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An Analysis of Sexist Communications: Women's Resistance to Harassment

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the nature of sexism, sexual harassment, and women's resistance and coping strategies. Sexual harassment takes on many different forms, and the specific types of harassment impact how a women will respond to the perpetrator. Harassment consists of verbal and nonverbal interactions, microaggressions, and other forms of sexual objectification. Previous research has concluded that women's imagined reactions to harassment vary from their real responses. In actual situations of sexual harassment, women feel fear more than anger. Psychological distress was a repeatedly reported repercussion of sexual harassment. The current study focuses on specific sentiments of insults, such as age, appearance, intelligence, sexual experience, and mental stability. I expect that specific sentiments will elicit one of the four reactions: behavioral engagement, behavioral disengagement, cognitive engagement, or cognitive disengagement. I hope that this research will contribute to reducing sexism through better understanding of women's subjective experiences of resistance to misogyny.

Introduction

There is a complex history of women's subjugation and the changing forms of sexism. Sexism is discrimination and prejudice that stems from patriarchal regimes that diminishes the role of women, effectively limiting them to their physical benefits and depriving them equal treatment (Lewis, 2018). These ruling patriarchal regimes situate heterosexual men at the forefront of society, allowing for women to be mistreated (Lewis, 2018). Sexism can be obviously implied or inconspicuous, inherently allowing misogyny to be present individually, institutionally, and culturally (Swim & Hyers, 2009). These different forms of sexism implicate a variation of reactions from women. Previous research done to observe women's reactions to sexism have been conducted. The primary evaluation being that women imagine responding to sexism in confrontational matters, but when they experience sexism in reality, their real responses are different than what they had claimed (Woodzicka, 2001). This complexity in women's real reactions is a predominant focus of the present research, in an attempt to understand why this phenomenon occurs. This study evaluates the effects of different types of sexism, looking at the relationship between the specificity of the insult and the tactics that women use to respond. Previous research has not been conducted to look at the different classifications of misogynistic slander to understand if the category of insult will affect the response. This research is critical, as a vital component in the pursuit to not only understanding the history and consequences of sexism, but also women's subjective experiences of it. Ultimately, this is an attempt to eliminate sexism from society.

Sexism

Sexism is a form of discrimination that originated from patriarchal society, which downplays a woman's role, reducing them to their anatomical benefits and denying them from equal privilege (Lewis, 2018). Patriarchal systems placed men at the center of society, marking them with supremacy with titles like father, brother, husband, allowing for these family or marital connections to be justifications of ownership. Lewis (2018) contextualizes the definition of sexism with a model that illustrates how patriarchy is the basis for the various expressions of sexism that have a negative impact on women. Swim and Hyers (2009) is mentioned by Lewis (2018, p. 381) and they defined sexism as 'individuals' attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and organizational, institutional, and cultural practices that reflect negative evaluations of individuals based on their gender or support unequal status of women and men. Lewis (2018) refers to Derald Wing Sue's 2010 book, *Microaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact* stating that sexism can be overt and conscious, as well as subtle and unconscious. Overt sexism is exemplified through sexual harassment, domestic violence, and discriminatory hiring practices. The model of sexism that was created for the purpose of this literature shows that patriarchy is at the center of sexism. Linking attributes are gender, race, sexual orientation, and social classes. Sexism has effects on psychosocial and behavioral outcomes, and also on individual, institutional, and cultural practices. This research emphasizes different features of contemporary sexism: modern sexism, ambivalent sexism, perceived sexist discrimination, everyday sexism, and gender microaggressions.

Individual sexism is a form of gender discrimination that seeps into an interpersonal level. Lewis utilizes J.M. Jones racism model developed in 1997 that was originally created as a

tripartite model for racism that includes individual, institutional, and cultural forms, which Lewis converted to detect sexism in the same forms (see Appendix 1). Individual sexism (interpersonal) is aimed to disparage women who are seen to be inferior to society. They use the example of a man at work who prefers to work for a superior who is a man; in this there is an assumption for there to be equal competence and entitlement when exercising authority. Rather than when a man is the boss of a woman, in this case sexist actions are deliberate, however they are disguised within interpersonal space, the work environment, which creates a permissible territory for the male boss to communicate his internal sexist beliefs. Sexist aspects of this interaction include sexist slights, and insults directed towards women. These are similar to microaggressions.

Microaggressions are any language, action, or occurrence that can be indirect, discreet, or inadvertent discrimination affecting people of a marginalized community (Lewis, 2018). Gender microaggressions are conscious and unconscious and are usually deliberated by a man who is unaware that he is communicating subtle sexist messages to women. It can be argued that microaggressions have changed current day sexism to be more subtle, through the use of microaggressions as the nonverbal and verbal forms of sexism on an interpersonal level. Theoretically, it is a possibility that women internalize the sexist beliefs that are embedded in public and private interactions. Referring back to the example of the male boss and the female employee, the boss before even meeting the woman employee is prone to make the assumption that she lacks competence and will be a hindrance. This sets the tone for the work dynamic between the two, as the boss has pre- stigmatized his employee's potential due to her gender (Lewis, 2018). Reference to Capodilupo et al. (2010) is made to classify the different themes of microaggressions. The nine themes are:

> sexual objectification (e.g., being reduced to their bodies in verbal or nonverbal ways), second class citizenship (e.g., communicating that women do not deserve the benefits or privileges afforded to men), use of sexist language (e.g., using the generic pronoun he), assumption of inferiority (e.g., assumed to be inferior intellectually and physically), restrictive gender roles (e.g,, messages that communicate women's traditional gender roles and warning not to break them), denial of the reality of sexism (e.g., invalidating messages that sexism is a thing of the past), denial of individual sexism (e.g., consciously discriminating against a woman on the basis of sexist attitudes and beliefs but disguising their sexism as meritocracy), invisibility (e.g., ignoring women in the workplace to minimize their contributions at work), and sexist humor of jokes (e.g., jokes that demean women and reinforce gender role stereotypes) (Lewis, 2018, p. 388).

Institutional sexism is the presence of gender bias that restricts opportunities for women and legitimates inequality through policies, practices, and norms (Lewis, 2018). Media outlets and the U.S. government are both prime examples of overt and discreet sexism embedded in institutions. The media is a dangerous place for anyone, but especially for women. A popular occupation currently, is being a media influencer. These are people who chose to support a brand through media control, making themselves a sponsor for the cause/ product. As a women influencer there is a tendency to show off your body to promote your brand. Sexualizing women’s bodies for commercial use is nothing new, but the media allows for the influencers to have direct contact with the consumers, creating a sense of intimacy with the consumer. With this comes an abundance of criticism through body shaming. Women have to encounter these comments now, because everyone has something to say, and cyber space provides them with

protection and security that there won't be a negative consequence to their unsolicited input. Government institutes perpetuate overt sexism in many different ways. The most deafening threats towards women are exhibited though bills passed by Congress that bann abortions and rape laws that fail to frame women as the victim of sexual assualt. Women aren't just subjected to laws, but there is a lack of women representation in government institutions. Consequently, laws are made for men, by men, leaving women to be secondary (Lewis, 2018).

Cultural sexism is deeply rooted in standards from postmodern society (Lewis, 2018). Historic gender pretenses are at the core of sexism, and the description of men's and women's social roles create the association of gendered terms with men and women. Men are strong and agentic, women are caring and nurturing. This created stereotyping for the roles that men and women should take on at home and in the workplace and endorses hierarchy in private and public lives (Menegatti & Rubini, 2017). When examining pre modern societal gender roles, the man is the hunter and the woman is the gatherer. This preindustrial standard is what models society today, as men are the breadwinners and women are subservient wives and mothers. This form of sexism is exuded through the media, in which there is a space created for women to be judged on their appearance, and held to standards of beauty, inherently turning them into sex objects. This form of sexism reinforces that men are superior to women. The enslavement of women has been occurring since the beginning of time, through the romanticization of women's anatomy, oppression of women by marketing them through marriages and sex trafficking, and holding them to fertility expectations (Lewis, 2018). Women are held to a standard of purity to be 'good', consequently marginalizing women as good and bad based on their virginity status and their compliance with their societal role. Theologically in different variations of the

Christian Bible, we see that women are depicted as weak and consequently easily tempted by the devil, and because of Eve's gullibility and lack of faith, she persuaded Adam to commit the original sin. Consequently marking Eve, and stereotypically grouping women, as temptresses to sin. Women have been historically framed as *whores* and/or *bitches* who are *slutty* if they diverge their ascribed roles as passive, caring, kind, nice, and good. Misogynist narratives can be found within powerful religious ideology and institutions, as well as principles of capitalism and contemporary legislation (Lewis, 2018).

The nature of sexism is studied to understand its historical roots, evaluate the implications that gender bias has had on women, and the various ways in which women cope with sexism (Lewis, 2018). Much of the discussion in this paper concerns specific expressions of sexism. Scholars like Anderson (2007), acknowledge the presence of sexism in our lives every day, as it can be discreet, or bold, either way it is discriminatory, stereotypical, and contriving with the goal to put someone down because of their sex, biological or chosen. With the introduction of capitalism, there was a shift in women's roles, and their position in society. Specifically looking at the development of neoliberalism, an ideology with the goal that everyone in society will focus on their own financial agenda, which inherently shifts economic and political conditions of society (Anderson, 2007). This form of economy was aimed to dismantle the social welfare programs that were established in the United States during the New Deal. For neoliberalism to flourish it was reliant on having a small government that would transfer huge sums of wealth from the public to the private. In this economy everything is privatized, including feminism and identity, this inturn led to economic agency being separated from the bounds of gender (Anderson, 2007). This economy guides women to focus more on

their own personal wealth within their private lives and individual consumer capacities, which imminently gives power to concepts of self expression and agency (Anderson, 2007). With these new economic standards women are placed on the same playing field as men as they are both consumers and empowered with a financial agenda of their own. The presence of false equality that followed neoliberalism is the cause of the Postfeminist notion that men and women are actually equal (Anderson, 2007). Neoliberalism intertwined with postfeminist ideology promotes the concept that if any form of discrimination against women occurs, its exisitance is acknowledged and is viewed as a outlier to sexism, and the criticsms and mistreatments are not based on gender, but rather on the individual person and their characteristics. This is one of the major flaws of postfeminism, in addition to the marginality of this wave of feminism which fails to include any women who is not white, upper to middle class, and heterosexual (Anderson, 2007). Within neoliberalism, there is an assumption that this economy has sufficed the needs of women and because of this, they can now demonstrate empowerment through their consumer choices. This led to an agentic shift of the premise that an individual makes their own opportunity and failure is one's own fault, as there is a sense of being able to choose your destiny due to economic freedom within free market capitalism. Postfeminism emphasizes self-transformation rather than structural transformation, and makes the assumption that collective action is harmful. A penalty of this economic structure and agentic social structure is that it misinterprets people and their circumstances as it forgets to be empathic of sexism, racism, and other forms of discrimination and sees them as individual problems, or not problems at all (Anderson, 2007). Anderson (2007) evaluates the masculine trope for women to be kind and warm, but in exchange they can't be agentic and independent. This creates an unachievable

archetype for women to be well liked and simultaneously liberated. When evaluating modern misogyny, the failures of postfeminism must be considered to understand the 21st century and developments that have challenged and encouraged sexism through forms of media and technology.

Studies on sexism have categorized it into several different groupings, as it's a malleable form of discrimination and can be transparent or opague (Lewis, 2018). Glick and Fiske (1997) define sexism as ambivalent and either being hostile or benevolent. Sexism revolves around the two conditions that there is hostility toward women "(e.g., hostile affect and negative stereotypes) and that it embraces traditional gender roles (i.e., constricting women to abide by societal gender roles, in which they are second class citizens to men)" (p.119). They highlight patriarchal structure as the root of women's subjugation and they elaborate that the existence of the patriarchy juxtaposed to the implication of being female, is what creates the ambivalent sexist ideologies that are hostile or benevolent. Hostile sexism aims to justify male power and gender roles, with emphasis on the sexual exploitation of women. When this type of sexism is expressed, it is obviously derogatory. Benevolent sexism mocks a sense of protection over women, making the man out to be affectionate towards a woman accompanied with an urge to be a protector. This form of sexism highlights justifications of male dominance when they are acted out as caring. Consequently this contorts a sexual relationship with a women to give a subjectively positive facade. They claim that hostile sexism is an outcome of dominative paternalism, the belief that women need to be controlled by men. Using these terms, hostile sexism can be classified as overt, and benevolent sexism being covert. They ascribe traditional-egalitarianism to the construction of ambivalent sexism. This theory helps to understand modern

concepts of attitudes towards women. Women's roles have been traditionally set, and the attitudes about these roles are subjectively positive, as women are seen as caregivers and homemakers- making them out to be nice, compliant, subservient. These characteristics of women's roles are subjectively positive as all of the adjectives to describe women are positive, however these terms and conditions set for women are marginalizing, as women who are not in roles of being a wife and mother are subjectively negative (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Glick and Fiske created the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) in 1996. It is a 22- item self report engineered to distinguish hostile sexism (HS) from benevolent sexism (BS) with an 11- item subscale designed to measure attitudes towards power (dominative or protective paternalism), gender differentiation (competitive or complementary), and heterosexuality (hostile or intimate). HS was associated with negative stereotyping of women who did not take on traditional gender roles and BS with positive stereotyping towards traditional women. This scale also measures levels of anti-egalitarianism between women who are traditional and nontraditional. The self report uses a scale from 0-5, 0 being disagree strongly and 5 being agreeing strongly. Examples of these statements are: "1) No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman" and "2) many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men , under the guise of asking for 'equality" (p. 124). This scale is beneficial for studying sexism due to its categorization of hostile and benevolent tropes into a qualitative form (Glick & Fiske, 1997).

Modern forms of sexism are discussed in Lewis who references Swim, Aikin, Hall, and Hunter's 1995, article "Sexism and Racism: Old Fashioned and Modern Prejudices" stating that researchers detected that there is impending pressure in contemporary society to keep

suppressing women through old-fashioned beliefs. In the recent decades women have made tremendous progress economically and politically, putting them in mobily upward conditions. Swim et al. (1995) maintain that women have been given this opportunity due to programs and policies that have been instated, this however makes men resentful. Modern sexism has three core components: "(a) belief that sexism is no longer an issue in society and is a thing of the past, (b) negative attitudes toward women who fight for equity, and (c) resentment toward women who advocate for affirmative action or gender conscious policies and practices" (p. 212).

Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Ferguson (2001) studied everyday sexism, its cause, nature, and its psychological impact. They refer to everyday sexism as being interpersonal due to its abundance in everyday life. The focus of this research is on women's and men's everyday experiences of sexism on a college campus. They conducted three studies throughout a 2-week period. In the first and second study participants were asked to journal any gender related experiences throughout the day, and to measure the prejudice they felt. In the third study participants reported their experiences on a checklist, which included examples of sexist hassles. In the journal entries, participants had to determine the presence of sexism in the incidents, saying that they were uncertain of its prevalence, that there was probably sexism involved, or that the incident was definitely prejudice. One category of incidents involved comments or behaviors that enforced traditional gender roles and stereotyping, e.g., perpetuating gender bias or general dislike of women or subtypes of women. This included the following:

> (a) comments classifying that certain roles were more fit for either men or women [e.g., one woman reported someone saying to her, 'You're a woman, so fold my laundry']; (b) comments indicating that men have greater ability in gender- stereotypic domains (e.g., a

> woman reported that her husband was discussing a bill with a receptionist and he told her that she should not ‘worry her pretty little head about these complex insurance issues’); (c) comments that label women with stereotypic traits [e.g.; comments made about women being passive]; (d) comments that assume women have different interests and preferences that are strictly feminine [e.g., a woman reported that a male responded to her confusion about an exam question by saying ‘girls aren't into that stuff, I guess’; and other described assumptions about women not being interested or capable in sports]; (e) comments made expressing a double standard for men and women [e.g., a woman reported a man said to them that it was all right for men to see female stippers but not for women to see male strippers]; (f) comments about general dislike of women (p. 7).

The second type of incident that was measured was the amount and types of demeaning and derogatory comments and behaviors. They looked at the use of demeaning labels such as “bitch” of “chick”, usage of sexist jokes, the exclusion of women from conversation, exclusion through the usage of sexist language, violence toward women, and negative attitudes towards equality. Some examples of this were reported in an incident where a group of friends were hanging out and one man said to a participant, “Yo bitch, get me some beer!”, this was a blatant usage of sexist language. Another woman had reported a man she had just met came up to her and grabbed her and called her “his woman”. These comments are made to endorse traditional gender roles, as well as sexual objectification.

Sexual objectification is the final grouping of incidents. These are comments that are reported in sexual nature. One woman reported that she was with two male friends and they were discussing women, and the men said that females were okay only if they were “easy”. A discrete

incident of this was reported when a woman was at a party and a man walked past her, and squeezed her waist as he passed. These sexual comments include criticism about one's body or clothing (e.g.; "that's a nice boulder holder"), references to sexual acts, threats of sexual contact, and street remarks such as catcalling. Behaviors that can be classified in this category are unwanted flirting, staring, and touching, such as being intimately touched by men that they don't know.

In Study 3, participants that were enrolled in a Psychology of Gender course, most of the people in this class were women, so researchers made a deal that if they participated and recruited male students, they would receive additional extra credit. These groups of subjects participated in the same measures as participants in studies 1 and 2. Swim, Hyers, Cohen, and Ferguson utilize Spence and Helmreich 1972, Attitudes Toward Women scale. They also use Swim et al.,'s 1995 Modern Sexist beliefs scale. Used with O'Neil et al.,'s 1993 self reported personal activism against sexism classifier. In addition to this, Study 3 required participants to complete Spencer's 1994 Gender Feminism Scale. This scale focuses on beliefs that are associated with feminism, e.g., "I believe this society is still completely patriarchal- it is still deliberately designed to preserve men's privileged access to power and keep women subservient and oppressed" (p. 43). This represents a measure of the tendency to feel threatened by stereotyping.

The data shows that sexist hassles are frequent for women, who experience sexist incidents with a "personal impact" once or twice a week. Women are more likely to experience everyday sexism through traditonal gender role stereotyping, demeaning comments and behaviors, and sexual objectification, on the other hand, men rarely experience these hassels.

Swim, Hyers, Cohen, and Ferguson use Benokraitis & Feagin's 1995 study to elaborate modern forms of sexism as being overt displays of inequality and subtle and covert forms of sexism. "If one focused only on these traditional forms of sexism, however, one would miss other forms of sexism" (p. 50). They argue that subtle sexism consists of incidents of inequality that might typically go unnoticed or that might not have a large impact on the recipient due to its discretion, or because they are not considered normal parts of our lives. Post study, participants claimed that they have become more aware of discrete forms of sexism. This promotes the idea that sexism can go unnoticed and can be an invisible form of oppression. They predicted that the data would support that women would experience more everyday sexism than men would, which is a believable hypothesis. They also predicted that women who identified as being feminist would report more sexist incidents than non feminist women. This prediction can be translated to the invisibility of sexism. Women who claim to be feminist are viewed to be more sensitive to sexist responses as they predicted. However I don't think that these women are more sensitive persay, they are just able to see through sexist coverups, and understand the reality of life that sexism is always present.

Through this research, it became clear that sexist hassles are a very common occurrence, more for women than for men. This study showed that women experience sexist incidents that have a personal impact at least twice a week. Women are more likely to experience traditional gender roles and demeaning comments and behaviors, however it was more prevalent for women to experience sexual objectification. This can be reduced to the argument that men sexually objectify women's bodies, and women are inherently more likely to objectify themselves as they internalize the male observer's perspective of themselves. This is threatening to women's

psychological well being, which can increase depression and lower self esteem. Swim, Hyers, Cohen, and Ferguson cited Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) to understand the results from Study 1, which indicate that encounters with sexism affected women's comfort. Study 3 indicates that women experience increasing rates of anxiety that are corresponding to the amount of sexist interactions that they faced. Reporting more sexist incidents was associated with increased feelings of more anger, depression, and lower self- esteem.

Woodzicka (2015) investigates the usage of humor in relation to sexism. "It's Just A Sexist Joke", Woodzicka aims to expose sexism and racism in the form of jokes and statements. Research looks to examine factors of self- perception of confrontation. Woodzicka conducts four different studies to analyze these factors. The results show that comments about racism are far more hurtful than sexism, and that a statement is more harsh than a joke. A sexist joke is shown to be the least negative out of racist statements/jokes and sexist statements/jokes. The ability to rebuttal is examined through the factor of bluntness which plays a major role in the study. A statement is more straightforward than a joke, more serious, and inherently more hurtful due to the lack of humor. The current study moderates the effects of prejudice in an evaluation of disparaging remarks. There are three responses that were found to be the most popular when women confront negative sentiments. Women will ignore, reply "that's not funny", and label the remark as biased (as a form of being able to forget about the comment and give it less seriousness by degrading the intellect and persona of the individual who made the comment). The underlying sentiments that have been studied shows that these comments are undertones of power relation dynamics- this brings us back to the concept of social roles that have affected language.

Harassment

Verbal harassment is a category of psychological abuse that is diverse in its usage, based on linguistic gender inequality, tone of the perpetrator [harsh/serious/ condescending], linguistic abstraction, and if the offense is made in a public or private space (Menegatti and Rubini, 2017). These factors weigh heavily on the recipient of the abuse, as everyone has different personal backgrounds when having to react to it.

Linguistic gender inequality is gender bias in language and is most prevalent through the mechanisms of stereotyping. Men are agentic, active, independent, and resolute as women are communal, kind, helpful, and benevolent (Menegatti, Crocetti, and Rubini, 2017). These terms structure women to live passively, as men are leaders and have high status in the gender hierarchy. This word association is attributable to social and cultural normalities which emerged from the division of labor. The division of labor is constructed of gender- typical social roles that are enforced, marginalizing women and keeping them confined to roles of the gatherer, the caring stay at home mother, the innocent daughter, and the dutiful wife. Men are associated with a variety of terms that exude privilege and power as they are the hunters, breadwinners, fathers, sons, and husbands. Through these roles from a young age boys are on a projectile to become men and the incompleteness of becoming a man is based on normative masculinity standards. Linguistic gender inequality appears as these stereotypes and forms of sexism. Menegatti, Crocetti, and Rubini mention Glick and Fiske's 2001 as they identified two forms of sexism: expressly hostile and subjectively benevolent. Expressly hostile addresses how animosity towards women attempts to justify male power, enforce gender roles, and objectify women's sexuality. Subjectively benevolent sexism frames women as a chivalrous conquest, who need the

protection of a man, to highlight women's subordination role (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Gender bias is also seen in the grammatical usage of words. A variation of languages have grammatical gender, in which words are masculine or feminine, in German, Italian and Spanish, there are two forms (masculine and feminine) that are asymmetrical as female nouns are made female by adding a different ending suffix to the noun, that is permanently masciuline and needs no alteration when being referred to a man. For example, in Italian, *professor* is masculine and to make it feminine, it becomes *professoressa*. *Essa* is equivalent to the English suffix - *ess*. In English, which claims to be a gender neutral language, there are similarly more asymmetrical masculine and feminine terms. There is a trend in languages, as masculine forms of nouns never need variations. Female nouns are inherently denoted as it is always more grammatically complex to be female than male.

Linguistic abstraction is an elusive mechanism that intrinsically degrades women (Menegatti, Crocetti, & Rubini, 2017). Linguistic abstraction is the act of making a new language using grammatical and syntactical techniques to structure language. Language is a catalyst for the reproduction of gender bias (Menegatti, Crocetti, & Rubini, 2017). Language produces a symmetrical balance between inequality in language and the way that it skews subtle linguistic disparity. There are feminine terms and masculine terms in language, and a vast majority of these feminine terms are just rooted from corresponding masculine term, e.g., man and woman, actor and actress, prince and princess, waiter and waitress, and many more.These words are the same in their meaning, but differ in the level of abstraction. An attempt to reduce gender bias in language is changing words like "chairmen " and making it "chairperson", but this approach cannot fix every aspect of sexism in language (Menegatti, Crocetti, & Rubini, 2017). Men are

associated with agentic related words and women with communal related words, and this plays out into our conversations with one another (Menegatti, Crocetti, & Rubini, 2017). There is a negative representation of women, allowing for gender discrimination without necessarily intending to do so, this linguistic behavior is discreet and goes by unnoticed (Menegatti, Crocetti, & Rubini, 2017). Menegatti and Rubini (2017) research the structure of language to analyze the ways in which it reflects the status of men and women, and produces subtle gender bias. They focus on discrete sexism in the workplace through language to understand the origins of gender discrimination, the social role theory must be considered.

Born and Taris (2010) studied students' inclination to apply for a job based on the linguistic choices made in the description of the job application, looking for terms that are abstract. They studied the impact of words, gender typical and atypical, in candidate profiles that were received. Fiedler and Semin (1996) constructed the Linguistic Category Model that categorizes the impacts of behaviors, verbs or nouns, and adjectives. These word categories have various levels of abstraction; terms within the same categories are capable of causing cognitive associations that can be triggering an implicit gender bias. The reason for this occurrence is the hidden sentiment of abstract statements that insinuates greater temporal stability and inherently criticizes one's expectation of being productive within their social role grouping. The study showed that women are more inclined than men to apply for jobs that have an application that is linguistically abstracted to fit within their gender role grouping. Women applied to jobs that were described with nouns/adjectives that were female oriented and intended to apply for masculine jobs when they were described concretely, rather than abstractly. Abstract language permits a space for men to be associated with positive traits, and women with negative. (Menegatti &

Rubini, 2017). The tone of verbal abuse is crucial as it enforces the victim's perception of the comment. For example, you are a woman carrying heavy bags, and a man screams out to you, "Do you need any help with that, sweetheart?" This comment with a condescending tone makes the comment more sincerely hurtful, as it degrades strength, but also uses the term "sweetheart" as a patronizing word that is grammatically associated with weakness and vulnerability.

Felmlee, Rodis, Zhang (2019) collected data in an effort to find the most offensive sexist slurs/ curses, and see when in collaboration with different negative sentiments, which formation of sexist language is the most offensive. To collect this data, cyber aggression was looked at on Twitter, to collect a realistic structure and indication of how the insults against women are constructed. First researchers did a historical review of gender and feminine stereotypes. They discuss the two classic takes on stereotypes aimed to degrade femininity. One stereotype being that women are kind and warm. The other is that women lack the competence and the intelligence that men have. This research proposes the concept that acts of aggressive behavior oriented toward women [specifically in this case on Twitter] are aimed at these two stereotypes in an attempt to boost the perpetrator's social esteem and endorse casual sexism. They recall socio-cultural history that creates stereotypes for men and women. At an individual level, these stereotypes fortify one's view of themselves through accepting certain gender norms.

This article highlights the usage of "bitch", "slut", "whore", and "cunt". These terms did not randomly come about one day, they have been constructed over time, and derived from women's resistance, and aim to criticize any feminine quality that falls outside of the marginalization of what the "good" woman is. *Bitch* implies someone is acting like a malicious, spiteful, woman who is not conforming to her gender role expectations. Being called a *slut*/

whore degregates sexuality, as these words infer promiscuity and come to conclusions about a woman's sexual experience. *Cunt* is considerably one of the most negative and derogatory terms that a woman can be called. *Cunt* demeans women, and implies that the woman has no redeeming qualities. In this way, *cunt* is more permanent than *bitch* and *slut/whore*, because you can never *un-cunt.* Researchers calculated the usage of these four key terms and their varied usage and overlap with each other, to observe levels of cyber aggression. In addition to this, they conducted a sentiment analysis to indicate the degree of negativity of tweets. A sentiment is a point of view or disposition toward a subject or occurrence. Sentiments are impactful in this way, as they allow for certain connotations to be placed onto words, subject matters, and events. Puschmann and Powell (2018) study sentiments and create the conclusion that sentiments are encoded with conceptual background through the eyes of the perceiver. Similarly to Felmlee, Rodis, Zhang (2019), Puschmann and Powell (2018) evaluate the impact of sentiments on social media discourse to understand the notion of specific sentiments and what the implications are for the conceptual meaning of them. Felmlee et al., (2019) focused on common negative adjectives that challenge femininity, e.g., ugly, stupid, fat, skinny, crazy, old, promiscuous. *Ugly, overweight, and underweight* are used to emphasize traditional appearance, being that women need to be skinny to be attractive, but at the same time they can't be too skinny. *Stupid and crazy* attack intelligence and mental stability, infereing that women are emotional and irrational. *Old and promiscouous* contradict ideals of youth and sexual experience. Researchers collected data for 2 ½ years from 2016- 2019 and collected 50,000 tweets and messages that contained derogatory gendered language. To measure impact of sentiments in the tweets, they developed a classifier that utilizes the VADER (Valence Award Dictionary and sEntiment Reasoner)

classifier. This consisted of a scale from -4 (most negative) to +4 (most positive). They predicted that the adjective will increase the negativity of the insult, especially those that are aimed at beauty standards, assuming that ugly and weight related comments will be the most negative. Their data supports that the inclusion of an insulting word (negative adjective) in conjunction with the key curse words, increases the overall negative sentiment of the statement, and that inferences to beauty standards are the most negative. When a tweet used the adjective "ugly" or one of its synonyms it was ranked as most negative when it was presented with "cunt", this ranked as the overall most negative combination. This mixed methods study shows that there is pressure to "do gender" and to maintain stereotypical gender roles, as there are obvious attacks on women who fail to represent the traditional standard.

What is it to be a *bitch*? *Bitch* can be used in many different ways, e.g., "You little *bitch*", "OMG my *bitch*!", "What a hard ass *bitch*", "That's okay, I'm a bad *bitch*, I don't need him". Bitch is a term that can be used to mean many different things. The question at hand is, what is the conceptual reality of the usage of the word *bitch*? "Words are our tools of thought, reflecting societal reality as well as shaping it" (Kleinmann, Ezzell, & Frost, 2009, p. 48). In a sociological perspective words are symbols that are common to a group or community, and they evoke conscious and unconscious responses. They preface that words are used for communicating, but they are equally used for miscommunicating, in discrete ways that are dismissed subtly. Words are just words sometimes, like in U.S. government elections when scouting for votes, politicians will make all sorts of promises, but then once elected, they are no better than who they replaced, and their words lacked meaning. There is an assumption in U.S. society that actions are separate from, and more important than, words. This is seen in cliches, i.e., "actions speak louder than

words". It can be suggested that these cliches allow for sexism to be permitted as this concept has been generated from the cynicism of politics. It must be accepted that sexism does exist, to understand sexism, heterosexism, class inequality, and racism as functions of society, and that the United States, in particular, is patriarchal, as it is male dominated. In their study, Kleinmann, Ezzell, & Frost, (2009) analyze "bitch," and those who use it to evaluate in what ways it reinforces sexism. In this analysis it is argued that despite people's intentions, sexism and racism are reproduced within our conversations with each other. This study looks at this as an indirect effect of language. The impact of words: informant of ranks of inequality within societal hierarchy; renews old inequalities in new terms; creates false power within the members of an oppressed group; permits unconscious sexism, racism, or other forms of inequality; subordinates are resistant to injustice.

According to Hofstader (1985) and Richardson (2004), women are effectively made invisible in society through the usage of generics and slanderous terms in English, the majority of them based on degradation of sexuality. This results in a series of systematic disadvantages for women (in Kleinman et al. 2009, p. 49) This can be observed through the use of *girl*. Kleinmann et al., 2009 study that female and male college students use *girls* to refer to college- aged women, and they dislike the term *woman*, which is an indicator of sexism in a non-harsh, or seemingly intentional way. In doing this women are infantilized through male- based generics. *Bitch* originates from the English language, to be a female dog. Which poses the task of understanding the association between female dogs and female humans. The use of the word *bitch* emerged in the 1400s, used as it is today as an insult to a woman, with undertones of sexual connotations. At the time being called a bitch was considered to be worse than a prostitute,

reasoning being that prostitutes at least benefitted financially from their labor. Reference is made to Caputi (2004) and Walker (1983) who both study *bitch* in its ancient Greek and Roman roots. Goddess of the hunt, Artemis- Diana was often depicted with dogs, and she herself was often portrayed as an animal, due to her divine power being closely linked to nature. The ancient goddess was then appropriated by Chistian ideology. In an attempt to strip the sacred feminine power complex, Chistians, non- Christians, and pagans composed the use of the phrase “son of a bitch”. This was utilized in Christian Europe to discriminate against the followers of the goddess. The historical context of the word *bitch* concludes that this term is tethered to suppressing images of powerful and divine women, while associating them as sexually depraved animals (p. 51).

The term *bitch* is inherently derogatory as it's a tool to reinforce sexism. Kleinman, Ezzell, and Frost study taking back the term *bitch*, as it is used so frequently and in so many different ways. If women, specifically feminist, use “bitch” becaue they like it better than the word “jerk”, they suggest this preference is a form of internalized oppression, in which the members of this group, women, train themselves to like using the dominant group’s, men’s, term for them. The satisfaction of saying *bitch* keeps women from building solidarity.

Bitch is malleable as it can be a generic noun. “Life's a *bitch* and then you die” and “That test was a real *bitch*”. In both of these sentences *bitch* is used as a term to describe an obstacle. Something hard to overcome, it is something meant to be dominated and conquered. In this way the term still remains a diss on femininity, as women are uptight, difficult, and impenetrable at times. There is the same effect when the term *my bitch* is used. This expression indicates sexual domination over someone else. In prisions this term is often used for those who are sexually

dominated by another inmate. In men's prisions it was seen that *bitch* refers to someone who is weak, a snitch, or homosexual. Reference is made to Sabo et al. (2001) when men call each other *bitch*, it is to emasculate and cause insecurity of their place within the bounds of masculinity (p. 52). The term *bitch* is often used to deflate women in positions of power. In the 2008 primaries in the United States, women politicians were harshly criticized through demeaning terms. People who don't like Hilary Clinton for example love to call her a *bitch*. She is a target for it as a woman politician, as she embodies the role of a boss. This suggests that women in power are called *bitches* perhaps due to insecurity of men who fall under their regime, and invade their male-centric power dynamics.

Bitch is also used as a verb, *bitching*, which translates to complaining. This doesn't just mean complaining, it means complaining like a woman, a common trait that is associated with women due to stereotypes of frailty and irritability. *Bitching* is defined by the negative reaction of the audience (irritated, annoyed) rather than by the judgment of the speaker (angry, aggrieved). When someone is bitching, it categorizes conversation as being whiny and full of nagging, there is a weak argument being elaborated by the speaker. This term has the most impact when it is used to describe a man, because it implies that his speech is of no importance in part because he is acting like a woman.

Bitch is commonly seen in popular culture and media and has influenced societal attitudes, beliefs, and influences. The word is seen in songs, entertainment television, and in news sources. *Bitch* is a curse word, so why should it be excused in primetime media and entertainment? The Federal Communications Commission's guidelines rank *bitch* differently than *shit* and *fuck*. There are guidelines for obscenity, indecency, and profanity that are allowed

in media, and *bitch* is permitted to be used casually. Kleinman et al quotes Columnist Theresa Schneider (2006) (p. 55):

> Under the definition of indecent language I can print the word "bitch" as many times as I want, but I can't say s---. The so-called standards of indecent language protect children from poop but allow impressionable listeners and viewers to learn that calling a woman a bitch is not only socially acceptable, but normal and sometimes funny. Essentially, by allowing "bitch" and not "s---", the FCC exposes children to the idea that it is OK to degrade women (para 5).

In pop music, rap, and hip hop, bitch is frequently used, for example, rapper Ice Cube's hit song, "A Bitch Iz a Bitch". This bitch is used to label women who step out of their place. In the lyrics women who are bitches are manipulative and materialistic. There is a myriad of examples of this in music, where misogyny is prevalent, and women are depicted as untrustworthy and only good for sex.

In entertainment television the use of *bitch* varies. An example of one use can be seen on HBO's Entourage and NBC's The Office. Both shows have a similar scene consisting of two male characters who are disputing and when coming to a resolution with one another the same expression was used in both shows, "Let's hug it out, *bitch*." Following this statement, the two men make up and embrace. This scene appears innocent, but the same result could have been accomplished without the use *bitch* at the end of the statement. Kleinmann, Ezzell, Frost argue that this usage of *bitch* is crucial for hetereosexual men to use when forgiving each other. Even though they are making up, the insult must be inserted so there is a clear boundary between

them, so that this interaction isn't homosexual. One man calling the other a bitch separates himself from any risk of intimidating homoeroticism.

Reclaiming the term *bitch* is much harder than women reclaiming the term *feminist*. *Feminist* is a label for women, made by women, but has negative connotations created by men who find the term threatening to their status. Due to men's influence on the term, many women reject the term *feminist* to show their disinterest with stepping out of line and challenging the gender order, and compulsory heterosexuality. Reference to Bell Hooks (1989) argued that sexism is the only form of oppression in which the oppressed party is supposed to love their oppressor. To reclaim *bitch* there needs to be boundaries as to who can use it, when it is used, and in what context is it permissible. Kleinmann, Ezzell, and Frost suggest that women who call other women *bitches*, even with friendly intentions, use the term because they think it's cool, which is an attitude perpetuated by the fact that it's a slang term, and because men use it. There is a coolness associated with cursing, the use of curse words is a sign of maturness, especially for men. Feminists who call other women bitch are inherently doing it to be tough, and perform masculinity. Women who use *bitch* do it to accomplish being accepted as "one of the guys," which gives a woman higher status (i.e., having male friends). Or they may do it because it makes them seem cool and frames them as a "sexy *bitch*," which presents them as a girl that is desirable to date. The main problem with reclaiming the word bitch is that the word has no real power, as its not like the term "feminist" which is a part of a movement. When a woman is called a bitch they become subjected to male domination and the entrails of his power, which may even include violence. They argue that a *bitch* is a woman whose feelings and opinions are dismissed due to her sex category. Men feel comfortable calling women bitches because they are not fearful

of violent retaliation for their rude behavior. They argue that the term *bitch* cannot be reclaimed. If it is permitted casually in society, it just promotes sexism, and denies the existence of obvious gender imbalance. In addition to this, it is recognized that women may not be bothered, or they enjoy being called bitch by their friends, when used in a commandeering way. This appears harmless, but unfortunately for women interpersonal relations are political, and there is interference between private thoughts and public appearance. Meaning that women can be okay with the usage, but they are just letting society see that they are okay with using it, which allows for the term bitch to be taken advantage of and abused to a point of sexism becoming extremely casual. A woman endorsing *bitch* creates a feeling of false power for herself. Someone in a subordinate group may feel good about embracing an oppressive practice, but that feeling does not challenge the systematic oppression and inequalities that are present. It can be concluded that bitch has become a flexible term of patriarchy, as it disguises itself as not harmful for women to use interpersonally. The major challenge that this poses is the way in which women view themselves (Kleinmann et al. 2009).

Women's Reactions

Magley (2002) studied the passive and active [dis]engagement that women have when presented with verbal sexual harassment. This research analyzes the stress and coping model designed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) in their book , *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*. The model they created was made for general analysis of coping with types of harassment, which they divided into two categories, external and internal. External reactions are problem focused and internal reactions are emotion focused. External reactions consist of tactics of avoidance,

appeasement, being non confrontational and elusive, perhaps with the use of humor or making an excuse. Internal reactions consisted of endurance through ignoring the behavior, denial, detachment, minimizing the situation, relabeling, and illusory control (self- blame).

Further studies on this delve into how to measure sexual harassment, through theoretical and psychometric advances (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Fitzgerald et al. (1995) developed the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) in 1988, which is a self report inventory to gauge the prevalence of sexual harassment's psychological effects (Magley, 2002). The categories of this are gender harassment, seductive behavior, sexual bribery, sexual coercion, and sexual imposition. Each category has a corresponding sample question item. The category of gender harassment is measured by the question, *Have you ever been in a situation where a supervisor or coworker habitually told suggestive stories or offensive jokes?*. Researchers defined the theoretical dimensions of sexual harassment through oberservation of behavior that was then systematically sampled and measured. They put forward the concept that sexual harassment is composed of a behavioral structure of three dimensions: sexual coericion, unwanted sexual attention, and gender harassment. They use these methods to study gender harassment in the workplace (nontraditional, blue collar workplace).They define gender harassment as any verbal or nonverbal behaviors that convey insulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes about women. These consist of sexual epithets, slurs, taunts, gestures, pornographic materials, gender- based hazing, threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts.

Magely (2002) uses this background literature to come to conclusions about not only what defines sexual harassment, but also to investigate the coping strategies women may use

when responding to different forms of sexual harassment. They use Fitzgerald's 1990 study to group the different coping reactions to verbal sexual harassment using the Coping With Harassment Questionnaire (CHQ). They look at avoidance, appeasement, seeking social support, assertion, seeking institutional/ organizational support, endurance, denial, relabeling, and self-blaming. Using a unidimensional and multidimensional model, they examined coping interactions with different harassment stimuli. The method used in this research began with collecting coping strategy data from eight independent samples of participant: (a) Northwest public utility, (b) Midwest university staff and faculty, (c) Agricultural organization, (d) Midwest university, undergraduate and graduate, (e) Midwest university analogy study, (f) Litigant and in-depth assessment, (g) Italian nurses, and (h) Military. Sample groups were given hypothetical descriptions based on geographic location, ethnic grouping, type of assessment given, and occupation. Participants were asked to rank the coping strategies that they would respond to sexual harassment with. Coping strategies consisted of 10 common items from the CHQ that were administered to seven of the eight sample groups. Each coping strategy was matched with an item in the following manner:

> Detachment with the item "I told myself it was not really important." Denial with the item "I tried to forget the whole thing." Relabel with the item "I assumed he meant well". Illusory control (self- blame) with the item "I blamed myself for what happened". Endurance with the item "I just put up with it". Avoidance with the item "I stayed away from him as much as possible". Assertion with the item "I told him I didn't like what he was doing". Seeking institutional/ organizational relief with the item "I talked with a supervisor, manager, or union representative." Seeking social support with the item "I

talked to someone about what happened". Appeasement with "I made up some excuse so he would leave me alone" (p. 933).

With these mechanisms, clusters of reactions were created for the prevalence of corresponding coping mechanisms. The four clusters are: 1) *Behavioral Approach Coping* refers to assertion and seeking organizational relief; 2) *Behavioral Avoidance Coping* refers to avoidance and seeking social support; 3) *Cognitive Approach Coping* refers to blame, relabeling, and appeasement; and *Cognitive Avoidance Coping* refers to detachment, denial, and endurance. The first two clusters are behavioral aspects as they directly address the harassment and the offender. The second set involves behaviors that indirectly address the harassment by using other people for support who are not related to the trauma. The third and fourth clusters are cognitive and internal aspects of coping. This multidimensional configuration allowed for analysis of potential reasons for understanding women's coping strategies. The results of this study suggest that coping behavior is multidimensional as there are many individually internalized solutions. When harassment is presented, all of the dimensions overlap and vary depending on the external factors that are applied to the situation.

The effects of verbal harassment change when the comment is made in a public or private space. Swim and Hyers (1999) selected 108 women in Introductory Psychology classes to participate in one of two randomly selected studies. These studies were designed to capture the struggle that women have when facing verbal harassment. Researchers state that when women want to respond and challenge sexism, there are social pressures that cause women to internalize the harassment and they do not respond publicly. Study 1in Swim and Hyer (1999) evaluates private and public reactions within different social spaces where verbal harassment occurs. A

lack of response can be the facade of many different emotions, but there are factors that make it unacceptable for women to react the way that they want to. Plausible cause for a non- verbal reaction is due to self esteem. Self blame is a common response that the receiver of harassment will often experience. In Study 2 researchers examined whether women would be overconfident that when faced with verbal harassment hypothetically, they would respond. The purpose of this study was to test the cognitive reasoning for the lack of responses when publicly and privately responding to sexism. It was hypothesized that women would be more likely to respond to sexism publicly. It was also predicted that women who had more "feminist beliefs", were more "gender identified", and reported being actively committed to fighting sexism would be more likely to have a public response to sexist remarks. They predicted that women were more likely to confront it when it was just the perpetrator in their presence, in a private space. In their final prediction they make the further implication that public confrontations, gender identification, nonsexist beliefs, and having an activist orientation would prevent possible negative effects of sexist comments directed at self- esteem.

Responses were in the categories of *No response* and *Confrontational responses*. *No response* consisted of 1.) *ignore the comment* and 2.) *wait to see what others do*. *Confrontational responses* consisted of 3.) q*uestion the response 4*.) *task- related response* 5.) *comment on inappropriateness* 6.) *sarcasm or humor* 7.) *surprised exclamation* 8.) *grumbling* and 9.) *hit or punch*. These reactions were measured as being *direct, risky*, or *polite*. They observed that confronting may serve a social role by altering other people's perceptions. Analyzing the unintended effects of confronting, it was seen that people who confront become a role model for others to express their reactions to sexist remarks, altering the societal standard for acceptable

behavior, educating the perpetrator and calling them out for their sexist remarks. Confronting may seem as if it could lead to increased levels of self- esteem. But according to Study 1, confrontation has a personal effect, as women take in the negative comment and they are able to label it as sexist. Doing this allows women to protect their self esteem, because they know that sexism is a societal norm. Through this perception the harassment appears as less about themselves personally, but directed at them because they are a woman.

Woodzicka and LaFrance (2001), study women's reactions when they experience sexual harassment. Research on sexual harassment has shown that women are more likely to have a different emotional response than they expect from themselves. Their research contrasts imagined reactions with the actual responses to harassment. Sexual harassment studies have predominantly used retrospective surveys, which rely on observing imperfect memories of real events, and analogues which measure false memory constructed events. This process attempts to evaluate the overlooked private reactions to sexual harassment. Retrospective surveys are helpful to document incidents of sexual harassment, however, the main problem with them is that they are prone to be biased. Incidents can be falsely construed over a period of time and the memory of the incident can be inaccurate. Experimental analogues aim to have participants assess how they could or should respond to sexual harassment. The problem with this type of assessment is that participants are prone to overestimate what their reaction would be, framing themselves to be more confrontational than they actually are. Consequently, it is important to focus on studying immediate reactions to sexual harassment. Woodzicka and LaFrance's (2001) research highlights looking at the psychological reactions to sexual harassment, to understand what the cognitive effects of coping with sexual harassment are. These researchers aimed to create a realistic

harassment situation, in which they could analyze both verbal and nonverbal emotional reactions, alongside a prototypical self report and behavioral measures.

In Study 1, they contrasted how women imagine responding and created a scenario describing a sexually harassing job interview. Women read over the scenario, through the point of view of the target of the sexual harassment, and they were asked to report how they would feel and what actions they would take against their perpetrator. The questions presented as sexually harassing were (*1) Do you have a boyfriend? (2) Do people find you desirable? (3) Do you think it is important for women to wear bras to work?* It was accurately predicted that the majority of the participants (62%) responded that they would either ask the interviewer why he had asked those questions, and/or call him out for the inappropriate and unnecessary questioning. A group of participants (28%) claimed that they would have taken more drastic measures by rudely confronting the interviewer or leaving the interview completely. 68% said they would refuse to respond to at least one of the questions. These reactions are closely associated with anger, the main emotion that was reported by the participants. When women are asked to imagine harassment, it is possible that the emotional response of anger constitutes directly confronting the harasser, and the emotion of anger is the "correct" way to respond.

In Study 2, they created sexual harassment in the lab. This was a complicated process to create an ethically viable and realistic harassing situation. They used a similar technique to Study 1, they constructed a job interview with a male interviewer to ask the female job applicants sexually harassing questions in a series of other normative job interview questions. Researchers recruited women to participate with posters and advertisements placed in local and school newspapers. The ads promoted an interview for a research assistant job. Fifty women were

selected and upon their arrival to the interview they were assigned to a sexually harassing or a nonharassing interview. All of the participants were asked the same questions with the exception of three experimental and control questions. Post interview, participants were taken to complete Watson, Clark, and Tellegen's (1988) Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)- Brief Form. Participants rated their current moods on a 5- point scale ranging from 1 (very slightly) to 5 (extremely). The moods rated were *angry, disappointed, alienated, confident, happy, disgusted, surprised*, and *humiliated*. The results from both the interview and emotional measurement tests were computed into categories, verbal and behavioral, with an evaluation of emotional responses. Behavioral reactions consisted of ignoring (interpreting the question as legitimate, e.g., responding to "Do people find you desirable?" with responses such as "Desirable?.. In what way?", or "Desirable as a person right?". A positive counter consisted of asking why the question was asked, and a negative counter would be aggressively questioning the legitimacy of the question, leaving, and reporting the incident to an experimenter. Emotional reactions rated using self- reported experiences, developed by Ekman and Friesen in 1978, (using PANAS) and measured through facial expressions (with the Facial Action Coding System, FACS) (Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001, p. 26).

Results showed that actual responses to harassment varied from claims made in the self reports. Data from the study was compiled in a table that shows the percentage of imagined and actual responses to sexually harassing questions. Responses were *to ignore/ do nothing, refocus, positive counters* (*ask why and answer, ask why and don't answer, state the question is irrelevant),* negative counter (*Tell off* or *None of your business*), *leave the interview, report to a supervisor*, and *refuse to answer at least one question*. Imagined reactions of negative counters,

leaving, reporting, and *refusing* were never executed during the staged job interview. Self reports suggest that women imagine to feel anger when presented with harassment, but in reality they were feeling fear more than anger, which subdued the urge to act out their imagined response. Nonverbal reactions and facial expressions were evaluated and *smiling* was the prominent reaction to sexual harassment. They studied the anatomy of the smile and made the claim that it is not a positive- emotion smile, and there are many negative underlying emotions.

Furthermore, Woodzicka and LaFrance (2001) conclude that imagined reactions to sexual harassment are more confrontational than real reactions. This discrepancy between imagined and real can be disguised by the underlying emotions that arise in a harassment situation. They theorize that the reason women do not confront harassment like they claim they will is due to fear of engaging with the assaulter, and inhibiting a more assertive and aggressive response.

Gervais and Eagan (2007) analyze modern forms of sexism through understanding sexual objectification. Sexual objectification has become more obvious and blatant. Through recent history such as the Trump presidency, sexual objectification was prevalent, enhancing different forms of sexual violence against women. Gervais and Eagan (2007) explain that sexual objectification occurs when a woman is deduced to being judged on her sex appeal, sexuality, and pleasuribility. The effects of an objectifying gaze causes changes in social perception and creates a “what-you-see-is-what-you-get” perspective. An objectifying gaze consists of actions such as “ogling”, “leering”, and “checking out”. These terms are applied to subtle incidents when a woman interacts with a man and instead of maintaining eye contact, the woman is faced with a full body scan. These vehicles of objectification indicate that the woman is gazed in an objectifying view, instead of a humanizing one. Objectification focuses on women’s superficial

characteristics and disregards observable attributes such as thoughts, feelings, goals, and desires. In the eyes of the recipient of sexual objectifiction, the way that women start to view themselves also changes. Through frameworks of media and social interactions, women adopt a physical perspective of their bodies that is shaped by the view of the perceiver. Sexual objectification leads to women having negative thoughts about themselves through body shaming, anxiety, and intrusive thoughts about their appearance and inherently self worth. Sexual objectification has the potential to cause different mental health disorders, such as anxiety, depression, sexual dysfunction, and eating disorders. Sexual objectification is linked to violence through two routes, which are direct and indirect (Gervais & Eagan, 2007). The direct route is that people who sexually objectify women will act more aggressively towards women. And the indirect route is that people who objectify women are consequently changing social norms and standards of how to treat women. The authors state that this causes a passive acceptance of violence against women and causes social discrimination, i.e., less support for women through legislature and politics that have the capability to eliminate gender discrimination.

Gervais and Eagan (2007) studied the impact objectification and results showed that after being sexually objectified women are more likely to self objectify. They state this as a threat to the safety of women in the instance of a woman being called on the street. An example of this would be when a woman is catcalled, it distracts her from focusing on the task at hand and her surroundings. This causes for the woman to focus on herself and her appearance and the same then applies when women are put into intimate situations. They start to focus on their sexual appearance that their partner is preceiving rather than their own sexual pleasure, causing them overall to be more critical of themselves based on the catcalling and sexual objectification they

received. Using supplemental research, from Franz, DiLillo, and Gervais (Gervais & Eagan, 2017), it can be theorized that there is a link between sexual objectification and sexual assualt. They studied sexual assault on college campuses and examined that objectification has direct implications for assault, as it increases the likelihood that men will partake in violence against women. When objectification is experienced by women, their tendency to self objectify increases and makes them more vulnerable to sexual assault. On college campuses, rape culture is sustained through sexual objectification, as men are prone to view women as sex objects. Objectification causes for there to be a lack of trust with the victim of sexual assualt. Victims are often portrayed as "asking for it" based on their appearance and the way that they dress themselves, framing them to be deserving of the assault. They are objectified as *sluts* which is degrading to sexual experience and status. They conclude that reducing sexual objectification of women would reduce men's willingness to engage in sexual assualt. Sexual objectification also leads to gender discrimination in the workplace, as women are veiwed as lesser employees compared to men through actions such as gazing and commentary.

Gervais and Eagan (2017) mention several approaches to reducing objectification, which would decrease instances of sexual assualt. They state that there needs to be an individual and institutional level of mindfulness. This would consist of shifting views about women and not just seeing them within a frame of subordination as a one- dimensional sex object. Increased mindfulness leads to fuller cognitions and expands mental capacity to allow for women to be viewed as multidimensional, and not just taking a cognitive shortcut and labeling women as sexual objects. Another way to decrease objectification would be to implement empathy and perspective taking. Like mindfulness this allows for there to be an understanding that women are

not just sexual objects. Another cognitive method of decreasing objectification that they refer to is called “Seeing the forest for the trees”. This implies that objectification is linked with myopic “tunnel vision” which narrows women into categories based on physical attributes. They claim that when people objectify women, they fail to look at women for their attributes that are deeper than just physical. In the forest and the trees analogy, the forest is viewed for its pure vastness, rather than being examined for the individual trees that make up the forest. Another way to decrease objectification would be through the usage of public service announcements. Phrases such as “boys will be boys” promotes the sentiment that men can and should be excused for sexual discrimination and violence against women. This phrase is dangerous as it permits and promotes sexual violence and allows for there to be little consequences for perpetrators. Another solution that the research presents is adapting parenting styles to be inclusive of women and to train boys from a young age that women should be respected. They use the example of Trump speaking about his daughter, saying that if Ivanka wasn’t his daughter he would date her. This is an example of the parenting mindset that sons don't need to be regulated as much as daughters, and that daughters’ appearances need to be regulated by parents. This inherently sexualizes girls from a young age as it sets a standard for them to fit into as they grow up and become women. Another mentioned solution is bystander intervention training. Through this process it focuses on taking action when objectification occurs. Programs that provide bystander intervention training identify sexually risky behaviors (e.g., a man isolating a woman who is blatantly intoxicated and could potentially be taken advantage of) and to interfere and prevent sexual assualt from occuring. Attempts like this have the potential to curb sexually violent behaviors.

Berdahl and Moore (2006), suggests that minority women face double jeopardy when dealing with sexual harassment, as reactions and coping strategies vary, compared to middle class white women, the primary group of studied participants. They conduct a study to evaluate the presence of sexual harassment in the workplace, evaluating that minority women experience ethnic/ racial harassment and sexual harassment. This article highlights the lack of data that examines harassment against minority women, and discusses the problem with focusing on primarily white women. During the 1970s and 1980s, women of color developed the Double Jeopardy theory, which evaluates the dual effects of sex and ethnicity through dicrimination, synthesizing that minority women face more negative harassment than other marginilized groups in society. This theory is exemplified through the wage gap and the lack of female executives overall in businesses. Specifically looking at minority women, there is much research showing that Black and Latina women earn the lowest wages, have the least authority in the workplace, and are hardly promoted into power positions. There is inconclusive data pertaining to whether minority women experience more on-the-job harassment in comparison to other female and male employees.

Researchers, Berdahl and Moore (2006), claim that there are two different versions of the double jeopardy hypothesis. The first hypothesis they claim argues that minority women and non minority women experience similar amounts of discrimination and that minority women and minority men face similar amounts of racial discrimination, however when sex and race are analyzed, minority women are the most affected. They suggest the hypothesis that sexual harassment is based on the sex of the target, concluding that women acrually do experience more sexual harassment than men do. However, the ethnicity of the target has no effect on sexual

harassment, and there is no corroboration between ethnicity and sexual harassment. Researchers also hypothesize that ethnicity of the target is the premise of ethnic harassment and sex of the target doesn't affect it, leading to minorities experiencing increased level of ethnic harassment compared to Whites. There is no interference between ethnicity and sex in harassment that specifically attacks ethnicity. They additionally hypothesize that the sex and ethnicity of the target will impact the total harassment that they recieve and that women will encounter more harassment than men will, and minorities in particular face more harassment than Whites will overall. They claim there is no connection between sex and ethnicity of the target on overall harassment, claiming that the overall harassment that White women and minorty men recieve is equivilamt to the overall sum of harassment that minority women experience overall.

The second version of the double jeopardy theory is multiplicative, which means that it has the tendency to reproduce itself and expand into other interactions. This hypothesis suggests that race and sex play onto each other, and multiply the causes and effects of harassment, causing minority women to receive the most harassment overall.

To test their hypotheses, the authors created a study which evaluates both ethnicity and sex as factors to recieving harassment in the workplace. Surveys were brought to the homes of approximately 800 employees from one of five organizations that are based in North America. Of these organizations three are male- dominated manufacturing plants owned by the same larger company. Two organizations are community service organizations and female- dominated, they are controlled by the city government. They encouraged people to respond to the study by ensuring $15 for everyone that completed the survey. The respondents consisted of 88 women (23 of them were employees from the male- dominated companies) and 150 men (15 of them

were employees from the female- dominated companies). The survey measured sexual harassment through usage of items from the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (Fitzgerald SEQ rating system) and the Sexual Harassment of Men questionnaire (SHOM provided by Waldo et al., 1998). These rating systems enabled participants to describe the extent of sexual harassment that they have received in the workplace over the span of two years. The evaluation of an experience was separated from frequency, which allowed researchers to determine if the event could be labeled as harassment, or if there was bias being expressed from the point of view of the recipient. An experience was defined as harassing if it had happened at least once and if it was evaluated negatively. Scaling ranged from 0 (*never having experienced harassment* or *experienced with a neutral or positive evaluation*) to 8 (e*xperienced harassment most of the time and evaluated very negatively*) for each item. To study ethnic harassment, questions from the Ethnic Harassment Experiences scale (EHE designed by Schneider et al., 2000) were utilized and measured on the same scale as the SEQ and SHOM. Non- European backgrounds, Asians, Caribbeans, Africans, Latin Americans, Aboriginals, Arabs, and Pacific Islanders were grouped as “ethnic minorities”. The largest ethnic minority groups that responded to the survey were Asian and Caribbean. Data shows that responses from these groups were the same when reporting incidents of sexual or ethnic harassment. The additive and multiplicative double jeopardy hypotheses were evaluated and it can be concluded that minority women face the most amounts of discrimination.

The reviewed literature states that women’s reactions to sexual harassment are complex and understudied. Research has shown that women suffer serious psychological consequences, such as decreased self esteem, which can induce anxiety and depression. Women’s own

anticipated reactions vary from real responses to sexual harassment, indicating that fear overshadows their ability to confront the perpetrator and protect themselves. It is apparent that new research is necessary to produce a more nuanced understanding of women's resistance strategies and multiple factors that may affect their choices.

Proposed Research

I am proposing to design and implement a study with the goal of better understanding women's coping strategies, behaviorally, cognitively and emotionally. The objective of the proposed study to understand sexual discrimination against women, looking at the relationships between the nature of verbal harassment and women's specific reactions. In this study there will be two variables, women's reactions being the dependent variable and the negative sentiment as the independent variable. Women's reactions can be categorized in four different approaches, two of them are behavioral and two are cognitive. Behavioral approaches include behavioral disengagement and behavioral engagement. Behavioral disengagement is an aspect of coping that avoids dealing with the situation directly, but uses the support of other people. Examples of this are avoidance and seeking social support. Behavioral engagement is an aspect of coping which includes assertion and seeking institutional/ organization relief. With this strategy women directly approach the offender. Cognitive approaches to harassment are also categorized by engagement and disengagement. Cognitive disengagement strategies are endurance, denial, and detachment. These tactics help women avoid thinking about the situation. Cognitive engagement is an internal coping strategy that frames the situation in a cognitively manageable way. This consists of appeasement, relabeling, illusory control (self- blame), and humor. The independent

variable is the nature of verbale harassment, categorized into five distinct sentiments: age, appearance, intelligence, sexual experience, and mental stability.

I propose four hypotheses. 1) I expect that when women receive negative sentiments about their age, they will respond using behavioral disengagement strategies. 2)When women receive negative sentiments about their intelligence, they will use behavioral engagement strategies. 3) When women receive negative sentiments about their appearance and sexual experinece they will react with cognitive engagment strategies. 4) And lastly, when women are faced with negative sentiments about their mental stability they will respond with cognitive disengagement strategies.

My proposed method is to survey 100 self-identifying women and ask them to rate experiences of sexual harassment that they had been subjected to over the past year. I will ask them to describe the interaction with as many details as possible, in order to successfully evaluate the nature of the harassment. In addition to this I will ask the participants what their reactions to the harassment were. I will measure the independent variable by categorizing the negative sentiments in the participants' descriptions. Then I will categorize women's reactions into groupings of behavioral engagement, behavioral disengagement, cognitive engagement, and cognitive disengagement. I will use the chi- squared statistical test to see if there is a relationship between these two variables.

Conclusion

Forms of sexism are abstract and prominent due to its malleability. Discreet misogyny is equivalently detrimental to women, affecting their placement in social hierarchy and internally, impacting self esteem and causing psychological distress. The ways that women react to sexual

harrassment varies, the main reactions being categorized as behavioral or cognitive engagement or disengagement. The nature of verbal harassment is categorized into five sentiments: Age, appearance, intelligence, sexual experience, and mental stability. The goal of my proposed research is to understand why women's imagined reactions to sexism are radically different from their real reactions. In this study, women's reactions to sexist interactions is my dependent variable and the sentiments are the independent variable. Through this I will be able to experiment with my different hypotheses with hope to determine why women react the way they do. This knowledge will help us understand the nature of sexual harassment and inform different preventive strategies.

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Appendix A.

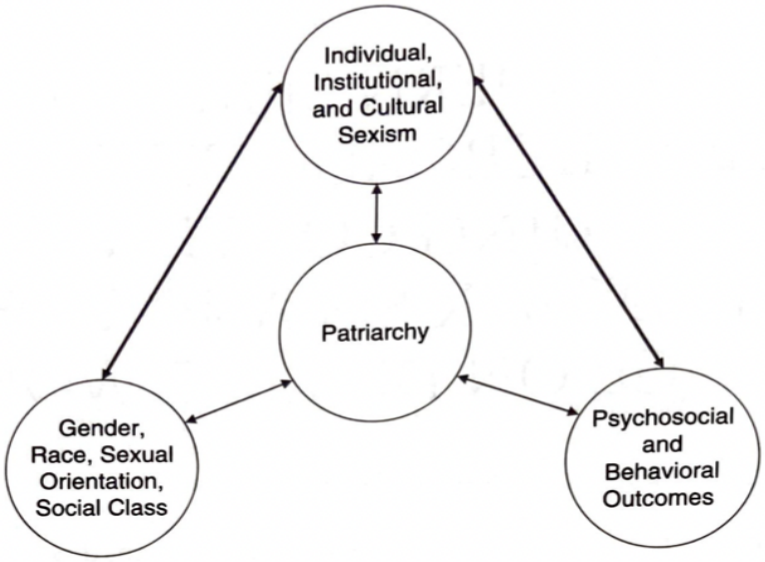

Figure 1. Psychosocial model of sexism (Lewis, 2018, p. 382)