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Experiences of Subtle Sexism Among Women Employees in the National Park Service

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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Although blatant sexism persists in the workplace, there is a subtler type of sexism that is not often discussed. Some of the harmful outcomes that concern organization employees and leaders include decreased job satisfaction and morale, increased stress and turnover, damaged workplace relationships, barriers to career development for women, and decreased feelings of safety in law enforcement employees. Subtle sexism is often disguised as friendliness or chivalry, and therefore is difficult to detect, so it is often ignored or trivialized. The harms are cumulative and compound over time. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to gather data about how women experience subtle forms of sexism in the National Park Service (NPS) workplace. Semistructured telephone interviews assisted with the gathering of data from 12 women employed by the NPS. Feminist theory and critical theory guided the research process. Moustakas's phenomenological method was used as an approach to data analysis. The findings that emerged included: (a) impacts on workplace culture, (b) harmful effects on individuals, (c) coping with subtle sexism, (d) organizational impacts, and (e) organizational change. The study promotes positive social change by providing a more nuanced understanding of how women experience and perceive subtle sexism. The results could help organizations to find more effective ways of dealing with this type of sexist behavior and decrease the negative outcomes.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Overt sexism is being replaced by subtler and more pervasive forms of sexism (Basford, 2014; Judson, 2014; King et al., 2011). Like its overt counterpart, *subtle sexism* is harmful to employees and creates a negative workplace environment. Its covert nature makes subtle sexism especially harmful because it is easy to overlook or trivialize (Swim, Mallett, & Stangor, 2004). There is a need to understand the lived experiences and perceptions of subtle sexism from women working in a variety of professions, such as those in the diverse workforce of the NPS. Having a more nuanced understanding of the ways that women experience and perceive subtle forms of sexism could lead to organizations finding more effective ways of dealing with this form of behavior. It could also decrease the negative outcomes of subtle sexism such as those related to mental health, turnover, job satisfaction, performance, and stress.

The following sections provide a summary of the study including the background, problem statement, purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance.

Background

Subtle sexism is a pervasive form of sexism that can be difficult to detect, often because it is disguised as friendliness, concern, chivalry, or having some other positive nature (Basford, 2014; Good & Rudman, 2010). Detecting the harms of subtle sexism is difficult because it is distal and cumulative, meaning the effects are not immediately

observable; however, over time, the effects do become harmful (Cundiff, Zawadzki, Danube, & Shields, 2014).

The subtle nature of this form of sexism makes it more harmful than overt sexism because it is less likely to be addressed by organizations (Basford, 2014). Even though subtle sexism can appear chivalrous and well-mannered, researchers have shown that it has the effect of making women appear weaker than men in the workplace, regardless of the gender of the observer (Good & Rudman, 2010). A woman who is viewed as weak may be deemed as not suitable for managerial or other stereotypically male roles (Good & Rudman, 2010). People who observe women being treated with subtle sexism are likely to view them less favorably, regardless of whether the observer is a customer, coworker, or supervisor (Good & Rudman, 2010; Hebl, King, Glick, Singletary, & Kazama, 2007). Even if overt sexism is eliminated from the workplace, if subtle sexism is not also eliminated, women may continue to be marginalized in their careers.

Subtle sexism also has harmful effects on employee wellbeing and can lead to increased turnover, stress and burn-out and decreased levels of cooperation, satisfaction, and commitment (Basford, 2014; Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013). Women who experience gender stereotypes, which is especially common in male-dominated organizations (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Logel et al., 2009), are likely to have less trust in the organization, resulting in disengagement and decreased performance (Emerson & Murphy, 2015). There may also be financial implications for organizations due to discontentment, accidents, sick leave, loss of productivity, conflicts, and turnover (Cortina et al., 2013). The implications for employee and organizational wellbeing

underline the need to understand subtle sexism better. Organizational leaders cannot effectively address problems that they do not understand.

Increased qualitative research could result in a more refined and nuanced understanding of how subtle sexism is perceived (Holland & Cortina, 2013). It is important to increase awareness of sexism in the workplace, especially of the subtler forms that are less easily detectable (Basford, 2014; de Lemus, Spears, & Moya, 2012; Swim et al., 2004). Awareness is the first step to having an inclusive workplace and changing a work culture with subtle sexist behaviors (Basford, 2014; Sewpaul, 2013). Not only do organizations need to increase awareness of this issue, but they also need to increase emotional empathy for the targets of sexism (Becker & Swim, 2011).

Increasing emotional empathy can be achieved by learning about the perceptions of other people (Becker & Swim, 2011). When people learn how others perceive subtle sexism, it can surprise them to learn how condescending and patronizing it can feel to others (Cundiff et al., 2014). Taking the perspective of others can reduce stereotypical judgements (Ku, Wang, & Galinsky, 2010; Todd, Bodenhausen, & Galinsky, 2011; Vescio, 2003). It is especially important for people to understand the perspectives of others because of the globalization of organizations and the increasing diversity of workplaces (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). Understanding the experiences of others can improve group interactions (Todd et al., 2011; Vescio, 2003). Perspective taking can be an effective tool for improving negative climate issues of diverse workplaces because it causes the perspective taker to find commonality with other people (Ku et al., 2010; Todd

et al., 2011) Organizations can benefit from having policies that show respect for the perspectives of women's experiences in the workplace.

It is important to have workplace policies that address sexism of all kinds because women experience more of it in the workplace than in other environments (Nadal, Mazzula, Rivera, & Fuji, 2014). When organizations have any form of gender discrimination problems, they often have other broader problems with climate, culture, human resources practices, structure, leadership, and strategy (Stamarski & Hing, 2015). Rather than waiting for women to file complaints about subtle sexism, organizations should be proactive in preventing it (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). The NPS has seen the problems that arise from waiting until claims about sexist behaviors are filed before addressing them.

A survey conducted in 2017 to learn about the experiences of 9,156 women and men NPS employees regarding harassing behaviors (Federal Consulting Group and CFI Group, 2017). The survey results showed that over 19% of the NPS workforce are estimated to have experienced gender harassment. Although some progress has been made, by gaining a better understanding of subtle sexism in the NPS, leaders could develop ideas for addressing it at this level.

Although researchers have measured selected variables related to subtle sexism (Fasoli, Carnaghi, & Paladina, 2015; London, Downey, Romero-Canyas, Rattan, & Tyson, 2012; Moya, Glick, Expósito, de Lemus, & Hart, 2007; Nadal et al., 2014), they could be overlooking other potential variables that could only be discovered with an inductive, emergent design that can result in rich contextual details about the perspectives

of women. This study was needed because the resulting nuanced understanding about subtle sexism could increase empathy and the ability to understand the world from the perspectives of women.

Problem Statement

Researchers agree that blatant sexism is no longer as frequently experienced in American workplaces as it once was, but it has been replaced by a subtler and more pervasive form of sexism (Basford, 2014; Judson, 2014; King et al., 2011). Although men may also experience subtle sexism, to explore the experiences of both genders was beyond the scope of this study, so I focused on the experiences of women. The positive nature of subtle forms of sexism hides the harmful outcomes that result from this belief, so that many people do not recognize it as sexist at all (Becker & Swim, 2011; Good & Rudman, 2010).

Different organizations may have varying levels of sexism. Some may have successfully managed to eliminate even the subtler forms of sexism, whereas others struggle with multiple issues of sexism in its various forms. The NPS has received increased media attention as it faces serious problems with various forms of overt sexism, including some egregious cases of sexual harassment at Grand Canyon National Park and Canaveral National Seashore (Reynolds, 2016). Current Department of the Interior (DOI) policy acknowledges the need to address subtler forms of sexism or offensive behavior that does not meet the legal description of harassment (Zinke, 2017). The NPS consists of over 20,000 employees (Reynolds, 2016). In 2016, about 40% of those employees were women (NPS, n.d.). These women hold jobs that are traditionally female, such as

administrative, human resources, or interpretive park ranger positions, but they also hold jobs that tend to be male-dominated, such as law enforcement rangers, firefighters, scientists, maintenance workers, and leaders. Although women in male dominated fields are more likely to experience sexism, it can be encountered by women working in any field of work (Hideg & Ferris, 2016).

In summary, the problem is that overt sexism is being replaced by subtle sexism, which is also harmful to employees, and creates a negative workplace environment. Its subtle nature makes it especially harmful because it is easier to overlook or trivialize (Swim et al., 2004). There is a need to understand the lived experiences of women who work in a variety of professions and have experienced subtle sexism. Having a more nuanced understanding of how their experiences are perceived could lead to organizations finding more effective ways of dealing with this type of uncivil behavior and decreasing the resulting negative outcomes, such as decreased performance and productivity, increased stress and conflict, higher rates of turnover, and fewer women in traditionally male roles (Basford, 2014; Cortina et al., 2013; Emerson & Murphy, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study is to gather data about how women experience subtle forms of sexism in the workplace. The goal is to understand the lived experiences of female employees of the NPS who have encountered subtle sexism, to provide a stronger basis for addressing the negative outcomes of workplace sexism in that and similar organizations.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the lived experiences of women employed by the NPS with subtle sexism in the workplace?

Subquestion 1: What types of subtle sexism are women experiencing in the workplace?

Subquestion 2: How do women feel about communicating with others about experiences of subtle sexism in the workplace?

Research Question 2: How do women employed by the NPS perceive subtle sexism in the workplace?

Subquestion 1: How do the ways that women experience subtle sexism compare to how they experience overt sexism?

Subquestion 2: How is subtle sexism contributing to employee dissatisfaction, stress, turnover, or other negative workplace outcomes?

Conceptual Framework

I used conceptual frameworks focused on feminist theory and critical theory. One of the aims of critical theory, as with feminist theory, is to find ways to solve social problems by questioning traditional world views (Sandford, 2015; Steinvorth, 2008). Because of their similar aims, feminist theory and critical theory combine well as conceptual frameworks for this study.

The paradigm of feminist theory is based on the idea that gender is a social construct because, from birth, people are taught the normative roles and responsibilities of their gender (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). These gender role expectations persist today in

American workplaces and using a feminist lens can help researchers to recognize them. Using feminist theory to understand organizational issues facilitates critical assessment of instances of marginalization that can occur in the workplace (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014).

The philosophy behind critical theory was in practice in the fifth century BC by Greek sophists, whose goal was to understand their world without prejudice or superstition (Steinvorth, 2008). The primary aim of critical theory today is to address social and political inequalities by questioning hierarchies and normative world views (Wellmer, 2014).

Feminist theory can be used in the research design and data analysis to uncover power differences that may exist related to gender (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). Used together with critical theory, these frameworks can guide the interpretation of data in a way that helps the researcher to reconsider language, beliefs, and practices of organizations that perpetuate the dominant status of men (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014).

Using a feminist lens requires the researcher to be reflexive and self-critical to be sure the strengths and limitations of using this approach are acknowledged (Dick, 2013). Qualitative, phenomenological studies also require the researcher to use reflexivity throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting processes. By using a feminist and critical theory framework, biases about gender can be avoided and data can be viewed with a critical lens that will help to identify power differences between genders.

Feminist research seeks to encourage equality between men and women and helps to promote positive social change by informing and supporting activism, legislation, and organizational decision making (Eagly, Eaton, Rose, Riger, & McHugh, 2012). Both a

critical and feminist lens is advised for human-resource-related studies because doing so can provide information to help organizations understand how their systems, structures, processes, policies, cultures, and workplace climates can result in inclusion or exclusion, resulting in some groups being privileged above others (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014).

I used the research questions of the study to determine what experiences with subtle sexism women employees of the NPS have had, and how they perceived those experiences. Organizations tend to address overt sexism rather than the less recognizable subtle sexism. This tendency was critically challenged by increasing awareness about the issues of subtle sexism. Using a critical theory and feminist theory lens leads to data being interpreted in ways that challenge norms (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). I provide more details about feminist theory and critical theory in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative methods are advisable for exploratory studies, such as this one, that was used to reveal the lived experiences of subtle sexism from the perspective of women. I used a qualitative method for this study because the purpose was to learn the experiences and perspectives of the participants. I employed a phenomenological research designed to explore how the participants experienced the phenomenon of subtle sexism. Qualitative research methods are preferred when exploration is needed to learn more about a subject before quantitative measures can be used. Most studies have used quantitative methods to measure different aspects of sexism (Basford, 2014; Becker & Swim, 2011; Good & Rudman, 2010; Hideg & Ferris, 2016; Judson, 2014; Leskinen, Rabelo, & Cortina, 2015). In the study I used recorded, semistructured telephone

interviews to gather data from 12 women employed by the NPS. I planned to use NVivo analytic software to develop a thematic analysis of the data using codes and categories. I provide more information about the research method and data analysis in Chapter 3.

Definitions

Several key concepts and constructs were used throughout this study and are explained in this section.

Subtle sexism: a covert form of sexism that is especially harmful, because it is easy to overlook or trivialize (Swim et al., 2004).

Hostile sexism: a form of sexism that includes the belief that women are inferior to men.

Benevolent sexism: a form of sexism that appears to be positive, but in fact is negative and patronizing behavior towards women (Barreto, Ellemers, Piebinga, & Moya, 2009; Fraser, Osborne, & Sibley, 2015; Glick et al., 2000; Lemonaki, Manstead, & Maio, 2015; Zakrisson, Anderzén, Lenell, & Sandelin, 2012).

Gender stereotypes: greatly simplified views of differentiating gender attributes that affect how men and women behave (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Kugelberg, 2006; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002).

Gender microaggressions: intentional or unintentional behaviors that exclude, demean, insult, show indifference, or in other ways oppress or express hostility towards someone because of their gender (Basford, 2014).

Workplace incivility: low intensity, rude or discourteous behavior that shows a lack of regard or respect for others and does not always involve a clear intent to harm (Chui & Dietz, 2014; Cortina et al., 2013).

Assumptions

Some assumptions in social science research are considered acceptable. I assumed that women in the NPS have experienced subtle forms of sexism and that some of these women were willing to discuss these experiences in a private setting. If my assumption was inaccurate, I would not have been able to recruit participants. Based on the literature about subtle sexism, I assumed that subtle sexism was likely to result in negative outcomes. I also assumed that the participants would be able to accurately and honestly verbalize their experiences and that the interviews would result in rich descriptions. That assumption was necessary because of the self-reporting nature of interviews.

Scope and Delimitations

One delimitation that restricted the scope of this study was that participants must be women employees of the NPS who had experienced subtle forms of sexism. Although men also experience sexism, the study was limited to women because researchers have shown they are better able to detect sexism, especially at the subtler levels (Basford, 2014; Glick et al., 2000). Only employees of the NPS were used in this study for two primary reasons: accessibility to participants and the current efforts of the NPS to address issues related to sexism and harassment.

Limiting participants to employees of the NPS, could reduce transferability to other workplaces. Although using NPS employees was a delimiter, transferability was

improved by the fact that the NPS employees hold a wide variety of positions: managers, supervisors, law enforcement officers, fire fighters, biologists, custodians, medics, maintenance workers, trail crew workers, carpenters, pilots, forestry technicians, GIS specialists, computer specialists, budget analysts, administrators, river rafters, safety professionals, education specialists, public outreach coordinators, equipment operators, mechanics, and more. Transferability was further assisted by the fact that NPS employees are a diverse group of races, ethnicities, income levels, and educational backgrounds.

The study was also delimited by the conceptual theories selected as a framework. Although other conceptual theories could help to explain subtle sexism, feminist and critical theories were determined to be most relevant for answering the research questions. Gender Equality Framework (GAF), bifurcation of consciousness, and feminist standpoint theory were three conceptual theories that I did not select as part of the framework. Gender Equality Framework may be used to explain the differences and similarities between gender parity, equity, and equality (EQUATE, 2018). It is a broad concept that helps to explain the definitions of parity, equity, and equality, but does not provide a solid way to interpret experiences. (EQUATE, 2018).

The foundational concept of bifurcation of consciousness developed by Smith (1974), explains split perspectives of men and women. Smith described marginalized groups as being conditioned to view the world through the dominant group's perspective, whereas the dominant group is often not even aware of the marginalized group's views. Using this concept, Smith provides an explanation for women with benevolent sexist

beliefs, but it does not help to understand the views of the women who do not view the world through the eyes of the dominant gender.

During the early 1970s, philosophers and sociologists studying feminism developed feminist standpoint theory, which evolved from Marxist views (Bowell, n.d.). The basic principle behind this theory is that women and other marginalized groups come from a place of epistemic privilege. Because of that, these groups should be starting points for answering questions about the experiences of marginalized groups or their oppressors (Bowell, n.d.). Feminist standpoint theory could have been used to explain why women were ideal participants in this study about subtle sexism, but it would not help to understand their experiences and perspectives.

Although each of those theories were useful, I did not think that they were the best fit for the research. Although those theories helped to explain different aspects of sexist behavior and perceptions, they did not provide an overall framework for viewing the experiences and perceptions of women related to subtle sexism.

Limitations

The study had several limitations to trustworthiness that were addressed in different ways. One of these limitations was the potential for personal bias. I am not only a woman employee of the NPS, but I have also experienced sexism (both overt and subtle) in the workplace. As further discussed in Chapter 3, Moustakas (1994) advised achieving objective neutrality by setting aside biases in a process called epoche, or bracketing. I achieved this through reflexive journaling throughout the recruitment, data collection, analysis, and reporting processes.

I conducted the interviews by telephone, causing the additional limitation of not being able to interpret body language. I paid close attention to vocal cues, such as pauses, hesitations, changes in tone of voice, loudness, or word choice.

Participants were mostly Caucasian except one who was Hispanic. None of the participants were under the age of 36 years. This could be because I limited the study to permanent employees and most of the younger employees are temporary employees. The lack of younger participants could also be the result of one of the findings that younger women had a lower awareness of subtle sexism.

Significance

The significance of this study is that it provides a more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of subtle sexism from women working in a variety of professions, such as those found in the diverse workforce of the NPS. This improved understanding of subtle sexism and how those experiences are perceived by women could lead to organizations finding more effective ways of dealing with this type of uncivil behavior and decreasing the resulting negative outcomes, such as decreased performance and productivity, increased stress and conflict, higher rates of turnover, and fewer women in traditionally male roles (Basford, 2014; Cortina et al., 2013; Emerson & Murphy, 2015). The results from the study could also serve as the basis for subsequent quantitative research on subtle sexism. Although in this study I focused on workplace behaviors, the results could provide useful information for those who are working towards positive social change through the women's movement.

Summary

In this chapter I provided a summary of the qualitative study to explore the lived experiences of women employees of the NPS who have experienced subtle sexism in the workplace. I presented the background and foundation of the topic of subtle sexism and explained why the research was relevant and needed. Then I explained the problem statement, purpose, research questions, and conceptual framework of the study. I also provided a description of the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the study's significance.

I provide a review of the literature related to subtle sexism in Chapter 2. This includes a description of the literature search strategy, followed by a synopsis of the literature establishing the relevance of subtle sexism in the workplace. The conceptual framework and history of feminism and sexism provide a basis for understanding the problem of subtle sexism. I provide a review of the research methods used in the literature on subtle sexism in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 includes an explanation for the method selected for this study about the experiences of women exposed to subtle sexism. I determined that a qualitative method was most appropriate for the study to address this research need. After the chapter introduction, the research questions are stated. A detailed methods description and justification includes the research design and rationale, an explanation of qualitative research, the role of the researcher, research methodology, population and sample, sample size, data collection procedures, data analysis, validity and trustworthiness, and measures for ethical protections.

I present the results of the study in Chapter 4. I discuss the analysis and interpretation of the data, as well as the implications for social change and suggestions for future research in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter includes a review of the literature related to subtle sexism in the workplace. Overt sexism is being replaced by subtler and more pervasive forms of sexism (Basford, 2014; Judson, 2014; King et al., 2011). Like its overt counterpart, subtle sexism is harmful to employees and creates a negative workplace environment. Its covert nature makes subtle sexism especially harmful because it is easy to overlook or trivialize (Swim et al., 2004). There is a need to understand the lived experiences and perceptions of subtle sexism from women working in a variety of professions, such as those that may be found in the diverse workforce of the NPS. Having a more nuanced understanding of the ways that women experience subtle forms of sexism and how those experiences are perceived by women could lead to organizations finding more effective ways of dealing with this type of incivility and decreasing the resulting negative outcomes.

The following section includes a description of the literature search strategy used, followed by a synopsis of the literature establishing the relevance of subtle sexism in the workplace. The conceptual framework and history of feminism and sexism provide a basis for understanding the problem of subtle sexism. A thorough review is given on the current research related to subtle sexism. This review is strategically organized to begin with the broad topic of its rise in prevalence and relevant definitions, then gradually narrows towards the more specific issues within the NPS. After discussing the research that introduces the basic concepts related to subtle sexism, research is presented that relates to abilities to detect it and how it is perceived. It is then important to review the

literature related to the harms of subtle sexism and antecedents that can lead to this harmful behavior. This helps to explain why it is important to understand subtle sexism. Next, I review the research related to how people react to or report subtle sexism. I then narrow in on the key points of the study by reviewing research related to the importance of awareness and perspective taking. Narrowing in closer to the topic of the study, I review the literature related to workplace policies, potential interventions, and the issue of sexism in the NPS. To explore how various research designs have contributed to the body of knowledge about this topic, I provide a review related to the research methods reflected in the literature. Finally, a summary of the chapter is given. A description of the literature search strategy lays the foundation for the remaining sections.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search began in August of 2016 and continued until July 2017, using the PsychINFO database. Subsequent searches used the databases Sage Premier, SocIndex, and Business Source Complete, as well as the search engines Google Scholar, and Google. Various combinations of search terms were applied to the search, and the results were limited using different combinations of the following Boolean limiters: peer reviewed, full text, English language, and years ranging from 2001 to 2017. In 2019 additional searches using similar methods, as well as some additional Boolean limiters related to the emergent themes were used to find literature from 2018 to 2019.

In August 2016, the initial search included these different keyword combinations: microaggressions, gender, everyday sexism, cultural differences, human females, perceived discrimination, and mental health outcomes. In September 2016, the search

expanded to include key words frequently encountered in my reading, such as: benevolent sexism, diversity, sex discrimination, attitudes, sexism, discrimination, workplace, sexism, gender roles, gender bias, human sex differences, subtle sexism, gender discrimination, decision making, laws, and human resources. Later, in December 2016, new search terms were added to more fully capture the full spectrum of sexism, such as the following keywords: empathy, sexual harassment, defined, feminism, feminist theory, hostile sexism, ambivalent sexism, stereotypes, and women's movement. To learn more about the value of understanding the views of others, the search expanded in January 2017 by using the terms compassion and emotional responses. In February 2017, it was expanded again to include some organizational terms and other types of sexism such as the following terms: incivility, organizations, gender stereotypes, acceptance, career development, and social identity. Finally, in March 2017, the word "cases" was added as a term to enable a search of research about sexual harassment cases. As new key words were added, they were used in various combinations with previous ones.

In February 2017, books about feminism were obtained to provide a background about the history of issues related to sexism. Some of these books, in turn, referenced other classic literature about the women's movement. Some references in previously found articles appeared relevant to the study. In January 2017, those references were located and added to the collection of relevant literature. Between April and June 2017, representatives from the NPS were contacted as references about the approval process for an NPS employee to conduct research using other NPS employees as participants. From October 2016 to July 2017, the search engine Google was used to find news articles and

public statements about issues of sexism and harassment in the NPS. By using this method of literary search, I was able to review a wide range of literature about sexism. Using this method, I also found information about organizational processes and outcomes related to sexism. The literature search helped to find information supporting the value of gaining the perspectives of those who have experienced sexism. Throughout the entire literature search, conceptual frameworks that guided the study were developed.

Conceptual Framework

Feminist theory and critical theory guided the data interpretation for this study. The following section about feminist theory includes its definition and usefulness for the study. An explanation of critical theory and its usefulness follows.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is useful for guiding the understanding of the marginalization of women in the workplace (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). This construct is rooted in activism related to inequality, freedom, and social justice (Ferguson, 2017). It is based on the idea that gender is a social construction and roles are learned according to the gender assigned at birth (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). In my study I asked questions about the lived experiences and perceptions of women employees of the NPS who have encountered subtle sexism in the workplace. Feminist theory was a useful framework for answering these questions whose answers revealed inequality and social justice issues.

Some feminist researchers have an evolutionary or Darwinian view of human behavior and believe that inherent differences between men and women should be considered when trying to study gender roles (Gowaty, 2003; Vandermassen, 2010). In

this study I focused more on socially constructed views about gender. For example, not only are the colors pink and blue assigned to babies according to gender, but from an early age, people are taught their roles, responsibilities, and type of respect they should expect based on their gender (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014).

Feminist theory has evolved over time, going through three major waves of support (Dicker, 2016). The philosophy behind American feminism has had many proponents including, but by no means limited to, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Margaret Fuller, Mary Wolstonecraft, bell hooks, Gloria Steinem, Betty Freidan, and Robin Morgan.

There is no one way to define feminist theory, however the current primary tenets of the theory are that: (a) it is not only a way of understanding the world, but it should be used to promote positive social change; (b) it opposes dualistic thinking, meaning that the world cannot be viewed in shades of black and white; (c) it is interdisciplinary and intersectional; and (d) that social inequalities cannot be viewed with a single cause and effect, because of the large number of continuously changing influences (Ferguson, 2017; Sandford, 2015).

Feminist theory generally involves one or more of the following issues: sex, gender, sexuality, women, and sexual differences (Sandford, 2015). A large body of research has used a feminist lens to view information about the profound changes in women's roles, equality, and status (Eagly et al., 2012). A variety of research methods and theories have been used to understand a wide range of issues related to feminism, such as sexism, harassment, and violence against women (Eagly et al., 2012).

Henry's (2017) qualitative phenomenological study used feminist theory to view the perspectives of nine Egyptian men about women who are sexually harassed on the streets of Egypt. The study found that the men blamed and failed to empathize with the women. Another peer reviewed article (McLean, La Guardia, Nelson, & Watts, 2016) encouraged the use of feminist theories in couples counseling to address relational issues, self-objectification, and low self-worth. Kantola and Lombardo's (2017) conducted a literature review to show how feminist political theories are used to address issues of social, cultural, and political transformations.

Although feminist theory, today, is about women, it is not only about women. In the third wave, feminist theory is about viewing the world with a critical and intersectional perspective (Ferguson, 2017). It is a form of practical criticism (Sandford, 2015). One of the aims of critical theory, as with feminist theory, is to find ways to solve social problems by questioning traditional world views (Sandford, 2015; Steinvorth, 2008). Because of their similar aims, feminist theory and critical theory combined well as conceptual frameworks.

Critical Theory

The philosophy behind critical theory was in practice in the fifth century BC by Greek sophists, whose goal was to understand their world without prejudice or superstition (Steinvorth, 2008). In the 1800s, Karl Marx initiated a critique of classical philosophy, which later evolved into critical theory (Sandford, 2015). Later proponents of critical theory, included the Frankfurt School of Max Hortheimer and Theodor Adorno in the 1920s and 30s and Jürgen Habernas in the 1980s (Steinvorth, 2008, Wellmer, 2014).

Although Marx and the Frankfort School suggested that economics issues were at the root of most social injustices, later critical theorists considered other influences on society, such as intellect, individual capabilities, moral judgements, and beliefs (Steinvorth, 2008). The primary aim of critical theory today is to address social and political inequalities by questioning hierarchies and normative world views (Wellmer, 2014).

With the research questions of my study, I asked about the lived experiences and perceptions of women employees of the NPS who had encountered subtle sexism in the workplace. Critical theory was a useful framework for addressing those and questioning normative views that might minimalize covert forms of sexism.

Green (2017) provided an epistemological grounding for community equity theory. Critical theory was used as a framework for viewing equity and unequal power relations of school-community relations. Smith (2013) reviewed the American School Counseling Associations Model by using a critical theory framework to view how the model helps to confront or maintain the status quo related to safe schools for queer youth. Other peer reviewed articles used critical theory to find new ways to view topics such as marginalized young offenders, the scientific objectivity of gender related psychology, and human sexuality in the digital era (Barry, 2016; Dadico, 2016; and Garlick, 2011).

By using a feminist and critical theory framework, I avoided biases about gender and viewed data with a critical lens that helped to identify power differences between genders. These frameworks guide the interpretation of data in a way that helps the researcher to reconsider language, beliefs, and practices of organizations that perpetuate

the dominant status of men (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). Feminist research seeks to encourage equality between men and women and helps to promote positive social change by informing and supporting activism, legislation, and organizational decision making (Eagly et al., 2012). Both a critical and feminist lens is advised for human resource related studies because doing so can provide information to help organizations understand how their systems, structures, processes, policies, cultures, and workplace climates can result in inclusion or exclusion, resulting in some groups being privileged above others (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). If organizations do not have access to information viewed with critical or feminist lens, Gedro and Mizzi claim that assumptions about gender may be made, biases about these assumptions can develop, and practices of inclusion or exclusion may develop, because of those biases. A critical theory and feminist theory lens lead to data being interpreted in ways that challenge norms.

Factors that Led to the Rise of Subtle Sexism

Although history is important for laying a foundation for understanding subtle sexism, a full historical review is beyond the scope of this proposal. The first wave of feminism began with women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton stating that women were oppressed and demanded the rights and privileges that belong to all United States citizens (Stanton, 1848/2015). Women like Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), one of the first American feminists, introduced issues that are still the basis for concerns of working women today (Fuller, 1845/1999).

The second wave of feminism took place in the 1960s and 70s (Dicker, 2016). There appeared to be no unity to determine how feminism should be defined to give it a

strong foundational theory (hooks, 1988/2000). Feminism developed negative connotations, in part because of main stream media's depiction of feminists as aggressive, hairy, man-hating, unattractive lesbians, in other words, the stereotypical "feminazi" (Douglas, 1994; Dicker, 2016). Words such as sexism and sexual harassment were created (Dicker, 2016). Overt sexism was rampant and the issues of the second wave included education and workplace equality, rejection of traditional roles for women, reproductive rights, and beauty expectations (Dicker, 2016). When the second wave began, it was common to advertise that certain jobs were for men only (Friedan, 1963/2013). The women's movement of the second wave addressed these kinds of issues of inequality. With so many overt issues of sexism, society was not yet concerned much about subtle sexism.

Although the second wave did not focus on subtle sexism it expanded criticisms of sexism in general. During the second wave, people recognized that psychology research had not adequately studied women or gender and had even misrepresented them in previous studies that considered women childlike, dependent, and possessing maternal instinct (Eagly et al., 2012). Researchers drew on gender stereotypes from popular media and common social views, as a source of reliable information about gender traits (Shields, 2013). Because of this concern, studies about women and gender rapidly increased during the second wave (Eagly et al., 2012). This increased understanding of gender and women helped organizations to address issues of overt sexism.

The 1980s brought a time of having fun and a narcissistic focus on the self, rather than on social issues (Dicker, 2016; Douglas, 1994). For some, it may have been the

defeat of the equal rights amendment in 1982, that demoralized women and reduced the motivation to fight (Eagly et al., 2012). Then in the early 1990s, it can be argued that outrage over the Clarence Thomas supreme court confirmation hearings and related sexual harassment claim were the beginning of the third wave of feminism (Dicker, 2016).

Feminist views now protect women from all walks of life with a variety of concerns, not just their roles as women (Dicker, 2016). Even during the second wave, some leaders of the feminist movement knew that addressing sexist oppression was a step towards addressing all forms of oppression (hooks, 1988/2000). To understand the experiences of women, it is also important to understand their socioeconomic standing, education, race, ethnicity, and other form social identity (Shields, 2013). Feminism addresses everything from the concerns of poor women looking for jobs and lesbian women wanting to adopt children (Dicker, 2016). Feminism today continues to challenge traditional gender roles.

Although much progress has been made, and women are viewed more positively than ever, they are still fighting for gender equality in the workplace (Latu et al., 2011). Inequalities still exist in male dominated fields of work, even though laws prohibit sexual discrimination and harassment (Gervais, Vescio, & Allen, 2011). One possible reason for this is that people still have a difficult time recognizing subtle forms of sexism as harmful, so laws do not protect people from some types of sexism (Gervais et al., 2011; Hideg & Ferris, 2016).

People are still hesitant to use the term feminism (Swirsky & Angelone, 2014), and psychology studies that are overtly identified as feminist are rare, but increasing (Eagly et al., 2012). Swirsky and Angelone stated that reasons why women hesitate to identify as feminist include the negative connotations associated with the word, a belief that there are no shades of grey in defining feminism, belief that it is no longer relevant to society, and belief that it is irrelevant to one's culture. The further explain that a misunderstanding of goals of feminism can create a barrier to supporting the goals of the women's movement. It is important for people to realize that the goals of feminism can be viewed on a continuum and people do not have to support all goals of feminism to support the women's movement.

In 1990, the United States Census Bureau (2012) found that women with a Bachelor's degree or higher earned 72.2% of the salary or wages of men with the same level of education. Twenty years later, in 2010, women still only made 74.1% of the pay that men made. In 2016 the median wage of fulltime working women was 80% of what men made. Sexism is perpetuated by institutions, social structures, oppressive individuals, and victims or bystanders who are socialized to accept the status quo (hooks, 1988/2000).

The Rise of Subtle Sexism

Although blatant forms of sexism appear to be declining in the American workforce, they are not merely disappearing; they are being replaced by subtler forms that are harder to detect (Basford, 2014; Judson, 2014; King et al., 2011). Using third party perceptions of vignettes of varying levels of subtlety, Basford's (2014) empirical

study showed the differences in awareness of subtle forms of sexism in men and women. Basford found that working women today experience more covert forms of sexism than working women of the past.

Even though there have been many court cases related to sexual harassment, a lot of ambiguity remains about how to identify this type of blatant sexism (Claybourn, Spinner, & Malcom, 2014). This is significant because organizations cannot begin to address a problem like subtle sexism if they do not understand it or even know how to define it. If blatant sexism is so challenging to define, subtle forms of sexism is even more so. Characteristics frequently used to identify sexual harassment (intent, perceived intent, repetition, and consequences), can be even harder to determine in subtle sexism (Claybourn et al., 2014; Druhan, 2013).

Types of Subtle Sexism

Most women experience sexism, but it can come in many forms (Judson, 2014). Judson's (2014) quantitative dissertation used surveys (Modern Sexism Scale, Schedule of Sexist Events, Everyday Sexism Checklist, Gender Experiences Questionnaire, Gender Microaggression Scale, and the Hopkins Symptom Checklist – 21) completed by 957 women to measure several constructs of sexist discrimination, as well as levels of psychological distress. Although distinct differences exist between different forms of subtle sexism, there is also enough overlap due to the common and pervasive themes among them, and their similar negative impacts on mental health, that they could also be lumped into one broad category (Judson, 2014). This is significant because there are so many types of subtle sexism and if an organization wanted to understand issues of subtle

sexism among its employees, it would have to conduct multiple studies to gain a complete understanding. By only looking at the perceptions of one type of subtle sexism, part of the whole picture of subtle forms of sexism could be missed (Judson, 2014). Some examples of subtle sexism include nonverbal behaviors, such as derogatory facial expressions or even the lack of actions through inattention (Basford, 2014). Other examples of subtle sexism can include: interrupting someone, using a condescending or patronizing tone, belittling someone's work, calling a woman a girl, or saying that women are too sensitive. Generally, however, subtle sexism is not intentionally meant to be sexist or harmful (Swim et al., 2004). A summary of some common forms of sexism follows.

Benevolent Sexism

Unlike hostile sexism, which is a hostile belief that women are inferior to men, benevolent sexism appears to be positive, but in fact is negative and patronizing behavior towards women (Barreto et al., 2009; Fraser et al., 2015; Glick et al., 2000; Lemonaki et al., 2015; Zakrisson et al., 2012). Ambivalent sexism refers to the idea that women in nontraditional roles tend to receive hostile reactions, whereas those in traditional roles tend to receive more benevolent reactions (Glick et al., 2000; Hebl et al., 2007; Zakrisson et al., 2012). Benevolent sexism includes a combination of beliefs: protective paternalism (the belief that women need to be protected by men), complimentary gender differentiation (the belief that women have certain social and domestic skills that men lack), and heterosexual intimacy, which is the belief that women are meant to fulfill the

sexual needs of men (Barreto et al., 2009; Fraser et al., 2015; Glick et al., 2000; Zakrisson et al., 2012).

Like hostile sexism, benevolent sexism involves gender stereotypes (Barreto et al., 2009). Barreto et al. (2009) manipulated surveys to expose 62 to 100 women participants to either hostile or benevolent sexism. Follow-up surveys were then used to determine if it affected their decision to describe themselves in either relational or task-oriented terms. They found that women exposed to benevolent sexism tend to define themselves in relational terms and have fewer leadership aspirations. Becker and Swim (2011), in their empirical study, had participants keep diaries so that researchers could examine their perceptions of sexism. Benevolent sexists support the idea that women are gentle caregivers and should be provided for financially by men (Becker & Swim, 2011; Montañés et al., 2012; Zakrisson et al., 2012). They often do not realize that this belief gives the impression that women are weak and helpless and what implications this can have in a workplace setting (Becker & Swim, 2011).

Hostile and benevolent sexism are correlated to gender stereotypes (Glick & Fisk, 1996). The foundational research by Glick and Fisk (1996), resulted in the creation of the ambivalent sexism inventory (ASI), which has been frequently used by researchers (Gaunt, 2013; Glick et al., 2000; Good & Rudman, 2010; Hideg & Ferris, 2016; Latu et al., 2011; Logel et al., 2009; Montañés et al., 2012; Moya et al., 2007; Zakrisson et al., 2012). Using 2,250 participants and six separate studies, Glick and Fisk (1996) showed that the ASI had convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity. Correlational analyses

also showed that both the hostile and benevolent sexism scales correlate with stereotypes about women.

Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes in the workplace affect how men and women think and behave (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Kugelberg, 2006; Steele et al., 2002). It is a greatly simplified view of differentiating gender attributes (Kugelberg, 2006). Stereotypes can be both positive and negative (Barreto et al., 2009). For example, women may be described as overly emotional or incompetent, but they may also be described as kind and gentle. Although one is negative, and the other is positive, they can both imply that women are more effective in relational roles and less effective in task specific or leadership roles (Barreto et al., 2009). In Hoyt and Murphy's (2016) review of the model of stereotype threat, they stated that typically, top leadership positions are viewed as belonging to White males. People with stereotypic beliefs about gender, view males and females as belonging to separate spheres, or sets of roles, that justify the status quo (Miller, & Borgida, 2016).

Gender stereotypes also exist because of assumptions about skills needed for certain jobs, such as the belief that a certain type of job is a "man's job" (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Bobbit-Zeher (2011) used case studies of 219 court cases to explore how stereotypes affect discrimination determinations. Sometimes this is even expressed, ostensibly, as a form of kindness by saying that a job would be emotionally hard on a woman or too difficult for a pregnant woman. Kugelberg (2006) conducted a phenomenological study, using interviews and focus groups, to investigate how

parenthood in the workplace affects organizational opportunities. The results showed that workplace leaders are likely to view motherhood as problematic, without having any concern about fatherhood. Other stereotypes include: a woman being unladylike for cussing; attractiveness expected for women; sexual behaviors being acceptable for men but not for women; a strong woman being considered a "bitch;" the belief that people prefer to work with men; or that women will have childcare issues (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). Any of these stereotypical beliefs may be displayed in blatant or subtle ways.

Other Forms of Subtle Sexism

Gender microaggressions are intentional or unintentional behaviors that exclude, demean, insult, show indifference, or in other ways oppress or express hostility towards someone because of their gender (Basford, 2014). Microaggressions are common, and often every day occurrences (Basford, 2014). They can involve microinsults, microinvalidations, or microassaults, and can be interpreted as a form of discrimination, even though they usually need to be overt before being recognized by federal courts as discriminating (King et al., 2011).

Modern sexism and neosexism are both considered hidden prejudices against women (Becker & Swim, 2011; Swim et al., 2004). They both include: the belief that discrimination against women is rare, antagonism towards women's concerns about equality, and resentment of efforts to address it (Becker & Swim, 2011; Cortina et al., 2013; Martinez, Paterna, Roux, & Falomirc, 2010). Modern sexism, however, has a stronger focus on the belief in the rarity of discrimination against women, whereas neosexism has stronger focus on the other two beliefs (Becker & Swim, 2011). Modern

sexists believe that it is fact, not opinion, that sexism is no longer an issue (Cortina et al., 2013). They even publicly condemn sexism and claim to not have any gender bias (Cortina et al., 2013).

Everyday sexism is defined as minor incidents of sexism or gender microaggressions that occur during daily activities (Cundiff et al., 2014). It includes such behaviors and beliefs as gender role expectations, stereotypical comments, and excluding someone because of gender (Cundiff et al., 2014).

Patronizing behavior is another form of subtle sexism in which praise is given for someone who is devalued because of their gender (Gervais & Vescio, 2012; Vescio, Gervais, Snyder, & Hoover, 2005). A patronizing person may appear to be kind to someone, yet not believe them to have a very important role.

Protective paternalism, like benevolent sexism, involves a desire to protect women (Moya et al., 2007). This behavior also includes the belief that men should be dominant over women (Moya et al., 2007). It can be difficult, however, to determine when paternalistic behavior is sexist and when it is based on justifiable concern.

Aversive sexism is an especially subtle form of sexism that refers to the tendency for people to feel stronger affectivity towards similar people who are members of the same group, in other words, men would feel closer to other men (Melgoza, & Cox, 2009). This type of tendency becomes sexist when it affects critical organizational decisions such as who to work with on assignments or invite to meetings. This can be especially noticeable in male dominated organizations (Melgoza, & Cox, 2009).

Sexual objectification is described by Gervais et al. (2011) as occurring when a woman's body parts or functions are the focus of attention, rather than herself as a person. This can come in the form of a simple gaze, called an objectifying gaze, that may be subtle enough to not be noticed by some, although it also may come in an overt or violent form too. It may also come as a comment about someone's appearance, that can be complimentary, yet still objectifying, and therefore harmful.

Incivility in the workplace is considered low intensity, rude or discourteous behavior that shows a lack of regard or respect for others and does not always involve a clear intent to harm (Chui & Dietz, 2014; Cortina et al., 2013). When directed towards women, it is a subtle form of sexual harassment that contributes to a hostile work environment (Chui & Dietz, 2014). Gender incivility is considered a covert manifestation of gender bias and prejudice (Cortina et al., 2013). Gender harassment is described in the same way as gender incivility – rude, hostile, or discourteous remarks or behavior towards women that do not include sexual or romantic expressions (Holland and Cortina, 2013). The inclusion of sexual or romantic expressions moves the behavior into the category of sexual harassment and is likely to be more overt.

Detection of Sexism

Although both men and women can detect varying levels of sexist behavior, from blatant to subtle, women are better able to detect it, especially at the subtler levels (Basford, 2014; Glick et al., 2000). The purpose of Basford's (2014) empirical study was to determine the differences in awareness of gender microaggressions in 150 men and women. The study used third party perceptions of vignettes of varying levels of subtlety.

After viewing each vignette, participants answered questionnaires to measure perceived levels of microaggression and expected negative outcomes. In the study by Glick et al. (2000), researchers used the ambivalent sexism inventory to determine if ambivalent sexism exists across cultures. Participants in this study included 150,000 men and women from 19 different nations. From these studies, the researchers were able to show that women were better able to detect sexism than men. This is significant information because it can explain why some women's claims of sexism may be minimized or not taken seriously.

Both men and women have been found to have subtle sexist beliefs, such as modern sexism and neosexism, because they are simply unaware of the prevalence or extent of sexism around them (Becker & Swim, 2011). To many people subtle sexist behaviors appear so normal that they go unnoticed (Swim et al., 2004). People with modern sexist beliefs are less likely to detect sexist behaviors and more likely to use sexist language (Swim et al., 2004). To determine this, Swim et al. (2004) used the Modern Sexism Scale in an empirical study to measure certain factors related to sexist language, including the ability of 207 to 471 men and women participants to detect it, their likeliness of using it, and what they believed constituted sexist language.

Benevolent sexism is often discounted by people as a form of sexism because of its ostensibly positive nature and because it appears to show affection towards women (Becker & Swim, 2011). Incidents of sexism could also be discounted because the perpetrator's intent is unknown (Becker & Swim, 2011). Even if someone detects subtle sexism, it is easy for offenders to deny that it occurred. Cortina et al., (2013), in their

empirical study, used measures of workplace incivility and job withdrawal to examine the theory of selective incivility. They found that offenders can easily excuse incivility behavior as carelessness, personality, or cultural norms. There may not even be intent to harm or awareness that the behavior is sexist (Swim et al., 2004).

Through secondary data analysis of federal court cases, King et al. (2011) determined that when sexism is overt, it increases the chances of being ruled in favor of the plaintiff. More subtle forms are more readily dismissed. Even when sexism is pointed out to the offender, it can still be difficult to acknowledge as sexist, due to varying perceptions. Modern sexists may even publicly pronounce that they oppose sexism and believe that they do not have any gender bias (Cortina et al., 2013). It is important for organizations to learn more about subtle sexism because doing so improves their understanding of the experiences and perspectives of their employees (King et al., 2011). Because of the variety of experiences and perspectives that people have, sexism can be perceived in a variety of ways.

Perceptions of Sexism

After reviewing literature about researchers applying theories from different disciplines to color blind racial ideology, Banks (2014) reflected that using the term "perception" in conjunction with any form of discrimination can cast a shadow of doubt as to its legitimacy. The term perception is used in this case, not to question if sexism occurred but to display that not everyone views what they see in the same way.

Gender Differences in Perception

Using an empirical study, Basford (2014) determined that although women may be better able to detect subtle forms of sexism than men can, both men and women tend to expect negative work outcomes to result from sexism in the work place, especially as overtness increases. Only at the most blatant levels of sexism does gender not seem to affect perception. Additionally, Basford found that both genders expect more negative outcomes as overtness increases.

Chaudoir and Quinn's (2010) empirical study involved 114 women imagining themselves as bystanders in different situations of men and women interacting, followed by completing a measure (the Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist) of affective reactions. Their study showed that the most common emotions when women witness sexism are anger and fear, however their research was quantitative and may not have included the full realm of emotions that women experience. Their research was also limited to the more overt sexist behavior of cat-calling. Additionally, participants were asked to say how they would feel in an imagined scenario, rather than how they felt about an actual experience they have had.

Effect of Relationships on Perception

The type of sexism and the relationship between target and offender affect how sexism is perceived. Fasoli et al.'s (2015) empirical study used surveys to measure three factors related sexist slurs in a variety of situations. They measured frequency of use, acceptability of the slur, and how pleasant or derogatory the slur was viewed by 36 men and women participants. Sexist derogatory slurs, such as "bitch," are perceived as more

harmful than objectifying slurs, such as “hot chick”. Additionally, when an affective relationship exists between the target and offender, derogatory slurs were more offensive than objectifying slurs, and in a working relationship, derogatory slurs were never acceptable. Whereas derogatory slurs likely include feelings of disgust and contempt towards women, objectifying slurs may be perceived in some situations to involve some level of appreciation of women.

Levels of Severity

In determining when sexist behaviors should be considered severe or pervasive, some courts have adopted the perspective of a reasonable woman, rather than a reasonable person, because women have a different perspective than men. In an empirical analysis of court cases, and a Merit Systems Protection Board survey related to sexual harassment, Druhan (2013) showed that women are 13.8% more likely than men to identify behavior as harassment. Proponents of the reasonable person standard, claim that a reasonable woman standard encourages gender stereotypes. Druhan provided support for the reasonable woman standard, however because of the importance of perception when determining severity and pervasiveness. Determining pervasiveness and severity is a decision process requiring subjective judgement and is subject to bias (Pesta, Dunegan, & Hrivnak, 2007).

Perception could also be affected by the fact that most court cases involve more blatant forms of sexism or discrimination that must meet strict standards for the ruling to be in favor of the plaintiff, therefore subtler forms may appear less legitimate as claims of sexism (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; King et al., 2011). The contrast effect can make subtler

forms of sexism seem like they are not severe enough to be legitimate, when compared to more blatant sexism (Pesta et al., 2007). US federal courts are not in line with the experiences of the American workforce, and because courts are viewed as fair, people may accept the status quo and discredit valid cases of sexism (King et al., 2011). This is significant because by allowing subtle forms of sexism to persist, eventually those subtle behaviors could develop into more blatant ones. Not only should courts consider subtle forms of sexism, but they should also look at the source of the sexism (Druhan, 2013). When a supervisor or person in authority displays the behavior, it may be considered more severe (Druhan, 2013).

Appearance of Benevolence

The positive nature of benevolent sexism hides the harmful outcomes that result from this belief, so that many people do not recognize it as sexist at all (Becker & Swim, 2011; Good & Rudman, 2010). Patronizing types of subtle sexism, such as benevolent sexism, can be so difficult to recognize, that whether the recipient or bystander perceives the behavior as friendly or hostile makes a difference in whether they perceive the behavior as sexist (de Lemus et al., 2012; Good & Rudman, 2010). When sexist behavior was delivered with a smile by a dominant male, women were more likely to behave submissively, without realizing they were doing so (de Lemus et al., 2012). When women embrace traditional roles, they are often rewarded with friendly reactions from men, which can encourage women to view benevolent sexism positively (Glick et al., 2000; Montañés et al., 2012). By supporting benevolent sexist views, women increase the adoration and protection they receive (Glick et al., 2000). Moya et al. (2007) used

surveys to determine that when sexism is justified by a desire to protect women because of their gender, it is often received with more approval than when it is justified with hostility or not justified at all. Even women who would typically reject benevolent sexism can be led to accept it when justified with concern for women's wellbeing (Moya et al., 2007).

Opposing Perspectives

Some people believe that there are natural and inherent differences between men and women (Dick, 2013; Shields, 2013). The differences paradigm of research focuses on these gender differences (Shields, 2013). Others believe that sexism is subjective and cannot be objectively defined (Dick, 2013). Sexism can also be viewed with another dual perspective. People with traditional values about gender norms tend to look more favorably on those who do not violate gender norms (Gaunt, 2013; Glick et al., 2000). The other perspective is that people who have more egalitarian values about gender norms may look more favorably on those who do violate gender norms (Gaunt, 2013). Additionally, this double standard is stronger with those who have the more egalitarian values (Gaunt, 2013). Gaunt (2013) determined this by measuring levels of ambivalent sexism in 311 men and women participants of an empirical study, having them view photographic and written scenarios, then having them rate the people in the scenarios on different dimension.

Prior Experience and Workplace Policies

One possible explanation for gender differences in perception is prior experience (Basford, 2014). If people experience sexism, they are more likely to recognize it in

subsequent instances. Because women are more frequent targets of sexism than men, they may be more likely to detect it (Basford, 2014). Holland and Cortina (2013) used questionnaires (including items from the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire, Occupational Wellbeing, and Mental Health Inventory) to measure to what degree 500 women identified as feminists and the levels of sexual and gender harassment they experienced. They found that women who identify as feminists are also less likely to have gender harassment experiences than women who do not identify as feminists, but when they do experience harassment, they experience greater job dissatisfaction (Holland & Cortina, 2013).

Ironically, the presence of diversity structures or programs, such as diversity training or awards, in an organization can make women likely to view a sexist workplace as procedurally fair (Brady, Kaiser, Major, & Kirby, 2015). Brady et al., (2015) conducted experiments, using photographic vignettes, followed by questionnaires completed by 119 to 249 women to measure perception of disparate treatment, support for litigation about sexism, procedural justice, and perceptions of a diversity training program. They found that diversity structures can cause women to perceive sexist outcomes as legitimate and justified (Brady et al., 2015). This effect is especially strong in women who score high in benevolent sexism, but the same effect occurred with men too (Brady et al., 2015).

Theories Related to Perceptions

Theories, such as social identity theory, indicate that people are inclined to view their own social group favorably, however, with systems justification theory, people are

also inclined to view the current social system, or status quo, favorably (Jost et al., 2004). Jost et al. noted that especially significant is the idea of systems justification theory that the desire to view the status quo favorably may be so strong that it overrides individual or group interests or esteem. Benevolent sexism could result when the desire of women to view the status quo of old-fashioned sexist beliefs favorably overrides their desire to view their own gender group favorably. From a literature review on systems justification theory, Jost et al. found that this type of justification is often seen in marginalized groups who are most harmed by the status quo, and it usually exists at an implicit level, of which they are not aware.

Bystander Perceptions

An important factor, found by Chui and Dietz (2014), that can affect the perceptions of bystanders who witness incivility is the reaction of the target. Chui and Dietz used video vignettes, followed by measures of harm to target and perceived need to intervene, completed by 148 to 168 men and women to examine observer reactions to incivility. They found that if a woman laughs at the event, then bystanders are not as likely to view the event as negative as they would if the woman had appeared offended. If the target reacts by laughing, bystanders will have a more negative view of the event if the target has a working relationship with the offender, rather than a personal relationship. However, if the target reacts neutrally or offended, the target-offender relation will have little effect on the bystander perceptions.

Good and Rudman (2010) conducted an empirical study in which 205 women and men participants completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, and reviewed transcripts

of female applicants and male interviewers. Following this, they rated levels of competence, likeability, and hireability of the applicant and favorability of the interviewer. They found that another factor that affects whether bystanders will view behavior as sexist, is how favorably they view the offender (Good & Rudman, 2010). If offenders appear friendly and are perceived in a positive manner, then their sexist behaviors are less likely to be viewed as sexist and recipients are more likely to be viewed negatively (Good & Rudman, 2010). Some other factors that could affect perceptions of sexism include race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, education, sexual orientation, workplace gender composition, and work experience (Basford, 2014). Just as there are factors that affect perceptions of sexism, there are factors that are often preexisting before sexism occurs.

Antecedents of Sexism

Roets, Van Hiel, and Dhont (2012) had 179 to 222 men and women participants complete questionnaires (Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, Need for Closure Scale, and the Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale) measuring ambivalent sexism, need for closure, organizational citizenship, right wing authoritarianism, and social dominance orientation. They found that compared to social attitudes, gender is a minor predictor of sexist beliefs (Roets, Van Hiel, & Dhont, 2012). It is important to understand antecedents because organizations wanting to address sexism may need to not only address issues of sexism, but also the factors that can lead to it. Certain factors (attitudinal, cognitive, emotional, and personality) correlate with a person's willingness to accept social or cultural stereotypes (Carter, Hall, Carney, & Rosip, 2006). The purpose of Carter et al.'s

(2006) study was to examine 95 to 424 women and men's willingness to study and conduct a correlational analysis on four potential correlates: attitudinal, cognitive, personality, and emotional. Six studies used the following scales obtain various measures: Acceptance of Stereotyping Questionnaire, Benevolent Sexism Scale, Hostile Sexism Scale, Modern Sexism Scale, Modern Racism Scale, Attitudes Towards Blacks Scale, Universalism Scale, Social Dominance Orientation Scale, Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale, Implicit Theories Measure, Hierarchy Expectation Scale, Faith in People Scale, Powerful Others Scale, Need for Cognition Scale, Personal Need for Structure Scale, Need to Evaluate Scale, Levels of Emotional Awareness Scale, Physiognomic Cue Test, Opener Scale, Self-Esteem Scale, Big Five Inventory, and Marlowe– Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Carter et al., 2006).

Stereotyping was associated with less liberal views of gender roles, authoritarian attitudes, preference for hierarchies, stronger views of social dominance, less universal outlook, more simplistic ways of describing emotions of others, less utilization of emotional information, more utilization of social categories like gender or race, less agreeable personality, and more rigid and simplistic cognitive styles (Carter et al., 2006). People who stereotype others tend to focus on the weaknesses of others, rather than their strengths (Vescio et al., 2005). People who are politically conservative are more likely to approve the status quo and resist change (Jost et al., 2004; Roets et al., 2012). People with sexist attitudes are more likely to be closeminded and do not like to have their beliefs challenged (Roets et al., 2012). In places where the general sexism level is higher, women are more likely to display greater levels of benevolent sexism (Zakrisson et al.,

2012). Researchers have shown that females and Black people are less accepting of stereotypes than men and Caucasians (Carter et al., 2006).

Male dominated organizations may be especially prone to having gender stereotypes (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Logel et al., 2009). In these organizations, some men may view women as not belonging, so their gender becomes more salient in day to day activities (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Logel et al., 2009). For example, at scientific symposia, when organized only by men, only 29% of the presenters are women, when women organize the symposia 64% of women are presenters, and when a mixed gender group organizes the event, 58% of presenters are women (Isbell, Young, & Harcourt, 2012). The more male dominated an organization is, the more likely women are to encounter gender incivility (Cortina et al., 2013; Settles, Cortina, Buchanan, & Miner, 2012).

In social identity theory, being a member of a group is a part of how people identify themselves, so positive views of that group are important (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The number of social identity threat sources, such as in male dominated organizations, is relevant to the negative outcomes of gender stereotypes for women (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Even female dominated organizations, though, can have gender stereotypical expectations for their employees (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). The number of other people identified with a person's social identity also affects the level of threat they feel (Steele et al., 2002). Social identity threat is likely to be triggered when one's social identity appears to be viewed as important in the workplace or when there is a culture of

exclusion for that identity (Steele et al., 2002). Organizational culture is a significant factor in whether sexism exists in the workplace.

Cultural tightness is an example of an antecedent of sexism. Toh and Leonardelli (2013) describe cultural tightness as how strong norms are, as well as how low the tolerance for deviance is. For example, in a tight culture, someone could be arrested for displaying certain behaviors, but in a loose culture, they might just receive disapproving stares. Toh and Leonardelli explain that women leaders are more likely to be found in loose cultures than in tight ones. Tight cultures may need quotas to address gender discrimination in the workplace, and loose cultures may work better with role models. Organizations need to find ways to address sexism to avoid negative outcomes.

Negative Outcomes

Even though there are known negative outcomes of subtle sexism, it is still often not recognized as harmful (Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Good & Rudman, 2010). When women interact with a sexist person, they can pick up on subtle behavioral clues that make them aware that the person has sexist attitudes (Logel, et al., 2009). After exposing 83 women to photographic or written vignettes, Lemonaki et al. (2015) measured participant levels of security and comfort, preselected emotions, and willingness to compete. They discovered that when women experience hostile sexism, the result is feelings of anger and frustration, as well as a decreased sense of security and comfort, which results in a decreased willingness to compete with men. Researchers have shown that subtle sexism is more likely to be overlooked, not recognized as sexist, and result in inaction, which has led some researchers to conclude that benevolent sexism is more

harmful than hostile sexism (Good & Rudman, 2010; Hideg & Ferris, 2016). As early as the 1800s enlightened women were aware of the harms of sexism disguised as benevolence (Grimké, 1838/2015). Grimké (1838/2015), a first wave feminist, asserted that flattery, benevolence, and courtesies that treat women as if they are children, are injurious because it makes women seem inferior.

Difficulties of Recognizing Harm

Cundiff et al., (2014) conducted experiments using controlled groups playing games that gave men advantages. In these studies, pre and postquestionnaires measured perceptions of everyday sexism, engagement, reactance, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions. They found that detecting the harms of subtle sexism is difficult because it is distal and cumulative, meaning the effects are not immediately observable; however, over time, the effects do become harmful (Cundiff et al., 2014).

Those who have experienced sexism will sometimes not be aware of the subtle ways that they are negatively affected (Foynes, Shipherd, & Harrington, 2013; Good & Rudman, 2010; Hideg & Ferris, 2016). Most cases of subtle sexism are not actionable, making it harder to address sexism, even though it is harmful (Hebl et al., 2007). People will often observe the harms of overt sexism without realizing that subtle sexism is also harmful (Cundiff et al., 2014). For this reason, it is important to increase awareness of the harms of subtle sexism (Cundiff et al., 2014).

Health and Wellbeing

Different types of sexism, such as discrimination, stereotyping and gender microaggressions, have been found to have negative effects on health and wellbeing, as

well as on life chances (Araujo, & Borrell, 2006; Basford, 2014; Nadal et al., 2014; Von Hippel, Sekaquaptewa, & McFarlane, 2015). Cortina et al. (2013) and Settles et al., (2012) conducted empirical studies with 353 women and men participants completing the following surveys and scales: Texas A&M University Campus Climate Survey, Organizational Sexism Towards Women, Michigan Faculty Work-Life Study, and Gender Fairness Environment Scale. Their studies showed that workplace gender incivility results in increased stress, distraction, and turnover, and decreased satisfaction, creativity, cooperation, and commitment (Cortina et al., 2013; Settles et al., 2012).

Hall, Schmader, and Croft's (2015) empirical study involved 96 women and men participants keeping diaries to track their workplace interactions over time. Participants completed measures to determine how those social interactions affected social identity threat (the experience when a social group with which one identifies is stereotyped as inferior). They found that social identity threat increases the likelihood of mental exhaustion and burnout. This was especially true when men view women as incompetent, but not so much when women view other women as incompetent. In addition to causing harm in the workplace, such as negative attitudes, sexism can cause health problems that spill over into personal lives (Sojo et al., 2016).

Many types of subtle sexism are linked with psychological distress (Judson, 2014). Other negative outcomes include increased levels of stress and depression, lower income levels, and less educational achievement (Araujo & Borrell, 2006). Foynes et al. (2013) conducted a longitudinal study using questionnaires (Workplace Discriminatory Inventory, SF12 Health Survey, and the Beck Anxiety Inventory), completed by 1, 516

men and women over a ten-year period, to measure perceived gender discrimination, health functioning, and severity of anxiety symptoms. They found that people who have experienced gender-based discrimination have higher levels of mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression (Foynes et al., 2013). The anxiety of expecting gender related rejection, is associated with increased alienation (often tinged with anger), as well as, decreases in motivation, performance, and likelihood of seeking help (London et al., 2012).

King et al. (2012) used surveys completed by 155 to 1,506 women and men to determine gender differences in a variety of workplace experiences. As a result of this empirical study, they suggested that paternalistic behavior can result in reduced self-esteem and self-efficacy, due to women being assigned fewer challenging assignments in the workplace, and eventually even believing that they are not capable of them (King et al., 2012).

Performance

Subtle sexism also negatively affects performance (Good & Rudman, 2010; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Montañés et al., 2012). Stereotype threat theory addresses the idea that when people are concerned about being negatively stereotyped, their interest, motivation, ambition, and performance are negatively affected (Emerson & Murphy, 2015; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Logel et al., 2009; Steele et al., 2002; Von Hippel et al., 2015). When chronically exposed to stereotype threat, women will leave their career field before they reach higher level positions (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Logel et al., 2009; Von Hippel et al., 2015). Barriers to success in the workplace include stereotypes, feelings of incompetence,

and lack of successful women role models (Michailidis, Morphitou, & Theophylatou, 2012).

When receiving patronizing behavior from a male superior, women are more likely than men to have decreased performance, even though their desire and motivation to succeed is just as strong (Gervais & Vescio, 2012; Vescio et al., 2005). Vescio et al. (2005) conducted an empirical study involving correlational analyses of patronizing behavior and performance of 182 to 242 women and men. The study results showed that patronizing behavior results in feelings of anger that decrease performance of women, but men in the same situation experienced increases in performance (Vescio et al., 2005). Gervais and Vescio's (2012) empirical study assigned113 to 132 men and women participants to different conditions of patronizing behavior and had them complete scholastic tests to determine the effects on performance. The researchers found that when women believe that they have some control over the outcomes of their performance (i.e. receiving better future assignments), their performance is improved (Gervais & Vescio, 2012). When the person displaying patronizing behavior is responsible for determining the rewards for performance, women feel that they have less control over the outcomes (Gervais & Vescio, 2012).

Gervais et al. (2011) conducted an empirical study in which 150 men and women completed scholastic assessments before and after they received objectifying gazes. They found that, as with patronizing behavior, the performance of women decreases when receiving objectifying gazes, another subtle form of sexism. Steele et al.'s (2002) empirical study that manipulated stereotype experiences and had participants complete

math tests, found that negative stereotypes caused decreased performance. Additionally, when a person who displays sexist behavior towards a woman is well liked by employee observers (regardless of gender), the perceived performance of the woman, by those observers, is negatively affected, regardless of her actual performance (Good & Rudman, 2010).

Intent to Leave the Organization

In addition to reduced performance, a person's gender has a significant effect on the likelihood of receiving uncivil treatment or microaggressions in the workplace, which, in turn, affects intent to leave (Basford, 2014; Cortina et al., 2013). If a woman is a member of another marginalized group, such as race, the effects are worse (Cortina et al., 2013). Intersectionality compounds the outcomes. Sexism creates negative workplace environments, which can lead to decreased job satisfaction, especially related to their coworkers and supervisors (Settles et al., 2012; Sojo, Wood, & Genat, 2016). When women leave fields of work because of gender stereotypes, that career field can significantly lack women's perspectives, as is commonly found in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

Effects on Career Development

Some women, when exposed to benevolent sexism, react by emphasizing their relational skills, rather than their task skills, and are more likely to relinquish leadership to a male team member (Barreto et al., 2009). They will do this more when exposed to benevolent sexism, rather than hostile sexism (Barreto et al., 2009). They are even more likely to emphasize relational skills when the person who exhibited the benevolent sexist

behavior is expected to be collaborator. Although benevolent sexism may appear to be affectionate, it is a condescending belief because it promotes the idea that women are weak and incompetent (Becker & Swim, 2011; Good & Rudman, 2010; Hebl et al., 2007; King et al., 2012; Lemonaki et al., 2015). Even though men and women both desire challenging assignments in the workplace, men often receive more challenging assignments, and receive more criticism, than women (King et al., 2012). This suggests, in line with theories of ambivalent and benevolent sexism, that people in the workplace still feel that they need to protect women (King et al., 2012). The significant differences in quantity and quality of assignments is often minimized, so that these kinds of subtle differences persist (King et al., 2012). These gender stereotypes may also be limiting the access of women to higher levels of leadership (King et al., 2012; Latu et al., 2011; Lemonaki et al., 2015).

Women who receive objectifying behavior from men are likely to feel threatened because they believe that they are valued for their looks, rather than for their skills or other characteristics (Gervais et al., 2011). In the empirical study by Gervais et al. (2011), teams of two were assigned in which the team leader was a trained confederate. The team leader was responsible for interviewing the participant, who was responsible for then completing some math problems. The 150 women and men participants were randomly assigned to either a control group or to receive objectifying gazes and compliments about appearance. The results showed that men who received similar gazes were not as negatively affected as women. This type of subtle ideology, that women are weaker and less competent, can reinforce power differences in the workplace (Becker & Swim, 2011;

Good & Rudman, 2010; Lemonaki et al., 2015). Women may be unconsciously reinforcing these power differences by accepting subtle sexism, such as benevolent sexism (de Lemus et al., 2012; Glick et al., 2000). The power differences promoted through benevolent sexism exacerbates ideas of male superiority and competencies (de Lemus et al., 2012; Good & Rudman, 2010).

Women who receive objectifying gazes may unknowingly perpetuate power differences (Gervais et al., 2011). Women who have received objectifying gazes from a work partner will often have increased motivation to interact with that partner (Gervais et al., 2011; Logel et al., 2009). The reason for this could be that stereotype threat causes an uncertainty of belonging, resulting in women making a greater effort to interact with the offending partner, and can be a difficult cycle to break (Gervais et al., 2011; Logel et al., 2009). Praising women for things that they are stereotypically good at does not motivate them to participate in less stereotypical activities, such as taking on leadership roles (Barreto et al., 2009).

Subtle forms of sexism, such as benevolent sexism, hinder career development of women and keeps them in traditional roles (Hideg & Ferris, 2016; Montañés et al., 2012). Hideg and Ferris's (2016) empirical study used the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, as well as measures of attitudes towards an equal employment policy to show that benevolent sexism undermines equal employment policies. This happens because those with benevolent sexist beliefs support equal employment, but only for jobs that match traditional gender roles. Montañés et al.'s (2012) empirical study, involving 328 women, looked at the relation between levels of benevolent sexism and education levels and job

attainment. They used measures including the Future Goals Scale, Ambivalent Sexism Inventory for Adolescents, and Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, to show that academic advancement was affected by benevolent sexism.

Expectations states theory involves the idea that some people are viewed with more power, prestige, and status, and, therefore, have increased opportunities to speak, are taken more seriously, and are more influential (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003). Using questionnaires that measure sexism and managerial success, Latu et al. (2011) found that men are implicitly viewed as having successful managerial traits, more than women are, which leads to increased positive workplace outcomes for men, such as better assignments. These negative implicit views of women are more common among men than women. Implicit views are often negative, but explicit views provide more positive perceptions of women, perhaps because people do not want to admit their sexist views.

From a review of research related to the workplace effects of discrimination, Araujo and Borrell (2006) found that the negative outcomes may include differential treatment and the denial of opportunities. Increased benevolent sexism can result in decreased empowerment of women to have high powered positions, as well as decreased levels of education and standards of living (Glick et al., 2000; Montañés et al., 2012). A woman who receives objectifying comments, such as being told that she is cute, may believe that she is not taken seriously (Glick & Fisk, 1996). An increase in benevolent sexism decreases hiring opportunities because it decreases the appearance of competence (Good & Rudman, 2010). Sexist behaviors reinforce social systems where women

occupy a lower status than men and can negatively affect organizational climate (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010).

Hebl et al. (2007) conducted a naturalistic field study, where pregnant women entered a shopping store and acted in either traditional or nontraditional roles. Observers acting as shoppers watched for either hostile or benevolent sexist reactions. They found that ambivalent sexism, where women are viewed with hostility when in nontraditional roles, and viewed with benevolence when in traditional roles, may discourage women from pursuing jobs that violate gender norms (Hebl et al., 2007). In the workplace, women are faced with a double-edged sword; to be successful often requires having nonstereotypical gender characteristics, which also results in an increase in encountering harassment (Leskinen et al., 2015). Leskinen et al. determined this by using surveys in which women described themselves, their jobs, and their experiences with harassment.

Harms when Sexism is Subtle

Many researchers have examined the effects of overt discrimination, but fewer have examined the effects of the subtler daily discrimination experiences (Claybourn et al., 2014; Druhan, 2013; Johnson, Mitchell, Bean, Richeson, & Shelton, 2010; Malos, 2015; Lemonaki et al., 2015). Surprisingly, it is the less intense, but more frequent experiences with sexism that are more harmful than the more intense and overt, but less frequent ones (Sojo et al., 2016). By conducting a meta-analysis with correlational measures of 88 studies, Sojo et al. (2016) determined that less intense, but more frequent sexism has a direct effect on mental health, but more intense and less frequent sexism only has an indirect effect through the mediator of job attitudes. The mere lack of

women, or having “token” women in an organization, industry, or career field can be a subtle, yet harmful, form of gender stereotype (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). It is the chronic, daily discriminatory events that are the better predictors of poor mental health, rather than acute events (Sojo et al., 2016). Organizations should be cautious about distinguishing between levels of severity of sexism, because that can lead to the assumption that more overt forms are more harmful (Sojo et al., 2016).

Negative Outcomes for Bystanders

Even bystanders and witnesses to sexist behavior experience negative outcomes (Basford, 2014; Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010; Settles et al., 2012). Bystanders to subtle sexism, such as workplace incivility, show decreased levels of satisfaction and commitment, as well as increases in burn-out and intent to quit (Cortina et al., 2013; Settles et al., 2012). Settles et al. (2012) used questionnaires measuring workplace gender mistreatment, organizational climate, and job satisfaction of 353 women and men science and engineering faculty members. The researchers determined that when sexism is occurring in the workplace, the resulting negative climate can impact the satisfaction of all employees (Settles et al., 2012).

Because women are more likely to perceive behavior as sexist, they are also more likely to experience the negative effects of being a bystander to sexist behavior (Basford, 2014). Chaudoir & Quinn (2010) conducted an empirical study for which 114 women imagined themselves as bystanders to various situations of men interacting with women, then completed the Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist to measure their affective reactions. The research showed that women who have witnessed sexist behavior of men

have negative emotions and motivations towards men at the group level, which could have negative implications workplace interactions (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010). More specifically, when women witnessed sexist behavior towards another woman, the result was often feelings of anger and fear, and the desire for the women to either move against or away from men. Fear is more likely to be the result when women feel helpless, but anger is the result when they believe they have the resources and support needed to counteract the sexist behavior (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010). Not only are these outcomes harmful for women, but they are also harmful to men in general, because effective relationships with women can be damaged due to someone else's behavior.

Organizational Harm

Organizations can be harmed by subtle sexism, such as gender incivility, because of the financial impacts from workplace distraction, accidents, substance abuse, absences, conflict, productivity decline, and turnover (Cortina et al., 2013; Settles et al., 2012). Sexism also results in the loss of talented personnel, damage to the organization's reputation, weakened recruiting efforts, and legal costs and disruptions in the workplace (Malos, 2015). Even though sexism usually must be overt to be considered legitimate from a legal perspective, organizations could reduce court costs by addressing issues of subtle sexism before they reach the courts (King et al., 2011; Malos, 2015).

Reactions to and Reporting Sexism

Reactions to sexism can vary from ignoring the incident, to laughing about it, crying about it, or retaliating against the offender (Chui & Dietz, 2014). People may feel helpless to act because of the pervasiveness of subtle sexism (Cundiff et al., 2014).

Workplace policies that require people to confront harassers or sexists, fail to take into consideration the many complexities that affect whether someone is willing to report an incident of sexism (Dick, 2013).

If women believe that men are less likely to identify subtler forms of sexism, as researchers have shown is the case (e.g. see Basford, 2014; Carter et al., 2006; Martinez, Paterna, Roux, & Falomirc, 2010), then women may be less inclined to report these incidents to male supervisors. Women may fear that male supervisors will disagree with their perception of sexism. Targets of sexism may also be averse to being labeled as victims (Dick, 2013).

Johnson et al. (2010) conducted a study in which 58 women and men participants were exposed to changing conditions of sexist or nonsexist behavior, then completed measures of cognitive depletion. They discovered that when people try to suppress or regulate the emotions they feel after encountering sexism, they are less able to successfully complete tasks that also require emotional suppression or regulation (Johnson et al., 2010). However, if a woman is empowered, has strong self-efficacy, and believes that she can succeed, despite the sexism she encounters, then she is more likely to successfully react against sexism (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).

As previously mentioned, some women, when exposed to subtle sexism, react in ways that support stereotypical beliefs (Barreto et al., 2009; Miller & Borgida, 2016). They often react this way, without even being aware that the reaction is subtly sexist (Barreto et al., 2009). When women encounter benevolent sexism, their tolerance for

sexism is more likely to increase; however, when they encounter hostile sexism, they are more likely to resist (de Lemus et al., 2012).

It is especially important for bystanders to intervene because of the ethical consideration that all humans have the right to be treated with respect (Chui & Dietz, 2014). After reviewing the literature related to men as allies against sexism, Drury and Kaiser (2014) summarized that seeing someone else intervene can empower others to react in the same way when they encounter sexist behaviors. When bystanders observe sexist behaviors, they first evaluate the level of harm, and then decide if intervention is needed, and if so, how they should react (Chui & Dietz, 2014). Just because the bystander determines that harm was caused (perhaps because the target is crying) does not mean that they will intervene (Chui & Dietz, 2014). The perceived consequences of intervening can affect the decision to intervene (Chui & Dietz, 2014; Drury & Kaiser, 2014). Observing has only low costs to the observer, but intervening could potentially involve high costs. Not only does the observer need to recognize that the incident is an ethical or moral issue, but they need to determine that the incident was severe enough to be worth the potential costs (Chui & Dietz, 2014). Whether the bystander decides that intervention is required often depends on what they believe is the motive of the offender.

Drury and Kaiser (2014) completed a review of literature about using men as allies against sexism and came to the following conclusions. They found that when sexist behavior is reported, it is more likely to be viewed as sexist when it is reported by a man. Although, researchers have shown that this is likely because men do not benefit from reporting sexism (Drury & Kaiser, 2014), it can also be viewed as another example of

gender power differences. Despite the appearance of power differences, Drury and Kaiser found that when men are the bystanders, and they choose to intervene, they can be powerful allies. They also found that men who are relationally oriented (characterized by social responsibility and a motivation to help others) are more willing to confront sexism and serve as allies. Because men are often the ones displaying sexist behaviors, it is critical for them to be key players in addressing and confronting sexism, and serving as role models for others (hooks, 1988/2000). Men who confront sexism are more likely to be taken seriously and their complaints are more likely than women to be taken seriously (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). Rather than protecting women from harm, they should be viewed as joining women as partners against sexism.

The cost of confronting sexism can prevent people from reporting it, and men who report sexism experience fewer costs than women who report it (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). Drury and Kaiser (2014) found that both men and women who confront sexism are viewed as complainers, however, this happens less so with men than women. When men confront sexism, however, it can make complaints by women seem more legitimate, changing the norms of the organization. Men as allies could appear to perpetuate beliefs that women need men as protectors, but it could also be argued that men are working with women, rather than for them. To recruit anyone as an ally against sexism, however, they must first be aware that the problem exists.

Awareness

It is important to increase awareness of sexism in the workplace, especially of the subtler forms that are less detectable (Basford, 2014; de Lemus et al., 2012; Swim et al.,

2004). Awareness is the first step to having an inclusive workplace and changing a work culture with sexist behaviors (Basford, 2014; Sewpaul, 2013). Swim et al.'s (2004) empirical study using the Modern Sexism Scale found that when subtle sexism is an everyday or common experience, it becomes more difficult to notice, so increasing awareness and learning to critically appraise behavior is critical. Supervisors need to become more aware that even seemingly kind acts can be harmful and limit the career development and advancement of women (King et al., 2012). Awareness unfreezes old behavioral patterns, by causing employees to become more in tune to their own behavior (Basford, 2014). To change oppressive behavior, people need to critique their everyday actions, which allows them to become aware of how their thoughts and actions affect others (Sewpaul, 2013).

Feminism is described by Martinez et al. (2010) as a five-stage process. The five stages include accepting the status quo, revelation and questioning the status quo, united and connecting with other women and feminist supporters, developing a feminist identity, and active commitment in collective actions. The most important phase is the revelation phase, where traditional roles are questioned and awareness develops. It is no longer enough, however, just to challenge traditional roles and norms; organizations today need to address the subtler forms of sexism creating inequalities (Martinez et al., 2010). Just because women can be found in high level positions, does not mean that sexism has been eliminated.

Neosexism, and similar beliefs that deny the existence of inequalities, are a barrier to increasing awareness of sexism (Martinez et al., 2010). Researchers have shown that

women who pay attention to sexism in their daily activities are more likely to oppose modern sexist, neosexist, and benevolent sexist beliefs (Becker & Swim, 2011). The same research showed that men who paid attention to sexism during their daily activities were not more likely to oppose these sexist beliefs. In a study where 261 men and women completed several questionnaires (Neo-Sexism Scale, Feminist Identity Development Scale, and the Gender Role Subscale of the Liberal Feminist Attitude and Ideology Scale) that measured sexist beliefs, gender awareness, identification with feminism, and ideologies, Martinez et al. (2010) found that men are more likely to have neosexist attitudes than women. For these men to oppose the sexist beliefs, not only did they need to increase their attention and awareness, but they also needed to increase their emotional empathy for the targets of sexism (Becker & Swim, 2011).

Empathy and Perspective Taking

When people learn how others perceive subtle sexism, they can be surprised to learn how condescending and patronizing it can feel to some (Cundiff et al., 2014). Considering the emotions and perspectives of others can result in decreased stereotyping (Carter et al., 2006; Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008; Vescio, 2003). Perspective taking refers to the act of seeing the world through someone else's viewpoint (Gilin, Maddux, Carpenter, & Galinsky, 2013). Empathy refers to the affective ability to recognize the emotions of, and feel sympathy for others (Gilin et al., 2013). Gilin et al. (2013) used empirical experiments in which participants played simulated competitive games and completed measures to determine the effects of empathy and perspective taking on the outcomes of the game. They found that perspective taking improves the cognitive

understanding of how other people think, whereas empathy improves the emotional understanding of how others feel (Gilin et al., 2013). They are related constructs that can work effectively together to reduce conflict (Gilin et al., 2013; Skorinko & Sinclair, 2013). Empathy can mediate the relationship between perspective taking and positive intergroup attitudes (Vescio, 2003). Weng, Fox, Hessenthaler, Stodola, and Davidson (2015) used laboratory experiments involving compassion training and computerized games in which participants could punish others. They found that increasing empathy and compassion for others can increase altruistic behavior towards others (Weng, Fox, Hessenthaler, Stodola, & Davidson, 2015).

Taking the perspective of others can reduce stereotypical judgements (Ku et al., 2010; Todd et al., 2011; Vescio, 2003). Using an empirical study designed to determine how perspective taking by 32 men and women participants affected behavior and judgement related to stereotypes, Ku et al. (2010) found that taking the perspective of others consistently and significantly moderates the stereotype related behavior and judgement of the perspective taker. Reflecting on experiences and discussing them with others has been shown to improve perception of subtle sexism and increase understanding of how to react to observations of subtle sexism (Cundiff et al., 2014). When looking through their own perspectives, women viewed cases of sexism as more severe than men did, however, when viewing sexism from the perspective of the opposite gender, the reverse occurs (Pesto et al., 2007). Organizations could consider the truth to lie somewhere in the middle (Pesto et al., 2007). Laws related to and legal definitions of

sexist behavior do not provide a full understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the recipients of and witnesses to these behaviors (Nye, Brummel, & Drasgow, 2009).

Not all research, however, is supportive of perspective taking as a way for reducing stereotyping. Paluck's (2010) longitudinal empirical study exposed different regions of the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to different versions of a radio show designed to increase perspectives of certain disliked outgroups. The research, which included 842 people, concluded that perspective taking can sometimes increase intolerant attitudes and decrease support for outgroup members. Paluck explained that this could be the result of just hearing about other perspectives, rather than having discussions with those who have different points of view. The results could also be culturally specific, but an American study also suggested similar results. The study involved participants viewing images of varying levels of stereotypes and then writing essays about a day in the life of the people in the images. The results showed that when perspective takers encounter someone with stereotypical behaviors, it can increase the stereotypical beliefs of the perspective taker. This could mean that perspective taking should be used cautiously as an intervention tool. Skorinko and Sinclair (2013), also stated that the participants heard different perspectives, but had limited information about those people who had different perspectives, which may have limited empathy.

Despite these cautions, perspective taking generally is still effective at reducing stereotyping (Skorinko & Sinclair, 2013). Todd et al. (2011) conducted an empirical study in which participants viewed or read vignettes of a person, then wrote about a day in that person's life. Some participants were instructed to consider the perspective of that

person. The results of the study showed that perspective taking increases the likelihood of believing that discrimination persists. Todd et al. found that perspective taking also increases positive attitudes towards workplace efforts to address inequalities. The positive effects of perspective taking are a result of identifying with people who are different.

Because of the value of men as allies, Drury and Kaiser (2014) determined that it is important to increase their ability to detect sexism). One way to do this is to make them more aware of their privileged place in society and the pervasiveness of sexism by understanding women's perspectives. Drury and Kaiser stated that men need to learn that just because a woman does not confront a perpetrator of sexism, it does not mean she was not harmed. Men should also learn the barriers to reporting sexism.

With globalization of organizations and the increasing diversity of workplaces, which will likely change views on gender and sexuality, it is especially important for people to be able to understand the perspectives of others (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). Hostile and benevolent sexism is a pervasive problem across many cultures (Glick et al., 2000). Understanding the experiences of others can improve group interactions (Todd et al., 2011; Vescio, 2003). Perspective taking can be an effective tool for improving the climate of diverse workplaces because it causes the perspective taker to find commonality with other people (Ku et al., 2010; Todd et al., 2011).

Workplace Policies

It is important to have workplace policies that address sexism because women experience more gender microaggressions in the workplace and academic settings than in

other environments (Nadal et al., 2014). Bobbit-Zeher (2011) found that gender stereotyping can combine with organizational factors, such as structure, gender composition, and discretionary policies to create workplace inequalities. Sometimes organizations, with a primary concern about the appearance of fairness, will have policies that appear gender neutral, but still cause women and men to be treated differently (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). These types of policies are often created by decision makers who have gender stereotypical beliefs (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011).

Unfortunately, the mere presence of diversity structures or policies, such as diversity training and awards, can even cause women, especially those high in benevolent sexism, to view the organizational outcomes as fair, even when those outcomes are sexist (Brady et al., 2015). It is important to be sure that policies are rooted in justice, because if women view the organization as fair, it is more difficult to address sexist behavior in the workplace (Brady et al., 2015). If women believe the organization is fair, these women will be more inclined to minimize discrimination and be less supportive of other women who express concerns about sexist behaviors (Brady et al., 2015).

Roehling and Wright's (2006) theoretical article cautioned organizational leaders about legal-centric decision making. They stated that some organizations will have a policy of trying to keep women and men from interacting, to avoid problems with harassment or sexism. Unfortunately, they found that this type of legal-centric decision making can create barriers to advancement for women and can perpetuate "good old boy" networks. Ironically, it can also increase the likelihood of having claims of sexism. It is

important for organizations to consider organizational values when making policy decisions.

Some organizations have affirmative action policies to increase their diversity. An empirical study by Fraser et al. (2015) involved correlational analyses of data collected from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study, which included measures for social dominance orientation, ambivalent sexism, opposition to gender-based affirmative action, and relevant demographic covariates. The study found that affirmative action programs are viewed as reverse discrimination by opponents, but supporters of such programs claim that more harm is done to organizations and their employees by not increasing diversity. People who are high in social dominance, meaning they prefer society to have a hierarchical order, tend to oppose affirmative action programs (Fraser et al., 2015). Hideg and Ferris (2016) also conducted an empirical study in which 90 to 713 men and women completed measures of ambivalent sexism and attitudes about an equal employment program and found results in common with Fraser et al., (2015). People who are high in benevolent sexism are likely to support gender affirmative action programs, because, on the surface, benevolent sexists believe that they are very supportive of women (Fraser et al., 2015; Hideg & Ferris, 2016). Although they are often supportive of hiring women, they tend to prefer them in positions that comply with traditional gender roles (Fraser et al., 2015; Hideg & Ferris, 2016). Support for affirmative action does not necessarily equal support for having women in nontraditional workplace roles, such as leadership positions (Fraser et al., 2015; Hideg & Ferris, 2016).

Organizations can be described as entity or incremental. According to Emerson and Murphy (2015), an entity organization will attempt to recruit the best people because they believe that abilities are limited, and that people have fixed traits that make them good at their jobs or not. Making mistakes in an entity organization can lead to increased anxiety, because of the fear that it can be viewed as not having what it takes to perform. Incremental organizations believe that talent can be developed, and mistakes can be overcome from persistence and dedication to improvement.

Emerson and Murphy (2015) conducted an empirical study in which 144 women and men participants read an organizational mission statement, watched a video about the organization, and looked at its website, after which they completed measures of organizational trust, and expectations of stereotyping. Finally, they were asked to imagine that a manager had given them a poor performance rating, after which they completed a measure of expected level of disengagement. They found that women have more distrust than men of entity organizations because they fear that they will be stereotyped. Because of stereotype threat, women may feel that they are not viewed as having the required skills for certain positions, such as leadership roles, so they may keep away from entity organizations (Emerson & Murphy, 2015; Logel et al., 2009). Thus, organizational cultures may create barriers for women without realizing it and can attract a broader workforce by looking at whether the company has an entity or incremental characteristic (Emerson & Murphy, 2015). Even though blatant discrimination is acknowledged, and employment laws exist, income inequality persists because other factors that are subtler

perpetuate the status quo (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). Benevolent sexism, because of its subtlety, leads to inaction in enforcing workplace equality (Hideg & Ferris, 2016).

When organizations have gender discrimination problems, they often have other broader problems with climate, culture, human resources practices, structure, leadership, and strategy (Stamarski & Hing, 2015). Rather than waiting for women to complain about sexist behaviors, organizations should be proactive in stopping them before complaints are filed (Drury & Kaiser, 2014).

Suggestions for Interventions

A variety of interventions could be used to address sexism in the workplace. Interventions can be healing for those who have witnessed or experienced sexist behaviors, and they can also promote a climate of respect in the workplace (Chui & Dietz, 2014). Unfortunately, interventions are not as common as they should be.

Differences in the ability to detect subtle sexism can create challenges when trying to create an inclusive workplace, but what men may view as fair may be viewed differently by women (Basford, 2014). No matter what intervention is used, it is critical that organizations consider the perspectives of women when planning to address workplace sexism, equality, and inclusiveness. Though organizations often do this when addressing blatant sexism such as sexual harassment, it is necessary to do the same for addressing subtle sexism in the workplace.

Ensuring that female role models exist can be a useful intervention for an organization (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Williams, Kilanski, and Muller (2014) conducted a phenomenological study using interviews of 30 women geoscientists to assess diversity

management programs. They discovered that although male role models may be useful in some ways, they cannot provide the same level of understanding about sexism as women role models (Williams, Kilanski, & Muller, 2014). It is important to choose successful women role models or the intervention could have negative effects (Toh & Leonardelli, 2013). Role models prove that success can be achieved and provide an example of behaviors required to accomplish this (Lockwood, 2006). Because women face more negative stereotypes than men do, providing gender matched role models is more beneficial for women than for men (Lockwood, 2006; Williams, Kilanski, & Muller, 2014). Lockwood (2006) used several studies where 87 to 148 women and men participants read about gender matched role models, then completed measures about the role models' successfulness, their own successfulness, and to what extent they related to the role model. The studies showed that having an example of a woman who succeeded in breaking barriers, helps women to feel more confident and competent in the workplace. Not only can having successful women role models increase workplace performance, but it may possibly even reduce other negative outcomes of gender stereotypes. Recruiting to increase women into fields where they are underrepresented can also remove the perception of tokenism (Von Hippel et al., 2015).

Experiments in a longitudinal repeated measures design study, were used to determine if diversity training affected attitudes (Ehrke, Berthold, & Steffens, 2014). The results of the study showed that effective diversity training increases the positive and decreases the negative perceptions that people have about those who are viewed as different (Ehrke et al., 2014).

Tajfel and Turner (1979) developed social identity theory to explain how people self-identify within society. People need to feel that their social identity is safe in the workplace (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Women who are exposed to sexism may experience loss of self-esteem, however if they receive affirming feedback about any of their other group memberships, the loss of self-esteem is reduced (Spencer-Rogers, Major, Forster, & Peng, 2016). Positive affirmations are beneficial in increasing resilience and reducing the harmful effects of sexism (Spencer-Rogers, Major, Forster, & Peng, 2016).

Malos (2015) found that accountability has been underemphasized as a preventative measure. By disciplining people who display sexist behavior, organizations could eliminate offensive people and provide incentive for more professional behavior of others. Rather than trying to justify sexist behavior in court cases, it could be more beneficial for organizations to admit when sexism has been detected and take corrective action to improve the workplace climate.

Increasing awareness is a critical part of any intervention program and is the key to unfreezing old behavioral patterns and promoting long term cultural change (Basford, 2014). New employees should receive workplace civility training (Cortina et al., 2013). Training should not simply provide information but should engage employees in discussions to be most effective (Cundiff et al., 2014). Targets of sexism should learn the importance of expressing their concern and not laughing off or ignoring sexist incidents, so that observers can better assess the seriousness of an event (Chui & Dietz, 2014). Education and training can provide guidance about how employees should respond when

they see sexist behaviors, and how they can offer support to victims (Basford, 2014; Sojo et al., 2016). Training should also include discussion about the fact that many observers choose not to intervene, and why this happens, so that bystanders can become more aware of when they are choosing this reaction (Chui & Dietz, 2014). Support programs often focus on the victim, but because even bystanders can be negatively affected by sexist behaviors, support should be available for them too (Basford, 2014). The broad organizational benefits of reducing sexism, rather than just the benefits to women, should be emphasized in training programs (Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Sojo et al., 2016).

Simply increasing awareness of sexism in general, however, does not necessarily mean that the subtler everyday forms of sexism are also being addressed (Cundiff et al., 2014; Sojo et al., 2016). By increasing education and training about sexist behaviors, both blatant and subtle, employees will be better able to recognize it when they see it (Basford, 2014; Sojo et al., 2016). Reactance is the defensive tendency to reject the idea that subtle sexism is a problem, regardless of the facts presented (Cundiff et al., 2014). Reactance, and increasing the self-efficacy of people to believe that they can make a difference, are challenges that organizations face as they try to address subtle sexism (Cundiff et al., 2014). The NPS is facing these challenges.

National Park Service

The NPS includes seven regions, 417 park units, and several program offices throughout the United States (Reynolds, 2016). Like many organizations, the NPS started out as an all-male organization. The NPS hired the first woman park ranger in 1918, due to labor shortages during World War I (National Park Service, n.d.). It then hired its first

woman superintendent in 1940 (National Park Service, n.d.). Additional glass ceilings were shattered when the first woman director of the NPS was selected in 2001(National Park Service, n.d.). During the same year the first woman Secretary of the Interior (the NPS is part of the DOI) was chosen (National Park Service, n.d.). The NPS has about 20,000 employees (Reynolds, 2016). In 2016, the NPS's centennial year, women made up about 40% of the workforce (National Park Service, n.d.).

Despite the progress made with having women leaders, harassment, discrimination, sexism, and reprisal are commonplace in the NPS (Kendall, 2017). Deputy Inspector General, Mary L. Kendall, in her congressional testimony for the DOI, stated that she believed that those who engage in misconduct are a minority, and most employees embrace a culture that supports the agency mission (Kendall, 2016). However, she also stated that high-ranking leaders of the NPS, as well as other agencies, are still being found guilty of violating laws and regulations. She said that even the former director of the NPS admitted to blatant ethical violations, giving the appearance that laws, policies, and regulations are not important. These statements show that these behaviors and attitudes permeate all levels of the NPS.

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) investigated serious sexual harassment cases, such as ones at the Grand Canyon National Park and Cape Canaveral National Seashore that NPS managers failed to address (Reynolds, 2016). The OIG found that NPS leaders accused of wrongdoing, were simply being relocated or promoted to get them away from the location of the reported incident, which appeared to reward bad behavior and failed to deter others from the same behavior (Kendall, 2016). When

employees of government agencies display any kind of misconduct, such as sexual harassment, it damages the morale of the other employees, as well as the reputation of the agency (Kendall, 2016). Failing to address serious issues has perpetuated a negative workplace culture.

Changing this culture of harassment, discrimination, and sexism is a difficult challenge. Kendall (2017) in another congressional testimony, stated that the NPS also has a culture of silence about misconduct and protecting those who commit this behavior. She also stated that superintendents have a significant amount of authority within their parks with limited oversight. Additionally, many national parks are in remote locations, where it can be challenging to find a diverse applicant pool. The result of these remote locations, is that the employees of many parks tend to blend work and personal lives.

A survey conducted in 2017 resulted in information about the experiences of 9,156 women and men NPS employees regarding harassing behaviors (Federal Consulting Group and CFI Group, 2017). The survey found that over 19% of the NPS workforce are estimated to have experienced gender harassment. The survey also found that women and sexual minorities, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people, are more likely to experience gender or sexual harassment than men or heterosexuals. It was reported by 63% of the people who experienced harassing behaviors that the behavior occurred repeatedly. Most of the time, the harassing behavior came from a male peer or coworker, and over 86% of the time they were required to continue interacting with this person. Regardless of the behavior, only slightly over 25% filed a report of any kind and most only spoke with peers but did not speak to a supervisor or

manager about it. Reasons given for not reporting harassing behaviors included: that they did not believe it was serious enough, they just wanted to forget about it, they believed no action would be taken, or the process would not be fair. People who had experienced harassment were more likely to notice organizational issues related to: supervisor support, organizational trust, inclusion, conformity, and tolerance for harassing behaviors.

When the public trust is violated due to misconduct by federal employees, an independent and objective office investigates the matter. The Deputy of the Inspector General stated that their office exposes misconduct, holds people accountable for their actions, is transparent about the consequences of misconduct, discourages others from behaving similarly, advises those who report misconduct, and encourage others to come forward (Kendall, 2016). She also reported that many employees perceive that reporting wrong doing will not be met with approval and may result in retaliation. According to Kendall, the OIG often found that managers spend more time trying to find out who filed a complaint, rather than if the complaint is valid. When the OIG becomes aware of these incidences, they believe they are successful in intervening with corrective action (Kendall, 2016). These OIG reports were serious revelations about the NPS.

Acting Director Mike Reynolds has been responsive to the OIG's requests (Kendall, 2017). He has stated that the NPS leadership is committed to long term cultural changes to ensure that workplace environments are safe and respectful (Reynolds, 2016). The Secretary of the Department of Interior (DOI), Ryan Zinke, has stated that employees are expected to refrain from any form of offensive or abusive behavior, even

if it does not reach the legal level of sexual harassment (Zinke, 2017). Regional directors have become more involved in the culture change process (Kendall, 2017). Although every change is important, any actions taken to address specific incidents of sexism are useless without a culture change (Reynolds, 2016).

The Ombuds program [organizational term for the program] is one change that has resulted from increased attention to issues of misconduct, that provides a new way for employees to come forth to voice concerns and receive unbiased guidance (Kendall, 2017). "Civil Treatment for Leaders" is a new training program of NPS supervisors, which is another positive improvement (Kendall, 2017). Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Employee Relations, and Human Resources employees have received additional training (Reynolds, 2016). An email box was created specifically to provide an avenue for employees to voice concerns about sexism (Reynolds, 2016). Focus group conference calls were held with NPS employees so that they would have another method to voice concerns about sexist behaviors (Reynolds, 2016). A newly formed Women's Employee Resource Group is another way that leaders are trying to hear the voices of over 9,000 women employees (Reynolds, 2016). In 2017, the NPS only had one full time ethics counselor, the worst ratio in the entire DOI (Kendall, 2017). To address this, the NPS is committed to increasing their Ethics, Employee Relations, and Labor Relations staff (Reynolds, 2017).

There is still progress that needs to be made. Increased transparency about corrective actions that are taken would be a significant deterrent (Kendall, 2017), although privacy concerns limit this ability. The NPS has drafted a new policy that

addresses harassment in the workplace, with a goal of addressing it at the earliest possible point, before it becomes pervasive, severe, or illegal (National Park Service, 2017). By gaining a better understanding of subtle sexism in the NPS, leaders could develop ideas for addressing it at this level.

Review of the Literature as Related to Method

The existing research about subtle sexism often uses one of the three primary approaches to research: quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. Following is a summary of the research methodology of the literature reviewed for the study. This review helps to systematically examine the approaches and methods that have already been used by other researchers. Organizing the review in this manner helps to identify under-applied methods having the potential to contribute meaningfully to the topic of subtle sexism.

Quantitative Research

Most of the research literature found about subtle sexism used a quantitative approach. Quantitative research aligns with the post-positive ontological view that knowledge is quantifiable and objective (Creswell, 2009). It often involves testing theories, examining the relationship of variables that can be measured, and a written report with a fixed structure. This section reviews some of that literature and the various methods employed to learn about different aspects of subtle sexism.

Survey methods. Creswell (2009) says that the purpose of survey methods is to generalize from a sample to a larger population to make inferences about a characteristic of the population. Surveys can provide a numerical description of that characteristic of

the population. Surveys methods are beneficial because they are fast and efficient and allow researchers to use large sample sizes.

Much of the quantitative research about sexism used surveys methods. The majority were designed to determine the presence, frequency, or severity of sexism in various settings (Glick et al., 2000; Holland & Cortina, 2013; King et al., 2012; Latu et al., 2011; Leskinen et al., 2015; Melgoza & Cox, 2009; Michailidis et al., 2012; Zakrisson et al., 2012). Similarly, questionnaires were also used to measure different types of subtle sexism and determine how much overlap existed between the various concepts (Judson, 2014).

Survey methods were also used to determine how people perceive subtle sexism. These studies included some that looked at the levels of awareness of subtle sexism (Martinez et al., 2010; Swim et al., 2004). Others measured predetermined variables that described the perceptions people had of subtle sexism (Fasoli et al., 2015; London et al., 2012; 2010; Moya et al., 2007; Nadal et al., 2014).

Survey methods were used for measuring potential negative outcomes of sexism (Barreto et al., 2009; Foynes et al., 2013; Miner & Eischeid, 2012; Montañés et al., 2012; Settles et al., 2012; Von Hippel et al., 2015). The variables that were measured were carefully selected based on hypotheses developed because of prior research. In some research, such as the one conducted by Fraser et al. (2015) the variables selected were specific to hiring or selection processes like affirmative action.

To understand why some men and women display sexist behavior, some researchers used survey methods to measure various characteristics of sexist people

(Carter et al., 2006; Roets et al., 2012). These studies increased researcher knowledge of sexist people, but not of the people who are the targets of that behavior.

Survey methods were also used to develop, or test various theories, models, or measures related to sexism such as selective incivility and the ambivalent sexism inventory (Cortina et al., 2013). Another common strategy for studying subtle sexism included experimental methods.

Experimental and quasiexperimental methods. Experimental methods apply a treatment to a group, while at the same time withholding the treatment from a control group and keeping all other variables constant, to determine if a specific outcome occurs (Creswell, 2009). When a random sample is used, this is called a true experiment (Creswell, 2009).

Many researchers designed experiments either in field or lab settings in which participants were randomly selected. These experimental designs tended to have one of three purposes. Some studies were designed to assess the effects of perspective taking, empathy, or compassion on levels of sexism (Becker and Swim, 2011; Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010; Chui, 2014; Gaunt, 2013; Gilin et al., 2013). A second purpose of these experimental designs was to measure selected negative outcomes resulting from specific sexist behavior (Cundiff et al., 2013; Emerson & Murphy, 2015; Gervais & Vescio, 2012). A third purpose for experimental designs related to sexism was to measure the effectiveness of interventions (Ehrke et al., 2014).

When an experimental method, which determines if a treatment results in a specific outcome, does not use a random sample, it is called a quasi-experimental method

(Creswell, 2009). One of these studies used this method to measure selected negative outcomes resulting from specific sexist behavior (Johnson et al., 2010). Other researchers used the method to examine the effects of perspective taking, empathy, or compassion on sexism (Galinski et al., 2008).

Correlational methods.

Correlational Methods are a subtype of experimental method that seeks to determine relationships between variables (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). These methods can serve as a preliminary step towards showing causation and if there is no correlation then causation can be rejected (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Several studies employed correlational methods to determine relationships between perspective taking, empathy, or compassion on different levels and types of sexism (Hideg & Ferris, 2016; Ku et al., 2010; Pesta et al., 2007; Todd et al., 2011; Weng et al., 2015). Correlational methods were also used to determine the relationships between sexist behaviors and different negative outcomes (Clayborn et al., 2014; Gervais et al., 2011; Hall et al., 2015; Hebl et al., 2007; Lemonaki et al., 2015; Logel et al., 2009; Steele et al., 2002). Correlational methods were also used to measure the relationships between different interventions and levels of sexism (de Lemus et al., 2012; Lockwood, 2006; Paluck, 2010).

In the quantitative approaches, researchers selected variables in advance to be measured in accordance with the hypotheses of the studies. Qualitative research does not have variables or hypotheses determined in advance because this type of research is exploratory in nature.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative approaches to research involve attempting to understand people or phenomena in their natural settings and reflect the meanings that people make of their world (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This approach to research is often based on the constructivist ontological view that reality is determined by the perspectives of people (Patton, 2015). Of the variety of qualitative methods, some of the primary ones include narratives, case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology (Creswell, 2009). In Chapter 3 these methods are explained further.

Qualitative research about subtle sexism is much less common than quantitative. It can be difficult to find existing qualitative research about feminist issues, but especially about the specific topic of subtle sexism. Swirsky and Angelone (2014) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study about the barriers that prevent women from identifying with the feminist movement, using open ended questionnaires to collect data. Kugelberg (2006) conducted also conducted a qualitative phenomenological study, but the purpose was to investigate gender stereotyping related to parenthood in the workplace.

Williams et al. (2014) used interviews and focus groups in their program evaluation of diversity management programs created to improve gender equality. This study was designed to provide an evaluation of a program and not to capture perceptions of sexism unrelated to the program.

Bobbit-Zeher (2011) conducted a case study using court documents as the unit of analysis. Sex discrimination cases were coded to find themes that explain how gender

stereotyping and various organizational factors lead to discrimination cases. When using documents as the units of analysis, there is no opportunity for obtaining clarification or asking questions for deeper understanding. Additionally, court documents report the facts of the case and do not deeply explore the affective experiences of those involved. Like qualitative studies, mixed methods research about subtle sexism were not as common as quantitative.

Mixed Methods Research

Patton and Johns (2007) used a mixed methods study to conduct a content analysis of new paper articles about societal perceptions of workplace absenteeism of women. They coded the documents for qualitative categories and coded them for quantitative data too. By using a document analysis, the researcher of this study explored societal views, but did not explore the affective experience of being the recipient of sexist views.

The Federal Consulting Group (2017) designed a mixed methods study to assess NPS employee attitudes and perceptions related to harassment and assault in the workplace. The study's data collection methods included questionnaires for quantitative and focus groups for qualitative data. The focus of the study was overt, rather than subtle forms sexism.

Conclusion

Most of the research about sexism uses the quantitative approach. This is useful when variables are known and measurements or relational information about those variables is the goal of the research. Relatively little qualitative research exists about

sexism, especially the subtle forms. Researchers have expressed the importance of having more qualitative studies to understand the subtle nuances of what different women experience (Basford, 2014; Holland & Cortina, 2013; Judson, 2014). Quantitative data collection methods generally do not involve open ended questions, so participants cannot expand on the contextual reasons for their responses. Unlike qualitative approaches, quantitative ones that measure predetermined variables and test hypotheses cannot provide the rich descriptions of how people experience reality.

Especially in a world that is ever changing and where perspectives about sexism are readily seen on news media, exposure to the views of others may be changing the perspectives that women have. It would be useful to have more qualitative research to explore the current experiences and perspectives of women's encounters with sexism. An in-depth analysis of grievances would provide a more complete picture of the problem the NPS faces with different types of misconduct (Kendall, 2017).

Summary

In this chapter I reviewed the literature related to subtle sexism. Although overt forms of sexism are becoming less prevalent in the American workforce, they are being replaced by more pervasive and subtle forms of sexism (Basford, 2014). Even subtle sexism comes in a wide variety of types. The various forms of subtle sexism are different enough that they each can be identified and defined separately, however there are enough common themes among them they can also be lumped together in one broad description (Judson, 2014). This type of broad coverage allows organizations to gain a more

complete overview of subtle sexism by not leaving out any of the varieties present in the workplace (Judson, 2014).

To create a foundation for an understanding of the issue of sexism in general and to explain the rise of subtle sexism, I provided a brief description of the fight against sexism in America, as well as a strategically organized summary of research related to the rise of subtle sexism. A variety of emotional, cognitive, and attitudinal antecedents can be found in organizations that have problems with sexism (Carter et al., 2006). Before addressing issues of sexism, it can be useful to be aware of these antecedents. There are many studies, most of them quantitative, that tell us that subtle sexism is harmful to both mental and physical health, as well as career development (Basford, 2014; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Lemonaki et al., 2015; Von Hippel et al., 2015). With this study, I provided a current understanding of how women are experiencing and perceiving subtle sexism.

Knowing these perspectives of women is an important step in addressing the issue of subtle sexism in the workplace (Carter et al., 2006; Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). Subtle sexism is more common in the workplace than in other settings, so it is important for organizations to develop effective ways to address it (Nadal et al., 2014). The NPS is just beginning to work towards addressing all forms of sexism (Kendall, 2017). Through this study women NPS employees provided information about their views related to their experiences with subtle sexism. I provide a description of the methods and procedures of this study in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an explanation for the method selected for this study about the experiences of women exposed to subtle sexism. Overt sexism is being replaced by subtler and more pervasive forms of sexism (Basford, 2014; Judson, 2014; King et al., 2011). That does not mean that overt sexism has disappeared, and in many places where people believe that it has disappeared, it has merely morphed into a different kind of sexism. Like its overt counterpart, subtle sexism is harmful to employees and creates a negative workplace environment. Its covert nature makes subtle sexism especially harmful because it is easy to overlook or trivialize (Swim et al., 2004). There is a need to understand the lived experiences and perceptions of subtle sexism from women working in a variety of professions, such as those found in a diverse workforce like the NPS. Having a more nuanced understanding how women experience and perceive subtle sexism could lead to organizations finding more effective ways of dealing with this type of incivility and decreasing the its negative outcomes. I chose the qualitative method as the most appropriate to address this research need.

I begin my explanation of the selected method with a statement of the research questions. I then provide a detailed methods description and justification that includes the research design and rationale, an explanation of qualitative research, the role of the researcher, research methodology, population and sample, sample size, data collection procedures, data analysis, validity and trustworthiness, and measures for ethical protections. The chapter concludes with a summary of the method selected.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the lived experiences of women employed by the NPS with subtle sexism in the workplace?

Subquestion 1: What types of subtle sexism are women experiencing in the workplace?

Subquestion 2: How do women feel about communicating with others about experiences of subtle sexism in the workplace?

Research Question 2: How do women employed by the NPS perceive subtle sexism in the workplace?

Subquestion 1: How do the ways that women experience subtle sexism compare to how they experience overt sexism?

Subquestion 2: How is subtle sexism contributing to employee dissatisfaction, stress, turnover, or other negative workplace outcomes?

Research Design and Rationale

The three research design traditions commonly used in social science include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2009). Determining which approach to use is driven by the research questions. With the research goals in mind, the researcher must consider the intersectional influences of their philosophical world view (postpositive, social construction, advocacy, or pragmatism), the strategy of inquiry that provides the best fit (e.g., experiments, ethnography, phenomenology), and the research procedures (e.g., data collection, analysis, validation) that can best answer the research questions (Creswell, 2009).

I chose a qualitative approach as the most appropriate to answer the research questions. I rejected the quantitative approach because that required determining the relationship between existing variables. In this study, the goal was to determine the experiences and perceptions of women who have encountered subtle sexism in the workplace. Those experiences and perceptions could not be selected and measured as variables because I did not know what they were yet. Although research exists about subtle sexism that measures selected variables (Fasoli et al., 2015; London et al., 2012; 2010; Moya et al., 2007; Nadal et al., 2014), those studies could be overlooking other potential variables that could only be discovered with an inductive, emergent design that can result in rich contextual details about the perspectives of women.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers inquire into the lives of others to understand their perspectives of how they view the world (Patton, 2015). This approach to research is often based on the constructivist ontological view that reality is determined by the perspectives of people (Patton, 2015). Qualitative approaches to research include 12 interactive strategic principles (Patton, 2015).

1. Naturalistic inquiry: Researchers study naturally occurring, real world situations without manipulating or controlling.
2. Emergent design: Researchers remain flexible and open to adapting their designs as discoveries emerge.
3. Purposeful sampling: Participants or cases are selected because they are information rich and can provide insight into the phenomenon of interest.

4. Rich qualitative data: Observations result in rich, thick descriptions. Direct quotes are often obtained.
5. Direct personal experience: The role of the researcher is important because of the direct contact that he or she has with the participants or cases and the experience the researcher has with the phenomenon.
6. Empathetic neutrality: Researchers balance their cognitive and affective processes so that they establish rapport, sensitivity, and openness with participants without judgement.
7. Dynamic processes and systems: Researchers understand that change is ongoing in individuals, groups, organization, society, and cultures. It is important to be mindful of system dynamics.
8. Unique case orientation: Researchers are careful to capture the essence of each case. Cross-case analysis depends on detailed case descriptions.
9. Inductive analysis: Analysis goes from specific to general. The researchers immerse themselves in the details to discover themes, patterns, and relationships.
10. Holistic perspective: The phenomenon of inquiry is understood to be a complex system that cannot be simply defined in linear cause-effect terms.
11. Context sensitivity: Researchers are careful about making generalizations because inquiry occurs in a social, organizational, historical, and temporal context.

12. Reflexivity: Because of the role of the researcher, authenticity and trustworthiness is established by being self-analytical and continuously aware of his or her perspective.

Of the variety of methods of inquiry in qualitative approaches to research, some of the primary ones include narratives, case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology (Creswell, 2009). Of these, I chose phenomenology as the best fit for the purposes of this study.

Phenomenological research seeks to discover how people experience the world (Patton, 2015). It focuses on the lived experiences of people related to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). The phenomenon is not bounded in the way that a case study is. Researchers often set aside their assumptions and biases through a process called bracketing (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2015). With this approach researchers gather firsthand information from people who have experienced the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). The participants may be viewed as co-researchers because their views are used to interpret and provide meaning to the data (Moustakas, 1994). I selected this strategy as the most appropriate because it matched the goal of exploring the lived experiences and perspectives of women who have encountered subtle forms of sexism in the workplace.

I followed Moustakas's guidelines for a phenomenological study. This brand of phenomenology stresses the importance of the whole experience of the concept being studied (Moustakas, 1994). Not only should the researcher look at what is experienced (noeme), but how it is experienced (noesis) by the participants, who are considered coresearchers (Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas (1994), the basic requirements

of a phenomenological study are: (a) discovering a topic with social meaning and significance; (b) conducting a review of the research literature; (c) developing criteria for selecting co-researchers (participants); (d) providing coresearchers ethically based information about the nature and purpose of the study, informed consent, confidentiality, and researcher roles and responsibilities; (e) developing an interview guide; (f) conducting lengthy interviews while using bracketing to reduce bias; and (g) organizing and analyzing data to develop textural and structural descriptions and determine the essence and meanings of the construct being studied. In the Data Analysis section of this chapter I explain in more detail how Moustakas recommends conducting this part of phenomenological research.

It should also be noted that in the previous chapter's review of the literature, only four qualitative studies were found, and, of these, the only phenomenological studies dealt with feminism (Swirsky & Angelone, 2014) and stereotypes about parenthood (Kugelberg, 2006), not with subtle sexism. Thus, there is a need in the literature for this kind of exploratory research, making it an appropriate method for this dissertation.

Role of the Researcher

With qualitative research, the researcher can understand the values, motivations, emotions, interests, and other factors that influence the behavior of participants (Patton, 2015). Traditional quantitative research requires objectivity, but in qualitative research remaining too objective could potentially limit the researcher's ability to empathize and sympathize, allowing deep understanding of participant views (Patton, 2015). In

qualitative research, objective neutrality is employed by setting aside biases in a process called bracketing or epoche (Moustakas, 1994).

Researchers in qualitative studies play an active role in the data collection process. In this research, I recruited, selected, and interviewed participants, transcribed the interviews, conducted data analysis, and reported findings. In the interview process the interviewer participates in a social interaction with the participant.

I am a woman employee of the NPS who has experienced both overt and subtle workplace sexism and am passionate about issues of workplace wellbeing, such as sexism, diversity, harassment, and inclusion. I have been a member of male-dominated organizations. Over the years, I have reacted to instances of sexism in different ways, which enabled me to empathize with the variety of responses that participants had in their encounters with sexism. Because the participants did not have close, personal, or professional relationships me, there were no relationship biases that affected trustworthiness. During the data collection and analysis processes, I maintained a journal in which I noted any participant responses that angered or surprised me, which indicated that I had certain expectations. Journaling helped me to recognize this and minimize bias.

Research Methodology

To determine what parameters a research study will operate within, researchers need to determine the definition of the problem, the sample design, and the size of the sample (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). I describe the methodology of my research in the following sections.

Population and Sample

In social science research, the population is the complete group of instances that conform to designated specifications (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The goal of the study was to explore the lived experiences of women employees of the NPS who have encountered subtle forms of sexism. The population, therefore, consisted of a group of over 9,000 permanent women employees of the NPS. The agency is divided into seven regions and all regions were included, so I did not use any subsets of the population in the study. The strategy used to determine the sample is the sampling method.

Moustakas (1994) does not recommend any specific method for selecting participants, however he does suggest that the researcher should consider factors such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or cultural, economic, or political factors that could affect the experience of the phenomenon. The only critical factor is that the participants must have experience with the phenomenon and must be willing to be interviewed (Moustakas, 1994). Researchers using qualitative approaches often use purposive sampling to select the most information rich cases that can contribute most to understanding the construct being studied (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To meet the needs of the qualitative research goals of the research, I employed purposive sampling as the sampling method.

There are many strategies for purposive sampling. I employed both group characteristics and maximum variation sampling strategies. Group characteristics sampling involves selecting cases that can reveal group patterns (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The sample in the study included participants who could provide data that would reveal

patterns about the experiences of women employees of the NPS. For this reason, I only selected women who had encountered subtle sexism in the workplace. Maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling is a form of group sampling in which the researcher selects a wide range of participants who are most likely to be able to show patterns across diverse cases (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I selected women from a variety of career fields to show that the results are not specific to certain jobs.

Sample Size

Unlike with quantitative approaches, there are no firm rules in determining qualitative sample sizes (Patton, 2015). In-depth data obtained from a small sample can be just as valuable as less depth from a larger sample, depending on the goal of the study (Patton, 2015). In a phenomenological study, in which in-depth interviews will take place and a large amount of data could come from each case, a small sample size of only six to 10 participants could be acceptable (Patton, 2015). Moustakas (1994) does not suggest a sample size because the size would depend on the phenomenon and the population. Like some examples that Moustakas (1994) provides, I decided that my study would include 10 to 15 participants. Due to the emergent nature of qualitative approaches, the sample size may need to increase if data saturation has not been obtained. I decided that after 10 interviews I would determine if I was still obtaining new and relevant information. If not, then I would have reached data saturation. If I was still obtaining unique data then I would add participants to the sample size until it appeared that I had reached data saturation.

Recruitment of Participants

In the study, communication with participants occurred in three phases. In the first phase, I planned to initially recruit NPS employees through their government e-mail, using my Walden University e-mail. In the second phase, which included their responses to the recruitment and all subsequent communications other than the actual interview, the participants could choose to communicate by personal or government e-mail, whichever they believed was more secure and private. Supervisors and internet technology specialists do not have access to employee e-mails except in extreme cases, but employees know through annual mandatory training that there is no guarantee of privacy when using government e-mail. Depending on their situation, employees may find their government e-mail more secure than their personal ones. The third phase of communication included data collection, which I completed by telephone interview. I assigned pseudonyms to each participant for use in all notes and records of the interview. I planned to obtain permission to contact the employees from the regional directors of each of the seven NPS regions. The associate regional director of workforce management determines who should approve research using employees (Meldrum, 2017). The Intermountain Region's associate regional director of workforce management decided that the regional director should provide approval (Martinez, 2018), so I planned to use this same method of approval with all regions for the sake of consistency in recruitment approval. During the initial recruitment, I asked interested individuals to provide their position title, approximate length of service, and park location to allow me to select a

diverse sample. If multiple people were available with similar job experiences, then I planned on selecting them in the order that they responded to me.

Data Collection Procedures

Well-designed data collection procedures provide the best way to gather data that answer the research questions. The goal of the study was to understand the experiences and perspectives of women who have encountered subtle sexism in the workplace. I used telephone interviews to collect data from participants. The goal of qualitative interviews is to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants and how they make sense of those experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The interviews were semistructured, which meant that I followed an interview guide (see Appendix A) with specific questions to be asked, however the precise wording, probing, and follow-up questions varied as needed with each interview. The interview guide included experience, behavior, cognitive, and feeling questions.

The interviews were conducted by telephone to allow for the greatest flexibility in scheduling. Face-to-face interviews were not selected because I would have had to travel across the country to conduct them and this would have put pressure on the participants to continue with scheduled interviews. Many employees are busy and may have needed to reschedule a few times due to changing work priorities. I informed participants that it posed no problem to reschedule their telephone interviews as needed. Participants were put at ease by knowing that they could reschedule as needed without the pressure of trying not to inconvenience to me. If face-to-face interviews had been used and the participants had to reschedule, they would have been aware that I had traveled a long

distance to see them and they might have felt pressured to continue the interview without telling me if it had become inconvenient or created undue stress for them. In-person interviews would also have increased the risk of privacy being invaded if a participant's coworker became aware of the interview, which is especially a concern with sensitive topics such as sexism. Many parks are in such remote locations that there are no nearby public places, such as libraries, for a private interview to occur.

I rejected the option of video conferencing as an option because it could limit participant recruitment and diversity. As an NPS employee, I knew that not all employees have the capability to do video conferencing or the comfort in using the technology. This requirement could have limited the number of older or blue-collar workers who volunteered to participate. The use of video conferencing would also have required participants in remote locations to be someplace where they could access WiFi, which can be a challenge in these locations. This could have eliminated the ability for participants without private offices to step outside of their workplace and sit in an outdoor location to talk. Many NPS workplaces are not typical office environments in which it would be easy to employ the use of video conferencing.

Although interviews conducted in person can be useful for establishing rapport and reading nonverbal cues such as body language, researchers haver shown that phone interviews can be a positive experience without significant differences in data quality from being face-to-face (Nandi & Platt, 2017; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Ward, Gott, & Hoare, 2015). Ward et al. (2015) conducted a grounded theory study using inductive thematic analysis of data from semistructured phone interviews with 16 people.

Researchers found that those who participated in phone interviews reported the benefits of feeling phone savvy, being less inhibited, easing establishment of rapport, and being able to focus on the researcher's words instead of the face (Ward et al., 2015). In an experiment where 1870 adults were randomly assigned to either telephone or in-person interviews, researchers found that telephone interviews can even reduce the likelihood of responses with social desirability bias (Nandi & Platt, 2017).

Even with the benefits of telephone interviews, there is the loss of the ability to observe nonverbal cues such as body language. There are ways to pick up on nonverbal cues through the telephone by focusing on vocal cues such as pauses, hesitations, tone of voice, volume of speech, voice speed, and words that express emotion. Interviewees were also be reminded that they should let me know if they begin to feel uncomfortable and that they could stop participating at any time. Rapport can also be established through small talk about the park where the participant works and sharing common experiences before beginning the interview. Preliminary contacts from recruiting and scheduling the interview can also help to increase rapport.

Qualitative interviews are a personal interaction and their effectiveness is based on 10 principles: ask open ended questions; ask clearly stated questions; listen carefully to the responses and respond accordingly; follow up with clarifying probes; pay attention to the behavior of the interviewee, adjusting the interview as needed; be empathetic and neutral, showing interest without judgement; guide the interview by using smooth transitions; distinguish between descriptive questions and interpretive questions; be prepared for anything; and remain present and attentive (Patton, 2015). The interviews

were the data collection process and the researcher, interview guide, notes, and recording device were the data collection tools. The process of data collection followed a specific sequence.

After participants were selected, interviews were scheduled according to participant convenience. Interviews were recorded to ensure the accuracy of the collected data. I encouraged each participant to find a private location for the phone interview so that they would not be disturbed and would feel safe speaking openly. During the interviews, I also took notes. This served as a back-up in case the recording device failed. Immediately after each interview, I reviewed the recording. If the recording failed, then I planned to immediately write details of the interview as best as possible. I planned to transcribe the interviews, rather than use a third party. I transcribed them as soon as possible after each interview while I they were fresh in my memory. In most cases, I completed the transcription before conducting the next interview. The transcription included notes about vocal cues such as voice tone and pauses. I planned to provide copies of the textural-structural descriptions derived from the interviews to each participant to ensure the accuracy of their intended comments. Participants were asked to review their interviews, noting if their perspectives changed or did not get clearly recorded. I planned on using follow-up interviews if review of the transcripts revealed weaknesses in the data. Due to the emergent nature of qualitative research, if I had not reached data saturation after the initial interviews, I would select more participants after seeking appropriate permission from Walden's IRB. After I collected and transcribed the data, I began analysis.

Data Analysis

The study used Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological model with his modification of Van Kaam's analysis method. This model has four primary steps: epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation; and the synthesis of composite textural and structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994).

The first step of this transcendental phenomenological model, epoche, is an important principle of phenomenological research in which judgements and assumptions are put aside before seeking understand a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I went into the interview and data analysis processes receptive to all ideas. Doing this required internal reflection. I achieved this through reflective journaling, an ongoing process, not just a one-time event.

In the next step, reduction, I began the continuous process of describing the phenomenon. This step began by bracketing, in which I set aside all preconceived ideas of the phenomenon as I took apart and dissected the data. Reflexive journaling also helped with the bracketing process. During the process of horizonalization, every statement of data was viewed as having equal value (see Moustakas, 1994). To fully understand the essence of a phenomenon, I needed to look at the noema (what is experienced) and the noesis (how something is experienced), and unite the meanings of both (see Moustakas, 1994). I organized the transcribed data into meaning units to develop textural (noema) and structural (noesis) descriptions and themes (see Moustakas, 1994).

In the third step, imaginative variation, I viewed the data through a variety of perspectives to seek out other potential meanings of the phenomenon (see Moustakas, 1994). Finally, the individual and composite textural and structural themes were integrated and synthesized into the meanings and essence of the phenomenon (see Moustakas, 1994).

I planned on analyzing the data for emergent and a priori themes using the qualitative analysis software, NVivo. Recordings and notes can be uploaded into that software program to determine alternative ways to organize and analyze the data into codes, subcodes, and simultaneous coding. It also allows multiple participants to be easily compared. I remained open to coding methods when I initially reviewed the data, but I anticipated potentially using the first cycle Elemental Methods of In Vivo and Process Coding, as well as the Affective Methods of Emotion and Values Coding. Focused Coding will most likely be the second cycle method used. Saldana (2016) describes Elemental Methods as foundational coding and Affective Methods as being used to explore emotions, values, and beliefs. In Vivo Coding uses exact quotes to capture the voices of participants and Process Coding only uses gerunds (verbs ending with "ing") to show action (Saldana, 2016). Emotions Coding labels experienced emotions and Values Coding labels values, attitudes, and beliefs (Saldana, 2016). Having effective analysis procedures helped to improve validity and trustworthiness of the research.

Validity and Trustworthiness

The validity of qualitative research is established when the researcher confirms the accuracy of data and analysis (Creswell, 2009). Creswell lists eight primary strategies for improving accuracy of research findings. Most of these strategies were employed in this research. Data sources were triangulated by selecting participants from a variety of career fields. I planned on asking participants to review and confirm their textural-structural descriptions, which would constitute member checking. I requested follow-up interviews for additional information as needed, but e-mail was used if I only wanted simple clarifications. I reported discrepant data to acknowledge the existence of alternative perspectives, which showed that I did not limit results to findings that supported one view.

Trustworthiness and validity were established by ensuring that the research had credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Because I was the primary data collection tool, my continuous attention to personal bias improved trustworthiness. I improved validity through reflexive journaling to acknowledge bias that shaped how interpretations were formed. I used reflexive journaling during the data collection and analysis processes to constantly consider my decisions.

Credibility of qualitative research is the equivalent to internal validity of quantitative research (Patton, 2015). This refers to the ability of the researcher to accurately represent the data provided by the research participants. I ensured descriptive validity of the data by using reliable recording devices and confirming the accuracy of the

data with participants. I reviewed recordings immediately after the interviews and notes were added while my memory was fresh.

Transferability of qualitative research is equivalent to external validity of quantitative research (Patton, 2015). Although qualitative research does not aim to generalize across a broad population, it does seek to provide sufficient descriptions so that readers can determine if, and to what degree, research could transfer to another similar situation (Patton, 2015). I accomplished this by using thick, rich descriptions and the collection of basic demographic data that described the participants. Using rich, descriptive data when reporting findings added to the validity because it more accurately portrayed perspectives and allowed the reader to understand them better.

Dependability of qualitative research is like reliability in quantitative approaches (Patton, 2015). I achieved dependability by ensuring that the entire research process is logical, well documented, and can be traced from start to finish (see Patton, 2015). By using NVivo, the coding process will have a "paper trail" that documents the analysis steps and decisions. Journaling about the thought process during coding will also help with this.

Confirmability of qualitative research is comparable to objectivity in quantitative approaches (Patton, 2015). I achieved this by showing that the resulting interpretations can be directly linked to the data itself (see Patton, 2015). I planned on providing participants their textural-structural descriptions to ensure that my analysis of their responses accurately conveyed what they meant to communicate. I improved interpretive validity by using effective follow-up questions to confirm my understanding of

participant statements (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Using precise quotes effectively shows that the data accurately reflects participant views, so I used direct quotes to back up each theme.

Time is an important factor in developing trustworthiness and validity, so that time spent collecting or analyzing builds on the foundation laid by solid research questions (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2015). Time spent with participants can increased their comfort level and openness. By spending time to analyze data, I demonstrated that I put thought into the process. Every step I took, using effective qualitative processes increased the complexity of the research and improved the validity and trustworthiness, making the findings more valuable when shared with others.

Dissemination of Findings

I was the sole researcher responsible for the dissemination of findings from this study. I planned to write a short one to two-page summary of the research findings to distribute to any participants who expressed interest in having it. I plan on providing a copy to other NPS employees who also expressed an interest in the study. I also expect to prepare a condensed version of the study for publishing in a scholarly journal so other people who are interested in women's issues can benefit from the findings. I will also consider preparing a presentation for a professional conference, NPS training sessions, or any other organization that expresses an interest in learning more about subtle sexism.

Measures for Ethical Protections

Approval Process

Before conducting the research, I sought and obtained permission from the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB). The approval number for this study is -01-19-0557699 and it expires on January 31st, 2020.

I made an initial inquiry to the Deputy Ethics Counselor of the NPS Ethics Office to determine what procedures were required to obtain approval to conduct research using NPS employees as participants (Davies, 2017). The NPS Ethics Office only had two primary concerns: (a) it must be clear that participant opinions did not reflect the opinion of the NPS; and (b) although participant government email addresses may be used, I must use a private e-mail address to prevent giving the impression that the NPS was conducting the research.

According to the NPS's Chief of Social Science, no formal approval process exists for conducting social science in the NPS using employees as participants, as there is for conducting research that involves the collection of resources or contacting the visiting public (Meldrum, 2017). The manager of the Research Permit and Reporting System stated that, although no required or recommended, this database could be used to document the research (Commins, 2017). He believed that the only required approval was for either the regional director or park superintendents to give permission to recruit using government e-mail (Meldrum, 2017). The associate regional director for human resources and workforce management of the Intermountain Region determined that this approval

should remain with the regional director (Martinez, 2018), so, to be consistent, I planned on using this process with all regions.

Ethical Considerations

I obtained informed consent from participants. The consent form (see Appendix B) clearly explained the privacy measures taken in the study. To protect the privacy and anonymity of participants, I talked with participants in a private location. I planned on providing participants the opportunity to review their individual textural-structural depictions to ensure that I correctly interpreted the data from their interviews. They were allowed to choose whether they preferred it being sent to their personal or work e-mail addresses, depending on which they felt provided them the most security and privacy. I also planned on providing a copy of their interview transcript upon request. The consent form explained the potential risks of participating in research about the sensitive topic of sexism. Some participants may have found the topic troubling, so I provided information to all employees about obtaining professional assistance both from within and outside of the agency.

To ensure the security of data, interview transcriptions and notes were stored in a password protected computer that only I could access. Pseudonyms were used instead of actual names to further increase privacy. I backed up data on an external hard drive, also only accessible by me. After seven years all data will be destroyed.

The appearance of bias existed because the I am an employee of the NPS. During the selection process of the study, individuals who had a personal or professional relationship with me, or who were likely to work with me in the future, were eliminated

from the sample. Not only did this reduce the appearance of bias, but it prevented individuals from feeling pressured to participate. With 417 NPS units throughout the nation I did not have difficulty finding participants who met this selection criteria. Although I reduced bias to some degree, the role of the researcher in qualitative studies requires some level of personal experience with the subject of study.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the research methods for this study about the experiences of women employees of the NPS experienced subtle forms of sexism. I stated the research questions and explained the rationale for selecting a qualitative design. I continued with an explanation for why a phenomenological approach would be used. Additionally, I described the population, sample size, recruitment process, role of the researcher, data collection procedures, data analysis, validity and trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. I ended the methodology presentation with a plan for the dissemination of the research findings. In Chapter 4, the results of the study are described and in Chapter 5 the data analysis is presented and interpreted.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gather data about how women experience subtle forms of sexism in the workplace. The participants were women employees of the NPS. In this research I had the goal of understanding the lived experiences of these women to provide a stronger basis for addressing the negative outcomes of workplace sexism in that and similar organizations. I organized the results according to the overarching themes that developed from the research. Although some themes related to multiple research questions, I identified the primary question answered for each theme. The research questions that were addressed in this study were:

Research Question 1: What are the lived experiences of women employed by the NPS with subtle sexism in the workplace?

Subquestion 1: What types of subtle sexism are women experiencing in the workplace?

Subquestion 2: How do women feel about communicating with others about experiences of subtle sexism in the workplace?

Research Question 2: How do women employed by the NPS perceive subtle sexism in the workplace?

Subquestion 1: How do the ways that women experience subtle sexism compare to how they experience overt sexism?

Subquestion 2: How is subtle sexism contributing to employee dissatisfaction, stress, turnover, or other negative workplace outcomes?

This chapter contains a description of the study setting that may have influenced data interpretation. The demographics of the NPS employees who participated in the study are described and summarized on Table 1. The processes used for data collection and analysis are reported in detail. Evidence of trustworthiness is described. The results of the study, including the emergent themes and supporting quotes, are presented followed by a summary that addresses the research questions.

Study Setting

In 2016, numerous high-profile media articles appeared describing the culture of sexual harassment and other forms of sexism in the NPS (Gilpin, 2016; Joyce, n.d; Parker, 2016; Rein, 2016; Waymer, 2016). The titles themselves were shocking and may have contributed to feelings of fear, worry, surprise, validation, anger or sadness that the participants and I felt. Titles included:

- Investigations Show Extensive Harassment History in Park Service: The Agency Made a Plan to Protect Female Employees in 2000, but It Appears No Meaningful Action Was Taken
- Out Here, No One Can Hear You Scream: The Dangerous Culture of Male Entitlement and Sexual Hostility Hiding within America's National Parks and Forests
- National Park Service Faces Sex Harassment Scandal
- Interior Chief: 'Culture' of Sexual Harassment Probably Pervades the National Park Service
- Congress Slams Park Service Over Pattern of Sexual Harassment

The participants who came forward to share their stories in these articles described horrific events and shed a negative light on NPS leadership. As a result of the negative publicity, the NPS created Director's Order 16E, known by employees as DO16E. Through this new policy and its accompanying reference manual, NPS leaders expressed a commitment to "eliminate harassing conduct regardless of whether the conduct rises to the level of a violation of law" (National Park Service, 2017). Several participants in my study either specifically mentioned or alluded to the negative media stories and the resulting new NPS policy. These events and the resulting policy could have influenced the perspectives of participants, just as they have increased my awareness of this issue in the NPS.

Demographics

I used purposive sampling to obtain a diverse sample in terms of career fields and park locations. All together the participants have worked at forty NPS locations. They have worked in all seven of the NPS regions which includes the Northeast Region, Southeast Region, National Capital Region, Midwest Region, Intermountain Region, Pacific West Region, and the Alaska Region. Six of the participants work or have worked in Regional Offices or the Washington Office. The various types of NPS units often operate differently if their sizes are small or large or if they have specific operations that are characteristic of their particular types of park. The participants have worked at National Parks, Preserves, Historic Parks, Historic Sites, Battlefields, Memorials, Parkways, Recreation Areas, Seashores, Regional Offices, and Washington Offices.

Together the participants represent a diverse coverage of NPS locations. They also represent a wide variety of career fields as noted below.

The participants have been volunteers, interns and seasonal employees early in their careers and currently are permanent employees performing work across the spectrum from field level positions to national leadership. They work or have worked in a variety of career fields including administration, budget, business management, human resources, internet technology and telecommunications, natural resources, cultural resources, interpretation, education, outreach, volunteer coordination, fee collection, visitor use, visitor protection (law enforcement), search and rescue, wildland fire fighting, backcountry, maintenance, trail crew, division chiefs, superintendents, and regional and national program managers. The participants work or have worked in both supervisory and nonsupervisory positions. Although I based the selection criteria on location and career field diversity, I also obtained other demographic information to enhance my understanding of the data.

Participants were asked their age, race, and tenure with the NPS. No participant was under the age of 36 years, but this is likely because only permanent employees were selected for the study. It can take years for an employee to gain permanent status, so it is not surprising that the youngest participant was 36 years old. The participant ages ranged from 36 to 66 years. They have worked for the NPS from six to 25 years. Racially, the participants were not very diverse. All of them were Caucasian, except for one Hispanic participant. I obtained no other demographic data.

Because people are easily identified in the NPS if too much detail about them is provided, I could only include a vague summary of each participant. Table 1 provides a brief summary of the duty stations and positions of each participant. Real names were not used. I selected and assigned a pseudonym for each participant. If a region could be identifying, it is left blank on the table. Certain combinations of career fields could identify participants, so some of the careers were not included in the table. Regional office employees or superintendents were also not identified because the career field and region combined could be identifying.

Table 1

Participant Summary

	Regions	Career Field	Tenure in years	Current supervisory status
Sherry	NER	Cultural resources	25	Supervisory and nonsupervisory
Lola	*	IT & telecommunications	10	Nonsupervisory
Rhiannon	IMR, SER	Law enforcement, interpretation	12	Nonsupervisory
Rosanna	AKR, SER, IMR, NER	Interpretation, resource management, backcountry, law enforcement	18	Supervisory and nonsupervisory
Maggie	IMR, PWR	Interpretation, law enforcement, wildland fire	6	Nonsupervisory

Josephine	NER	Interpretation	21	Supervisory and nonsupervisory
Gloria	*	Human resources, maintenance	10	Supervisory and nonsupervisory
Corrina	IMR, PWR, MWR	Resource management, maintenance, public affairs	20	Nonsupervisory
Amanda	WASO	Resource management	8	Nonsupervisory
Cecilia	PWR, NER, WASO	Interpretation	18	Supervisory and nonsupervisory
Angie	MWR, IMR	Administration, interpretation	16	Nonsupervisory
Layla	SER, IMR, NCR, NER, PWR, WASO	Administration, resource management, interpretation	12	Supervisory and nonsupervisory

Note. Asterisk used to blind identifying information.

Data Collection

I recruited the participants through Facebook, rather than using employee government e-mails as stated in Chapter 3. Although the NPS privacy officer approved a Privacy Threshold Analysis of the study and all seven regional directors of the NPS were contacted by e-mail, none of them responded to me. The chief of park police contacted me to inform me that the solicitor was looking into the matter. Later I followed up with her by e-mail, but she did not respond to me. I contacted a Washington information request office and was told that the deputy director of administration and business was the person who should approve recruiting through government e-mails. I contacted her by

e-mail, but received no response. After months of no responses, I decided to use Facebook as a recruitment method. I posted an announcement of the study on four different NPS Facebook sites and asked interested women to contact me privately. Responses only came from the post on the National Park Service Employees Facebook page.

A total of 47 people expressed interest in participating in the study. Of these, 17 people were not considered because they quit responding, posed an ethical concern, were not a part of the population of the study, or did not have experience with the study's topic. Of those who were not part of the study's population, two were men and 11 were not current employees. Of the other interested people, one had only experienced overt sexism so she did not meet the group sampling requirement of experiencing subtle sexism, two expressed interest but quit responding to me, and one was a close friend of mine and therefore posed an ethical concern. Of the original 47, I considered 30 people as prospective participants.

I held screening phone calls with all 30 prospective participants. For maximum variation sampling, I wanted to select women from a variety of career fields to show that the results were not specific to certain jobs, so I was looking for a diversity of job titles. If volunteers had the same job experiences, initially I had planned on selecting the participants in the order that they responded to the recruitment announcement. I was unable, however, to determine the order that people responded to my announcement because they were responding to me in different ways (Facebook post, instant message, and e-mail), not all of which identified date and time of contact.

My population included women employees of all regions of the NPS, so when candidates had similar job titles, I selected them based on the regions they worked in so that all seven regions were included in the sample. When I had people with both similar job titles and regions, then I looked at tenure to increase the diversity of the group. I selected 13 participants with a diverse selection of job titles, regions, and tenure. Of the 13 selected, only 12 participated. One backed out due to lack of time as she prepared for a pending maternity leave.

I conducted the interviews by telephone. Participants chose where they would participate in the phone call, but they were advised to select a private location where they would not be interrupted. The interviews were scheduled over a four-week period. Four interviews were conducted in the first and second weeks, and two interviews were scheduled in the third and fourth weeks. I only scheduled one interview a day and, when possible, at least one day break was scheduled between interviews to allow time to process the information and clear my mind for the next interview. The duration of the interviews ranged from a little under an hour to1 hour and 45 minutes, depending on how much each participant had to say.

The interviews were recorded using the Microsoft application on my laptop called Voice Recorder. I used a cellphone application called Voice Memos as a back-up recording device, in case the primary device failed, but I never needed the back-up recordings. I also took notes during the interview in case of total device failure.

I specified in Chapter 3 that I would transcribe the interviews, but I did not specify that I would use any type of transcription tools. I chose to use NVivo

Transcription for the initial transcription. I listened to the recordings and reviewed the initial transcription to make corrections as needed. I also stated in Chapter 3 that I would send the participants copies of the textural-structural descriptions to review. Instead, I sent a copy of the interview transcripts for each participant to review to ensure credibility of the data before beginning analysis. All participants had the opportunity to edit their transcript, but only some made changes. Rather than editing the document, some participants just replied to my email with additional thoughts about the topic. With their permission, these comments were incorporated into the data analysis of their interviews.

Data Analysis

I reviewed the transcripts and completed the process of horizonalization (see Moustakas, 1994), selecting important statements that might relate to the research questions. This is a standard practice as described by Moustakas (1994), where significant, verbatim statements that give meaning to the phenomenon are listed in no particular order and viewed equally by the researcher. I entered the horizonalization statements on an Excel spreadsheet. On this spreadsheet I identified categories for each line of horizonalization. I combined categories to eliminate any with similar meanings and reduce the total number of categories. I reviewed and refined the categories into the codes used on the final analysis spreadsheet. I revised the codes multiple times, merging some categories and splitting others. I organized the codes into the themes that emerged. I put aside the data for a couple of days to clear my head. Then without looking at it, I considered the key points of my study that stood out to me the most. I merged these eight key points into four overarching themes. I analyzed the data over a two-month period in

which I continuously reviewed the data in a cycle of coding and recoding, and lumping and splitting. Sometimes I just edited the existing data analysis spreadsheet, but when making a large amount of changes, I created a new spreadsheet to save a record of the process of analysis.

A full description of the codes and themes is provided in the Results section, and here I provide an example of how they were developed. Four codes that emerged from horizonalization categories were women being talked over and interrupted during meetings; women's ideas being ignored, but men making the same points were acknowledged; and using male peers to get ideas heard. After careful analysis, I lumped these codes into a theme called *Lack of a Voice* because they all related to women not being able to be heard. I eventually lumped this theme with several other themes to create the overarching theme called *Workplace Culture*. Some discrepant cases were found and retained in the data as outliers. The discrepant cases were related to (a) comments about physical appearances, (b) sexist jokes, (c) dismissive names for women, (d) comparing overt and subtle sexism, (e) working harder, (f) performance, (g) damaged relationships, (h) job satisfaction, (i) getting help from employee relations specialists, (j) mentoring younger women, and (k) having hope in the younger generations. Discrepant cases are discussed in more detail in the Discrepant Cases section. In the Results section I provide a table and detailed explanation of the four overarching themes, supporting themes, and codes.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I ensured data accuracy by ensuring that I had reliable recording devices. I used two different recording devices, a primary and a back-up. I also took notes during the interview using a template of the interview questions. I interviewed one to four participants each week for four weeks. I never interviewed more than one participant per day, which gave me time between each interview to prepare and review each transcription while the memory was fresh. I confirmed data accuracy by sending each participant a copy of their transcript for review. Initially, in Chapter 3, I stated that I would send participants a copy of textural-structural descriptions of their interviews, but later decided that I needed them to confirm the data, not the analysis. Accurate transcripts laid the foundation for the analysis work.

After interviewing all 12 participants I considered whether or not I had achieved data saturation. I had noticed during my first few interviews that each participant was providing new ideas and potential themes. As the interviews progressed, I started noticing a lot of similarities in the data from participants. Finally, during my last few interviews I reached the point where I did not appear to be obtaining data with potential new themes. After careful consideration, I decided that I had reached saturation and would not need to conduct more interviews and began data analysis on all interviews.

Transferability

I provided sufficient descriptive data about each participant so that readers could determine if, and to what degree, the research could transfer to another situation. I

collected some specific demographic information about the participants that included what parks/offices/regions they had worked in, the positions that they had worked, and their tenure, age, and race. I used thick, rich descriptions to report the data and accurately portray participant perspectives and improve reader understanding.

Dependability

I ensured dependability that the study could be repeated with consistent findings, by thoroughly documenting the entire research process. I provided a detailed description of the data collection and analysis process. Initially, as noted in Chapter 3, I had planned to use NVivo to assist in the analysis and documentation of the coding process. I later decided to have more hands-on involvement with the data by not using NVivo. I analyzed the data on Excel spreadsheets. Each tab represented a different phase of the data analysis process. This method created a documentation trail of the coding process. I also journaled to document my thoughts during the coding process.

Confirmability

To show confirmability, I needed to be able to demonstrate that I had set aside my biases, both conscious and unconscious. As previously mentioned, I shared transcripts, rather than textural-structural descriptions with participants, to ensure that I accurately recorded their ideas. I used exact participant quotes to show that the interpretation was directly linked to the data and to support every emergent theme. In qualitative research confirmability is also achieved through the process of epoche (see Moustakas, 1994), where the researcher biases are recognized and set aside. Through journaling I identified all of my biases. I also journaled how I would answer each interview question so I could

be aware if I tried to insert my own beliefs into the interpretation of the data. I also journaled before and after each interview to clear my head of any strong thoughts or feelings that I experienced as a result of that interview so that I would be open to hearing new ideas from the next participant. Interviewing one participant per day, gave me enough time to process my own emotions after each interview. Rubin and Rubin (2012) advise leaving as much time as possible between each interview to create a psychological space that allows the researcher to be open to listening to what the interviewee says. This increases the interviewer's alertness to bias and increases confirmability.

Results of Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gather data about how women experience and perceive subtle forms of sexism in the workplace. I was particularly interested in learning about how subtle sexism was experienced, how they felt about communicating it, how it compared to overt sexism, and how it affected workplace outcomes. During data analysis four overarching themes emerged: *Workplace Culture*, *Harms of Subtle Sexism*, *Organizational Behaviors and Attitudes*, and *Organizational Change*. I present the overarching themes, supporting themes, and codes in Table 2. This table shows how the codes relate to the supporting themes, and the supporting themes relate to the overarching themes. All of the themes and codes provide insight into answering the research questions of the study.

Table 2

Overarching Conceptual Themes, Supporting Themes, and Codes

Overarching Conceptual Themes	Supporting Themes and Codes
Workplace Culture (derived from descriptions of long-term patterns of workplace behavior and values as described by participants)	**Disparity in Social Display Rules** Assumptions about what skills women have Women treated like the weaker sex Disparity in physical contact and appearance rules Motherhood affects how women are treated **Male-Dominated Fields** Internet technology Military parks Maintenance Trail crews Law enforcement and search and rescue Fire crews **Gender and Jobs** "Girl divisions" Women not recognized as the boss Successes or failures attributed to gender Hearing "female" or "woman" put in front of position titles Women teleworkers treated differently **Boys' Club Culture** Belittling women Making sexist jokes Dismissive names Disparate views on aggressive/assertive Not taking women seriously Going around women of authority Never feeling good enough Missing out on bonding opportunities Pressure to fit in and be one of the guys Having a hard time getting men to understand women's issues **Lack of a Voice** Interrupting women during meetings Ignoring women's ideas, but acknowledging the same ideas made by men Using male peers to get ideas heard **Questioning Themselves** Wondering if they are contributing to bias Making self-disparaging remarks Self-doubt about their reactions Needing validation from other women

	Awareness Levels
	Difficult to identify
	Men needing subtle sexism pointed out
	Awareness in women is like opening a floodgate
	Done as kindness or by good people
	"Death by 1000 cuts" (awareness and pain growing over time)
Harms of Subtle Sexism	**Compared to Overt**
	Confusion of differentiating between them
	Just and painful/harmful
	Subtle is harder to deal with
	Physical and Mental Exhaustion
	Feeling worn down
	Hopelessness and discouragement
	Depression and loneliness
	Feeling powerless
	Lowered self-esteem
	Internalizing emotions
	Dealing with stress
	Being physically ill
	Spillover from work to home
	Long term effects
	Mitigating emotions by being "paid in sunsets"
	Unexpected Powerful Emotions
	Sadness and crying
	Anger
	Fear
	High profile cases causing worry about lack of support for women
	Fear of addressing subtle sexism
	Fear of having a sexist supervisor
	Hiding and avoiding
	Feeling squelched
	Survival strategies for self-protection
	Feeling unsafe
	Using Humor to Cope with the Harms
	Using pointed humor to address
	Laughing at subtle sexism
	Using humor as a coping mechanism
Organizational Behaviors and Attitudes	**Working Harder than Men**
	Trying to get the same level of trust and respect as men
	Needing to prove themselves
	Overcoming barriers
	Missing opportunities for career/skills development

	Performing better
	Team Dynamics
	Damaged relationships
	Talking to supervisors
	Talking to coworkers
	Trying to maintain relationships
	Subtle sexism from trusted friends
	Feeling a sisterhood with other women
	Employee Outcomes
	Job satisfaction
	Morale
	Wanting to quit or change parks/districts
	Taking as little leave as possible
	Confronting
	Not making waves/brushing it off
	Not being sure how to handle it
	Addressing it depends on the situation
	Addressing it in the moment
	Having mixed results from confronting
	Men as allies
	Bystander reactions
Organizational Change	**Filing Complaints**
	Not seeing any changes or consequences
	Fear of reporting
	Supervisor fears of addressing
	Lack of an effective process for dealing with subtle sexism
	Viewing NPS Employee Relations and other formal processes as pointless.
	Leadership
	Needing more women leaders in the NPS
	Not applying for career advancement opportunities
	Career advancement affecting awareness
	Career advancement empowering women
	Wanting to help younger women
	Feeling disappointed with poor leadership
	Organizational Excellence
	Recruiting and reputation
	The NPS not seeing its full potential
	Poor fit/appearance of women's uniforms
	Fostering Change
	"That's just the way that it is"
	Challenging current attitudes as unnecessary
	Wanting guidance for change
	Feeling hopeful for change

Overarching Conceptual Themes

I present the four overarching conceptual themes as W*orkplace* C*ulture*, *Harms of Subtle Sexism, Organizational Behaviors and Attitudes*, and *Organizational Change*, in that order. This shows how the culture contributed to emotions, attitudes, and behaviors, and they all led to a desire for change.

Workplace Culture – RQ1

I developed the overarching conceptual theme of *Workplace Culture* from seven supporting themes that evolved from the participant descriptions of their workplaces. The themes primarily supported RQ1 about the lived experiences of participants. These supporting themes included (a) disparity in social display rules, (b) male-dominated fields, (c) gender and jobs, (d) boys' club culture, (e) lack of a voice, (f) questioning themselves, and (g) awareness levels.

Disparity in social display rules. I developed the supporting theme *disparity in social display rules* based on concerns participants expressed about being expected to display or accept traditional gender rules for behavior. Participants explained how they were often asked to take notes, plan parties, clean, bake, and provide comfort/caretaking. Lola said, "I'm the one that takes the notes, and I try to get the guys to do it, and they won't. They refuse." Sherry said, "You know everybody wants a Christmas party, but it is, uh, you know, still very much women's work to pull that together. And, you know, comments like, 'You ladies like decorating.'" She also said, "The women, we are professional employees, are going to clean the toilets, mop the floor. You know, which, it's like I didn't keep going to school for that." Rhiannon stated, "[a] ranger

recommended to me, to make friends that I should bake cookies for everybody [laughing]. I'm not really a good baker." She went on to explain,

> I don't think they would ever ask a dude that was coming onto the staff to go bake cookies for everybody to make friends with them . . . that's super dumb, and I don't need to bake cookies to make friends.

Rosanna said,

> I would often get assigned as family liaison . . . . It was just assumed that I would do that . . . . I was the only woman . . . . I was always assigned those types of duties where . . . . caring and mothering was needed.

The participants did not believe that men were being asked to do those same types of tasks. As Maggie put it, "it was a honey-do job . . . . Would you make so-and-so do that? Would you invest, you know, male ranger A to do it or male ranger B? Like, why did you ask me, you know?"

Participants also felt like they were treated as if they were weaker than men. For example, men displayed chivalrous behavior towards participants, but did not display that same behavior towards men. As Maggie explained, she had seen other rangers "trying to be chivalrous . . . I'm on the side of the road changing a tire for a visitor, and that ranger will come up and just kind of take over . . . . [He] won't do the same thing for another male ranger." She explained that the problem with that was that, "other male rangers see that . . . . you might unintentionally create some, some tension there, because you're helping a female ranger out and not the males." Participants also viewed the chivalrous behavior of apologizing for using foul language as a way of making women look weaker.

Rosanna stated that men were, “apologizing to me when there's an offensive comment or . . . somebody uses foul language and they'll turn to me and say, ‘oh sorry’ . . . as If I'm the only one who has the potential to be offended by something like that.”

Participants also experienced being called “emotional”, when men would be called “passionate” for the same type of behavior. Josephine stated that hears the phrases, “She's too emotional” or “You can't work with her when she gets too emotional”, and she wondered, “How is it that with men it's ‘passionate’ and ‘dedicated’ and ‘caring’, but with women we’re being ‘emotional?’ Amanda said, “If you try to address . . . subtle sexism by being direct, which is what we should be, we run the risk of the subtly sexist reaction that we're being ‘overly emotional’ or . . . sensitive . . . . which, for some reason, are negatives.”

Participants have also been treated as if they are easily swayed. Gloria said, “I've experienced male hiring managers . . . attempting to woo me into advising in the way that they would prefer . . . . [and] ask me what kind of chocolates or wine that I like, implying that I will work harder for gifts.” Participants felt that when men behaved as if women were easily swayed, it made the women appear weak.

Participants found a disparity in social rules about physical contact and appearances. They reported being touched in ways that men are not touched, such as hugs or putting a protective hand on a woman’s back or shoulder. Rosanna said that she experienced, “a protective vibe from him . . . He puts his hand on my shoulder . . . . [or] . . . on my back sometimes when we're walking through a door. It's just things that he does to me that he doesn’t do to other people.” Regarding hugs, she said, “nobody else has to

deal with it. Why do I have to?" To avoid hug, she said, "I've experimented a little bit with, like, trying to shove my hand out before I got hugged . . . . It ended up being a little bit awkward, but I'm able to do that . . . . especially when I don't want to hug, right?"

Participants reported that the appearances of women are treated differently from men too. Rosanna said that although the women have not made comments about her fitness or her body, the men have said, "Ah, you're looking really good" or "you're looking really fit." She explained, "[It] is meant as a compliment, but the men aren't saying that to each other . . . . They're only saying that to me, the only woman in the work group, and they're fit too." To explained how comments about her body made her feel, she said, "It makes me feel icky, like, 'Oh, that's gross' and 'I don't want you thinking about me that way.'" Josephine also reported that she would hear "about other male managers making comments about other female employees and their appearance." Participants did not believe that appearances were relevant to how well a person did their job.

During pregnancies, maternity leave, and as new mothers, participants believed that people treated them differently. Angie said, "a supervisor was concerned that, you know, my being pregnant would be problematic . . . . not asking what, you know, what my limitations I felt were, but basically, that being pregnant was, sort of, like a handicap." Corrina recalled, "At a all supervisor meeting . . . . it was an all-male audience . . . . [a manager said], 'What are we going to do about the "situation?"' as he waved his hand over his belly in reference to my pregnancy."

Regarding maternity leave, Amanda said, “If you go on . . . maternity leave . . . for even a short time, your funding for your projects and the control of your projects , , , can quickly get gobbled up by other people who want those opportunities.” Corrina reported that she, “only took six weeks off for a recovery time after having the C-section.” Even after the birth of her child, Corrina worried about taking time off to be with her child. She said, “Any prolonged absence or me taking time, you know, for my son, would be deemed as a weakness on my part because of my motherhood [voice trembling and sounding a little emotional].” Corrina also said, “[A] work leader, who I worked closely with . . . . told me, basically, I had to choose between being a mom or being on the job.”

Participants also encountered problems with coworkers not understanding the needs of breastfeeding. Angie’s boss told her that he turned down a request for her to go on a temporary assignment because she was a breastfeeding mom. She said, “Whether or not I breastfeed . . . is beside the point . . . . I can tell them if it wasn't gonna work out . . . [I was] angry that he hadn't let me make that choice for myself . . . he took that decision away from me.” Regarding a similar incident with someone else, Angie said, “I was upset that . . . everything else that I was able to bring to the table was trumped by the fact that he couldn't see that a single mother could do the job.” While attending an out-of-town meeting, even though she had childcare during the meeting, people could not understand Layla’s need, as a breast-feeding mother, to bring her child on travel with her. Another man in the class had a child of a similar age as hers, so people said, “Well, you know, he's not asking for this”. She responded to them by saying, “Yeah, well he doesn't have

breasts . . . His wife is at home with the baby". When people said, "He's not bringing his child along", she replied to them by saying, "Yeah, 'cause the milk supply is back in the home state." It demonstrated how people did not understand issues that breastfeeding mothers experience.

Male-dominated fields. The supporting theme *male-dominated career fields* comprised of six career fields that participants identified as particularly problematic. These career fields included internet technology, interpretation at military parks, maintenance, trail crews, law enforcement, search and rescue, and fire crews. Lola said, "As a female in the information technology realm, that's really common. You're not really, I'm not saying you're not really respected, but you're not really trusted to have, like, the right or the correct answer." She also said, "I feel almost despair because I do think that, our, our females in IT . . . they've got a lot of knowledge to share and I feel kind of sad that that knowledge doesn't get heard."

Josephine reported that at military parks women are also not expected to have knowledge. She recalled, "[A woman ranger was] standing at the information desk with a [male] volunteer, and a gentleman said . . . 'I have an artillery question I need to ask him.' . . . The volunteer . . . said, 'well she's the expert in artillery.'" Sherry also said, "Women are kind of assumed to not understand the military aspects of it and the interpreters [are] . . . mostly [expected to] do something about women's roles." She explained, "They're relegated to the less important questions . . . but . . . are very willing to talk about the military stuff, and the men won't talk about the families." She also said,

“It's not like the male interpreters are military veterans, and . . . we’ve had some females who are, and they’re still kind of shot down.”

About working in maintenance, Corrina said, “[The] male crew members that would have to work with the interns, kind of, say . . . . ‘aren’t there any men . . . . on the list’ . . . . because I, you know, I keep hiring women.” Layla said, “I think many assumptions are made about women that are in maintenance, and their capacity . . . . people make comments about . . . . ‘Oh, are they going to be able to do this job? Are they strong enough?’ . . . . just based on gender.”

Speaking about working on trail crews, Gloria said, “On trails, it's definitely a male-dominated field. There are a lot of gender jokes, or you know, jokes about inability to lift something or move something.” Angie said, “I have witnessed where women on trail crews and stuff get teased in a way that I didn't feel comfortable with.”

Regarding the field of law enforcement/search and rescue, Rhiannon said, “I felt like the guys were always picked to do like the really cool trainings . . . . I've been held back from… because of the fact that the dude always gets picked.” Maggie said that she saw, “some subtle things going on like some prejudices against a female size, or the sound of her voice, bearing in command in the field. Little comments that happen.”

Regarding working on fire crews, Rosanna said, “Women . . . from fire and aviation management . . . said . . . ‘If you're a woman in fire, you're either gay or you're a slut’, and it's totally true.” She went on to explain, “You're either totally one of the guys, in which case you're not feminine, or you're probably a lesbian . . . . or, you're probably sleeping with everybody.” Maggie said, “[I] worked full time as a firefighter . . . . On

crews that had multiple females, there was always talk about who was a gay couple or who was gay." She added, "Nobody asked of all the males . . . 'Which one's the gay guy?' . . . [but] there was always the question about which [women] were gay. And I think that had to do with women being in a male-dominated field."

The supporting theme of *Gender and Jobs* emerged as a result of various gender related issues specifically related to participant jobs. These included such issues as attitudes towards woman dominated career fields, women not being recognized as the boss, gender being related to successes or failures, and attitudes towards women teleworkers. Angie jokingly referred to the administration division that she works in as "the girl division" because of how she feels women in that career field are treated. She describes one person's attitude by saying, "This particular employee does have a chip on his shoulder about girls . . . . he's said other things before that make it clear, he thinks of administration as, uh, lesser." She explained this comment by saying, "He has said derogatory things about women before . . . and he has very publicly voiced opinion that we're basically sitting in admin and doing nothing."

Explaining how people do not recognize a woman as the boss, Rosanna said, "Just because law enforcement rangers are often male, and I'm often confused as the subordinate . . . . we'll go into a meeting and everyone will address my subordinate." Layla said, "How often it is that the first look goes to the man I'm with . . . . 'I'll meet you first. I'll shake your hand first. You're clearly the more important person in this conversation.'" She wondered, "Why do we make that initial, like, handshake to the guy

first?" Josephine recalled being the "lead on a project . . . . and there was a man . . . . he would never acknowledge that I had said anything or that I was running the meeting."

Rosanna talked about people attributing her successes to her gender. She said, "I've heard that a lot, where there's an assumption that somehow my gender has played into my success or my, quote unquote, luck with my career." She also recalled about her failures being attributed to her gender. She said "I had a supervisor . . . . [who] didn't like when I argued or . . . spoke up . . . . and [he would say], 'You know, not everybody wants to hear that sort of thing from a woman. You just need to be careful.'" If she had problems with her subordinates, she said, "He would always attribute it to my gender. He would say, 'Well, he probably struggles working for a woman' . . . . My gender had always been a part of the conversation, especially when anything was going wrong."

Rosanna said that she often hears people say, "It's so great that you're a woman law enforcement officer", "It's so great that you're a woman chief ranger", "It's so great that the women are in positions of power.'" She continued by saying, "It's never, 'Oh what a great male chief ranger'. Nobody would ever say that." She explained, "I want to be appreciated for the work that I do and the success that I've demonstrated, and not for things that are outside of my control, like my gender or how I look."

Participants who worked as teleworkers believed that they were treated differently than men. Lola said, "[We] did have a gentleman teleworker . . . . they spoke highly of him . . . . They would always go to him because they knew he would be there. So, they're more apt to go to the guys on the team, than, than to me." Corrina, with the added factor of being a mom, said, "When you're not physically present, like, there's always this

question mark hanging over your head because you're female and have a child . . . . implying that somehow I'm not working, you know, when I'm teleworking."

Boys' club culture. The participants described their workplaces as having a boys' club culture of demeaning and dismissing women. They described being belittled. Describing one of these events, Lola said, "He said something real derogatory about her being just a secretary." Josephine said, "I was in a management team meeting and I asked a question . . . . and in front of everybody . . . . [the] deputy superintendent . . . looked at the superintendent, and said, 'Isn't she cute?'" Describing a man that she heard make sexist jokes, Sherry said, "I mean he was like a comic on a TV show from the 1950s, like in a humorous way, but constantly disparaging women."

Working in a boys' club culture, participants were called dismissive names. Rosanna said, "A senior man here . . . . regularly calls me 'kiddo' . . . . the other men would be . . . called by their names . . . and yet I am called a, kind of, a term of endearment you might call a daughter." To explain why this concerned her, she said, "['Kiddo'] is not a name you would call a peer that you work with and that you respect." In talking about her experiences, Cecilia said, "There is this acceptability to use dismissive language like 'dear' and 'sweetie, um 'gals', oh, my favorite, that means my least favorite, 'ladies.'" She explained, "The same kind of language doesn't exist for men. You know it's 'guys' . . . We don't call grown men in the workplace 'boys.'"

In a boys' club culture men have disparate views on different genders behaving assertively. Layla talked about a woman who got in trouble for behaving too aggressively. She said, "There were males in the office that acted the same way and did

not get in trouble for that because women are held to different standards when they're aggressive versus assertive . . . interesting." Josephine said, "[A] deputy superintendent . . . . if you are really passionate about something . . . . he would say, 'You're just an angry female, aren't you?'" Gloria said, "I personally struggle with communicating in those situations because I don't want to be perceived as a bitch." As Amanda says, "If being pushy is something worth complaining about, then we should hear the complaint equally . . . . if it was fair and not sexist, we should hear the same complaint about some male colleagues being pushy."

Participants are not taken seriously in a boys' club culture. Corrina said, "When I would talk, you know, like at . . . . meetings . . . . I would get . . . . eye rolls." Amanda described a woman in her office by saying, "She's a middle-aged woman with an advanced degree, and yet I observe that she gets treated like she's a 20-year-old intern." Angie spoke of a contractor she had to work with and said, "This contractor would say, 'Well, this is a really complex project, and so I need to talk to [a man]'". Expressing her frustration, she said, "Not only am I the COR [contracting officer's representative] for this project, but I wrote it. I wrote it. I wrote this. This is mine.'"

Gloria talked about men who would go around women of authority to higher levels. She stated, "Male hiring managers in particular, will go around me to higher H.R. staff members . . . . I've worked hard to build my reputation and professionalism . . . . so . . . being challenged in that situation felt very, um, very uncomfortable."

Working in a boys' club culture, participants felt like they were not good enough. Corrina said, "It just felt like . . . no amount of, you know, competence or, you know,

production . . . . would . . . be good enough . . . As long as you weren't male . . . . you would not . . . measure up and . . . you know, just this, sort of, boys' club attitude." As Amanda said, "It's frustrating because it's something I have no control over. I can't magically transform myself [laughing] into the quintessential, classic, you know, the middle-aged, male park service dude."

Participants reported missing out on bonding opportunities when they worked in boys' club cultures. Rosanna said, "Where I have all these peers that are mostly male, I wouldn't get invited out with the guys . . . . they were all friends but I was always an outsider." She elaborated by saying, "It was always this weird, awkward thing where [they would say], 'Oh yeah, high five, let's go out for drinks . . . after work', and everybody takes off. I'm like, 'Okay, I guess I'll go home' [said in a meek voice]." Layla said, "There was a lot of interest from leadership, which happened to be men . . . in sports . . . . that was a big bonding thing in the office, and so a lot of us younger women were potentially left out of conversations."

In these boys' club cultures, Rosanna said, "There's pressure . . . to . . . be one of the guys. . . . If you embrace your . . . femininity too much, [there is] . . . this . . . double bind of it." She elaborated by saying, "Sheryl Sandberg talks about it in [her book called] 'Lean In', if you're too feminine . . . you don't fit in . . . but if you're too much one of the guys, then you have to pretend to be somebody else all the time." She said that this especially applied to the law enforcement field of work.

Working in a boys' club culture participants had a hard time getting men to understand women's issues. Rosanna talked about excitedly telling a group of mostly

men about an idea for addressing a work-related issue that women face. She said, “There was just like this silence in the room . . . . a higher graded employee said . . . . ‘I don't see why this is an issue’ . . . . [there was a] complete misunderstanding among that group that there could possibly be an issue.”

Lack of a voice. The overarching conceptual theme of Workplace Culture included the supporting theme of *Lack of a Voice*. Cecilia described her experiences by saying, “It's interrupting in meetings, it's having a hard time having a voice at a table of peers, and . . . the male domination of conversation, and having a hard time injecting yourself, and not a space of equality at . . . meetings.”

Josephine said, “I would say something at a meeting and nobody would really respond to it . . . My husband would say it in a slightly different way, maybe 10 minutes later, and everybody would respond to it.” Amanda said, “I’ve definitely observed a lot of the same things, of leaders in the room listening to the male colleagues talk, but not giving the same deference to the ideas coming from the female colleagues.” She also said, “If you wanted to actually get your idea heard, you might need even to . . . utilize those male colleagues, and get them on board to help me champion my own idea.” She believed, “Without their support, or their voice . . . I just wouldn't be heard, that I couldn't do it on my own.”

Questioning themselves. In the culture of the NPS workplace, participants admitted to questioning and doubting themselves. Cecilia wondered, “Why do we dismiss our own feelings about things that we believe? And maybe this goes back to that we, that women contribute to the problem.” Angie said, “I was mad at myself for losing my cool .

. . this is my own bias, but it feels like I am justifying, ‘Oh yeah, emotional girl.’” Amanda wondered about herself, “Are you being [said in a dramatic tone] overly sensitive . . . . maybe the discussion of the subject matter itself can be perceived . . . as emotional.”

Participants also made self-disparaging remarks. Rosanna said, “I'm not sure that I'm proud of how I've always reacted” and “Sometimes I feel like maybe I failed, early in my career, that I didn't do enough.” Josephine said, “You feel bad about yourself because you feel like, ‘I should have said something. Why wasn't I strong enough to, in that meeting, call that person on that?”

Participants questioned their reactions to subtle sexism. Cecilia said, “You know it makes me maybe question myself and my leadership skills” and Josephine said, “I don't want to come right out and say that I think this is sexism because maybe I'm wrong. It makes you question yourself. That's where the subtlety comes in.”

Awareness levels. The awareness levels of employees about subtle sexism are part of the culture of the workplace. Participants found subtle sexism hard to identify. Gloria explained, “It's hard to articulate . . . . It was more of, like, feelings in the moment and mannerisms and interactions and tones.” Layla said, “I think it's hard because sometimes it's not, I don't even necessarily think that I recognize it all the time . . . . it's not often as immediate and easy to see either.” As Josephine put it, “You walk away from it like, ‘Wait a minute. Did that just happen?’”

Some men need others to point out subtle sexism to them, because they are not aware when it happens. Rosanna said, “Unless you point it out to these men, I think

they're not aware of it." Describing a previous supervisor, Angie said, "The best at dealing with this was actually the one who flat out admitted he just didn't know how to deal with girls." She explained that this man told her, "Unless they are, like, grabbing you physically in front of me, know I'm not really a witness because I am oblivious . . . . but if you tell me, I will go after them." She appreciated him because she said, "He was . . . . self-aware."

Participants were not always aware of subtle sexism, but became more aware later. Sherry said, "It took like decades, but I finally became aware [laughing] that it's still out there and it's very pervasive." By participating in this study, Rosanna said, "it's like I opened the floodgates [of awareness]." Awareness levels are also affected by the kindness of the person exhibiting subtly sexist behaviors. Rhiannon described a man who made subtle sexist assumptions about her abilities and said, "He's a kind person and a good person." Angie said, "It's different when . . . . it's coached as being caring and understanding."

Participants described the awareness levels and pain of subtle sexism increasing over time. Rosanna described this by saying, "I see it kind of as death by 1000 cuts . . . and the more of the subtle sexism you deal with, the more it becomes apparent, and the more it, for me personally anyway, the more it bothers me." Amanda used the same term and said, "Subtle forms of sexism probably have a bigger impact in the long term because over time you're losing ground in little ways. It's like death by 1000 cuts."

Harms of Subtle Sexism – RQ2

I developed the overarching conceptual theme of *Harms of Subtle Sexism* based on the five supporting subthemes about the emotions resulting from experiencing subtle sexism in the workplace and the personal effects they had on participants. These themes are connected to RQ2 about how participants perceived their experiences. These subthemes included (a) compared to overt, (b) physical and mental exhaustion, (c), unexpected powerful emotions, (d) fear, and (e) using humor to cope with subtle sexism.

Compared to overt. Participants were aware of a gradual shift from overt to subtle sexism. Participants talked about the confusion of differentiating between overt and subtle sexism. Josephine said, "I don't know where you, kind of, draw the line between the two" and Lola said, "There is no comparison. I think sexism is just sexism, bottom line."

Participants described subtle sexism as just as harmful as overt sexism. Sherry said, "Subtle stuff is almost worse because people are educated enough nowadays that they'll, you know, they can recognize the really obvious stuff . . . subtle stuff is equally oppressive . . . but we haven't got to that level of calling people out." Lola said, "They're both . . . harmful and it doesn't hurt any less if it's subtle or . . . blatant . . . Being mentally put in your place . . . [is] still pretty harmful . . . I don't think there's really too much difference." Cecilia said, "Subtle sexism . . . does have more stress or morale issues attached to it." She elaborated by saying, "If it's one big episode . . . . you report it. It happened. You tell your friends about it . . . . You can deal with and . . . heal from it . . . . When it's subtle and it's constant . . . it keeps coming at you."

Participants found subtle sexism harder to deal with. Amanda said, “I feel more empowered to address the overt things than the subtle things.” Maggie said, “There were some that were like straight-up sexism, you know. That, that's easy . . . The subtle stuff is a little bit harder.” Gloria explained the difficulty when she said, “It was easier for me [to deal with the overt] . . . because it's, socially, not as acceptable . . . . We've had this . . . public conversation for so long about . . . blatant forms of sexism . . . and how you shouldn't do that in the workplace.” She explained, “It was much easier for me in those situations to stand up for myself, or others, than with the more subtle forms, because they're not as easily identified or defended.” Amanda also explained, “Overt [although infuriating is] . . . easier to deal with because it's overt. I can look at it, I can name it, and I can put my finger on it. I can be like ‘THAT was over the line.’"

Mental and physical exhaustion. The supporting theme of *Mental and Physical Exhaustion* developed from reported feelings such as being worn down, hopeless, depressed, powerless, and stressed. Participants talked about feeling worn down. Corrina said that subtle sexism, “kind of wears you down after a while.” Angie said, “I was a little worn down.” Participants felt hopeless and discouraged about subtle sexism. Sherry said, “I’ve been a careerist female all of my life, and it is sort of, when this happens to me at this point after decades it’s discouraging.” Josephine said, “[It] makes you feel like giving up . . . . makes you feel somewhat hopeless because what can you do? You can't file a complaint because somebody said, ‘Isn't she cute?’ . . . . It makes you feel hopeless and kind of resigned to it.” Participants reported feeling depressed and lonely. Angie said,

“I have had dark times before” and Rosanna said, “Sometimes it made me feel just left out and lonely.”

Participants reported feeling powerless after experiencing subtle sexism. Amanda said, “I felt really powerless.” Rhiannon said, “I felt like, really, like I didn't know how to handle it because we were so outnumbered.” Participants also experienced lowered self-esteem as a result of the subtle sexism they experienced. Josephine said, “[My] counselor asked . . . ‘What do you like about yourself?’ and . . . [voice tone gets stronger] I could not think of a thing, and that is just not me.” She explained, “ That was a direct result of . . . things like this, that were happening . . . . It affects how you see yourself.” Corrina said, “I kinda feel a dark shadow hanging over you, you know, you know it just, kind of, messes with your confidence.” Cecilia said, “[It feels] like I’m less worthy . . . pretending to be worthy . . . It can impact your confidence if you let it.”

Participants internalized their emotions. Sherry said, “For a couple of decades I, you know, internalized it.” She also said, “I agonize over this.” Josephine said, “You just swallow it . . . you internalize.” Maggie explained, “There's times where I have to box that up and put it away for later.”

Participants talked about dealing with stress as a result of the subtle sexism they experienced. Maggie said, “When stuff like that happens it stresses me out.” Gloria said, “I dwell on things sometimes, and I'll replay it over and over in my head, and I think that that, um, that adds to the level of stress for me and my job.” She also said, “I’m . . . an emotional person, by nature . . . and it adds stress for me when I want to feel those emotions, but I have to keep them, like, hidden, as to not be perceived as weak or

perceived negatively." Rosanna explained, "Gosh, I'm a leader. I should be setting an example with this guy. What if he's doing this to other women . . . Trying to figure out how to deal with it increased my stress more than the actual act." Subtle sexism even impacted the physical health of participants. Amanda said, "I have been physically ill over these things." Cecilia said, "It can cause a significant amount of emotional stress, which is, you know, it affects . . . you physically as well."

Corrina talked about the spillover effects of stress from work to home. She said, "[It] puts a strain on my personal relationship with my husband . . . . He gets tired of hearing about work . . . . It adds stress to our off time . . . . but . . . sometimes [laughing] you just gotta vent to . . . a neutral third party." Amanda had similar experiences and said, "I have stayed up talking to my husband about some of this stuff at 2:00 in the morning, you know, pouring my heart out and upset and angry and frustrated about these things." Cecilia also talked about the difficulties of having to choose which partner's career takes the lead in the relationship. She said, "It's a hard choice for couples to figure out how to be the lead in career in your relationship, and have a husband or a spouse that is the follower." Families were also impacted by subtle sexism impacting a woman's decision to have children. Layla recalled working on a management team in which nobody had children. She said, "I was thinking about having kids, and I was like, 'I can't have kids and do this . . . . there is no flexibility for parenting' . . . . So, it did affect . . . personal life."

The long-term effects added to the physical and mental exhaustion of the participants. Corrina said, "After . . . years of always be on guard . . . it's going to take a

long time for me to be comfortable . . . and feel like you can let your guard down . . . which I doubt it will." Gloria said, "It makes me uncomfortable, and it's been probably, like, seven or eight years . . . It's definitely something that was impactful for me." Maggie said, "[It] sticks in my craw three years later" and Sherry said, "That still rankles me and it was about 15 years ago."

Participants reported that the negative effects on their mental and physical health were mitigated by the fact that they work in beautiful places, or as they say in the NPS, they are "paid in sunsets." Maggie explained, "Working for the Park Service, you know, the mantra of, 'We get paid in sunsets and sunrises' . . . We put up with a lot . . . because it's such a beautiful place." She explained, "It's a lot easier to shake off that subtle sexism because it's a really awesome place." She also said, "I usually bounce back . . . . because . . . . I'll have an epic day where I get paid to hike." Rhiannon said, "I still love my job and I'm not going to leave here because I love it here and I love this place."

Unexpected powerful emotions of anger and sadness. Participants were saddened by their experiences with subtle sexism and even cried unexpectedly while talking about it. Josephine said, "This does actually, actually, get emotional [crying], I have to say I wasn't expecting that**."** Corrina said the following:

> My current boss knows that I'm married and have a kid, but that's about all he knows [voice trembling and sounding emotional]. You know, it's, it's just like, I don't know, I don't offer to show pictures of my family [crying]. I don't have pictures of my family on my desk. You basically just hide that side of your personality . . . . I kind of kept that as a hidden [voice trembling and sounding

emotional] aspect of my persona at work**.**

Angie said, "[Because] I have to work with this guy, I still work with him, and I went to my office and shut the door for a little while and . . . [beginning to cry] I'm getting kind of emotional telling you**."**

In addition to sadness, participants also felt anger. Lola said, "Yeah, I was angry. I was really angry . . . . You know, there's no changing. So yeah, I was angry. Very angry . . . . I was just amazingly angry . . . . I guess angry. I guess still anger and anger and still despair." Maggie said, "Aaaghh, just makes me so angry!" Corrina said, "This is just really wrong and, you know, I really want to punch you out!" Angie said, "Being told that, because my home life was complicated, I was, like, I don't ever want to have to deal with that man again . . . . I'm gonna send his paychecks to Dry Tortugas [a remote island park]!"

Fear. The supporting theme of *Fear* developed from recurring comments from participants about fear in the workplace resulting from subtle sexism. Participants learned about high profile cases about harassment and it caused fear and worry about the lack of support for women in the NPS. Corrina said, "Like a Grand Canyon or . . . these parks where . . . they're supposedly cleaning everything up, but I don't know." She continued by saying, "The now former superintendent who had been here, who went there, her experience, like if that happened to you, you know, it's just, like, what's the underling gonna experience"? Lola said, "I still feel that there's no support there, especially for everything that they're trying to put in place . . . . Everything that's happened at the Grand

Canyon, even recently you know, for that poor superintendent, but there's no support there."

Participants expressed fear of addressing incidents of subtle sexism. Layla said, "At the time it was scary to address because I was not in a position of power and this was one of the highest people at the Park Service having this conversation." Maggie said, "I think there's a reason that sexual harassment is still pretty rampant in land management. It's because we have the jobs that everybody wants, and once you get that job, there is a fear in making a complaint." Sherry said, "I did complain about it [laughing], uh, but not to his face 'cause, uh, at that point, uh, he had the power to do, uh, kind of give me some good projects."

Participants were also afraid of having a sexist supervisor. Lola said, "The guy that actually is a jerk on our team is probably going to take that position. So, she's like, 'No, you've got to get that. You can't let him be our boss.', but I don't wanna be the boss'. So, yeah, I never thought about it. I wonder how different that would be." Angie said, "I don't want this man as my supervisor . . . . I don't want to work for someone like that. Why would I do that to myself?"

Participants would even hide from, and go out of their way to avoid, people who had exhibited subtly sexist behavior. Gloria said, "I'll avoid interactions, if possible, with certain people, or I have to be like extra cautious or wary of dealing with certain individuals." Corinna said, "I didn't say much of anything to him. I tried to limit any sort of contact with him . . . . I tried very hard to avoid that person." Layla said, "[I] just put my head down and didn't want to get involved." Josephine said, "I don't react directly . . .

The indirect response is . . . I'm not . . . [going] to you with these problems and issues. I'm not going to invite you to this meeting . . . . I'm not going to seek your support or opinion."

Participants felt squelched by fear and felt like they could not speak up. Sherry said that she felt, "Squelched." Gloria explained, "I guard my words a lot more than I would otherwise need to if I were male." Corrina stated that, "I'll see stuff, I just won't say anything . . . . because you don't want to get singled out as the complainer or the person who's, you know, always bringing up negative issues or, you know, you don't wanna get a reputation".

Participants also felt fear to the degree that they felt that they needed survival strategies to defend themselves. As Cecilia put it, "You get into self-protection mode, but not dealing with the problem mode." Corrina said, "I got very nervous, you know, about trying to just watch my back at all times . . . . Always feeling like you had to be 110% at all times." She further explained being cautious about, "any sort of sign of weakness, or something where they could try and get you . . . and make your life miserable." She also said, "If I get emotional, then . . . [my coworkers would say], 'Ugh . . . she's being a girl' . . . My strategy the last eight years has been to . . . not show emotion . . . . My strategy of surviving that division was to fly under the radar." Corrina also said, "The best strategy to survive that division was to not show my gender . . . . I made . . . a conscious effort not to mention my child in the workplace. I've always felt on the defensive [voice trembling and sounding a little upset]."

Participants had such a fear of people who exhibited subtly sexist behaviors, that they even felt unsafe. Lola said, "[It] was kind of freaky . . . It felt like it was just like this mob boss, like, giving me the kiss of death or something. You know it was, it was amazing." Corrina said, "You just don't ever feel safe . . . you always have to have your guard up." Regarding feeling unsafe as a law enforcement ranger, Rosanna said the following:

> You need to be able to trust these people, literally, with your life, and when, when you're not included in that group, or when you're seen as an outsider to that group . . . it felt unsafe . . . . Gosh, this is the guy that, that backs me up tonight. Is he really going to have my back? Is he really gonna help me out if I need it . . . It made, sometimes it made me feel unsafe.

Even though the behavior was subtle, it resulted in fear strong enough to make participants feel unsafe.

Using humor to cope with the harms. *Humor* developed as a supporting theme because participants used humor to address and deal with the negative emotions of subtle sexism. To explain using humor to address it, Sherry said, "I like to use a light touch . . . . A lot of it's like humorous, but pointed humor." She continued by saying, "I feel it's to put you in a position of some strength . . . . Just to do that would be more effective . . . . and sort of gets the point across to somebody else, and diffuses any kind of nastiness." Amanda said, "I tried to make it kind of, jokey . . . but there was a message in that."

Participants even laughed at subtle sexism. Cecilia described an incident when she was the only woman on a management team and she reacted to subtle sexism with humor.

She said, “We would . . . joke that I would bring up an idea . . . and our superintendent would dismiss it, and then one of my male peers . . . would bring it up and it was a brilliant idea.” She also said, “Maybe I’ll mock it later behind my superintendent’s back . . . in order to make me feel a little better.” When asked about her thoughts on women using humor, Amanda started laughing and said, “I’m laughing.”

Some participants used humor as a coping mechanism. Rhiannon said, “Maybe the laughing is a coping mechanism? I don't really know.” Rosanna said, “Laughter and crying are so closely interconnected in our emotional response.” She explained, “In law enforcement . . . we use humor to deal with traumatic experiences . . . . things that are emotionally disturbing, because the alternative is to break down and cry, and that’s . . . not always acceptable, nor . . . productive.” Josephine believed that humor was used, “out of discomfort.” Angie said, “If you don't laugh about it, you cry . . . . because my only other reaction would be tears, and . . . it's not worth it . . . . It was frustrating. It was sad. It was hard, but I need to laugh to move forward.” She clarified, “It doesn't make it less of a wound [but] . . . . if you cry every time when you relate a story . . . you're re-wounding yourself.” Amanda described it by saying the following:

> Women also use humor in talking about it. It's like putting up a wall. If we open the floodgates, we'll just drown. We'll just start crying, and that's so inappropriate in a work environment . . . . It's easier to just, kind of, laugh about it because that puts the wall up, and it, kind of, keeps your emotions locked in a bit more.

Participants coped with subtle sexism by laughing at it or using humor to address it.

Organizational Behaviors and Attitudes – RQ 1

I developed the overarching theme of *Organizational Behaviors and Attitudes* based on various supporting themes about descriptions of the workplace provided by participants. The themes primarily supported both RQ1 about the lived experiences of women. The four supporting themes included (a) working harder than men, (b) team dynamics, (c) employee outcomes, and (d) confronting.

Working harder than men. The supporting theme of *Working Harder than Men* was based on comments from participants that they believed that they needed to work harder to prove themselves, overcome barriers, and make up for missed opportunities. Participants felt that they needed to work harder than men in order to get the same level of trust and respect as men. Sherry said, "You have to do, like, ten times better than a man to get the kind of respect that they get." Lola said, "It's like you have to work twice as hard just to prove yourself. The guys just, it feels like they just have to just show up with a piece of paper saying that they've studied this topic." Rhiannon said, "I had to work ten times harder to earn the respect of, like, a seasonal." Gloria said, "I feel like I have to work harder than some of my male counterparts for the respect and the trust from many hiring managers."

Participants worked harder because they felt that they needed to prove themselves. Josephine said, "[It] makes me feel like I am going to succeed so much at this, what you perceive as a male position . . . . Again, I feel like, 'OK, you just wait'." Layla said, "Part of me wanted to prove myself . . . . just more of a challenge . . . .

Sometimes you just, like, you just get tired of it all, right. You're like, really? I have to prove myself again?"

Participants felt that they had to overcome barriers. Lola said, "There's always something. I'll always come up against lots of walls." Layla described an interesting incident while attending a meeting of superintendents who were talking about being hard on themselves because they wanted their work to be perfect. She said, "It came out that, like, most of the women in the room have been either valedictorian or top of their class, and all the men are like, 'Yeah, no I barely made it through it.'" She further explained, "I think that, to be a leader in the Park Service, as a woman, sometimes the standards are higher . . . . There are higher barriers for women . . . . They have to jump different hoops to get where they are."

Participants had to work harder because they missed out on career or skill development. Rhiannon said, "Oftentimes [there were] instances where I was really interested in doing something but . . . . people just didn't even think to ask me to do it." She also said, "The fact that I was going to get held back from a training . . . . I feel like my performance as a field ranger suffered." Corinna said, "He wouldn't sign off on anybody's task books . . . and it was all women who told me, you know, that, that he had refused to sign theirs as well . . . . Basically, that opportunity was denied to us."

Participants believed that because they worked harder, they performed better. As Sherry said, "If anything, it spurred me to be even better." Cecilia said, "I still wake up every morning and want to make sure I'm kicking butt, and to do the best work I can . . . . I really, really try hard to not let it affect my performance." Layla said, "It made me work

harder . . . . It probably actually made me a better performer . . . . I mean, IT didn't make me a better performer, my reaction to it made me a better performer."

Team Dynamics. I developed the supporting theme *Team Dynamics* based on participant comments about their workplace relationships with supervisors and coworkers. As Cecilia said, "It's also a breakdown of a relationship too." Explaining the damage to workplace relationships that she experienced, Rhiannon, said:

> [It] became a huge rift between me and my supervisor . . . . Our relationship was really strained over that for quite some time . . . . We just kind of avoided, avoided each other during, during that time . . . . I definitely wanted a different supervisor after that because I just felt like we, we lost something in our relationship that we could never get back . . . . The fact that I spoke up . . . I feel like the upper management seems to feel like they walk on eggshells around me . . . . I just feel like they see me in a different light.

Speaking of how subtle sexism affected her workplace relationships, Corrina said, "[It would] make me wary of, you know, trusting anybody in that division [Maintenance]."

Participants had varying experiences with discussing subtle sexism with their supervisors. As Rosanna put it, "[It] depends on the supervisor or manager . . . . I feel uncomfortable addressing it often with the person who has perpetrated it." Josephine described talking to supervisors as, "pointless." Lola said, "It's almost to the point where you don't trust your supervisors when you tell them something . . . . You're just talking to a wall." Elaborating on this, she said, "You know they may feel it for you, but they, they don't report it, at least in my experience. Nothing . . . has ever gotten reported." Maggie

said, “I can go to my immediate supervisor . . . and I have no doubt that they are taking it a step up, but somewhere along the line it hasn’t, some of that hasn't changed.” Describing positive experiences, Layla said, “I would have no problem bringing it up to someone, my manager or supervisor. I also have supportive, a super supportive supervisor, so that's helpful, who is a male, but also supportive.”

As with supervisors, participants had varying experiences talking to coworkers about subtle sexism. Gloria explained, “[It] depends on the coworker . . . . [I] wouldn't really discuss this with a coworker that I didn't know very well or that I think couldn’t be . . . understanding and empathetic . . . It’s just frustrating to have to even have the conversations at all.” Gloria said, “When you have good and trusting relationships with coworkers, being able to talk about it especially in productive ways . . . helps bring awareness to the issues.” Speaking of her ability to talk to coworkers, Rhiannon said, “I don't and I can't.” Lola said, “They don't know anything about this because they wouldn't understand. They would think that I would be, uh, an overreacting female . . . . like, ‘oh, you're just a dumb girl’ . . . . so . . . no, I don't talk to them very much.” Maggie, however, said, “I've had good experiences talking within my own work group . . . [I have] almost a better relationship because employees, I think, feel they can talk to me because I'm not their supervisor”. Cecilia said, “[there’s] more comfort there because there's no power dynamic with your peers, your equals . . . . It's easier to talk about and it can be really productive”.

Participants tried to maintain their workplace relationships. Gloria said, “[I] try really hard to maintain a good professional, um, relationship with all of my team and my

coworkers and my customers, and I feel like your reputation . . . is all you have". Rosanna said, "I feel like I have . . . tried to repair and maintain that relationship, and I think that's helped more than, probably, my supervisor saying anything . . . . This is somebody that I have to work with, I have to collaborate with". About one particular person, Rosanna said, "This is a high-level person in the agency who it behooves me to maintain a good relationship with, and it's easier to go with it than try to make a deal of it". Although participants tried to maintain relationships, sometimes subtle sexism caused confusing complexities.

Participants spoke of the confusion that results when subtle sexism comes from a trusted friend. Corrina said, "I was shocked . . . . because this was somebody I trusted and had worked closely with." She also said, "Having somebody who went to bat for me . . . turning around and doing stuff like that to somebody else . . . . It's hard to figure out . . . an exact word that would cover . . . that sort of confusion [and] . . . mixed emotions".

Participants also felt a sisterhood with other women as another result of subtle sexism. Angie said, "There's sort of a kinship, a sisterhood if you will. We've all been there." Layla said, "We all just, sort of, recognized it . . . . We had a conversation about it . . . . [It was] a camaraderie with other women." Rhiannon said, "We had a bit of a sisterhood, and so . . . like we all just stuck together", or as she also stated, "At night we'd have a glass of wine and then just, just, 'grr, grr, grr', talk about it".

Employee outcomes. I developed the supporting theme of *Employee Outcomes* based on the four supporting themes of (a) job satisfaction, (b) morale, (c) wanting to quit or change parks, and (d) taking as little leave as possible.

Participants said that their job satisfaction declined as a result of subtle sexism. Amanda stated that it had, “a huge impact on job satisfaction.” Lola said the following:

> My job satisfaction has declined . . . . It's gotten really bad . . . it’s making my, my job satisfaction decline. I used to love my job and now I'm starting to, I just, I hate it. I dread it every day. You know, I still try though. I, you know, I’m just not happy with it.

Josephine described it by saying, “I know I have the best job in the world, but when other things like that come into play, what I see as unnecessary things, it definitely negatively affects your job satisfaction because you don't, you don't feel validated.” She continued by saying, “You don't feel appreciated. You don't feel like you're taken seriously even though you're working really, really hard to, so, it has to affect it negatively.” For some participants it only affected their job satisfaction during certain events. Maggie said, “I don't know that it affects my overall job satisfaction though, I'd say, it, kind of, it almost depends on the year or if there's a particular incident that just gets under my teeth.” Some participants manage to have good job satisfaction in spite of the subtle sexism they experienced. Layla said, “I would say I've mostly been really satisfied with my jobs, but I think it's working in spite of it.”

Some participants reported low morale as a result of the subtle sexism in their workplace. Gloria said, “Sometimes I feel, like, defeated . . . My morale is like, just defeated, like, I, it's never going to get any better . . . . It's just when these things happen, and they generally pass once I stop dwelling on it”. Lola said, “Yeah, [laughing]. There is no morale . . . I don't do my tasks joyfully . . . . There's no joy in what I do for my work . .

. . but, yeah, my morale's pretty crappy." Some participants reported experiencing a loss of morale only occasionally. Maggie said the following:

> When I'm satisfied with my job, when I'm loving my job, my morale is really good . . . . When I see something that upsets me, like, my morale will go down the toilet for a few days. Like, I'll be frustrated that this stuff still happens sometimes.

Some participants maintained their morale in spite of the workplace environment. Layla said, "In spite of these things I was happy, and it was just like, this is par for the course and you've got to deal with it.".

After experiencing subtle sexism, participants reported negative impacts to organizational commitment, turnover, and retention. Some participants wanted to change districts to get away from sexist people. Rhiannon said, "I actually transferred districts." Some participants transferred to other parks. Sherry said, "When I moved from [my previous job] to this park, the sexism in [that previous job] made me really want to get out of there. Yeah, I was very happy when I made the move." Some participants considered leaving the NPS altogether. Cecilia said the following:

> [It] makes me feel like I want to quit . . . . This constant demeaning, and then you have a breakdown of a relationship . . . . made me decide that I couldn't work there anymore . . . . I did contemplate leaving the National Park Service altogether because, you know, you see it in the culture everywhere.

Participants reported wanting to change supervisors, districts, parks, and even agencies.

Some participants chose to stay at their parks, but not because they loved the job. Explaining how her options to leave the park were limited, Corrina said, "[I'm almost]

eligible to retire . . . If it was just me . . . I might be more likely to try to get to another park . . . but [I have] . . . a kid in school, and . . . a husband who's got ties to the . . . area." Corrina also chose to stay because of fear. She explained, "I have a desire to move up, but I also don't want to, you know, go to another park and then find out it's even worse."

Another outcome of subtle sexism was that participants tried to take as little leave as possible. Sherry said, "Probably there were times when I should've taken some leave and I didn't." Corrina said, "I did everything I could to not take leave . . . . so, I . . . missed as little work as possible . . . . I would work 12 and a half hour days." Cecilia said, "I rarely take leave . . . If I work hard, if I don't take that leave, if I do twice as much work, I will get the same recognition." Layla said the following:

> I probably could have taken off more time after I had my kids, but I felt like I needed to come back and prove myself . . . . I probably don't take as much leave as I might because I don't want to be perceived as being weak . . . . People make comments about taking more time when you're a mother.

To avoid appearing weak, participants avoided taking time off.

Some participants took time off, as needed, but received negative comments from coworkers. Angie took extra leave to care for a child with serious health issues. She said, "My supervisor was very understanding, but I got a little flak from [coworkers] . . . about taking . . . leave . . . . Single men with no children . . . . they don't understand . . . . [They say,] 'Didn't you take off yesterday at 2:00? Do you even work here anymore?'" Maggie also reported not taking time off, but she expressed changing her plans for the day as a

result of subtle sexism. She said, “I can't say that I ever took a day off because somebody irked me with some subtle sexism . . . . I may change my job duties for the day.” Elaborating on this comment, she said, “Say I was planning on doing report writing . . . I might [decide that] we needed to hike . . . . I might go do something more physical that day so that I’m not stewing around in my own head.”

Confronting. I created the supporting theme of *Confronting* as a result of the various behaviors and attitudes participants reported about addressing subtle sexism. Some participants brushed it off because they didn’t want to make waves. Lola said, “You just step back. It’s like you don’t sit there and make waves.” Maggie said, “I don't want to appear a complainer.” Layla said, “I think I just let some of it roll off my back because that's just, sort of, the way of the world.” Brushing it off did not mean that it did not bother participants. Gloria said, “[I] brushed it off, but it's something that, that bothered me for a long time.”

Some participants did not know how to handle subtle sexism. Lola said, “They’re really nasty about her and I don't say anything because I don't want to. I don't know. It's just really hard for me to figure out how to handle that.” Rosanna wondered, “I've given it a lot of thought because of this [study]. I think, like, it bothers me . . . Why can't I just say something about it?” Josephine explained, “Well, the subtle forms, I think you, you question and you have to think about it, so you don't act in the moment.”

Addressing subtle sexism could depend on the situation. As Rosanna said, “It would depend on the situation. I think sometimes it's just not the right time to bring it up.” Layla said, “I just kept going . . . . I wouldn't sideline the conversation about it or

anything . . . . Sometimes later I might call someone or talk to someone about it." Amanda said, "It just depends on how much it matters to me, how important it is . . . how tired am I [laughing] . . . or . . . how many battles I want to fight this week."

Some participants were able to address subtle sexism in the moment, but had different levels of directness. Josephine said, "Your reaction has to be just as subtle as the sexism, has to be." Rosanna said, "I don't often speak up in the moment . . . It's something that I'm not very comfortable with, I'm not very good at, and honestly, I have seen more benefit from addressing things in other, maybe, roundabout ways." As an example, she said, "I've tried to, kind of, divert the conversation." Some participants were more direct. Cecilia said, "[I] try to step up and make that space for myself because that makes space for somebody else." Angie said, "I've not ever really had a problem, either doing it directly to the person, or [going] . . . above him to his supervisor." There were times when participants responded with more anger. Angie said, "I snapped back at him." Josephine said, "I might have responded once or twice, like, 'You're darn right I'm angry, and here's why I'm angry.'"

When participants addressed sexism, they had mixed results. Some participants experienced positive results. Cecilia said, "[I] actually felt pretty empowered that we were able to have that conversation, and he was able to see things a little bit differently, and I feel like it built more trust into our relationship." Other participants experienced negative results from addressing it. Rhiannon said the following:

> The guys just wouldn't even, like, talk to her . . . She just wanted to feel respected and not, like, made fun of in front of the whole class . . . . Her standing up for

> herself ended up backfiring, and then she was, she was basically outcast . . . . It just felt like, after that . . . there was no camaraderie . . . . We were all just like divided.

Participants reported having mixed results from addressing sexism, but sometimes other people addressed it for them.

Participants appreciated it when men acted as allies and addressed subtle sexism in the moment in support of women. Rosanna said, “I was thankful that he, kind of, was the one who spoke out because I didn't want to then be this, kind of, quote unquote, annoying woman.” Corrina said, “It basically took another male on their crew that was equal to them saying something for them to at least not say it in front of me . . . . They . . . toned it down after . . . he had said something to ‘em.”

When participants were bystanders to subtle sexism, they had different reactions to addressing it. Some participants were unable to respond. As Angie said, “I didn't like it, but I don't, I didn't do anything outward, just played witness.” Some participants felt more empowered to react as bystanders. Cecilia said the following:

> I would feel more empowered to say that that's not all right, and, even if I was ok with it, we don't know who else isn’t going to be OK with that . . . or is unable to speak up, and so I think I’d feel a little bit more comfortable, like, putting a stop to it.

Josephine said, “If it’s something directed at somebody else you feel empowered to step up and speak for that person, but when it happens to you, and it happens to you in a

subtle way, you don't feel empowered." Maggie said, "I would get very defensive on their behalf."

Organizational Change – RQ2

I developed the overarching conceptual theme of *Organizational Change* based on four supporting themes that emerged from comments from participants about the efforts and desires of women for change. The supporting themes included (a) filing complaints, (b) leadership, (c) organizational excellence, and (d) fostering change.

Filing complaints. People can file complaints as one method for achieving organizational change, but participants have not had good experiences with this. Participants reported not seeing changes or consequences when they filed complaints. Maggie said, "I certainly didn't see any behavior change . . . . I've seen multiple grievances go through and I've not seen a behavior change in several individuals here that I work with. I don't see a change." Corrina said, "The sexual harassment training and . . . talk that we got from . . . leaders . . . saying, [in a mocking voice] 'oh yeah, we care about sexual harassment', but then it felt like . . . the reality was . . . nothing was going to change." She also said, "Speaking to the deputy superintendent and basically not getting . . . anything other than lip service . . . always feeling like there was no hope that anything would ever change . . . They were perfectly happy with status quo." Josephine said the following:

> Even though everybody is, kind of, hyper sensitive about things right now . . . . after the, recent, most recent DOI order, where it's, like, no tolerance . . . . What will happen then? What will happen then is that's going to take up, a lot of my

> time and your time, and nothing's ever really going to come of [it] . . . . That's how you feel.

Aside from not believing that subtle sexism would be addressed, women had other reasons for not reporting these behaviors.

Participants also expressed a fear of reporting subtle sexism. As Maggie said, "I hope that I can recognize it and, you know, bring it forward . . . . but a lot of times I, I'm pretty frightened." Cecilia said, "I think that in general the National Park Service has a culture of labeling people who report anything, but especially sexism, as trouble makers." Explaining her personal experiences, she said, "[I] had to make choices . . . . between reporting the behavior that I felt was hostile or marginalizing, and my career . . . . If I wanted to have a vibrant career in the National Park Service, I needed to not report things."

Supervisors are afraid to take action on reports that are filed because they could get blamed for poor behavior among their subordinates. Lola said the following:

> They're still stuck in that mentality, 'If I report this I'll get in trouble, or I'll get blackballed, or, you know, I'll get suspended for six months and reassigned until they do the investigation, or I'll get an EEO complaint against the other person.' They're just so afraid to do anything still.

She also described an incident where a supervisor did bring a case forward and ended up getting in trouble. She said, "[Another supervisor] actually had me report him . . . so right now she's also now getting blackballed, and getting in trouble, and getting called over to [her superior's] office now because of all of that."

Participants felt that there was not an effective process for addressing subtle sexism. Josephine said, “You can't file a complaint because somebody said, ‘Isn't she cute?’ in a meeting. Like, then, oh, where is that even going to go? You know? It's not going to go anywhere.” Cecilia elaborated on this idea by saying the following:

> It's become a lot easier to deal with the blatant forms. We now have a reporting process. We, we have, we even have a policy that blatantly says it's not OK. I think we have a lot of tools now to deal with the blatant sexism, and I think there's more of a conversation in society about it, right, with the MeToo movement . . . we have more to tools, uh, to know what to do and to have the empowerment to do something about it. I don't feel like we're there yet with the subtle sexism. That we don't necessarily have the tools to deal with it. We aren’t having an open conversation about it, and so it's much harder to know how to stop it.

Participants thought that the NPS only had a process for dealing with overt sexism. They did not like the existing options for dealing with subtle sexism.

Participants did not want to use employee relations specialists or other formal processes or professionals, such as Equal Employment Opportunity, ombudspeople, mediators, or conflict resolution, for addressing workplace issues. Using these methods to address subtle sexism were viewed as pointless. Gloria said, “I've had a couple of encounters with employee relations . . . The ER program as a whole has been underdeveloped and undertrained. So, I don't think that they . . . . have been equipped to handle or counsel employees in situations like that.” Amanda said, “The various forums that they have set up for this, EEO and . . . the ombudsmen, they are . . . designed . . . to

deal with sexual harassment [which] . . . has a very specific legal definition." She elaborated by saying, "All of this other type of subtle sexism, because it doesn't fall under that legal definition of sexual harassment [is] . . . not protected." In summary, Corrina said, "I really don't have any faith in the internal organization . . . . It's like, it's like having a toothless dog."

Leadership. I developed the supporting theme of *Leadership* based on the comments from participants about needing more women leaders, reasons why they chose not to be leaders, and what happens when they did become leaders. Regarding needing more women leaders, Corrina said, "So much focus has been on . . . blatant harassment . . . These aren't isolated cases. Widespread misogyny is endemic . . . and . . . will only get better if [it] is fully exposed and more women . . . are integrated into all levels of the agency." Layla said, "It goes all the way up to leadership. There's not a lot of women in leadership . . . . There's more in . . . [interpretation, visitor services and] . . . administration, but . . . [not] in leadership overall . . . I think we need to really change that." She explained further, "Until we do, there's not going to be a lot of people thinking about that a huge amount of work leaders in maintenance are men." Regarding park level leadership, Sherry said, "Until I got put in this position, this park didn't have any females in the senior management."

Even though they expressed a need for women leaders, participants expressed reservations about advancing their careers and becoming leaders. Amanda said, "[Subtle sexism has had] a huge impact on . . . . opportunities for advancement . . . . There's been some opportunities for advancement . . . . and I actually haven't applied because I felt so

discouraged that . . . I . . . wouldn't be considered . . . even though I should be." Cecilia said the following:

> My confidence took enough of a hit . . . . that that has affected . . . what I apply to and . . . needing time to heal from [subtle sexism] . . . so I haven't been applying to [superintendent positions], even though that would be like the natural next step, because I just needed some time and perspective to step away from that and decide whether I want to be in that kind of a leadership position.

Josephine said, "The long-term effects [are] . . . you don't try to advance anymore . . . You just settle into the thought of . . . 'I'm going to be effective in doing this' . . . [rather] than being a division chief or . . . superintendent . . . . You just settle." Lola said, "I've been thinking about taking [a leadership] job . . . . [laughing] I talked myself out of it." She explained her reason for not applying for career advancement by saying, "I see what [another woman] went through . . . . She was a supervisor and, uh, I know what she went through and . . . I see the lack of support."

As participants matured and their careers advanced, they became more aware of subtle sexism. Cecilia said, "Now that I'm a little bit older and a little bit more mature, I can see that, in general, was demeaning women." Speaking of her younger views, Gloria said, "I was pretty young and I didn't see it as being as egregious as it, as I see it as being now, as I've grown and matured." Rosanna spoke of her younger years, stating, "Early in my career, it made me feel special, and I know that sounds weird, but it made me feel like, 'Oh, like I'm, I'm different. I'm special. I'm the only woman. I am somehow unique

in this group.'" She also said, "These things become more apparent, as I become older and more aware of them."

As participants advanced in their careers, they felt more empowered to address incidents of subtle sexism. Layla said, "I generally would say something as, you know, as I became more confident, and in my leadership role, I feel like I can speak out more." She also said, "Over time, I have come to focus more on others than myself." Explaining her experiences, Rosanna said, "I did whatever I could to fit in early in my career. Later in my career, I didn't care as much about fitting in." She explained this further by saying, "We all do that in life . . . . and as you grow up, you realize that you . . . . can be yourself and still be cool." As a leader now, Rosanna said, "The more I see it and experience it, the more engaged I get in these issues." Sherry said, "So now that I'm a supervisor, I try to not let this happen."

Participants expressed a desire to help younger women who were not as advanced in their careers. Sherry stated that she has, "tried to be a mentor." She said, "I do really care about them, young women, younger women coming into this . . . . [I want to] look out for the younger women not just in my division, but elsewhere in the park." Rosanna said, "As I get older, I think my big concern is that other women . . . are in similar situations, that other women are trying to fit in and . . . . if you're not careful . . . you can compromise who you are or who you want to be." She expressed her concerns further by saying, "I worry a lot about our next generation and whether, whether they have the tools and the skills and the support to be able to do what they need to do to keep themselves safe and well." Layla said, "[It] makes me a little frustrated . . . but also energized to help

other women . . . . I see it at all levels of the organization and want to do something . . . When you look at a bigger picture . . . that frustration has made me want to help others." She also said, "I was not capable of addressing that earlier in my career . . . . but, you know, it's made me think about how I can help others as well, that don't feel that they have the capacity to address it."

Effective leadership can create organizational change, but participants expressed disappointment with the current NPS leadership. Josephine wondered:

> They're horrible leaders. They don't have the skill set for this . . . . Why are they promoting these people or putting these people in these positions . . . . With all the problems in the National Park Service leadership these days, that, to me, is the real tragedy of it, as I've seen people come in here who are horrible leaders . . . Potentially good leaders could just resign themselves to their current position because of how others have knowingly or unknowingly belittled them because they spoke out for things, and did not meet the expectations of what they thought you should be. Horrible leaders, and we see it all over the place.

Corrina said, "This park holds itself as an example of . . . . [being] cutting edge and . . . super inclusive, and all this sort of stuff that they hype, but then, you know, the reality is not [that]." Sherry even expressed how her negative feelings about leadership went all the way up to the executive branch of the federal government. She said, "I'll get political here. I actually feel under the Trump administration . . . . I'm feeling oppressed from on high [laughing]."

Organizational excellence. I developed the supporting theme of *Organizational Excellence* because of comments from participants about their concerns about the reputation of the NPS and that the agency was not reaching its full potential. Explaining the importance of recruiting student interns, Angie said, "We are supposed to be showing [interns] . . . . the best of . . . working in the Park Service . . . and working with people in one of the most beloved government agencies." Expressing her concern about the effects of subtle sexism on these interns, she said, "Not only are you . . . damaging this person's view . . . but possibly [preventing] . . . them ever having a job in the Park Service because they have such a negative feeling . . . You're not showing us as the best . . . that we can [be]." Sherry said, "Female interns were very put off by this . . . exclusive boys' club . . . . and it may have put off modern young guys . . . . There probably were good females that might have been interested in the Park Service career." She also said, "You could just see . . . modern youth . . . cringing about it . . . . They've gotten more training at their colleges, [laughing] so you know, I think that's sort of a little sell of bad Park Service behavior."

Participants expressed concerns about how subtle sexism even impacts the effectiveness of the NPS. Cecilia said the following:

> So, the more we don't make space for women at the table, or the more we don't see the perspective of women, and you could insert people of color into this also, right? The, those incredible ideas, those incredible perspectives that women bring to a team and to a workplace, and women are really kick-ass leaders, you know, and we will never see the full potential of our agency until you really embrace

> that, and that's, I mean, that's why diversity is such a good and powerful thing, but it's also, I think, really scary too, for men to give up that power.

Amanda said, "My job is such that I used to speak a lot at conferences and represent the organization at very high-profile meetings. And so, if I don't feel supported in doing those things . . . . I do think it hurts the parks." She further explained, "It's hurt the Park Service, it's hurt our organization and the way that we engage with partners, when myself personally, and maybe when other women don't feel supported in being strong representatives of the organization in our positions."

Layla voiced concern about the need for leaders to look good in their uniforms and how poorly they fit women. She said, "As superintendents, you want to look your best . . . . You can't do that in the off-the-shelf women's uniforms." She also said, "The women's uniforms are horrific . . . . I know there is a move now to make uniforms better . . . but . . . it's been . . . years of women's uniforms being ridiculous . . . . I think if men's uniforms were as poorly fitted, we wouldn't be here."

Fostering change. I created the supporting theme of *Fostering Change* based on comments from participants about wanting to challenge current ideas and behaviors and wanting to know how they could affect change. Participants spoke about a common practice in the NPS of accepting things the way they are. As Lola said, "I didn't tell anybody about it . . . because I figured, well, I guess that's just the way things are. And that's the best phrase in the Park Service, 'Well that's just the way it is'. You know, there's no changing**."** Sherry said, "It's like that's the way it's always been**."** Josephine said, "It just tends to make you, just, well that's, that's the way it is**."**

Participants challenged the current attitudes as unnecessary. Josephine said, “It's so UNNECESSARY . . . . When you have to deal with things that are just unfair and unnecessary, it affects the stress levels and your morale and work culture. It affects all of it.” Amanda said the following:

> I have experienced pervasive subtle sexism in offices . . . . I've experienced it not being that way at all, and so, because I've experienced it not being that way, then I'm of the mind that it's not necessary . . . . There's this sense of where we are now, that this is as good as it's gonna get, for now. I just challenge that.

Layla said, “Over the years in the Park Service, you see a lot of it happen every day . . . . You . . . take it for granted sometimes that's how the world is. You're like, ‘oh wait, maybe it doesn't have to be that way.’”

Participants wanted guidance about how to address the issue of subtle sexism. Cecilia said, “How do I balance this mission that I believe in deeply with this culture that still, you know, marginalizes women a lot, and that's a very real part of our really awesome organization.” Participants claimed that the training videos about harassment are not sufficient to provide guidance about subtle sexism. Josephine said:

> These training videos where they have like, four coworkers sitting around and they're, like, talking about discrimination . . . but, you know what? It doesn't happen like that . . . . If those four people were . . . . blatantly saying [something]…. [voice gets very strong] then of course you would call it, but that's not how it happens in the workplace.

Corrina also expressed disappointment with these training videos when she said, “It's more subtle than the . . . . the sexual harassment films where it makes it very obvious and anybody observing it would, you know, agree.” Cecilia said, “This system sucks, and how do we get past that inequity that still exists in our workplace?” Layla said, “With . . . subtle [sexism] . . . . this is part of life and it happens all the time and how do we change it?”

In spite of everything, some participants were hopeful for change. Rosanna saw younger women conducting training about inclusion and said, “[It’s] really heartening to me because I just think that that is the next generation and they're taking an active role in working out some of these issues.” Maggie said, “I've seen it change, and I think, for the better, with the newer generations.” Gloria said, “I think the culture of the Park Service is changing, and I'm hopeful for that. You know, it's been a really big topic of conversation at all levels.” Cecilia said, “I feel like I can bring up great employees and support other women and we can change the culture. Those are the good days.” Even though the NPS is not where it needs to be yet, Maggie said, “I'm at least hopeful that we're heading in the right direction.”

Discrepant Cases

The very nature of subtle sexism makes it easy for discrepant cases to appear. Not all participants recognized it in the same way. What is sexist to one woman could be acceptable to another. I found a discrepant case in the supporting theme of *Disparity in Social Display Rules.* Participants found it subtly sexist to comment on physical appearances in the workplace because they considered it irrelevant to how well someone

did their job. On the other hand, Sherry actually behaved in a subtly sexist way when she criticized how women dressed. She said, “If you have to go to that level of preparation . . . the hair, the nails, and everything . . . how can these people be as good as the men if they have to spend like half their time on that stuff.”

In the supporting theme of *Boys’ Club Culture,* I found one discrepant case about sexist jokes and three about dismissive names for women. When Cecilia was younger, sexist jokes from men on the fire crew did not bother her. Of those days she said, “Because it was so out there and open, it bothered me less.” She also said, “[I] didn't feel like it was in particular demeaning me, where some of the things that happened in my career, now I can feel more personally demeaning.” Even now, when she is mature and has advanced to a leadership role, she still does not find those comments offensive, although she can see how some would view it that way. She said, “I would feel more strongly that it . . . wasn't okay . . . . I still don’t think that I would take it personally . . . but I also understand that . . . is probably privilege because . . . it really didn’t trigger anything for me, right?”

I found discrepancies in how participants viewed dismissive names for participants. Although other women did not like being called “girl”, Angie used the word repeatedly. For example, she said, “This particular employee does have a chip on his shoulder about girls” and “he just didn't know how to deal with girls.” Some participants did not like it when men called women “gals”, but Maggie used the term. For example, she said that the, “human resource admin gals all started in right away.” Cecilia,

interestingly, did not mind the word “chicks”, but did not like women being called “ladies.” She said the following:

> There is this acceptability to use dismissive language like ‘dear’ and ‘sweetie’, um ‘gals’, oh my favorite, that means my least favorite, ‘ladies’. You know, I think ‘chicks’ doesn't bother me because it's usually, ‘chicks’ is used in such a casual way that it's not like, it doesn't feel as raw to me like the really old school ‘ladies’, which is a little bit, like diminutive.

These discrepancies emphasize the fact that even women can have difficulty in recognizing subtle sexism.

In the overarching conceptual theme of *Harms of Subtle Sexism*, I found discrepant cases about how overt and subtle sexism compare. Maggie felt that overt sexism caused more harm, but she thought that was because she had experienced overt sexism. She did not realize that other participants had also experienced overt but still felt that subtle sexism caused more harm. She said, “For someone who has experienced a lot more harassment earlier in my career . . . subtle [sexism] . . . doesn't make me happy, but it doesn't affect my job satisfaction as much as . . . someone who's never experience something worse.”

Participants thought that subtle sexism was harder to deal with, but Layla believed, especially when she was younger, that it was the other way around. She said, “the subtle, on a one to one, I feel like I could bring it up or talk about it. You know, it's, it's not as scary as saying to someone, ‘I think you're being sexist and stop doing that.’” Overt sexism, to her, was scarier to address.

In the overarching conceptual theme of *Organizational Behaviors and Attitudes*, I found several discrepant cases. While most participants reported working harder because of subtle sexism, Amanda reported working less hard. She said, “I . . . used to work a lot harder. I put in a lot more hours . . . when I felt supported and passionate about my work, and . . . when I haven't had that, it's made me less willing to do that.”

Most participants reported performing better as a result of their experiences with subtle sexism. One woman reported her performance not being affected at all and another said her performance was negatively impacted. Gloria said, “I don't think it's necessarily affected my performance” and Rhiannon said, “[It was] keeping me away from, like, what my job truly is because of the fact that I've been given, like, clerical administrative duties. I would say it affects my performance.” Hindrances to career development affect performance, but although other participants said that subtle sexism affected their career development, Rhiannon was the only one who linked that to affecting her performance.

Participants talked about subtle sexism damaging relationships, but Rhiannon said, “I don't really feel like it's super affected relationships.” Although she made this statement, she also said things such as, “We lost something in our relationship that we could never get back” and “Our relationship was really strained over that for quite some time . . . . We just kind of avoided, avoided each other.” It is likely that she meant that the effect on relationships was situational and not constant.

Participants talked about subtle sexism affecting job satisfaction, but those who worked in law enforcement reported some increases in satisfaction. Although these women did report negative impacts, they also experienced some positive impacts. For

example, Rosanna said, “We have come a lot farther than other partners and other law enforcement organizations, so that, I think, increased my job satisfaction, recognizing how lucky I was to be in an agency like the Park Service.” She also said, “If I'm going to be a law enforcement officer, I'd rather be with this agency.”

In the overarching conceptual theme of *Organizational Change*, three discrepancies were found. Participants found using formal processes such as employee relations specialists as pointless, but Rhiannon found it useful. She said, “It would probably be really great to just get advice because sometimes, like, you want to see change but you don't want it to really disrupt your operation.” Her experiences with it were positive. As she said, “It showed me what options I had, like they had mentioned the mediator, they had mentioned . . . what an EEO complaint would be, what kind of a process it would be.”

Participants did not want their gender placed in front of their job titles because they wanted to be recognized for their accomplishments, not their gender. This is understandable, but participants also expressed a desire to help other women. In one instance Rosanna talked about a young woman approaching her with respect, but the woman associated Rosanna’s gender with her title. Rather than responding as a woman wanting to be a mentor for another woman, she corrected the woman. Describing the event, she said, “[I remember a] woman coming up to me . . . . she was a law enforcement ranger, and she was like, ‘I’m so excited to meet women chiefs. I'm so glad they're more women chiefs getting hired.’” Rather than respond as a mentor wanting to help other women, she said, “I remember turning around, looking at her very directly, and

saying, ‘I would like to think that, you know, that I'm just a good chief ranger and that it doesn't have anything to do with me being a woman.’”

Participants expressed hope for the future of the NPS because they had seen different attitudes with the younger generations. Corrina’s experiences were different. She said, “The [NPS] culture [won’t] change.” She explained her reason for believing this by saying, “These were not the old . . . guys . . . . These are . . . guys in their 20s and 30s . . . having this attitude . . . . You would hope that the younger generation would be more [deep breath out] accepting of . . . . women being in the workforce.”

Every person’s experience is different. Every park has different employees. Participants stated that some parks had very little subtle sexism and in some parks it was pervasive. This could change in each park over time as the personnel at the park changes.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I described the study setting, including a description of high-profile cases that were in the media and the resulting anti-harassment policy. I summarized the demographics of the participants, displaying key points in Table 1. I described the data collection and data analysis processes. I provided evidence of trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I provided the results of the study, displaying the overarching conceptual themes, supporting themes, and codes in Table 2. In this chapter I answered the research questions about the experiences and perceptions of women NPS employees with subtle sexism. Specifically, I discussed the types of subtle sexism participants experienced, and how they felt about communicating those experiences. I also discussed how subtle and overt sexism compare and what

impacts the subtle forms have on workplace outcomes. Discrepant cases were described and explained as much as possible. In Chapter 5 I will discuss the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research. I also will discuss the implication for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

I designed this study with the purpose of gathering data about the perceptions of women who have experienced subtle sexism in the workplace. I used a qualitative phenomenological design because my study was exploratory and revealed the lived experiences of women. The key findings are (a) impacts on workplace culture, (b) harmful effects on individuals, (c) coping with subtle sexism, (d) organizational impacts, and (e) organizational change.

Interpretation of the Findings

From the data collected from in-depth interviews conducted with women employees of the NPS, I developed five findings: (a) impacts on workplace culture, (b) harmful effects on individuals, (c) coping with subtle sexism, (d) organizational impacts, and (e) organizational change. I compared the data to existing literature to determine if it confirmed, disconfirmed, or added to information from existing literature.

Finding 1: Impacts on Workplace Culture

The experiences that all participants described about their workplace cultures confirms what I found in the literature. It even helped to explain outliers. The workplace culture of the participants was described in terms of social display rules, working in male-dominated fields, how gender affects jobs, boys' club attitudes, self-doubt, and awareness of subtle sexism.

Disparity of social display rules. Regarding the disparity of social display rules, women talked about being assigned traditional roles for women such as party planning,

cooking, cleaning, and providing comfort or care. Benevolent sexism includes the belief of complimentary gender differentiation, which is the belief that women have social and domestic skills that men lack (Barreto et al., 2009; Fraser et al., 2015; Glick et al., 2000; Zakrisson et al., 2012). This type of stereotype implies that women are more effective in relational roles than in leadership ones (Barreto et al., 2009). Participants were likely assigned more traditional roles because men believed that these women were strong in those skills, even though that was not always the case.

In the study, participants reported that chivalrous behavior made them appear weaker. This is supported by the results of Good and Rudman's (2010) research. They found that chivalry caused women to appear weaker, but it also resulted in people viewing women as not suitable as managers or other traditionally male workplace roles. Participant's concerns about being viewed weaker than men were justified by the literature that shows that those ideas reinforce workplace power differences (Becker & Swim, 2011; Good & Rudman, 2010; Lemonaki et al., 2015). Subtle sexism disguised as benevolence is a condescending belief that promotes the idea that women are incompetent (Becker & Swim, 2011; Good & Rudman, 2010; Hebl et al., 2007; King et al., 2012; Lemonaki et al., 2015). Participants stated that they did not think that men were always aware of the harm that they caused. Research (Becker & Swim, 2011) has shown that this is the case and that men often are not aware that their behavior makes women appear weak and the implications that can have in the workplace.

Participants were disturbed that people complimented them on their appearances, rather on than on their skills. Gervais et al. (2011) described this as sexual objectification.

Their research showed that men who received similar gazes were not as negatively affected as women. This type of behavior also reinforces workplace power differences (Becker & Swim, 2011; Good & Rudman, 2010; Lemonaki et al., 2015).

Participants described times when they were told, or made to feel, that their pregnancy or breastfeeding was problematic. Kugelberg (2006), with a phenomenological study, showed that workplace leaders were likely to view motherhood as problematic, but not have those same views about fatherhood. This supports the experiences that participants reported.

Working in male-dominated fields. Participants reported that in male-dominated fields men seemed to prefer to work with men and would question if women had the skills to perform the jobs for which they were hired. Previous research exists about aversive sexism in which people feel closer to those who are similar to themselves (Melgoza & Cox, 2009). These researchers also explain that this is especially noticeable in male-dominated organizations and is problematic when it affects who gets certain assignments. Researchers have also found that male-dominated organizations are prone to gender stereotyping (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Logel et al., 2009) and incivility (Cortina et al., 2013; Settles, Cortina, Buchanan, & Miner, 2012).

How gender affects jobs. Participants felt that they were not heard or taken seriously. Hoyt and Murphy (2016) found that some male-dominated fields were significantly lacking the perspectives of women. In addition to not being taken seriously, participants who were supervisors complained that men did not view them as being the boss. Existing literature exists that supports this experience. Men are implicitly viewed as

having more managerial traits than women (Latu et al., 2011). Expectation states theory includes the idea that when people are viewed as having more power, it results in them also having increased opportunities to speak and being taken more seriously (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003).

Boys' club culture. Regarding working in a boys' club culture, participants complained of assertive women being viewed as aggressive or "bitchy". One participant had a supervisor who would tell her, when she had problems with her staff, that it was probably because they had a hard time working for a woman. These stereotypes were supported by Bobbitt-Zeher's (2011) research. In this study, the researcher showed that a stereotype existed in which strong women were viewed as bitchy. The researcher also found the stereotype belief that people prefer working with men. Leskinen et al. (2015) found that in order to be successful in the workplace, women had to display nonstereotypical gender characteristics, but that also resulted in increased harassment, creating a double-edged sword.

The participants described the culture they worked as including belittling comments, objectifying comments, and dismissive names for women. Researchers described gender harassment as rude or discourteous remarks or behavior towards women that does not include sexual expressions (Holland and Cortina, 2013). The foundational research by Glick and Fisk (1996) included the results that women who receive objectifying comments, like being told they are cute, may lead to the women believing that they are not taken seriously.

Participants worried that their actions, or lack thereof, may be contributing to biases about women. De Lumas et al. (2012) determined that women unconsciously may be contributing to power differences and biases by the act of accepting subtle sexism and not rejecting it. This research validated the concerns that participants expressed.

Discrepant cases about dismissive names for women were also supported by existing research. A participant spoke of not being offended by sexist jokes she heard while working with the fire crew. She also did not find the sexist name for women, "chicks", to be offensive. Jost et al. (2004) explained this in their research about systems justification theory. In their research they noted that the desire to support the status quo could be so strong that it overrides individual or group interests. This justification of the status quo is often found in marginalized groups who are most harmed by the status quo. Fasoli et al.'s (2015) study found that objectifying slurs, such as "hot chick" could be viewed more favorably than other slurs because they involve a level of appreciation of women. Both of these studies help to explain this outlier behavior. The desire to fit in and approve of the behavior of their peers seemed to override any concern for the harm of subtle sexism.

Awareness levels. Participants described their workplace culture as including a lack of awareness of subtle sexism. Basford (2014) explained that organizations needed an increase in awareness in order to unfreeze old behavioral patterns and promote culture change. Awareness makes up the first step to having an inclusive workplace (Basford, 2014; Sewpaul, 2013). It is not surprising that organizations like the NPS that have issues with sexism have a culture of low awareness levels.

Participants referred to subtle sexism as a death by 1000 cuts. Even though it seems minor, they felt that over time the harm built up to become more oppressive. Cundiff et al. (2014) found that the harmful effects of subtle sexism are distal and cumulative. These researchers showed that even though people may not immediately see the effects, over time, they did become harmful.

Participants attributed low awareness levels to the difficulty of identifying subtle sexism. They believed this was hard for women, but was especially difficult for men. Studies have shown that women are better able than men to detect sexism, especially at the subtler levels (Basford, 2014). Women believed sexism expressed benevolently to be even more difficult. Becker and Swim (2011) explained that the positive nature of benevolence masks the harmful outcomes of this type of subtle sexism. Even when participants pointed out sexist behavior, not all people perceived it as sexist. Becker and Swim showed that for these people, especially men, to recognize and oppose sexism behaviors, not only did they need increased awareness, but they also needed increased empathy. Perspective taking refers to seeing someone else's viewpoint, but empathy referred to the ability to recognize and feel sympathy for the emotions of others (Gilin et al., 2013).

Finding 2: Harmful Effects on Individuals

The finding *Harmful Effects on Individuals* developed because of the harmful effects described by participants. It is discussed in terms of how the emotions from subtle sexism compare to those from overt forms, signs of physical and mental exhaustion, unexpected powerful emotions, and feelings of fear. The comparison of emotions

resulting from overt and subtle sexism was complex because expected emotions and actual emotions differed.

More harmful than overt sexism. Overall, participants felt that subtle sexism was more harmful and more difficult to deal with. They viewed overt sexism as less frequent events that could be pointed out, acknowledged by others, and addressed with the support of others. Their problems with subtle sexism were that it happened frequently, they and others had a harder time recognizing it, and they were less likely to get support in addressing it. These views are supported by the literature. Basford (2014), using an empirical study determined that at the most overt levels both genders expected negative outcomes, but as the sexism became subtler, people, especially men, did not expect to the outcomes to be as harmful. Interestingly, Basford, found that both genders expected to see more negative outcomes as the sexism became more overt, but the participants in my study, who had experienced both overt and subtle sexism, reported more negative outcomes from the subtler forms. Some researchers have concluded, however, that subtle forms are more harmful because they are more likely to be overlooked (Good & Rudman, 2010; Hideg & Ferris, 2016; Sojo et al., 2016). Even though women believe that subtle sexism is more harmful, they were less likely to address it than overt sexism (de Lemus et al., 2012). Participants in my study expressed the same views that they were more likely to address overt than subtle sexism.

Mental exhaustion and decreased self-esteem. Subtle sexism has been linked to psychological distress (Judson, 2014). Participants in the study reported signs of mental exhaustion, such as feeling worn down, hopeless, discouraged, depressed, lonely,

powerless, and stressed. They also reported having decreased self-esteem and internalizing their emotions. Hall et al. (2015) explained social identity threat as when a social group with which someone identifies becomes stereotyped as inferior. They found that increased social identity threat leads to increased chances of mental exhaustion and burnout. Gender discrimination causes higher levels of mental health problems like anxiety and depression (Foynes et al., 2013). Health problems can even spill over into personal lives (Sojo et al., 2016), as reported by participants.

Crying and sadness. Although researchers have shown that reactions to subtle sexism can vary from laughing about it to crying about it (Chui & Dietz, 2014), I expected to hear a lot of comments about being annoyed or irritated. I did not expect to hear women crying during their interviews, but four of the 12 participants cried while talking about their experiences and six of the 12 reported crying or feeling sad and hurt from incidents of subtle sexism. The participants also expressed surprise that they reacted with crying. Even though I had read research about the harmful effects of subtle sexism, I still did not expect the reactions that showed such strong feelings of sadness participants were experiencing. My own expectations aligned with Basford's (2014) research showing that people did not expect the reactions of subtle sexism to be as harmful as overt sexism.

Fear and anger. Participants also expressed emotions of anger. Chaudoir and Quinn (2010) showed that after encountering sexism, when women believe they have the resources and support needed, they are more likely to feel anger about the encounter because their feelings would not be questioned by group members, but when they feel helpless, fear is more likely to be the result. They also found that women often felt anger

and fear when they witnessed sexist behavior against other women. Participants expressed anger at seeing other women experience subtle sexism. Participants also expressed fear of reporting and addressing subtle sexism. Kendall (2016) reported that NPS women perceived that they were more likely to experience retaliation than approval for reporting sexism. She also found that managers seemed to spend more time trying to find out who reported sexism than if the complaint was truly valid. This validates the fear that participants had about reporting their experiences.

Finding 3: Coping with Subtle Sexism

Participants had a difficult time coping with subtle sexism. They did not know how to effectively address and prevent it. They needed ways to deal with the harmful effects described in Finding 2. In private settings with spouses they had more serious conversations and showed their true emotions, but in social settings they tended to mask their true feelings by laughing.

Using humor to cope. I was surprised to find that participants frequently coped with the harmful effects of subtle sexism by using humor. Participants laughed when they were talking about very serious events that caused sadness, anger, fear, or frustration. I found myself laughing along with them and upon later reflection wondered why we were laughing. In our society people, especially women, learn to behave in a friendly manner and smile at others. When talking about serious topics women may still feel the influence of societal norms to behave cheerfully.

Chui and Dietz (2014) also found that women sometimes react to sexism by laughing. In my study, all 12 participants laughed while talking about incidents of subtle

sexism that they found disturbing. Two women laughed less than others, but they laughed when discussing their most upsetting events. Reviewing all of the times that participants laughed, it appears that they laugh when they talked about specific incidences of sexism, felt discomfort, made self-disparaging remarks, described ridiculous scenarios, felt disappointment, felt sadness, questioned themselves, found similarities or a sisterhood with the researcher, or felt other strong emotions.

The participants used laughter to create a wall and prevent themselves from crying. Creating this barrier allowed them to continue to work effectively. They felt that if they did not laugh, they would cry. I did not find much literature about using laughing as a coping mechanism in reaction to subtle sexism. Even when confronting people about subtle sexism, the women in my study used humor to present their concerns. They believed people would not take them seriously if they did not conform to the norm of behaving in a friendly manner. They worried about being viewed as "bitches" or "angry females".

Chui and Dietz (2014) warned of the importance of not laughing at sexist incidents so that observers could better assess the seriousness of the sexist behavior that they witness. Even when pointing out that women tend to laugh at serious experiences with subtle sexism, one participant's reaction was to laugh. It appears to be an instinctive coping mechanism, but participants also coped by being serious with their spouses.

Communicating with trusted people. When they were with someone with whom they had a trusting relationship, such as with a spouse, participants were able to drop the cheerful mask and show how sad, angry, fearful, or frustrated they felt. Although

participants were aware that it sometimes put a strain on spousal relationships, they were so disturbed by subtle sexism that they continued to have these conversations. This ability to open up with certain people helped women cope with the subtle sexism they experienced in the workplace.

Having a sisterhood with other women. The need for social support also created the feeling of having a "sisterhood" or "kinship" with other women. It seemed important for participants to know that they were not the only ones experiencing and affected by subtle sexism. Even if they still had a hard time knowing how to deal with it, just knowing that they had someone with whom they could relate and laugh helped women cope with the harms of subtle sexism.

Finding 4: Organizational Impacts

The various organizational behaviors and attitudes expressed by participants included having to work harder than men, decreased satisfaction and increased turnover, reduced absenteeism, effects on team dynamics, and effects on bystanders. Organizational leaders should increase their concern about and awareness of subtle sexism, not only because of the impacts on individual employees, but because of the impacts that it has on the organization as a whole.

Barriers to career development. Subtle sexism creates barriers to career development of employees. Participants reported having to work harder than men to prove their self-worth and overcome barriers. Researchers have found that some barriers to workplace success include encountering stereotypes, feeling incompetent, and lacking successful women role models (Michailidis, Morphitou, & Theophylatou, 2012).

Participants believed they had to achieve more than men before they could advance their careers.

Participants stated that men were selected for the best training and assignments. New mothers also reported not being given the opportunity for some assignments because supervisors did think a nursing mother could accept assignments that involved travel. Researchers have found this to be a workplace issue at other locations too. King et al. (2012) found that even though both genders desire challenging assignments, men more frequently receive them. They also found that because people often minimize these differences in opportunity, this discrepancy persists in workplaces. Subtle sexism hinders career development of women and keeps them in more traditional roles (Hideg & Ferris, 2016; Montañés et al., 2012). Existing research supports the belief that participants had about not having the same opportunities as men.

Performance. I found that performance, an aspect of women working harder than men, did not align with the literature. Participants believed that because they worked so much harder to prove themselves, that they performed either better than men or better than they otherwise would have. Researchers have found that subtle sexism negatively affects performance (Good & Rudman, 2010; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; London et al., 2012; Montañés et al., 2012). Researchers use stereotype threat theory to explain that when people believe they are negatively stereotyped, their motivation, ambition, and performance decrease (Emerson & Murphy, 2015; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Von Hippel et al., 2015). Participants did not want to admit that their performance is not as good as it could be. Hindrances to career development affect performance, but only one participant

acknowledged this. The fact that participants believed their performance improved could be explained by researchers who found that if women believe they have control over the outcomes of their performance, then their performance actually increases (Gervais & Vescio, 2012; Vescio et al., 2005). Participants still maintained the belief that if they worked harder, then they could gain the same respect as men.

Decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover. In addition to missed opportunities and feeling the need to work harder than men, subtle sexism leads to other negative feelings such as decreased job satisfaction and morale that influence turnover and intent to leave. Researchers have found that gender incivility in the workplace causes increased turnover and decreased satisfaction and commitment (Cortina et al., 2013; Settles et al., 2012). They found that even being a bystander results in decreased satisfaction and commitment, and increased burnout and intent to leave. Women are more likely than men to receive uncivil treatment, such as subtle sexism, in the workplace, which increases their intent to leave (Basford, 2014; Cortina et al., 2013).

Reduced absenteeism. Researchers have shown that subtle sexism can harm organizations by various financial impacts from conflict, distraction, accidents, substance abuse, productivity decline, turnover, and increased absences (Cortina et al., 2013; Settles et al., 2012). Participants reported, instead of having increased absences, subtle sexism caused them to avoid taking time off when possible. As part of their desire to work harder, participants were afraid to show weakness by taking time off. This differs from the literature about subtle sexism's effects on absenteeism. Participants believed that absences from work could cause supervisors and coworkers to view them negatively.

Effects on team dynamics. Subtle sexism affects the dynamics of workplace teams. Participants believed that subtle sexism caused a breakdown in relationships. They reported feeling uncomfortable around people they had confronted, even after the issue had been resolved. They also said that they would avoid and hide from people with sexist behaviors. Sexism causes negative workplace environments that especially affect relationships with coworkers and supervisors (Settles et al., 2012; Sojo, Wood, & Genat, 2016). For organizations to function effectively, they need healthy working relationships among team members.

Participants reported trying to maintain relationships with people who had displayed subtly sexist behavior. NPS employees and leaders learned from survey results that harassing behavior usually came from male coworkers and 86% of the time women had to continue working with these men (Federal Consulting Group and CFI Group, 2017). What participants did to maintain those relationships varied from addressing subtly sexist behaviors to ignoring them. Cundiff et al. (2014) found that discussing subtle sexism with others improves perceptions and understanding of its effects on women. Participants agreed that it was important to maintain relationships to keep workplaces functioning.

Confronting subtly sexist behaviors impacts workplace relationships and participants had mixed views on confronting them. Some participants brushed off subtle sexism and preferred not to make waves. In one study researchers found that when dominant men presented subtle sexism with benevolence and smile, women were more likely to willingly accept it without even realizing it (de Lemus et al., 2012). Workplace

policies that require people to confront sexists, fail to take into consideration the complexities that affect the abilities of women to confront it (Dick, 2013). Some participants felt comfortable confronting sexist behavior. Hoyt and Murphy (2016) found that if women are empowered and have strong self-efficacy, they were more likely to confront subtle sexism. Participants seemed to appreciate having men as allies to aid in confronting subtle sexism.

Participants felt that having a man confront subtle sexism eliminated some of the awkwardness of women having to do it. They also found that confronting it was more effective when done by men. Although they found it frustrating to need a man's assistance, they appreciated the efforts. Drury and Kaiser (2014) found that despite the appearance of power differences, when men intervene, they can be powerful allies because their complaints are more likely than those of women to be taken seriously (Drury & Kaiser, 2014).

Effects on bystanders. As bystanders, participants expressed sadness, anger, and fear, but did not always react in the moment and address subtle sexism. Using an empirical study, Chaudoir and Quinn (2010) found that the most common emotions when women witness sexism are anger and fear. Sometimes participants would not react when they were bystanders to subtle sexism because they did not know what to do, they were afraid, or they were not sure if the woman receiving that treatment was really bothered by it. Chui and Dietz (2014) found that the perceptions of bystanders are affected by the reaction of the person receiving the subtle sexism. They found that if women laughed, even if they were laughing out of discomfort, bystanders were less likely to view the

incident as negative. Participants found it especially difficult to know how to handle a situation if the offender appeared friendly while doing it. Good and Rudman (2010) found that if the offender appears friendly, then bystanders are less likely to view them negatively. Although these were reasons that some women did not react in the moment, others felt comfortable standing up for other women.

Some participants felt comfortable standing up for other women as bystanders. Some expressed that they felt more empowered to react as a bystander than to stand up for themselves. Other participants reported that even if the woman receiving subtle sexism appeared upset, sometimes they still did not react as bystanders. Chui and Dietz (2014) found that before bystanders decide to react, they first evaluate the harm to themselves that would come from reacting. Even if the target of subtle sexism cried, a bystander may still not react because of the perceived consequences of intervening. Most participants felt that confronting sexism was difficult, regardless of whether they were able to do it or not.

In addition to the anger, fear, and sadness that participants felt as bystanders, they also expressed self-doubt and guilt when they did not react. Even bystanders to subtle sexism experienced negative outcomes (Basford, 2014; Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010; Settles et al., 2012). Although participants did not realize it, researchers have determined that seeing someone else intervene can empower others to intervene in the future (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). Empowering bystanders to react can improve organizational effectiveness.

Finding 5: Organizational Change

Although some participants had reached a point of feeling hopeless, other had hopes of affecting change. People have the option of addressing subtle sexism by filing complaints. Even better, effective leaders can push for change. Changing negative behaviors in the workplace can improve organizational excellence. Leaders are challenged by bringing cultural change to organizations. Participants expressed desire for organizational change.

Filing complaints. For participants not in leadership positions, one option for changing behaviors of subtle sexism included filing complaints. Participants believed that filing complaints did not effectively bring change. From survey results, NPS leaders learned that only a little over 25% of employees who experienced harassment filed any kind of report (Federal Consulting Group and CFI Group, 2017). Most employees only spoke to peers, but not to supervisors or managers about the harassing behaviors they encountered. In the survey, employee reasons for not reporting negative behaviors included not believing it was serious enough, wanting to forget the incidents, thinking the process would not be fair, and believing that no action would be taken and no change would come from filing reports.

Participants did not believe that any change would come from reporting subtle sexism. Some of them had seen reports filed and had not seen any action taken or change occur. As early as the 1800s enlightened women were aware of sexism disguised as benevolence (Grimké, 1838/2015), yet it remains an issue in workplaces today. Deputy inspector Kendall (2017), from the Office of the Inspector General, in a congressional

testimony, stated that the NPS has a culture of silence and protects those who commit misconduct. Participants believed that NPS leaders protected people who displayed sexist behaviors.

Participants expressed a fear of reporting subtle sexism. If women believe that men have a difficult time recognizing subtle sexism, they are less likely to report it to male supervisors out of fear that these men will disagree with their perceptions of sexism (Basford, 2014; Carter et al., 2006; Martinez, Paterna, Roux, & Falomirc, 2010). Participants also expressed fear of being viewed as a complainer. Drury and Kaiser (2014) found that both men and women, but especially women, who confront sexism are viewed as complainers.

Participants felt that the NPS did not have a process for dealing with subtle sexism, even if they did want to complain about their experiences. The processes that exist, they said were only effective for overt sexism. Hebl et al. (2007) found that most cases of sexism are not actionable so people found it harder to address. The daily subtle events can better predict poor mental health than acute events (Sojo et al., 2016). Organizations like the NPS, should use caution when distinguishing between overt and subtle sexism because it can lead to people believing that subtle is less harmful (Sojo et al., 2016). Participants felt that the NPS took subtle sexism less seriously than overt.

Women as leaders. Participants believed that the NPS needed more women as leaders. Unfortunately, higher levels of subtle sexism decrease hiring opportunities because they reduce the appearance of competence (Good & Rudman, 2010). These sexist behaviors reinforce power differences in society where women occupy a lower

status than men, which negatively affects organizational climate (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010). The presence of token women in leadership can create a subtle, yet harmful, gender stereotype (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Even seemingly kind acts can limit the career advancement of women (King et al., 2012). It is no longer enough to challenge traditional roles and norms; organizations today need to address the subtler forms of sexism (Martinez et al., 2010). Just because women can be found in high level positions, does not mean that sexism has been eliminated. Regardless of how organizations decide to address subtle sexism, it is important for them to consider the perspectives of women. Ensuring that enough women role models exist is useful in organizational interventions. Even though participants realized that the NPS needed more women leaders, they often chose not to advance.

Participants felt discouraged from trying to advance their careers into leadership positions. Subtle sexism can result in lowered self-esteem and women believing that they are not capable of more challenging assignments (King et al., 2012). When women are exposed to subtle sexism, sometimes they respond by emphasizing their relational skills, rather than their task-oriented skills, and are more likely to relinquish leadership opportunities to men (Barreto et al., 2009). When participants experienced subtle sexism, they began to feel that they would not be taken seriously and were not wanted as leaders.

Disappointment in current leaders. Participants expressed a desire to help younger women and were disappointed with how current leaders handled subtle sexism. They reported seeing horrible leaders advance and potentially good leaders be turned off from advancing because they were belittled and treated with subtle sexism. Participants

believed that current leaders were out of touch with the reality of sexism in parks. Some organizations that primarily concern themselves with the appearance of being fair still result in treating genders differently (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). Leaders with stereotypical beliefs typically create these kinds of policies (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). The deputy inspector general of the OIG stated that high-ranking leaders of the NPS are still being found guilty of violating laws, regulations, and policies, giving employees the impression that these are not important (Kendall, 2016).

Concern about the NPS not reaching its full potential. Participants expressed concern for the organization that they loved. They worried that subtle sexism gave the NPS a bad reputation. They were concerned that sexism hindered recruiting efforts because young interns coming to experience the NPS were not seeing the agency at its best. Malos (2015) found that sexism results in the loss of talent, damage to organizational reputation and recruiting efforts. With increasing workplace diversity, and changing views on gender and sexuality, it behooves organizations to understand the perspectives of others (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). Deputy Inspector General Kendall (2016) stated that any kind of workplace misconduct damages the reputation of the agency. The NPS does not see its full potential when it does not embrace the perspectives of women and all marginalized groups.

Challenging the status quo. Participants despaired over the traditional mantra in the NPS of "that's just the way it is". They viewed negative behaviors like subtle sexism as unnecessary. They wanted to affect change, but were often unsure how to do that and hoped for guidance. Deputy Director Reynolds (2016) stated that regardless of how much

the NPS needs change, without a culture change, any actions to address incidents of sexism are worthless. Organizations should increase the ability of employees to detect sexism because of the value of having men as allies (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). Organizations can accomplish this by increasing understanding of women's perspectives. They also need to understand that a woman's decision to not confront sexism does not mean that she was not harmed. Organizations can provide education and training to provide guidance about how employees should respond when they see sexist behaviors (Basford, 2014; Sojo et al., 2016). Gilin et al. (2013) determined that perspective taking improves the ability to understand how others think, but empathy improves the emotional understanding of their feelings. It is not enough to just increase understanding of the perspectives of women. Organizations wishing to affect change need to increase empathy and compassion for others in order to increase civil behavior towards others (Weng, Fox, Hessenthaler, Stodola, & Davidson, 2015). Although some participants felt hopelessness and despair, there were some who felt hopeful for the future of the NPS.

Critical Theory and Feminist Theory

To guide my research, I used feminist theory (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014) and critical theory (Wellmer, 2014). Using these theories helped me avoid gender bias as I engaged with the data through a critical lens to identify power differences. I kept these theories in mind as I reviewed the interview transcripts and went through the processes of data analysis and interpretation. Researchers can use both of these theories to seek ways of solving social problems by questioning traditional world views (Sandford, 2015; Steinvorth, 2008). Because of their similarities, I found it useful to use them together.

Feminist theory is based on the idea that gender is a socially constructed idea, because people are taught from birth what their roles and responsibilities should be in society (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). In this study, participants described workplaces where these expectations persist in the NPS. Using feminist theory to understand organizational issues of marginalization facilitates critical assessment of power differences (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014).

The philosophy of critical theory, which was in practice as early as the fifth century BC by Greek sophists who tried to understand their world without prejudice or superstition (Steinvorth, 2008). Today the theory's primary use is to address social and political inequalities by questioning normative world views (Wellmer, 2014). I used critical theory, along with feminist theory, to guide how I interpreted data and considered the language, beliefs, and practices that perpetuate the dominant status of men employees in the NPS.

Using this approach required me to be reflexive throughout the research process, but especially during data collection, analysis, and reporting, when I listened to and considered the statements of participants. Not only did I need to be self-critical of my biases from being a woman employee of the NPS, but I also needed to reflect on the comments of the participants and determine how established norms influenced their experiences.

Feminist research can be used to encourage gender equality and promote positive social change by informing and supporting activism, legislation, and organizational decision making (Eagly, Eaton, Rose, Riger, & McHugh, 2012). Researchers can use

both critical and feminist theories to help organizations understand how their systems, policies, cultures, and climates affect workplace inclusion of marginalized groups (Gedro & Mizzi, 2014). I used these theories when listening to the stories and experiences of women NPS employees and critically reflected on their perceptions of their encounters with subtle sexism.

The NPS tends to address overt sexism, rather than subtle forms which employees and leaders have a more difficult time recognizing. Subtle sexism is more harmful and difficult to address, yet leaders persist in focusing on overt and minimalizing subtler forms. As I reported the findings, I challenged this view, and through the dissemination of findings will increase awareness about the need to challenge the norms.

Limitations of the Study

The study had several limitations to trustworthiness, some of which could be addressed and some that could not. One obvious limitation of the study is the potential for personal bias to affect the ability to be open to hearing new ideas. Not only am I a woman, but I have also experienced both subtle and blatant forms of sexism in the workplace. Additionally, I am an NPS employee. I used the process of epoche (see Moustakas, 1994), to acknowledge and set aside my biases. I journaled throughout the research process, but especially during data collection when I heard stories that were surprisingly emotional and where my personal biases might influence analysis.

Conducting the interviews by telephone led to the additional limitation of not being able to interpret participant body language. I paid close attention to vocal cues, such as pauses, hesitation noises, and changes in voice tone or volume. I noted these

vocal cues in the transcriptions. I spent time reviewing the vocal cues of each transcription to determine if the emotions behind those vocal cues were adequately captured in the transcription and considered during analysis.

Participants were primarily Caucasian, with only one being Hispanic. No participants were under the age of 36, likely because younger people tend to be temporary employees and I limited the study to permanent employees. The results of the study showed that most women were less aware of subtle sexism when they were younger so that could also have been a factor in the lack of younger participants.

Recommendations

In previous quantitative studies, researchers examined various aspects of subtle sexism which revealed a gap in the literature related to qualitative exploration of subtle sexism experiences. I limited this study to women employees of the NPS. In other potential studies, researchers could include men as participants to explore their experiences with subtle forms of sexism. Researchers could examine men's experiences with being the recipient of subtle sexism or their views on, experiences with, or awareness of women experiencing it. In future studies, researchers could also look at the experiences of LGBTQ people with subtle or overt sexism. I limited this study to a public sector agency, so additional research could be conducted using participants from the private sector.

In this study women used humor when talking about uncomfortable topics. Most women laughed throughout the interviews. One woman did not laugh as much as the others and one of the rare moments that she laughed was when she was describing the

most “horrific” incident of subtle sexism. Future researchers could examine the use of humor in dealing with sexism.

Women expressed a desire to affect change in the workplace but wanted guidance about how to accomplish that. Some researchers (Williams et al., 2014) have evaluated programs to address sexism, but I did not find much literature that assessed effective ways to address subtle sexism. This would be a valuable goal for future researchers to address social change issues.

Researchers have found subtle sexism to have more harmful outcomes than overt forms (Sojo et al., 2016). This aligned with my research results. Basford (2014) showed, however, that people expect overt sexism to have more negative impacts. Future researchers could examine the disconnect between expectations of people and actual experiences.

An aspect of this study’s results that did not align with the literature was the effect of subtle sexism on performance. Research showed that it negatively affects performance (Good & Rudman, 2010; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; London et al., 2012; Montañés et al., 2012). Participants in my study reported that they actually worked harder and performed better as a result of experiencing subtle sexism. This could be explained by research results that women’s performance increase if they believe they have control over the outcomes of that performance (Gervais & Vescio, 2012; Vescio et al., 2005). It could also be explained by the fact that participants believed their performance increased, even though they also reported having missed training opportunities. Depending on how it is viewed, people could view performance as suffering if they miss training opportunities.

Working harder and performing better after experiencing subtle sexism is a topic worthy of additional research.

Another disconnect between this study and the literature involved subtle sexism's effects on attendance. Researchers have shown that it can increase absences (Cortina et al., 2013; Settles et al., 2012). Participants reported that subtle sexism caused them to avoid taking time off because it could be viewed as weak and they felt a need to prove themselves. Future researchers could investigate this discrepancy since the literature in this area is outdated.

Implications

Positive Social Change

In this study I examined how women employees of the NPS experienced subtle sexism. The findings from this research have the potential to affect positive social change at the individual, organizational/policy, and societal levels.

Individual Effects. At the individual level, women reported that this study had increased their levels of awareness about subtle sexism. Some of them had never even thought about the concept before. After increasing awareness, women could think about how they respond either as recipients of subtle sexism or as bystanders. Increased awareness and validation about what they are experiencing could also increase their feelings of empowerment to respond. As more people speak up in the moment, awareness levels could spread.

Organizational implications. Increased awareness at the organizational level could influence changes in the NPS. Several of the participants are leaders in the NPS.

Additionally, other leaders at the regional and national level who work with NPS issues of diversity and inclusion have asked me to provide them a summary of my research findings. I plan on publishing my findings in peer reviewed journals and other magazines too. I may also develop a training course for the NPS to increase awareness of subtle sexism in the workplace. As leaders become more aware of the experiences of women employees with subtle sexism, they could decide to find ways to address this issue.

Participants expressed concern that the NPS currently does not have an effective way to address subtle sexism. The NPS needs policies that effectively address employee behaviors of subtle sexism. Leaders who are aware of this form of incivility do not know how to deal with it. Increased conversations among leaders could lead to effective solutions for addressing subtle sexism in the workplace. Finding effective ways to address subtle sexism could reduce negative workplace outcomes. To help impact policy changes within the organization, I could develop presentations for NPS leaders.

Societal Implications. When the findings are published, they could affect positive social change in society. Increasing awareness and beginning conversations about the subtler forms of sexism could begin the process of changing societal attitudes and behaviors. Although in the study I focused on women of the NPS, the findings could be applied to similar situations in other organizations and agencies to affect positive change at the societal level.

Conclusions

As an NPS employee, I was attracted to the idea of learning about the experiences that other women employees have with subtle sexism. I had encountered both subtle and

overt sexism and wanted to understand how this phenomenon was viewed by other women. Overt sexism, although still persistent in the workplace, has been replaced in many cases with a subtler form. The culture of the NPS, as reported by participants in 2019, supports the persistence of subtle sexism in the workplace.

In the current NPS culture, a disparity in gender social display rules exists. Male-dominated career fields exacerbate negative workplace cultures. Gender was associated with women's jobs in different ways such as a) blaming negative outcomes on a woman's gender, b) attributing successes to gender, or c) putting the word "woman" or "female" before a leadership related job titles, even though gender is not relevant to the ability to perform the job. The existence of a boys' club attitude resulted in women not feeling good enough and that they needed to be "one of the guys" in order to be accepted by their peers. Participants were ignored and interrupted and felt they had no voice. When participants were pregnant or breastfeeding, they faced additional issues with a lack of understanding of women's issues. Lack of awareness perpetuates subtle sexism in the workplace.

Because subtle sexism appears minor, it may be easy to think that overt sexism has more negative outcomes for individuals, but subtle sexism is more harmful and difficult to deal with than overt forms. Subtle sexism resulted in strong feelings of sadness, anger, hopelessness, powerlessness, and fear, which leads to frustration, depression, stress, and mental and physical exhaustion. The negative effects even impacted workers' lives outside the workplace.

Experiences of subtle sexism influenced workers to want to change jobs to escape negative work environments and damaged relationships. Although employees in the NPS commonly move around frequently, experiences with subtle sexism made them even consider leaving the agency altogether. Training new employees is expensive and having a culture that supports subtle sexism deters the recruitment of new staff. Employees should not have to accept the mantra of "that's just the way it is". It is time to increase the number of women in leadership. It is time to question the status quo and listen to the voices of women.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Q1. To be sure we are speaking about the same concept, briefly, how would you describe subtle forms of sexism?	RQ1 and Subquestion 1
Q2. What experiences with subtle forms of sexism have you encountered in the workplace?	RQ1 and Subquestion 1
Q3. How did you perceive these encounters with subtle sexism? For example, your response may include, but is not limited to, how you felt emotionally, intellectually, or professionally.	RQ2
Q4. How do you feel about communicating these experiences of subtle sexism with coworkers, supervisors, managers, or employee relations specialists?	Subquestion 2
Q5. How are your experiences with subtle sexism affecting satisfaction, stress, performance, attendance, intent to leave, or other workplace outcomes?	Subquestion 4
Q6. Have you also encountered blatant forms of sexism?	Subquestion 3
Q7. How do your experiences with subtle sexism compare to any experiences you may have had with more blatant sexism? OR If you have not encountered blatant sexism, how do you think the experience would compare?	Subquestion 3

Potential Probes

Clarification Probes

- Could you tell me more about that?

- What were your perceptions about _____before/after the incident you just described?

Steering Probes

- OK, could you go back to what you were saying about_____?

Confirmation Probes

- You mean that you feel _____?
- You mean that what happened was _____?
- Are you saying that_____?

Clarification Probes

- Can you explain that again? I'm not sure that I understood what you were saying.
- When you say, "they", who are you referring to?

Sequence Probes

- Could you tell me what happened in order step by step?
- Did you feel this way before or after the event?
- What were you doing before that happened?

Continuation Probes

- Then what happened?
- So how did you feel about that?
- You started to say ____, where were you going with that thought?

Elaboration Probes

- Could you give me an example of what you mean?
- It seems like there could be more to this story. Is there something I'm missing?

Credibility Probes

- Were those the exact words used during the incident you described?
- Did you personally witness or experience this?