THREE

THE ROAD TO GENDER EQUALITY IN HIGHER

EDUCATION: SEXISM, STANDPOINTS, AND SUCCESS

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Abstract: This article shares the findings from a mixed-method study of women's groups at one mid-sized university. In many ways, women's groups at this institution epitomized women leading and succeeding in higher education. Long term, incremental, and partial success related to curricular, financial issues, family policies, and campus climate are described.

This paper shares the findings from a qualitative case study of women's groups at one mid-sized university. This particular higher education institution had six women's activist organizations. Formal groups offer women opportunities to forge interpersonal connections and engage in activism (Carlock & Martin, 1977; Walker, 1987). Yet, descriptions of campus activist groups have largely focused on women students (Cherniss, 1972; Farley, 1970; Vaccaro, 2009) with no attention paid to groups comprised of women faculty, staff, or administrators.

This article documents the activist groups' challenges and success in battling sexism (Risman, 2004). Women faculty, staff, and students experienced oppression in the curriculum, family policy, financial realm, and the overall university climate. However, findings demonstrate that even though women shared similar experiences with institutional sexism (i.e. curriculum, family policy), group activism produced differential results for women in various places in the university hierarchy. In short, despite the fact that all women experienced similar forms of interpersonal and institutional marginalization (Risman, 2004), they did not benefit equally from the "success" achieved by women's collective action. This paper reminds readers that the road to gender equality is filled with hurdles, failures, and partial successes. It also suggests that success is relative. For activist success to be comprehensive,

differing standpoints between women at various levels of the organizational hierarchy must be considered.

Literature Review

Gender inequality is described in the higher education and social sciences literature in a variety of ways. Most often, gender inequality refers to differential access and unequal participation in higher education (David, 2009). Subrahmanian (2005) analyzes the notions of access and participation in a discussion of the differences between gender parity and gender equality. Gender parity refers to equal access and representation with respect to proportions of men and women in the population. In short, parity is about numbers. Unfortunately, while some women might have achieved parity with (or surpassed) men in certain realms of education such as graduation rates at public higher education institutions (NCES, 2010), their experiences throughout the educational system can be rife with inequities (Vaccaro, 2010). Thus, gender equality is more complicated than mere parity, as it encompasses experiences with educational processes, procedures, and outcomes. Risman (2004) acknowledges this complexity in her argument that gender is a social structure which perpetuates inequalities in individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions. Individual inequalities can manifest in women's socialization and subsequent identity work. Interpersonal inequalities stem from unequal status expectations, cultural biases, gender stereotypes, and the othering of women. Finally, institutional inequalities are inscribed in organizational practices, regulations, and resource distribution (Risman, p. 437).

In their model for evaluating gender equality in higher education, Miller and Miller (2002) document five areas where women face individual, interactional, and institutional inequities: access to institutions, campus climate, interactions with instructors, inclusive instruction, and employment. These five areas have been explored by scholars who focus specifically on inequities faced by women in particular higher education roles (Collins, Chrisler & Quina,

1998; Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, Townsend, & Ropers-Huliman, 2000; Welch, 1990). Women staff and administrators experience the glass ceiling, unfair job expectations, and sexual harassment (Bracken, Allen, & Dean, 2006; Collins, Chrisler & Quina, 1998; Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001; Sagaria, 1993). Faculty women experience hostility or invisibility from male colleagues, the devaluation of their scholarship, and tensions between tenure and family commitments (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Collins, Chrisler & Quina, 1998; Philipsen, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Female graduate students experience classroom exclusion in male dominated fields (Colyar, 2008), limited access to good advising and research collaboration with faculty (Sadker & Sadker, 1994), and patriarchy in the dissertation processes (Wolgemuth & Harbour, 2008).

The literature about women faculty, staff, and students offers a vivid image of inequalities faced by women. However, much of the literature focuses on *one* particular group of women such as faculty, administrators, or students. Read independently, those studies suggest that women with different roles face completely different struggles. To focus on one type of struggle may keep us from focusing on complicated and embedded systemic issues of sexism in higher education. For instance, on an interpersonal level, all women can experience a "chilly climate." Hall and Sandler (1984, 1991) describe the indicators of a chilly climate as: the devaluation of women and women's achievements, ignoring women or making them invisible, and singling women out because of their gender.

One factor that may mitigate the negative effects of institutional and interpersonal sexism is the development of supportive relationships with other women on campus. While women form interpersonal connections in a host of manners, some women seek relationships in formal and informal groups. Women's groups can provide opportunities for women to share personal thoughts and emotions, deal with intra-personal issues (Carlock & Martin 1977; Walker 1987), and fight institutional sexism. Consciousness

raising (CR) groups from the women's movement offer a historical insight into ways women have organized to fight gender inequalities on an individual, interpersonal, and institutional level (Miller & Miller, 2002). Yet, little research has focused on campus-based women's activist associations beyond those created and maintained by students (Cherniss, 1972; Farley, 1970; Vaccaro, 2009). There is a dearth of scholarly literature that documents the experiences of women staff and faculty who belong to campus women's organizations. This research sought to fill that gap.

Feminist standpoint theory informs this research (Harding, 2004; Hartsock, 1987, 1998; Hill Collins, 1990; Smith, 1987). Standpoint theory has its roots in Marxian notions that ideology and society are shaped by those in power, while proletarian (or the marginalized) standpoints are routinely ignored or dismissed. Feminist standpoint theorists argue that the social world in general, and knowledge production in particular, has been dominated by men. Standpoint theory suggests that women's subordinated position in society allows them to experience and understand the world in ways that are radically different from men. Harding (2004) explains how standpoint perspectives have been used effectively by a variety of oppressed groups who make the case that from their particular standpoint, the social order looks quite different than both dominant paradigms and other group standpoints.

While scholars (Harding, 2004; Hartsock, 1987, 1998; Hill Collins, 1990; Smith, 1987), have argued the benefits and dangers of standpoint theory for decades, particular critiques have emerged from women of color. Scholars of color argue that all women do not share similar standpoints (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Berry & Mizelle, 2006; Hill Collins, 1990; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981, 2002). In fact, women of color experience marginalization as women and also as people of color. The intersectionality of racism and sexism makes their lived reality different from the standpoint of their white, female counterparts.

Both the classic notion of standpoint and its critique inform this paper. First, women's common standpoints about interpersonal and institutional sexism in one higher education institution are shared. Second, the critique of standpoint is used to analyze women's access to activist success, as not all women benefited equally from the successes achieved by women's collective action.

Methods

The methods for this study were qualitative in nature, and were intended to address several different aspects of the question around women's participation in collectives. This section describes the study's context, design, and data collection and analysis.

Setting
The setting for this study was Mountview University (MU), a private institution with a student population of approximately 10,000. In the 1970's, six women's groups were created at MU. At the time of the study, the university still had associations for female faculty, administrators, mid-level managers, entry-level staff, undergraduates, and graduate students. A description of what each group publicized as their goals and purposes is summarized in Table 1.

In addition to the six individual groups, an umbrella group was also created. The coalition of women (COW) was comprised of two representatives from each of the six groups. The purpose of the coalition was to encourage communication and collaboration among the six women's groups. While women in the individual groups might feel camaraderie among like experienced women, the coalition was a place where women could connect and work across group lines. The coalition was considered a unit of strength on campus.

Table 1: Summary of Women's Groups

Group	Members	Written Description/

		Purpose
Undergraduate Women (UW)	Undergraduate Students	o Supporting undergraduate women o Making connections with other women's groups o Focusing on health and safety, education and classroom issues, and women's empowerment
Graduate Women (GW)	Graduate Students	o Affecting positively the experiences of graduate women o Building interdisciplinary alliances and support networks among graduate students
Staff Women's Network (SWN)	Staff Women (Clerical, Grounds, Housekeeping)	o Helping staff women achieve their highest potential through acknowledgement, education and advocacy o Providing a safe forum for addressing grievances
Advocating Change for Equality (ACE)	Mid-Level Managers & Leaders	o Acting as mentors for entry-level women o Working for fair compensation and recognition o Increasing communication on campus o Balancing work and personal lives o Combating the glass ceiling

Faculty Women (FW)	All faculty including: tenure track, lecturers & adjuncts	o Providing a support network to faculty women o Sponsoring programs concerned with professional development o Disseminating information about university practices and policies vital to women's interests o Addressing gender issues in the curriculum
Women's Leadership Group (WLG)	Dean's Council, Provost Office Staff, or other executive offices	o Using its influence toward an open, shared organizational culture o Being concerned with issues of equity o Using the WLG to develop effectiveness as leaders o Using the WLG to develop support for women university-wide
Coalition of Women (COW)	2 Representatives from each group	o Encourage communication between diverse groups o Provide a space where women's representatives from each group could work in collaboration o Provide a vehicle for collective campus-wide change

Design

In order to understand women's experiences in these groups, a qualitative case study was employed. In a case study approach, "the investigator explores a bounded system (a case)…over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Case study design works well in studying unique phenomena, such as the existence of multiple women's groups on a college campus. A case study has clear boundaries in terms of time and location and this study was limited to women's groups on one campus over a period of 18 months. Yin (2009) discusses many types of data that can be used in case studies; documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant interviews, and physical artifacts. Archival records and group documents such as meeting minutes and publications were obtained from each of the women's groups and the women's coalition. The researcher also observed COW meetings and selected group events. Additionally, group members were invited to participate in individual interviews.

Interviews offer a venue for women to share their lived experiences and their standpoints. In her chapter on using interviews in feminist research, Devault (2004) argues that "what it means to talk or listen 'as a woman' is based on the concept of women's standpoint" and that interviews can uncover women's "multiple versions of both oppression and resistance" (p. 228). Through a semi-structured interview format, MU women shared their standpoints of oppression and resistance in one institutional setting. A total of 16 women participated in a 50-75 minute individual interview. Women from each group except the Staff Women's Network participated in an interview. A list of interview questions is provided in the Appendix. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data analysis

Narrative analysis was used as a vehicle to understand women's stories. Through a systematic analysis of narratives, a researcher looks to understand a person's experience within the context of the larger socio-political environment (Reismann, 1993). One of the strengths of narrative analysis is that it allows a researcher to holistically explore a person's identity, relationships, and emotions, all within a larger cultural and social context (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Reismann, 1993). While qualitative research is not easily generalizable, narrative analysis offers an in-depth look at women's experiences within a larger socio-political environment of exclusion. More specifically, narrative analysis provides a vehicle for seeing women's experiences with oppression as more than merely a description of their life experiences. In this study, narrative analysis was useful for uncovering how women's group experiences intersected with sexism in the university structure.

Both open and axial coding (Creswell, 2007) were used in the analysis of observation notes, group documents, and interview transcripts. Open coding allowed for a number of categories to emerge, including: family issues, curriculum, finances, and campus climate. These categories are in line with decades of research that documents women's experiences with sexism in the academy (Collins, Chrisler & Quina, 1998; Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, Townsend, & Ropers-Huliman, 2000; Welch, 1990). In axial coding (Creswell, 2007) the context, intervening conditions, and consequences of these categories produced the major emergent theme in this paper. That is, while women's activist groups achieved success in fighting particular forms of interpersonal and institutional inequality in the university, their success was experienced differently by women at various levels in the hierarchy.

Five verification methods (Creswell, 2007) were used in this research. First, data from the archival records, group publications, meeting minutes, and interview transcripts were triangulated for

corroboration (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Second, as a member of the university community, I was able to establish trust with participants. Third, transcripts were shared so that participants could check theirs for accuracy. Fourth, negative case analysis was used to explore the ways COW successes were not necessarily enjoyed by all women. Finally, preliminary findings were shared through a campus presentation where participants were invited to critique the findings. Many of the women who participated in the study attended the presentation and offered feedback which shaped the final draft of this paper.

Findings

One purpose of this study was to understand group functions and goals and to determine if female faculty, staff, and students felt they accomplished their goals. Table 1 might suggest that each group focused on unique needs and interests of its members. However, women's narratives uncovered many common themes of interpersonal and institutional (Risman, 2004) gender inequality. In this case, the standpoint of women activists revealed how institutional sexism in curriculum, finances, and family, along with interpersonal sexism embedded in campus climate, touched the lives of women throughout the university.

The findings from this study document women's success in addressing interpersonal and institutional sexism. The most large scale and long lasting successes were achieved when the women's coalition (COW) addressed women's collective standpoint and pushed for change. In short, campus change happened when *all* women worked collaboratively to fight a particular form of sexism. Yet, success is a relative term. Sometimes success took a decade to be achieved. Other times success was fleeting. Most importantly, success often benefited certain women more than others. The complexity of success, and particular women's lack of access to this success, is addressed throughout the remainder of this paper.

Family issues

Family issues were among the most pressing topics that impacted women on campus. Margaret, a top administrator, argued that the challenges of having a family and a career were largely disregarded on an interpersonal and policy level by male administrators. As an administrator and former faculty member herself, Margaret was frustrated by policies, like tenure, which impacted women differently than men. She described, "The tenure system which in terms of its timing and its relation to women's biology [and] children...It doesn't work!..You can make it work, but it's a system that is designed for males."

Of course, gender inequity in the tenure process is not a unique problem experienced by Mountview women. Family issues and time restraints related to the tenure and promotion process have been the focus of scholars for decades (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Finkel & Olswang, 1996; Philipsen, 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Less research, however, has been done with female staff who also struggle to balance work and family demands. Janice, a middle manager, who was pregnant at the time of her interview, described the navigation of job expectations for women administrators as "crazy-making."

She explained

> I don't agree with the system. It worked for a lot of senior women managers, but none of them were married, none of them had children, none of them had lives. And I thought that's really important to me. I have a 2 year old now so I thought this doesn't fit for me.

She believed that the "system" forced women to work long hours and forego quality time with family.

For years, the women's coalition (COW) worked to create affordable childcare on campus. Women in the coalition

collaborated across group lines to pressure the administration into creating a childcare facility. After a decade of hard work and negotiation, the university built an award-winning educational center for children. The building was a beautifully constructed, state of the art facility. Many faculty and administrators were happy with the facility, and most described the center as a tangible success of women's activism. However, the success was incomplete.

Some of the women who initially demanded the creation of the daycare center on campus were entry level staff and students. Sadly, once the daycare center opened, many staff and students found the services inaccessible. One staff woman exclaimed, "Staff can't afford it. The faculty can but the staff don't make enough!" Another staff woman argued that the high cost of tuition made the center inaccessible to most women. She explained,

> [It is] not family friendly, women friendly- not at all. Because here you have this wonderful center on campus that initially was built to meet the needs of working parents... And... I'm very very concerned that it's going to be an elite place.

If staff could not afford daycare, struggling students could not either. Even if a student could afford the services, priority was given to children who needed daycare between 8a.m.-5p.m. daily. Many graduate (and undergraduate) students did not need such extended services. They merely needed safe childcare while they were in class. Thus, the creation of the children's center was a success for some, but not all women on campus.

Curriculum

Inequalities related to curriculum and academic policies impacted women faculty, staff, and students in a host of ways. One faculty member described how she did her best to fight oppressive curriculum. She also talked about how she felt a responsibility to

support students when they demanded more inclusive curricula. Mara shared,

> When we first started...there were several faculty members who met a lot with the graduate women because we had similar concerns. There were certain groups of graduate women who felt that they were struggling in their areas against sexism in some ways and against sometimes repressive curriculum choices that were made in some areas.

As a tenured faculty member, Mara knew that creating a less oppressive curriculum was a long road; curricular change was a slow institutional process. By the time of her interview, she had traveled that road for more than two decades. Even the women's studies department was relegated to the margins of the university with a very small budget, two small office spaces, and no tenure lines. While the creation of a women's studies department was a step in the right direction, curriculum needed to be transformed in every corner of the university. One undergraduate student shared,

> I think that it's important that we go to a school where there is a women's studies department...I think that shows some receptiveness [to women's issues], but I don't feel like there is a lot of emphasis on women's issues being important [in the overall curriculum].

Transforming the curriculum was not one of the issues on COW's high priority list. However, other institutional issues, like making the curriculum accessible to all women, was one the coalition fought for.

One of the major successes of the women's coalition was obtaining a tuition waiver for university employees. The achievement took almost a decade, but upon completion it offered university employees (and their children) up to 20 credits of tuition waivers each academic year. However, the tuition waiver policy posed a

host of challenges for staff women, especially those on the lower rungs of the organizational chart. First, the policy excluded non-benefited, hourly employees, many of whom were women. Even benefited employees who were eligible were not always able to utilize the waiver. A staff woman who wanted to enroll in a course during her regular working hours was required to obtain permission from her supervisor to miss work and make up the hours. Often, such requests were denied, especially to entry level women who served as clerical staff and office administrators. Once again, to celebrate the tuition waiver policy as a complete success would be to ignore the challenges faced by many staff women at the university.

Finances

The ability to thrive financially was an institutional challenge faced by many women on campus. Salary inequities were an issue; women at all levels of the hierarchy felt underpaid. For years, the women's groups (individually and as a coalition) demanded that the university release salary information so that equity issues could be addressed.   When the private institution refused to share salaries, some of the women attempted to collect data on their own. A staff woman explained,

> We started making all of these lists about people we knew who had left and we had a pretty substantial list and [there were] gender differences, but of course there are performance issues, there are all kinds of other issues that you have to look at.

Many believed that rampant salary inequalities forced many women to seek employment elsewhere. Yet, they could not prove it.   In the end, the endeavor to review salary inequities was dropped by the coalition. This was one of the few areas where women lamented that they were unable to achieve any success.

Despite that failure, the coalition achieved other limited successes in the financial realm. One of those successes was pressuring the university to hire more women in high paying leadership positions. The coalition worked to ensure that women were represented on hiring committees. At the time of the study a majority of the deans were women. Yet, one staff woman argued how the presence of a few women deans did not mean that institutional sexism was history. Janice exclaimed,

> I want to see some real action! I want to see it in terms of salary...I would like to see them get really realistic and show me that they really care about women. Not just that we have this dean who's a woman and that dean. Okay that's great nice and everything, but what about your people? What about the real issues that make them survive?

Her comments speak to the complicated nature of institutional sexism. Often, the number of women in high level administrative positions is touted as a sign of women's progress in higher education. If women have achieved positions such as dean, then inequality must no longer be a widespread problem. Janice's comments remind us how complicated gender inequality is and how deeply it runs financially. The success for those women deans did not necessarily translate into financial success for all women on campus.

Often discussions about finances focus on salary alone, but in this case, financial viability and success for women came in many forms. As mentioned previously, services (i.e. childcare) that would allow women to grow and thrive were often inaccessible. Tuition at this university was also quite costly. With the cap on the number of tuition waivers women could use per year, the tuition waiver policy made achieving a bachelor's or master's degree only useful for some women.

Finances were certainly an issue for graduate students. Many of the graduate women had families to support, so they worked part (or

full) time jobs while taking classes. The graduate group decided to use its funding to support women in a manner that would benefit their careers. One graduate woman explained,

> In the beginning [we hosted] events and activities...now I think we serve more the function of support...for individual women's efforts, internships and research projects and conferences and things like that.

Research has shown that women have historically been overlooked by faculty seeking research collaboration or co-authorship on publications (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). While the graduate women's group was not successful in changing the larger institutional culture of exclusion for graduate women, they did achieve success by helping members build their academic resumes through conference attendance, internship resources, and research support.

Campus climate and invisibility

The final topic that most women discussed was how they felt invisible on campus, as individuals and as groups. They believed that the chilly climate described by Hall and Sandler (1984, 1991) was a reality at Mountview. On an interpersonal level, women felt ignored and discounted when they tried to initiate change. One faculty member argued that there were many ways women's needs and demands were ignored by the university. In fact, she suggested that invisibility was an issue for all women on campus. In her mind, being ignored was in sharp contrast to the vast amount of attention the university gave to campus aesthetics. She argued, "I have questions about whether or not women are being paid attention to while we are putting all of these new buildings up...That emphasis on buildings is problematic because it puts buildings in front of people." She had no illusions that the university would focus on women (or issues of interpersonal or institutional sexism) once construction was complete.

In a culture of inequality, where women are treated as if they are invisible, activist groups may be the impetus for change. However, many women argued that neither the university structure, nor the male leadership, supported the women's groups' efforts toward change. One staff member argued that women "do all of this work and nothing comes of it. And that has happened far too many times." Further, a graduate student explained,

> I don't think the women's groups have a very strong voice formally in terms of being heard by the administration. There is no formal pipeline...no way for us to express our demands or our needs or our requests. So, if there was a better way that we could present what we needed there might be a better chance of getting responded to. I don't know, maybe not.

When she initially came to campus, she was thrilled to see so many women's groups. Over time, it became clear that university support of women's groups did not go beyond the surface. It was one thing to provide the groups a space to meet and minimal budgets, but it was another to institutionalize a chain of command for women's voices to be heard.

Other women felt that marginal financial support of the women's groups by the university was a way to appease women. One faculty member argued that the university is "putting up with us because that would be a risk on their part to do away with us." Her quote reflects her (and other women's) feelings that the administration merely tolerated the groups and offered marginal support because it was afraid of potential bad press if it were perceived to be unsupportive of women. If the university offered small concessions and minimal budgets to do programming, women might not focus on larger systemic issues of interpersonal and institutional gender inequality that plagued the university. One staff member said of the mostly male administration,

> They are responsive in some ways and then other ways
> they've really been neglecting real issues…We do get
> money from them. That's been good...We have a lot of
> women senior level administrators. That's good. Okay, all
> of those things are good, but I don't want it just for show. I
> want to see some real action.

Despite lack of "real action" from the university administration on many of the issues discussed in this paper, the women's groups persisted.

Success: A long and complicated road

To end the article on women's frustrations about university inaction and their feelings of invisibility would be a disservice to the accomplishments of Mountview women. Most groups had been in existence for more than thirty years. Even when membership declined or morale was low, the women's groups continued to work for change. One staff member argued, "We have a lot of work to do (to achieve equity)...I mean it's really quite remarkable!" Yet, were it not for these groups, the campus climate, policies, and lived experiences of women might be far worse. One administrator who had been at the university for 30 years saw some amazing changes happen during her tenure. She described the campus as being "light years" beyond where it was in the 1970s. She also admitted that the university still had much work to do.

Mountview women's groups deserve a vast amount of credit. No matter how long projects took to come to fruition, their dedication and hard work made the university a better place. While a number of COW's bittersweet successes were documented in this paper, others have yet to be told. One of the major successes of the women's coalition includes the creation of the first gender equitable sports facility in the country. Another success described by women was the annual women's conference. The conference featured inspirational keynote speakers and served as a safe space

where women could to come together and share their strengths, collaborate, and rejuvenate their spirit.

Discussion

Feminist scholars have written about the chilly climate, oppressive curriculum, and inequitable higher education policies for decades (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Glazer, Bensimon & Towsend, 1993; Hall & Sandler, 1984, 1991; Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001; Vaccaro, 2010; Welch, 1990; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Why then, discuss those same interpersonal and institutional inequalities here?

First, sexism is a complicated beast. Combating insidious manifestations of interpersonal and institutional sexism (Risman, 2004) is no easy task. The long road toward equity is won in small, incremental, and long term successes. During her interview, one woman lamented, "The amazing thing is that the issues are the same! They haven't changed over all of these years and I'm talking over 20 years!" Those in positions of power must constantly be reminded of the gross gender inequalities embedded in institutions like higher education. Women's standpoints offer a vehicle for such reminders. In this case study, institutional inequalities related to family policy, curriculum, finances, and women's invisibility emerged as a standpoint of all Mountview women. No faculty, staff, administrator, or student escaped the effects of institutional sexism. What differed, however, was women's access to activist success.

Consistency of themes in women's narratives shows how interpersonal and institutional sexism impacted women at all levels of the hierarchy. The standpoint of Mountview women exposed institutional inequalities and reminds us how different the lived realities of women and men are in higher education. Hartsock (1998) argues that "women's lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy, a vantage point which can ground a powerful critique of the phallocratic

institutions" (p. 107). In this case, women at Mountview experienced exclusion in curriculum, family policy, finances, and a chilly campus climate. We cannot assume that childcare and family issues are only relevant to women trying to earn tenure, or curricular issues are only of significance to students. If we do, we miss the bigger picture of institutional sexism that impacts *all* women.

Despite these shared standpoints with interpersonal and institutional marginalization, critiques of standpoint theory suggest that such conclusions have their shortcomings (Harding, 2004). Even though women at Mountview shared a standpoint of marginalization from the male dominated hierarchy, they did not share similar experiences with "success." The collective power of COW allowed women to make institutional level changes. However, women's narratives highlight some important differences between women's access to that success. Findings reveal that some women reaped more benefits from the coalition's success than others. In fact, particular women (i.e. students and entry level staff) did not always feel that they could rejoice in coalition success. As women's groups engage in activism, they need to be conscious of the ways success may be felt very differently (or not at all) by some women.

Just as women of color have been excluded from white mainstream feminist thought, (Moraga & Anzaldúa & Keating, 1981, 1983, 2002; Hill Collins, 1990) findings from this study show that some Mountview women were excluded from women's success. Understanding the experiences of women who have differing access to institutional resources and power is essential to achieving comprehensive gender equality. We cannot merely focus on parity between men and women (Subrahmanian, 2005). If we do, we miss the important distinctions *between* women. Findings from this case study show how issues of intersectionality (Hill Colllins, 1990; Risman, 2004) must be included in conversations of women's standpoint and women's activist success. While intersectionality has typically referred to the connections of race,

gender, and other social identities, intersectionality in this study of predominately white women's groups meant something different. Here, the intersection of gender and women's institutional roles was most salient. Women who occupied the lowest positions in a hierarchical power structure did not reap the benefits of activist successes. Lack of access to success is especially troubling as women with the least access to resources and power may be the ones most in need of programs and services (e.g., affordable childcare, tuition waivers). In sum, recognizing intersectionality of gender and institutional position is an essential foundation for comprehensive activist success that *all* women in higher education can enjoy.

The documentation of pervasive sexism in higher education and women's limited activist successes offer both inspiration and caution to women activists. Women's narratives remind us how important it is for women to build coalitions across faculty, staff, and student lines. It is also important for activists to realize that women's standpoints are complicated by their institutional roles and relationship to the hierarchal power structure. Failure to acknowledge issues of intersectionality limits the broad reaching effects of activist success.

In this article, I described some of the major successes of the women's coalition, including a tuition waiver policy and the creation of a daycare center. While each of these successes benefited some women more than others, they were still important institutional successes on the long road to gender equality. Without the work of the women's groups, the university might have no tuition waiver or childcare. After this study concluded, the women's coalition began to brainstorm ways to make childcare more affordable for low wage staff and students. They were also in negotiations with human resources to try to make the tuition waiver more usable for all staff. The ongoing efforts of the women's coalition remind us that the road to gender equity is long and complicated. Small or partial successes in combating interpersonal and institutional sexism *should* be celebrated.

However, those celebrations should be followed by further activism to ensure partial successes are transformed into success that *all* women can enjoy. If not, success becomes exclusionary.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about the women's group you belong to.

2. In your opinion, what are the overarching goals of your group?

3. How well do you think your group meets those goals? Please use a few examples to explain your answer.

4. Can you talk about some of the events/activities your group has hosted this year?

5. How often does your group meet?

6. How is your group similar to or different from the other women's groups on campus?

7. How long have you been a member of the group?

8. Why did you first become involved in the group?

9. Can you describe your motivations for both joining and staying involved in the group?

10. What are the benefits of belonging to the group?

11. What are the drawbacks of belonging to the group?

12. In what ways is the university responsive to the needs of
    women on campus?

13. If there was one thing the university could do to better
    support women on campus, what would that be?

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