

MANAGING THE INCLUSIVITY-EXCLUSIVITY DIALECTIC: A COMPARISON OF
WOMEN IN TECH, FUNERAL DIRECTING, AND CANNABIS

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1960s, an increasing number of women have entered the paid labor force. However, occupations still remain deeply sex segregated (Heilman 2012; Rudman and Phelan 2010; Sweet and Meiksins 2008; Charles and Grusky 2004). Ashcraft and her coauthors (2012) argue that one reason segregation is so persistent is because occupations have identities that tie the work being done in a given job to an image of a gendered and raced ideal worker. This creates a tension, where occupations are under pressure to have a diverse workforce while still claiming a distinct occupational identity (Ashcraft et al. 2012). This research explores how women resolve that tension and how they frame their sense of inclusion in male-dominated jobs. I present three case studies (high tech, funeral directing, and cannabis) of jobs that represent Kanter's (1977) spectrum of segregation in occupations. I draw on 79 interviews with women working in these careers to address how the relative gender composition of occupations impacts how women are able to frame their belonging in occupations that have historically excluded women. I discuss how gender is both a reason for women's exclusion in these occupations, as well as how they argue for their inclusion. My research shows that viewing ways that women both challenge and maintain the gender order through a "both/and" lens (Luft and Ward 2009; Hill Collins 2000) can help us understand women's employment in male-dominated occupations. This research contributes to our understanding of gender transgressions and identifies the limitations of the transformative impact of women's participation in male-dominated jobs.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Look, it’s a female plant.” Ashley, a young marijuana cultivator who had just opened her third storefront said of her success. “It’s only natural women would be successful in it [the marijuana industry].” Debbie, an embalmer who felt she outperformed her male coworkers explained, “it’s because us girls, we know how to do that kind of thing [cosmetics, hair, and nail art] up front, from practicing on ourselves for so long.” A computer programmer solving a tutorial exercise exclaimed, “I just have to stop thinking like a woman and start thinking like a computer.”

These three statements from professional women in three very different occupations represent a spectrum of ways to manage gendered expectations at work. The marijuana cultivator drew on essentialism to claim her place in the industry, the funeral director explained her success through gender socialization, and the computer programmer attempted to eliminate gender altogether. The tensions arose from the same source—women joining male-dominated occupations—yet the responses differ. This dissertation explores how women achieve a sense of belonging in three traditionally male-dominated fields: the marijuana industry, the funeral industry, and tech. The purpose is to advance a conceptualization of how the gender composition of occupational fields (as opposed to the organizations where daily work takes place) creates different discourses and interactional settings that equip women to resolve tensions brought about by their participation in those occupations. The analysis draws on 79 interviews

with women working in the three industries as well as my own observations from attending professional events in each of the three.

Although women constitute nearly half of the paid workforce, the sex segregation of occupations remains a persistent feature of the labor market (Heilman 2012; Rudman and Phelan 2010; Sweet and Meiksins 2008; Charles and Grusky 2004). England (2010) argues that the egalitarian forces that allowed women to enter paid work are not necessarily at odds with the essentialist forces that segregate women into a small number of generally lower-paid (and less prestigious) fields. The persistence of segregation has led to a plethora of studies showing how gendered power imbalances are maintained even when women do enter male-dominated fields (see Stainback, Kleiner, and Skaggs 2016 for a review). In this dissertation, I explore how women understand the gender dynamics in their respective professions. I also investigate how women both enact and resist gender ideologies to achieve professional status, as well as the meanings they assign to their actions.

In her classic work, Kanter (1977) outlined the negative consequences women in male-dominated fields face, such as isolation, tokenism, and increased scrutiny. She viewed the increased inclusion of women as the solution to these obstacles. Indeed, many authors since have followed this so-called “absence” view, arguing that increasing women’s representation in male-dominated fields will also increase equality. However, as Ashcraft and her coauthors (2012) argue, inclusivity and exclusivity are not linear and mutually exclusive, but dialectical. Occupations brand themselves with gender ideologies, drawing certain people to certain jobs, which then impacts how a given occupation defines and enacts professionalism. Even as companies now have “Chief Diversity Officers,” occupations must balance claims about *exclusive* knowledge with demands for an *inclusive* workforce (Ashcraft, Muhr, Rennstam, and

Sullivan 2012). In this dissertation, I ask how women resolve the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic in jobs that are, in part, defined by their absence.

This research began from my interest in women both maintain and challenge occupational segregation by gender. Initially focused on funeral directing, I realized that the *degree* to which occupations are segregated by gender is an important, but often overlooked, facet of how women talk about their participation in male-dominated fields. I thus expanded the project to include one occupation with fewer women (computing) and one with more women (cannabis). In an analysis informed by the theories of social psychology, feminism, and gendered organizations, I explore the reasons why women entered these fields, their day-to-day experiences on the job, their frustrations, and why they remained their professions.

There is a plethora of extant research that focuses on *why* occupations are segregated. Explanations have focused on childhood socialization (Lawson, Crouter, and McHale 2015), choice of college major (Morgan, Gelbgiser, and Weeden 2013; England 2010), motherhood (Cha 2013; Cohen 2013), gender differences in values (Kennedy and Kray 2013), and employer practices (England 2011; Kmec, McDonald, and Trimble 2010). Instead, my research explores women's experiences within these occupations. While much work has focused on documenting women's negative treatment in segregated fields or women choosing to leave male-dominated jobs (see Stone and Hernandez 2013 for a review), many women stay, and even thrive, within these fields. This research is not just about women who stay, but ways women find inclusion in male-dominated fields.

In this dissertation, I examine how women balance the inclusivity-exclusivity tension in three occupations representing Kanter's (1977) spectrum of segregation (skewed, tilted, and balanced). I explore how women achieve inclusion in fields that have historically been defined

by their absence. I consider how inclusion and exclusion, along with challenges to the gender order and actions that maintain it, can be taken together rather than in opposition to each other. In this way, I answer Ashcraft (2012) and Stainback's (2016) call to move past binary conceptions of how women enter and claim a place in male-dominated fields.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In chapter 2, I first review the literature on occupational sex segregation, with careful attention to Kanter's (1977) theory of tokenism and subsequent critiques. Next, I outline women's participation in the three cases presented in this work: computer programming, funeral directing, and the marijuana industry. I describe my research methods and data analysis techniques, including a reflection of my positionality in this research, in chapter 3.

Chapter 4 examines women in tech. I outline different pathways into computing and how these paths shape women's views of working in a highly segregated field. I show how women oscillate between being highly invisible and being tokens. I argue that gendered structures keep women away from power in computing, and in response, women seek to create their own networks and positions of authority within the tech industry. Next, in chapter 5, I turn my attention to the funeral industry. I argue that women redefine the image of the ideal funeral director by using gender essentialist logic, which originally acted as a barrier to their entry to the field, to justify their participation. By showing how gender essentialism and egalitarianism can constitute reinforcing logics instead of an opposing binary, I show how the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic remains unresolved and reinforced by women from the inside.

Chapter 6 focuses on women in the cannabis industry. I analyze the intersection of women's professional identities and the occupational image of the legal drug trade. I focus on how women create a new "narrative of cannabis," drawing on gender stereotypes, to achieve inclusion in the industry. However, these women also reject masculine norms inherent in both entrepreneurial fields and drug markets, instead privileging traditional femininity. I argue that the legal ambiguity of cannabis offers women an opportunity to create a new occupational brand for cannabis that is inclusive to women.

Finally, in chapter 7, I provide concluding thoughts for this dissertation. I summarize my contributions to the field of gender, work, and occupations. Making connections between the literature on gender, broadly speaking, and that of work and occupations, I discuss how this research advances the study of occupational sex segregation. I finish with suggestions for how future scholars can begin to reconceptualize women's challenges to and maintenance of gendered beliefs that continue to exclude women from certain jobs.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: POWER, INEQUALITY, AND SEX SEGREGATION AT WORK

Gender is both a ubiquitous and constraining force in the everyday lives of individuals. There are numerous definitions of “gender” within the social sciences (see Risman 2004 for a brief review). Perhaps the two most influential are the ethnomethodological approach articulated by West and Zimmerman’s “Doing Gender” (1987), which situates gender within specific contexts and interactions, and the structuralist view of gender as an institution that transcends and limits many other facets of social life (Risman 1998, 2004; Lorber 1994).

West and Zimmerman (1987) define gender as contextually specific activities that confirm an individual as male or female. From this perspective, gender is continually “done,” in the sense that it is accomplished and re-accomplished in interaction. West and Zimmerman’s paper has been immensely influential in the social sciences, having been cited over 2,000 times. It described gender differences as situationally emergent rather than the product of socialization (Deutsch 2007; Risman 1998). Despite its popularity, the “doing gender” approach has been critiqued for not fully accounting for how individuals can change gender inequity, including occupational roles. Deutsch (2007) argues that the intended optimism of West and Zimmerman’s (1987) original thesis-- if gender is constructed, it can be deconstructed-- became lost in a sea of empirical research that has established “doing gender” as a theory of gender maintenance. If doing gender is any behavior at risk of assessment, then even behaviors intended to challenge traditional sex categories are recreating difference (Deutsch 2007).

Alternatively, Risman (2004, 1998) suggested that scholars begin to conceptualize gender as a social structure, showing both how social institutions limit the contexts and interactions individuals participate in and how individuals can shape institutions. For example, gender is embedded in organizations, serving to shape interactional expectations, but as interactions change, the organization may also shift norms about inclusion (Lorber 1994). In this research, I consider both theories by examining how women actively draw on gender ideologies (and are limited by them) within their occupational roles. In doing so, I conceptualize gender as both a limiting structure and something that is actively constituted within workplace interactions.

SEX-SEGREGATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Gender egalitarian values have rapidly spread throughout many facets of American culture, including the workplace (Vandello et al. 2013; Banks and Milestone 2011). While this is evident in the rising numbers of women obtaining college degrees and joining the workforce since the 1970s, women largely remain crowded into a small number of occupations, such as nursing or teaching, and underrepresented in positions of power within organizations (Heilman 2012; Rudman and Phelan 2010; Sweet and Meiksins 2008; Charles and Grusky 2004). Although Risman (2004) suggests that society is moving away from viewing women's jobs skills as different from those held by men, ample research finds essentialist views embedded in institutional practices and internal personnel systems. These are manifested through policies and practices that favor placing men in certain positions and women in others, with women generally being favored in customer interaction roles (Bhave and Glomb 2009; Erickson 2004; Charles and Grusky 2004). Managers may hire, fire, and promote based on gender essentialist beliefs (Reskin and Roos 1990), limiting women's opportunity to enter and excel in many fields.

Employees themselves also participate in occupational sex segregation, consciously and otherwise. Young girls internalize essentialist beliefs that lead them to express a preference for work in certain occupations (Charles and Grusky 2004; Xie and Shauman 2003). Furthermore, women are less likely to choose career paths in male-dominated fields and more likely to drop out of male-dominated jobs (Rudman and Phelan 2010; Mastekaasa and Smeby 2008; Frome, Alfred, Eccles, and Barber 2006; Charles and Grusky 2004). It is important to note that perceived essentialist thinking on the part of others can also affect women's choices. Even when the individual herself does not personally think in essentialist terms, exposure to essentialist thinking can lead women to accept status inequality (Morton et al. 2009). The perception that women are exercising full agency in career choices makes occupational sex segregation appear natural and does not account for the fact that their choices are largely constrained (Alvesson and Billing 2002).

Occupational segregation can be vertical, horizontal, or both. Horizontal segregation refers to the distribution of men and women across different occupations. Vertical segregation refers to the extent to which men and women occupy different positions of seniority and power within their occupational roles (Jarman, Blackburn, and Racko 2012). This dissertation does not seek to explain why occupations are segregated, but instead focuses on the experience of working in occupations with varying degrees of segregation. I focus primarily on horizontal segregation. However, I interviewed women who were both newer to their roles as well as those who had many years of experience. This allowed me to understand how they experienced the challenges associated with vertical segregation as well.

OCCUPATIONS, INDUSTRIES, AND PROFESSIONS

There is no clear definition of what constitutes an “occupation” from a sociological perspective. The term is used in a general sense to refer to the overall function of specific job within the larger system of the division of labor (Kalberg and Griffin 1980). The *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* defines “occupation” simply as “the kind of work usually being done for a living” (Rytina 2007). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the federal agency that provides data on detailed occupations in the United States, uses a system of classifying occupations based on an individual’s job title. While many individuals share common job titles (e.g., assistant professor) making such computations simple, this still overlooks a great deal of nuance within the functions of the work different individuals do. For example, the BLS classification “Models, Demonstrators, and Product Promoters” would encompass everyone from Kate Moss (a high-fashion model) to Billy Mays (the Kaboom cleaning product infomercial spokesman) to the people handing out dispensary flyers at the Cannabis Cup.

Occupation classifications are rolled up into industries (also called fields). Industries are categories of businesses that draw on similar resources, including the background and experience of employees (e.g., occupations) (Nightingale 1978). Analyzing an industry would capture a great deal of variation between occupations. For example, the BLS has the industry grouping “professional and business services,” which would encompass computing occupations as well as medical doctors, sociologists, and probation officers—all very different occupations.

Neither adhering to strict job titles as the basis of an occupation nor analyzing entire industries were appropriate for this research. Industries are much too broad, encompassing both highly male dominated occupations and those that are majority female. Recruiting simply by job title or occupational classification (as defined by the BLS) may not have yielded women who

had to master the same kinds of *tasks and knowledge* on the job. Job titles are becoming increasingly niche (a search on LinkedIn produced postings for positions in tech such as “professional evangelist” and “brand ninja”), and occupational classifications are equally as problematic. My definition for occupation in this research is one based on common sense—were the women responding to my research recruitment efforts doing the same kind of tasks that required the same kinds of knowledge in the same kinds of businesses? If the answer was yes, I considered them to be working in that occupation. For example, in chapter six on funeral directing, I was focused on recruiting women who handled the dead and arranged funerals. Their job titles included funeral director, embalmer, and home funeral consultant. They would likely be included in the BLS occupations of “funeral directors, morticians, and undertakers,” “funeral service managers,” or “embalmers and funeral attendants.” However, the actual work tasks of all the women I interviewed were virtually identical.

Sociologists have long argued that common sense is subjective and may obscure the truth of the object of inquiry (Black 1979; Geertz 1975). However, Watts (2014) showed that sociologists rely on common sense more often than most of us are willing to admit. My common-sense definition of “occupations” does not mean that my theoretical assertions about occupation sex segregation rely on the same mechanisms. In other words, I used common sense only as a frame of understanding who I considered to belong to the occupations in this study, a choice caused by imperfect occupational classifications and job titles. I do not rely on these definitions to inform my analysis.

The professions are a subset of occupations that require specialized education and knowledge, have high levels of autonomy, and codes guiding their work (Saks 2012). In this research, only computing would likely be considered a profession. Funeral directing and

cannabis management would both likely be considered para-professions, occupations that exhibit some, but not all, of the characteristics of a profession (Barber 1963). Regardless, the status of a given occupation as a profession (other than ideal typical examples such as medical doctors and lawyers) is often debated and may not be agreed upon by every social scientist (see Saks 2012 for a review).

WOMEN IN MASCULINE AND MALE-DOMINATED OCCUPATIONS

Britton (2000) outlined three ways that occupations are defined as “gendered” within the literature. The first portrays bureaucratic organizations as inherently masculine. This approach rests on the argument that bureaucratic hierarchy is defined through masculine traits and emphasizes power and inequality (see Acker 1990). The second approach enumerates the extent to which men or women dominate the occupation. Although this approach represents the majority of work and occupations literature, its numerical definition is also criticized for ignoring workplace culture (Alvesson and Billing 2002). The third approach to gendering focuses on the extent to which the occupation or organization is “symbolically and ideologically described and conceived in terms of a discourse that draws on hegemonically defined masculinities and femininities” (Britton 2000:420). These approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as an occupation can be *numerically dominated* by one sex but *gender-typed* by another. Examples of this phenomenon include women’s prison guards (Britton 1999) and veterinary medicine (Irvine and Vermilya 2010), both of which are numerically female while retaining predominantly masculine occupational values.

The research literature consistently finds that feminine typed-work is devalued in comparison to male-typed work (Levanon, England, and Allison 2009; Alksins, Desmarais, and Curtis 2008; Sweet and Meiksins 2008; Cohen and Huffman 2003) and that female dominated jobs generally have fewer paths to upward mobility (Glauber 2012; Charles and Grusky 2004; Budig 2002; Maume 1999). Thus, women have an economic incentive to enter masculine and/or male-dominated fields (England 2010). Entering these fields, however, does not necessarily translate into improved career paths. Women entering these fields can experience decreased pay relative to their male peers and be pushed into less valued roles (see Cech 2013; Sweet and Meiksins, 2008; Charles and Grusky, 2004). Therefore, women experience both financial and opportunity costs when entering these professions. One focus of the present research is how women manage the consequences of exclusion in male-dominated jobs and achieve a sense of belonging.

Because the workplace is a central site of the reproduction of gender inequality, it is also a crucial setting to consider challenges to the practices that maintain male dominance (Connell 2010). Regardless, existing power relations help maintain traditional interactional arrangements (Hollander 2002). England (2010) noted that women still face discrimination when they attempt to integrate into male and masculine jobs, arguing this is the case because gender essentialism still shapes culture and individual choice, co-occurring with notions of gender equality. In other words, just because a woman now *can* enter certain fields does not necessarily mean there is cultural support for doing so. Chase's (1995) study of women superintendent's work narratives shows that empowerment and subjugation can be felt simultaneously. This research continues the investigation of that tension, focusing on how women in male dominated jobs manage exclusion while maximizing opportunities for feeling included.

Stainback, Kleiner, and Skaggs (2016) lament that research on occupational sex segregation too often focuses on how power is maintained rather than challenged, even in integrated settings that appear ripe for doing so. However, this assumes that challenging and maintaining are oppositional. In contrast, Chase (1995) describes women school superintendents experiencing layers of conflicted emotions, Ness (2012) argues that discourses that include women in construction work actually reinforce ideas about which sexes do particular jobs. In this research, I do not view challenge and maintenance as binary activities. Instead, I draw on Kanter's (1977) theory of tokenism and Ashcraft's (2012) model of the inclusion-exclusion dialectic to show how these forces occur simultaneously and how women manage the resulting tension.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In Kanter's (1977) important work, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, she focused on the high level of visibility of women in numerically male-dominated work groups. She described how women in these settings become "tokens," forced into devalued positions or isolated, their competency speaking for all women. Kanter (1977) outlines four types of groups, theorizing how the sex composition of work groups may affect women's ability to be successful on the job. At one end, the uniform group is sexually homogenous. The *skewed* group has a clear majority of one sex over the other; Kanter suggests a ratio of 85:15. Tokenism is most likely to occur in skewed groups. A *tilted* group, characterized by up to about a third of a minority group, has less extreme effects of tokenism and may include minority subcultures. Finally, in a *balanced* group, where the composition is near equal, abilities may start to matter more than demographic factors.

Kanter (1977) focused on underlying similarities between women and men and saw no fundamental differences in their workplace behavior. Additionally, since Kanter (1977) thought men in female dominated jobs would face the same issues as women in male dominated jobs, she did not consider organizations “inherently” gendered in her original theory (Lewis and Simpson 2012). Instead, she focused on how individuals shape organizations and argued that, as a skewed group became tilted (or even balanced) through the entry of more women, positive cultural change and acceptance would follow. However, research has demonstrated that men in female-dominated jobs are promoted more quickly and are often better paid (Maume 1999). As Turco (2010) demonstrated, status, not numbers, matters in many workplace situations. Moreover, a multiplicity of gendered performances can occur on the job. For example, Morash and Haarr (2012) found that women police officers collectively resisted negative stereotypes and use a mixture of traditionally masculine and feminine traits to describe themselves. This echoes research findings suggesting that women in engineering perform neither traditional femininity nor masculinity on the job (Powell et al. 2008). Kelan (2010) argued that both men and women enacted the role of information technology professional the same way, as the occupation took precedence over gendered expectations. This is complicated by evidence that women’s job performance is measured by enduring ideas of “right” and “wrong” ways of doing femininity within management and professional careers (see Mavin and Grandy 2012). This suggests that tokenism creates unique pressures for women that have to be resolved for career advancement (Budig 2002). While Kanter (1977) theorized that inclusion would create change, findings such as these challenge that assertion. Ashcraft et al. (2012) note that because inclusion can lower professional standing, it can become equally as problematic as exclusion. Instead of viewing exclusion and inclusion linearly, as Kanter (1977) did, Ashcraft and her colleagues (2012) argue

they are dialectal conditions managed through gendered occupational “branding” that draws certain kinds of people to certain kinds of jobs, linking symbolism and materiality of occupations. Ashley and Empson (2016) question how the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic is sustained given that need for a claim to specialized knowledge, yet a diverse workforce. Additionally, professions have unique cultures and operate as partially closed systems (Cech 2013). While these tensions create occupational norms about the role of women, these stereotypes are not fixed, as different people may disrupt or maintain exclusionary dynamics at different times for different reasons (Lewis and Simpson 2012). This research explores the tension between disruption and maintenance of gender norms within three occupations that represent Kanter’s (1977) spectrum of segregation.

INCLUSIVITY AND EXCLUSIVITY AS A DISCURSIVE CONTRADICTION

The inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic is one form of discursive contradictions that can take place within occupational fields. Ashcraft (2013) argues that the primary contradiction between inclusivity and exclusivity is between individual identities (e.g., woman) and the collective identities of occupations (also called occupational brands) constituted, in large part, by the image of the ideal worker. McDonald and Kuhn (2016) outline four ways that discursive contradictions within occupations is typically managed. Although scant literature examines the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic as one such contradiction, research on women in male-dominated occupations does shed some light on how these different techniques manifest themselves.

The first technique is what McDonald and Kuhn (2016) refer to as “strategic ambiguity.” Applying this to inclusivity and exclusivity, no resolution to the tension would be sought out in

order to maintain claims to both specialized knowledge *and* recruit at least some diverse employees. Such ambiguity may be able to create a sense of unity despite these contrasting positions (McDonald and Kuhn 2016; Eisenberg 1984). For example, Currier (2013) highlights the utility of strategic ambiguity in her research on college hookups. The term “hooking up” is ambiguous, and when used in conversation, allows young people to talk about their sex lives without disclosing details about it. Adamson (2015) also used strategic ambiguity to describe her study of women counselors in Russia, showing how, as members of the profession, they diffusely construct their behavior in accordance with norms about altruistic behaviors while still expressing a strong hiring preference for a certain kind of worker.

The second technique is transcendence (McDonald and Kuhn 2016). Here, contradictions are reframed into something a new kind of occupational representation. For inclusivity and exclusivity, this could mean changing the dialectic with an entirely new representation of the occupation. In, Muhr, Sullivan, and Rich’s (2016) recent case study of Claire, a transwoman and IT manager, whom they followed for several years. Claire fought for inclusion while simultaneously presenting herself as neither male nor female. By being an open transwoman at work, and speaking at many diversity and LGBT+ summits, Claire directly challenged manager’s views that gender is a binary system. However, different contexts and interactions constrained the degree she was able to be transformative. For example, when discussing her career, Claire downplayed the importance of gender in the workplace, describing herself as “100% professional” (Murh, Sullivan, and Rich 2016: 18) instead of talking about potentially problematic gendered tensions in her technical career.

Selection, simply avoiding the discursive contradiction by choosing one kind of narrative over others, is the third technique outlined by McDonald and Kuhn (2016). They use the case of

the National Center for Women and Information Technology (NCWIT) campaign, “Sit With Me”¹, as an example. Sit With Me features technical women discussing the positive aspects of their careers in the hopes of encouraging other women to pursue computing. McDonald and Kuhn (2016) argue that in this campaign NCWIT chooses to highlight the positive aspects of a career in computing (e.g., high pay and flexibility) and simply ignores the high levels of discrimination technical women face.

Finally, separation is recognizing different views but still distinguishing between them (McDonald and Kuhn 2016). In terms of inclusivity and exclusivity, this may mean “separate but equal” in terms of encouraging diversity within the occupation but limiting the ways in which diverse employees can participate. Muhr and Slok-Anderson (2017) highlight this in their research on women in the Danish military, showing how the historical narrative that women are not capable soldiers created different physical standards for military performance, despite women almost always meeting the standards set for men (e.g., doing pushups on your toes instead of your knees). They argue this narrative still serves to discourage women from enlisting.

THE CASES

Ashcraft et al (2012:473) call for “empirical inquiry into how the tension [between inclusivity and exclusivity in occupations] is (and has been) managed in particular contexts.”

This research will heed that call by examining how women in occupations that vary in degrees of

¹ As an employee of NCWIT I am familiar with this campaign, but never actually worked with any of the program managers in charge of this project. My work on Sit With Me was limited to listing website analytics for NCWIT’s annual evaluation.

segregation understand their place within their occupation. I pay particular attention to how women claim professional identities in fields defined largely by the absence of women.

The Skewed Occupation: Computer Programming

Computer programming is male dominated, both numerically and culturally. Despite efforts in companies, colleges, and national science institutions, the field has made little headway in desegregating. Only 20 percent of computer programmers and developers are women (BLS 2016), and within these groups, many are the sole women in their workplace or classroom (see Sankar, Gilmartin, and Sobel 2015; Dasgupta and Stout 2014; Fisher and Margolis 2002). Further, the number of women in these professions has *declined* since 2000, despite women's representation increasing in STEM fields overall (Abbate 2012). Women in computer programming often face extreme identity penalties, being neither "real" women nor "real" engineers (Bix 2014; Cech, Rubineau, Silbey, and Saron 2011; Gill, Mills, Franzway, and Sharp 2008). As tokens in the computing industry, women often develop the kinds of workplace identities described by Kanter (1977): they become either "one of the boys" or sexual objects (Gill et al. 2008).

While many studies account for the trend toward the feminization of occupations, computing constitutes a rare example of a field that masculinized. In the 1940s, computing was considered low status clerical work suitable only for women. Only later, after managers realized it required analytical skills, did the field masculinize, largely through active efforts to rebrand it as a career for boys (who were often trained by women; Ashcraft and Ashcraft 2015; Ensmenger 2010; Misa 2010). Indeed, at the 1968 NATO conference to establish software programming as a

form of engineering, no women were present despite the fact that most of the capable software compilers of the time were female (Abbate 2012).

One explanation for the lack of women in STEM fields (e.g., computing) is that girls do not invest as heavily as boys in mathematics and other relevant courses early on in their education (see Berryman 1983). This closely tracks human capital theory, which claims that labor markets are neutral and reward skill, therefore gender differences result from differences in *investment* (Schilt 2010). This model assumes that men and women are interested in different things, whether due to socialization or essentialism (Correll 2004), and that those differences shape women's choices in formal schooling and job training (Blau, Ferderr, and Winkler 2005). By investing less in math and science courses, women shut themselves off from STEM majors, and this STEM careers.

However, there is little evidence to support human capital prior achievement models (see Riegle-Crumb et al. 2016), and the meritocracy at the center of such arguments is by and large a myth (Roth 2006). Across assessments, there is little to no gender difference in math achievement (see Ma 2011). Even in advanced math courses, girls have higher grades on average (Riegle-Crumb et al. 2012). Instead, men and women have a *perceived* skill difference in math and other technical ability. U.S. culture has stereotyped men as better than women at math, which leads women with the same skills to rate themselves as less confident in math-related subjects (Ma 2011). The gap between confidence and actual ability for girls is widest in computer science and computer engineering (Sax et al. 2015).

Girls are also discouraged from entering computing by those around them. In high schools, boys are often allowed to dominate the computer lab and girls are given fewer opportunities to independently explore computing (Fisher and Margolis 2002). Video games,

another important avenue to an early interest in technology education, are also often geared toward boys and explicitly sexist, with female characters being overly sexualized or weaker than male characters (Barker and Aspray 2008). Programming is experimental and boys are encouraged to take more risks than girls are in all areas of life, especially during middle and high school, when boys' computing confidence increases and girls' decreases (Fisher and Margolis 2002). Girls in high school computing and engineering courses are perpetually teased about their bodies, appearance, and competence with no teacher intervention. It is these interactions that are most informative to the gender gap in STEM and dampen women's ambitions (Riegle-Crumb et al. 2012; Shapiro and Sax 2011). Fisher and Margolis (2002) argue that although girls are just as interested in technology as boys are, they are less encouraged by their parents and teachers to pursue their interest, thus leaving them with little support if they do choose to enroll in computing and engineering courses.

Anker (1997) shows that women are less likely to pursue certain fields in which they feel they would face discrimination. Based on their high school experiences, women may be less inclined to continue in computing and engineering courses in college. For those who do enroll, computer science and engineering classrooms in college are said to present a "chilly climate" for women. Kanny, Sax, Riggers-Piehl (2014) identify classroom experiences as a primary factor in women's diminished interest in technology. Technological and engineering education for women and girls has been marked by marginalization, harassment, and isolation (Bix 2014). STEM classrooms are often uncomfortable and discouraging for women because of differential expectations and treatment (Reigle-Crumb, King, and Moore 2016). This is overt in that women are more likely to have their intellectual abilities questioned, and covert in the sense that there is rarely a direct effort to include them in both formal and informal activities (Reigle-Crumb, King,

and Moore 2016). Male boasting is an informal norm in computing classes, which damages women's confidence (Fisher and Margolis 2002). Women in computing and engineering suffer from "stereotype threat." The male-dominated culture and composition primes stereotypes about ability (Reigle-Crumb, King, and Moore 2016). Women are thus double-stereotyped as competent at neither being scientists nor females (Bix 2014). Boys tend to "rub-in" girls' minority status and tell them they were only accepted into the major because they are girls (Fisher and Margolis 2002).

Professors have a role in creating and maintaining this negative climate. In computer programming classes, teaching examples are rarely relevant for women (Fisher and Margolis 2002). Word problems, for example, usually refer to programmers as "he," and football statistics are common datasets in introductory programming courses. In a more extreme example, Fisher and Margolis (2002) observed an informal competition in a college computer science course where a prostitute was the prize (albeit jokingly). Teachers and professors aid in subtle discrimination as women are excluded from classroom activities and judged by different grading criteria, which in turn leads them to believe they are not qualified to be graded with everyone else (Shapiro and Sax 2011). Women are often excluded from academic networks in computing fields (Misa 2010) and more likely to view professors as unresponsive (Shapiro and Sax 2011). Reigle-Crumb, King and Moore (2016) argue that negative treatment by male peers and faculty lowers women's self-confidence and interest in STEM. Because women are isolated, they have no insulation from hostility. Indeed, more women leave computing majors than men (Fisher and Margolis 2002).

Computer programming is a clear case for understanding professionalism as exclusion (Ashcraft and Ashcraft 2015). The masculine image of computing, including the antisocial

hacker, was not only intentionally created, but has made it difficult for women to enter the field (Kelan 2008; Bix 2014). However, as Cech (2013) noted, this image of computing could change in response to either structural or cultural shifts within the occupation. In this section of the dissertation, I explore how women overcome the barriers to enter computing as well as the efforts required to remain in the field.

Recent high-profile cases of sexism in the technology industry have highlighted many of these barriers. In 2015, Ellen Pao, an electrical engineer and technology venture capitalist, filed suit for gender discrimination against Kleiner Perkins, a Silicon Valley venture capital firm that invests heavily in technology companies. Pao claimed that she was repeatedly sexually harassed and that, throughout the firm, women's ideas were usually dismissed more frequently than those of their male peers. Pao ultimately lost the suit, but other women in technology have cited the case as their reason to speak out about sexism. One such woman was Susan Fowler, an engineer with the ride sharing company Uber. In 2017, Fowler left Uber and went public with claims of gender discrimination and sexual harassment. According to Fowler, after approaching human resources with concerns about being propositioned for sex by her male co-workers, Fowler was instructed "not to complain" about how she was treated. This story resulted in the #deleteUber campaign, which trended on Twitter for months and led to over 200,000 people removing the application from their phones. Later in 2017, the so-called "Google Manifesto" was made public. This ten-page document rails against the company's diversity efforts, claiming Google has had to ease technical qualifications to hire women engineers, arguing women are not biologically suited to be programmers. The document was widely shared on internal mailing lists, though the author was ultimately fired from Google.

In 2014, I began working as a research assistant to Dr. Wendy DuBow, Director of Evaluation at the National Center for Women and Information Technology (NCWIT). During this time, I have had the opportunity to contribute to several online publications detailing the lack of women and girls in computing. However, my direct interactions were primarily limited to students rather than working women. In 2016, I was added to a Facebook group for both high school and college students who had applied for an NCWIT award. Many students who entered the workforce remained in the group. One of my assignments was to analyze social media posts made by the members of this group. The posts contained many different themes related to college, internships, networking advice, and questions about computing-related activities like hackathons. However, many of the most popular posts (measures in terms of “likes” and comments) were gender-related. This included young women seeking social support to overcome isolation they felt as a result of being one of very few women, if not the only one, in their programs, or seeking advice to deal with negative interactions they perceived as rooted in sexism. Throughout the interviews I conducted, the professional women overwhelmingly reported having few to no female colleagues in their workplaces. Most of these women said they had to make an effort to find groups (both online and in-person) for women in tech for social support.

Many people associate the technology industry with giant organizations like Microsoft, Google, Amazon, or Apple. While these companies do employ thousands of programmers and engineers across the globe, they are not necessarily representative of the technology industry as a whole. In 2016, 73 percent of technology companies were start-ups and smaller companies (Atkinson and Wu 2017). Overall in the tech sector, large companies account for only about 26 percent of all IT employment (BLS 2017). In this research, the majority of women worked at

small to medium sized companies, though more had experience with the tech giants in their early careers but had left prior to our interview.

The Tilted Occupation: Funeral Directing

The U.S. funeral industry is sex segregated. Although funeral directing involves female-typed emotion work, including acting as caregivers to the bereaved (Parsons 2003), gender essentialist beliefs and practices on the part of male managers and supervisors appear to impede women's entry into the industry. For example, male funeral home owners have gone on record citing physical weakness and emotional fragility as justifications for denying women apprenticeships (Wong 2000; Cathles, Harrington, and Krynski 2010). However, before the medicalization of death and dying around the turn of the twentieth century, women generally cared for the dying and dead, enacting essentialist feminine roles as "natural" caregivers (Fromme et al. 2005). As undertaking became a business and funerals took place outside of the home and family, women lost their roles as caregivers to the dead, regardless of setting.

The earliest available American data shows that, in 1951, only about 4.5 percent of funeral directors were women (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics 1951). Today, women comprise about a quarter of working funeral directors (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013). Although mortuary science degree attainment is now nearly equal between women and men (National Center for Education Statistics 2014) and informal sources indicate that more women have entered the industry since 2013, a gender gap still exists within the funeral industry. In her memoir, funeral director Caitlin Doughty (2014) suggests that although more female students are entering mortuary science education programs, they are less likely to be hired by

funeral homes and crematoriums. At the end of Doughty's college program, employers came in to interview students. Though half of her cohort of 50 consisted of women, she recalled of these recruiters: "I had to wait my turn while they interviewed several male students in the mortuary program, from whom they made no effort at all to hide their preference" (2014: 209).

Because women have recently entered the funeral industry in unprecedented numbers, the profession has become "tilted." Consequently, it offers a unique context to study how women negotiate a sense of belonging in male-dominated field that is at risk of feminizing. When interviewing funeral directors in person, it was difficult to fully observe the gender of employees. Health and safety regulations prevent visitors from entering the "back rooms" of most funeral homes and crematoriums, and it would have been insensitive to enter funerals just to make note of the gender of the director. Further, since part of a funeral director's job is retrieving bodies, they are often out of the office on "pick-ups." For these reasons, I include no first-hand observations of the gender dynamic of funeral homes in this analysis. However, I did note that all of the front desk associates in the funeral homes I visited were women. This may indicate that the funeral industry has both vertical and horizontal sex segregation, with more women as receptionists and fewer as directors and owners. I asked women about the gender composition of their workplace. Most reported being the only woman or one of few women in their organization, though some more experienced interviewees noted that a greater proportion of recent hires were women than in the past.

In 1963, Jessica Mitford published her classic expose of the funeral industry as a highly capitalistic industry profiting from death and anguish. Mitford (1963) argued, through sleazy sales tactics, funeral homes were not unlike other exploitative and profit-seeking corporations, a finding echoed by other research (see Howarth 1996). However, other research has shown that

most funeral directors act out of a genuine sense of compassion for families (see Bailey 2010). Today, approximately 86 percent of U.S. funeral homes are small, closely held businesses (National Funeral Directors Association 2018). However, this is a rapidly changing statistic. Large, publicly traded companies are increasingly buying out family-owned funeral homes. The largest of these companies, Service Corporation International (referred to as “SCI” by employees) holds the remaining 14 percent of funeral homes and continues to acquire new funeral homes every year, a contributing factor to their recent \$4 billion market valuation. In fact, SCI has become so large that in 2013 they sought Federal Trade Commission (FTC) approval to continue purchasing funeral homes, and the conclusion of this approval indicated that the FTC was becoming concerned about decreased competition in the mortuary services market (Boring 2014). Other large corporations, such as Wal-Mart, are now in the accessory sales (e.g., caskets) market. Funeral homes operating under SCI usually retain the name and look of a family-owned home, so consumers and passersby are unlikely to be able to distinguish a corporate funeral home from a family-owned funeral home. In this research, five women worked for SCI funeral homes, three women owned their own businesses, and the remaining women worked for closely held funeral homes.

The Balanced Occupation: Legal Cannabis

In 2015, *Newsweek* asked if legal cannabis could be the first billion-dollar industry not dominated by men. Although federal law criminalizing cannabis makes definitive employment data unavailable, numerous industry reports claim that pot has the highest representation of women in management and executive roles among high-growth, high-revenue fields. According to an industry survey, women hold about 40 percent of executive positions in non-investment

areas of the cannabis industry (Olson 2015). Since then, informal data from professional organizations and certifications suggest that even more women have entered the industry in the past two years (Deruy 2016).

Unlike computing and funeral directing, which had meaningful places for women early in their histories, the drug trades have historically had skewed male, in part due to increased social and legal sanctions for women in the industry. Women typically do not occupy high level positions in underground drug markets (August 2013; Anderson 2005; Adler 1993). However, as small legal markets began to emerge, such as early legalization efforts in the “Emerald Triangle” of northern California, women began entering behind-the-scenes support roles, such as trimming plants (August 2013). Even within these niches, women were often promoted due to gender essentialist beliefs that women were “naturally” more in-tune with plants (August 2013).

As of October 2017, 29 states and the District of Columbia have some form of a legal cannabis industry (however, by federal law, cannabis remains a schedule one drug). The cannabis industry offers a window into a point of change, not only in terms of drug policy, but into how an occupation became not only woman-friendly but also allowed women meaningful representation at the upper ranks of the industry. As Lewis and Simpson (2012) note, however, balance does not necessarily lead to equality. This research explores how women’s participation in the drug trade has changed, and whether that change has brought an actual shift in power rather than just job titles.

In conducting this research, I visited several dispensaries in Denver and Boulder, Colorado, and Sonoma County, California. Although the majority of the “budtenders,” as staff members are known, were male, as in funeral homes, those at the reception desk were always women. I do not recall seeing any employees of color, either male or female, at any of these

establishments. A recent cannabis industry survey found that 81 percent of cannabis business owners are white (McVey 2017). Additionally, the majority of my in-person dispensary visits were in Boulder, Colorado—a city that is approximately 85 percent non-Hispanic white (compared to 62 percent nationally) (American Community Survey 2016).

Each dispensary I visited had a specific look and feel. Some marketed themselves as pseudo-pharmacies, with budtenders wearing lab coats, clean, white interiors, and promotional health materials one would find in a medical spa or high-end doctor's office. Other dispensaries were more like walking onto the set of *How High*, with Bob Marley black light posters, relatively loud music playing songs with pot references, and budtenders who fit the atmosphere with baggy t-shirts, beanie hats, and several days' worth of face stubble. A few dispensaries were in the middle: not overtly referencing medical clinics while not trying to screen out pot references. These establishments generally had some Grateful Dead references around, such as the Terrapin turtle, but were otherwise decorated in a non-descript fashion, with simple greenery and artwork with no connotations to cannabis. The employees at these establishments usually wore outdoor gear (e.g., hiking boots) and fit neither the “stoner” stereotype nor references to medicine.

When cannabis was legalized, many supporters argued that it could help boost small business owners. In Colorado and Washington, however, this does not appear to be the case. Larger companies are already taking up an unexpectedly large amount of the market share. In Washington in 2017, the ten largest farms harvested and sold more cannabis than the 500 smallest farms licensed in the state (Black 2017). Despite a Colorado Department of Revenue report finding that only small amounts of consolidation have taken root in the state, similar trends have been taking shape. In Denver, a group of investors now owns nearly 15 percent of all cannabis licenses available in the county, all given to dispensaries marketed under different

brands. This process of licenses falling into fewer and fewer hands is expected to continue. As one of my respondents put it, “one day there *will* be a McDonald’s of weed.” In this research, most of the women I interviewed worked for small businesses (defined as either one or two storefronts or operations). However, three women worked for larger businesses (more than five operations) and one was part of a capital holding company that owned one of the largest cannabis product lines in the country.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

In this dissertation, I use qualitative interviews to explore how women achieve inclusion and experience exclusion in three occupations that represent Kanter’s (1977) spectrum of tokenism (computing, funeral directing, and the marijuana industry). I seek to document the ways women experience in the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic and re-conceptualize tokenism in this non-linear space. Expanding on the research on both occupational sex segregation and gender discrimination, my research will contribute to these literatures in three important ways.

First, this research moves scholars beyond binary conceptions of inclusion and exclusion at work. Stainback et al. (2016:22) claim, “Practically all qualitative research examining women and men at work has shown the reproduction of gender at work and how privilege and domination are actively recast and maintained by women and men rather than challenged.” However, England (2010) argued that the logics of essentialism and egalitarianism co-occur. This opens up the possibility that, at least in some occupational contexts, inclusivity and exclusivity can reinforce one other. This is supported by research that shows how women in non-traditional roles can actually maintain hegemonic masculinity (Mojola 2014; Wolkomir

2012; Irvine and Vermilya 2010; Silva 2008). In this research, I reject the assumption that challenge and maintenance represent oppositional undertakings, and I begin to clarify the gendered processes by which women feel included in occupations defined by their exclusion. Hill-Collins (2000) and Luft and Ward (2009) argue that sometimes discourses are better characterized through a “both/and” lens rather than an “either/or” framework. I mean to capture the complex nature of performances of gender at work: both how individuals challenge the sex-gender binary and how those challenges remain partial, incomplete, and culturally constrained.

Second, my work provides an empirical context for the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic. Research on inclusivity and exclusivity tends to focus on historical trends and long-term shifts within occupations (e.g., Ashley and Empson 2016; Ashcraft et al. 2012; Lewis and Simpson 2012). In contrast, this research captures the specific mechanisms by which inclusivity and exclusivity are managed within occupations that differ in degree of (de)segregation. By doing so, research can begin to clarify how women respond to gendered power within segregated occupations, as well as how women actively participate in the maintaining segregation.

Finally, I expand on the concept of gender transgressions at work. Schilt and Connell (2007) popularized this term to describe the degree to which individuals who transition to the opposite gender and stay at the same workplace are willing to break traditional gender norms, though it is now widely used in a more general sense to describe how people break or expand traditional gender boundaries (McGrath and Chananie-Hill 2009; McGuffey and Rich 1999). Muhr and her coauthors (2016) argue gender transgressions include how willingness to cross gendered lines shift across contexts and is influenced by outside factors. Although none of my respondents self-identified as transwomen, as women entering male dominated spaces, they still

transgressed gender norms. In this research, I show how gender transgressions do not always mean attempts at degendering or acting in a fashion one would expect from the opposite gender.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

While different in many ways, the three occupations examined in this dissertation share some commonality. All three require specialized knowledge and have distinct occupational identities. All funeral directing, and most tech jobs require post-secondary degrees, and all the women in cannabis I interviewed had college degrees (although one is not required for licensure). Structurally, most people employed in these fields work for small businesses, though that is changing. Additionally, all three occupations typically earn above U.S. median income salaries. I selected the three industries to represent the spectrum of skewed, tilted, and balanced occupations. Within each industry, I interviewed women about their subjective sense of belonging in their occupations (Weiss 1994). Interviewing also allowed participants to describe scenes and events I could not experience, such as building new software, cosmetically reconstructing the dead, or planting a cannabis farm. Moreover, interviewing can challenge a researcher's personal assumptions (Rubin and Rubin 2011), and my knowledge about all three of these occupations has shifted drastically over the course of my research. Because the three occupations differ in nature, no single recruitment technique could carry over from population to population. Therefore, I used a multi-prong approach, focusing efforts on one occupation at a time to immerse myself fully in each one and to focus theoretically.

RECRUITING AND INTERVIEWING

I used semi-structured, intensive interviews throughout this research. Following this method of interviewing, I prepared (and continuously refined) an interview guide that outlined both questions and topics I wanted to know more about (Loftland et al 2006). However, with each respondent, questions may have been asked in a slightly different order or fashion, depending on the flow of our conversation. This flexibility allows researchers conducting semi-structured interviews to make better use of their limited time with respondents by leveraging the dialogue and creating space to explore new knowledge-producing angles deemed important by the interviewee (see Brinkman 2014). Thus, after asking a respondent a question, I generally followed up with a series of probes based on their initial answer. These probes were usually intended to draw out additional background information, clarification on the emotional tone of their responses, or the relative importance of different things they mentioned (see Loftland et al 2006 for a discussion on probing questions). Often, the most interesting and productive parts of the interview were at the end of my questions, when I asked my participants if they had anything else they wanted to talk about, a sentiment that has been echoed by other sociologists (see Loftland et al 2006).

The Funeral Industry

I began this chapter by leveraging existing connections I made through a prior project on female funeral directors for my master's thesis. However, scheduling in-person interviews for this project still proved surprisingly difficult. Because of the unpredictability of death, funeral

directors work odd hours and often have ever-changing shifts. Scheduling interviews was challenging, and respondents frequently had to cancel because they were called out to “pick up” a corpse or attend to a family in need. As Debbie, one of respondents put it, “You know, you never plan on dying.” Moreover, many funeral directors often do not have email addresses listed on websites and do not necessarily hold regular office hours. Consequently, I recruited interviewees through a variety of channels to obtain theoretical saturation (Morse 1995; Charmaz 2003). I sent solicitations for interviews through two different professional newsletters, local funeral director professional associations, word-of-mouth, and direct referral, as well as cold calling and emailing.

After piloting several interview questions, I developed a guide centered on how the respondents decided to become funeral directors, how they interacted with coworkers and clients, and how they addressed issues they experienced in their daily work. These topics allowed me to analyze not only what the women did in the work of funeral directing, but also on their accounts of how others perceived them. I explored any topics that emerged naturally over the course of conversation and, if appropriate, incorporated these as questions in subsequent interviews. After 13 interviews, I coded and interpreted the data. I then conducted an additional 10 interviews to probe the emergent themes.

The fluctuations of funeral directors’ schedules also changed the mode of interviewing. Of 23 total interviews, I conducted 19 by phone, three in person at the respondents’ place of employment, and one online (with a respondent living overseas). Although Weiss (1994) stated that telephone interviews can lack depth, I found no difference in the interviews conducted by phone versus in person, and all phone interview participants readily shared personal stories about events, such as their first time seeing a dead body, experiencing sexism at work, and difficult

interactions with clients. However, the phone interviews were generally shorter, with an average duration of about 45 minutes, while the in-person interviews lasted around an hour. Still, phone interviewing provided the advantage of recruiting a geographically diverse sample, thus not limiting the data to within a specific social network, workplace, or region. In fact, three participants had international experience.

Of the 23 women who participated, three identified themselves as black, one as Hispanic, and one as Asian, and 18 describe themselves as white. The women ranged in age from their early twenties to their late sixties. Because of the qualifications required to become a funeral director, all of the women had obtained at least an associate degree. Seven had completed a bachelor's degree, and one had her master's degree. All the women had at least two years of experience in the funeral industry at the time of the interview.

As a total outsider to funeral directing, I adopted the position of a "learner" (Lofland et al. 2006) during the interviews. Although I did conduct enough background research into funeral directing to be aware of issues such as different licensing, educational requirements, and differences between corporate and family funeral homes, I would often ask clarifying questions about different job-specific events participants brought up, such as asking the women to explain the function of equipment they mentioned. These questions generally brought up other information or anecdotal stories. Eventually, I became more conversant in the "shop talk" of funeral directing, though I generally let participants assume I lacked knowledge to elicit their explanations for their actions or procedures.

The Cannabis Industry

After completing interviews with funeral directors, I turned my attention to women in the cannabis industry. I became interested in the occupation after reading a news article that interviewed a female cultivator who described how the industry welcomed women. Living in Colorado, a state with legal cannabis, I was well-positioned to reach out to women in the industry and gain insight into the gender dynamics of this balanced occupation. Especially after the 2016 Presidential election, my residence in Colorado (and later, California) became essential to assuring cannabis business owners that I was neither “anti-pot” nor intending to somehow harm their business.

Because of the nuances of each business niche and varied paths of entry into the cannabis industry, I did not go into these interviews tended to deviate the most from the interview guide. All participants were asked a few common questions, such as what made them interested in entering the cannabis industry, but otherwise these interviews were mostly conversational. As an occasional cannabis user, I am familiar with much of the industry slang and could converse as someone who has knowledge of both the products and drug experiences. Much like my method for interviewing funeral directors, I used a mix of in-person and phone interviews to recruit a diverse sample. Thus, the results of this chapter are not limited by a specific set of cannabis policies present in one state (e.g., Colorado) that may have influenced women’s experiences.

About half of my sample comes from a single women’s professional organization for the cannabis industry. This particular organization had been featured in several media stories, was headquartered in Denver (where I lived when I began the interviews) and maintained a list of female-owned member businesses, thus making it an ideal place to start recruitment. With

permission of several chapter chairs, I contacted women-owned businesses from their list using the directory information. This generated 11 interviews.

Not wanting to base my findings solely on the members of this group, I located other networking organizations and non-affiliated businesses through web searches. This broad canvassing generated six interviews. At the end of every interview, I asked if the participant could refer someone else I might contact. This “snowball” approach has yielded three additional interviews. Prior to the 2016 election, interviews were relatively easy to set up, generally through a single email exchange. However, since the election, some participants wanted more information about the study, including IRB documentation, before setting an interview time. I conducted nine interviews post-election and the themes present in the interviews do not differ from those conducted before the election.

Of the 20 women in cannabis I interviewed, one identifies as Hispanic, one identifies as Black, and one as South Asian, and 17 of the women are white. The women ranged in age from their early twenties to their sixties. All the women had obtained at least a bachelor’s degree. Some had grown cannabis while it was still illegal, while the others had either moved into the field from another industry after legalization or were young enough to have graduated from college after legalization.

The Tech Industry

I conducted the interviews for the tech industry last. Despite having been a research assistant at a non-profit organization for women in technology since 2015, I found this to be the most challenging group to contact. First, computer scientists and engineers rarely have their

contact information listed on company webpages—my primary method of recruiting funeral directors and cannabis business operators. Second, the tech industry is notoriously demanding in terms of both time and emotional commitment (see Gunda 1993). My connections through my research assistant position were mostly with evaluation and education professionals, not actual IT professionals. The affiliation, however, was useful in attending meetup groups and having a plausible connection to tech for attending talks and workshops.

In March 2017, I began attending meetups and talks to introduce myself to women in the tech industry. To meet programmers and engineers (as opposed to less technical – and less male dominated- occupations, such as web design), I attended groups and talks focused on creating software, developing new products, and engineering issues. While this created the most access to my population of interest, it was the most difficult in terms of participation. I have no coding experience and very little knowledge of engineering processes. Small talk during networking times was awkward and I had little to contribute to technical conversations. Here, my status as a research assistant provided a strong cover for my interest. Some of the events were smaller work groups designed to provide assistance and feedback for specific technical projects presented by a group member. To blend in to these study groups, I introduced myself as “learning to code” and have actually completed several JavaScript tutorials. Once again, by assuming the position of a learner, many women were eager to offer help to resolve programming issues I was experiencing. In the summer of 2017, I even built an online game of “Snake” with the help of women from the meetup groups. From attending these groups, I recruited 12 respondents.

To capture women’s experiences beyond the tech centers of Denver and the Bay Area, I also found online communities of women programmers from which to recruit. A simple Google search turned up numerous Slack (an online social platform where users can form semi-closed

groups) communities for women in programming. I emailed the moderators of four such groups, explaining I was a graduate student interested in interviewing women in computing for a research project and asking if it would be okay to post on their Slack “channel.” One group was organized specifically for women of color. All four groups consented, and I posted a simple recruitment message with my email, so women could contact me directly. This method of recruiting yielded an additional 24 interviews.

The structure of these interviews has been greatly informed by my experience in my research assistantship. I have transcribed interviews conducted by three different research scientists for various projects at the organization, and I knew the kinds of questions they asked and what sorts of responses they yielded. From these, I knew that asking the women about their decision to enter tech and the early career opportunities they had were important to understanding their experiences, even for women far removed from high school. I also asked about common themes from the literature, such as the opportunities they have to contribute to technical projects at work and their interactions on teams with men. Regardless of the exact job title a technical woman has, feelings of isolation and experiences of sexism tend to result from those experiences (Thomas 2016; Cech 2013)

Of the 36 women I interviewed, one identified as black, one identified as Hispanic, six identified as Asian, five identified as South Asian, three identified as Middle Eastern, and 20 identified as white women. The women ranged in age from their twenties to fifties. Most lived in major tech centers, including the Bay Area, Denver, and Chicago.

DATA ANALYSIS

With permission from the participants, I recorded the interviews. I later transcribed the recordings into Word documents. I also took extensive notes during interviews and at meetup events. I analyzed the transcriptions and notes according to the principles of Constructivist Grounded Theory, using constant comparison while still recognizing my role and prior knowledge as a researcher in producing this data (Charmaz 2003, 2008). During each interview, I took detailed notes and formed tentative explanations, treating those observations as “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer 1954) to explore further in subsequent interviews. In my first pass of the data, I began open coding, developing broad themes relating to gender and sexism. I compared these themes to ensure they were salient, yet distinct from one another (Guba 1978). I then began the process of focused coding, looking for subthemes and any data that could not be explained by one of the analytical categories I had developed. This involved an iterative process, often going through the same section of data and applying multiple codes at different times. I plan to analyze each of the three occupations independently first, then comparatively, looking for both common themes and points of divergence to develop a conceptualization of how inclusion is achieved within male-dominated and balanced occupations.

Intersectionality in the Sociology of Gender and Work

Sociologists recognize that race, class, and gender collectively create difference (West and Fenstermaker 1995; Wilkins 2012; Flippen 2014). Although I actively made an effort to recruit women of color in this project, most of the women I interviewed were white. While I recognize the importance of intersectional analysis, a specific analysis of race, and how it may

shift the salience of gender, in these occupations is beyond the scope of this project. However, I have been careful to attend to the unique experiences of women of color in my sample and highlight them in my findings.

The occupations included in this study differ in terms of how the women discussed race during the interviews and in the subsequent analysis. For example, in funeral directing, sex category constituted the most salient basis of difference in their day-to-day work activities, probably because the women I interviewed worked in highly segregated environments. With the exception of Debbie, an Asian-American woman who had predominantly white co-workers, the women worked in race-matched workplaces. Debbie even commented, “There’s black funeral homes, there’s Mexican funeral homes, there’s Jewish funeral homes, there’s white ones. You have to work wherever you match.” I made an effort to reach out to these funeral homes, including specific outreach to a black women in funeral directing group. It was through this outreach that I was able to interview the women of color included in this research.

The cannabis industry is notoriously white, in no small part because of the lingering effects of the disproportionate impact the war on drugs has had on people of color (see Bender 2017). Discriminatory police tactics resulted in more black and brown people having criminal records due to cannabis enforcement (Bender 2017), and most states require a “clean” criminal record to obtain professional licenses in the cannabis industry. I spoke to only three women of color in the cannabis industry, although I asked white respondents about the lack of racial diversity in the industry and noted this in the findings. I did reach out to the one group I found for women of color in cannabis, though I was not able to get in touch with anyone after several attempts. In California, I did target dispensaries in cities with more racial diversity for recruitment, specifically the Oakland and Vallejo, California areas. While I was able to recruit

from these areas, only one woman I spoke with from these areas identified as a woman of color. I have wondered if being a white woman played a role in my difficulties reaching women of color in cannabis, especially my recruitment in California, which is more diverse, but generated a less diverse sample. White women have played a central, but often overlooked role, in the reproduction of racism (Ware 2015; Frakenburg 1993). At the time I was recruiting and interviewing for this research in the Bay Area, there were several high-profile cases of white women calling the police on black families for activities that were not crimes. Given the precarious legal nature of the cannabis industry, the fact that the war on drugs has been especially harmful to black women (Bush-Baskette 1998), and these incidents, an element of justifiable mistrust on the part of communities of color about my intentions for asking about their involvement at cannabis may have impacted my ability to recruit for this chapter.

In terms of racial diversity, the tech industry is as bad or worse than the cannabis industry. Several of the women I spoke with identified as Asian. However, as a whole, Asians are overrepresented in STEM disciplines. Many of the Asian women I spoke with were immigrants and stayed in the United States after college. The U.S. immigration system contributed to this, often providing simpler paths to work visas for students majoring in science and technology fields. The lack of women of color from other racial and ethnic is not surprising in light of the fact that women of color comprise less than three percent of the computing workforce (BLS 2016). I did reach out to groups for women of color in computing, which connected me with several respondents. Most of the women that contacted me from these groups were Asian or Middle Eastern. People of color, and women of color in particular, are excluded from computing early on, as middle and high schools with high proportions of students of color generally have substandard technical equipment, teachers, and courses (Margolis, Estrella, and

Goode 2008). Women of color face additional barriers to entering computing occupations, even after earning a degree, compared to white women (Hodari et al. 2016; Ong et al. 2011). This said, many women of color in this sample, including Asian women, did talk about their “double minority” status, and this features in the chapter.

What it means to practice intersectionality in sociological research has been the subject of much debate (Choo and Ferree 2010; Davis 2008). Broadly, intersectional analysis can mean simply giving a voice to people to experience multiple forms of inequality and comparing where axes of difference may be at play (Choo and Ferree 2010). In this analysis, I do present findings that could be considered “intersectional” from this standpoint. However, this sample lacks the overall diversity that would be required to say I am presenting a complete picture of women on color within these occupations. Additionally, scholars have argued that true intersectional sociological work delivers sustained focus on the different elements of inequality (Yuval-Davis 2006) and reveals the underlying structures that sustain intersectional forms of difference (Choo and Ferree 2010). From this viewpoint, with which I tend to agree, this research falls short of being a true intersectional analysis of gender in male-dominated occupations.

Positionality

For the most part, I am similar to many of the participants in this study; like them, I am white, educated, and middle-class. As a woman interviewing other women about their work experiences, my respondents and I shared at least some of the on-the-job experiences they joked about, such as having had mostly male managers or being mistaken for an administrative employee. Berger (2015) notes that this positionality of the researcher vis-à-vis respondents can

make interviewees more willing to share experiences. That said, in general, I had more in common with some of the women than others, and this fell along occupational lines. Overall, I found it easiest to relate to the women in the cannabis industry. As a closeted “hippie,” I shared the same taste in music and film as many of the women, and therefore could joke about the same cultural references. Generally speaking, I felt the most distant to the funeral directors. I have been fortunate enough not to have planned a funeral, so in addition to a general lack of experience with what they did daily, I have a weak stomach for body fluids. At times, when a respondent would describe a particularly grizzly scene, I found it difficult to keep composure in the interview. The women in computer programming fell somewhere in between. Prior to enrolling in a sociology PhD program, I worked for a marketing consultancy and was the sole female analyst, so I understood with the isolation the women in tech experienced on a day-to-day basis. However, most of the women I have met have been high achievers from a young age. While these women were building software and interning at major companies such as Google as college freshman, I was drinking cheap beer and going camping, not finding my academic motivation until later in life. That kind of extreme dedication to academics from childhood separated these women and me.

CHAPTER 4

(IN)VISIBILITY IN COMPUTING

“Computing is too important to be left to men.”

Karen Sparck Jones, in an interview with the *British Computing Society*

Billie’s mom taught her HTML and binary coding when she was eight-years-old. By high school, she had joined a robotics team and signed up for programming classes, both in and out of school. She summed up her experience by saying “I’m a traditional computer science grad. I did this stuff in high school. I did this stuff in college. And I was very lonely.” Attending an engineering college as one of two women in her computer science program, Billie felt very isolated from her male peers. Similarly, in describing her college experience, Billie said, “There were a lot of weird guys who hadn’t learned to socialize very well. There were some awkward encounters and you feel very singled out. Sometimes the professors make you feel singled out. It’s not great.”

“That sounds really difficult, but you stuck with it and graduated. Why did you decide to stay?” I asked Billie.

“Since I took programming in high school, that put me ahead in my classes. I was able to do really well and keep up since I had a few years of experience already. It helped my confidence. I had some really good [female] friends later in college. They weren’t in computer science, they were in engineering. We bonded over it [the isolation]. And I’m really stubborn, I don’t know if I ever would have switched.”

Billie was able to do three internships with large tech companies while in college. Throughout these placements, her co-workers were all men. In addition to feeling excluded, she lacked mentorship and support. However, her degree, combined with the work experience she gained, made her an attractive candidate after graduation. Billie received multiple job offers from traditional tech companies, including Google, and hip Silicon Valley start-ups. In the end, she accepted a job at small consultancy with a woman CEO. “It was my lowest offer [in salary] and the one I took right away. I was most excited about it. It was a company headed by a woman.”

In the consulting position, Billie was exposed to a wide range of industries and projects. While the CEO was supportive, Billie felt burnt out by the constant shifts inherent in consulting work. “I wanted my team to get to know me,” she explained. “I had to prove myself over and over again [as projects changed]” After about three years, she decided to apply elsewhere. Once again, she was a strong candidate and she could be picky with which offers she entertained.

“Did you have any deal breakers in job ads or interviews where you were just like- ‘No, I’m not going to work here’?” I asked.

“Yes! All the time.” Billie laughed. “I felt that way when I interviewed at Google. I knew it would never work. It wasn’t collaborative. I would never want that. Another interview I had was with a guy who spent the whole time talking about his technical accomplishments and not interviewing me.”

“Was there anything you were definitely looking for in roles for when you were on the market?” I asked.

“Interesting work, a supportive team, and not being the only woman.” She replied.

Billie eventually decided to accept a senior engineering position at mid-size software start-up in Denver that was becoming a more established company. At the time of our conversation, Billie had worked there for three years. She also ran meetup groups and classes from her office for women wanting to learn programming. She still felt very supported in her role and said she was provided with ample opportunity for mentorship and growth. “They still have a lot of learning to do about gender issues in the workplace,” she added. “They’re working on it, and that’s been cool to see.”

About 60 miles up I-25 in Fort Collins, Colorado, Toni was also growing in her technical career. Unlike Billie, she was just getting started in the field, though the two women were about the same age. Toni struggled in college to decide on what she really wanted as a career. Though she worked in the IT department of her college and enjoyed the work, she was never encouraged to pursue it as a career. “It just didn’t occur to me that’s something you could do,” she told me. “I just didn’t have any idea. Like I don’t think I knew anyone who was a computer science major. I just didn’t know about it.”

I asked whether her co-workers ever encouraged her to take any computer science classes or pursue IT as a career. “They were super nice but they weren’t like ‘you should do what I do’,” Toni explained.

In contrast, her writing teachers frequently remarked on how skilled she was and strongly encouraged her to consider a career as a professional writer. Because of this positive feedback from professors, Toni declared journalism as a major and eventually engaged in both print and radio work for public media. After ten years, Toni eventually came to believe that taking her career to the next level meant leaving Colorado. “I didn’t want to move to New York or DC. Those are the media hubs of the United States. And I just wasn’t interested in living in either of

those places. I like living in the West,” she explained of her decision to leave the field. She added:

Journalism is becoming an increasingly female dominated occupation. As that is happening, you see that it’s less and less valued, which I feel like is an interesting parallel. Unless you join a major news organization I would never be able to grow a career because there’s just no opportunities. I didn’t want to make 35,000 dollars for the rest of my life and never move up.

When Toni began thinking of an alternate career path, her criteria were relatively simple: she did not want to have to go back to school for more than a year (she had already earned a master’s); opportunities needed to be available anywhere; and the job had to have some kind of creative aspect. She settled on a career as a programmer relatively quickly. Within one month of making the decision to explore other options, Toni was enrolled in a coding bootcamp.

“Did you have any reservations about making the switch? Anything that gave you pause?” I asked.

“No. It just felt really obvious” Toni said.

“How did you feel about transitioning from a female dominated job to a career with very few women?” I asked.

“I mean, like, in my workplace no one sexually harassed me as a journalist. But people I interviewed have. And, like as a journalist, you are often in situations where you’re asking people questions they don’t want to be asked. Or in situations you don’t want to be in. I’m not frightened of them. So, it didn’t worry me. I feel like I know how to handle myself.”

Toni chose a larger bootcamp in Colorado that has a reputation for only accepting professionals who are serious about making a change. Her husband was very supportive of her

during the 12-hour days of the camp and she was able to make friends with the five other women in her cohort of 20. “We forged our own group and supported each other” she said.

Three months after graduating, Toni landed a job as a junior software developer at a larger company in Denver. The job lacked many things she was looking for, such as a mentorship program and pair programming opportunities. Toni also had some insecurities about being a bootcamp graduate and not a traditional computer science student, like Billie was. Toni explained:

I think the number of one thing they [bootcamps] sell on you on, you can be a developer in 6 months. And you get hired and make a ton of money and blah, blah, blah. After six months all you know is how much you don’t know. It’s engineering, right? It’s a very complex field. When I got to the end of it, I didn’t have a lot of confidence in my skill. Not because I was worse than anyone in the class, but just because there was so much to know and I knew only a tiny bit of it. I still feel like an idiot every day.

Although Toni felt supported at her workplace because of the work-life balance and having female peers on her team, she was unsure of how long she would stay in programming. She explained, “I feel like you could call me back in two years and I might be doing something completely different.” Although she enjoyed software development, she said, “It’s really different than what I used to do and I still miss a lot about writing. There’s things about tech that I don’t love. But it’s really interesting and I feel like I’m learning about how a different part of society works. Everything relies on tech.”

Billie and Toni represent different career patterns found among women in computing. In this chapter, I compare the experiences of women who, like Billie, entered the profession in college or graduate school, with those who, like Toni, pursued computing as a second career. In

particular, I focus on how different career pathways shape women's experience of invisibility and visibility. My analysis shows how the pathway taken into the profession matters both for women's experiences of tokenism and how they are able to address and even resolve it within computing careers.

PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN IN COMPUTING

Most research frames women's tokenism in tech as a supply-side issue. Usually called the "pipeline" model, many scholars have argued that there are fewer women interested in and tech and with the skills needed to succeed in computer science classes (Sax, Kanny, and Jacobs 2015; Abbate 2012; Ma 2011). The lack of women in computing classrooms and workplaces makes the environment "chilly," in that women's minority status leads to pronounced isolation and harassment (Bix 2014), with this effect being even greater for women of color (Ong et al 2011). From the pipeline perspective, the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic in computing would be solved if more women gained the requisite skills and joined the field.

However, beginning with Xie and Shauman's (2003) influential book *Women in Science*, researchers and educators have urged their communities to view the lack of women in computing through the lens of life course theory. As opposed to the pipeline model, a life course model of persistence in science and engineering recognizes multiple entry and exit points, varied career trajectories, and specialization area changes (Xie and Shauman 2003). Lewis and Simpson (2012) also recognized these kinds of career shifts in their conceptualization of invisibility and visibility in Kanter's (1977) theory of tokenism. They argue that women, as tokens, are highly visible in male-dominated workplaces, which brings negative consequences such as stereotyping

and exclusion. The (white) male norm that governs many workplace dynamics, particularly in the tech sector, is characterized by invisibility, as these workers do not stand out. Workers experience invisibility and visibility differently as their career develops (Lewis and Simpson 2012)

Computing is unique within STEM fields. First, computing fields have a much higher degree of gender and racial segregation when compared with biology, physical sciences, mathematics, and many engineering subfields (IPEDS 2017; BLS 2016). In fact, the number of women majoring in computing has *decreased* since the late 1980s (IPEDS 1987). Second, computing allows for a much later entry than other STEM fields, and an increasing number of professionals are entering the field through bootcamps and self-directed study (Lehman, Doyle, Lyon, and Thayer 2018; French 2011). Further, evidence suggests that these late-entry students are more diverse than are “traditional” computer science professionals (e.g., those with a four-year computing degree) (Lehman, Doyle, Lyon, and Thayer 2018; French 2011).

While the life course model accounts for later entry into fields, scholars using this approach are generally referring to women who switch undergraduate majors or obtain a graduate degree in a different STEM field than the one of their undergraduate degree. However, as computing bootcamps proliferate and the industry remains friendly to self-taught professionals, computing-related jobs allow for a much later entry than what is currently included in the life course model of women’s STEM careers.

Understanding Career Development in Computing

The dominant frame for understanding the lack of women in computing fields is the so-called “pipeline” model. This refers to linear career development, whereby a student would take focused math and science courses in middle and high school, followed by a corresponding undergraduate major, and then employment in the same specialization (see Ma 2011; Berryman 1983). Women are said to experience a “leaky pipeline,” which refers to the cumulative loss of women, particularly in the transition from high school to college, the transition to college to the workforce, and then in long-term career persistence (Sax, Kanny, and Jacobs 2015). Women’s underrepresentation in computing is explained by their lack of entry and higher rates of attrition from the pipeline (Xie and Shauman 2003). This frame is dominated by the invisibility of women, as they are often excluded from classrooms and activities, and are not represented in popular images and norms of computing professionals.

While the pipeline model has been criticized for being overly simplistic, it does highlight important features of sex segregation in tech. Girls have lower rates of specialized science course-taking in high school, but no achievement difference when they do enroll (Xie and Shauman 2003). Cohoon and Aspray (2006) note that even when women have similar course taking patterns in high school as their male counterparts, they are still not as likely to persist in computing and engineering. The transition from high school to college is when most women stop taking STEM courses, most often due to less encouragement to enroll and the expectation that they will choose humanities and social science courses instead (Xie and Shauman 2003).

Research on college and high school students has shown that although women and men have similar levels of interest in computing, women are less likely to pursue it as a field of study or career (see Sax, Kanny, and Jacobs 2015). In fact, men are three times more likely to choose

a STEM major out of high school (Ma 2011). Correll (2004) argues that the culture of male superiority evokes different standards for attributing performance to ability, which biases women's self-assessment of skills. In other words, women come to believe they are less capable than men are in science and technology, and thus less likely to succeed. To choose something as a career path, you have to believe you have a chance of succeeding in it (Correll 2004). Fisher and Margolis (2002) show that although girls are just as interested in technology as boys, they are less encouraged by their parents and teachers to pursue their interests, thus leaving them with little support if they do choose to enroll in computing and engineering courses.

Computer science and engineering classrooms often represent “chilly climates” for women because of their invisibility and token status. Kanny, Sax, Riggers-Piehl (2014) identify classroom experiences as a primary factor in girl's diminished interest in technology. Technological and engineering education for girls has been marked by marginalization, harassment, and isolation (Bix 2014). Computing classrooms are often uncomfortable and discouraging for women because of differential expectations and treatment, such as questioning women and girl's intellectual abilities and being excluded both formal and informal activities (Reigle-Crumb, King, and Moore 2016). Boys in computing classes tend to “rub-in” girls' minority status and tell them they were only accepted into the major because they are girls, as a diversity token of sorts (Fisher and Margolis 2002).

Classroom teaching examples are rarely relevant for women. Materials almost always refer to programmers as “he” and sports statistics are common datasets in intro programming courses (see Fisher and Margolis 2002). In a more extreme example, Fisher and Margolis (2002) detail how they observed an informal competition in a college computer science course where a prostitute was the prize, albeit jokingly. Teachers and professors aid in subtle discrimination as

women are excluded from computing classroom activities and judged by different grading criteria, which in turn leads them to believe they are not qualified to be graded with everyone else (Shapiro and Sax 2011). Women are often excluded from academic networks in computing fields (Misa 2010) and more likely to view professors as unresponsive (Shapiro and Sax 2011). Reigle-Crumb, King, and Moore (2016) argue that negative treatment by male peers and faculty lowers women's self-confidence and interest in STEM. Because women are isolated, they have no insulation from hostility. Indeed, more women leave computing majors than men (Fisher and Margolis 2002).

Male culture and the invisibility of women in computing may push girls out of the "pipeline" (Fisher and Margolis 2002). Girls in high school computing and engineering courses are perpetually teased about their bodies, appearance, and competence, often without teacher intervention (Sax, Kanny, and Jacobs 2016). The low number of women in many computing classrooms can send the message that it is bad for women, and the women who enroll have few role models as either peers or faculty (Shapiro and Sax 2011). This negative environment discourages girls from asking questions in class, as they fear being seen as incompetent (Shapiro and Sax 2011; Fisher and Margolis 2002).

Women also leave professional computing careers at higher rates than men do, partially because of gendered belief systems in and about technology occupations (Cech 2013). Pop culture images also render women invisible and show technologists as male (Barker and Aspray 2008). These kinds of stereotypes are used to determine job fit for women (Abbate 2012), as hiring choices in computing and engineering often rely on stereotypes about math ability (Sax et al. 2015) and result in women being kept out of more technical specialties within technical workplaces (Cech 2013). These kinds of gender schemas also influence job performance

evaluations, leaving technical women systematically underrated and men over-rated (Bailyn 2003). Misa (2010) argues that women who leave computing career are not opting out, but rather are pushed out by isolation and a hostile environment.

Although there are undoubtedly connections between the negative events and the lack of women in computing, the pipeline model of career development is overly simplistic (Riegle-Crumb et al. 2012). Few women in science careers followed an early pipeline model, as most who earn a STEM degree switch in college after originally choosing non-STEM majors (Ma 2011). The pipeline model is linear and has one way of career entry (Cohoon and Aspray 2006). It does not capture the complexity of science careers and views persistence as progress without considering life course events and alternate trajectories (Xie and Shauman 2003).

In their life course model of science and engineering careers, Xie and Shauman (2003) argue that women's career development is more complex than the pipeline model portrays. Using longitudinal, national data from over seventeen different studies, they reject the hypothesis that women are somehow handicapped by lower levels of science and math coursework in high school. Instead, they found that science and math course-taking patterns and achievement in those courses do not predict success in a science or engineering major for either men or women. Instead, most women who graduate with a science or engineering degree in college switched from a non-STEM field (Xie and Shauman 2003). For those women who graduate with STEM degrees in fields other than biological sciences, they are just as likely as men to pursue a science or engineering career after graduation. However, when women marry or have children, they are less likely to return to those careers than men are (Xie and Shauman 2003). This happens in part because of the demanding culture of technical careers that can make work-life balance challenging (see Gunda 1993 for an in-depth ethnography) and women (even working women)

generally have more caretaking responsibilities than men (Revenson et al 2016; Esplen 2009). However, Xie and Shauman (2003) note that many women attempt reentry into science and engineering careers, and because of this broken career trajectory, often return to less technical specialties or have more difficulty earning promotions.

Lewis and Simpson's (2012) reformulation of Kanter's (1977) theory of tokenism notes that career trajectories are also marked by changing experiences of visibility and invisibility for women. They argue that women, as tokens, are susceptible to discrimination because of their visibility within male-dominated groups. Stead (2013) later expanded on this work, showing how women experience exclusion as invisibility. Visibility, however, can also be used to change damaging norms within the occupation as women gain experience in their careers. Though men are invisible as part of the norm, women may render themselves invisible by conforming to that norm to avoid discrimination, or they may be pushed into invisibility by conforming to damaging gender stereotypes, which Kantar (1977) referred to as role traps (see chapter two for a discussion on role traps). At a deep level, women are invisible as they are shut out of positions of power within these groups (Lewis and Simpson 2012; Stead 2013).

PATHWAYS TO COMPUTING

In this research, interviews with women in computing revealed how they manage invisibility and visibility throughout their careers to achieve inclusion within technical occupations. The women I interviewed all had the responsibility of designing, creating, and managing technical products, such as software and applications. About a third had founded their own tech companies. These women all had different pathways into their technical careers, which

influenced how they experienced invisibility at work. Though each story was unique in some ways, there were three clear patterns of entry.

Persisters

Women on the first path, whom I call *Persisters*, majored in computer science or computer engineering in college intending to pursue a technical career even before they entered the workforce. While many of these women were interested in computing in high school, several switched majors into computing once they had started college. Like Billie, introduced at the start of this chapter, many of these women referred to themselves as having a “traditional” background. Those who became interested in computing prior to starting college often described their decision as shaped by family. For example, Pagett, who had recently transitioned into management role at a large tech company, said “I grew up in Silicon Valley, so I think that probably influenced it. It’s not just by dad, more of my immediate family, friends, there’s just a lot of engineers around. I felt like it was engrained in me from a young age.” For some women, their parent’s influence came across as a tension. JJ, who worked as a data scientist and software developer in Denver, explained her decision to major in computer engineering. “They [her parents] didn’t pressure me into it,” she said, “but I was strong enough in science so I could just choose engineering and I didn’t necessarily need to be presented other options besides engineering.” JJ tried to be explicit that she did not feel constrained by her parents and her choice of major was her own while acknowledging her family did not encourage her to enter any other field. For some women, particularly the Asian women I spoke with, the pressure from their families was more acute. Kamala, a database architect and application manager for a technology-oriented public health group, explained, “I’m Indian. There’s not a lot of options.

Our parents start brainwashing you from childhood. You can be a doctor or an engineer.” These women all participated in computing activities, such as taking Advanced Placement computer science or joining a robotics club, while in middle or high school.

Consistent with Xiu and Shauman’s (2003) findings that many women in STEM enter after starting college, several of the Persisters I interviewed switched into computing after originally declaring a non-STEM major. These women most often reported having to take a computer science or engineering course as part of their core requirements and were not exposed to computing prior to college. They described being attracted to the problem solving inherent in computing, and to the ability to create tangible products in their courses, like webpages and applications. Some also saw the practical applications of computing. For example, Tess, who entered college as a journalism major and switched into computer science her sophomore year, described her experience taking an introductory engineering course as a science elective: “It made me have the belief that being in tech was about building the future world we live in, and from reading about tech enterprises, realizing that they can have much more impact on the world than an environmental journalist could.”

In-Betweeners

The second path, the *In-Betweeners*, refers to women who had some computing education in high school or college but were not computing or engineering majors. This includes women who were in a STEM major other than computing or engineering, where they learned computing skills (e.g., a biology major learning to program in Python script to create statistical models), as well as women in non-STEM majors who were nonetheless exposed to computing at some point

in their education. However, these women did not originally intend to have a career in technology. For instance, Tyler studied design in college but learned basic programming skills as part of her degree. Less than a month after graduating, she was invited to a hackathon with other designers, which inspired her to pursue tech. She explained, “I participated in that and I think that was my first introduction to the technology community. It was really cool to see how many people get into tech without knowing.”

Some In-Betweeners had been exposed to computer science but were originally turned off from the field because they did not identify with the occupational identity of tech. Jasmine attended one of the top high schools for technology in the country, taking several mandatory computer science courses. Despite being well prepared for computing in college, she chose a different major. Jasmine said, “I actually was a French major because I didn’t feel like a typical tech kid at my high school. I felt contrarian to that.” Despite not feeling like a “typical tech kid,” Jasmine went on to be the solo founder of an app-based company. Natasha had also had some exposure to computing in high school and learned some programming in college. She explained, “I fell into tech. I have a chemistry and biology background. And after working in that field for less than a year, I think it was three months, I just fell into tech.” Women like Natasha and Jasmine came back to programming after short stints of employment in other fields that leveraged their technical skills but without the pay and fringe benefits typically afforded to technical employees. They decided to leverage these backgrounds to further their careers after exploring other options.

Switchers

I refer to women on the third path as *Switchers* because they switched to computing from another career, either through a bootcamp, by self-learning coding languages, or gaining computing experience after originally being in a non-technical support role (e.g., design for a tech company). None of these women had any exposure to computing before deciding to pursue it as a career. They had majored in non-STEM disciplines in college and had non-STEM careers after graduation. Some women did enroll in community college computing courses after deciding to enter the field, though none completed a computing degree. However, all the Switchers I interviewed had at least a bachelor's degree in a different area of study. They often described feeling dissatisfied in their first career and deciding to make a change, which often happened very quickly.

Most women I interviewed described being successful in their first careers and many were earning high salaries. Louise, a product manager in the Denver area, explained her decision to leave her career in advertising: "I was running our largest client at that agency, which was a bank. It was during the financial crisis. It was actually very, very stressful. It was investing in a recession. My clients were panicking... I was exhausted." Within weeks of leaving that role, where she was managing a mid-size team, she had enrolled in a coding bootcamp, though she had never considered a tech career or been exposed to programming. A stressful experience, such as the one Louise described, were not always the cause of the switch. Michelle, who was working a software designer after leaving a career in marketing, said, "I had just reached the point in my job where I felt really stagnant. I was at a point where I wasn't growing anymore. I couldn't see that was ever going to change." Annie, who did not even finish math in high school

or college, echoed these feelings, explained her abrupt decision to leave her career as a healthcare executive:

I was just ready for the next thing. I didn't know what that was. I didn't see any other jobs at my company where I could make a lateral move. I also didn't see any advancement for myself in my current department. I didn't see anything I wanted to do. So, I started exploring my options. What do I do next? I had been in essentially the same job for 18 years. It was basically the same role. A long time. It was just time to go. I was very comfortable. I made a lot of money I loved the office. My office had a view of the pond. I was really great. Nice bonuses. It was a nice place to work. People were nice. There were challenges, it wasn't always a piece of cake. But I had it good. And I know I had it good. That's why I stayed so long. When I looked for what I wanted to do, on a whim, I ordered a programming book. It was about how to make video games. And as soon as I did it, I knew I was hooked. *I knew I just had to be a programmer.* It was very addicting.

Both Michelle and Annie said their decision to quit their jobs and pursue a computing career happened in less than one month without exploring other options. This was a common story among the Switchers.

INVISIBILITY AND VISIBILITY IN COMPUTING

Super (1990) outlines the stages of career development as Exploration (choosing to enter computing), Establishment (experiences in early career), and Maintenance (career advancement). However, while the last stage of Super's (1990) model involves disengagement from careers, I instead focus on engagement and how women find support in a male-dominated occupation. Through these stages, I show how experiences of visibility in computing change the degree to which women feel included or excluded in their careers.

Choosing Computing

Exclusivity in tech is defined by both the dearth of women who enter and remain in computing jobs, as well as the masculine occupational identity of tech careers. While early research into the lack of women in some STEM disciplines focused on how few women choose to enroll in math and science courses that prepare them for careers in tech (see Berryman 1983), more recent work has shown that peers, teachers, and even parents often discouraged women from pursuing these opportunities (see Fisher and Margolis 2002; Shapiro and Sax 2011). As demographic and cultural minorities in computing, women are often considered highly visible tokens. The Persisters I interviewed were keenly aware of their status as the only woman or one of very few women in their courses. Britney, a founder who built her own platform, said she “felt like a sore thumb or out of place.” As she recalled thinking, “In one class, I was the only woman. I’m like, this is not a coincidence.” Persisters often said these feelings caused them to question whether they had made the right choice to major in a computing discipline. This kind of self-doubt is one reason that women may have high attrition rates in computer science (Jessup, Sumner, and Barker 2005).

Visibility is often associated with social exclusion (see Simpson and Lewis, 2005; 2007). The experience of Billie, who said college was a “lonely” time for her, was a common theme among Persisters in my interviews. However, their high visibility was often described as a sense of exclusion among their peers, which can be instead thought of as surface-level invisibility (Stead 2013). For example, Jeanne, a recent graduate from an elite university, said she never connected with her peers in computing throughout college. For her, this made staying in the major more difficult. She said, “I didn’t really feel a sense of this is my group of people.” This

exclusion and invisibility were often described as an active effort on the part of males in the class. Maura, who said there were typically about four women out of fifty students in her undergraduate computing courses, said, “It was difficult because you’d go into the class and all the guys would already be friends with each other. You’d sit down and no one would sit next to you.” This exclusion made completing coursework more difficult for these women. Moreover, computing courses often involve group assignments or assignments that require lab assistance. Ling, who now managed a large tech company, remembered, “Even when you’re just working on stuff together, I found it a little more challenging to find other people to work with. Especially if I didn’t know people in that class already. It was more difficult to find new friends who would want to help me and want to work together on stuff.” Most of the Persisters I interviewed dealt with exclusion silently, simply hoping things would be better once they entered the workforce. However, one woman, Tess, started a “women in computing” group on her campus to alleviate her social isolation.

In contrast to Persisters, who had chosen to pursue computing in college, tech as a field of study or career path was largely unknown to In-Betweeners and Switchers. These women, who entered tech sometime after graduating from college, were largely unaware of what computer science was or what tech careers entailed. This was true even of some women who had exposure to computer science. Natasha, who left biochemistry for tech less than three months after graduating, had enrolled in an introductory computer science course during college. However, she could not make any connections between what she was learning and a viable career option. She explained her perception of tech careers during that time by saying, “I was only aware that there weren’t a lot of women doing it.” The lack of knowledge of her career options, combined with the feeling that she may experience social isolation if she continued, led

Natasha to drop the course in the first few weeks of the semester. Others also noted that not having female role models discouraged them from pursuing more technology courses. Gillian, who was working with an international startup while stepping out of a company she founded, said “You never see a woman who is saying that [to take computing courses] to you. You commonly hear, ‘You could be a doctor or a nurse, a lawyer.’ But especially in tech, I think, I don’t come from a world where tech was the same. I never considered it as a career move.”

Switchers were particularly unaware of what computing entailed. Barbara, who enrolled in a bootcamp after hearing a radio ad, had earned a doctorate in quantitative psychology and was working as a professional research assistant before becoming a software developer. While in graduate school, she learned R statistical programming and loved it, and decided to enroll in a computer programming course to learn more data science techniques. However, like Natasha, Barbara quickly dropped the course. She explained “Honestly, I think I was scared of it. I looked at it once and thought it was hard. It looked hard. You know, code looks incomprehensible if you don’t know what it’s doing.” Despite having experience writing script in R, as well as other courses that required math and problem-solving skills, Barbara did not feel confident she could be successful in the computing course and was not aware that she had already applied the skills she would need to learn the materials. Other women, too, had so little exposure to computing that they were not aware it was a career. For example, Olive, who had been an early contributor to popular music streaming applications, said, “When I finished school and went to university, I had absolutely no idea when I wanted to do or what I would end up doing. And in fact, I guess the one thing that frustrated me about schooling at the time was that this is pre-iPhone. So really the careers I’ve ended up doing just didn’t exist. And no one could have envisioned them.” However, Olive graduated from college in 2008, one year after the iPhone was released and

nearly ten years after music streaming and downloading had launched online. Her future career had already been the subject of numerous high-profile lawsuits (such as Lars Ulrich from Metallica suing and shutting down Napster), but Olive remained unaware that her future career was already a controversial issue among technology companies.

Unlike most Persisters, who questioned their place in computing because of the male image and demographics of the profession, the majority of women who entered the field after college were not concerned about being in a male-dominated field. Although all of these women were aware of problematic gender dynamics in many technology companies, it did not cause them to question their desire to join. Many of these women, like Toni, came from female-dominated careers. For these women, they anticipated that working with predominantly men as more or less the same as working in their previous careers. Kathy, who was a teacher and Mary Kay consultant for ten years before enrolling in a bootcamp, described her attitude about the gender dynamics in tech before making the switch by saying, “Both of those, there’s no men. Now I’ll go to one where there’s a lot of men. More like, this is just how things are. It didn’t bother me. I wasn’t concerned about the stories. Like, If I encounter that problem, I’ll deal with it then.” Though she viewed occupational segregation as inevitable, Kathy did later struggle to gain credibility on all-male interview panels when she was searching for a job. Other women came from demanding careers, some of which were male-dominated, and did not view the challenges they could face in the tech industry as something unique. Barbara, who was the only female on her development team after leaving a university career, said “I figured it couldn’t be worse than being a woman in academia.”

For some women, the lack of women in tech was a motivation to join the profession. Jessica, who thought of herself as a “tomboy,” was finishing a software development bootcamp

when we spoke. After she brought up the lack of gender diversity she was seeing on her job interviews, I asked if she had known about or considered that before deciding to pursue computing. She responded, “It was a very positive thing. Like I grew up around boys. I had brothers, cousins, even when I was a kid, the kids who lived on my street were all boys. In my previous job, all guys. So that’s not something that phases me at all.”

Overall, Persisters and those who entered tech after college had divergent experiences of inclusion and visibility when choosing computing. The Persisters I interviewed described well-documented aspects of invisibility, namely extreme social isolation because of their gender. However, those who entered computing after college tended to be unconcerned about problematic gender dynamics in the tech industry. Both groups experienced exclusion in computing, but it arose from different dynamics. Persisters were highly visible tokens in computing classes and workplaces, leading to pervasive feelings of difference. For In-Betweeners and Switchers, exclusion came from invisibility, in that they were unaware that their skills were applicable to computing work, or that computing could be a viable career option for them. In this sense, tech was invisible to them, rather than them being invisible in tech.

Early career

During the “Establishment,” or early career stage, women must overcome the notion that men are “naturally” better suited for technical work (Cech et al 2011). There are few female role models in computing and engineering occupations, and this can influence young women’s perceptions that they are not suited for these careers (Sax et al 2016). Women may also experience what Lewis and Simpson (2012) refer to as a “tokenism eclipse,” the erasure of

women's technical abilities despite their highly visible status. While this may be a threat throughout women's technical careers, it is acute when women are trying to establish themselves as junior developers and engineers.

For those without a computing degree, their early career was marked by difficulty entering the field. Before seeking inclusion in the sense of feeling belonging, they simply wanted to be included on a development team. Career Switchers felt especially unprepared to take on computing careers, despite their optimism when they chose to leave their previous lines of work behind. All of the women who attended bootcamps struggled to find work. Since they did not attend an accredited college or university, they were not eligible for most internship positions that would have given them additional experience. All of the bootcamps offered career assistance, though women reported these varied in quality. Kathy, a former teacher from Denver, said of her job search, "I felt like I was below a computer science graduate. Not in terms of my skills, but in terms of how I was viewed. A lot of places won't do bootcamp grads... I felt like on paper I was the very bottom of the barrel, like how other people viewed me. I knew I had the skills. But I started over because I had no experience." Switchers were often not even given the opportunity to interview for positions. Though most were unsure if their struggles to find an interview originated in gender discrimination, recent experiments using gendered names on resumes show that although bias in receiving callbacks for interviews has decreased overall, it remains strong when females apply to male-dominated jobs (Koch, Mellow, and Sackett 2014).

Both Switchers and In-Betweeners had to leverage their past work experience to find ways to stand out. Most technical employers did not immediately see the value of having someone, for example, who had experience as a museum curator, as was the case with Sabrina, a developer from Colorado. This also limited the kinds of employers that were interested in those without

traditional computer science backgrounds. With the exception of one woman, Jasmine, who had a non-technical career with a Silicon Valley giant before moving in to a technical role, Switchers and In-Betweeners were excluded from opportunities at large tech companies. Natasha, a black woman who was now the founder of her own company, explained:

Because of my diverse background, all of that background gave me unique experiences and skillsets, which for the most part if you're in tech, you don't really fall into a box, but they like to checkmark you into boxes. I didn't fit. And so, I realized the challenge that I had on my job search, companies didn't know what to do with me. How many other people, especially women of color, if you're taking care of your family or you're a caregiver, or you had to take time off work to raise your kids or whatever might be, you're going to have an eclectic work background. And that is immediately going to take you out of the running for the usual jobs.

These women had to actively look for aspects of prospective employer's projects and translate their past experience to things that may be relevant for tech. In describing her interviews, Michelle said, "I had to show there are all of these other things I bring to the table that make me really valuable." She was looking for jobs creating online sales platforms, and her previous career was in marketing. Though this connection may seem obvious, Michelle had to find ways during interviews to show how marketing skills would add value on a development team.

Interestingly, while Switchers were not concerned about entering a male-dominated field at the time of exiting their first career, the gendered dynamics of technology became a concern once they started looking for a job. This was especially true for mothers, as Starr explained:

As a woman and a mother, when I was job searching and stuff, I didn't let that out. I didn't mention I had kids until after I was hired because you're never sure how people will take that. I'd heard

stories where it's an issue. So, I just didn't want that to, you know, be a card to play. I'm the first female developer hired here, which I didn't know going into it.

This often came with a discomfort of knowing they would be the only woman on their team or among the first women hired at that company. Starr explained of her job search, "I talked about that with classmates. Like would you want to be the first one [woman]? Or does it bother you or do you want to take on the challenge of being the first one?" Like Starr, some women reframed being the only or first woman at a company as a provocation that gave them the opportunity to prove themselves equal to men.

One thing all of the women I interviewed had in common was a deep sense of insecurity when first starting their careers. This was true even of women who had computer science backgrounds. Pagett, who graduated from a top five ranked engineering school, said of her job search and early career, "I was the definition of a scared college student. I was pretty unsure of myself. I don't know. Engineering's hard and my confidence was a bit low." She recalled starting her first job at a large technology company, "I felt like an imposter. I just kept thinking I can't believe they hired me. I hope they don't think they made a mistake. It was intimidating to work with a mostly male team. It's hard to blend in and you just feel like you have to work harder than them in order to get the same amount of recognition." Similarly, after I asked Jessica, who was searching for her first job after a software development bootcamp, what she found most challenging about her search, she replied "All the self-doubt. Like I'm a relatively confident person, but there have been times I've sat here like, fuck, I can't do this."

Women who had risen of to the ranks of tech management noticed the lack of confidence among new hires. I discussed this with Kareena. As head of engineering for a mid-size company in Texas, she oversaw hiring for junior developers.

I've had a couple of female candidates for job openings and I have and the biggest difference I can see is confidence. Male candidates, even though they have less experience or less to offer, they are a lot more confident in their skill set. They know what they know. They're like 'this is what I'm offering to you.' They also ask for higher pay. Female candidates seem a lot more nervous. They don't come off very confident. I was such a hermit. I was so shy. I wouldn't speak up to anything. But it's really important to be confident.

I asked what made her feel less confident and shy when she first started out. Kareena said she felt intimidated by male developers. "I used to think, 'Wow, they know so much more!'" she recalled. "But it's just how they project themselves. You know, it's like fake it 'til you make it. Don't let all those guys with two years' experience talk a big game and intimidate you."

Research suggests that male-boasting is an informal norm in computing classes, which damages women's confidence (Fisher and Margolis 2002) and may carry over into their early career experiences.

As women moved into the workforce and made efforts to establish themselves, they once again faced a high level of visibility as creators of technology. The women I interviewed felt their roles as software developers, engineers, and product designers was distinct from occupations where women exercise high levels of analytical ability without playing a central role in advancing computing products. As Natasha, who created a human resource management software, put it, "I don't like to use this word, but the only way to characterize it is that tokenism is happening." She paused, then added, "If you're a woman in this industry, when it comes to creating technology, using the technology and *creating the technology* are completely different things to people. And you're constantly being tasked to prove yourself and say why you deserve to be here. Creating in tech, there's a HUGE barrier there." The visibility women described as

students of computing mainly centered on feelings of isolation and exclusion, whereas the visibility they experienced once they entered the workforce required showing they had the requisite skills to be members of the occupation.

This visibility was also the result of not fitting the occupational brand of technology. As women, they were far outside of the image of the ideal tech worker. This was especially so for women of color. As Jasmine said:

The archetype of a tech founder is a really dumb and really wrong cultural construct that we have. The mythical super dev who builds apps in a day and never talks to anyone, magically releases it and all these people use it. it's totally fake and extremely male construct. We inherited those definitions from white guys.

Some women described feeling outside of this ideal based on their physical appearance. For example, Azra, who switched careers from film-making, said she felt noticed in a negative way every day at her job, which caused a great deal of stress. She said, "I'm in the video game industry and every single day I'm overdressed because I like to dress up. I'm going to work. I don't give a shit if everybody else is having a hipster beard and wearing shorts and sandals. Not my thing." This visibility led to women being undermined or having their contributions discounted because they did not fit the part of a computer scientist or engineer. When I asked Camilla, who was working in Silicon Valley, what challenges she faced at work she replied, "Literally being the only woman in the room. It's noticeable from my end. Sometimes I feel like they're not paying attention when I talk versus when my male coworkers talk, they pay more attention." Similarly, in describing her early career, Ela, who worked in Silicon Valley for the European Union and established the first start-up incubator in a western European country, recalled, "I had to work a lot more than my peers to prove that I was good enough to be at the

table. I was working a lot, until like 3 A.M.” This visibility either pushed women into more marginalized support roles on their teams or led them to work extremely long hours to take on additional work to maintain the status of their male peers who did less.

Visibility also led women into the role traps described by Kanter (1977). Many women became what Kanter (1977) referred to as the “pet,” those who received mentoring as a favorite of the manager but were often not taken seriously. For example, Maura, who was the only person on her security team with a master’s degree in the subject, described being consistently overlooked for leadership roles on projects despite having a warm relationship with her manager. Others, like Barbara, became the “schoolmistress.” They were awarded some authority, but without being offered serious leadership role. As Barbara explained, “I’ve heard of other people falling into that den mother stereotype as a team lead when you’re a woman. You’re not necessarily taken seriously as a leader but seen as someone who will nurture other devs [developers].” In this situation, women growing out of junior roles were being asked to use their experience to further the careers of younger, male employees, who were often promoted into management before them.

However, high visibility also came with some perceived benefits. As more technology companies have been scrutinized for the lack of women and people of color in technical roles, some major companies are making efforts to increase diversity in their hiring (Branson 2019; Holtzblatt and Kules 2017; Varghese 2016). This left many of the women I interviewed with extremely conflicted feelings about being a so-called “diversity hire.” As new graduates, they were eager to find jobs and establish themselves in the field, but they also wanted to be recognized for their skills and not just ticking off a diversity box. Jeanne explained:

One of the things that I thought was really interesting was this whole idea that if you are a woman in STEM it will be easier to get a job. And I'm not really sure how I feel about that perception which some people have. On the one hand, it's like sometimes I was like I think I'll have an advantage because I'm female at a time when that's something that's super desirable for companies. Great, I have a better chance. But also, I hope I'm not hired because I'm a woman and I'm looking around the office and there's not that many women. Maybe that's why I'm here. And on the flip side, I've heard that from one of my classmates who is a year older. I met him to get some lunch and at one point he was like oh, that will be easy [finding a job] for you because you're female. Everyone is going to hire you because they all want women. That's insulting because it comes from him. If that's the only defining characteristic.

This internal conflict about leveraging visibility also applied to women who were somewhat more established, but still trying to grow their careers. As a junior developer looking for a more senior role, Gillian said of her networking opportunities, "Obviously you get invited to things because you're a woman and it's good and bad. Sometimes it's just because they need another woman. They want to increase women. But also, you feel like you become that diversity token, especially being an Asian woman, I feel like I'm a double win." Even the most established women had to reckon with accepting opportunities simply because of their gender. Olive, one of the more experienced women I spoke with who eventually founded her own start-up said this visibility had followed her throughout her career. She explained, "There are upsides and there are downsides. I get some opportunities from fantastic companies who are trying to address gender balance at conferences and events. People are keen to have a female voice, and I think globally that's fantastic. But being a woman effects how you can operate a business." Overall, women usually did accept opportunities they felt they received just because they were women, but this

damaged their overall confidence and led to feelings of guilt of whether they truly deserved the roles they were offered.

In their early careers, women's pathways in computing began to converge. Upon interviewing or receiving job offers, Switchers and In-Betweeners, previously less concerned about gender dynamics in computing, began to be concerned about discrimination and harassment. However, these women often had fewer employment options than Persisters had. Doubly excluded on the basis on both their gender and non-traditional computing backgrounds, they struggled to find employment. Persisters had mixed feelings about capitalizing on their visibility. They wanted opportunities they felt like they deserved and had the requisite skills to compete for but did not want to receive these opportunities as diversity tokens.

Advancing in Tech

Women in male dominated occupations have more challenging pathways to leadership roles (Bierema 2016; Vial, Napier, and Brescoll 2016; Stead 2013), and tech is no different. The core of invisibility is power in the male norm that governs these kinds of occupations (Stead 2013; Lewis and Simpson 2013). As women from all pathways gained experience in tech, they sought opportunities that provided more power and responsibility. However, few of the women I interviewed were able to achieve this within the more traditional, larger tech companies in which they started their careers. Instead, they often sought roles in smaller or non-profit companies, and some decided to found their own start-ups to create workplaces that rendered that allowed them to define the cultural norms for themselves.

As women started to gain experience, they could start looking for work at companies that they felt had a friendlier work culture. This was much easier for Persisters and In-Betweeners to accomplish as compared to the women who switched careers, who had less experience and technical skills to leverage into more desirable work. Kamala, who was raising two young children, described her decision to leave a large engineering firm for a health non-profit: “Now I look for the culture. I can be choosy since I have the experience. And it’s harder for women. We have to prove ourselves harder than anybody else, so the work culture is really important, that’s the number one thing I look for in a company.” Similarly, Britney, who decided to leave a company where she felt marginalized without having yet received another job offer, described her decision: “I’ve talked to too many women who have worked in toxic environments after graduation and it’s really difficult to get out of those situations, especially at the early stage in your career. No amount of salary is worth the pain of not wanting to go to work every day.”

These women were often seeking workplaces that did not fit the occupational image of traditional tech companies. When I asked Jeanne about what challenges she faced looking for a job after working in a junior role for a few years, she replied, “The culture thing. I don’t think I’m very geeky. I wish I was a little more interested in nerdy things. Like I don’t read about new technologies for fun.” Several women said that an emphasis on “nerd culture,” which research has shown to repel women from tech at all stages of the “pipeline” (see Fisher and Margolis 2002), was a red flag for them when they were interviewing at companies. However, many women said that they had difficulties spotting companies that acted on values of inclusion and teamwork. as many workplaces advertised programs and activities that were not actually being implemented.

For many women, starting their own company was the only way to ensure that they could do the work they loved and advance their careers in an environment they found supportive. Interestingly, starting a company was also more accessible to women who did not have computer science degrees than finding a management job in a tech company. Louise, who as a Switcher struggle to gain recognition as a software developer, made the decision to just start her own company. She explained, “There was lots of marginalization, microaggressive behavior that at the time I didn’t know it was marginalization or microaggression. It was more like, ‘This sucks’.” In all, 12 of the women I interviewed currently worked at companies they founded, and one woman, Camilla, had previously founded a company but decided to return to a traditional technology workplace. Of these women, only three were Persisters, while six were In-Betweeners, and four were career Switchers.

While the decision to become founders allowed women to create a culture within their companies that they found appealing, they still had to interact with power structures that excluded women. The most challenging of these systems was the venture capital world, which they needed to gain access to resources and financial capital to start and grow their companies. Women comprise only about 7 percent of venture capitalists, and women-founded companies receive less than 3 percent of all venture capital funding (Brush, Greene, Balachandra, and Davis 2018). Tess, who founded a networking platform, said that while she had concerns about the lack of women in tech at her previous workplaces. “I didn’t find being an only woman to affect me negatively until I was raising money for my company,” she said. Women described the venture capital world as a crony system, where connections seemed to matter above ability and those most like the (overwhelmingly white male) funders were most likely to succeed. Natasha added, “I would go [to pitch sessions] and I was one of the only women there and the only

woman of color. I come to the mecca of tech and I'm going into these rooms and I'm not seeing anyone who looks like me." It was in their attempts to raise funds for their companies that women described feeling the highest levels of visibility, and with that, exclusion.

The women founders I spoke with usually were shut out of access to venture capital at the stage where they "pitched" ideas to potential funders. If a pitch goes well, a founder is typically invited back for more meetings and conversations with the funder before any investment. Sophie invented gesture recognition software and though she had already been able to connect with major companies, was seeking funding to be able to grow her production scale. In describing her experience pitching, she said, "Had I been a guy raising money, somebody would have accepted [her company] sooner. I've had people flat out say, 'I don't think that's going to happen' and I'll say, 'It's already happened. You enjoy my systems in your car'."

In their early careers, women described their confidence being diminished because of male boasting. Male boasting also hindered their ability to successfully compete for funding. Here is Camilla:

When I was fundraising, I could clearly see the difference between how women pitched and how men pitched. And also I could clearly see the difference between my startup, which was targeting women. So, the VCs are all guys and they don't get it even though women are the decision makers of the household. So, I felt I was at a disadvantage there. I also saw my peers who were guys pitching and they were just saying their companies were so much more than they are actually. I would never do that! I take things more personally. I'm responsible for this money that I'm raising, so I want to make sure that I tell them the complete truth.

At this stage, women did not say that they felt less confidence because of male boasting. Instead, they could view themselves as having moral superiority because they were accurately depicting the potential investment opportunity and their company's worth.

Despite becoming more visible within their occupations with experience, women also became invisible to outsiders. All of the women I interviewed described being mistaken for a non-technical employee, the significant other of a male developer, or another outsider. After founding her company, Britney was asked to give the keynote address a major technical conference with over one thousand attendees. With humor, she recalled walking up for her speech. "Everyone was sitting at dinner tables. I was walking on stage to give my keynote address at the dinner when this guy goes, 'Excuse me ma'am, we're done with our food, can you clear my plate?' I was stunned, and I was like 'I'm happy to take your plate after I give my keynote speech'." This approach of using humor as a way to call-out sexism is also discussed in chapter 6.

Women remained invisible even in the most obvious of social situations. Barbara said this happened so frequently at open houses her company held to meet potential clients that they started issuing name tags with job titles. However, this still did not make her visible as a technical employee to visitors. She explained:

No one has out-and-out said something. If you're in a social situation and you're standing with a group of other developers and everyone's introducing themselves and they're like 'Are you a developer, too?' Like, I'm standing with a group of developers but they don't want to assume that I'm a developer. Or we had a company open house and your name tag says what you do. Mine said 'software developer' in really big letters. And the number of people who will ask 'So, what do you do here?' There's a default assumption that I'm not a developer.

Trapped by being both highly visible as female founders, managers, and experienced developers, while remaining invisible as technical women to potential employers, clients, and customers, even the most successful women I interviewed remained outside of power in the tech field. For most women, the discrimination they faced was covert. Kareena explained, “Discrimination isn’t always up front. It’s not like they show in TV. There’s no sleazy boss going, ‘Hey, baby.’ It’s subtle things people both do and don’t do.” This included being subtly reprimanded for leading meetings, having their leadership styles criticized, receiving unequal wages, and having their work scrutinized in ways that male peers were not subjected to. Women leaders are often viewed more negatively than male leaders when displaying the same traits or emotions, and are subjected to a higher level of visibility and scrutiny (Binns 2010)

However, other women were subjected to overt sexual harassment as founders and managers. This did not occur as blatantly while these women were in junior positions. Women who became founders or managers at a relatively young age described having the most experiences with harassment, or in some cases, sexual assault at work. While growing her learning and development platform, Gillian became involved with an investor who started saying inappropriate things to her after the contracts were signed. Over the course of several months, this situation escalated. She recalled, “My co-founder was physically groped. But this is not the first time. This is not the second time. This is like the seventh time and you don’t realize it’s happening to you.” The women who experienced this kind of sexual contact with male investors, including Gillian, frequently did not report these behaviors because they were afraid of being stigmatized and shut out of the relationship-driven venture capital world.

Even when women did speak up about harassing behaviors or situations where they felt physically unsafe, this rarely resulted in meaningful change. Tess and several of her friends had the same encounter with a male technology investor before she decided to share her experience:

He was reaching out to female founders over LinkedIn and asking to interview them and wanting to feature them on the front page of the magazine, and then taking up a bunch of their time, including mine, over the phone with the interviews and saying ‘the last stage of the interview process, you have to take the cover photo of the magazine in my home.’ Things like that. Just a horrible, creepy thing. I shared that and then other people started going, ‘Oh, he approached me too, he approached me too.’ Unfortunately, I see it really frequently. I think it is a lot harder to be a female founder and it’s easy to get taken advantage of like that when you think someone’s really excited about your business and wants to invest money in your business or cover you and stuff. I’ve definitely seen a lot of it, and unfortunately experienced it.

I asked Tess, “Do you think that’s related to the difficulty of raising funds for women that you were talking about, and so there’s this sort of tension of needing to go out there and network, but then also there’s people who want to take advantage of you?” “I think so,” Tess said. She went on to explain:

There are people who want to take advantage. I had one venture capitalist that came highly recommended to me by another, a woman venture capitalist recommended him really highly. I didn’t think about it, the fact she’s married, and I met with this guy, this VC, and within the first five minutes he asked me to have an orgy with him. And then questioned me about why not. I must not be adventurous. I must not take risks with my company. Things like that. Then unfortunately, a week or two later, I went to this female founders dinner that was supposed to be women only, and the host was like, ‘Oh, we actually brought in two VCs, both male, to speak with you all. They’re huge advocates for women in tech and female founders.’ One of them was

this guy. It was horrible. I find women don't really warn others that much because they're afraid of their reputation being hurt or being seen as talking badly about others... you don't want to get pushed out once you're into that group and people aren't so friendly.

As women advanced their careers, they became caught between visibility and invisibility, inclusion and exclusion. On one hand, by seeking more supportive workplaces or establishing their own companies, women were able to gain greater access to power that is at the core of invisibility. However, in doing so, they subjected themselves to greater scrutiny from outside of their occupations. Seeking venture capital funding, they experienced discrimination and harassment from potential partners. As leaders interacting with clients and new teams, they once again had to prove themselves as technically competent or were not recognized as an in-group member. In this way, they were simultaneously both visible and invisible: they stood out as women in a male-dominated space but were not immediately recognized as technical women.

Finding Inclusion

The women I interviewed also found inclusion and turned their visibility into a positive feeling. However, this did not just come easily to them; rather, it was something they had to actively create and seek out. When I asked what they found most supportive to grow their careers, be empowered to take on new projects, or feel included as a woman in tech, all of the women responded that it was joining (or starting) a women-in-tech group. Friendships is one way women "do" gender and are women are more likely to share personal problems and express candid emotions with their same-gender friends (Cronin 2015; Sapadin 1988). Everyone I spoke with had previously joined, or was currently a member of, a mixed-gender networking group for computing. They all said it was not as helpful to them as the women-only groups. Starr

described the difference by saying, “There’s extra, non-technical concerns some women have.” Similarly, Olive said, “For me it [joining a women’s group] was about the having access to people who were not just founders but understood the unique struggles a female founder would have.” Women described three primary functions of these groups: social support, career support, and learning community.

Women-in-tech groups provided vital social support that the women I interviewed felt like they were not receiving on the job. Jessica, who was relatively new to tech, sought a women-in-tech group as soon as she started her internship, where she was one of few female employees. She explained that, “Girl friends are so important and female friendships are so important.” This feeling of community and friendship was echoed by others I spoke to. Azra, said of the women-in-tech group she attended, “I’m very proud when I go to this community, even just scrolling through a Facebook page, I feel so proud to belong there. There’s all these women who are doing beautiful things and trying to change the world or trying to make a lot of money. Doesn’t matter. *But trying to survive in the tech world.*”

Engineering can be a very competitive field (Mangu et al 2011; Gunda 1993), with some employers enacting policies that intentionally pit technical employees against each other in grueling performance reviews. Founders were competing against countless other startups for precious investment dollars and sometimes customers. However, women-in-tech groups offered a haven of *cooperation*. Natasha, who belonged to several different groups for women, said, “We keep each other going. We share our stories. We share our journeys. We share our resources.” Overall, the women I spoke with said they received more social support women women’s groups as compared to mixed-gender groups, and they felt a genuine connection to the women they met there.

These groups also provided women with a community of other computing professionals that they could go to when they needed assistance. There are countless programming languages and technical project management frameworks and knowing one does not necessarily translate into proficiency in the other. For example, JJ found herself with an opportunity to work on a project in the programming language Python but did not know the script. She decided to take on the opportunity and turned to a women-in-tech group for help. She explained “It’s a safe place to be a beginner and learn something new.” In the past, she had sought help from mixed-gender forums and felt like she was looked down on for not being an expert in every language.

Sometimes, women just wanted to learn from other women. When I asked Azra, who was had immigrated from the Middle East, where she sought technical advice, she said she only went to women-in-tech groups. She explained “I’m not going to find the answer from white dudes. I’m going to see the women, who I by default trust because we belong in this community together. I’m going to be getting their perspective.” This sense of trust was key to women’s groups, as they felt men may choose to not help them or intentionally lead them astray.

Women-in-tech groups were also a vital resource for women to grow their careers. For some women, especially switchers, allowed them just to get a foot in the door. For example, when Louise had first graduated from bootcamp, she was struggling to find her first job in the industry and turned to a friend who also worked in computing for advice. They told her to “find women’s organizations” and Louise did. Women-in-tech groups welcomed Louise, providing her with projects she could use as work samples and references for her applications.

These groups also helped more experience women with the advice and support needed to advance in tech. For example, Jeanne joined a women-in-tech group shortly after graduating from college and starting an entry-level job. One day, at a staff meeting with the whole team, a

male coworker presented data from a new partnership the company had entered. A woman in the office had facilitated this partnership, as it happened through her connections and she provided business development plans during negotiations. However, the male presenter did not mention her name or give her any credit for her work during his presentation. Jeanne found this extremely discouraging until she and the other woman attended the same women-in-tech group later that week. Jeanne recalled “She actually went up to him [the presenter] after like ‘Hey, you should have mentioned my name. I was the one who was running that deal.’ Later she went to our group and was like ‘I ran this deal. The person who presented omitted my name. I went to talk to him after. Remember to take credit for the work that you do and don’t let people not give you credit.’” Jeanne found this inspiring and said it led her to advocate for herself to always be named on the projects she helped complete.

Women-in-tech groups were able to advance women’s careers because it made them feel visible and valid. When Jasmine was still running her startup, she quickly learned that women-in-tech groups were a valuable resource for her company. She explained:

I very quickly found that I had bad experiences in mixed gender tech spaces. One of the biggest trends I’ve found is that when I told women what I was doing, or other people from marginalized identities, when I told them what I was doing they believed me. And then asked questions. And when I told men what I was doing they questioned me to see if they believed me or thought I was valid. It was massively different. I pretty much stopped reaching out to men because the reaction was so unencouraging and unhelpful.

The feeling of being validated by other women was a common theme among founders and managers. In mixed-gender tech forums, women felt as though they were interrogated about their ideas for companies and products, they received helpful advice and resources from women-in-tech groups, as well as support. This enabled woman to pursue projects that they may not have been able to otherwise.

Keeping up with women-in-tech groups was important to the women I interviewed, and they made attending these functions a priority. Natasha explained, “We need to continue to just show up and encourage other women to do the same. Otherwise we will disappear.” Lewis and Simpson (2013) argued that this kind of self-segregation, which they refer to as disappearance, is a negative form of invisibility sought out as a coping mechanism to go unnoticed at the margins of power in male-dominated spaces. However, Stead (2013) points out this can also be characterized as positive visibility, as women sought a space where they were seen as valuable leaders and are able to “blend in.” I believe these women achieved the latter. They acknowledged their ongoing token status within tech, but created avenues to find success and support, often mentoring other women as they forged ahead.

The concept of (in)visibility helps reveal how women experience inclusion and exclusion at work (Lewis and Simpson 2012; Stead 2013). The pipeline model of technical careers, which dominated most research on women in computing, assumes a linear trajectory: highly visible in computing classrooms and classrooms, women experience marginalization that leads to an increasingly smaller number of women participating in computing as their careers progress. However, the life course model of women’s technical career development shows that women enter STEM careers through multiple points of entry and do not experience exclusion in a uniform fashion (Xie and Shauman 2003).

In this chapter, I explored how women in computing characterized their experiences of (in)visibility throughout their careers. By including women who do not have traditional computing backgrounds, I showed how the career trajectory of these technical women impacted their perceptions of inclusion and exclusion on the job. Initially, women from traditional

computing backgrounds were subject to a much higher degree of visibility and exclusion from inside computing. Women who had non-traditional backgrounds experienced exclusion in the sense that they were not encouraged to pursue a technical career, though most exhibited the skills and interest necessary to be successful. However, as both groups of women gained experience within computing, their experiences started to converge.

My analysis contributes to our understanding of how women manage exclusion in heavily male-dominated settings. Kanter (1977) focused on how visibility and exclusion lead women to trap themselves in positions with little or no upward mobility. Later, Lewis and Simpson (2012) expanded this to show how women may self-exclude in an effort to mitigate discrimination. While many of the women I spoke with did change their environments or leave a particular workplace altogether as a result of sexism, this was far from an act of disappearance. Instead, women in computing sought to create new norms of power, drawing on their relationships with other women, challenging the domination of the white male image of tech.

In many ways, the women I interviewed resolved the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic through separation, which McDonald and Kuhn (2016) define as a situation where diversity is encouraged, but meaningful participation of those diverse employees is limited in scope. Most of the women I interviewed were aware that their diverse status, in terms of gender and sometimes race, could be advantageous in computing, which is publicly under fire for obvious gender imbalances. They also felt many of these opportunities were just “lip service” and did not allow them access to positions of power or opportunities to create (as opposed to just using) technology. However, these women sought to create their own pathways into positions of power in tech. However, these were usually not individual challenges or attempts to degender themselves or the tech industry. Instead, they drew on other women for support and acceptance.

Together, they used the exposure they faced as women in a male-dominated world to try to effect change by changing the masculine image of computing, competing with men through developing their own products and companies, and empowering other women in the tech space.

In the next chapter, which focuses on funeral directing, I address the limitations of these kinds of challenges to the gender order within occupations. I show how efforts to establish gender quality can co-exist (and even reinforce) gender essentialism.

CHAPTER 5

UNDOING AND REDOING GENDER IN THE FUNERAL INDUSTRY

What was a nice girl like me doing in a body-disposal warehouse like this? No one in her right mind would choose a day job as a corpse incinerator over, say, bank teller or kindergarten teacher. And it might have been easier to be hired as a bank teller or kindergarten teacher, so suspicious was the death industry of the twenty-three-year-old woman desperate to join its ranks.

Caitlin Doughty (2014, p.5)

Mary decided to leave her career as a PhD-level neuroscience researcher at an Ivy League institution to open a natural burial park in the southwestern United States seven years ago. She volunteered with end-of-life focused organizations and became interested in the home death care movement. After learning about natural burials, Mary and her husband decided they wanted that option for themselves when the time came. Mary's search for natural burial options came up empty. Consequently, she became entrepreneurial. "I decided I was going to start this [burial] park by myself," she told me, "and so I bought the land outright. I bought this property in 2010 and it's [natural burial] is quite popular now, we've been doing very well."

Mary described her career change as "taboo," likening even talking about her decision to become a funeral director and burial park owner to talking about divorce in the 1950s. However, this was part of what motivated her. Mary sought to advance our culture's comfort and

understanding of death, often encouraging her clients to help prepare their deceased loved ones' bodies for burial and allowing family pets to be buried in the same plots their owners will occupy. When I asked Mary how her friends and family reacted to her new career, she replied "They all thought I was crazy. Everybody just thought I was nuts to do this."

The park opened with no outside investors and Mary accrued no debt by opening it. After a frugal two years, she now earned a decent living operating the park. "But if anybody is actually impressed, I wouldn't know," she said. "The way the men are, my husband and two boys, I think they're shocked it turned out to be successful. They all still think I'm strange. My boys won't ride in the care with me because it often has just had something dead in the back. They're not comfortable with death. They're not interested and want nothing to do with it."

Despite her family's attitudes, part of Mary's success came from referrals. Clients always referred new families to her business. Mary often held events for the families of the deceased in her park, offering to help decorate graves for holidays and holding memorials after the funerals. She felt this stood in contrast to people's image of the funeral industry as all sadness and profit-making. "As a woman, I have a lot of empathy. I can relate to them very well and I think they feel very comfortable working with me and helping them through the whole process. I get very emotionally involved with my clients," Mary stated. She went on to explain that she felt the opportunity to emotionally connect with families was drawing more women to the industry. She noted that, when she first opened the park, all of her peers in the area were men. Nearly a decade later, over half are women.

When I asked Mary what advice she gives these women starting out, she said "It's all worth it. Anytime somebody gives me a hug and calls me an angel and tells me I saved their life

burying their child or their infant, or their wife, I made it so much easier on them. It makes it worth it. I'm proud of myself."

Mary's emphasis on caring and connection illustrates one way women cope with the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic. At the center of this dialectic is a paradox: occupational expertise, largely defined through exclusion by reliance on specialized knowledge by an ideal practitioner (e.g., the geeky white male engineer), is constantly under pressure to be inclusive through both policy demands, like affirmative action, and public support for socially responsible corporations. Hughey (2010) offers a theoretical lens for understanding this counterintuitive inclusion. In what he terms a "paradox of participation," or an appropriation of conditions that originally created exclusion, Hughey (2010) shows how nonwhite people achieve social inclusion in predominantly white campus Greek organizations (i.e., sororities and fraternities) through a careful performance of the racial stereotypes that originally caused their exclusion (e.g., an Asian-American emphasizing his or her academic superiority). In this chapter, I show how by trying to resolve the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic, women in funeral directing create their own "paradox of participation."

DOING AND UNDOING GENDER

In their classic article, West and Zimmerman (1987) defined gender as actions that one "does" to reinforce a claim to belonging in a sex category (e.g., male or female). The notion of "doing gender" subsequently led to its theoretical opposite: gender can also be "undone". Here, differences between men and women are reduced through the expansion of the behaviors or attitudes considered acceptable for each sex category (Kelan 2010; Deutsch 2007; Butler 2004).

Kelan (2010) argued that women's mere presence in male-dominated fields constitutes "undoing" gender through disrupting the enduring bond between certain occupations and their ideal workers (e.g., male technologists), thus challenging the underlying gender norms that segregate jobs. Conversely, others have argued that work roles are tailored to male norms and workplace cultures, regardless of the gender of the worker, thus requiring more nuanced understandings of the relationship between job composition and gender norms (see Billing 2011; Irvine and Vermilya 2010). By attempting to identify whether specific actions undermine or support notions of essential differences between men and women, research has not adequately addressed how equality and difference interact. Understanding persistent patterns of occupational segregation requires moving beyond approaches that merely classify actions as either challenging or maintaining gender systems. As Deutsch (2007) asked, can difference, which tends to lead to inequality, also be used to achieve equality? In other words, can women redefine femininity in ways that allow them to achieve occupational parity with men? In this chapter, I investigate this question by drawing on the case of funeral directing, historically a male dominated industry that now comprises about 25 percent women in the United States (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013).

The movement of women into traditionally male fields, including funeral directing constitutes "undoing" gender because it represents opposition to gendered norms both in interaction and institutions, a process that can ultimately reduce gender difference (Kelan 2010; Deutsch 2007). Likewise, a woman doing traditionally masculine tasks (e.g., lifting corpses) also constitutes gender being "undone" through disrupting the link between the female and femininity (Butler 2004; 1990). Responding to the concept of undoing gender, West and Zimmerman (2009) revisited their original definition of "doing gender," noting that "undoing"

implies that individuals are no longer answerable to a sex category. West and Zimmerman (2009) argue that gender is instead “redone,” as opposed to undone, and suggest that the attributes and actions deemed appropriate for men and women have expanded rather than disappeared. Walzer (2008: 6) defined redoing gender as “changing the norms to which one is accountable,” that is, re-categorizing what constitutes an appropriate attribute or action for men and women. A “good” working mother (Walzer 2008), for example, or a young girl interested in and competent in mathematics (West and Zimmerman 2009) exemplify gender being “redone” from this perspective. In this chapter, I use the framework of undoing gender to highlight the ways that women sought inclusivity, and redoing gender to frame ways that women rebuilt exclusivity in way that was more accepting of women in some ways, yet still built on gender essentialism.

UNDOING GENDER IN THE FUNERAL INDUSTRY

Almost unanimously, the women I interviewed could recount a time when they experienced sexism upon entering the funeral industry, which acted as a form of exclusion. Most respondents offered these accounts without prompting. When I prompted the few who did not spontaneously offer such accounts, I heard about instances of sexism that included pay inequality, hearing outright that women applicants were not being considered for jobs, and more subjective feelings of being devalued as a woman. No matter the case, they had to fight against stereotypes about women not being “right” for funeral directing, as co-workers and supervisors saw being a woman as fundamentally incompatible with being a funeral director. Resistance to dominant gender discourses took place in everyday conversation. My analysis revealed two primary ways that women “undid” gender in their work as funeral directors: by resisting the

norms that defined them as unable to do their jobs and emphasizing that they could do the same tasks as their male counter-parts (McDonald 2013; Simpson 2009).

Calling Men Out

Many women I interviewed were not afraid to draw attention to the differential treatment they experienced within the funeral industry. “Calling out” sexism constituted a viable strategy for undoing the gendered norms of the funeral industry. For example, Vera, a native Spanish-speaker, licensed by the state of Illinois to both direct funerals and embalm, interviewed for a job in the Spanish-speaking Chicago-area neighborhood in which she grew up. The owners, while looking for a Spanish-speaking director familiar with the area, repeatedly asserted that because she was a woman, they would not hire her because of concerns for her safety. Vera told the owners, “Don’t you know you’re breaking the law? You can’t tell me you’re not going to give me a job because I’m a woman. I know the neighborhood.” Here, Vera insisted that her competency, demonstrated through knowledge of and experience with the locale, should supersede her perceived fragility as a woman. As Schwalbe and his coauthors (2000) noted, inequality is reproduced in face-to-face interactions. Having the courage to call it out, even subtly, represents a challenge to the status quo.

This approach of calling out sexism also applied to consumers at times. Several of the women I interviewed reported tense interactions with clients because of their sex category. Conflicts could occur at any point during the funeral planning process, whether over paperwork, embalming, or simply showing up for work. Rachel, who had wanted to be a funeral director since childhood, tried to have a sense of humor about it, explaining:

People will say “You don’t look like a funeral director.” And I will say “Well, what does a funeral director look like?” And then there’s times where I’m getting in a hearse and a man will stop me and say, “Are you going to drive the hearse?” and I want to say “How do you think we’re going to get there?” But I don’t. I just say “Yes, I am.” It takes some getting used to.

Rachel engaged with sexism² subtly by attempting to deflect it with humor. Other women engaged more directly with the underlying assumptions that they felt caused sexism, namely, that women are weaker than men are. For example, Amber was relatively new to the industry at the time, having been a funeral director for only a year when I interviewed her. She described how, during her education, she did not think much about being a woman in funeral service because her cohort in mortuary school was predominantly female. However, when she graduated and started working on her internship requirements, she described what I interpreted as being pigeonholed by her manager, as she was only assigned to clerical jobs, such as answering phones and organizing paperwork with families. She described having to challenge her male co-workers just to be able to complete her internship requirements. Amber said, “At first, especially with my internship, a lot of the guys were like, ‘Step back and we’ll let the men do this’, and I would look at them and be like, ‘Bullshit. I am a lot stronger than what you think I am. I’m not this dainty little woman.’” As Butler (2004) argues, language can serve to undo gender by subverting norms. Amber exemplified how the women I interviewed verbally resisted the normative constructions of both funeral directors and women.

² Rachel was a black woman and I did ask if she felt the “looks like a funeral comment” comment was in relation to her race *and* gender. She did not feel as though race was a part of it, explaining that the vast majority of the families her funeral home served were also black. She felt that in interactions like these, her gender was the salient basis of difference that led to these comments.

Doing the Same Job

Previous research shows that men working in feminine-typed occupations distance themselves from women by doing different tasks or assigning different meanings to the same tasks (McDonald 2013; Pullen and Simpson 2009; Williams 1989). In nursing, for example, men distinguish what *they* do as nurses from traditional conceptions of nursing tasks, such as caring (Williams 1989; see also Cross and Bagilhole 2002). It would follow then, that if the goal were to achieve inclusion, doing the *same* things would become important. The women I interviewed asserted that, no matter a funeral director's sex category, it was the same job with the same expectations and activities. They attempted to diminish symbolic boundaries between men's tasks and women's tasks by showing emotional control and occupying positions of power.

One common way to challenge symbolic boundaries was by participating in the common task of "removals," industry jargon for picking up a corpse from a home or hospital and bringing it to the funeral home. Because the female body is generally considered weaker than a male body, women had to prove they could do the job. For example, Debbie described funeral directing as a physically demanding career, resulting in hand cramps from using embalming tools for hours on end or backaches and eyestrain from filling out reams of paperwork. However, because removals often occurred in public view, she felt more pressure to show that she could do the same work as a man could do than she felt when doing other tasks. She described a typical scene at removals:

When you go to make a removal, a lot of times people are expecting a man. And unfortunately I'm not. I mean, they're a little disappointed and they expect me not to be able to pick up their loved one. Most of the time people don't want to

stick around and actually see the removal, but occasionally they do. And I hold my own.

For Debbie, the physicality of the job offered an important way to prove her competence. However, other women described proving they had the emotional strength to cope with death as a significant obstacle. As Cahill (1999) noted, funeral directors must manage their emotions in a detached fashion to be successful. The idea that women are emotionally fragile has prevented women's entry into the funeral industry (Cathles, Harrington, and Krynski 2010). Therefore, many of the women I spoke with found it important to show men that they could handle cases that evoked intense emotions. For example, Stephanie, who had over 20 years of experience in the funeral industry, saw her emotional strength as both a source of personal pride and an asset for women, in general, in the funeral industry. She said if she ever broke down in front of a mutilated body or a dead child, "for these men, it could be a proof that women are not good for this job." This comment demonstrates how women's emotionality can be viewed as a weakness, despite funeral directors' needing to show caring to clients.

For the few women who owned their own businesses, ownership represented the ultimate evidence of their ability to do the same work as men. Jennifer got her director's license in her late forties, after years of working in the office at a mortuary. She considered opening her own business a necessary step to having access to funeral directing. Recalling her male boss, she said that he "really didn't want me to get my license and learn anything because he felt very threatened by strong women. I had to go out and do it on my own." Similarly, Becky co-owned a funeral home with her husband, but participated in all facets of the business, even digging a grave on one occasion. She was outspoken about women being involved in the funeral industry, using her own business to help other women get training and experience so they could become

licensed. Optimistic about more women entering the funeral industry and possibly opening their own homes, Becky said, “I don’t think anything can stop us. It’s amazing what we can get done.”

In sum, the women I interviewed crossed gendered boundaries both physically and emotionally in their work. Whereas men in female-dominated occupations often distance themselves from the job-related tasks or define themselves as performing those tasks better than their female co-workers do, women in the male-dominated funeral industry took a different approach. They had to demonstrate their ability to perform at the same standards as men did, whether moving corpses or confronting intense emotional situations.

REDOING GENDER: DISCURSIVE AND EMBODIED PERFORMANCE

Although the women I interviewed “undid” gender through calling out sexism and doing the same jobs men did, they also “redid” gender by drawing on stereotypical gender differences. In the process, they rebuilt the exclusivity of funeral directing. As Ashcraft and her colleagues (2012) argue, a dialectic of inclusivity and exclusivity creates and maintains the association between an occupation and the image of the ideal member of that occupational group. What might be inclusive for some women, allowing them to participate in certain occupations, may contribute to the exclusion of women in other contexts by supporting stereotypes. West and Zimmerman (2009) argue that, because accountability to a gendered performance is highly situational, the expectations associated with gendered performances cannot be undone. Rather, gender is *redone* in new, more covert ways, representing a similar kind of dialectic where inclusivity remains defined by gender, but absorbs new kinds of performances into the accepted boundaries. After all, people usually evaluate gender on the grounds of sex category (West and

Zimmerman 2009; Messerschmidt 2008), and even those who subvert the gender order remain accountable to it (Connell 2010).

For the women I interviewed, their attempts to undo gender were incomplete or only temporarily effective. A new family would come in and the process of earning respect would begin again; coworkers remained stubbornly tied to sexist beliefs; women business owners claimed their establishments were less respected among other funeral directors. Thus, a second set of strategies for dealing with difference emerged that involved *redoing* gender, in the sense of strategically using, or, in some cases, intentionally rebuilding gender difference in ways that still allowed women to be good funeral directors. These strategies include discursively relabeling funeral directing into feminine terms and being “matter in place” by using female sex categorization to embody a skilled performance of feminized work.

Elevating Care Work

As Butler (2004) argues, names help create reality, and the women I interviewed attempted to relabel the funeral industry in more feminine terms. Gender was redone by not only actively recasting funeral directing according to different—female—norms, but also by privileging this newly constructed femininity. Repeatedly, the women I spoke with elevated the importance of caretaking and nurturing, stereotypically feminine skills, in funeral directing. For example, Lisa, who was unemployed at the time of our interview, had found open positions in funeral homes, but they only wanted to use her in arranging and working with families, not in using her embalming skills. She declined the jobs, saying she did not want to feel like an unskilled salesperson. However, when I asked her what the most important skill she could have

was, she quickly responded “The caretaking, of course.” This shows the disjuncture between how Lisa and other participants characterized *themselves* and the *occupation*. They attempted to recreate an *occupational identity* that promoted inclusivity by privileging caretaking. They simultaneously distanced *themselves* from stereotypes by insisting they are skilled workers above simple caretakers.

However, some women combined technical skills and care by redefining embalming as a caretaking activity. Melanie had worked on the client-facing side of funeral directing in the past, but had recently taken a job as an embalmer. In this position, she had few direct interactions with families, a necessary feature of the emotional labor that caretaking jobs involve. After she mentioned caretaking, I asked her if it was still important in her role as an embalmer. She responded: “You’re going to do the last time that they’re going to see their loved one in most cases. You’re the one they chose to do the funeral with, and you’re going to be the one to make a last picture of the deceased.” Melanie discursively repositioned embalming as an important part of “being there” for families, effectively blending the technical skills of a funeral director with the more feminine role of a caretaker.

Kendall was somewhat of an activist for death and dying on social media. She wrote about mindfulness in death and offered low-cost classes on home death care and, interestingly, had a background in sociology. Trained as a funeral director, she focused on home funerals, but also offered grief counseling. Kendall eschewed a traditional career, and instead moved to a homestead in Canada and became a voice for “death midwives,” who offer care for the dying and dead in a more natural and community-based approach than what would be found in most modern hospitals. She explained the historical precedent for women caring for the dead, tracing the practice back to ancient “shrouding women.” She saw these ideals gaining traction with the

increase of public interest in palliative care and green burials. Kendall said, “I would go so far as to call it the *refeminization* of death care.” She later added, “It’s not that men can’t do it, and the philosophy is not so much a feminist perspective, but it’s a feminine orientation.” Here, the history of caring for the dead provided a foundation for Kendall to argue that it is a feminine profession and reframe her experiences. Coutinho-Sledge (2015) argues that such recoding is important to changing gendered organizational processes. Therefore, by recasting funeral directing in feminine terms, women may have a cultural impact on the occupation overall.

Matter in Place

Scholars have used the phrase “matter out of place” to describe men in feminized occupations (see Pullen and Simpson 2009). Drawing on Douglas’s (1966), the term implies the simultaneous existence and breach of an established system. Although women in the male-dominated profession of funeral directing could be seen as matter out of place, the women I spoke with asserted they were exactly where they belonged. To turn the phrase around, they were matter *in* place. They claimed that being women not only qualified them to be funeral directors, it made them potentially superior to men, in terms of occupational abilities. They described these advantages as essential gender differences, learned gender differences, or perceived gender differences. This notion of difference represented an embodied extension of their increased focus on care work and emphasized a reconception of the image of the ideal funeral director.

Many of the women I talked to held essentialist beliefs about gender. They equated being a good funeral director with being caring and nurturing, and equated caring and nurturing with

being a woman. For example, Jennifer, who opened her own business partly to escape sexism in the industry, described funeral directing as “a very maternal thing. It’s something a man will never feel.” This not only positioned her as a qualified funeral director; it turned sexism around and effectively shut men out from competently doing the job. Likewise, Heather, one of the most successful women I spoke to, having published books and trade articles about funeral directing, as well as appearing on talk shows to represent the industry, also believed women were better suited for arranging funerals because they were more attentive to details about the appearance of the body and the emotions of the bereaved. Heather concluded, “I know some feminists will say, ‘Oh, that’s not true,’ but men and women are different.” Sarah, who was a pastor before getting her funeral director’s license, added that being present for families was “one thing women tend to do better than men.” Each of these responses not only supports essentialism through fundamental differences, but positions that difference as an advantage for women, through the privileging of care work.

Others claimed that women did not *inherently* differ from men, but learned to be different. Nevertheless, these socialized differences still created a distinct advantage for women in funeral directing. Women in the funeral industry argued that their socialization gave them superior skills in both embalming and working with families. For instance, embalming can involve restoration work, the application of makeup, and dressing the deceased. Debbie felt she was much better at these sorts of tasks than her male coworkers were. She explained, “it’s because us girls, we know how to do that kind of thing [cosmetics, hair, and nail art] up front, from practicing on ourselves for so long.” Other respondents agreed that women learn to have the attention to detail necessary for high-quality restoration work.

Working with families was the other area where women's socialization purportedly produced an advantage within funeral directing. Amber, whom we met earlier as one who called men out on their sexism (i.e., she was not a "dainty little girl"), embodied the dialectic between undoing and redoing gender. When I asked her to describe her skills when working with clients, she said, "I find women tend to have a softer approach when it comes to people. I think we're taught from a very young age to be softer and to be gentle and to, you know, play nice and watch how you talk to people." These learned differences represent gender differences nonetheless, and still assert that women are "naturally" skilled funeral directors.

Other respondents perceived no differences between men and women, whether through biology or socialization, but recognized that they could capitalize on the public's belief in sex differences. Melanie, who was doing only embalming at the time we spoke, said, "I've heard comments from people that I've helped that they were happy a woman was assisting them because they felt like women were a bit more nurturing and caring." Faith, one of the more experienced women I interviewed, expressed similar sentiments. "A lot of times, I find families are a little more comfortable talking with a woman than a man," she said. "So I think women have a lot to bring to this industry." Sarah, the pastor, said, "Women are allowed to share emotion, so I don't have a problem crying with the families." When I asked what she meant by "allowed," she explained that the stereotype about women "allows me the opportunity, at least, to be more sensitive." These women show that the image of the ideal funeral director could still be reconstructed without personally asserting the idea of difference. While they did not actively redo gender by impressing the notion of gender difference on their activities, they passively allowed others to do it for them. While research has argued women may rely on femininity to deal with coworkers in male dominated jobs, this shows the same tactic can also be applied to

dealing with coworkers and the public at the same time by using it to demonstrate competency (Martin and Barnard 2013) While in other situations, such as removals, women fought back against clients who labeled women as different, they did not do so for care work activities. The perception that they were more genuine or compassionate in a time of need was advantageous. It is worth noting that, because many funeral directors earn commission for funeral product sales (e.g., caskets), by putting on a performance that clients considered more caring and sincere, women could potentially surpass men as salespeople. The conflict between the care work and commercial aspects of funeral directing is well documented (see Cahill 1995), although women funeral directors may be more motivated by care than profit (Bailey 2010).

One explanation for occupational sex segregation is the essentialist notion that women possess an innate skill for interpersonal interaction (Fitzsimmons 2002), particularly interactions that involve conveying a sense of nurturing (Kennelly 2006). In the interviews, the women recreated and applied these ideas, extending them into contexts such as embalming, which involve no interaction at all. Consistent with Irvine and Vermilya's (2010) research on women veterinarians, I found that women funeral directors applied stereotypical definitions of femininity to each other, evident through phrases like "us girls" and "women are." Consequently, women's movement into a previously off-limits occupation (i.e., funeral directing or veterinary medicine) does not necessarily produce transformative effects for existing gender relations. Regardless, these actions can co-occur with the previously outlined attempts at "undoing" gender. For example, in a study of women police officers, Morash and Haarr (2012) noted that women on the force were able to reject hegemonic gender stereotypes, while still valuing traditionally defined femininity.

The literature documents that male-dominated jobs generally provide higher status and pay than feminized work does (Glauber 2012; Budig 2002; Maume 1999). Additionally, research shows that men typically enjoy easier paths to supervisory and managerial positions (Williams 2012; Maume, 1999). Women experience several barriers to entering these occupations and positions and to mobility once within them (Lewis and Simpson 2012). Although some scholars argue that women's ability to enter such positions represents progress and transformation (see Kelan 2010), inequalities persist between men and women at work (England 2010). It follows, then, that the transformative effects of women's participation in male-dominated jobs, in terms of inclusivity, has limits.

Funeral directing offers an opportunity to identify those limits. As more women enter the profession, they become more visible, potentially increasing hostility between women and their male coworkers (Lewis and Simpson 2012). Women's responses to such discrimination shed light on how they manage gendered expectations at work. In this chapter, I asked how difference can be used to achieve equality. I found that in a male-dominated setting that *also* requires care work, women funeral directors parse out different gendered expectations and selectively challenge or uphold them to benefit their personal standing at work. Women funeral directors try to achieve inclusion and "undo" gender by verbally challenging sexism and diminishing symbolically masculine boundaries around tasks. However, they counteract those actions, and rebuild exclusivity, by "redoing" gender: reattaching attributes to a sex category but with different, less oppressive, meanings. This redoing revealed itself in strategically upholding gender essentialism or recognizing socialized differences between men and women. Either form was still rooted in the idea that men and women are different. This difference then became a form of protection from assertions that women were not competent funeral directors.

England (2010) argued that the logics of essentialism and egalitarianism co-occur. In the case of funeral directing, I extend this to say that essentialism and egalitarianism are *mutually reinforcing*. Working in an environment with structural barriers to women's participation while still requiring caring and nurturing, women funeral directors create a "paradox of participation" (Hughey 2010). Similar to Hughey's (2010) observation that nonwhites in traditionally white fraternities and sororities gain acceptance through racialized performances, women funeral directors use gender essentialism to assert their belonging (and sometimes their superiority) as funeral directors. By doing so, they recreate the gendered occupational barriers they had to overcome in the first place. In this way, women resolve the dialectic through "strategic ambiguity" (McDonald and Kuhn 2016). By claiming themselves as both diverse employees *and* possessing specialized knowledge because of that diverse status, they are able to leverage the contradictions of the dialectic to create a space of belonging while at the same time holding contrasting positions within it.

By saying that gender is "redone," I mean to capture both how individuals challenge the sex-gender binary and how those challenges remain partial, incomplete, and culturally constrained. As scholars continue to write about how gender is "undone" (e.g., Stainback et al. 2015), it is increasingly important to recognize the limitations of these "undoings" and how they are as situational as gender itself. In this chapter I show that, because of those limits, essentialist logic can be repurposed in a progressive fashion. The women I interviewed used their own and others' essentialist beliefs in ways that benefited them professionally, through claims that being women made them more technically and interpersonally skilled. This assertion is supported by previous research indicating that women's valuing feminine stereotypes in the workplace does not necessarily lower their status on the job (Morash and Haarr 2012).

Redoing gender has been variously defined as shifting gendered norms (Walzer 2008), defining gender in ways that is less oppressive (West and Zimmerman 2009), or expanding the norms associated with masculinity or femininity (Connell 2010). I expand the concept to include changing the *subjective meaning* of gendered norms. For women in funeral directing, being caring and nurturing does not preclude them from doing “dirty work” or physical tasks. Instead, it acts as an additional skill set, real or supposed, that provides a cultural script for performing their work duties. This conception of redoing gender reconciles significant occupational and education advancements of women with the fact that gender inequality persists by showing how difference is not necessarily viewed or experienced as antithetical to projects of female inclusion.

In the next chapter, I present interviews with women in the cannabis industry, another occupation that has seen an influx of women in recent years. As a balanced occupation, I show how women also use gender narratives and the concept of professionalization, to combat exclusion and create inclusion.

CHAPTER 6

LEGITIMIZING AND FEMINIZING CANNABIS

Of course I know how to roll a joint!

Martha Stewart (2013, on *The Andy Cohen Show*)

Emily smoked pot in college while double majoring in biology and biochemistry. Before she could finish her master's in computer science, she got a job offer in horticulture, working with a sanctuary for retired lab animals in Nevada. She loved her work, and through it, met her husband, who also worked in horticulture. After cannabis was legalized in Nevada, Emily's husband was tapped to conduct agricultural compliance work for the newly formed industry. He accepted the job. One of his clients needed a cannabis cultivator—one who was trained in plant science—to test a grow product. Emily's husband asked if she would be interested, and Emily met with the client. She decided to accept the position of testing the client's new "grow box," a self-contained system designed to grow cannabis using less electricity and water than a typical grow operation.

Emily liked her new job, but quickly ran into problems with the product. The grow box, which had been designed and built by men, had many components and switches that she, as a 5'5" woman, could not reach. Since she could not grow any cannabis if she could not reach parts of the grow box, modifications were needed. Emily quickly relayed the concern to her new employers. "They redesigned the whole interface to make it accessible for everybody," she said.

“So now, let’s say if you’re in a wheelchair or you’re small, or you have some sort of other thing that prevents you from being a giant guy, you can still use the whole thing [grow box] easily.”

Despite pushback from her conservative parents, Emily decided to stay in the cannabis industry after she finished the grow box project. She now operates a 50,000 square foot grow operation for various Nevada dispensaries. She also contracts to do monitoring for other growers, in addition to co-owning a cannabis licensing company with her husband. Although Emily has a long list of credentials, she still faces sexism from clients. When we were discussing working with her husband, Emily said, “They’re [clients] shocked I’m the grower.” She said women in the cannabis industry face negative impact from new marketing schemes to hire attractive women in themed dispensaries, such as spas or “stoner-reggae vibe” shops. “Their [clients’] presumption is looks are why you were hired. It’s very hard to say, ‘No, I have a degree in this. I’ve been doing this a long time and I know how to fix your problem.’ Their assumption is you’re the girl they hired and we can talk to the other guy.”

These experiences aside, Emily felt that cannabis offered a unique opportunity for women. She co-chaired a local chapter of a professional networking group for women in cannabis, and since her entry into the field, had noticed large numbers of other women joining. “It’s such an interesting thing to see a business where women are not only represented, but now you see things where companies are actively recruiting them,” Emily explained. I asked, “Why do you think so many women are becoming cannabis businesses managers and growers, not just the sexualized positions?” “It’s cannabis!” Emily exclaimed. “It’s a very nurturing, natural thing.”

Emily’s account illustrates how women in cannabis draw on the industry’s unique cultural and structural conditions to brand it as inclusive to women. In the previous chapter, I showed how women in the funeral industry resolve the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic only temporarily

because they both denounce and strategically use femininity to claim belonging. Here, I turn my attention to how the dialectic operates in legal cannabis—an industry that is both feminizing and still defining itself as a legitimate occupation. Although illicit drug markets have historically subjugated women (see August 2013; Adler 1985), recent reports indicate that women and men are employed in the legal cannabis industry in near equal numbers.

While large-scale business operations are increasing in states that have legalized cannabis, small businesses managed by owner-operator entrepreneurs (sometimes referred to as “ganjapreneurs” in the industry) still dominate the business landscape (Rodd 2018). Historically, working in entrepreneurial, emerging fields, such as cannabis, are associated with a masculine identity, as entrepreneurs must be willing to take risks and assert themselves (Bruni et al. 2004; Collinson and Hearn 1996, 1994). In fact, Connell (1995) argues that the entrepreneur embodies hegemonic masculinity. Combined with the history of men dominating the drug trade, one would expect cannabis to have high barriers for entry and success for women. On the surface, one would expect this to make cannabis a highly exclusive field, and one not inclusive for women. As an emerging legal industry, cannabis entrepreneurs must also distinguish themselves as *professionals*³, as opposed to criminals working in the underground drug trade. The connection between entrepreneurial occupations and masculinity represents a connection between a kind of work and the traits of the person who “should” be doing that work. Ashcraft (2007) refers to this connection between the content of a job and the image or traits we associate with people doing

³ I use the term “professionals” in the sense of being seen as a legitimate business person. Sociologically, this is defined as being a member of a legitimate and distinct occupational group (Aldridge and Evetts 2003). This is different than labeling a given occupation as a “profession” in the sense of high-prestige occupations that require knowledge beyond the grasp of many people, as well as a corresponding emphasis on theory and intellectual skill. These are distinct, as an individual can lay claim to legitimacy in a certain field by exhibiting certain behaviors, though that field may not constitute a “profession” (Saks 2012).

that job as occupational identity. She argues this connection, which can cross specific time periods, people, and organizations, is one of the main driving forces of occupational sex segregation (and exclusivity) because of the way it cements and legitimizes notions of gender difference at work. She explains that through occupational identity, the image of the job and the mundane, everyday tasks of the worker become dialectically linked.

Creating an occupational identity is a core professionalizing activity in the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic (Ashcraft et al. 2012). Legal cannabis does not have a coherent occupational identity as it exists in a space between a legal (and legitimate) occupation and a drug subculture. Individuals must also define themselves as members of an industry or occupation (Carper 1970). Both reify sex segregation by creating enduring images between jobs and gendered bodies. In this chapter, my analysis shows how women in cannabis draw on the unique cultural and structural conditions of the industry to brand it as inclusive to women. Although this kind of occupational branding is generally thought to organize discourses of *difference* (Ashcraft 2007), women in cannabis are able to draw on elements of drug culture, once a part of the black market that served to exclude them, and a legally ambiguous regulatory system to make the case for their inclusion. In this way, women challenge stereotypical definitions of entrepreneurialism as masculine. Research has overlooked how femininity is manifested in entrepreneurial occupations, even in studies detailing the lives of women entrepreneurs (see Bruni et al. 2004).

Lewis (2013) argues that women entrepreneurs construct identities that reconcile both gender essentialist views of women and a masculine definition of professionalism. Some suggest that women adopting these kinds of identities disrupt traditional notions of gender by blurring the boundaries of masculine definitions of professionalism (Lewis 2013; Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio 2004; Billing and Alvesson 2000). However, this explanation does not address how

women make sense of occupational identity, as the identity of occupations (rather than people) are central to understanding sex segregation at work (Ashcraft et al 2012; Ashcraft 2007). I focus on how women redefine elements of the cannabis industry in a way that reframes it as a woman-friendly industry. I argue that, in the absence of existing models of professionalism, women use stereotypical definitions of femininity to legitimize cannabis as an industry and themselves as female cannabis business operators. While exclusivity is generally achieved through branding an occupation in masculine terms that emphasize power (Ashcraft et al 2012), women in cannabis attempt to brand cannabis in terms of a “helping profession” that values cooperation over competition. Exclusivity is characterized through connection to the “culture” of cannabis, the cannabis industry, and the associated risks. The dialectic is resolved by claiming inclusivity as a natural feature of the industry and exclusivity as a risk, albeit one that may differentially affect women.

PROFESSIONAL + CANNABIS + WOMEN = ?

In 2012, Colorado and Washington became the first states to legalize cannabis for recreational use. Although some states had legalized medical cannabis (including storefront retail sales) prior, recreational use dominates most of cannabis sales and products. Since 2013, several other states have followed suit, allowing non-medical use and retail cannabis establishments. In 2017, legal cannabis sales totaled nearly \$10 billion (Pellechia 2018) and financial firms estimate that sales will continue to grow. The newly emerging cannabis industry is undergoing an extreme image makeover in the fight to be seen as legitimate. Fine (2012) noted that the “tie dye-wearing peace-sign flashers” have been traded in for a “buttoned-down cannabis-industry.” (xvi). In other words, the cannabis industry is in the midst of creating a new occupational identity,

shedding the association with the black market. As the occupational brand of the cannabis industry is being created, women are redefining their role within it. Although nearly half of cannabis industry leadership is composed of women (Deruy 2016; Olson 2015), drug markets have historically been unkind to women. Social policies toward users have generally been more punitive toward women, especially mothers, exposing them to greater risk (see Boyd 2004 for a review). Women who have worked in drug cultivation and sales are face greater risk of experiencing violence and less opportunity to rise within the underground industry (August 2013; Boyd 2004).

Coming In and “Coming Out”

Most of the women I interviewed had been involved with cannabis as users, cultivators, or dealers when it was illegal. Legalization opened the opportunity to get paid for a “passion” or turn their black-market business legitimate. Some women were cultivators or involved in sales, and nearly all were users. Three-quarters of the women I interviewed characterized their involvement in the cannabis industry as a natural evolution of their use or black-market involvement. However, five of the twenty women in this study were not cannabis users prior to entering the industry. These women had other, unrelated careers and entered the cannabis industry after having a personal, medical experience with the plant. For four women, a family member had a condition that benefitted from cannabis. One woman, Gaby, became a medical cannabis user after being diagnosed with cancer.

Regardless of history, entering the industry meant revealing oneself as a cannabis user. The women I interviewed called this a process of “coming out,” likening their disclosure to the experience of the LGBT community. For most women, this caused some friction in their

personal relationships, especially with family. Mothers were especially vulnerable because, even in legal states, they did not have complete assurance that Child Protective Services would not interfere with their desire to both parent and be part of the cannabis industry. Once in the industry, women had to develop not only new careers, but identities as legal cannabis professionals. My analysis shows that women in cannabis accomplished this by trying to create a new narrative of cannabis as legitimate career suitable for “professional” women.

Entering the cannabis industry as a career meant that the women could not hide their involvement with cannabis from their friends, family, or communities. Although some women had families who knew of their recreational or medical cannabis use, employment in the industry was a new level of exposure to risk of stigma or legal sanctions. For Robin, a manager for a dispensary chain in the greater Denver area, although her mother was generally “open-minded” and otherwise accepting of her cannabis use, she nonetheless worried about her daughter making the leap from cannabis user to cannabis worker. Robin said “My mom has worked for attorneys for 25 years and her first question was ‘Is this something that is going to get you arrested? Are you going to get in trouble for this?’” Similarly, Heather, whose family knew she was a cannabis user explained, “It just kinda happened. I always liked cannabis. I’m sure my parents would be very happy if I was a dental hygienist or something very normal like that. But I have benefits. I have good pay.”

However, other women did not experience an easy transition into the cannabis industry. Women who were not cannabis users prior to entering the industry had the most difficulty, as they had to come to terms with the decision with themselves in addition to coming out to their families. Gaby, who started a medical cannabis company, said of her cancer treatment, “It was my first time using cannabis in my life. I’d never tried it, smoked it, eaten it, anything. So, it was

very foreign to me. We lack so much when it comes to research because there's so much stigma around it. There was for me until my own diagnosis." Women who had hid their cannabis use from their families and community also experienced challenges. For these women, there was greater stigma around their use and more severe social consequences. However, part of the discourse of professionalism is emphasizing the importance of one's work (Aldridge and Evetts 2003), and these women framed their participation in the cannabis industry as a benefit to the community. Grace, who turned her large northern California cannabis farm legal in 2012 said, "There's definitely pushback." She described her family as "pretty supportive," but laughed and added, "I do have some that think I'm evil for being in this industry." She went on to say:

In my county, when I started showing my face like, 'Hey, I'm a cultivator. It's not just these lazy people who don't want to work.' There's stigma around it, being a cultivator. There's people who say this is just drugs, I see what it does to kids. But I'm out there being in the community because I know what this plant can do.

Similarly, Miriam said, "I grew up in the very conservative Texas panhandle. My mom had me convinced marijuana was the reason my biological dad was nuts. So I grew up thinking marijuana was this bad, bad thing. Then I moved to Colorado and it opened up my mind differently to it"

This stigma was even greater for women of color and mothers, who violated expectations of both their gender and race. Analyn, an East Asian woman who was both a dispensary owner and cannabis policy analyst, said of her career, "The only side effect is my family. If you have a conservative family, they will go against you. Or they will not agree. Eight years, I haven't talked to some of my family members because of this [cannabis]. I wish they would understand,

but I'm sticking to my convictions to advocate for this plant." Similarly, Lucia, a Mexican-American mother of two who had left her successful engineering career for cannabis stated:

At this point in the cannabis industry, you have to be as transparent as possible. So, I'm completely out of the closet. At first, just like any other venture I've done, I got a lot of stink eye about it. I kept pushing forward. It was something I believed in. Being Mexican, being a female, we're expected to you know, raise a family. I don't know if you know many Mexicans, but they're like "*Dios mio*, the devil is going to come after you."

Although Lucia attempted to minimize her stigma with humor, other mothers were extremely fearful that their children would be exposed to negative consequences, including CPS involvement and social shaming, as a result of their cannabis business. For example, Alex, who is a national spokeswoman for the cannabis industry, explained why mothers are more hesitant to "come out":

It was partially the perception thing. "You're a mom? You're a professional woman? But you're speaking about marijuana!" You have to look at who was out there talking about marijuana. If not a rapper, it was a white, male comedian. Not exactly the type that speaks to middle class, middle aged moms. Nothing in common there. In fact, what they're doing is hoping to god their child doesn't turn out like that guy. So that guy is reinforcing the idea that marijuana is bad. Because the only ones willing to stand up and talk about it were the ones that didn't care. The smart, active, productive accomplished people who smoke pot were smart enough not to say so out loud. I have been in the closet about it when it comes to my children... It's a very difficult issue amongst women to be considered a good mom and that, I think, is the root, the judging, of why women don't come out.

Women have long faced greater risks when using, selling, or cultivating drugs. This includes greater exposure to victimization within the illicit drug industry as well as legal consequences.

However, as a now legal industry, the women I interviewed were not concerned with these challenges. Their primary concern was strained relationships with their families, and for mothers, lingering concern about the safety of their children. Despite this, the women I interviewed felt “coming out” and being openly involved with the cannabis industry was worth it. They described feeling a deep desire to dispel myths about cannabis users and help others have access to the plant.

Overcoming Sexism

Connell (2010) argued that women who subvert the gender order are still accountable to it. The women I interviewed, though entering an alternative industry, experienced many of the same barriers that women in other male-dominated fields face. Like the funeral directors I interviewed, the women in cannabis had to overcome sexist assumptions about their physical ability to do the job. Growing cannabis can involve a good deal of manual labor, akin to that involved in landscaping or medium-scale agriculture. Many women, especially those involved in cultivation, were held accountable to the idea that women were not physically strong enough to participate in cannabis. Grace, a single mother who owned both a storefront and cultivation farm, said:

I definitely have had some issues being a woman in this industry with mainly male growers. I’m the only female grower in the county. That has been interesting because I get a lot of competition and “How can you do this? Can you lift this up?” It’s an interesting dynamic, it’s the hardest thing I’ve come across. I’m also little. I’m very small. So, I get a lot of slack from the guys about how tiny I am. But then I make shit happen, so I’ve gotten to the point where I don’t get slack anymore and they ask real questions. That’s been nice.

Grace had to navigate sexism in the industry to be seen as physically able to cultivate cannabis. Other women had to engage directly with sexism to be recognized as a member of the cannabis industry. For example, as described in the opening of this chapter, Emily, who owned her own large-scale commercial grow operation in addition to consulting for several companies, said most of clients she met with assumed she was an assistant or secretary, not the actual grower. Like Grace, Emily identified this as one of the most difficult barriers to recognized as a member of the industry.

The women I interviewed directly engaged with sexism as a way to overcome it. As Schwalbe his coauthors (2000) argue, inequality is reproduced in face-to-face interactions and calling out sexism challenges people's gendered assumptions. As was the case in funeral directing, "calling men out" was a viable way for women in cannabis to overcome gender bias. For example, when I asked Emily how she handled those difficult clients, she responded that she would "be obnoxious back." Similarly, Heather, a general manager for a medical dispensary chain in Colorado, was the only female manager in her organization. She described several instances in which her male colleagues treated her in a condescending fashion or asked her to "play secretary," when she would use her notary public credentials on company documents. She said she had overcome many negative relationships during her four years with the company by pushing back on that kind of behavior. She said, "It's interesting, I must say. I've had to learn to be a bit tougher and a bit more direct. There's stereotypes that have come into play I've had to push back at, but all in all, they're good guys. *But they're guys.*"

Sexual objectification often underlies less hostile forms of sexism at work, and blatant sexual objectification on the job can lead to negative consequences for women (see Syzmanski and Feltman 2015). For many women I interviewed, the direct sexual objectification of other

women posed a barrier to their employment. Both the black market and the early medical cannabis industry have a long history of hiring women only as trimmers or in other positions based on their physical attractiveness, with some employment advertisements going so far as requiring women to trim nude (August 2013). Many women I interviewed said this still happens, particularly in low-level retail sales positions, such as dispensary receptionists and “budtenders.” As Emily put it, “some places you won’t get hired unless you look like an Instagram model.” Ari, who was involved with several cannabis and hemp companies, said she had seen women leave the industry because of sexual objectification. She explained, “I think they just got defeated because of the sexism that goes on and men are just so fucking raunchy and evil towards women in a total sexual manner. If they’re not flirting and showing their tits, they’re not going to buy products from them in a way they would buy products from a chick that does. That’s who you deal with in this industry.” However, of the women I interviewed, Ari had been involved with the industry the longest—predating legalization in her home state of Colorado.

Nearly all of the women I spoke with actively resisted being sexualized. Only one woman, Jackie, said she actively used her looks and sexuality to get ahead in the industry. However, she also recognized that other women disapproved of this and said she would not rely on flirting or sexuality if other women were present. Additionally, women who became involved with the cannabis industry after legalization tended to take a more optimistic view, noting that many improvements had been made. Analyn, who was a biologist by training, explained:

We hear a lot about the Me Too movement, this industry nipped that in the bud before Me Too even started. In the beginning, about 10 years ago, they were sexualizing women on cannabis ads. And women put up a stink about that... the women activists in the industry really let the guys know we’re not here to be sexualized, we’re not here to be objectified. And, sure enough, the men in the

industry, they stopped. *High Times* magazine, *Skunk* magazine, they stopped allowing those ads. So, they're leaving that space for women to come and be free. We are trying to leave space for people of color to come do the same.

Overall, the women I interviewed described facing hostile sexism after entering the cannabis industry. This included combating assumptions about their physical ability to do cultivation work, being relegated to inferior roles within dispensaries, and sexualization. These barriers represent how the cannabis industry frames exclusivity—the skills it takes to do the work and the image of the ideal worker.

Validating the Cannabis Industry

The women I interviewed were deeply concerned about being seen as professionals and entrepreneurs, not “stoners.” Just as the women had to confront stereotypes about women at work, they also had to confront stereotypes about cannabis users. This meant a shift in the way they spoke about what they did for a living. As Butler (2004) noted, language is key to subverting norms. In Fine's (2012) ethnography of the Northern California medical cannabis industry, he noted that the word “marijuana” has become outdated, with activists, policy makers, and the industry preferring the term “cannabis.” The women I interviewed tied this language to their ability to be seen as professionals. As Heather explained, “There's a lot of names and I don't call it anything else but what it is. And that's cannabis. Any other name to that is slang. We have to validate a professional space for it.”

The exclusion of identities was broader than just the stigma of being seen as a “stoner.” Cannabis professionals are primarily white. This is, in part, due to policies in many states that

prevent people with criminal records from entering the legal cannabis industry, and many of those affected by the war on drugs and aggressive pursuit of drug arrests were black and brown. It was very difficult to recruit women of color for this study, and I never saw a woman of color as an employee or customer in any of the cannabis establishments I visited while conducting this research. Stephanie, a white woman who owned a testing and certification lab, felt there was little support for anyone who did not meet the image of white professionalism in industry groups, even those for women. She said of a large networking group for women in cannabis “They’re not very inclusive. Whether it’s because of your skin, because you’re male, or because you’re too much of a cannabis person, right? Too hippy-stoner person, not what they’re looking for.” Although many other white women I interviewed felt that practices in the cannabis industry were exclusionary to both people of color and those who came off as “stoners,” they were nonetheless optimistic that the industry would change. Indeed, since I concluded interviews, some cities in California have begun expunging cannabis convictions and issuing industry licenses for those with convictions in the hopes of diversifying the industry. Many white women I interviewed were committed to these pursuits, as were all of the women of color I interviewed. Lucia, who acted as a mentor for women trying to enter the industry, said, “I’d really like to find a way to give back and promote women, especially Black and Latina women to enter the field. Not that white women shouldn’t be encouraged, they should be. But I tend to see more white women than I do other minorities.”

While nearly all of the women I interviewed agreed that shedding the “stoner” image was key to the success of the cannabis industry, other women did not want to see cannabis simply go the way of mainstream, corporate America. Most of the women I interviewed, especially those who were involved with cannabis before it was legal, though it was very important that cannabis

stay true to activism and alternative business practices. Ari, who associated “ego” with masculinity, said, “We can’t just start an industry and then throw everything in that industry away to identically match like mass corporations. That’s big money. That’s ego. Ultimately that shit is not sustainable.” Similarly, Jackie, who owned a marketing and design company for cannabis products, explained, “People like being themselves and appreciated for having their own unique point of view, being able to communicate in their own manner instead of having to speak what I call ‘corporatese’.”

The ability of the industry to be legitimate, but not traditionally professional, was particularly important to the mothers I interviewed. Several women I spoke with had traditional careers before moving to cannabis full-time. These women described many of the difficulties associated with women in business, such as being penalized for taking off for childcare needs and feeling overwhelmed by managing both a career and a family. Although cannabis came with greater risks as a legally ambiguous industry, also held promise as a family-friendly industry. For example, Grace said, “I’m still able to run both my garden and be there, really present with them [her children] every day. That’s one thing cannabis has given me. I hope it gives other women the same benefit. To be able to raise their children themselves and to also have a really awesome career at the same time.”

Cannabis use has historically been stigmatized, especially for women (August 2013; Boyd 2004; Adler 1985). Further, entrepreneurship is generally seen as a masculine activity (Bruni et al 2004). The women I interviewed had to overcome the double stigma of being associated with cannabis and being women as they entered the industry. Professionalism is a form of discourse that allows workers emphasize the legitimacy and worth of their work, both to themselves and other people (Aldridge and Evetts 2003). The women I interviewed had to overcome the

exclusivity of cannabis, as well as construct a narrative about being a cannabis being a legitimate industry. Although being seen as professional and not as cannabis users was of the utmost importance, most of the women did not blindly adopt a traditional professional identity. They saw their participation in cannabis as an opportunity to create a new model that allowed them greater flexibility in terms of their work arrangements, image, and opportunity to assert themselves as women.

SUCCEEDING IN THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY

Although the women I interviewed had to overcome stigma and reframe their own “professional” behavior because of participating in the cannabis industry, they also insisted that cannabis presented a unique and important opportunity for women. The dialectic of inclusivity and exclusivity maintains the association between an occupation and the image of the ideal member of that occupational group (Ashcraft et al. 2012). Occupational identity is a form of collective professionalization built through strategic claims on the part of workers to give value to the occupation (Ashcraft et al. 2012). The women in this study redefine cannabis as a distinctly feminine occupation, regardless of what barriers to entry they may have faced. Like funeral directors, they elevated the relative importance of aspects of their work that could be considered congruent with stereotypical femininity. Unlike funeral directors, who applied these definitions to their own behaviors as they did their work, women in cannabis applied them to the nature of the occupation itself. By furthering stereotypes about women, my interviewees created an inclusive occupation for themselves through what may exclude women from other occupations. The women I interviewed reframed the cannabis industry in three ways. First, they argued that the still-emerging structure of the industry made it easier for women to enter and

succeed. Second, they claimed a strong emotional connection between women and cannabis existed because the plant is female. Third, they claimed that the culture of cannabis was uniquely egalitarian. These rationalizations were not mutually exclusive, many women evoked different rationalizations at different points in our interviews.

Succeeding Because of an Emerging Structure

As a legal industry, cannabis is new. Although California legalized medical cannabis cultivation in 1996, developments in cannabis as a retail *industry* were slow until Colorado and Washington legalized recreational sales in 2012. Since that time, many more states have passed laws allowing the storefront sales of cannabis and related products, with sales in 2017 nearly topping \$10 billion. However, the federal prohibition leaves the cannabis industry in a regulatory vacuum. Legal cannabis business owners do not have access to many tax deductions, forms of business insurance, banking, and other federal business protections normally afforded to business owners and managers. Further, cannabis is still considered a Schedule 1 drug by the federal government, leaving open the possibility, however unlikely, of property seizure and prosecution for cannabis industry employees. The women I interviewed repeatedly claimed that this newness and ambiguity created a unique environment that provided them with the opportunity to be successful. Analyn explained “It’s interesting to be in an industry where the law dictates your livelihood to this extent. So, women do stick together. It creates unity.” For others, the lack of barriers was, in itself, an opportunity. Alex said, “There can’t be a glass ceiling when the walls aren’t even built yet.”

For other women, the lack of occupational identity meant that there was no attachment to an ideal practitioner yet. Emily, a grower who had graduate-level training in both biology and computing, had previous experience with the flipside of this in STEM. As one of only three women in a 500-person computing program, she said the “preconceived notions” of what a woman in STEM was supposed to be eventually led to her dropping out of the program. However, in cannabis, she felt freer because of the industry’s newness. She explained:

Where with this industry [compared to computing], it’s so new, and women have been a part of it from the beginning...So they never really had to take the subjugated role. Like moving from secretary to CIO, if that makes sense. To try to do something else. Well, now you came in at the ground as a marijuana lawyer. Or a marijuana this or that. So, you made your own name from the bottom rather than having to crack to the top.

Other women echoed that the relatively sudden legalization of cannabis was an equalizing force. Mary, the CEO of a large-scale cannabis grow operation, argued that cannabis “provides a really unique opportunity for women” because no preexisting structures unfairly distributed influence. She argued that women who entered cannabis, whether from other legitimate sectors or the black market “were able to take all that work and experience into a space where the rules hadn’t been made yet. There wasn’t already an established system for distributing money and influence in a way that excluded them. So, it’s really just the difference between starting something from scratch and changing an existing system.”

Celebrating “Cannabis Culture”

In other cases, the women I interviewed explained that the culture of the cannabis industry was uniquely supportive of women. Although the women were fast to deflect the possibility that the *structure* of underground drug markets that subjugate women carried over into the legitimate industry, they said the opposite about the *culture* of cannabis users. Robin summarized this view well:

You’re talking to an industry that’s based on a culture. We went from being cannabis consumers to now working in a business. Ten years ago, I would have lit up a joint in a room and we’d all be friends. I’ll still light up a joint, but now I’ll hand you my business card. There’s a difference when you take a culture and turn it into an industry. There wasn’t a restaurant culture before a restaurant industry.

Although the women were quick to distance themselves from the “stoner” label, they were also quick to keep the values they felt the label represented embedded in the identity of the cannabis industry. Mary explained that because most cannabis business owners were also users the industry had “a different ethos and vibe.” This “vibe” was often associated with stereotypical feminine traits, such as being caring, relationally oriented, or nurturing. Many women felt that this aspect of the cannabis industry was both cause and caused by having greater numbers of women in leadership. Lisa, who was also involved in a pro-cannabis political action committee, said, “The cannabis industry, women are not only at the forefront driving the boat, but we get to create something that has this emotional connection to our community, and it’s really, really cool.”

Many of the women I interviewed felt that an environment where connectivity and support was emphasized has encouraged women to take risks in a different way than they may in

other industries. They described feeling supported and encouraged to do things such as assume visible leadership positions, take financial risks, and advocate for cannabis law reform. For instance, Lucia had left a career as an engineering manager at a large technology firm to dedicate herself full-time to the cannabis industry, despite not yet having clients for her new business. She had attended many events for women in STEM and always felt that the encouragement she received was “complacent” about how much leadership she took on. She explained this was a different dynamic than she found at the events for women in cannabis. She said, “All we talk about, aside from being supportive of one another and learning from one another, is be leadership. Be the CEO. Go all out. Don’t sit behind the shade and learn this. Test your limits!”

Connecting to a Female Plant

The third frame women use to portray cannabis as a woman-friendly industry rested on tying the industry’s identity to an essentialist view of the product. They explained that the industry has an essential feminine nature because cannabis plants that are suitable for consumption are themselves female. Analyn, who was an entrepreneur and has launched products in many industries, said that of all her experiences, cannabis was the most “loving and accepting.” She explained, “It’s something about this plant really unleashed this inner knowing, this mindfulness. That’s why you see so many women entering this business. I’m so happy about that. It’s so different.” Olivia, an ex-school teacher who came to cannabis after her father died of cancer, echoed the sentiment that cannabis was particularly welcoming and supportive of women. She said, “The plant is female. There’s something to be said for that. It’s an entire industry based on a feminized plant.”

Others drew connections between cannabis and stereotypical feminine traits, reducing the association to the nature of females. Jackie explained the appeal of medical cannabis employment for women as “These plants are female in nature. And cannabis is very healing. And women, in general, are seen as the healers on earth versus men.” This view was echoed by Ari, who firmly believed in the divine-feminine nature of cannabis, calling it a “force plant.” She explained:

The reason why there’s a lot of women coming out in cannabis and being able to work in cannabis is because cannabis is the mother plant... It’s the mother plant speaking through us [women]. She’s a very loud plant, cannabis. She’s just getting her word out through us. She’s using women as the outlet because we can balance her a lot better than men can. Women who really understand the plant and plant medicine understand that this is a very powerful plant and she’s here speaking through humans. We’re doing work for her basically. She doesn’t have words. She has power, but no words. So, we have to be the words. Women understand that.

In sum, the women I interviewed justified their participation in cannabis by reframing it as an inherently feminine industry. Whereas occupational identity is generally evoked to lay claim to *exclusive* knowledge (Ashcraft et al 2012), women in cannabis drew on industry structure (or lack thereof), “cannabis culture,” and the sexual reproductive functions of the cannabis plant and to create the image of an *inclusive* field. This illustrates how essentialism is strategically used to manifest femininity in entrepreneurial occupations. Recent work has highlighted how women, especially business owners or those working in entrepreneurial fields, adopt highly feminized professional identities and emphasize gender-consistent traits of their daily work (Lewis 2013; Billing and Alvesson 2000). This is rooted in notions of gender essentialism—that women are being more “authentic” as professionals by taking a different approach to their work role.

People develop identities at work that communicate the value of what their work to themselves and others, which creates inclusion (Ashcraft 2007; Ashcraft et al 2012; Carper 1970). This is also collective, cementing an *occupational identity* that communicates the exclusive knowledge that members of that occupation possess. Both can reify difference. Entrepreneurial fields like cannabis, are generally associated with masculinity (Lewis 2013; Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio 2004; Billing and Alvesson 2000). Occupational identity contributes to sex segregation by creating an enduring association between a job and the kind of person who should be doing that work (i.e., *policeman*).

In this chapter, I analyzed the intersection of inclusion and exclusion in the cannabis industry through the lens of occupational identity. Cannabis, as a newly (and ambiguously) legal industry, offers a window into the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic because, although drug markets and entrepreneurial occupations have long excluded women, emerging cannabis markets in legal states have nearly equal representation between men and women in management and ownership positions. I focused on how women defined what it was to be a member of the cannabis industry, as well as how they framed the occupational identity of the legal cannabis industry.

The women I interviewed faced both internal and external challenges to being cannabis professionals. Many faced personal difficulty in their family relationships because they participated in cannabis. This was particularly true for mothers and women of color. However, the women insisted that cannabis was too important of an industry, or their passion for their work was too strong, to leave for a more conventional field. Despite the unique setting, these women also faced opposition from within the industry in the form of sexism and sexual harassment.

And despite these barriers, all of the women I spoke with strongly identified as cannabis *professionals*. They created new narratives of the cannabis industry that allowed them to present themselves as entrepreneurs and professionals, though not in the traditional sense. They did not adopt masculine models of entrepreneurialism, but rather emphasized the flexibility of the cannabis industry and the opportunity to create equality in a high-growth field. This narrative allowed them to overcome the barriers to the industry that created exclusion.

The women also redefined the industry in terms of inclusion, framing it as a uniquely feminine context. Like the funeral directors from the previous chapter, they recreated many of the same stereotypes that initially acted as barriers to entry, such as women being more sensitive, nurturing, and needed as mothers. They framed the occupational identity of cannabis in terms of the ambiguity of formal structures, the culture of cannabis users, and the genetic sex of the cannabis plant. These narratives were not mutually exclusive, but rather evoked at different times to insist that, despite their own personal challenges, cannabis was a field uniquely and naturally inclusive to women.

As was the case with funeral directing, these women used gender essentialism strategically to create inclusion in the cannabis industry. In this way, they were also “redoing” gender, but there are also distinctions between the way the dialectic was resolved in these cases. Notably, funeral directors used strategic ambiguity (McDonald and Kuhn 2016) to use gender essentialism to their advantage as it applied to their own personal behavior. Women in cannabis, on the other hand, applied gender essentialism to *reframe the identity* of the entire occupation. In other words, while funeral directors did not attempt to change the gendered meaning of funeral directing, women in cannabis did exactly this. In this way, the actions of women in cannabis more closely fit the definition of remedial work (see Gheradi 1994) under the umbrella of doing

gender; their breaches to the gender order were largely incidental (simply being in the occupation) rather than intentional, as was the case in funeral directing. Likewise, women in funeral directing were also intentional with redoing gender, asserting they were indeed *better* funeral directors than men. In contrast, women in cannabis used incidental aspects of the cannabis industry (e.g., the flower being biologically female) to create a narrative of inclusion. For these reasons, the method women in cannabis used to resolve the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic most closely resembles selection (McDonald and Kuhn 2016), simply choosing to rationalize cannabis as a feminine industry, rather than acknowledge gender transgressions.

Lewis (2013: 65) asked how the inconsistencies in women's professional narratives "challenges, changes, and yet sustains the dominant gender order." In this chapter, I showed how women must overcome obstacles related to the legal status of cannabis and the stereotypes of cannabis users to participate in the industry. However, the women also use the images of cannabis culture and the cannabis plant, as well as the ambiguity of cannabis as a legal industry to reframe it as a place where women belong. These inconsistencies both draw on gender stereotypes, though subvert traditional masculinity in emerging fields by allowing women to assert themselves *as women* rather than conform to a masculine norm.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I show how gender constitutes a limiting structure, acting as a barrier for women's inclusion in male-dominated fields. The analysis also shows how women actively create gendered roles in their workplaces. In addition, this research explores women's experience in occupations that have identities built around the exclusion of women. Here, the analysis reveals how women draw on gender in various ways to achieve inclusion at work. Overall, this research contributes to the literature depicting the workplace as a central context for reproducing gender ideologies, as well as to the studies connecting occupational identity to the idealized gendered and raced workers who take on those jobs (Ashcraft 2013).

As Stainback *et al.* (2016, p.22) claim, "Practically all qualitative research examining women and men at work has shown the reproduction of gender at work and how privilege and domination are actively recast and maintained by women and men rather than challenged." This assumes that *challenge* and *maintenance* are binary occurrences, and that actions accomplish either one or the other. In contrast, Ashcraft and her colleagues (2012) argue they are dialectal, managed through gendered occupational "branding" that draws certain kinds of people to certain kinds of jobs, linking the symbolism and materiality of occupations. This dialectic is driven by both the need for occupations to claim specialized knowledge and skill while employing a diverse workforce (Ashcraft et al 2012; Ashley and Empson 2016). This research supports the

dialectical argument by exploring and comparing the tension between disruption and maintenance in high tech professions, funeral directing, and cannabis cultivation and sales.

Too often, sociological research on the sex segregation of occupations has simply defined a field as segregated or not. At the core of much of this work is Kanter's (1977) theory of tokenism, where women in male-dominated jobs stand out, and, as a result of this visibility, are subject to negative consequences such as harassment and limited career trajectories. However, Kanter (1977) herself argued that the degree to which occupations are segregated is an important lens for analyzing women's experience in these jobs. The occupations under analysis in this dissertation represent a spectrum of segregation from the heavily skewed (tech), to tilted, but still male-dominated (funeral directing), to gender-balanced (cannabis). In examining occupations across this spectrum of segregation, I highlight the unique ways that women talk about inclusion, in part depending on how many other women are around them.

I have outlined both the discursive and interactional approaches women use to achieve a sense of inclusion in currently or formerly male-dominated fields. I presented and analyzed both the ways women characterized their relationship with others in their field, as well as *how* they defined their occupations and their roles within them. This often uncovered discrepancies between exclusion women experienced at work and their self-definitions of belonging in that workplace. I also highlighted the various ways women attempted to resolve the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic in their professions. In doing so, women drew on gender, which acted the primary reason for their exclusion, to talk about how and why they belonged in these occupations. In doing so, they sent a contradictory message. Many of these explanations simultaneously both challenged *and* maintained the notion of gender difference in their workplaces.

In Chapter four, I outlined how women in tech experience the invisibility of tokenism and managed exclusion in a heavily male-dominated setting throughout their careers. Far from an act of disappearance, women in tech sought out other women to challenge (white) male norms in computing. They strategically used separation (McDonald and Kuhn 2016) to create their own pathways into positions of power, which often meant founding their own tech companies. In this way, these women sought out and created invisibility with other women as a response to their experiences with visibility in the workplace. This created inclusion, not in their day-to-day activities at work, but through their status as a “woman in computing” in their interactions with affinity groups.

I explored gendered norms in Chapter five, using the funeral industry as a case for understanding how gender is both undone and redone in the workplace. The women funeral director also created new norms by self-defining their occupational skills in terms of their gender. While Kanter (1977) argued that women are “trapped” in gendered roles in the workplace, the women funeral directors I interviewed *trapped themselves*, or allowed others to trap them, and used this to argue for their inclusion. However, by doing so, they actively recreated the barriers that had originally created their exclusion. Women funeral directors resolved the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic through strategic ambiguity (McDonald and Kuhn 2016). They were able to lay claims to both sides of the paradox; they were diverse employees, and directly because of that often-marginalized status, they possessed special knowledge about how to provide the appropriate kind of care to the deceased and their loved one.

Finally, in Chapter six, I outlined how women in cannabis create inclusion by actively feminizing the image of their occupation. These women created narratives about their work that not only served to legitimize cannabis sales and cultivation as a career path, but as an appropriate

one for women. Emerging fields, such as legal cannabis, are generally associated with masculinity because of the focus on risk-taking and entrepreneurialism (Lewis 2013; Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio 2004; Billing and Alvesson 2000). Like the women funeral directors I interviewed, women in cannabis appropriated stereotypes about women to turn these terms into ones that focused on community and nurturing. Women in the cannabis industry resolved the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic through selection (McDonald and Kuhn 2016), choosing to elevate rationalizations that reframed cannabis as a feminine industry, rather than acknowledge gender transgressions and the marginalized history of women in both the drug trade and emerging fields.

In ways small or large, all of these women used gender essentialism to their advantage in some way. Just as England (2010) argued that the logics of essentialism and egalitarianism co-occur, the women I interviewed deeply desired to be seen as equals to their male co-workers, but at the same time either drew on or directly stated essentialist beliefs. In the case of tech, beliefs about gender essentialism were not blatant; however, women did seek inclusivity through other women. In part, this was likely a practical decision—other women may have been more apt to provide them with opportunities and support. However, most of the women I spoke with believed other women would give them better advice, listen more, or be able to teach them—all stereotypically feminine traits. Indeed, women are more likely to share personal problems and express emotion with their female friends (Cronin 2015; Sapadin 1988). In other words, friendship, including professional friendships, is one way women “do” gender.

In both funeral directing and the cannabis industry, narratives of gender essentialism were more overt. In both of these cases, women strategically employed essentialism as a way of arguing for egalitarianism. Although gender stereotypes have long been used to explain why

jobs are segregated (see Cundiff and Vescio 2016), in these cases, stereotypes were used to justify why they should not be segregated. Consistent with Ryazanov and Christenfeld's (2018) argument that essentialist thinking is not always detrimental to social group relations, the cases of cannabis and funeral directing seem to suggest that evoking gender essentialism can, at least sometimes, be a viable method for women to achieve inclusion in their careers. While supporting such beliefs may be detrimental outside of the workplace (for example, when running for office in a professional association), these women did seem to parse out situations when they felt gender essentialism should and should not be applied. In funeral directing, women applied essentialism to themselves, and only as it related to their ability to carry out certain functions of their job. They elevated the relative importance of care work within funeral directing, but did not fully attempt to redefine the work of a funeral director. In cannabis, women did not describe their own actions in essentialist terms, but rather applied concepts of stereotypical femininity to the meaning of their work. This suggests that occupations, separate from the workers within them, can have identities that draw on both essentialism and egalitarianism as well.

Undoubtedly, self-selection played a role for *why* the women I interviewed chose their careers. The sex-segregation of occupations is caused by both discrimination (which is the focus of this research), as well as a greater number of women *choosing* female-typed work (Ridgeway and Correll 2004). These seemingly voluntary choices are constrained by the identities of occupations and norms that push women into occupations that have a more feminine orientation (Cech 2013b; Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Cech (2013b) argues that women are more likely to be oriented to helping people and other emotion work, which often pushes them into female-dominated jobs. This perpetuates segregation, but in a way that allows women to think of their work as an extension of their own identities and self-expressions (Cech 2013b). However, the

women I interviewed did not describe their desire to join their careers in explicitly gendered terms. Women in tech expressed a love of problem-solving, the desire to be in a challenging career, as well as an acknowledgement of the lucrative salaries high tech jobs can offer. If anything, they *degendered* the actual work they were doing and why they wanted to do it. In cannabis, the women I spoke with were users, most often recreationally, but some out of medical necessity. Their involvement with legal cannabis as a career was a direct result of their use, which was not described in gendered terms. Funeral directing was a mixed case. Common explanations for becoming a funeral director were the desire to be in an occupation that they felt would not be impacted by market fluctuations (people still die in a recession), their religious beliefs, as well as wanting to help others through a difficult life transition. This care work could easily be self-selection into feminized work, but it was not the only narrative offered, nor the dominant one.

Women's ability to successfully draw on essentialism for inclusion, in part, seemed to depend on how many other women other women worked in the occupation. In tech, nearly all of the women I interviewed had experienced being the only woman in their classrooms or on a team in the workplace. Gender stereotypes that women are "naturally" less inclined toward engineering were rampant, and women, even founders and managers, were constantly at odds with this perception. They drew on gender only to the extent that they found inclusion through friendships and mentoring with other women. In funeral directing, where women had some contact with other women without seeking it out, they made the case that being a woman gave them an advantage in how they carried out their work. In cannabis, women used essentialism to talk about the occupational identity of the legal cannabis industry. While this may not be fully explained by the gender composition of these occupations, neither can it rest solely on the

content of the work. All three occupations, including tech (which is often thought of as carried out in isolation), involved significant amounts of so-called “soft-skills,” considered stereotypically feminine, such as client interaction and teamwork. In each of the three occupations, women had significant client-facing roles. However, women in tech elevated these aspects of their jobs in relation to their gender the least, and women in cannabis the most.

Interestingly, the relative severity of discrimination was inversely related to how often women drew on essentialism: the fewer barriers women faced, the more likely they were to evoke essentialism as an argument for inclusion. The degree to which occupations are segregated also affected the degree of negativity women experienced as a result of their visibility. Kanter (1977) theorized that as more women (or other minority groups) joined a group, ability would start to influence an individual’s treatment more than demographic factors. This more or less held true in my research. In tech, the skewed occupation, where Kanter (1977) argued tokenism would be the most acute, women experienced severe sexism in the form of harassment, silencing, and even sexual assault. In the tilted occupation, funeral directing, harassment was still commonplace, but sexism was usually subtler, for example, assuming women could not lift a heavy object. Women in cannabis, the balanced occupation, still experienced sexism, contrary to Kanter’s (1977) assertion. However, this was generally limited to the ability to enter the occupation and usually eased once they were established within it. Moreover, Kanter’s (1977) research was limited to a single organization, rather than occupations spread across countless organizations. My research shows that many of the same dynamics still hold true with the ability to relatively identify with other women in one’s occupational group (even if no personal connection existed), and not just in organizations where relationships are more immediate.

Some have argued that women's mere presence in male-dominated fields is transformative. For example, Kelan (2010) argued that women's entry into a male-dominated occupation helps to shape the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic by disrupting the bond between an occupation and its ideal worker. This challenges the underlying gender norms that segregate jobs in the first place (Deutsch, 2007; Kelan, 2010). By being in these jobs, women will do traditionally masculine tasks (e.g., program software, carry dead bodies, or grow cannabis). Butler (2004; 1999) argues this also disrupts the norms of exclusivity by weakening the link between the category of "female" and femininity. However, others have argued that women in non-traditional roles can serve to maintain hegemonic masculinity (Mojola, 2014; Wolkomir, 2012; Irvine and Vermilya, 2010; Silva, 2008; Miller, 2004). My research contributes to this literature by showing how women can parse out gendered behavior, supporting gendered beliefs in some contexts, while challenging them in others. Ainsworth and her colleagues (2014) argued that women construct multiple versions of femininity at work, with some performances of femininity being relatively important in gendered hierarchies. The women I interviewed did value femininity at work, and far from being detrimental to their careers, believed that it was exactly what helped them succeed. However, by supporting these ideas, they may support the ongoing exclusion of women in their careers.

Ashley and Empson (2016) asked how the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic is sustained given an occupation's need to claim both specialized knowledge and a diverse workforce. Gender, as a concept, is undoubtedly one factor. Drawing on stereotypical gender views allows women to both claim specialized knowledge as someone outside of the typical worker and challenge dominant gender norms within the occupation. These stereotypical views are both inclusive and exclusive, depending on one's perspective. Women's presence within these

occupations did cause their male peers to react to work situations in different ways. Sometimes, women also knowingly served as diversity tokens representing their respective careers.

However, they claimed exclusivity in two ways. First, they felt they were equally as competent as men in these careers and gender should not be a factor in how well they could execute their job duties. Second, they claimed exclusivity *as women* who could do these tasks by placing value on femininity in different forms. In the words of Hill Collins (2000) and Luft and Ward (2009), sometimes discourses are better characterized through a “both/and” lens rather than “either/or.”

Ashcraft et al (2012) argue that occupations have an empirically observable tension between inclusivity and exclusivity, which they frame as a dialectic. Whereas a Hegelian dialectic has a thesis and antithesis that results in a synthesis, the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic is framed as an intervening force between so-called “absence” and “presence” views of occupational sex segregation. The absence view, expressed by Kanter (1977), views women’s exclusion as a deficit that can be rectified by more women joining a given occupation or organization. The presence view argues that exclusive professions—that is, work of high value—is work that women do not do. In other words, if there is a predominately female or feminized field, it will become lower in status. Instead, Ashcraft and her colleagues (2012) make the case that inclusion and exclusion are ever evolving, positioning both absence and presence against an Other, which does not have a universal definition in all occupations, but is shared among all occupations that claim a distinct form of knowledge. Ashcraft et al (2012:472) state the dialectic is “a tense yet undetermined relation whose contours cannot be known in the abstract — hence, our call for empirical inquiry into how the tension is (and has been) managed in particular contexts.”

In this dissertation, I defined the Other, and how it was managed, in three unique occupations that varied by degree of segregation. I framed how these women encountered, and attempted to resolve, the tensions that arose as a result of the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic. In all cases, women were encouraging of other women to join and were not necessarily concerned about feminization bringing down their pay or status. This may be partially due to these occupations being relatively high-pay, as well as the perception in all three that there was growth and relative economic security for these fields in the future. Another explanation could be that concerns about feminization may arise as a second-tier concern to feelings of exclusion. Additionally, the Other, defined by women in these fields, was undoubtedly gendered. In tech, the Other was the masculine image and culture of computing, which locked the women I interviewed out of power and status. In funeral directing, the Other was steeped in the tension between the emotional toll of their work, the solemn (and masculine) cultural construct of the “undertaker,” and the need to empathize with families in a time of need. In cannabis, the Other was larger cultural norms about what is taboo for women. In other words, the tension was resolved by taking on the specific cultural constructs of masculinity as it was defined in these fields. Women did this by creating new definitions of how their work should be gendered, which varied in degree of how much they drew on gender essentialist logic.

CONTRIBUTIONS

In this research, I moved beyond a binary conception of inclusion and exclusion at work. Similar to England (2010), I showed how essentialism and egalitarianism can co-exist. While England (2010) argued this was the case in societal ideas, I revealed similar processes at both the occupational and individual levels. Inclusivity and exclusivity in occupations are reinforcing. I

documented the complexities of gender at work, showing both how women challenged gendered notions of what women can and cannot do, but also how those challenges were constrained and incomplete. In challenging gendered barriers, these women also recreated them.

In arguing that women used essentialism for equality, some may claim that these women were not really empowered at all, and that their sense of inclusion was an illusion. I would disagree. I argue instead that by refraining from placing women's actions in a dichotomy of empowering or not empowering, we can begin to focus on the lived experiences of women making inroads into segregated fields. All of the women in this research certainly felt empowered *as women* in their occupations and were proponents of supporting other women's entry and success in these fields. Though they drew on essentialism, their lived experience was certainly a positive one. In the most extreme case presented here, the tech industry, it seemed the *only* way women felt supported was through their relationships with other women.

This research also expands on the concept of transgressiveness at work. All the women in this research had breached the normative gender order. Sometimes, it was incidental, through their presence in a male-dominated occupation. Other times it was deliberate and thought out, as was the case with the computer programmer who started a group to address difficulties women in tech face at her school after discouraging classroom experiences. In each chapter, I outlined *how* women breach dominant norms. Transgressiveness at work is context dependent (Muhr et al 2016). However, intent, rather than content, is one important factor when considering whether a gender transgression leads to lasting change (McGrath 2009; Lorber 2001). In this research, women were able to transgress gender in ways that created meaningful change for them. Often, these changes helped them stay in their occupations, even when the content of the transgressions

did not challenge dominant gender norms. In this way, gender transgressions can be viewed as challenging context-specific gender norms, not just societal or structural definitions of gender.

This work also provided a unique empirical contact for the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic. Whereas other work has focused on long-term shifts in the gender norms of an occupation (e.g., Ashley and Empson 2016; Ashcraft et al. 2012; Lewis and Simpson 2012), this research focused on how women managed these tensions *in situ*. I captured the specific mechanisms by which women were able to challenge exclusivity and achieve a feeling of inclusivity. I showed how these techniques both allowed women to respond to gendered power within their workplaces and confront the masculine identities of their occupations, as well how some of these actions may play a role in maintaining gender segregation. Although I did provide background information on each of the occupation included in this research, historical trends were not the focus of this work. This leaves open the possibility that forces that drive long-term trends in the gender composition of an occupation may be distinct from those that affect women's ability to feel included in those occupations at any given time.

FUTURE RESEARCH

In this research, I asked how the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic was resolved in occupations that vary in degree of segregation. I touched on many aspects of gender discourses and transgressions. My work has implications for future research in the field of gender, work, and occupations.

First, this research should be expanded to include a specific examination of when and how women of color draw on gender to achieve inclusion. While I did make an effort to include

women of color in this research, the sample is predominantly white. Women of color experience gender and sex segregation at work differently than white women (Hodari, Ong, Ko, and Smith 2016; Hill Collins 2000; Schultz 1990). Research has suggested that women of color with strong womanist attitudes experience less distress from workplace harassment (Velez, Cox, Polihronakis, and Moradi 2018). However, an intersectional analysis of how womanism can be a protective factor from the negative effects of tokenism due to *both* race and gender, as well as the role race plays in how women discursively resolve the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic, is not well documented in the extant literature.

Second, the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic has been studied in current or formerly male-dominated occupations. Little extant research indicates how it may operate in traditionally feminine occupations, like nursing or teaching. It is well documented that men (particularly white men) in feminized fields, despite being tokens, ride what Williams (1995) called a “glass escalator,” easily finding paths to promotions and better work assignments (see also Pullen and Simpson 2009; Henson and Rodgers 2001; Maume 1999; Floge and Merrill 1986). Therefore, there is reason to believe that even in fields where they are the numerical and cultural majority, women still experience exclusion in some form. While research has tended to focus on the benefits for men, the literature would benefit from studies that explore the gender dynamics for women.

Finally, future research should focus on the role of male allies in the inclusivity-exclusivity dialectic. A small but growing body of literature examines how men can act as allies to women in male-dominated occupations, helping them to overcome sexism and acting as an advocate to other men to stop harassment (see Drury and Kaiser 2014). My research has shown that women evoke essentialism and stereotypical views of gender to achieve inclusion.

However, if *men* evoke essentialism, it may be perceived differently and have very different consequences.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WOMEN IN TECH

Tell me a little about yourself.

What got you interested in CS?

- College major?
- Consider switching majors?
- Supportive/encouraging during education? Discouraging?

When you were looking for your first job, what were you looking for out of a workplace?

- Any jobs you stayed away from?
- Is that the kind of work you ended up doing?
- Favorite part of work?
- Did things change as you moved out of entry level?

In work or school, did you ever experience sexism or racism?

What are your biggest supports at work?

- Co-workers?
- Support from managers/supervisors?

What advice would you give a woman interested in the tech industry?

Anything else important to add?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WOMEN FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Why did you decide to become a funeral director?

Were there any religious influences? Cultural values? Social values?

Any important life experiences that shaped your decision to become a director? Any important experiences with death?

Did you hold any jobs prior to becoming a funeral director?

Do you see any connection between previous work and work as a funeral director?

Did past employment help you? Has it hurt you in any ways?

What training did you receive to become a funeral director?

Did you complete an apprenticeship or go to college?

Was your overall training experience positive or negative? Why?

What was good about this training? What was bad?

How would you describe your basic work duties as a funeral director?

What are some business elements?

What are some caretaker elements?

Which role is more important and why?

How do you think the elements of business and caretaking interfere with each other?

Can they help each other?

What skills/attributes are the most important being a funeral director?

Which do you have the most of/least of?

Have you ever experienced sexism at work?

- Racism?

How is your work treated by your friends and family?

What is your relationship with the business/industry?

How are you treated by customers? Are you treated differently than men?

What advice would you give other women entering the funeral industry?

Anything else to add?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WOMEN IN CANNABIS

First, can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your business?

What, if anything, did you do for work before opening your business?

What made you decide to open your own dispensary/cultivation business?

- Different from before legalization?

How did your friends and family react when you said you were opening a marijuana business?
Was it a controversial decision?

What were some challenges you faced when you first opened your business? What were some successes? Do you think these would have been different if you opened a non-marijuana related business?

How did you go about building your staff? What were you looking for in your team? How did you go about building your customer base?

What are your relationships with customers like?

- Gender/race?

What are the biggest issues you face as a business owner? What do you think could be changed to fix those issues? On the other hand, what is the marijuana industry doing to support small business owners? Anything specific supports for women?

Are you involved in any business association, marijuana specific or not? What have been your experiences within those associations? How would you describe your professional connections? Can you describe your interactions with other business owners?

- Role of gender/race?

Do you think you've ever experienced sexism as a business owner/manager? Can you tell me about that?

- Racism?

Were you (or are you still) involved with marijuana legalization efforts? How are your experiences as an advocate similar or different from your experiences as a marijuana business owner?

What advice would you give to a woman considering opening up a marijuana-related business?

Anything else we didn't talk about that you think it is important to know about women in the marijuana industry?

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Tech Respondents

	Respondent	Race/Ethnicity	Career Pathway	Workplace Type	State
1	Annie	White	Switcher	Founder, Start-Up	MN
2	Starr	White	Switcher	Start-Up	CO
3	Barbara	White	Switcher	Mid-Size	KY
4	JJ	White	In-Betweenener	Start-Up, formerly at large tech company	CO
5	Kathy	White	Switcher	Start-Up	CO
6	Maura	White	Persister	Medium-Large	CO
7	Toni	White	Switcher	Start-Up	CO
8	Billie	White	Persister	Medium, previous at tech giant	CO
9	Michelle	White	Switcher	Medium	CO
10	Kareena	South Asian	Persister	Start-Up, previous at tech giant	TX
11	Kamala	South Asian	Persister	Medium-Large	CO
12	Camilla	Hispanic	In-Betweenener	Start-Up, previous at tech giant, previous founder	CA
13	Jasmine	White	In-Betweenener	Founder- Start-Up, previous at tech giant	CA
14	Jeanne	Asian	Persister	Start-Up	CA
15	Azra	Middle-Eastern	Switcher	Start-Up	NY
16	Jessica	White	Switcher	Start-Up	NY
17	Ela	Middle-Eastern	Persister	Large	CA
18	Natasha	Black	In-Betweenener	Founder, Start-Up	CA
19	Gillian	Asian	Switcher	Founder, Start-Up	IL
20	Tyler	Asian	In-Betweenener	Start-Up	IL
21	Olive	White	Switcher	Founder, Start-Up	NY
22	Britney	Asian	Persister	Founder, Start-Up	NY

23	Louise	White	Switcher	Founder, Start-Up	CO
24	Pagett	Asian	Persister	Tech Giant	CA
25	Ling	Asian	Persister	Medium	CA
26	Tess	White	Persister	Founder, Start-Up	CA
27	Unquoted Respondent 1	South Asian	In-Betweener	Founder, Start-Up	CA
28	Unquoted Respondent 2	South Asian	In-Betweener	Founder, Start-Up	CA
29	Unquoted Respondent 3	White	In-Betweener	Founder, Start-Up	CA
30	Unquoted Respondent 4	Middle-Eastern	Persister	Founder, Start-Up; Former tech giant	WA
31	Unquoted Respondent 5	White	In-Betweener	Founder, Start-Up	NY
32	Unquoted Respondent 6	White	In-Betweener	Start-Up	CA
33	Unquoted Respondent 7	South Asian	Persister	Tech Giant	CA
34	Unquoted Respondent 8	White	Persister	Medium	CA
35	Unquoted Respondent 9	White	Persister	Start-Up, former tech giant	CA
36	Unquoted Respondent 10	White	Switcher	Start-Up	IL

Funeral Directing Respondents

Respondent	Race/Ethnicity	Specific Job Role	Funeral Home Type	State
Sarah	White	Funeral Director	Family-Owned	CO
Melanie	Black	Funeral Director and Embalmer	Family-Owned	TX
Jennifer	White	Funeral Director	Owner- Small Business	LA
Rachel	Black	Funeral Director and Embalmer	Family-Owned	NC
Becky	White	Funeral Director	Owner- Small Business	CO
Lisa	White	Funeral Director and Embalmer	Unemployed at time of interview- previous SCI	KY
Faith	White	Funeral Director	Family-Owned	CA
Stephanie	White	Funeral Director	Family-Owned	Current EU- previous NY
Debbie	Asian	Funeral Director and Embalmer	Family-Owned	GA

Amber	White	Funeral Director and Embalmer	SCI	CO
Vera	Hispanic	Funeral Director and Embalmer	Family-Owned	IL
Mary	White	Funeral Director and Burial Park Owner	Owner- Small Business	TX
Heather	White	Funeral Director	Family-Owned	KY
Kendall	White	Funeral Director and “Death Doula”	Owner- Small Business	Current, Canada; Previous CA
Unquoted Respondent 1	White	Funeral Director and Embalmer	Family-Owned	WY
Unquoted Respondent 2	White	Funeral Director and Embalmer	SCI	WA
Unquoted Respondent 3	Black	Funeral Director and Embalmer	SCI	TX
Unquoted Respondent 8	White	Funeral Director and Embalmer	Family-Owned	KY
Unquoted Respondent 9	White	Funeral Director and Embalmer	Family-Owned	KS

Cannabis Respondents⁴

Respondent	Race/Ethnicity	Job Function	Involved Before Legalization?
Lucia	Hispanic/Mexican American	Cultivation	Yes- growing and using
Jackie	White	Cultivation and Distribution	Yes- using
Emily	White	Cultivation and Sales	Yes- using
Robin	White	Sales	Yes- using
Mary	White	Cultivation	Yes- growing and using
Miriam	White	Cultivation and Sales	Yes- using
Alex	White	Cultivation and Education	Yes- growing and using
Olivia	White	Sales and Education	No
Stephanie	White	Cultivation, Testing and Certification	Yes- using
Grace	White	Cultivation and Sales	Yes- growing and using
Ari	White	Cultivation and Sales	Yes- growing and using
Heather	White	Sales	Yes- using
Gaby	White	Cultivation and Medical Research	No
Analyn	South Asian	Cultivation and Sales	Yes- growing and using

⁴ Some states have issued very few licenses for legal cannabis production. Identifying a woman in these states, or the company size, could be identifying information for some of these women, especially when combined with other personal information included in this research. For this reason, I have opted not to disclose the location or company size for this chapter.

Lisa	White	Cultivation and Sales	Yes-using
Unquoted Respondent 1	Black	Large-Scale Sales	Yes- using
Unquoted Respondent 2	White	Cultivation	Yes- growing and using
Unquoted Respondent 3	White	Cultivation and Sales	Yes- using
Unquoted Respondent 4	White	Sales	Yes- Using
Unquoted Respondent 5	White	Cultivation	Yes- growing and using

APPENDIX E

OCCUPATIONAL STATISTICS

	Total Persons Employed in the U.S. (2016)	Median Salary	Percent Female Employment
Computer Occupations ⁵	4,238,400	\$80,028	20%
Funeral Directors and Morticians ⁶	141,000	\$51,850 base + commission	25%
Cannabis Industry ⁷	230,000	\$81,000-\$103,000 ⁸	40%

⁵ BLS 2016 and BLS 2016b

⁶ BLS 2016 and BLS 2016b

⁷ Berke 2018 and Adams 2018

⁸ Salary data for cultivators and sales managers