowledging that negative outcomes are caused by group membership may be more emotionally costly than attributing those outcomes to personal causes" (p. 297). Even when people recognize that discrimination occurs directed at groups they are part of, they tend to deny that they personally have experienced discrimination (including when, in experimentally controlled conditions, they have). This dynamic "has been labeled the personal/group discrimination discrepancy" (Taylor, Wright, & Ruggiero, 1991, p. 847).

These personal/group discrimination discrepancy dynamics are evident in the realm of sexism as well. Women are unlikely to identify their personal experiences as sexist, even as they acknowledge that women as a whole experience sexism. Kitzinger and Thomas (1995) found that women might not identify an event as sexual harassment, one form of sexism, as a way to avoid identifying themselves as victims. Furthermore, the overwhelming prevalence of sexual harassment has normalized it to the point that women identify these interactions as ordinary, and thus, not as harassment (Kitzinger & Thomas, 1995). The extent to which discrimination is overt matters as well. According to Barreto and Ellemers (2005), women were more likely than men to identify sexism when it was blatant, but less likely when it was covert.

Women respond to expressions of sexism in many ways, from endorsing those beliefs, to not recognizing them, to choosing not to confront them, to challenging them. Louis and Taylor (1999) noted "victims of discrimination are remarkably passive in the face of inequality . . . [and typically] they engage in individual responses to group-based discrimination" (p. 19). In experimental situations, exposure to blatant sexism often elicited a "fight" instinct in women while covert sexism rarely elicited a behavioral response (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). Kilianski and Rudman (1998) found that women accepted or responded positively to benevolent sexism while simultaneously openly rejecting hostile sexism.

Swim and Hyers (1999) posited that women might not openly confront sexism for fear of being identified as a feminist, retaliation, being perceived as impolite or aggressive, and being perceived as less feminine. Women also identified social pressure to not respond. However, women committed to challenging sexism actively confronted it more than those less committed. Women who chose to confront sexism preferred the least risky approach (nonresponse), and a "polite" response

was the next most preferred choice (Swim & Hyers, 1999). They were less likely to confront sexist behavior in the presence of other women than when alone (Swim & Hyers, 1999). These findings highlight the struggle between a woman's desire to challenge sexism and the social pressures not to respond. While this earlier research is sound, there is minimal modern literature on this topic or how people address sexism in higher education.

Methodology and Methods

We conducted this study from a constructivist, liberal, equity feminist epistemological framework, employing a case study approach. Proponents of equity feminism assert that women and men should have full equality and that traditionally gender-linked roles should be valued comparably if they make comparable contributions (Almeder, 2003). Nicholson and Pasque (2011) indicated that this approach, grounded in social justice, fits well in higher education contexts.

As researchers we hold ontologies and epistemologies that parallel the assumptions of social constructivism. We share the assumption that meanings of experiences are contingent on context and time, and arise from the interactions between people (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). Our study was constructivist in that the findings were jointly co-constructed with participants and addressed the role of historical and cultural norms.

We hold a social constructivist ontology, believing, like Guba and Lincoln (1994), that "realities" are comprised of contextually specific perceptual structures unique to the people and groups who possess these realities. Furthermore, realities are fluid and malleable, and one is "not more or less 'true,' in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated" (p. 111). Similarly, we hold a constructivist epistemology, asserting that findings are co-constructed between the researchers and participants throughout the research process. While many case studies are conducted from a post-positivist perspective, case studies can be congruent with social constructivist worldviews (Jones, et al., 2014). Furthermore, constructivist case studies are not uncommon in higher education research (e.g., Jones, Rowan-Kenyon, Ireland, & Niehaus, 2012).

Feminist research has a long history of case study approaches (Reinharz, 1992). Jones, et al. (2014) defined case study as having an "intensive focus on a *bounded* system" (p. 93, italics in original) while not having a particular philosophical grounding, allowing it to be used with multiple theoretical perspectives. Creswell (2007) added that the goal

of a case study is to “understand an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration” (p. 73). This was a collective/embedded case study as we wished “to show different perspectives on the issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 74) from the standpoint of classified, administrative, and faculty women, although in this article we treat the data holistically. It was instrumental in that we focused on the particular issue of gender in the experiences of women’s work lives; we used a particular context to illustrate larger points about the effect of organizational structures on women.

Eight researchers were involved in various phases of the study; the pilot study included two faculty and two undergraduate students and the full study has involved one of the original two faculty and four doctoral students. All researchers identify as White; two identify as men and the others as women. Other than the lead researcher, who has worked for the university for 14 years, all members of the research team had been affiliated with the university for less than four years. Additionally, most participants were substantially older than the researchers; interviews were conducted by researchers ranging in age from 22–47; the participants ranged in age from 45–75.

Before beginning involvement, all researchers reflected on their gendered experiences in higher education. Following Macbeth’s (2001) conception of positional reflexivity, we sought to identify personal interests and attachments relevant to our positionality “within landscapes of power, knowledge, and difference” (p. 40). During the interviewing and data analysis processes we kept a combined research journal and wrote numerous memos, highlighting questions and observations during the interviews, tracking the evolution of our thinking, refining our definitions, and exploring the implications of newly discovered literature for interpreting our findings.

Participants were recruited from Bowling Green State University, a midsized Midwestern public doctorate-granting research-intensive university enrolling about 18,000 students and employing approximately 900 full-time faculty (46% women), 600 administrators (53% women), and 650 classified staff (73% women) (Office of Institutional Research, Bowling Green State University, 2011b; 2011d; & 2011f). The campus setting is rural, but is within commuting distance of a large city. A former normal institution, this university has extensive bachelors and masters degree programs, and a limited number of doctoral programs. Disciplinary strengths lie in education, social and physical sciences, and interdisciplinary humanities programs. The institution does not have programs in engineering, law, or medicine. Historically, campus culture

has been highly collegial and the campus was often described as being like a family; budget-cuts, increased workloads, and tensions between senior administrators and faculty have diminished this camaraderie in recent years.

In the last five years, significant budget cuts and retirement incentives reduced the size of administrative and classified staff by about 25% although there have been limited cuts to the size of the faculty. While the faculty formed a union over the course of data collection for this study, the police force is the only other unionized unit.

Only a very small fraction of participants identified themselves as feminists or utilized standard feminist frames to explain their experiences. Bowling Green State University has never had a women’s commission, gender commission, or other campus-wide group reporting to a senior administrator that focused on gender issues on campus. A Women’s Studies program (now called Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies) offering a minor and a graduate certificate began in 1980, and a Women’s Center (reporting to the provost) was founded in 2000. Various student organizations for women have existed over time. The only university-wide committee specifically addressing women’s concerns was the Coalition against Sexual Assault, recently combined into a broader Drug, Alcohol, and Sexual Offenses Coalition. No faculty or staff women’s group exists, although there is a small community of women and men interested in gender issues that regularly attends events hosted by the Women’s Center and the Women’s Studies program. Further demographic information about the setting is found in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Context of the Study: Bowling Green State University Demographics in 2011

Characteristics	Full-Time Faculty ^a	Administrative Staff	Classified Staff
Women	46.3%	56.8%	73.9%
White	83.4%	88.1%	90.0%
African American	3.8%	6.5%	1.8%
Asian American	8.8%	1.2%	0.8%
Hispanic American	3.3%	2.0%	6.9%
Native American	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%

Note. Adapted from Office of Institutional Research, Bowling Green State University (2011 a-f).
^a PT faculty have same gender balance but 96.6% are White.

Sampling focused on obtaining maximum variation by employment category (classified, administrative, or faculty) and functional area. We conducted individual semistructured, face-to-face interviews lasting 30–180 minutes. Interview questions focused on work history; gender-related changes in institutional policies, culture, or climate over time; experiences of sexism or sexual harassment; and the relationship between work and family life.

We have analyzed transcripts from the interviews of 28 participants. Eleven participants were classified staff, nine were administrative staff, and eight were faculty. Fourteen (including all faculty) worked in academic affairs, five worked in student affairs, and nine worked in finance or operations. In some cases, classified staff moved between areas and we grouped them in the area in which they worked longest. While all faculty participants had held administrative roles, we classified them based on their primary identification as faculty. Participants worked for the institution an average of 30.6 years and 55.6% raised children (biological and adopted) over their time of employment. Further information about participant characteristics is presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and then returned to participants for verification and approval. Once edited, data were coded using NVivo to label and compare codes and explore emerging themes. Following the guidelines of Creswell (2007), we analyzed data by reading the transcripts as a whole, coding individual transcripts, clustering individual codes into a hierarchical system of seven categories, exploring patterns by classification status and work location, and making naturalistic generalizations from the data. The initial inductive analysis led us to create the model presented in Figure 1, by comparing the categories of *recognition of gendered dynamics* and *response to gendered dynamics*, a case study data analysis strategy advocated by Stake (1995). We tested this model through a deductive process of placing all relevant data into the model, and examining gaps and missing cells. Negative cases were examined to understand their position outside the model and to understand cells without data; we concluded that negative cases either reflected different understandings gained retrospectively, or reflected inadequate follow-up at the time of the interview to determine ways in which the participant responded. Empty cells are logical consequences of how the model is organized, as explained in the findings section of this article.

Document Analysis

As a supplement to interviews, we reviewed the content of multiple documents that spoke to aspects of participants' gendered experiences

TABLE 2
Participant Biographical and Social Context

Pseudonym	Years at Institution	Race	Education	Children	Classification
Amy	29.9	White	Doctorate	No	Faculty
Anna	32.9	White	Doctorate	No	Faculty
Betty	32.0	White	Masters	Yes	Admin
Cookie	34.9	White	Masters	Yes	Admin
Donna ^a	28 ^b	—	Bachelors	—	Admin
Emily	25.6	White	Masters	Yes	Admin
Faith	34.9	White	Masters	No	Faculty
Gabrielle	25.9	White	Doctorate	Yes	Faculty
Gail ^a	28 ^b	White	Doctorate	No	Faculty
Grace	28.0	POC	Doctorate	No	Admin
Helen	35.0	POC	Bachelors	No	Admin
Jo	35.0	White	High School	Yes	Class
Joy	31.0	White	Bachelors	Yes	Class
Karen	26.0	White	Doctorate	Yes	Admin
Kay	32.9	White	High School	Yes	Class
Khiva	26.0	White	Masters	No	Admin
Lisa	30.0	White	High School	Yes	Class
Marie	29.0	White	Bachelors	Yes	Class
Nancy	32.8	White	Masters	Yes	Class
Penny	25.0	White	Bachelors	No	Admin
Quincy	30.8	White	Doctorate	Yes	Faculty
Rebecca	26.9	White	Associates	Yes	Class
Sara ^a	39 ^b	—	Doctorate	No	Faculty
Susan	35.2	POC	Associates	No	Class
SusieQ	29.2	White	High School	Yes	Class
Tammy ^a	35 ^b	—	Bachelors	No	Class
Teresa	30.0	POC	High School	Yes	Class
Tina	29.0	White	Doctorate	No	Faculty

Note. POC = Person of Color. Class = classified staff member. Data not obtained at the time of pilot study indicated by a dash. *n* = 28.

^aPilot study participant. ^bExact years at institution not collected at the time of pilot study.

TABLE 3
Participant Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	<i>n</i> (%)
Classification	
Faculty	8 (28.6 %)
Administrator	9 (32.1 %)
Classified	11 (39.3 %)
Race ^a	
White	21 (84.0%)
People of color	4 (16.0%)
Children ^b	
Yes	15 (55.6%)
No	12 (44.4%)
Reporting Structure Location	
Student affairs	5 (18.0%)
Academic affairs	14 (50.0%)
Finance/Admin/Operations	9 (32.0%)
Education (Highest Degree)	
High school	5 (17.9%)
Associates	2 (7.1%)
Bachelors	6 (21.4%)
Masters/Specialist	6 (21.4%)
Doctorate	9 (32.1%)
Age at Interview ^c	
45–49	2 (8.3%)
50–54	5 (20.8%)
55–59	4 (16.7%)
60–64	10 (41.7%)
65–70	3 (12.5%)
Years Worked at Institution	
25–29	13 (46.4%)
30–34	10 (35.7%)
35–40	5 (17.9%)

Note. *n* = 28.

^a*n* = 25. ^b*n* = 27. ^c*n* = 24, missing data (not collected from one or more participants at the time of pilot study).

at the university. In particular, we examined faculty, administrative, and classified employee handbooks; parts of the state's Civil Service Code that address how retention points and seniority are calculated for classified staff (classified staff are the only university employees covered by the code); a report on utilization of the break-in-service policy; and curricula from recently initiated campus-based "institutes" designed to promote the advancement and retention of classified and administrative employees. The contents of these materials were reviewed to understand the current policy context of the university, distinctions between formal university policy and enacted procedures, and formal structures for professional development.

Trustworthiness

We utilized multiple strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of our findings. Following Creswell's (2013) guidelines, all transcripts were coded by at least two, and often three, researchers, and we discussed our coding and categorization until we reached consensus. We used extensive peer debriefing, reflexive discussions, and journaling; kept an audit log; and conducted both inductive and deductive analysis to confirm the findings are indeed grounded in the data. We presented preliminary findings to several audiences of university women and refined the findings presented here in light of the feedback from those groups. Additionally, many of our participants mentioned gaining insight into their own and others' experiences by participating in the study interviews, reviewing their transcripts, and seeing summaries of the findings. These insights reflect the ontological and educative authenticity of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical conflicts are common in qualitative research (Magolda & Weems, 2002). We attempted to balance participants' needs for and our promises of confidentiality with ethical obligations to address incidents of sexual harassment and inequitable policies. In cases where we could identify perpetrators of sexual harassment, the alleged perpetrators had retired from or left the university. In all cases, we felt there was no ongoing harm to current students or employees. In cases where identities were not shared with us, we reminded participants of reporting options. We identified one state-level policy with clear disparate impact on women and are in the process of reporting that to state human rights agencies.

Findings

In this article we report a subset of the findings, focusing on how gender manifests in the institution and how the participants responded to gendered dynamics. Having worked at the institution for over 25 years, participants in this study either enjoyed the institution and thrived or were unable to leave the region and therefore found a way to survive. As part of a larger sociohistorical collective they share generational experiences including the advent of personal computers, the passage and enforcement of Title IX, and the rise of third-wave feminism.

Data indicate the educational institution is a gendered organization and participants described situations we interpreted as contemporary sexism. In this portion of the article we discuss and substantiate elements of a model addressing women's responses to gendered aspects of the organizational environment.

Gendered Organization

Our findings reflected several of the processes by which organizations are "gendered" (Acker, 1990). First, numerous institutional policies that on their face appear to be gender neutral are in practice gendered. For example, many classified staff spoke of the university's policy regarding a "break-in-service," a resignation from and later return to university employment. Classified staff who resign their positions and later return lose all seniority, and thus are more likely to be laid off when personnel cuts occur. This policy has gendered consequences; university records indicate that over 90% of individuals with a break-in-service in the last 25 years are women. Additionally, the institution's policies regarding part-time hiring practices are gendered; over 80% of part-time employees are women. Multiple participants were hired as part-time employees, working 35 hours a week without benefits. This significant gender gap in part-time labor practices reflects an institutional choice to label specific types of work as less valuable and to hire women disproportionately into those roles.

Acker (1990) noted that a second process by which organizations are gendered is through "interactions . . . that enact dominance and submission" (p. 147). Specifically, participants reported themes of exclusion from networking opportunities and the existence of a "good old boys" club, unwanted physical contact, and expectations to fulfill traditional gender roles and perform lower status work. Cookie described a situation where exclusion from networking opportunities was considered normal.

There used to be a group of men and I was pretty good friends with most of them who played golf in the summer time every Friday afternoon and there was always a whole lot of work that came out of those golf games, but women weren't [included]—not even me . . . I think about some other women who might have enjoyed being a part of that never would have been able to break into that social group.

Grace described the “good old boys” club as creating “an exclusive, male-dominated environment; . . . a culture that sometimes is hard to be received into as a female.” These interactions limited women’s access to social networks and reinforced their second-class status.

Further illustrating the gendered interactions reflecting dominance within the organization, Helen noted the invasion of personal space:

There were some [upper level administrators who] always wanted to get right up beside you, like their arm touching your arm, just to say “hi.” It’s like they put their arm around you to talk to you. It wasn’t like we were socializing; we were talking business. So . . . you would see them coming and you would start trying to get a chair or something between you and them so they couldn’t get that close to you. So that I didn’t have to say, “Don’t touch me.” I didn’t really want to hurt anyone’s feelings or create a scene. This was someone that I had to work with all the time so I just tried to do other evasive actions.

In addition, many participants pointed out gendered expectations about who would do the relational work of the office. Anna, a faculty member, said, “sometimes the expectation is that you will do certain things because you are the woman—socialization and social parties, and social gatherings, and gifts for the secretary. I think because you are a woman the expectation is that you know how to do these things.” The assumption that women would coordinate parties and gifts, and take on other stereotypical prosocial roles came up in numerous interviews. Penny shared a related example of how as a woman she was expected to be nurturing, saying,

You never realize that your job is not just to manage but you are also . . . the shoulder to cry on. I didn’t realize that I needed a degree in counseling . . . but I think part of that was they wouldn’t do that to male managers.

Note that the dynamics of this second process also illustrate contemporary forms of sexism. Valuing women for their performance of caretaking roles, such as providing parties and emotional support, are prototyp-

ical examples of benevolent sexism. Modern sexism's assumption that gender segregation is normal, rather than indicative of sexist practices, is evident in our participants' exclusion from networking opportunities.

Third, organizations are gendered through "practical work activities and organizational logic" (Acker, 1990, p. 147). Expressed in the material forms of organizational logic such as job responsibilities, participants, regardless of classification or status, consistently described how expectations for their daily work activities surpassed men's. For instance, Cookie made multiple references to women being held to higher standards than were men, stating

Over the years I look at some of the men who stayed here for a long time and I wonder how the hell they've ever held onto their jobs because if I had behaved in some similar fashions I would conjecture that I probably would have been fired or never would have advanced in the organization.

Additionally, participants noted they were not compensated or recognized for the additional work. For example, Marie stated "Officially I am hired in as a Clerical Specialist which I mean is like typing and filing. Well, I don't do that. That is what I get paid at . . . what I actually do is a [different, more senior job title]." This phenomenon was also present with women administrators and faculty members. Gabrielle, a faculty member, said, "We're [the women] like the little drones, the little worker bees out there; [then] you had the king [male] bees . . . that was hard." Gabrielle found it difficult to avoid frustration and disengagement because women were not promoted when making significant administrative contributions while men who did less work were promoted. When examining the organizational logic of the institution, we saw a pattern of women's work responsibilities exceeding their formal job descriptions.

Finally, Acker's (2006) later work outlined the intersection of various social identities as important for understanding how people experience inequality. Several of our participants described difficulty identifying the root or substantive reason for their negative experience; they were not always clear if the cause of their negative treatment was their gender, or their race, religion, sexual orientation, academic discipline, age, parental status, or nationality. For example, Penny noted,

I think within my department I missed a few opportunities for promotion because and I don't know whether it was so much my age or that I was a woman. But people got the promotions before me, even though they washed out [left the organization after doing poorly in their new jobs].

In addition, Tina described her interwoven identities and how she adapted through persistence and hard work.

As you can probably tell, I have a double whammy. I'm woman and I'm foreign born, so as I said, I have struggled with that because there was a lot of discrimination at the beginning. It is easier now because I can tolerate it. I'm more mature . . . I'm stronger than they thought.

Our data reflected the complexity women experience when trying to understand the causes of their ill-treatment.

As these examples show, our participants experienced the university as enacting multiple aspects of gendered organizations. These included ostensibly gender-neutral policies having negative impacts on women; multiple practices that reflect power differentials between women and men, including unwanted physical contact from men, expectations women would perform unvalued social roles, and exclusion from opportunities to form professional networks; higher standards for women's work; and lack of clarity about the causes of their treatment. Together, these practices make clear this university meets Acker's (1990) criteria for gendered organizations.

Gendered Dynamics

In describing the findings we struggled to balance our feminist commitment to honoring the words and sentiments of our participants with our interpretations, which in some situations differed significantly from those of our participants. In particular, our participants overwhelmingly did not define their stories as experiences of sexism; at the same time, when these stories are placed alongside the definitions outlined earlier in this article, in the researchers' eyes they matched. Several feminist researchers (e.g., Caven, 2006; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997) have written about similar struggles, honoring the feminist ideal of respecting and validating participants, but not wanting to affirm understandings that reinforce the oppression of women. Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997) wrote that "part of being a feminist means not validating, but directly *challenging* women's taken-for-granted experience" (p. 572, italics in original), although they note the importance of doing so respectfully, and in particular, to avoid characterizing their participants as having false consciousness or "interpreting" all women's comments as having a hidden feminist consciousness. To honor the perspectives of the women in this study, we use the term *gendered dynamic* to describe all the ways women expressed stories in which they were treated poorly, inequitably, or differently because of their gender.

Participants' Response to Gendered Dynamics. The overwhelming sentiment expressed by participants was that they had very positive experiences as women, and that they had not experienced harassment or discrimination. In addition, however, they described anomalous situations in which they felt uncomfortable, singled out, or ill-treated because of their gender. In this portion of the article we explore these admittedly rare events to further understand how women frame them, and what action they took.

The model of Women's Responses to Gendered Dynamics (see Figure 1) provides a method of conceptualizing participants' responses to gendered dynamics. Women's responses to gendered environments can be described along two continua: recognition and action. *Recognition* describes the extent of participants' articulation of gendered dynamics as sexist or discriminatory, and ranged from *No Awareness* through *Uncertainty* to *Clear Recognition*. It is important to note that as our participants are describing stories that occurred in the past, participants may have retrospectively recognized the role of gender in events that they did not attribute to gender when the event occurred. For instance, Donna reflected, "This is really interesting because at the time I didn't realize its impact nor did I realize that I had turned into a radical feminist." We addressed the retrospective component by coding based on the participant's recognition at the time the event occurred.

Action, the second axis of the model, describes a continuum from *No Action*, to *Adaptation*, to *Resistance*. We defined No Action as a situation in which an action was possible; however, the participant accepted, acquiesced, endorsed, or ignored the situation. We defined Adaptation to mean changing oneself to cope with, or be successful within, a gendered organization, but not challenging the gendered nature of the system. Examples of Adaptation include working harder than men, taking "evasive action," being strong, learning to function within the system by "always doing your homework," and "proving your value." We defined Resistance as challenging an individual, changing the system, and protecting others; while sometimes this involved changing oneself, it was for the larger purpose of challenging gendered dynamics. Stories that were coded as Resistance included speaking up, confronting individuals, reporting sexism, researching issues and reporting findings, or helping others to report and challenge inequitable situations.

The resulting model of Women's Responses to Gendered Dynamics has nine cells; dotted lines signify permeable boundaries between the cells indicating the continuous nature of the categories. Bulleted items within cells are representative rather than exhaustive findings. We heard participant stories that fall on the dotted line border of several cells;

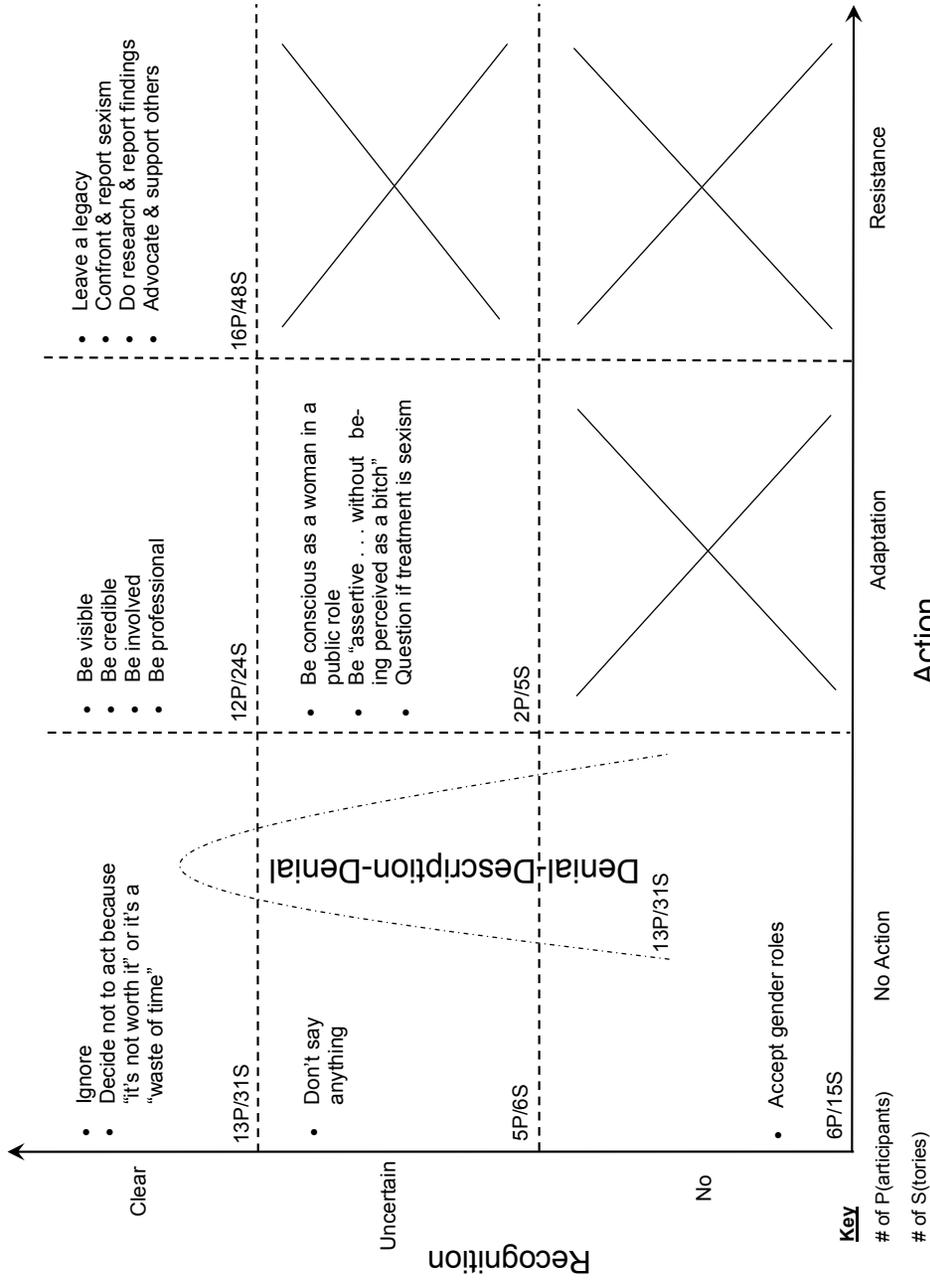


FIGURE 1. Model of Women's Responses to Gendered Dynamics

however we have not included them in this manuscript because of space issues and to provide theoretical clarity.

Three cells in the model conceptually must be empty: participants who did not recognize the existence of gendered dynamics would not adapt to or resist them and participants who questioned the existence of gendered dynamics may potentially adapt to them but would not resist them. We heard no responses belonging in these cells. Data from participants fell within all remaining cells. Embedded in the model is a parabola that represents a pattern of denial-description-denial. When listening to our participants, we repeatedly heard responses where women “sandwiched” stories that described hostile gender-related events between assertions that they never had negative gender-related experiences. This phenomenon is represented within the left column of the grid; participants took no action and had varying degrees of recognition.

No Recognition. Material in this bottom row reflects incidents in which participants did not recognize gendered dynamics (or at least did not articulate to us that they saw them that way). The lack of recognition could have occurred for a variety of reasons including that the dynamic was at the institutional or cultural level (not directed at a specific individual) or that the gendered dynamic was ignored, accepted, or endorsed.

In the bottom left cell of the grid we placed stories where the participants did not recognize the gendered dynamic and also did not act. Jo described Acceptance, saying

You know at the beginning, I would say you were definitely more a secretary. [The] person who did the coffee and the water, whatever. I don't want to say a gopher because I don't like that word but you know you definitely did more the woman things.

Jo gave no indication she saw this role as problematic, and identified serving beverages as “woman things.” Similarly, in response to the question, “has it ever been an advantage in your career to be a woman?” Anna demonstrated acceptance and endorsement.

Yeah, I think so. I think that sometimes because of the expectations, if they expect less of you, even though you feel like you have to do more to prove yourself. That sometimes it can be an advantage to be a woman, if you come up with ideas or plans that exceed the expectations.

The last two cells in the bottom row, Adaptation and Resistance, conceptually must be empty. If participants did not recognize the gendered

dynamic they could not adapt to or resist it. Data analysis confirmed this logic as we did not hear stories that fit in these cells.

Uncertain Recognition. Material in this middle row reflected incidents in which participants were uncertain if what they were experiencing was sexism, although they did label the dynamics as objectionable or unfair. Frequently, this uncertainty was a result of not knowing why they were being targeted, a dynamic described in the social psychology literature as *attributional ambiguity* (Major, 2007): was the cause of their ill-treatment their gender, their nationality, their position, their personality? Was it just the perpetrator having a bad day?

In the left portion of the grid we placed stories in which the participants were uncertain about the gendered dynamic and did not act. Jo discussed not knowing if her status as a classified staff member or as a woman resulted in the following dynamic:

The older you get, sometimes it bothers you. Sometimes you think, “Well, what do they think?” Well, I don’t know—I think as a woman they have always respected us—or respected me anyhow. I don’t think I have had any times when, a few faculty members can treat you a little rough and I think men faculty members can look at you and just you feel intimidated a little bit. They just have that tone, and it’s like you get so mad because you don’t want to say anything but you wish you did say something after they leave the office.

In addition, stories that follow the “sandwich” pattern of denial-description-denial frequently fell into this cell; they will be discussed in detail below.

In the next cell we placed stories where participants described uncertainty regarding whether the experience was related to gender, but still adapted their behavior. Often, their uncertainty was related to ways in which their gender was intertwined with other aspects of their identity or their role (Acker, 2006); many participants noted difficulty knowing why they were experiencing dissonance or discomfort. Despite this uncertainty, examples in this cell show they adapted their behavior to meet expectations. Cookie illustrated,

I don’t know if this is a part of my own personal choices or if it’s inherent in being a female in [an] administrative role where you’re pretty publicly viewed no matter what you’re doing. I have always had to be really conscious of where I am and what I’m doing.

Grace described how her uncertainty arose during a conflict with her supervisor over financial support for a professional development opportu-

nity, and her perseverance through, but not direct challenge to, his lack of support.

The president and the provost promptly wrote the [support] letter and they put money down, and then my boss was still hesitant. Was it because I was female? Was it because I was an African American female? African American, Christian female? I don't know what all of that was all about—but there was a stall.

Cookie and Grace's quotes reflected a theme common among many participants: uncertainty as to whether gender was the source of their poor treatment.

In other instances, participants adapted their behavior even when they were not certain what they experienced was sexism. For example, Karen noted, "I at least have always tried to figure out what the right balance is about how assertive to be in situations without being perceived as being a bitch." However, she continued by saying that "I don't know whether it is a gender thing or just the way [the male bastion on campus is]." Regardless of participants' uncertainty about whether what they were experiencing was about other aspects of their identity or whether it was sexism, some used a variety of adaptive strategies to find ways to be successful.

As one would expect, and like in the previous row, the cell of Uncertain Recognition/Resistance contained no data. If one were not sure sexism was present, one would not resist.

Clear Recognition. Material in this row reflected incidents in which participants clearly saw the gendered dynamic and labeled the events as objectionable or unfair. However, for a variety of reasons, awareness of a situation did not necessarily dictate challenging action.

On the far left side, we placed stories where participants clearly recognized the gendered dynamic but did not act; sometimes this was ignoring the situation and sometimes it was a conscious decision not to act. For example, participants did not report gendered dynamics because "it's not worth it" or it was a "waste of time." Betty stated,

I felt that there should be equity and that we should be out there fighting for it and I was on Administrative Staff Council and bringing these issues up and eventually I think, just because I got too busy to fight for it anymore, I kind of gave up, but I also think things improved.

In addition, stories about places that were "not female friendly" or descriptions of events that "happened to other women" frequently fell into

this category. Finally, stories where the participants described acquiescence or how the gendered dynamic benefited them (e.g., men carrying heavy boxes, not being expected to work on weekends as men were) were placed in this category.

The next cell contains stories where participants clearly recognized the gendered dynamics and described actions where they changed themselves to cope with, or be successful in, the gendered environment. Participants worked to be successful within the existing system by being visible, credible, and involved. For example, Cookie described,

[There was] a lot of either making a conscious decision to let comments or behaviors go, or a conscious decision to confront them and risk whatever the risk is, a relationship, some job related thing. Definitely feeling like to be credible I needed to work a lot harder than most men.

Similarly, Penny related a story where she

called for a repair on a piece of equipment and the man on the other end of the line said, "Well honey did you check to see if it was plugged in?" And then you just like have to pause and choose whether you are going to act professionally or not. And generally you go, "Yes, yes I did. Thank you. Would you like to try another?"

Regardless, for Penny, acting professionally meant ignoring the comment. This cell had an abundance of stories that described adaptive action, whether women altered their behavior to be successful within a gendered organization, avoiding challenging people directly and being sure their behavior was unimpeachable.

In the far right cell we placed stories where participants clearly recognized the gendered dynamics and described actions in which they challenged the specific individual or resisted the broader system. Some examples involved ways in which women changed themselves, but for the purpose of creating change, rather than adapting to a gendered system. Specifically, participants described desiring to "leave a legacy," being assertive, creating change, verbally challenging the gendered dynamic, and nonverbally challenging the gendered dynamic. Betty provided a story of resistance:

We had a dean in the [College Name] and he continues to do it. He comes up and hugs and kisses every woman who works in the college. It's just not appropriate. He's retired now, but he's back over there working again and he's, from what I hear, he's up to his same old . . . I confronted him about it. I said, "I would prefer that you not do that."

Helen also described an act of resistance: “I told my boss that ‘I feel that because I am the female in the group that everyone assumes that I should be the one taking the minutes; I want you to know that I probably going to push back on that.’”

Another administrator said,

I had one very bad experience that I took care of right away. I walked into a meeting in [name of building], I was probably about eight and a half months pregnant so I was very visibly pregnant and I can’t even, I knew who he was, but we weren’t friends. He walked up to me and put his hands on my stomach. And I had one of these folders in my hand and I picked it up and—cause I was a little bit late to the meeting so most people are at the table. I slammed it on the table which is just—that’s not [my] behavior normally—and I looked at him and I said, “If you ever touch me again, you and I will be sitting in a court room.” And there was dead silence in the room. It was just so—nobody knew what to do, but he had crossed the biggest line in the world.

Participants’ stories reflected identification of gendered dynamics, as well as the ability and willingness to challenge them. There were no clear patterns of resistance—women used both direct and indirect methods of challenge, and approaches that were targeted at individuals and, rarely, at more systemic targets. Strategies focused on individuals included directly confronting perpetrators, telling them to stop particular behaviors, refusing to comply with sexist requests, educating perpetrators about the consequences of their actions, and identifying behavior as unfair. Additionally, participants provided explicit support to other women experiencing sexual harassment or sexism more generally, persisted in the face of barriers, negotiated to raise their own inequitable salaries, asked hard questions, and took politically unpopular stances. Approaches that created systemic change included setting up informal support groups for women, researching and reporting university-wide salary inequities, advocating to people in authority for women’s salary equity, reporting sexual harassment to people in authority, and taking administrative positions with responsibility for equity issues.

The Denial-Description-Denial “Sandwich.” Embedded in the model is a parabola that represents a pattern of denial-description-denial. When listening to our participants, we repeatedly heard responses where women “sandwiched” stories that described hostile gender-related events between assertions that they never had negative gender-related experiences. As none of these stories reflected Adaptation or Resistance, we represented this dynamic with a parabola beginning in No Recognition/

No Action, moving into the Clear Recognition/No Action cell, and returning to the original cell. For example, one participant stated,

Well it's hard for me to say because I have not had any experiences that I can say are negative. I just was a woman working in a man's world. Obviously . . . Well men have to behave too but there is always the wanting to touch you on the arm, or wanting to be a little close to you, or wanting to kind of joke with you about things. I mean I got used to that . . . I was fortunate I can't say that I ever found myself in a situation where I felt uncomfortable, or felt treated unfairly.

Joy provided another example:

For the most part, working in [profession] it's been very easy to be a woman. Having said that though, I had a boss, a male boss, for seven years and he made it a much more difficult time to be in the [profession]. . . . I don't know if it was just because I was a female, I suspected . . . but other than that, not really. I don't feel I was discriminated against in the broad sense.

The phenomenon of denial-description-denial occurred within the left column of the grid; participants had varying degrees of recognition and primarily took limited action.

Discussion

In this section we review ways in which the findings of this study confirm and extend the existing literature. Additionally, we provide suggestions for changes in practice and for further research.

Connections to the Literature

Many of our findings confirm current understandings. While participants reported few instances of traditional sexism, their stories indicate that modern forms of sexism (Swim, et al., 1995) are present in this institution, and few participants consider these behaviors sexist. Indeed, some participants described benefiting from behaviors that reinforced women as weaker and needing assistance, a prototypical example of benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Our findings echo those of Harding (2004) that not all women have been taught to critically reflect on their experiences; therefore some share dominant interpretations of their encounters.

Similarly, our findings provide real world examples of experimental social psychology findings (Kappen & Branscombe, 2001; Taylor, et

al., 1991) that people who experience discrimination resist labeling it as such. Women in this study responded to gendered dynamics in many ways, including not labeling behavior as sexist. Several participants questioned if what they were experiencing was sexism, a classical example of attributional ambiguity (Major, 2007). The participants set the bar for actionable gendered behavior so high that many discriminatory behaviors were not labeled, and thus they did not consciously respond, as predicted by Barreto and Ellemers (2005) and Kitzinger and Thomas (1995).

Additionally, our findings support Frye's (1998/1983) birdcage analogy regarding sexism as a complex social system. One way of explaining that participants did not label their experiences as sexism is that they viewed their experiences as isolated incidents. Because they did not know what was happening to other women, because they did not connect these experiences across time, they were in essence viewing only single wires of the birdcage. One of the benefits of a study like this is its ability to make evident the scope of and connections between these experiences.

Echoing the literature on how women respond to sexism, participants in this study who were aware that what they experienced was sexism did not necessarily address it (Swim & Hyers, 1999). Their explanations for not acting frequently were grounded in the futility of making a response; we did not hear the fears of being labeled a feminist or judged as a trouble-maker that are indicated in the literature (Swim & Hyers, 1999). As Louis and Taylor (1999) would have predicted, even women who did adapt to or resist sexism rarely reported it through formal channels, attempted systematic change, or took collective action. Resistance took many forms, but typically it was individual, indirect, and focused on the perpetrator. Perhaps women with more systemic responses chose to leave or were forced out of the system before reaching 25 years of employment.

Gender schemas also provide a lens to understand the findings of this study. Schemas contextualize individual men and women's cognitive understanding of gender roles (Bem, 1981). The cumulative effect of the assumptions of gender schemas creates a gendered campus with outcomes that marginalize and devalue the contributions of women.

Extension of Literature

This research extends the existing literature in four key ways. First, we revealed an additional manifestation in which respondents "sandwiched" stories that portrayed a negative gender interaction between two statements in which the participants stated that they never had neg-

ative gender-related experiences. This pattern of denial-description-denial suggests another, more complicated, response to sexism. It is possible that participants engaged in sense-making, a constant construction and reconstruction of reality “that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs” (Weick, 1993, p. 635). A second explanation is that participants may have perceived the cost of acknowledging sexism to exceed the benefits. Alternately, refusal to name sexism may let participants continue to work in this setting without cognitive dissonance. Another explanation may be that these women were not able to see the larger pattern in which their experiences mirrored those of their colleagues, and treated these as isolated incidents. Finally, if these behaviors fit participants’ gender schemas (Valian, 2005) they would be unlikely to identify them as sexist.

Second, this research extends the literature on workplace climate in higher education. With the exception of one study on gender and athletic coaches (Greenawalt, 2012), we have found limited prior empirical support (e.g., Benokraitis, 1998) for the existence of modern sexism in higher education employment contexts. Specifically, the benevolent and covert sexism and cost-benefit analysis that our participants described indicate that the gender climate in higher education is more complex than just what would be evident on measures of sexual harassment or other climate studies. Recognition is an important component of reporting; if climate reports are not geared to ask questions about the subtle nature of modern and benevolent sexism, it is unlikely that they will accurately represent women’s work experiences in higher education.

Third, we propose a conceptual framework in the model of Women’s Responses to Gendered Dynamics that reminds us that in order to understand response patterns we must consider what women experience and how they label what they experience. Most existing literature, especially experimental research in social psychology, independently assesses recognition of sexism and actions taken in response to sexism. Using this model encourages the recognition and value of intersection in research.

Finally, very few studies have focused on extended service to one university. This research provides insight from the perspective of “thrivers” and survivors. By focusing on participants with longevity, we are able to extend our understanding of what institutions do to retain qualified women workers and what techniques women use to negotiate a gendered environment. Essentially, this research extends the literature by exploring how women who have stayed, either by choice or for lack of better options, address gendered dynamics.

Implications for Practice and Research

We argue that both women and men need to understand modern sexism, as the incidents described by these participants rarely indicated men's conscious attempts to demean, devalue, or discriminate against women. If both parties recognize sexism, they will be more likely to challenge it (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). Thus, existing training on sexual harassment should be extended to include understanding of modern and benevolent forms of sexism.

Additionally, our findings indicate we must not take reports of sexual harassment as proxies for the climate for women on campus. Many women in our study reported behaviors that take more subtle, covert, and seemingly benevolent forms, none of which are likely to be picked up in standard climate assessments, implying it is likely that sexism is underreported. More nuanced measures of campus climate are needed to identify contemporary manifestations of sexism.

We also encourage campuses to make employment practices clear. Employees who understand their rights, and who are aware of both formal and enacted policy may be more likely to challenge inequitable behavior. Indeed, we found administrators, those mostly likely to develop and enforce policy, showed the greatest willingness to resist gendered dynamics.

In addition, teaching undergraduate men and women about the constructs of sexism identified in this study could help further generations of working men and women in and outside higher education to challenge work environments and scenarios like those uncovered in this study. Becker and Swim (2012), in reporting the effects of several interventions designed to make participants aware of both modern and benevolent sexism, found "that critical attention to the harmful effects of benevolent sexism can increase the rejection of several indicators of benevolent sexism" (p. 134) in both women and men. Additionally, they reported that "information addressing the harmful nature of benevolent sexist beliefs can also lead to a stronger rejection of indicators of modern sexist beliefs" (p. 135), although information on its prevalence was not sufficient.

Many of the dynamics we described occur both in and outside higher education. Several of our participants who previously worked in other settings mentioned that they had experienced gendered dynamics in other work environments that were far worse than they encountered at this institution. However, most participants shared Emily's assessment that, unlike other employment settings, at the university "some will listen, they will be respectful, they may even change their thinking or their mindset." Perhaps this assumption that university employees are more

enlightened than employees in other work settings, or that the missions of higher education institutions refer to learning, leadership, and diversity are factors preventing participants from seeing or labeling gendered dynamics.

This research raises a number of questions we feel merit further study. First, the denial-description-denial dynamic raises many questions, including whether it is a coping strategy for those who are location bound. Does this dynamic exist in women who have worked at a university for a shorter time? Might job classification, educational level, race, or parental status relate to participants' recognition of gendered dynamics or ability and willingness to resist them? Is this pattern evident in other forms of oppression (e.g., racism, ageism, etc.) or power differential?

Additionally, a focus on extended service to one institution provides insight from the perspective of "thrivers" and survivors. However, this research does not address the experiences of individuals who left the university. Future researchers may consider developing a more complex understanding of institutional policies and practices by focusing on these individuals.

In numerous places in this article we have referred to women surviving or thriving. We have noticed that classified and administrative women were much more likely to thrive (i.e., in general, they were exceptionally positive and enthusiastic about their employment at the university), while faculty, as a group, were far less positive about their experiences. Yet administrators were the most likely to clearly identify gendered experiences as sexist. In future analyses we hope to explore differences across categories of participants, and within the faculty, including whether differences in the gender balance within their college matters.

Finally, a future study might explore the relationship between commitment to stay and willingness to confront sexist behavior. Are women more willing or able to leave also more willing to confront inappropriate behavior? To do so collectively?

As part of a larger study, the findings here represent only a subset of our findings. Despite the relatively infrequent mentions of gendered dynamics, often given with the caveat that these were exceptions to their overall positive experiences as women, respondents provided numerous examples of inequitable treatment based on their gender, whether or not they labeled this behavior as sexism. From these data it is clear to us that while overt, hostile sexism has decreased over these women's careers, modern and benevolent sexism continues in higher education at both the individual and organizational levels.

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