

A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

BECOMING THE BYSTANDER: A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

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By

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the
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BECOMING THE BYSTANDER: A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

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A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

*This project is dedicated to the memory of
Tyson Gordon
(1987-2009)*

*And to the future of Ivy Rose
(2022-present)*

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In 2017, I quit my corporate sales job and left my family, my girlfriend, my dog, and everything I knew to be life for 31 years. When I got to Columbia, I wanted to leave the next day. I was scared. I was terrified that I was not smart enough, I missed my dog, that I didn't want to do this, and most importantly, I was scared that I would like it enough to stay. I was scared to leave my life and, in my mind, start over. I walked around campus the first two weeks before classes start. I tried to find reasons to hate it here. I would go to buildings and just sit. I remember walking into the Newman Center and looking for an omen that would tell me to leave and go back home. When I walked up the stairs, I heard "My Sweet Lord" by George Harrison playing through an office door.

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“Someday everything is gonna sound like a rhapsody, when I paint my masterpiece,” –

Bob Dylan

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BECOMING THE BYSTANDER: A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

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ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment has been a continuous problem in the workplace. Previous research that postulates bystander intervention through an interpersonal lens need to be reevaluated. Critical-Interpretive assumptions about power and social interactions suggest there are deeper, more complex reasons for intervention/nonintervention. I argue that there are values and systems of meaning that are enacted in organizations that encourage or discourage bystander intervention. Furthermore, I argue that sexual harassment is an organizational cultural issue that explains how sexual harassment becomes normalized, and how these behaviors are sustained through nonintervention. This study used a phenomenological approach to capture the essence of the bystander experiences. Using interviews, this study explained bystander intervention by combining literature on organizational culture and Trans-MOC. From the data, three major themes emerged: fear, (dys)function, and organizational consequences.

Chapter 1: Becoming the Bystander: A Cultural Phenomenon

In 1964, New York city native, Catherine “Kitty” Genovese, was murdered in front of her apartment building. While walking to her apartment building, she was stabbed twice in the back. After yelling for help, the attacker, Winston Moseley, fled the scene (Rosenthal, 2015). For 10 minutes, Kitty was in a pool of her blood, waiting for help. Even though several tenants witnessed this attack, no one came to Kitty’s aide. The only person to return was the attacker, who not only continued to repeatedly stab Catherine, but raped and stole the \$49 she had earned waitressing earlier in the night (Rosenthal, 2015). With over 30 stab wounds, Catherine died in front of her apartment building. What makes this murder unique is 38 bystanders sat and watched Catherine plead for help before she died. No one called the police, no one intervened, and no one tried to stop the attacker.

This event sparked interest for researchers to understand why no one approached the scene or made any effort at intervention (Rosenthal, 2015). Nonintervention allows behaviors, such as the killing of Kitty, to sustain and go unchecked. In a similar phenomenon, sexual harassment happens frequently in the workplace, but bystander intervention does not. By the time students reach middle school, 80% will have experienced or witnessed some type of sexual harassment (Lichty & Campbell, 2012). With over 50% of medical residents experiencing harassment by their patients (Schnapp et al., 2016), and over 35% of women experiencing harassment at work (Rubino et al., 2018), the problem continues. Unfortunately, sexual harassment has been present in many organizations, making its way into churches, doctor’s offices, schools, news stations, and many more places. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

(EEOC, 2021a) reported over 13,000 cases, with three-fourths of targets failing to report.

I argue that sexual harassment is still a large problem in organizations, threatening stability, security, and safety. Sexual harassment is a prevalent and untamed problem.

Society has acknowledged that there is an issue with sexual harassment that takes place in organizations but acknowledging the issues does not yield a solution. Also, acknowledging the problem through an incorrect lens yields an incorrect solution. Researchers must come to a collective understanding that sexual harassment is much deeper than an interpersonal issue between a perpetrator and a target. Instead, sexual harassment in the workplace is effectuated by organizational communication. The issue continues because sexual harassment becomes engrained in organizations, producing functionality for its members. Dougherty (2001) found that organizational members will use sexual harassment to de-stress and build comradery, which explains, at least in part, how sexual harassment continues in organizations and becomes a normalized part of the culture (See Hennekam & Bennett, 2017).

Organizational members normalize sexual harassment because they fear disruption of their ways of interacting within the culture. For example, Dougherty and Goldstein-Hode (2016) found that organizational actors interpret anti-sexual harassment policies in ways that encourages sexual harassment to continue. I suggest more solutions should be created to help the mitigation of sexual harassment within organizations. There needs to be a deeper look into the complexities of the behaviors that go past the interpersonal dyad of the perpetrator and the target. The inclusion of bystander's perception of sexual harassment is a useful perspective given that bystanders engage in organizational cultural norms. The sustainment and enactment of sexual harassment

continue because bystanders participate in organizational norms—even norms that are destructive (See Linnekluecke & Griffiths, 2010). Building on Dougherty and Goldstein-Hode (2016), bystander intervention will take place if intervention is an enacted and normalized value of the organization. I also believe that bystanders will engage in behaviors that are most aligned with the organizational culture. For example, if the organizational culture views sexual harassment as a constructive behavior, bystander intervention will be limited or nonexistent.

This creates the question: Why do bystanders intervene in sexual harassment? The communicative abilities of the bystander, and their capability of intervention, lie within the backdrop of organizational culture (Keyton, 2010). Researchers have suggested that organizational culture is central to understanding sexual harassment in the workplace (See Dougherty, 2001; Herovic et al., 2019; Keyton et al., 2001), but have yet to apply this concept to bystander intervention.

As I have previously mentioned, Dougherty and Goldstein-Hode (2016) found that organizational members were fearful of policies that stopped sexual harassment. The authors found that members would reinterpret policies in a way that allowed them to reinforce the culture of harassment. Organizational Members within the study feared that these policies would cease their day-to-day interactions and damage their interpersonal relationships. Dougherty and Sorg (2020) found that organizational cultures can be viewed through a dichotomous lens. Some organizations create constructive cultures that support targets and punish perpetrators. However, on the other end of this dichotomy, some organizations produce destructive cultures that ostracize the target, diminishing their claims, while idealizing the predator (Dougherty & Sorg, 2020). From this research,

I argue that bystanders are culturally produced by the communication that is used by organizational members.

The Purpose

Current research on bystander intervention assumes that sexual harassment is enacted through interpersonal communication. An interpersonal communication lens is myopic to the nuanced organizational cultural dynamics of bystander intervention. The purpose of this study is to explore bystander intervention as a production of organizational culture. If researchers continue to view sexual harassment as an interpersonal issue, we will fail understand how bystanders face organizational complexities. Bystanders are constantly exposed to cultural beliefs, rules, and assumptions (Schein, 1991).

In this chapter, I explore bystander behavior, how sexual harassment is an organizational problem, organizational culture as framework for understanding bystander intervention, the Trans-MOC model, and theoretical, social, and practical implications of this study. First, I analyze bystander behavior by defining what it is and how this document can advance existing theories.

Understanding Bystander Behavior

Defining Bystander Intervention

Sexual harassment is not isolated in its connection to bystander intervention. Bystander intervention is commonly researched to understand psychological experiences (See Debnam & Mauer, 2021), online bullying (See Brody, 2021), workplace bullying (See Biçer, 2022; Dal Cason et al., 2020; Thompson et al., 2020), and healthcare (Grubic et al., 2022). The phenomenon of bystander intervention is rooted in the latter part of the

expression: intervention. Intervention is defined by Merriam-Webster (2023) as “the act of interfering with the outcome or course, especially of a condition or process” (n.p.). The definition states that intervention is grounded by the condition in which the behavior occurs. Referencing bullying, harassment, and violence, intervention would attempt to stop these behaviors. Therefore, intervention is contextually understood based on the situation in which the experience takes place. Bystanders are those who are present in these situations and observe the experiences unfolding (Banyard et al., 2019). Bystander intervention, then, are the actions, or lack of actions, observers engage in to stop or prevent unwanted behaviors. In this project, I looked at the actions that were taken by workplace employees that observed sexual harassment.

The definition of bystander intervention is an essential element that describes my entire argument. The act of intervention is contextually framed and assumes that bystanders can prevent certain actions from taking place and limit outcomes from these actions. I am skeptical to the expected agency authors’ advocate regarding intervention. Therefore, I make the following argument.

The Argument

I argue the role of the bystander is limited and it is a reflection, product, and representation of the organizational culture and the normalized patterns of communication. These patterns are developed and sustained by employee-to-employee conversations. Communication that gives meaning to policies, documents, training, and even punishment influences the intervention in which bystanders can engage. For example, there may be written policies and organizational training that are meant to stop sexual harassment but are useless if they are not supported and enacted as part of the

organizational culture. Standard sexual harassment policies, regardless of how carefully they are constructed, tend to be interpreted in ways that reinforce the organizational culture (Dougherty & Goldstein-Hode, 2016).

Previous researchers who have studied bystander intervention, frame the bystander as one who can make decisions that account for organizational obstacles and limitations (See McDonald et al., 2016; Nickerson et al., 2014). The exclusion of cultural influence and organizational restraint limits the understanding of bystander behavior. Also, previous researchers have failed to see the different norms that are produced by organizational communication and change from organization to organization.

The lack of connection between organizational culture and bystander research demonstrates the need to see the bystander as someone the culture develops, rather than someone the culture includes. Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly (2005) advanced the claim that bystanders are able actors who have organizational agency, stating that bystanders will choose how to intervene and to what extent. Yet, they misunderstand that bystander agency is constrained by the cultural norms in the organization.

A larger meaning system is established when members of the organization develop an understanding of these policies and the surrounding discourses (Kirby & Krone, 2002). For example, Kirby and Krone (2002) found that discourses around certain policies were more powerful than the policy. The authors found that organizations have extended maternity leave for their employees. However, discourses within the organization gave a negative meaning to members who take longer absences because it put a burden on other employees. As a result, members would take shorter maternity leaves to be consistent with the organizational culture. Parallel to this, an organization

may have policies to stop sexual harassment, but discourses will shape expectations for their members (Dougherty & Goldstein-Hode, 2016).

Discourses and organizational patterns are given meaning in the organization based on how they give agency and power. However, power is based on the knowledge that is attained by the bystander. Harris (2017) found a difference in mandated reporting based on how participants viewed and understood sexual harassment and other behaviors. The classification for sexual harassment was different between organizational members and tended to shift based on who was being reported. The inconsistency of reporting suggests people benefit, or lose organizational benefits, if they bring light to sexual harassment.

I suggest that bystanders participate in conversations around the specific events, become aware of the cultural discourses around these events (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), and make decisions they believe support organizational meanings (Dougherty, 2023). As a result, bystanders prevent policies from being effective because they are actively engaged in the cultural values and norms of the organization. Therefore, researchers need to understand the communicative issues surrounding discourse(s) in organizations to fully understand the role the bystander has when viewing, perceiving, and labeling a behavior as sexual harassment.

Alvesson and Karreman (2000) describe organizational communication outcomes more specifically as the impact discourse has on organizational members. These outcomes directly influence organizational behaviors. As I have previously mentioned, the day-to-day interactions as well as the larger meaning systems (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000) produce these behaviors, but they do in a complex, longer-lasting manner.

Alvesson and Karreman (2000) stated that organizational discourses imply social as well as physiological implications within the organization which serve as predetermined, expected outcomes of individual behaviors, due to organizational control (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) placed on the individual. This control leads to enforcing behaviors within the organization, such as sexual harassment.

Researchers must consider organizational culture to shift research in a direction that looks at bystander intervention in a more inclusive way so as to uncover the complexities of this phenomenon. The cultural development of patterned and persistent behaviors demonstrates how these behaviors become normalized within an organization (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010; Dougherty, 2023). There is a need for researchers to see how sexual harassment and bystander behaviors become circulated, sustained, and standardized within the organization through discourse(s). Therefore, I argue that bystander intervention needs to be studied as not only a behavior but as a culturally developed product of the discourses used within the organization.

By looking at existing theory, I build an argument that bystander intervention is a problem that cannot be looked entirely through an interpersonal communication lens.

Existing Theory and its Problem

Across the literature, most of the research around bystander intervention is viewed through the model created by Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005). The author's model was universally created to understand bystander intervention and its fundamental level. The dynamic of the model is positioned on an X-Y axis of High/Low and Involvement/Immediacy. Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005) suggest bystanders choose their interaction based on high/low levels of involvement and immediacy. The

authors view sexual harassment as an interpersonal issue that can be solved through more interpersonal communication. For example, a High-Involvement/High-Immediacy intervention tactic would be the bystander telling the perpetrator to stop the harassment. A bystander who tells the target to avoid the harasser would be on the opposite end of the model, Low-Involvement/Low-Immediacy.

These interactions are fundamentally created through more communication which is not always possible or effective. I believe the authors are optimistic, yet unrealistic, regarding bystander behavior. The assumptions suggested by this model are a) bystanders have the power to intervene, b) there are zero consequences for intervention, and c) sexual harassment is viewed collectively the same in the organization. These assumptions cannot be analyzed through an interpersonal lens. To draw conclusions to these assumptions, bystander intervention needs to be viewed through an organizational communication lens.

Sexual Harassment is an Organizational Communication Problem

I suggest that the current problem of bystander nonintervention in sexual harassment is an organizational communication issue. More specifically, this is an organizational cultural issue. Previous authors stated interpersonal communication is the reason why bystanders fail to intervene (See Darley & Latané, 1968; Latané & Rodin, 1969; Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). I suggest that the reason bystanders are resistant to intervention once experiencing sexual harassment is not an interpersonal issue, but an outcome of organizational culture. Of course, bystander intervention occurs at an interpersonal level, but to better understand the discourse and interactions that unfold at this level is through the culture in which sexual harassment continues.

Academics have continued to suggest new ways of finding solutions to sexual harassment but have failed to fully see the issue as cultural, failing to see how organizational behaviors become expectations for employees (Deetz, 1982).

Organizations may have policies, rules, or stated values, but the organizational culture will trump these cultural artifacts; their ability to produce change and sustain behaviors is only effective if permitted by the organizational culture (See Dougherty & Holdstein-Gode, 2016). Kirby and Krone (2002) found that although organizations have policies that allow members to take a designated time off for maternity leave, organizational members may feel pressured into taking only enough time that was accepted by the organizational culture and organizational discourse. Dougherty (2023), defined organizational culture as:

the shared communicative process through which meanings are constantly employed, negotiated, and contested to create a stable communication environment within which organizational life becomes patterned and persistent over time. Organizational cultures are always power-laden and function to reproduce organizational values and outcomes. (pp. 4-5).

Using this definition of organizational culture creates an understanding of sexual harassment and bystander intervention at a deeper level. Based on this definition of organizational culture, organizational behaviors are guided by cultural norms within the organization that encourage favored behaviors. I use this definition to explain how sexual harassment is a product of the organizational culture that is developed by the shared process among members (Dougherty, 2023). Therefore, research needs to recognize that bystanders do not have the agency to intervene at will. In the following section, I begin to

demonstrate how organizational culture guides organizational behaviors. By doing so, I push the argument that organizational agency—bystanders being *able* to intervene—relies heavily on the culture’s rejection or acceptance of sexual harassment and how meaning is created around the behaviors. Moreover, if sexual harassment is an accepted norm, that communicatively has a purpose within the organization, based on the definition of culture, bystander intervention will not occur.

Organizational Culture as a Framework

The development of sexual harassment, and specifically the bystander, are deeper, more complex issues than has been previously analyzed. Sexual harassment is guided by organizational culture. Being aware of organizational culture and its influence will help. Dougherty (2023) stated that organizations are created by communication. The communication that is used in daily interactions (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010) develops contextualized communication and organizational culture. In turn, we see expectations of thoughts and behaviors occur that are more aligned with the organizational culture. I propose three assumptions of organizational culture that will guide this study as well as serve as an overarching view to approach bystander intervention: culture is communication, culture informs decisions, and culture is woven with power.

Culture is Communication

Individual members within organizations communicate with each other to give meaning to their interactions. The complexity of how meaning manifests in these exchanges is where organizational culture emerges (Dougherty, 2023). As mentioned, individuals use communication to give meaning to sexual harassment in an organization, thereby creating ways to strengthen interpersonal relationships and manage stress

(Dougherty, 2001). Bystanders are inherently a part of this communication process, making sense of the meaning that communication brings regarding their role in sexual harassment. I argue that bystander behaviors will reflect this meaning system. Dougherty (2023) stated that communicative processes become stable, persistent, and patterned within the organization. These patterns become laden with meaning, becoming the organizational culture. This can be seen when organizational members purchase “green” items to fit into the organizational culture (Bonn et al., 2021), or when members are trying to increase their organizational commitment (Aranki et al., 2019). Therefore, culture informs decision-making skills.

Culture Informs Decisions

Meaning is created over time, and it is not a static occurrence. Dougherty (2023) stated that organizational culture is an active process that develops through many communicative interactions. Members develop communication that develops an expectation of behaviors within the organization. I argue that these expectations lead to organizational members making decisions that are based on how they understand the meaning that is being communicated within the organization. Eger (2021) found that organizational members will make decisions based on what they feel is correct and aligned with the organizational culture. Members reported that they will choose a certain outcome because they feel it is preferred by the organizational culture and what they feel will sustain these normalized behaviors. Organizational culture provides a sense of clarity for organizational members to make decisions that are backed by the meaning that has been developed by existing members in the organization (Dougherty, 2023). In a sense, *picking* the right decision based on the knowledge of the organizational culture reduces

the uncertainty of organizational consequences that disrupt organizational practices. Logically, by looking at Dougherty's (2023) analysis of organizational culture, following the basic patterns of the organization, members' behaviors are influenced by cultural norms. Therefore, bystander roles become produced by the culture, becoming a built-in norm that guides members on how to behave when faced with sexual harassment (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010). Inherently, culture is something that is woven with power, enforcing, and encouraging organizational behaviors.

Woven with Power

Power resides in those who have organizational status and benefit from organizational behaviors and communication. Power can be displayed in several ways—not just at the surface level. It would be a mistake to view the attainment of power as those who explicitly engage in organizational norms. The implicit, subtle enactment is also a way to attain and express power. Organizational culture both produces and reproduces organizational power. When applying this definition to sexual harassment, I deduce that bystander intervention and sexual harassment become normalized patterns that are reinforced by the fact that they are woven into the organizational culture (Dougherty, 2023) that provides power to those who allow the existence of the behaviors. These patterns, constructive or destructive, serve as guidelines for acceptable behavior, sustaining the behavior, and most importantly, reacting to the behavior when it is present. Researchers need to know that organizational culture is laden with power due to the ways power functions for organizational members, allowing them to achieve organizational and individual goals (Dougherty, 2023).

Research shows sexual harassment functions in organization which allows a sustainment communication that is a deep part of the organization (Dougherty, 2001) and to sustain their ability to escape the limitations of organizational policies (Dougherty & Goldstein-Hode, 2016). This demonstrates that organizational power is structured in a way that is preferred and normalized by the organizational culture.

Organizational members blend into the culture by becoming more aware of the values and norms that are advocated by the organizational culture. To strengthen their organizational alignment, members must be aware of the inconsistency between enacted and espoused values. Dougherty (2023) created a model that explains this inconsistency, furthering the argument that organization plays a large role in how members behave within organizations.

Trans-MOC

The process of developing culture is done through the shared meaning that has been created by organizational members. (Dougherty, 2023). The Transformational Model of Organizational Culture (Trans-MOC) demonstrates how communication, through a process of enacting cultural and organizational behaviors, becomes the organization. By looking at bystander intervention through the lens of Trans-MOC, I can show how bystander behaviors become an inherent, expected part of the organization. The several layers that are listed in this paper will help show how and why communication forms organizational behavior and organizational culture (Figure 1.1)

Figure 1.1: Transformational Model of Organizational Culture (Trans-MOC)



The core purpose of the model is to help organizational members see how behaviors within the organization are established and transcended through communication. Dougherty (2023) stated that Trans-MOC provides a more encompassing approach to organizational culture by exposing how behaviors are brought into the organization and then accepted or rejected when they are enacted. The main goal of this model is to see how communication “transforms into the organization” (Dougherty, 2023, p. 10). In the outer layer, Dougherty (2023) stated that there are larger cultural meanings that shape a person. In this layer, members will have a defined understanding of their identity regarding their attachment to larger cultural norms that exist in society and will bring these belief systems into the organization. For example, an incoming member will have an idea about hegemonic masculinity and what it means to be a man. The member will try to reinforce these beliefs through their communication once in the organization (Dougherty, 2023). Incoming members may have a perception of sexual harassment as something that is useful, functional, and has a place within the organization. However, incoming members may have a completely different view as well. Either way, these larger cultural assumptions, and beliefs are brought into organizations by members.

Once in the organization, an enactment of culturally appropriate behaviors takes place (Dougherty, 2023). I will use this layer of Trans-MOC to expand on my argument

that organizational culture is something that creates meaning around bystander intervention as I suggested that members enact culturally shared behaviors that have a positive meaning in the organization. For example, if sexual harassment provides a functional or useful purpose for members and the organizational culture (Dougherty, 2001), I believe that members will enact similar behaviors to increase their status within the organization and reject intervention.

I will use the third layer, meaningful organizational values, of Trans-MOC to show how organizational members enact behaviors to sustain communication of sexual harassment in the organization (Dougherty, 2023). This will be needed to further my argument stating that organizational members will engage in values that are accepted and encouraged by the organization that gives individuals power. Dougherty (2023) claimed that organizations have status values that suggest who can receive and give power. Given larger cultural structures, such as hegemonic masculinity, are not also formally promoted within the organization, Dougherty (2023) further argues that status values are usually hidden within the organization. Trans-MOC will help me expose hidden values that encourage sexual harassment and demote bystander intervention.

Earlier, I postulated that communication creates cultures that allow members to establish systems of meaning that are accepted and encouraged in the organization (Dougherty, 2023). The final layer of Trans-MOC consists of Core Organizational Meanings. Dougherty (2023) stated that there are meaning systems deep within the organization that are representative of the identity of the organization. If I can find the objective core meanings of organizations, I will have more success in understanding why members engage in sexual harassment and fail to stop it once it occurs. Dougherty (2023)

stated that there are meaning systems used by organizational members to gain power within the organization. This furthers my argument because I suggest that bystanders develop passive behaviors that ignore sexual harassment when they see it because they know harassing behaviors have meaning within the culture, so they do not risk losing power in the organization.

I conclude from the literature that organizational implications occur based on the communication, meaning, and power that exists in the organization. From this conclusion, I suggest that bystanders engage in communication and behaviors that are aligned with the best interest of the organizational culture. Below, I extend this argument by showing how bystanders become, in a sense, a product of the organizational culture.

Theoretical Implications

First, this approach moves beyond the existing theory of bystander intervention by looking at the interactions between bystanders and perpetrators as something that occurs beyond the interpersonal level, instead, introducing the issue as an organizational matter. Second, previous models and authors who looked at bystander intervention have yet to seriously consider either the influence of culture on intervention or the discursive properties of organizational communication. Finally, examining the bystander's ability to intervene through the lens of an organizational culture uniquely develops organizational communication scholarship.

Social Implications

Along with the theoretical impact of this paper comes a social impact as well. As mentioned earlier, there are over 12, 000+ cases of sexual harassment that are reported each year (EEOC, 2021b). According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center

(2023), over 18% of women have been raped, and 81% experiencing some type of sexual harassment. \ This is a crisis that has not been fixed or even slowed down. If anything, this problem has become worse over the last few years. By finding a better solution to understanding why there are so many cases of sexual harassment and so few cases where bystanders intervene when facing sexual harassment, scholar-practitioners can begin to make corrective processes within the organization.

Practical Implications

Organizational cultures are parts of every organization. Each organization has its own culture, but within these cultures are differently practiced norms, beliefs, and values. Understanding organizational culture and its influence on decision-making, organizational consequences, and fear, can further advance conclusions and assumptions about organizational function and their inherent power structures. A cultural approach to bystander intervention is not limited to sexual harassment. By using an organizational cultural lens, a deeper perspective of toxic behaviors can be analyzed such as bullying, racism, and sexism. However, positive behaviors such as productivity and cohesiveness can also be analyzed through an organizational cultural lens. Finally, research from this study could be used by practitioners to develop strategies to have successful organizational change.

I bring this argument to look at bystander intervention as something more complex and deeper than an interpersonal situation. There is a need for researchers to include organizational culture as an element in understanding why bystanders fail to intervene once they encounter sexual harassment. In the following section, I review bystander research. By doing this, I show how there has been an inherent flaw that

continues to use interpersonal communication as a lens for understanding bystander behavior. Following the literature on bystander intervention, I began to build a deeper argument around the power of organizational culture and how it guides organizational behavior. Because organizational culture is made meaningful through sensemaking, I review literature that explains how members use sensemaking to understand their expected behaviors based on organizational culture and the discourses that are present.

Chapter 2: A Literature Review

Bystander Intervention in Literature

Researchers found several characteristics in the literature that explained bystander behaviors. Most bystander research has focused on the bystander in social contexts outside of organizational settings. I reviewed the literature in the subsequent sections, focusing on three dominant findings: the social problem of the bystander; uncertainty and bystander behavior; Group Size and bystander behaviors; Organizational Communication and the Bystander; Organizational Culture and the Bystander; and A Critique of Existing Bystander Training.

The Social Problem of the Bystander Uncertainty in the Bystander

Following Genovese's murder Darley and Latané (1968) pioneered research looking at bystander intervention as an interpersonal issue, stating that individuals were unsure if they were responsible to intervene, which led to a decrease in intervention. Bystanders would disqualify themselves from intervention, assuming they were not equipped to stop the behaviors from taking place (Darley & Latané, 1968). For example, the researchers found that when individuals were in a group setting, they would assume that others would intervene, report, or stop the behavior. Bystanders did not feel that they were the ones who needed to act and intervene. Bystanders used communication to create a psychological perception on intervention.

To connect bystanders and targets, researchers continued exploring bystander intervention as an interpersonal issue. Latané and Rodin (1969) found that bystander intervention was impaired by the uncertainty bystanders had about the situation. Latané and Rodin (1969) performed a mock situation where a woman cried for help in distress.

When with other people, 70% of bystanders would not intervene. Participants were unsure about the situation itself, noticing that others did not intervene, therefore concluding that this situation did not require their help. Latané and Rodin (1969) found that potential bystanders would look to their peers for information to determine if the person in distress needed help. When bystanders look to others for guidance, the likely outcome is inaction, just as in the case of Kitty (Cook, 2014; Rosenthal, 2015).

Bystanders were uncertain about how to interact because they did not see themselves as capable of stopping the behaviors. In the following section, I provide literature that furthers my argument, suggesting that bystanders do not intervene because they do not feel equipped with the right skills to do so.

Research utilizing an interpersonal approach to bystander behavior suggests that bystanders fail to intervene because they are uncertain if they can stop the situation from taking place. Latané and Darley (1968) conducted a study to test how individuals would react when placed in a room that was slowly filling up with smoke. When alone, individuals would act appropriately, recognizing that danger was present, reacting with proper emotions, and responsible, accurate thought, and would intervene by trying to stop the situation from occurring. Therefore, when alone, individuals took it upon themselves to act appropriately and stop the situation from escalating (Latané & Darley, 1968). To the researchers' surprise, when individuals were paired, individuals would not try to stop the dangerous situation from taking place. The researchers stated that each participant looked to the other to get an understanding of how dangerous the situation was. If one person did not recognize the smoke-filling room as being a threat, the other would not either (Latané & Darley, 1968).

Researchers viewed nonintervention as an interpersonal issue. Individuals in this situation were unsure about where they stood in the relationship, what their role would be, and if the other person may have been more suitable for intervention. However, I argue that bystander behaviors are deeper than suggested by Latané and Darley (1968). Alone, individuals would act, being a ‘good’ bystander concerning the context. However, researchers saw a change in individual behavior once more people were present. When one more person is added to the situation, bystander intervention was impaired (Latané & Darley, 1968). Bystanders are influenced by their surroundings, and to a greater degree than suggested by this body of research. Researchers found that surrounding elements, such as group size, played a role in how bystanders viewed situations as well as how they decided to act. In the following section, I show how individuals are influenced by the size of the group and how members would adjust their decisions based on how many people witnessed the event. Elements such as a group's size suggest that there are organizational elements that affect bystander intervention beyond those previously considered by researchers.

The Size of the Group and the Bystander

Although research seems to favor the interpersonal dynamics of bystander intervention, bystander intervention is likely impacted by the environment surrounding the situations. Researchers have indicated that bystander intervention is influenced by the relationship between the observers, creating an obstacle to bystander intervention based on the person’s understanding of the relationship (Latané & Darley, 1968). Latané and Darley (1970) expanded their existing research which stated that interpersonal relationships catalyze bystander behavior, finding that the number of observers impacted

intervention. The authors found that when the number of bystanders increased, the chance of intervention decreased (Latané & Darley, 1970). Thirty bystanders watched Ms. Genovese die in New York City, which suggests that this is more than just an interpersonal issue. Labeling the lack of intervention as such misinterprets what took place during this murder. Bystander intervention researchers missed the fact that organizing has taken place. Within these settings, the group dynamics limit group norms.

Rutkowski et al. (1983) confirmed that intervention was affected by group size, stating that larger groups reported low intervention. These scholars believed that individuals would not act given the uncertainty of their social position in the group. The authors introduced another factor into the larger groups: cohesiveness. The study found that, regardless of the group size, when the group displayed cohesiveness, they were more likely to intervene (and vice versa). In the case of Catherine Genovese, the tenants of the adjacent apartment building, other than living in the same building, lacked group communication, and were only brought together by the murder for a brief period.

Even though these researchers discuss group dynamics as something that affects bystander intervention, they still view intervention as an interpersonal issue. However, there is a more powerful and deeper dynamic that would better explain how group size and cohesiveness affected bystander behaviors. When individuals are grouped, intervention changes. I argue that organizational culture is a reason for why this change of intervention takes place. I build this argument in the following sections:

Organizational Communication and the Bystander; An Organizational Issue;

Organizational Culture and the Bystander; Masculinity and the Bystander; Awareness of

social norms and the Bystander; Acceptance of Organizational Culture; and the Organization's experience with bystander intervention.

Organizational Communication and the Bystander

An Organizational Issue

When scholars identify bystander intervention as something that will take place when the group shows cohesiveness, they are suggesting that cohesiveness is always something that will produce constructive outcomes. Yet, cohesive groups can also engage in sexual harassment while preventing bystander intervention. As seen in the sexual harassment literature, sexual harassment has been used to strengthen membership bonds by being used as a function of comradery and coping (Dougherty, 2001). For example, the biggest sexual harassment scandal of 2021 includes Activision Blizzard, one of the largest video game creators, which was accused of having a "frat boy culture" (Brooks, 2021, p. 1). Brooks (2021) stated that the employees would strengthen their connection by making sexual jokes, openly talking about their sexual experiences, mocking rape, and discussing their fellow female co-workers' bodies. However, no intervention took place within the organization to stop the sexual harassment. Blizzard showed so much cohesiveness that they would not investigate claims of sexual harassment that were reported by organizational members. This resulted in a three-year investigation by the EEOC (Brooks, 2021) which found that organizational members would openly comment about women's bodies, rape jokes, and brag about their sexual encounters. Other large organizations, which have a strong, cohesive culture, are also plagued by sexual harassment. The Catholic Church has been accused of thousands of sex scandals over the last few decades. In one diocese, 300 priests were accused of molesting over 3,000 young

boys (Clair et al., 2019). Because of the nature of these organizations, it seems likely that members did not intervene due to the social similarities in the organization and the collective participation of the behaviors (Brooks, 2021). Given that these behaviors take place in organizations that share similar features, there may be other factors to consider when looking at bystander intervention and why individuals choose or choose not, to intervene.

Research has demonstrated that group dynamics influence bystander intervention. Aside from group size and its impact on intervention, researchers indicated targets' relationships with the bystander and his/her group to be crucial factors that lead to intervention. Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, and Reicher (2002) found that when targets were part of the in-group, the organization reported having higher amounts of intervention. For example, the researchers found that if the target shared similarities with the bystander (i.e., was at the same level in the organization, or shared the same status) the bystander was more likely to intervene. In contrast, if the target was in the out-group, an intervention was less likely to occur. Given that members were aware of a person's status and commitment to the group, this would suggest that members used the organizational culture as a guide to determine whether intervention should or should not take place. Take as a whole, these studies suggest that intervention takes place based on how the bystander makes sense of their identity and how it fits in the organization. In most organizations, in-groups are those with favored and popular individuals, deemed as elites within the organization (Bell et al., 2021). This would explain why 38 people did not intervene to help Kitty Genovese when she was attacked. The bystander group was not a collective unit, group dynamics had not been established, and there were no cultural

norms of behavior, only individual uncertainty about what to do in that situation.

Uncertainty can lead to fear of action.

Organizational members reported fear as a reason to not intervene. The members claimed they were afraid to intervene based on embarrassment and not being accepted by their peers (Neo et al., 2018), or fear of being “singled out” (Strindberg et al., 2021). Levine and colleagues (2002) found members did not intervene due to their emotional desire to be viewed as part of the in-group, which would protect their identities and status within the organization. However, members that did intervene were already committed and accepted members of the ingroup which suggests they lacked fear of isolation and exclusion. In cultures where in-groups sustain beliefs that are viewed as normal, pleasant, and constructive to the existing culture, the lack of fear is present because individuals knew their intervention and behaviors would yield an accepted reaction in the organization which sustained the collectiveness of the group. This research suggests that it is important to study bystander behavior based on group dynamics, including power, hierarchical goals, and values (Forsyth, 2018)

It seems unlikely that in-group relationships and collective likeness are the reason for intervention; rather, bystanders intervene based on their desire to sustain and maintain organizational norms. Next, I begin to argue that bystander behaviors are influenced by organizational culture. I do so by reviewing the literature and placing them into the following sections: Organizational Culture and the Bystander; Masculinity and Bystander Intervention; Awareness of Cultural Norms and the Bystander; Membership; and The Organization’s Experience with Bystander Intervention.

Organizational Culture and the Bystander

Members will engage in conversations and behaviors, such as intervention, if it holds value in the organization and increases or protects their organizational identities. According to bystander research, bystanders are hesitant to intervene based on several reasons. The researchers who developed most of the research have labeled these hesitations and noninterventions as interpersonal issues, as previously stated in this paper. Other authors have furthered this research but stated that intervention does not take place because members try to protect their organizational position and identity when faced with situations that may cast them as outsiders (Neo et al., 2018; Strindberg et al., 2021). Kania and Cole (2021) found that bystanders was afraid of proper intervention protocols, so they did not intervene so that they would not be viewed inadequate by the group. However, I argue that these previously mentioned reasons for why intervention does not take place are not psychological or interpersonal issues. Although researchers framed bystander intervention this way in previous literature, individuals tend to act in ways they feel will be analyzed, judged, and rewarded by the organization in which they function and work. When individuals are uncertain about the situation and how to act, they will not intervene and will instead engage in behaviors they feel are appropriate within the organizational culture. Behaviors such as these suggest that there needs research that looks at bystander intervention through an organizational cultural lens.

To better understand organizational culture, I suggest we look at how members engage in cultural expectations such as masculinity. In the following section I explain how individual membership is affected bystander intervention and provide literature that suggests that intervention will occur if the organization has familiarity with the issue. For

example, if there is previous communication about sexual harassment intervention, bystanders are more likely to intervene.

Masculinity and Bystander Intervention

Carlson (2008) suggested that members enact organizational values that are held and promoted by the organization. For example, in one of the organizations mentioned in the study, Carlson (2008) found that intervention was viewed as masculine and suggested that when men intervene and stop sexual harassment, they are sustaining masculinity. As a result, members would uphold this organizational value, stopping sexual harassment if it occurred. Masculinity is created by hegemony that men strive to include in their identities. To be identified as a traditional cisgender man, Messerschmidt (2018) stated that men will engage in patterns of behaviors that increase their appearance of masculinity. If researchers compare the behaviors of men subscribing to preferred organizational behaviors to the earlier mentioned research by Neo et al. (2018), Levin et al. (2001), Kania and Cale (2021), and Strindberg et al. (2021), they can see a theme of organizational expression that highlights favorable norms along with behaviors that will increase agency for the individual in the organization. For example, men will do behaviors they feel will give them a reward in the organization, which advances the argument that men will perform behaviors to sustain their identity. Carlson (2008) stated that interviewees in her study affirmed that they would intervene during crises, such as helping a woman in distress if the intervention increased the perception of their masculinity.

The masculine expression identified in Carlson's study, showing men intervening to appear masculine, proves that bystander intervention is much more complex than

merely interpersonal issues. Recent scholars uncovered components of organizational culture through which individuals express themselves in tune with the organization, as Schein (1991) found that organizational members will change their behaviors to match the cultural norms, values, and beliefs of an organization. In opposition of Carlson, Rosen and Nofziger (2019) found an opposite way in which men express masculinity. In their study, the authors found that masculinity was a driving factor for adolescent boys to not intervene in bullying. Boys would succumb to the pressure of what it means to be a masculine, young man (See Eldeleklioğlu, 2007). In turn, they would engage in bullying. Name-calling, homophobia, violence, and bullying become normalized behaviors due to the respondents reporting they felt the need to engage in these behaviors to appear more masculine (Rosen & Nofziger, 2019).

These findings enrich Carlson's argument by supporting the conclusion that bystander intervention is connected to an organization's view and expression of masculinity. Rosen and Nofziger's findings do show that organizational members will engage in any behavior, even toxic ones, to align themselves with the organizational norm which secures their productive organizational identity. That organizational members in two organizations took two different routes to appear masculine, supports the argument that depending on the organizational culture, and what it values (e.g., masculinity, sexual harassment, bullying), an intervention will primarily take place if it is culturally appreciated.

Therefore, researchers must understand that bystander intervention is not an interpersonal issue, rather, it is produced by the organizational culture. If researchers look at masculine organizations, such as fraternities (See Li, 2021; Ray & Rosow, 2010;

Wedlake, 2021, bars, and other male-dominated cultural contexts, researchers can see numerous cases of sexual harassment (See Boston Dioceses for example). I argue that the normalizing effect that has been created in these organizations around sexual harassment is why intervention/nonintervention occurs. Researchers can also see that bystander intervention will most likely occur if it aligns with cultural norms.

Awareness of Cultural Norms and the Bystander

When members engage with behaviors that help them align with the organizational culture, it creates a familiarity with organizational norms. Researchers can conclude that, according to Carlson (2008), the familiarity with what the organization views as normal allows bystanders to feel more comfortable in their intervention efforts. Bystanders in a culture that devalues sexual harassment are unlikely to fear repercussions and isolation if they intervene because sexual harassment, in this culture, does not hold value. I suggest an argument can be made that the more aware a person is of enacted organizational values, norms, and beliefs, the more likely an alignment of these behaviors will occur. In the Catholic Church, sexual harassment has been an ongoing issue that has been culturally embedded in the organization for decades (Clair et al., 2019). When monk St. Peter Damian presented *Liber Gomorrhianus* to the sitting pope, Pope Leo IX in the 11th century, he exposed that sexual harassment has been taking place for years (Beukes, 2019), giving examples of how harassment between priests and young boys was very common. St. Peter Damian suggested these behaviors would stop if the clergy who had performed them were removed. However, the removal of the harasser could not solve the issue because sexual harassment is woven into the cultural fabric of some of these dioceses (Dougherty, 2011). Members were aware of the harassment taking place but

chose nonintervention. The lack of intervention suggests that these destructive behaviors are known yet unacknowledged by bystanders due to their disinclination toward organizational disruption.

Researchers can transfer this same logic to other organizations to understand their organizational structures. For example, it was widely understood by organizational members that sexual harassment was an ongoing problem in the Weinstein Corporation. Although only made public in 2017, Hemel and Lund (2018) found in their Columbia Law Review article that allegations have been occurring since 1984. The allegations date back 40 years. Before starting the Weinstein Company, Harvey and his brother, Bob, worked for Miramax—where the allegations first started (Hemel & Lund, 2018). Harvey and his brother kept this same organizational culture while creating the Weinstein Company in 2005. It is probable that language and behaviors supporting sexual harassment were normalized, reproduced, and encouraged in the organization's culture (Schein, 1991).

Hemel and Lund (2018) found that 90 women, all of whom were employees of the Weinstein Company or were potential employees of the organization, were harassed by Harvey or other employees. Several lawsuits were filed against the corporation but were settled out of court. Jokes were made about the behavior at the Academy Awards, showing the acknowledgment of the company's behaviors, and memos were written about the destructive sexually harassing behaviors of the organization (Hemel & Lund, 2018). These examples suggest members were familiar with what was taking place, but it took years for members to openly discuss this ongoing issue. Therefore, this shows that bystander intervention is not about the interpersonal familiarity that members share,

rather intervention is a product of how the organization views unwanted sexual behaviors. If sexual harassment is valued, interventions will be unlikely. I argue that depending on how these behaviors are produced by the organizational culture—whether they are good or bad—will guide intervention moving forward.

The familiarity between organizational members and the toxic behaviors that are accepted by the organizational culture is not a new phenomenon. There are other institutional pockets that are publicly labeled toxic but continue to exist despite intervention attempts. Several studies demonstrated that college students are 300% more likely to get sexually harassed or assaulted at fraternities than at other places on campus (Kolpitzke, 2021). McGinley and colleagues (2016) uncovered that Greek life produces a functional, yet toxic culture, which increases the likelihood of members being sexually harassed. The authors found that in both sorority and fraternity houses, members experience more sexual harassment than other students and in other facilities on campus (McGinley et al., 2016). The harassment comes homogeneously, meaning that members who share similarities are more likely to engage in similar behaviors. This furthers my argument that members engage in behaviors that widely take place in the organization. Stopping (un)wanted sexual harassment seems highly unlikely given that organizational culture is created and perpetuated by organizational members based on organizational norms.

There is a limited amount of intervention that should be expected of bystanders in organizations that consider sexual harassment valuable. When trying to determine how and when intervention should occur, members must look past interpersonal relationships and be aware of the organizational values and acceptance of certain behaviors. Barnes et

al. (2021) proposed that sexualizing behaviors that are expected and accepted within Greek life may increase the occurrence of sexual harassment within sororities and fraternities. The authors suggest that pledging to these organizations socializes the individual to be exposed to sexual harassment, and common behaviors, such as drinking, and partying. The organizational culture conditions its members to engage in institutionally expected and normalized behaviors (Barnes et al., 2021).

Research mentioned in this section shows that bystander intervention goes much deeper than the interpersonal level. If researchers continue to neglect the organizational element of bystander intervention, resolutions will not be made, and the problem of harassment will continue. Next, I argue that the successful behaviors of members are aligned with their acceptance of the organizational culture.

Organizational Cultural Acceptance

Bystander intervention is likely impacted by organizational membership. Bannon, Brosi, and Foubert (2013) came across a particularly alarming conclusion about why bystander intervention may occur within organizations like fraternities. As mentioned earlier, masculinity was a driving factor in why members did or did not participate in bystander intervention of sexual harassment. Bannon et al. (2013) found that hyper-masculinity was an accepted behavior within fraternities, and this was a factor in the preservation of sexual harassment in fraternities. The acceptance of hypermasculinity by organizational members affected how they viewed the sexual harassment of their fraternity brothers. Bannon et al. (2013) said that fraternity members would be unlikely to intervene during sexual harassment and sexual assault situations, because they have

perceived and accepted both behaviors as normal. Also, the members have given meaning to sexual assault and harassment as it demonstrates hyper-masculinity.

The acceptance of these behaviors provided a blueprint for how members should enact their masculinity. As members became more aligned with organizational values, they demonstrated where they stood concerning cultural norms, values, and beliefs (Bannon et al., 2013). Over time, these behaviors become increasingly familiar. Huston, Ruggiero, Conner, and Geis (1981) found interveners were more likely to have exposure and experience with sexual harassment and rape than non-interveners, suggesting intervention was based upon familiarity with these behaviors. These findings leave researchers unsure of why organizations, such as fraternities, in which scholarship has shown that sexual harassment is widely relevant and part of the organizational fabric; the Catholic Church, where cases have dated back a thousand years; Blizzard, a tech company that has been given the moniker 'frat-boy culture'; and The Weinstein Company, consisting of cases taking place for nearly 40 years, still do not have intervention taking place on a wide scale.

The Organization's Experience with Bystander Intervention

Organizational experience can be a factor in which bystander intervention occurs. Butler and Fisher (2020) extended this idea of bystander intervention, suggesting that individuals who engage in more bystander intervention will be more likely to discuss bystander intervention with their peers.

Butler and Fisher (2020) believe that the more bystander intervention and bystander efficacy are discussed, the more *actual* intervention will occur in the organization. Like Huston et al. (1981), Butler and Fisher (2020) believe that the more

interpersonal communication that takes place about the issue, the more familiar organizational members become with the behavior, which can lead to intervention. Researchers have seen that this is not necessarily the case for many havens of harassment. Intervention may be more affected by communication, but not necessarily communication that comes through interpersonal relationships (Butler & Fisher, 2020)

In both articles, bystander intervention is developed through communication that was produced by the organizational culture. Butler and Fisher (2020) found that those who have been bystanders will discuss their behaviors with their peers, thus increasing the frequency of bystander intervention occurring in the organization. This suggests that the development of organizational communication postulates bystander intervention as a cultural norm, belief, and a desired behavior that is then accepted and practiced by the organization. Rather than looking at the interpersonal component of intervention, interpersonal relationships should be understood as products of the organizational culture. The failure of seeing the organizational component is present in current bystander training.

Critique of Current Bystander Training

Training programs are based on the interpersonal assumptions of sexual harassment. Given the pedagogical design of bystander intervention training, which has neglected to include organizational culture, it seems unlikely this training will either encourage bystander intervention or prevent harassment from taking place. In 2019, the year before the economy shut down due to COVID-19, there were 12,739 cases of sexual harassment reported by the EEOC (EEOC, 2021a), which was a ten-year high. Sexual harassment training has not worked as it should, but this could be due to training

programs focusing on the interpersonal aspect of intervention as opposed to a focus on the culture of the organization.

Lee et al. (2019) stated that sexual harassment could decrease, specifically through bystander intervention, by introducing more programs that include bystander intervention training. These authors also proposed that the more self-efficacy and knowledge bystanders have (i.e., certainty about behavior and what to do when encountering sexual harassment) would help increase the desire to intervene when faced with the decision. Their conclusion suggests that bystanders are unaware of how to intervene and are unable to determine what is right and wrong. I believe that there is not an interpersonal or educational issue. Instead, the bystanders have become aware of what is right and wrong, as well as what is expected of them, based on the discourse that are found in the organization.

The nearsighted approach of training has taken place for years. These approaches date back to early sexual harassment literature, only viewing sexual harassment as an interpersonal issue that can be fixed via training. Since 2017, the EEOC has launched a training program that trained over 13,000 people (EEOC, 2021b), educating various organizations on sexual harassment, suggesting that more education can create more effectiveness. Kathy Gurchiek (2018), a writer for SHRM, an organization that trains employees on sexual harassment, stated that the effectiveness of harassment prevention must be done by having real conversations about the issue which brings up several incorrect assumptions about sexual harassment. First, Gurchiek suggests that organizations do not talk about sexual harassment if it takes place in the organization. Second, she also assumes that these organizations do not label sexual harassment as

destructive and unwanted in the organization. Next, she assumed that people want to talk about sexual harassment. And, finally, she assumes that organizations do not have policies and training that have conversations about what sexual harassment is and what to do if takes place. Gurchiek is idealistic and neglects the organizational culture that cradles and protects sexual harassment.

Approaches such as these only address harassment as an interpersonal issue, and researchers still see the number of official reports from the EEOC rise each year (EEOC, 2021a). The failure to understand bystander intervention as an organizational phenomenon creates an inability to see a way to mitigate these behaviors.

Next, I will continue to demonstrate how research has approached bystander intervention through an interpersonal lens. My critique is merely to demonstrate the superficial outcomes that take place from not addressing the cultural root of the problem. Furthermore, the more detailed analysis of current research and training programs that only view bystander intervention as an interpersonal issue, creates an argument for the inclusion of organizational culture as a factor of bystander behavior.

Bystander Intervention as an Interpersonal Focus

The interpersonal aspect of bystander intervention has become the core of training programs on sexual harassment and other unwanted behaviors at the social level. The Green Dot program is a product of early research on bystander intervention, approaching violent behaviors such as rape, sexual harassment, bullying, etc. from an interpersonal approach. The lessening of sexual harassment needs to be accomplished through the implementation of bystander intervention. Dinkin (2019) stressed this in his article about the importance of implementing bystander intervention training in organizations. He

stated that the answers to solving sexual harassment fall within 'good' bystander communication, and he provides four guidelines. First, when encountering potential sexual harassment, Dinkin (2019) proposed that bystanders should distract the harasser by placing themselves near the situation or making small talk with the target of the harassment. However, if the bystander does not feel as if they can perform this task, this person should delegate the intervention to someone else. Next, if the bystander can, they should directly speak to the harasser, expressing dissatisfaction with their behavior. Finally, the bystander should sit down with the harasser and have a dialogue about what has taken place and how uncomfortable their harassing behaviors are (Dinkin, 2019).

Dinkin, like many other researchers who study bystander intervention, is doing so through an interpersonal lens. His guidelines for decreasing sexual harassment by encouraging bystander intervention are said with good intent; however, these interventions do not integrate research on organizational communication, organizational structure, and organizational culture. If bystander intervention were easy, researchers would not see a continuous growth of sexual harassment claims over the last decade (EEOC, 2021a), nor would researchers continue to see headlines reading that a new organization, such as Blizzard, is filled with sexual harassment. Dinkin makes several assumptions that neglect organizational power. If researchers look at intervention in organizations such as fraternities, where researchers see masculinity being expressed through harassment and as the core organizational value (Bannon et al., 2013; Barnes et al., 2021; Messerschmidt, 2018), researchers can logically conclude that discussions about stopping harassing behaviors would not only be rejected but would devalue the bystander within the organization. Dinkin did not include cultural norms, such as power, in this

guideline for stopping sexual harassment. He did not explore the fact that bystanders may be faced with fear, and intervention cannot occur just because the bystander wants to intervene. Dinkin systematically made a mistake about the overall understanding of culture. He assumed that the bystander, target, and perpetrator all have the same amount of power within the organization.

McMahon and Banyard (2012) make similar assumptions about intervention training using an interpersonal lens. The authors reviewed bystander intervention literature, concluding that bystander intervention must be viewed through a nomological model. Within the model, the authors compiled a list of opportunities for bystanders before (primary), during (secondary), and after (tertiary) sexual harassment or sexual assault occurs. The list includes suggestions like discussing sexualized posters on walls, to contacting the police after an assault takes place (McMahon & Banyard, 2012). The authors' premise is educating bystanders on options and opportunities to be a bystander and increasing their likelihood of intervention. McMahon and Banyard (2012) examined intervention as an education issue, which can be fixed through interpersonal communication. However, many organizations already require their employees to follow annual sexual harassment training. In addition, many perpetrators are aware that their behaviors are sexual harassment. There are continued, repeated cases in the Catholic Church, Weinstein Company, Larry Nassar, and many more. Perpetrators knew their behaviors were sexual harassment, which shows they are educated on what it means to harass yet continued to engage in harassing behaviors. Therefore, I suggest that education and training are not the core issues. In these organizations, sexual harassment has a purpose, a function, or some type of value that is not exposed through an interpersonal

lens. The impetus of sexual harassment is much deeper than these training programs can go. Bystander intervention programs advocate for bystanders to stop violent behavior, report to the authority, then support the target. These programs assume that intervention is this easy, neglecting cultural elements that lead to bystander limitations.

The ease of reporting and stopping sexual harassment that current research and training programs postulate is, quite frankly, insulting to targets. To suggest that intervention is capable, and reporting sexual harassment is possible is missing several key components that may restrict both behaviors. Elements such as fear of retaliation, punishment, and being removed from the group are factors that bystanders face if they try to intervene within their organization.

Within fraternities, researchers found that members are often fearful of engaging in bystander intervention because they want to avoid being devalued by other members and pushed away (Bannon et al., 2013; Barnes et al, 2021; Messerschmidt, 2018). Coker et al. (2011) found that when individuals on college campuses were trained with Green Dot, they were more likely to intervene in violent situations. Other research has found that bystander intervention is limited because bystanders reported that they were fearful to intervene due to their fear of the perpetrator (Fischer et al., 2011; Thornberg et al., 2012). Researchers have extended this idea when they studied fraternities. Researchers found that fraternity members neglected to intervene because they were fearful of punishment by other members which would cast them as being disloyal and undesirable to the organization (Bannon et al., 2013; Barnes et al, 2021; Messerschmidt, 2018).

Other research extends the perspective and application of the Green Dot program by exploring the process through a cultural lens. Patel and colleagues (2017) identified

that the installation of The Green Dot program in an organization had the potential to change the culture. The authors stated that normalizing the program could increase bystander intervention due to its ability to be woven into the culture. Though logical, this assumption is myopic. The authors fail to expand on the limitations of the organizational culture described in the article (e.g., construction company culture). Within organizational cultures, some discourses become normalized and favored as I have shown previously; different cultures have different viewpoints on the same topic. Patel et al., (2017) suggested that Green Dot could change the culture of a given organization.

Patel's study reinforces my primary argument that bystander intervention is woven into the organizational culture. It is important to further explore the processes through which bystander intervention can be discursively produced and rejected. However, researchers need to approach bystander intervention with a deeper, more complex focus. There needs to be an inclusion of normalized communication within the organization (Dougherty, 2023). Researchers must be able to understand cultural discourse and the meaning they have in the organization (Alvesson & Karraman, 2000, 2011; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Putnam & Fairhurst, 2015). Organizational culture and normalized organizational communication have the power to override the implementation of programs that try to introduce policies (Kirby & Krone, 2002).

In similar research on culture in bystander intervention, Lukacena, Reynolds-Tylus, and Quick (2019), found that bystanders were influenced by the culture of the university they attended. Researchers found that norms influence bystanders' desire to intervene when witnessing sexual harassment. Additionally, researchers found tension between injunctive norms (i.e., how they would be perceived if they performed a

behavior) versus descriptive norms (i.e., how they are expected to behave in the organization). Interestingly, results indicated that individuals were more influenced by descriptive norms. These findings suggest that intervention is guided by the cultural expectations of the organization. The researchers also found that individuals did not report an increased desire to intervene based on injunctive norms. Therefore, researchers can conclude that culture creates power dynamics that encourage or discourage bystander intervention through communication, supporting the argument that I am making which suggests that culture is the driving force for expected and desired behaviors within an organizational culture. Moving forward, organizational cultures are dynamic (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010), which means that bystander expectations and outcomes will not be the same among organizations.

Potentially viewing all organizations and the culture that they consist of as the same is where errors in the approach to sexual harassment and bystander intervention take place. Prevention models are used frequently in the public and private sectors and are based primarily on the interpersonal assumption-of bystander intervention, failing to see the need to look at intervention as something that is highly dependent on the organizational culture. In the following section, I will analyze the current model of bystander intervention that is frequently used in sexual harassment literature. The model provided a substantial start to looking at bystander intervention but does not consider the organizational cultural dynamics of bystander behavior.

Existing Model of Bystander Intervention

Bystander scholarship originates from the previously mentioned Kitty Genovese murder through a psychological lens. The research surrounding bystander intervention is

limited. Management scholars, Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly (2005) were one of the first to create a working model that analyzed bystander behavior, specifically looking at sexual harassment with a focus on interpersonal communication. The authors suggested that the relationship between the target and the bystanders could only be described and understood through an interpersonal lens. Participant responses ranged from, “I didn’t know her” to “I didn’t want to get involved,” the authors created a bi-dimensional model that broke down bystander intervention in dichotomies of immediacy and involvement. The dichotomy of intervention/involvement stems from early research, suggesting that depending on the relationship between the target, perpetrator, and bystander, an intervention will occur.

Though logical, the interpersonal approach to this model is a shortcoming that is built on another flaw of rationality (Dougherty & Sorg, 2020). Bowe-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly’s model assumed that organizational actors are beings who rationally make decisions about their intervention. However, bystanders are not rational beings (Dougherty & Sorg, 2020)—their identity, created by actions, is produced by how they make sense of and *interpret* the culture in which they are communicating (Weick, 1995).

Bystander intervention is something that is produced by the organizational culture, which creates normalizing communication for bystanders to learn from and use as a guide for their behaviors. Of course, these behaviors occur through the interpersonal dynamic of communication, but the complexity of decision-making that bystanders encounter is much deeper. The implementation and application of organizational culture as a feature of why bystanders do or do not intervene helps fill gaps in existing research

around sexual harassment. In the following section, I demonstrate that bystanders are forged, shaped, and polished by their organizational culture.

Becoming a Bystander Through Organizational Culture

Looking at bystander intervention through a cultural lens provides a more in-depth understanding of how sexual harassment continues and why bystanders are so resistant to intervene once they encounter harassing behaviors. Throughout this section, I discuss research that shows how organizational cultures create power within organizations, which leads to a normalization of communication and behaviors that guide organizational behaviors as well as push away anything that opposes the norm. I use existing literature to guide researchers to understand that individuals within organizations only have an agency that is embedded within the cultural fabric of the organization. I reviewed research that shows how members are guided by the organizational culture as well as how members are removed if these guidelines are not followed. By understanding organizational culture, researchers have a better framework for understanding bystander behavior.

So far, I have discussed what organizational culture is based on its definition but have yet to expand on what its functions are in the organization. Recall that Dougherty (2023) defined organizational culture as, “the shared communicative process through which meanings are constantly employed, negotiated, and contested to create a stable communication environment within which organizational life becomes patterned and persistent over time” (pp. 4-5). Stability is not always a constructive element that leads to positive outcomes. Using this definition, I argue that organizational culture is the basis of bystander intervention. The communication that bystanders engage in produces meaning

that exposes the power that is woven into the organization, helping members make decisions based on these norms. If sexual harassment is used for men to cope with stress (Dougherty, 2001), the communication that members have around these behaviors gives meaning to actions in the organization. Once members have used communication to give meaning to these actions (e.g., sexual harassment), it is very unlikely that bystander intervention will occur due to its normalcy.

Organizational Culture, Communication, and Normalcy

Normalcy can be confused, just like stability, as something positive in the organization. Elements such as being supportive and loyal can be stable adjectives of an organization but do not always include positive behaviors. Dougherty (2023) stated that meanings stabilize organizational cultures by producing normative behaviors in the organization. Combining this concept with sexual harassment suggests that organizational cultures, whether they be destructive and/or constructive in their relationships with bystander behavior, are based on how meaning stabilizes in a particular organization. However, for these norms and patterns to be effective, and must be accepted by the organizational members. For example, Shahzad and Shahbaz (2017) found that organizational performance, flexibility, and openness were influenced by organizational culture. The normalcy of function in these areas was standardized within the organization. Dougherty (2023) stated that the development of organizational culture is a process that is shared between members. I argue that bystander intervention, and many other organizational behaviors, become known by members during the process of understating of their value and meaning in the organization. When communication is being used to educate a person on their organizational behaviors, two byproducts emerge:

a) what is the correct behavior, and b) what is incorrect. In turn, organizational culture educates members on what will happen if they do the behaviors as well as what will happen if they do not.

My argument is not isolated in research. There have been dozens of examples of how organizational members will change their behavior to match or accommodate the organizational culture (See Aranki et al., 2019; Bonn et al., 2021; Browning, 2017; Pham et al., 2018; Shahzad & Shahbaz, 2017). This shows that members are susceptible to power dynamics in any organizational culture. Literature has shown how powerful culture is in its ability to influence organizational members. Gochhayat and colleagues (2017) found that member participation, willingness, and the overall effectiveness of member performance were linked to the collective strength of the organizational culture. Given that members have a connection to the organizational culture suggests that their behaviors, depending on their investment into the issue, are affected and guided by their commitment to the organization (Aranki et al., 2019); the stronger the culture, the more commitment individuals showed to the organization.

Organizational communication and behavior have been affected by the organizational culture in other areas as well, supporting Dougherty's definition. An alignment exists between individual behavior and organizational values and beliefs. Bonn et al. (2021) found that purchasers from wineries would engage in "green-purchasing" if their organization valued eco-friendly products. The fact that members change their purchasing depending on the culture suggests that members are directly affected by the culture which encourages them to engage in the behaviors that are valued and normalized by the organization. Applying this to bystander intervention, researchers could deduce

that individuals will act according to the communication that they are exposed to (Dougherty, 2023). The individual will try to fit into the organizational identity by engaging in organizational behaviors and communication that align more correctly with the culture.

Other researchers have found similar conclusions. Pham et al. (2018) found that organizational behaviors were directly affected by organizational culture, and that members would engage in green purchasing, but only if this was normal communication within the culture. Pham and colleagues (2018) examined “green organizational cultures” in their study which looked at how organizations pushed environmentally friendly behaviors within their culture (p. 1176). In the hotel industry, several pushes were made for companies to become more green-friendly or to create an organizational green culture. The hope of creating a greener culture is based on the idea of including more organizational behaviors that create more organizational citizenship behavior toward the environment (Pham et al., 2018). In the article, the authors discovered that constant communication around environmentally friendly behaviors established an expected identity within its members. The organization used training and education to boost the savviness of its employees in green organizational culture (Pham et al., 2018). Within the data, the authors found that the more the culture trained and pushed for its employees to adopt higher membership of OCBE, the more ‘greener’ behaviors took place.

Unpacking this study is essential for seeing why this research matters regarding understanding bystander intervention and the influence of culture on behavior. As researchers have demonstrated thus far, organizational culture is something that influences organizational communication and consequential behaviors. Pham et al.

(2018) found that the more communication that was given to employees about partaking in a behavior that they may not have been involved in before organizational entry, the more they became committed to the new behavior. Many scholars agree that decision-making and organizational communication will be performed by members in consonance with what they believe the culture encourages them to do (Bonn et al., 2021; Gochhayat et al., 2017; Shahzad & Shahbaz, 2017). If members resist these behaviors, negative outcomes could take place. Member rejection has a potential downside for their place in the organization, and if members reject cultural norms, they may be viewed as an outsider in the organization. Also, organizational identity could be affected if members do not share the same behaviors as the rest of the culture.

The shaping of member identity is something that is commonly seen within an organizational culture. To increase their organizational assimilation, members will change their communication and behaviors to develop an identity that is suitable within the existing culture. Eger (2021) conducted an ethnographic study that analyzed how members change their behaviors to match the organizational culture of a non-profit. This scholar demonstrated that organizational values, such as creating a family dynamic within the workplace, were emulated by organizational members, as they tried to help sustain the existing culture through their communication and behaviors. The urge to create a family dynamic was prominent as members of the nonprofit would engage in specific communication that was normalized within this organization. For example, Eger (2021) found that members used family-like communication because they knew it matched the normalized communication of the organization. The author believes that member identity

and organizational behaviors were tailored after the recognition of cultural values that are present in the organization.

Members adapted their communication, subsequently matching it to the language that they heard as well as the values that were communicated to them. Eger (2021) also found that members would use materials and artifacts that were present in the organization as a template for their communication (e.g., flyers, bulletins, pamphlets). It is interesting to note that members were not directly presented or told that family was a value of the organization. Members were able to pick up on the family-like culture because it was used so commonly in the organization. By doing so, they communicated and acted accordingly, so their organizational identity matched that of their peers. The behaviors that were observed by Eger demonstrate organizational culture's reach and power when it comes to shaping individuals, as well as the sustainability of its inherent structures.

Cultural existence is nothing short of resilient. Policies placed within organizations are in place to attempt to shape and change organizational behaviors (See Kirby & Krone, 2002), as well as the implementation of leadership (See Dixon & Dougherty, 2010) to shift the communication and behaviors, but organizational culture rejects the change and members' identities remain aligned with the established norm. Leonardi and colleagues (2005) observed the power of culture when policies entered the workplace. These scholars revealed the acceptance or rejection of newly proposed policies was guided by cultural beliefs and values. For example, if a new policy was presented that contradicted existing cultural behavior, members looked toward the existing norms to guide their decisions about the issue. Webber and Milik (2018) found

that organizational decision making is not just limited to choosing policies. In efforts to remove any opposition or potential threats that could disrupt the organizational culture, members made decisions that ensured the sustainability of existing behaviors and communication—protecting existing structures (See Berthon et al., 2001).

Rejection of Opposition for Sustainability of Organizational Culture

Cultures are dynamic, creating organizational outcomes that can be harsh, yet expected given past experiences. In some situations, members will find themselves being rejected within the organization, even if they are qualified, suitable, and experienced. If their identity does not match that of the culture as well as what the culture wants and needs, then members will be removed from the organization. Walker and Aritz (2015) found this while they looked at preferred leadership styles between men and women. The researchers explored what organizational cultures preferred when picking a leader and found that certain cultures will only pick people that they feel are best aligned with their cultural beliefs. In these case studies, men and women agreed on what they found to be good leadership characteristics; most of the traits being “masculine”. The interesting paradox was that even if women showed favorable characteristics, such as decision-making, assertiveness, and working well with the group, they were still not picked as leaders by the other members (Walker & Aritz, 2015). The data shows that individual acceptance of certain roles was guided by the culture of the group which only allowed leaders to be men based on existing norms, values, and beliefs. The culture rejected novel, qualified leaders because they did not match the existing system. Rejection was used to sustain organizational normalcy in this case study to ensure that the culture adhered to its values. Not aware of their actions, the members were enacting cultural

beliefs. These decisions could have been made because a) members value men as leaders, or b) they see women as threats to their organizational behavior. By choosing a male leader, members eliminate a cultural threat and retain organizational cultural functionality (Dougherty, 2001). The idea of sustainability is a function of organizational culture that encourages members to engage in the communication of said culture (Dougherty, 2023; Walker & Aritz, 2015). However, even if a member performs the desired behaviors of organizational culture, researchers can see that the *fit* may still not be suitable.

From the above-mentioned article, there is a need for members of the organization to change or adapt to the culture. In one of the case studies of the article previously mentioned, Walker and Aritz (2015) found that a female participant did not change her leadership style to match the men in the group. In this situation, the men rejected her as a leader. This study shows that organizational culture creates equilibrium in the organization. Inherently, the culture encourages members to choose behaviors that reflect the expectations of the culture. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the power of organizational culture as it displays the organization's ability to encourage membership behavior, and how members change their behaviors to what they believe is correct for the given situation.

In the case studies, the organizational culture created the situation as well as the expectation for members to engage. Hoelscher et al. (2016) found similar responses in their study about farmers' markets and the roles of vendors. Several themes appeared, but one that stood out was that vendors believed they needed to act in a certain way to be a part of the organizational culture of these markets. Vendors stated that fellowship was a major part of the culture and that there was a collective understanding that they were a

“family” (p. 491), which created several expected norms such as, “shooting the shit” (p. 491) and engaging in small talk. Other vendors claimed these chats are salient in the culture and help create a sense of community that is exercised and normalized by others. The cultural and accepted norms made vendors feel as if they needed to engage in these behaviors to increase their strength and solidarity with the organizational culture (Hoelscher et al., 2016). An important motivator for the need to enact organizational communication is so that members will engage in these behaviors to fulfill organizational membership, but also to ensure they are included and accepted by the culture, removing any threat of exclusion from the organization.

Expectations and cultural belonging

Organizational membership relies heavily on one’s ability to perform the normative behaviors and meanings of the culture. Feeling included (Hoelscher et al., 2016) is a product of engaging in organizational discourses and being committed to organizational beliefs. The fear of not being included or viewed as a tenured member of the organization suggests that individuals within an organizational culture will engage in behaviors and communication that they feel are essential and necessary to increase their inclusion in the organization (Walker & Aritz, 2015) which suggests that bystander behavior is a product of the culture in which individuals reside. Given that buyers felt they needed to purchase the product they felt showed a better alignment with the organization’s values (Bonn et al., 2021) shows that decisions are not always made by conscious efforts that are a representation of the individual; instead, they are a representation of the culture in which the individual is situated.

Members' behaviors represent the organizational culture implies several conclusions about organizational membership, organizational behavior, and individual thought. First, culture *expects*. It produces expectations that those who enter will abide by the norms and will answer any organizational uncertainties with responses they feel are expected (Schein, 1991). Second, cultures are historically created, developing presumptions that successors will act accordingly to predecessors. Third, organizational membership is determined by the participation and inclusion of organizational norms. And, finally, cultural communication will overpower individual agency if these two do not align. Each of the statements can be seen with Pope Francis entering the Catholic Church. Regardless of position, The Pope was still subject to the power of organizational culture once he started this tenure within the church.

Within his first few months, Pope Francis wrote *Amoris Laetitia* (Joy of Love), which shook the culture of the Vatican and its members. Smudde (2019) stated that Francis detailed this understanding of Catholicism along with his hypermetric rule to follow within the writing. However, this cultural expectation was different from that previously established by the Catholic Church. Culture functions for its established members and provides a template for those who wish to enter. Any disruption to the culture will be questioned, resisted, and inevitably pushed out. Smudde (2019) stated that several Bishops were cautious of *Amoris Laetitia*, questioning its origin and content, leading to tension between the newly appointed Pope and his followers.

The importance of looking at the organizational culture through a multitude of lenses does several things: a) shows existence of power structures, b) explains functional usage of behaviors, and c) demonstrates how leadership can potentially fail to change the

culture if the constitutive structures are strong enough (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010). The impact culture has on individual influence cannot go unrecognized. Organizational cultures have changed members to match existing power structures and to reduce any possible flux within the organization. In the case of Pope Francis, the latter had taken place. The culture of the Catholic Church guided Francis' behaviors to fit in more with the existing norms. Francis had tried to challenge the existing structures of leadership and culture in *Amoris Laetitia*. In the letter, Pope Francis made comments about divorce and communion (Smudde, 2019). Although his comments were vague and ambiguous, assumptions were made about the publication's intent. In the writing, Francis talked about who is allowed to take communion—a practice that has been followed for hundreds of years (Smudde, 2019). Traditionally and culturally, communion is given to those who have not gravely sinned, which was sustained and enforced by Francis' predecessor Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (e.g., Pope Benedict XVI; See Dixon, 2004). Benedict proposed more concrete rules about communion that were aligned with the Vatican and its organizational culture (Ratzinger, 2004). However, Francis was vague with his ruling about communion which was seen as opposition to the culture and Benedict XVI.

Pope Benedict XVI had zero backlashes about his stance on issues within the Church which were more aligned with existing cultural norms and standard Catholic behaviors. However, Francis was subjected to resistance when he provided a vague explanation about divorcees and his permission for them to receive Holy Communion that were viewed as a potential threat to existing rules. This example matters for several reasons. First, culture can impair leadership goals and beliefs, simultaneously reinforcing existing cultural beliefs. As Walker and Artiz (2015) found, people are chosen or

removed based on their ability to fill the spot in the culture. If the person does not fit in, they will be rejected. Second, culture is the primary driving factor for membership, regardless of status. As mentioned, Pope Francis was/is the figurehead of the Catholic Church but still faced backlash. And, finally, this shows the limitations of individual agencies from within an organizational culture. Once several bishops questioned the Pope's stance on these several issues, Francis rejected claims of supporting communion for divorcees and stated that his stance was very clear if read thoroughly.

The complexities of bystander intervention go beyond the organization. To help better understand the development of bystander decision-making, I will unpack the features of Trans-MOC, suggesting how certain behaviors become normal within an organizational culture. In this section, I analyze bystander intervention through each layer of Trans-MOC. I will include an explanation of the following layers: Larger Organizational Meaning, Organizational Enactment, Meaningful Organizational Values, and Core Organizational meaning.

Trans-MOC

Fuzzy Boundaries

Though the Trans-MOC model has distinct layers, the behaviors, communication, and processes, are not linear and not distinct. In the visual design, Dougherty (2023) gives each layer a fuzzy, blurry parameter, showing that layers at times intertwine and protrude from each other. This disclaimer will help readers and practitioners better understand the complexity of the model as well as each layer. First, I will discuss the larger cultural meaning systems that influence bystander thoughts and behaviors.

Larger Cultural Meanings

Organizational cultures do vary between organizations. If I suggested that organizational behaviors, language, beliefs, and values were isolated to *that* organization, I would be, not only incorrect, but providing a weakened approach to analyzing bystander intervention. Dougherty (2023) stated that members enter the organization mirroring societal norms that are structured by larger cultural meaning systems. Once in the organization, members begin to reinforce these societal meanings. I believe that organizational members preserve behaviors, beliefs, and values due to the recognition of society benefits from acquiring such characteristics (Dougherty, 2023). Power can be enacted in many ways that reflect society's meaning systems. Meaning systems are immanent structures of information that create societal templates for power acquisition. For example, Dougherty said that larger cultural systems provide assumptions of how people *should* act based on their gender and the aligned roles *for* gender (2023). For example, hegemonic masculinity is the societal understanding of why men engage in certain behaviors to sustain dominant roles (See Connell, 1997; Duckworth & Trautner, 2019). Hegemonic masculinity is the collective understanding of what it means to be a *masculine* man (Connell, 1997). Dougherty (2023) believes that larger cultural systems provide a function for individuals, helping them see how to behave following larger meaning systems.

Earlier in this paper, I provided examples of how males act in certain organizations based on their assumptions of masculinity from a societal understanding. The differences in how masculinity is attributed meaning are confusing due to the contradictory displays of masculinity. These contradictory findings support Dougherty's

(2023) position that individuals have assumed understandings of certain behaviors. To refresh, Rosen and Nofzinger (2019) stated that young boys would try to get a dominant position over other boys by doing what they thought was masculine—which was name-calling, using homophobic slurs, and violence. Dougherty (2023) would suggest that the boys would use these tactics because they knew there is meaning attached to each and that being labeled homosexual lessens the target's place in a larger cultural system. Dougherty would also suggest that these behaviors reflect how individuals have been subjected to that form of masculinity.

Other males have a different, opposite view of how they should act according to the larger cultural systems. Also, these males have a different view of the meaning that has been attached to certain behaviors regarding what it means to be masculine. Through Trans-MOC, Dougherty (2023) suggested that larger cultural meanings influence members entering an organization and how different each person can view critical situations. Carlson (2008) provided an example of men engaging in bystander intervention increase their masculinity which is much different than Rosen and Nofzinger (2019) who found that intervention weakened perceptions of masculinity. This does suggest that men enter organizations with programmed conceptions of certain behaviors that are a) different from each other, and b) possibly different from the organizational culture.

I conclude from Dougherty's (2023) position on larger cultural meaning that members bring into the organization behaviors and perspectives of society that contribute to the shaping of perceptions on the meaning of bystander intervention and sexual harassment. This leads me to the following research question:

RQ1: How do members use larger cultural meanings to understand bystander intervention?

Other dimensions of Trans-MOC help provide a more thorough explanation of organizational culture as it relates to sexual harassment and bystander intervention. In the next layer of Trans-MOC, Organizational Enactment, I will show how individuals' enactments of larger cultural meaning structures can create patterns in organizations.

Organizational Enactment

Member awareness of certain behaviors is crucial for understanding why or why not bystander intervention takes place. In the organizational enactment layer, Dougherty (2023) argues that organizational culture is built on behaviors, language, and other patterns that are important to the organization. Dougherty (2023) said that during the organization enactment layer, members become exposed to patterns that are recognized by the culture as meaningful. To provide a better understanding, Dougherty (2023) suggested that members draw meaning from behaviors that they persistently *enact* with the culture.

Over time, members become aware and knowledgeable of not only organizational patterns but the power that comes with engaging in these patterns. I argue that members become exposed to the language and meaning around sexual harassment and bystander intervention because they interact with both. During their enactment, they become aware of the meaning that sexual harassment has within the organization as well as if intervention is something they should do. Previously, I discussed how men use sexual harassment in organizations as something they believe is positive because it helps build relationships and helps them cope with stress (Dougherty, 2001). If sexual harassment is

behavior that occurs in organizations that are viewed positively, bystander intervention will not occur because members have enacted such behaviors and embraced the power that comes along with the harassment.

Larger cultural meanings are brought into the organization and are exercised by individuals, but enactment and acceptance of these behaviors depends on the organizational culture. For example, members may enter an organization with a perception that sexual harassment is bad, but change their position based upon the organizational culture. Members are, in a sense, transformed by the organizational culture. We come with a sense of being masculine. We try stuff. If it works, we keep it. If it doesn't, it is rejected. A person gets pushed more toward the organizational culture as what enactment of masculinity is.

Organizational enactment relies on cultural preferences of behaviors as well as how the organization contributes to said behaviors. For example, in the previous section, I explained the difference in enactment depending on the organizational culture. Dougherty (2023) stated that members enact behaviors to express and align themselves to, ultimately, gain power within the organization. Masculinity has a complex dynamic, especially in meaning, depending on how it is enacted within the organization.

Carlson (2008) showed that sexual harassment was viewed negatively within the organization. Therefore, members reinforced their masculinity by enacting the expectation of intervention. To simplify, the organization in Carlson's (2008) study found men were more masculine if they intervened, intervening a characteristic of enacting and performing masculinity. However, enactment and acceptance differ depending on how

organizations view the same behaviors, supporting Dougherty's (2023) model and her argument of organizational enactment.

Rosen and Nofzinger (2019) found the exact opposite of how members enact masculinity within an organization. As mentioned previously in this paper, young boys would harass, name-call, assault, and remove other members who tried to stop harassment from occurring. The basis of these behaviors stemmed from the organization's view on masculinity. Rosen and Nofzinger (2019) found that the young boys collectively thought that sexual harassment and assault *were* characteristics of masculinity. Young boys experience pressure to behave in ways that are normalized by the group (Sullivan, 2006). Therefore, if anyone tried to stop these behaviors, they were viewed as being less masculine.

I have given examples in this paper that show how organizational enactment and bystander intervention are associated. For example, Bonn et al. (2021) explained how in organizational cultures that have "green purchasing," members will only buy green products if the organization attaches meaning to the purchases. Members will buy products that are considered "green" if it increases their power within that organization. Filtering these conclusions through Trans-MOC, members have enacted these behaviors and have found that their status within the organization goes up if they engage with green purchasing.

Inherently, there is a power that comes from organizational enactment. In a sense, members become educated on the unspoken norms within the organization. Also, members know which behaviors, languages, and values give them agency amongst their peers (Dougherty, 2023). With the acknowledgment of the unspoken rules, they also

become educated on the power of written rules, such as policy (Dougherty, 2023). I suggest when members see how organizations enforce and apply policy, they become aware of which policies can be broken and which ones should or should not be followed. For example, going back to Kirby and Krone's (2002) article stating that members would *not* take long maternity leave because the culture thought negatively of those who did, we can see that those members who decided to shorten their leaves have enacted the organization's assumptions about extended leaves. In turn, communication in the organization has more power than policies.

Organizational enactment reflects not only the individual but the organization as it accepts or rejects these behaviors. The conclusions that members derive from the behaviors they encounter are crucial for how they communicate and behave in the organization. This leads me to my next research question:

RQ2: How do organizational members enact the relationship between sexual harassment and bystander behavior?

Perception is a major part of understanding why and how patterns of communication take place. In the next section, I will expand on Trans-MOC and discuss the third layer, Meaningful Organizational Values, and how they play a role in bystander intervention.

Meaningful Organizational Values

As organizational members, we have certain behaviors and values that we prioritize that change depending on the relationship and the context. Along with this, people tend to place certain values higher than others'—especially in the workplace. Organizational values are essential to organizational behaviors, communication, and

decision-making. Dougherty (2023) defines organizational values as, "...those things, standards, and ideals through which we evaluate our organizational wellbeing" (p. 16).

This definition creates subjective interpretations of how organizational members see certain values. For example, I believe that if a member values something such as power, he or she will do whatever it takes to achieve this value because it supports their well-being in the organization. Because people have differences of values, Dougherty (2023) stresses that values are treated as a compass for morality, but not all values are moral (e.g., masculinity and intervention). Dougherty extended Lau's three values: personal (what are our values), aesthetic (what we value as beautiful), and moral (how we value right and wrong); adding a fourth, status (who gets power and how). Organizational awareness of these values allows researchers and practitioners to better understand organizational behaviors.

Moving forward, the awareness of organizational meaning can be seen in other examples, too. I discussed how sexual harassment is typically a known practice and behavior within some organizations, and in these cases, hold some degree of value (e.g., the Catholic Church, Weinstein Corporation, fraternities). Hemel and Lund (2018) said that members of the Weinstein Corporation were aware that Harvey engaged in sexual harassment and assault, but no one tried to stop the harassment because they knew they would have been stripped of organizational power, and, possibly, removed from the organization. There was value attributed to sexual harassment and how it was used within the organization which highlights Trans-MOC and how individuals enact what they are exposed to in the organizational culture (Dougherty, 2023). Similarly, this takes place in the Catholic Church as the Vatican was aware of the assault occurring at local parishes

but continued to see more and more priests engaged in these behaviors. I believe that these atrocious behaviors had/have meaning within certain parishes. In turn, meaning creates values within the organization.

When it comes to sexual harassment and bystander intervention, it is clear to see how there may be conflicting values among organizational members, and I see some of these values as reasons why bystanders lack intervention. For example, personal values, for some members, could be professional growth within an organization. Going back to organizational culture, I presented several examples of how members change their behaviors to ensure they have not been pushed away in the organization. This same logic could suggest that bystanders will follow organizational values, negating any intervention in sexual harassment if they are aware of its importance in the organization.

Along with the following of personal values, I argue that Dougherty's (2023) addition of status values is a driving factor of organizational behavior as well. Throughout this paper, I have given examples of how members changed their views on recycling (Pham et al., 2018), purchased eco-friendly products, (Bonn et al., 2021), and even participated in killing (Browning, 2017; Oliver, 2006) to make sure their status was not questioned, and nor their organizational power lost. Clearly, this shows that there are underlying values that exist in organizations that are not espoused but enacted.

Dougherty (2023) describes hidden values as ugly values that "emerge from repetitive organizational behaviors that are destructive to either the workers or to the organization itself" (p. 16). Dougherty validates this claim by stating that organizations and CEOs never promote unwanted behaviors such as racism, sexual harassment, or bullying, but these problems continuously exist in organizations. Given that sexual

harassment is so common in organizations, I do believe that members use harassment as a behavior that has a function (Dougherty, 2001) and a value (Dougherty, 2023) that is collectively recognized as something that is encouraged within certain organizations.

Enacted Versus Espoused Values. At its core, organizations are controlled by values that are normalized, but not necessarily openly discussed. Confusion takes place while members try to perform these values to better assimilate into the organization. Dougherty (2023) said that members will perform and enact certain values which creates a level of understanding of true organizational meaning. The enacted values of the organization help identify core meanings. Enacted values are seldom acknowledged by the organization, which makes understanding the process of organizational behavior more complex.

Organizations will promote their espoused values and beliefs within their mission statement, literature, and other forms of information. For example, Blizzard states on their website that they value respecting others, equality, and leading responsibly (About Blizzard Entertainment, n.d.). On the surface layer, researchers explained how espoused values are desirable and commonly promoted by the organization (Matthews et al., 2009). However, they are not the values that are being enacted. Brooks (2021) stated that even though Blizzard had espoused healthy values, members enacted toxic values such as sexual harassment, name-calling, shaming, and promoting a frat-like culture (Brookes, 2021). Matthews et al. (2009) that values, regardless of morality, will be enacted due to the organizational benefits it this gives members. There are intersections between bystander intervention and the values of the organization that are collectively taking place, but universally ignored. This leads me to my next research question:

RQ3: How do sexual harassment and bystander intervention engage with espoused and enacted organizational values?

Core Organizational Meanings

In the final layer of Trans-MOC, Dougherty (2023) said that there are core organizational meanings that truly define an organization. Dougherty (2023) expanded, stating that “the core meanings are the symbolic representations of the organization” (p.17). Below, I provide an analysis of organizational core meanings to create a more thorough understanding of how core meaning influence bystander intervention.

It is essential for organizational members to understand the core meanings of their organization. The systems of meaning in organizations guide organizational behaviors (Dougherty, 2023), and if members are not aware of these structures, they can face backlash, punishment, and even removal from the group. Paralleling the consequences of being unaware of an organization’s core meaning to sexual harassment, if bystanders enact behaviors that are not a “symbolic representation” (p. 17) of the culture, unwanted outcomes may take place. Dougherty (2023) defined the first core meaning as *cognitive*. To make this more understandable, Dougherty (2023) stated cognitive meanings are the formal definitions. However, the bigger concern is how members within the organization define certain behaviors, or as Dougherty (2023) states, create systems of meaning that go beyond the formal definition. However, the formal definitions, especially around sexual harassment, are different (Dougherty et al. 2009). This furthers the discussion about bystander intervention, suggesting that core meanings differ among organizations. Considering there are different core meanings of sexual harassment, there will be

different understandings of bystander intervention as well. Next, depending on the organization, there will be different emotional core meanings, too.

Sexual harassment is emotionally laden. Targets and bystanders experience a range of emotions from fear to anger (Dougherty, 2023). Dougherty (2023) stated that *emotional* meanings are also essential to understanding organizational culture because emotions are experienced differently by everyone in the organization. However, organizational cultures limit some emotions while promoting and encouraging others. I have demonstrated how members can become excluded for not following cultural norms or engaging in preferred behaviors (Browning, 2017; Mills & Mills, 2017). Fundamentally, there is a fear of removal from the organization that creates emotional meanings around behaviors such as bystander intervention.

The next core meaning that is found in organizations is *social*. Dougherty (2023) stated that social meanings are negotiated through communication within organizations. Through the social process of organizational communication, members make sense of organizational behaviors (Weick, 1995). Weick (1995) defined sensemaking as a collective and social process that individuals use to attribute meaning. Sensemaking is used by members to better understand the value of sexual harassment and bystander intervention within an organization at the social level.

Next, Dougherty (2023) stated that there are *identity* meanings as well, which tell us who people are with a concept or behavior. Dougherty (2023) went on to explain that people will enact their identity to align with the social meanings of the organizational culture. Previously, I have explained through several examples of how organizational members will enact behaviors to sustain their identities within the organization, from

appearing to be green-friendly to committing mass murders, members' identities are formed within the social exchange of communication (Dougherty, 2023).

Finally, Dougherty (2023) mentioned that power meanings are used to shape organizational members' statuses. Power, however, is subjective to the organization based on how power is defined within the organization. Dougherty (2023) stated that other people believe that power is gained through communication and developing relationships. There is a difference in how power is viewed within organizations.

I argue that members will face a negotiation of identity when determining how to act when faced with sexual harassment. Members' identities are crucial to understanding the meaning sexual harassment has within the organization as well as if this meaning aligns with bystander intervention. This leads me to my next research question:

RQ 4: How do bystanders negotiate organizational meanings during intervention opportunities to sustain organizational core meaning?

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Sexual harassment is a complex experience that has many factors that contribute to understanding why the behaviors take place. Inherently, the multi-layers of sexual harassment suggest that solving sexual harassment is also a complex process. As stated by the EEOC (2021a), sexual harassment occurs in over 90% of women; suggesting these bystanders witness these behaviors. The purpose of this study was to explore why bystander intervention fails to happen in sexual harassment. In the research that I found, organizational members were aware of sexual harassment within their organizations (Bannon et al., 2013; Dougherty, 2001; Dougherty et al., 2009; Hemel & Lund, 2018), yet chose nonintervention. In the literature review I created, I argued intervention behaviors come from organizational cultures (Bonn et al., 2021; Pham et al., 2018; Walker & Aritz, 2015) that differ from organization to organization. I have developed an argument through this paper that created an interest to see why and how organizational members rely so heavily on organizational norms, values, communication, and beliefs to understand sexual harassment in organizations (Dougherty, 2023), how harassment is used within a said organization (Dougherty, 2001), and how these factors play a role in bystanders' decision-making.

In this study, I have looked at experiences that bystanders have regarding sexual harassment and found themes in the data to help contribute to why sexual harassment is sustained within organizations. To do this, I explored bystanders' experiences through a phenomenological lens. In this chapter, I explain how phenomenology as a methodology furthers my ontological assumptions as a researcher. Second, I expanded on my reasoning for using phenomenology as a methodology and why this was the best approach for

analyzing bystander intervention as well as why phenomenology advances the literature on sexual harassment. Third, I provide strategies that I used to collect and analyze data that explained the bystander phenomena, and, finally, I showed how this research furthers the field of communication and its ability to understand sexual harassment. First, I will explain how this study advanced my ontological view of research.

Ontological Assumptions

Fundamentally through this research, I argue that bystander intervention is symbolically created by communication within organizations (Dougherty, 2023). Also, I show that sexual harassment and intervention exist, and are limited by the power dynamics within the organization that is created through communication (Dougherty, 2001; Hemel & Lund, 2018). Furthering my understanding of bystander intervention, I believe an intersection between the Interpretative and Critical paradigms is where research needs to be to grasp bystander behaviors within sexually harassing communication. Stanley Deetz (1982, 2000) developed a critical–interpretive view of research as it relates to and helps define organizational communication. My critical assumption about research is power structures exist in society and organizations that allow some people to advance while suppressing others. Ontologically, I believe sexual harassment is power-laden; those with power are perpetrators, and those without are targets. Sexual harassment and bystander intervention, I believe, are a social exchange of power through communication that creates tension in intervention capabilities (Deetz, 1982, 2000). However, to understand the tension of power and how organizations create structures that favor some, research needs to include an interpretive lens. Deetz (1982, 2000) stated that realities are socially created through communication. Power is socially

created by the organizational value that is contributed to the actions members socially create through symbolic interactions (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010). By combining an interpretative and critical lens to research, I was able to deeply understand the socio- and political problems that construct organizations and define exactly what these problems are (Deetz, 1982).

First, I will explain the critical component and how a critical approach suited the exploratory assumptions of this paper. Deetz (2000) provided a thorough explanation of critical research and its ontological reasoning. Throughout this paper, I have shown examples of power imbalances that exist in organizations. Power imbalances allow certain communication to exist while lessening the agency of other communication. Deetz (2000) believes that organizations are historical creations. Through their organizational evolution, power imbalances emerge that give power to some discourses while suppressing others. For example, with fraternities, some cultures give power to those who engage in sexually harassing behaviors, while silencing those who do not (Bannon et al., 2013). Furthermore, I provided more examples where power has historically been given to priests (Rezendes, 2004), and organizational leaders such as Harvey Weinstein (Hemel & Lund, 2013) and Larry Nassar (Clair et al., 2019). The power imbalances that are shown in this paper require a critical approach to determine why and how power imbalances have developed within organizations and to further my argument that bystander intervention is determined by power as well.

Referencing Deetz's (1982) view on organizations, power is an integral component that develops through communication. Young, Kuo, and Myers (2012) used a critical approach to provide information that shows how cultural values influence KMS

(knowledge management systems). Newman et al. (2017) used a critical approach to better explain how young people with disabilities have a disadvantage in accessing the internet. These mentioned articles looked at the imbalances of power that exist within certain spheres. Deetz (2000) stated that critical research shows the struggle for power within organizations. My argument for bystander intervention is based upon the struggle bystanders have—participate in organization cultures or face organizational consequences that are rooted in fear. In this paper, I showed the adapting of behaviors members do to be a part of the organizational culture and sustain organizational agency (Bonn et al., 2020; Pham et al., 2018; Walker & Aritz, 2015).

Second, I have argued that communication is used to create meaning around bystander intervention and sexual harassment. I have built this claim from my understanding of organizational culture which stems from Dougherty's (2023) definition of organizational culture as being a shared process of communication that creates meaning. With this, I build on Deetz's (1982) argument that organizational culture and meaning are derived from members' background knowledge of the organization. In this literature review, I have shown the power and influence of organizational culture (Bonn et al., 2020; Browning, 2017; Pham et al., 2018; Walker & Aritz, 2015). Therefore, meaning is interpreted amongst members through communication. To thoroughly analyze and make sense of bystander intervention and the limitations bystanders face, this data must be viewed through an interpretive lens as well.

Interpretive scholarship has been used for understanding sexual harassment within organizations (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004), the cultural disadvantages minority groups feel (Razzante et al., 2021), and in several intercultural articles that looked at membership

experiences (See Delante, 2020; McInstosh & Eguchi, 2020; Xiao, 2021). An interpretive lens enhances the investigative nature of this paper and will assist in uncovering the interactive nature of organizational meaning as it relates to bystander intervention.

The combination of critical and interpretative paradigms allowed a deeper, more complex approach to uncovering the oppressive, systematic imbalances that organizations have; which are created by the symbolic interactions (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010) that create meaning within the organization (Deetz, 1982; 2000). The desire to uncover the elements of an organization stems from my interest in membership experiences. Looking at bystander intervention through a critical-interpretative lens contributed to the awareness of why members fail to intervene, as well as how they understand sexual harassment within their organization. In the next section, I show how these questions were answered through the methodology of phenomenology.

Phenomenology

The analytics and all-encompassing features of qualitative research allow deep, thorough, and expansive data to be found (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To fully understand the phenomena regarding sexual harassment, I needed to show how individuals engaged in discursive strategies, as well as the cognitive construction of reasoning to engage in bystander intervention. Individuals are members of organizations but are the catalysts for intervention to occur. Some restraints and factors stop or give impetus to intervention—these phenomena are collectively perceived and understood by individuals. van Manen (1990) stated that Hermeneutic Phenomenology is most suitable for understanding the collective understanding of experiences. I chose this methodology due to its interpretive

nature, allowing a fuller, deeper understanding of why and how bystanders reported or chose not to report sexual harassment (Creswell & Poth, 2016; van Manen, 1990).

Hermeneutic phenomenology has distinct features that make it most desirable for this project. Standard phenomenology aims to define a phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). However, for this paper, there needed to be a deeper, more complex understanding of what the phenomenon is, but, also, how the phenomenon is essential to bystander experiences (van Manen, 1990). Hermeneutic phenomenology describes the lived experiences as they relate to the individual and the phenomenon. Describing the lived experiences bystanders have with sexual harassment contributes to finding organizational solutions which can further explain limited intervention for sexual harassment. As I previously stated, there are 13,000 reported cases of sexual harassment each year, (EEOC, 2020a), and over 90% of women experience sexual harassment (UN Women, 2022), which suggests that nearly every woman, at some point, will experience sexual harassment. Therefore, there is a very high chance that most people will be faced with decisions about intervention. Hermeneutic phenomenology provides a collective view of everyday experiences. Furthermore, van Manen (1990) describes hermeneutic phenomenology as, “a human science which studies persons” (p. 6). My interest was in the experiences of the bystander. I aimed to become educated on why the bystander does or does not participate in the intervention. For example, Dougherty and Drumheller (2006) used phenomenology as their methodology when they captured the emotional experiences of organizational members. The results of this study were used to collectively describe and evaluate how emotions, such as fear, were managed by members regarding rationality. Phenomenology was used because Dougherty and

Drumheller (2006) wanted to understand the experiences members had with emotions. The authors wanted to understand the human experiences individuals lived within this organization regarding emotions.

Like Dougherty and Drumheller, my study has the intention of understanding the human element of people, but with bystander intervention. People give criticism, suggestions, and solutions about what to do if a person witnesses sexual harassment, but some elements are unknown unless a person's experience as a bystander of harassment is explored. I used hermeneutic phenomenology to create themes of lived experiences. In turn, these themes reflect bystanders' experiences with sexual harassment (van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology helped surface personal experiences with certain situations, which provided a deeper, more investigative insight into the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

The complexity and rigor of hermeneutic phenomenology discover and is interested in what is not replaceable (van Manen, 1990). Bystander intervention is a common, yet unique experience that deserves focus primarily on the process and experiences of people in harassing contexts. Dr. Rebecca Meisenbach (2010) saw a uniqueness in the individual lived experiences of female breadwinners. Meisenbach chose phenomenology because of the closeness the methodology brings the phenomenon to the reader (2010). To fully understand the experiences of bystander intervention, a personal connection must take place between the research and the reading.

Phenomenology can create detailed, human experiences that can be relatable to readers.

The human science aspect of hermeneutic phenomenology was important to my analysis of bystander intervention due to the organic development of the phenomenon. In

this paper, I suggest that organizational culture and its features are processed through the communication that is used by organizational members, which is enacted through developing meaning around symbolic interactions (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010).

Paralleling the organic development of organizational cultures, hermeneutic phenomenology brings awareness to the natural progress of events in our everyday lives in our “natural attitude” (p. 7). van Manen (1990) stated that hermeneutic phenomenology is the “philosophy of the personal” (p. 7). I had the desire to understand bystander thinking when faced with decisions about intervention. Hermeneutic phenomenology helped me create a collective framework that described bystander intervention, but, also, the personal philosophical reasoning bystanders had regarding sexual harassment. Furthermore, this methodology surfaced underlying reasons, concerns, and limitations bystanders have during sexual harassment encounters.

The philosophical, personal, and collective elements of hermeneutic phenomenology are rooted in interpretation. Hermeneutic phenomenology is the interpretation of lived experiences, moving beyond just the conceptualization of these experiences (van Manen, 1990). Not everyone will be able to truly and fully understand the phenomena that are discussed in scholarship. However, hermeneutic phenomenology captures personal accounts, exposing the “essence” (van Manen, 1990, p. 5) so that readers can, essentially, understand what it means to be human. Authors De Gagne et al. (2010) showed the human side and experience of online educators using phenomenology. The authors used phenomenology to consider personal narratives and experiences online educators have so there can be suggestions and strategies created to solve online education issues. Like De Gagne et al.’s (2010) study, my interest was to find the essence

of bystanders' experiences so that suggestions can be made to contribute to mitigating sexual harassment.

Along with providing an interpretation of why and how bystander intervention occurs within individuals, phenomenology gives an understanding of lived experiences (van Manen, 1990). Bystander intervention must be understood through the perspectives and lived experiences of those who have encountered sexual harassment to find an interpretive explanation for the behaviors that occur surrounding the witnessing of sexual harassment. Lived experiences are presented in conscious forms (van Manen, 1990), providing a unique explanation of the phenomenon that is occurring. The studying of the lived experiences of bystanders and how they have encountered sexual harassment increases the strength of the study, advancing the "human science" component that hermeneutic phenomenology instills (van Manen, 1990). To capture bystander phenomena, I used strategic interviews to fully understand the lived experiences of participants (Dougherty & Drumheller, 2006; Meisenbach, 2010).

Methods

Participants

For this study, participants were 10 women, and 3 men who have worked at an organization for at least six months. Their roles were diverse. I wanted to have a range of occupations to strengthen the results but also to show experiences within several occupations. The participants' jobs ranged from hairstylist, car salesman, server, marketing director, educator, and military member. Most of the participants described their occupation as being their primary income, while one stated the harassment took place in a part-time role. Twelve out of the thirteen participants identified as White. One

female stated she was African American. Participants ranged from 29 to 51 years of age with a median age of 35.

Given that sexual harassment is something that I have a passion for understanding and helping to remove, I have communicated with bystanders and targets alike. Most of them were willing to share their experiences with me to help educate more people on the issue. However, my reach was limited, so I had to use other techniques. Tracy (2019) suggested that when participants are needed for sensitive topics that may involve limited volunteers, snowball sampling is effective to recruit more participants. I asked participants if they had colleagues that would also be willing to participate in the interviews. van Manen (1990) stated that the essence comes from the lived experiences of the phenomenon. Therefore, my participants needed to be those who have directly or indirectly experienced sexual harassment. To better define this, I interviewed individuals who had directly witnessed or been involved in a sexual harassment encounter. For example, the participants were not targets, but third parties, in any aspect. Although this study aimed to uncover the individual interpretive experiences of bystander intervention, it fell within an organizational communication lens due to the role organizational culture played in bystander intervention. The number of interviews was regulated by the level of saturation in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I reached saturation when I found no additional, novel data, and I was able to categorically place information into themes.

For this study, I recruited employees who have been at an organization for six months or more. The employment did not need to be their current job. I reasoned that after six months; employees should have developed an understanding of cultural norms and organizational expectations. I believed that members would have been exposed to the

culture of the organization and would be familiar with the power dynamics that were in place. Participants were all over the age of 18.

Briefing Interviews

Tracy (2019) stated that there are several obstacles to overcome in data collection. I found this often when trying to recruit participants for this study. Potential participants and their ideologies and assumptions regarding sexual harassment acted as gatekeepers in this study. When I approached several men to participate, one said, “I don’t believe in that shit [sexual harassment]” and others shared similar views. I then asked if they knew someone who does and was quickly shut down. There could have been confusion about what I was going to ask, but with these individuals, I was unable to brief them on the study due to their lack of participation and acceptance of the topic.

I do believe that bystander intervention carries trauma, pain, emotions, and confusion. Before I selected participants to engage in this study, I performed briefing interviews that included several items (Tracy, 2019). Briefing interviews were done before the interviews took place on the topic of bystander intervention. These interviews helped the participants and I see if they would be a fit for the project. Some of the participants were removed after the briefing interviews took place based on their lack of experience with sexual harassment, their unwillingness to discuss the topic, or their overall disagreement with the topic.

First, I wanted to make sure that participants felt comfortable speaking about their experiences with sexual harassment since sexual harassment is emotionally laden. The project aimed to uncover past experiences, so there was a risk of the participant having lingering trauma from my questions. Second, briefing interviews allowed me to get more

information about the participants as well as what they have experienced to make sure they would be suitable contributors. Since I focused on bystander intervention in the workplace, I wanted to ensure that my participants have experienced the phenomenon in the workplace context. Finally, Dougherty et al. (2009) found that organizational members define sexual harassment differently, so I wanted to make sure the participant and I had at least a semi-shared definition of the term. In the briefing interview, there were a lot of potential participants that did not meet the criteria for this because of the trauma of their experiences, their views and rejection of the topic, and their experiences were not in the bystander role.

Interviews

Phenomenology is an interpretative exploration of participants' experiences. I collected data to ensure there is an interpretative process occurring. Tracy (2019) said that qualitative interviews allow the researcher to go beyond their expectations of discovery. For example, the interviews created a dialogue that catalyzed communication that was not expected, bringing a new perspective to the innovative process of the interview (Tracy, 2019). When it comes to sexual harassment, a phenomenon that thrives around oppression, interviews unlocked communication and experiences that helped structure meaning around bystander intervention.

Sexual harassment is full of trauma and experiences that were sensitive to the participants. Therefore, participants were not always comfortable disclosing their experiences. Using interviews allowed me to control the conversation and ensure they were safe and respected throughout the process (Tracy, 2019). Also, participants were informed that they could conclude the interview at any time if they felt too vulnerable or

if the trauma became too much. I used communication skills to build rapport and consciously, and carefully, navigated through the interview questions. Tracy (2019) stated that ethics should be considered throughout the data collection process, which could appear to be contested when asking participants about their experiences with sexualized content. I provided a clear understanding of why I asked about these experiences, and in turn, I increased the amount of disclosure that occurred. Interviews allowed me to control the perception of the questions and to clarify intent when probing about the participants' experiences. I was able to ask probing questions of participants, which allowed me to build more trust, interest, and disclosure of their experiences. Next, interviews allowed a more natural exchange of information to exist between myself and the participants.

Epistemologically, I view that meaning is created through the symbolic interactions between the researcher and the participants (Deetz, 1996). To truly uncover the experiences people have regarding being bystanders, I needed to talk to bystanders. Through the negotiated process of interviews, I was able to "uncover" these experiences and created a shared experience that allowed a more thorough, hermeneutic view of the phenomenon (Tracy, 2019, p. 132). Inherently, the experiences that I uncovered were "dark" for the person to disclose. Tracy (2019) stated that interviews work well for accessing past events that may be covered by emotions, disasters, and other forms of trauma. Interviews are very common in social science due to their effectiveness. I found this to be true in my interview process.

Tracy (2019) stated that 90% of social science researchers depend on interviews to collect data. Other than telling stories and narratives about experiences, interviews help

participants fill in the blank for past events and create accounts of what had taken place. This was essential in my study due to my goal of collectively providing accounts of bystanders' experiences. Moving forward, Tracy (2019) stated that, along with building accounts of experiences, interviews can show motivation and reason for certain actions. Ultimately, interviews helped me reach the justification for why bystanders did not intervene.

Interviews were a great tool for collecting data, but Creswell and Poth (2016) stated that there is a process for interviews. In this process, researchers must pick what they feel are the best interview approaches that will create beneficial and relevant information from the conversation. I believed that semi-structured interviews would have been most effective for gathering data.

Semi-structured interviews. Interviews allow the openness of information to occur, creating accounts and experiences about a particular phenomenon. However, there are fine lines that can be crossed that could potentially a) offend the participant, and b) shut off all communication. Within the boundaries of correct interviewing, researchers want to stay focused on the topic, but not be too narrowed where the questions are not being answered. For this study, I wanted to have a balance of disclosure and structure; therefore, I used semi-structured interviews (SSIs) to collect data.

SSIs showed the understanding and sensemaking participants have about their experiences with the phenomenon (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Tracy (2019) stated that structured interviews are needed when researchers want to compare the sample. Structured interviews are valuable because they reach simple, common answers from a large pool of participants. However, there are downsides to being too structured. There is

a lack of “flexibility and depth” that comes from being too structured (Tracy, 2019, p. 139). I wanted to explore the deepest, and most descriptive parts of participants’ experiences while being a bystander. Structured interviews may lack the ability to reach this depth.

In contrast, unstructured interviews aim to increase the depth of the interviewees’ reflections. Tracy (2019) suggested that researchers use unstructured interviews to achieve a more flexible, emic approach to collecting data. Unstructured interviews allow more room for discussion and a natural progression to uncovering data (Tracy, 2019). However, Creswell and Poth (2016) stated that being too unstructured could give control of the interview to the participants. Also, given that the topic is highly sensitive, some participants may require a more structured approach to show information. Finally, I concentrated on bystanders’ experiences regarding sexual harassment. There is a level of direction that needs to be followed. Therefore, I believed that using a more blended, semi-structured approach would help me collect data most effectively.

McIntosh and Morse (2015) stated that SSIs are most effective and efficient for collecting data around a certain experience or phenomenon. The focus of this paper was to uncover bystanders’ experiences as they encounter sexual harassment. If the interviews were too focused, the responses would have missed this mark. In contrast, if there was a lack of a basic structure, participants would not be prompted to answer the questions that move toward the desired outcome of this research. SSIs use a structured interview guide that highlights how much knowledge is currently known by the researcher (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Participants will answer open-ended questions but will be asked probing questions by the researcher to uncover more that is unknown about the experience

(McIntosh & Morse, 2015). There are areas of research that need to be filled and I do believe using SSIs helped shed light on these dark areas.

Dougherty et al. (2018) used SSIs to allow participants to tell individuals stories about their experiences with food insecurities. This approach allowed a deeper, more descriptive understanding of the phenomenon. McKinney de Royston et al. (2021) decided to use SSIs to show the experiences of black educators as they protected their black students from racial behaviors. The authors used SSIs because they stated it allowed them to “reorder questions” to better match participants’ experiences. SSIs are structured but allow the researcher to adapt accordingly to get the data that is needed to understand individuals’ experiences. When I collected data, I prospectively needed to uncover exhaustive information about bystander intervention, and this was done through SSIs.

Participants were hesitant to have face-to-face interviews, which I felt was due to the nature and vulnerability of the topic. For this study, I had 13 participants and only three opted for in-person interviews. Because of logistics, COVID, and the sensitivity of discussing sexual harassment, most of the participants wanted to be contacted via telephone or Zoom. The interviews ranged from 16 to 61 minutes with an average time of 28:30 minutes. The interviews were recorded on an iPhone and a MacBook. Once I record the audio, I transcribed it in a word-for-word manner, creating 121 pages of single-spaced text. Each participant was protected with a pseudonym, and I removed any identifiable information. Once I transcribed the interviews, I uploaded the transcripts to the data analysis software Dedoose.

The following list is the questions I asked during the interviews:

1. How would you define sexual harassment?
2. What is your experience being a bystander while sexual harassment occurred?
3. What are some reasons for why or why you did not intervene?
4. Would you say that sexual harassment was a part of this organizational culture, if so, how?
5. How do members participate in sexual harassment at this organization?
6. How is value given to those who do sexually harass?
7. What are organizational limitations that you have experienced with being a bystander?
8. When being a bystander, what are some struggles that you have faced when deciding to intervene or not?
9. Is there anything else I need to know?

Data Analysis

Qualitative research is structured to provide a thick description of the data so that the researcher can create a thorough understanding of not just how, but why participants experienced phenomena (Tracy, 2019). Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that qualitative research puts the researcher in a place that makes certain parts of our world visible. Qualitative research looks at the naturalness of the experiences, interprets them, and then exposes their meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There is no one preferred way of analyzing qualitative data, but the overall approach is a reduction of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Tracy, 2019).

Before the reduction of data, as well as throughout the entire process, I was aware of my biases on the topic. I am a heterosexual male who has been around men my entire life. Also, I was raised by my grandmother and mother, and I have a younger sister. Therefore, I had to suspend my judgments of bystanders' experiences and reasoning and bracket out my biases about the overall topic (van Manen, 1990; Creswell, 2007). By bracketing out and being more aware of my biases on the topic, I was able to reduce data with a fair and neutral attitude. I became aware of two biases that I had on the topic. First, given that I have a 6-foot, 215lb. male, I assumed that intervention is always possible. Also, I assumed that there would be no physical consequences for bystanders because, personally, I am not fearful of these types of outcomes. Second, I dismissed contextual agency. I caught myself seeing nonintervention as a failure by the bystanders, but not being aware of their limited agency within the organization.

For this project, I used the reduction process that was used by Dougherty et al. (2017) as they found the power dynamics of social stigma around unemployment. This project is a critical interpretative hermeneutic phenomenology that explored the experiences of bystanders during sexual harassment situations. There are dynamics of power that occur that had to be recognized and analyzed through this project. Dougherty et al.'s (2017) data analysis was ideal for uncovering the interpretive and critical aspects of the phenomenon.

From the reduction of data, I produced 61 different codes, which Tracy (2013) defined as "short captures of the essence" (p. 201), and 215 different excerpts (quotations from participants). The overall goal of the analysis was to reduce the data into smaller groups, then into themes. Just as Dougherty et al. (2017), I used a three-tier approach to

analyze data that helped supply a clear description of the experiences as well as a thorough collection of each member's encounters, and, finally, how power plays a role (Dougherty et al., 2017). Their process was layered in three tiers. In the first tier, data is analyzed by description. In the first layer, I found several codes that described what was taking place. For example, I found codes such as "trivializing the behavior", "fear of removal", "going against the culture", and "getting value from the harassment." Once I created the first layer, I continued to use a hermeneutic approach, filtering the data through the research on organizational culture and the Trans-MOC model (van Manen, 1990). Filtering data through the lens of organizational culture research and Trans-MOC helped me continue an iterative approach as I used emerging data as well as existing theories to make sense of what I found (Tracy, 2019). This approach furthered the reduction of data into groups of codes that were manageable and capable of being looked at through an interpretive and critical lens.

Next, in tier two, I began to look at data through a more interpretive lens, giving meaning to participants' experiences. In this tier, I begin to reduce codes even more, grouping them, but looking at how the codes demonstrated the experiences of the members as it relates to organizational culture as well as the Trans-MOC model. Once I had gotten a larger group of codes, I used Lindlof and Taylor's (2017) data reduction process. Initially, I found many different codes that I felt were useful for this study and to provide a more thorough understanding of bystander intervention. However, using the mentioned data reduction process, and filtering data through a lens of organizational culture and Trans-MOC, I reduced data even more, combining codes that were more relevant to the study and existing research. After this, I began to find themes, which are a

collection of similar codes that are categorically similar. In this study, themes are overarching experiences in the data. Overall, there were three consistent themes. For example, I had several different codes that were relevant to the organizational culture, such as “culture”, “part of the job”, and “rock the boat”. These codes were merged to create a theme of organizational consequences.

After finding initial themes, I went back into my research software, Dedoose, and started to place codes into this theme. I did this for the other two themes as well. Throughout my data collection, I continued to stay deep into my data, ensuring that newly found codes were placed in the most relevant theme and were filtered through, Trans-MOC, existing and emerging data, and the literature. For this project, it was a necessity that I used the hermeneutic cycle (van Manen, 1990) to filter emerging data to previously collected data as well as existing research so that a) I stayed consistent with collective bystanders’ experiences and b) literature and Trans-MOC. At the end of my data collection process, I found three themes.

These three themes were clarified in tier three when the data was critiqued through a critical lens, where I focused on the power dynamics (Li et al., 2017) experienced by the bystanders. The first theme, fear, was a stand-alone theme that was present in 100% of the participants’ interviews. Fear was the most phenomenological theme in this study, as it is the essence of bystander experience. I postulated this theme as a lens to view the other two themes. All participants reported fear at some point in their interview; however, fear was coupled with organizational meaning, and contextualized framing of each organization, to create distinct themes that were able to define both the interpretative and critical components of the phenomenological experience. The fear

theme did not have any subthemes. Fear, at its purest, was the reason intervention did or did not take place in all thirteen participants. In line with van Manen (1990), it was a phenomenon that could not be replaced and is a collective essence bystanders share. However, to better understand fear, I found two additional themes. The second theme, (Dys)function, had two subthemes: protection and future growth. (Dys)function was found in 85% of the participants. The third and final theme, organizational consequences, had two subthemes as well: organizational labeling and loss of social status which was found in 92% of participants.

Verification

Verification is needed when conducting qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Tracy, 2019). Qualitative research is subjective so, as researchers, we want to ensure quality and consistency with our data so that we can create useful, meaningful, and supported information. In this study, I used several forms of verification to ensure a rigorous, quality-based study. Creswell and Poth (2016) stated there are several steps to ensure quality and rigor.

First, I performed several techniques that ensured verification. In this study, I exhaustively went through bystander research which allowed me to a) understand the phenomenon more thoroughly, and b) see areas that need to be addressed (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Next, during the interviews, I kept exhaustive field notes for each participant. I wanted to collect my initial interpretations of their experiences, then ground my perception based on existing notes and data as well as existing research.

In the second step, I increase verification by engaging in thick descriptions and member-checking. Qualitative research is unique because of the thick description of the experiences that takes place in the analysis. In the analysis are in-depth quotes that created detailed descriptions that contextualized bystanders' experiences of sexual harassment and intervention (Tracy, 2019). Also, thick descriptions increase tacit knowledge, which reveals deeper, more complex meanings that take place (Tracy, 2019). Finally, given the sensitivity and subjectivity of this topic, I engaged in member-checking with several participants. Dougherty (2001) found that sharing information with several participants helps with overall validation. After completing the analysis, I reached out to Brittany, Gigi, Sam, John, Amanda, Will, and Jill to discuss my interpretation and placement of their experiences into several themes. After discussing the results, members verified my conclusion and supported my interpretation.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Results

Through this phenomenological process, three major themes emerged from the data. The themes encompass the experiences bystanders share when deciding intervention responses when they witness sexual harassment. The first theme, Fear, was expressed by all participants in this study. Fear was its own theme without any subthemes because it should be viewed as the core of the other two major themes. The second theme, (Dys)function was experienced by 85% of members and included elements of fear. (Dys)function included two subthemes: Protection and Future Growth. The final theme, Organizational Consequences was experienced by over 90% of participants, being broken down into two subthemes, Organizational Labeling and Loss of Social Status.

Fear, as mentioned, was an overarching theme of all experiences. Fear was nuanced, indistinct, rational, and irrational, but present in all experiences. In the following theme, I share experiences that culminate in how bystanders negotiate fear around bystander intervention.

Bystanders and Fear

In the experiences that I analyzed for this study; I found a common motivator for all participants. Fear was nuanced, explained differently, but framed in a way that aligned with the participants' organizational culture. Even though their overall reasons to participate, or not participate, in bystander intervention differed, all stated that *fear* was a conscious thought and motivation for their behaviors. This finding is compelling because it shows several elements of bystander intervention that need to be considered. First, bystanders are actively aware of organizational consequences that could occur if they intervene. Second, fear is present for different reasons as well as different outcomes.

Finally, bystander intervention is a choice that members make based on their analysis of fear regarding intervention.

Nearly all participants discussed fear, but their reasons were rationalized based on their overall conclusion and understanding of the organizational culture in which they worked and their position within the organization. Essentially, people's status served as *buffers of fear* when deciding to intervene. For example, we see this in fraternities. Younger members are fearful of being devalued and pushed away by other members if they try to intervene (Bannon et al., 2013; Barnes et al, 2021; Messerschmidt, 2018). Fischer et al. (2010) and Thronberg et al. (2012) found that bystanders were fearful of what the perpetrator may do to them if they tried to stop the behaviors. Hoelsche et al. (2021) stated that members would engage in organizational behaviors they deemed normalized because they were fearful of not being included as loyal and tenured associates of the organization. Fear is present in many forms but is a consistent component of decision-making around bystander intervention.

When deciding to intervene, bystanders were characteristically fearful of what would take place if they exercised behaviors that were against organizational cultural norms. Contextually, I have framed organizational culture as a catalyst of toxic, negative behaviors which would sufficiently highlight fear as a reason to sustain and perpetuate unwanted behaviors. Organizational cultures not only sustain behaviors but produce them, too. Members can intervene and still be fearful of organizational consequences as well as fearful of what would take place if they had not intervened. The overall purpose of this theme is not to isolate fear as something some participants experience, but to demonstrate the underlying motivation that all participants were aware of when deciding

if an intervention was appropriate within their organizational culture. Fear should be looked at as an element of all bystander experiences.

Participants in this study reported different reasons for both intervention and nonintervention. Each participant reported being fearful, or at least being aware of what *could* happen, if they intervened. First, I want to show how John demonstrated fear in his experience of being a bystander.

John is a 33-year-old car salesman, who has seen sexual harassment take place nearly every day at this organization. John witnessed a colleague of his make gruesome comments about a potential client's young daughter as she walked into the showroom floor. When asked why he did not intervene, John gave several reasons, but all were based on fear. He was consciously aware and fearful of the consequences that could take place if he spoke up.

Interviewer: What are some reasons for why you did not intervene and try to stop that communication taking place?

John: I guess at the time; I didn't really think about it. To me, it was more like extremely inappropriate, I don't want to be a part of it. So, I just quickly removed myself. And I figured if I really said anything, I would probably just get some backlash from the guys in the group. Focus was just removing myself first.

Each participant identified, an origin for where the fear comes from. For example, their fears were rooted in a potentially negative outcome that would take place depending on their level of intervention. In this brief excerpt, John states that his origin of fear comes from his conscious awareness of the social consequences that would have taken place if

he tried to intervene in the sexualized conversation. There is an underlying fear that is present in his reasoning for not intervening. I wanted John to further his reasoning and expand on this fear of interventions.

Interviewer: Can you talk about that a little bit more? Because I know you said there are four guys, and then two made comments, and the two kind of laughed, and there was you. And you mentioned just now that there's a fear of backlash, like, can you explain what you mean by that?

John: I feel like, you know, [sexual harassment] seems to be quite a social norm now, when you don't agree with what others are saying, you're kind of, I don't want to, I don't want to say they're against you. But you know, they sort of, they think differently of you like, oh, you know, kind of breaks trust saying things around you.

Interviewer: Interesting.

John: You're not as cool kind of thing or you make the conversation uncomfortable when they are talking and 'Why don't you agree?' And if anything, it just prolongs the conversation you don't want to be part.

John has given multiple reasons why he does not intervene when sexual conversations take place. His responses were initially vague, so I wanted to get to his primary concerns.

Interviewer: What do you feel like would have taken place and what do you feel like that person was said to you?

John: I feel like they've just ridiculed me about it. Like, 'oh, we know you're lying,' you know, or stupid crap about it, or you know, maybe bring up something, um, that I've said in the past, that, I am sure that I have said

things in the past. I can't think of any on top of my head, but everyone has their moments when they say things. But people like to twist what you say anyways.

Interviewer: So, you feel like it was like a fear of maybe not exposure, but I don't know, if you feel like there's maybe a fear of exposure by things you've said in the past to kind of...

John: No, I wouldn't say anything like that. I think it's more of a fear of them, either trying to make you an outcast or fear of being grouped in with something that you don't want to be part of.

John brought up mixed fears when explaining why he was fearful. First, he talked about the fear of losing the trust of his colleagues. Next, he talked about the fear of being outcasted from the group, but then, finally, he stated he was fearful of members bringing up things he said in the past. John's fears are created by the organizational culture. John's fears are not unique. Rosen and Nofzinger (2019) found that members engaged in behaviors because they were fearful of being removed from the group if they had not done so.

Katie, a 31-year-old director of a small day care, also, reported fear as being a reason for her limited intervention when the father of a student sexually harassed one of her workers. Katie described the situation:

Katie: There was a big time at work where we had a father whose child went to the daycare, and, um, they were kind of having excessive inappropriate reactions, or interactions, sorry, with one of the daycare employees. That's

happened with a couple of different employees, where it's like the client of our business and they're kind of a, yeah, I guess, harassing the employees.

Interviewer: based upon this definition and your experience, did you or did you not intervene?

Katie: Um, well, I did not intervene. No, I didn't intervene with the harasser, I tried to do other interventions, like making sure that that teacher was never alone, are never in a position where they had to be alone. I gave that teacher the opportunity to move classrooms if she wanted to, even though that was really, you know, that would be, you know, unfair that she would have to be the one that would have to leave her classroom, right with the option if she wanted to.

Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005) found in their model of bystander intervention that bystanders would intervene, but in low-immediate, low -involvement ways. For example, Katie intervened, but in a way that was less threatening to her and the target—she removed the target from the situation—but the harassment continued to take place. Katie performed a target-focused intervention. Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005) suggest this is a Low-Involvement/Low-Immediacy form of intervention. It is essential to know why Katie had chosen this approach to bystander intervention. I asked more questions because there is a sense of fear of intervention.

Interviewer: Now, you said that your intervention was, we call this low involvement right, where you take the, take the target and pull them away. I'm curious to, I'm curious to see, I guess to better understand why, why would you not tell the father to stop harassing the, your, your employees?

Katie: ...my bigger fear was that he would somehow approach the teacher and say something to her, and make her, you know, put her in a position to feel even more uncomfortable with him, because he was angry that she, you know, brought it up in any sort of way, or that he felt threatened with his marriage or anything like that... because it is that thing of, you know, then you're putting a more awkward position [on the target] if you make a man like that potentially angry. You just never know how they're going to react.

Unlike John, Katie's fear is not related to the backlash of the organization. Katie's intervention technique is grounded by her fear of how men have been known to retaliate once confronted. Also, Katie is the leader of an organization. The decisions she makes around sexual harassment are picked up by other organizational members. Other individuals may not see her low-involvement intervention—which would give the impression that Katie does not stop sexual harassment when it takes place. She has more agency and power than John or the people under her. However, she does not necessarily have the power and agency over external threats such as those from the harasser. Like John, she reacted in a way that she believed was best to reduce the fear of potential consequences of intervention.

It must be noted that Katie was conscious of the ramifications that go beyond the interaction. Her fears are deeply rooted—not just based upon the consequences of intervention, but what this may do for the man and his marriage. Katie tended to put the reputation of the man regarding his family over the safety of herself, the employee, and

the organization. She is also aware that there may be unpleasant consequences for the target. All of these are fears that Katie had to analyze when deciding to intervene or not.

The differences in intervention between men and women are clearly distinct in this study. The male participants are not fearful of physical harm. Dougherty (1999) stated men and women have different views on power as it relates to sexual harassment. Power dynamics are clear with John who is fearful of losing organizational power through losing social value. He is not fearful of physical harm. However, Katie limited her intervention based on fear of what the bystander may do to physically harm his target. Brittany, who worked with a verbally violent harasser, was also limited in her intervention due to the constant physical threat of retaliation.

Katie's choice of low-involvement intervention has been found in previous bystander intervention literature. Fischer et al. (2010) found that participants stated that they did not intervene to stop certain behaviors because they were fearful of the perpetrator. In another study by Thornberg et al. (2012), members stated they were also fearful of retaliation from the harasser. Katie continued to explain what she was fearful of regarding intervention. It seemed as if there was a calculated safety-based strategy in why she chose this approach to intervention.

Brittany, a 30-year-old director of an apartment complex and former manager of a small-town bar also stated fears that were like those shared by Katie. Brittany stated that sexual harassment sustained the organization and even was exercised by the patrons. The normalization of sexual harassment, as well as the behaviors of the owner, kept employees working in fear. Brittany described the experience:

Interviewer: Are there other times that you've experienced this at work where it took place in the workplace, where you watched people get harassed?

Brittany: When I was in college, I was a bartender at a bar and grill, as the manager. And the owner would routinely sexually harass every single one of us. And specifically, if we were seen as more attractive, the harassment was at a larger scale. And we would ask to see our boobs before we were able to clock out and leave work, before he would give us money to leave. He would try to make you take shots. And then he would just say really inappropriate things to you about, like, sexually what he wanted to do to you.

Interviewer: You watched your colleagues get harassed, too?

Brittany: Yeah, in that same situation.

Interviewer: Did you or did you not intervene when you watched your boss harass your colleagues?

Brittany: Yeah, I would intervene to a certain point. So, because I was a manager, I would intervene and say this, "you cannot talk to people like that. That's unacceptable." And we would fight a lot. But I had a sense of security. Because I was the only person able to do what he needed done at his business. Nobody else would put up with it. So, I was able to fight back where they didn't really have. They didn't feel like they had as much of a voice.

Brittany claimed that she was able to intervene, to a certain point. She stated that she had agency and power due to her position and knowledge of the organization.

However, her colleagues did not have this power and were unable to “fight back.” I noticed that her caveat of “to a certain point” required more uncovering. Walker and Aritz (2015) stated that members are limited in their behaviors based on the organizational culture. Brittany was limited by the organizational culture but by fear as well.

Interviewer: Did he ever give you any kind of like feedback or backlash or he just kind of knew you had power over him?

Brittany: He would talk to me in a way that let me know that he was in charge, like he could tell that I knew my standing and that he wasn't going to get rid of me for telling him how inappropriate he was being or telling him that he had to stop. But he would talk to me and private one-on-one in this, like almost like a coat closet size room in a position where he would get you into a place to make you feel fearful, scared, and a small space with him and he was a large man, and he would talk to you and like a nasty tone. And he would, and he didn't just do it with me. Anytime anybody said anything, whether it was sexual harassment or not, He would, he would yell at you or like scream at you and he would always take us to this one like little, tiny room. Even though there were other rooms.

Brittany is like Katie in the aspect of fear. Brittany was fearful for her safety because of how the owner would speak to her making comments such as, “You cannot talk to people that way. He was aware that she had leverage over him about doing tasks that no one else could do—which made her unable to be removed. However, he would speak to Brittany and her staff in ways that made them fearful for their safety. Brittany

expanded on her fear of intervention as she discussed how the organizational culture created a sense of fear for those who went against it. She stated that his wife and kids would come in and sexually harass staff. Also, patrons would also make comments because they saw how the owner spoke to his staff—sustaining the normalcy of sexual harassment.

Brittany: Everywhere, it [sexual harassment] was everywhere. And I would say it was only mildly mitigated though, because that, every single time I spoke up, I knew there, it's unlikely that they would fire me. But every single time that I, and I spoke up a lot, so if you, you only have so much before somebody says, screw it, let's get rid of her. She is, she's not going with this, she's not going along with it, she's making this difficult for me, let's get rid of her. So, at any point, I knew I could always be fired. At any point, I knew that he could try to sexually assault me. Because he would take us into these closets, and lock the door, and you're stuck with your back to a wall and no windows, no way out, and know that this person is disgusting. And so, then you start to fear for your own physical safety...Always have that fear in the back of your head.

Communication within organizational cultures gives meaning to certain behaviors (Dougherty, 2023). The understanding of where organizational meaning resides is essential for understanding bystander intervention. Also, understanding what organizations favor can help provide more clarity to participants' fearful decisions to intervene. In each case, normalcy around sexual harassment had been created. Sexual behaviors became normalized based upon the limited threats perpetrators had—not just

from the bystanders, but from the organizational culture in which the bystanders act. Rezendes (2004) explained how Catholic priests were able to assault and harass targets because the organizational culture allowed it to occur, and the targets were afraid of the priests. The combination of culture and fear fundamentally sustain harassment and protect the harasser from any intervention. Fear is constant in organizational cultures that sustain sexual harassment because individuals have posited these behaviors as normal and unstoppable. This is prevalent in cases such as Larry Nassar (Clair et al., 2019) and Harvey Weinstein (Hemel & Lund, 2018), where bystanders and targets were fearful of organizational consequences if they intervened.

The suspected consequences for John, Katie, Brittany, and other participants were different but were still based on fear. John's fear stems from organizational isolation and labeling that are connected to the discursive development (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000) organizational members used to normalize sexual harassment in the organizational culture. If John went against the cultural norm, meanings about him as a colleague, his take on sexual harassment, as well as his overall loyalty to the rest of the group, would be questioned. John feared this so he decided to walk away, mitigating these fears.

Organizational cultures are built around symbolic interactions over time (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010). Brittany's experience of being a bystander is an excellent example of how organizational cultures can breed toxic behaviors. Brittany stated that the owner was not the only person who had accepted and used sexual harassment; even his wife and children would engage in these behaviors. Sexual harassment was a normalized component of this organization. The normalization made the owner impervious to being stopped. Employees were aware of the unrestricted behaviors, and this could have

increased their fears of going against what was considered normal. Brittany's fear was based upon the normalcy of being taken into a closet and being verbally abused by her boss. This fear was present when she stated that she could only intervene to a "certain point."

Each participant in this theme and the overall study converges based upon the fears they have of disrupting the organizational culture. Their responses to sexual harassment, which were different from what they personally valued, enacted organizational norms and values that sustained toxic behaviors (Dougherty, 2023). In the selected examples, I argue that each member analyzed the organizational culture and sexual harassment through larger cultural meanings as described in Trans-MOC (Dougherty, 2023). For example, both Katie and Brittany have larger cultural meanings of what their experiences are with men. Katie stated, "You just never know how they're going to react."

In this study, men have a fear of losing access to organizational power, while women are fearful of physical retaliation from the harasser. Each participant had uncertainties about what would take place if they had intervened but reduced these uncertainties by engaging in behaviors they knew were safe based on past experiences.

Katie was fearful about what *could* happen if she intervened. This was not fully known because she had not been physically harmed by this man but knows how men can react violently to intervention. The fear of how perpetrators can violently act caused Katie to limit her intervention, avoiding direct contact with the man due to fear of what he may do to her and her employees. Brittany, however, has direct experience with hostile reactions to intervention—even as she brings in larger cultural meanings of angry

perpetrators and bystander intervention, she is still limited in how much she can act due to the fear of physical harm from her boss. In contrast, John's larger cultural meanings are purely social. He knows that socially, sexual harassment is bad, but organizationally, it has its purpose. He has changed his behaviors to match that of the organization, removing the fear of being socially isolated from the group.

For these members, the intervention has consequences. Each participant discussed their awareness of these consequences and labeled sexual harassment as a negative behavior they do not personally value. Even if organizations participate in sexual harassment, making these behaviors enacted values, harassment is not publicly espoused. Once in the organization, a continued enactment of behaviors, such as low-involvement intervention or zero intervention takes place which maintains and sustains organizational norms and values. For example, Katie knew her employees were being harassed by the father of one of her students. Katie faced a tension of values—she had to balance keeping her employees safe, while protecting the reputation of her business. Katie's tactic protected one target but did not stop the harasser from moving to another employee. Katie is enacting behaviors, due to fear, which perpetuates sexual harassment. There are also elements of fear around brand positivity and damaging client relations that are exposed through Katie's passive approach to intervention.

The same analysis of Katie can be applied to John. John stated, "I just wanted to remove myself from the situation." Clearly, John is aware that "the situation" is toxic, yet does nothing to stop it, enacting sexual harassment (Dougherty, 2023) because of his fear of being removed from the group if he goes against cultural norms (Browning, 2017). John enacted what he valued—being part of the "group". Brittany stated that she

intervened “to a certain point.” Regardless of her efforts, she still enacted organizational communication that allowed the enactment of sexual harassment to take place because she wanted to protect herself as well as her position.

Overall, the minimal intervention and fear of stopping sexual harassment is an indication and reflection of the core meanings of each organization (Dougherty, 2023). If the organizational culture valued constructive behaviors, there would not be fear. The fear comes from going against the normalcy that has attained meaning through communication in each organization (Dougherty, 2023). Members were fearful of a transcendent monster that may not even exist. However, their fears are real and based on their organizational experiences. The reactions to these fears are what sustain organizational function or dysfunction. In the following theme, I explain how participants enact behaviors and values that sustain (dys)function in the organization.

In my research for this paper, I found (Dys)function as an overall theme. By interpreting the data with the existing literature, I argue that members use, or fail to use, bystander intervention as a functional tool within the organization that can be explained by two subthemes: Protection and Future Growth.

Dys/function and Non/intervention

Organizational commitment requires members to engage and participate in normalized behaviors. Over time, these behaviors create a functional component of the organizational culture—guiding communication, behaviors, and overall systems of meaning (Dougherty, 2023). I found that members functionally participate in sexual harassment by a) avoiding or b) engaging in bystander intervention to serve a functional

purpose for themselves in the organization. Functional participation in sexual harassment creates an overall dysfunctional organizational culture (Dougherty, 2001).

Previously, I have shown how members will use behaviors to match the organizational culture. This study extends these findings by identifying how bystanders functionally use bystander non/intervention to create organizational gains within the organization. I found that members will use sexual harassment intervention, or lack thereof, as a function for their benefit. The implication of this theme suggests that the functional gain of allowing or not allowing sexual harassment to occur leads to an overall dysfunction within the organization.

The basis of this theme expands on Dougherty's (2001) article where she found that organizational members *use* sexual harassment functions to create favorable outcomes. In the article, Dougherty stated that members would harass targets to build camaraderie between each other and to cope with the stress of their jobs. In my findings, I discovered that the functionality of sexual harassment also shapes non/intervention. Organizational culture becomes more complex when members can manipulate, ignore, or sustain organizational behaviors to bring them success within the organization. In the first subtheme, I found that bystanders functionally participate in intervention/nonintervention to protect themselves in the organization. Most of the participants stated that intervention could have cost them money, hours, or their jobs. Others used bystander intervention to protect their roles and organizational status. Therefore, nonintervention/intervention functionally protected the bystanders from potential negative outcomes in the organization.

Protection

Several participants used bystander nonintervention as something that protects them from the organizational culture but also protects benefits that come from the job. The interesting aspect of this subtheme is that participants would label sexual harassment as toxic within the organization but chose nonintervention. Within this subtheme, I will show how participants would fail to intervene to remain protected within the organization.

Amanda, a 27-year-old female bartender stated that sexual harassment was quite common where she worked—a local bar/restaurant. I wanted to better understand Amanda, so I asked her to define sexual harassment in her terms. She stated, “Sexual harassment, to me, is any unwanted or uninvited form of sexual behavior from somebody that is projected onto myself in a sexual manner or nature.” Furthermore, Amanda stated that sexual harassment can take place in both verbal and nonverbal forms.

In her place of work, Amanda personally experienced as well as witnessed sexual harassment take place by the owner of the restaurant.

Interviewer: What was your experience being a bystander while sexual harassment had taken place?

Amanda: Oh, man. Yeah, so actually, so in the restaurant business, it was actually, like, common. He was known to talk and poke women. Also, every girl, under the age of 25 was harassed by him.

Interviewer: Who was this person?

Amanda: Actually, the boss.

Interviewer: Can you define to me what you mean by poking? Do you mean physically poking?

Amanda: He would just poke in all of your areas that I mean, nobody's supposed to touch...all your intimate areas. It was. It was odd behavior, really.

Interviewer: Do you feel collectively by all the staff that was touched by him? That this was a common behavior by this person?

Amanda: Oh, for sure. So blatant.

Interviewer: Okay, so blatant sexual harassment?

Amanda: Yes.

Interviewer: And you watched a colleague of yours be a target by this person?

Amanda: Multiple

Interviewer: Okay, over the course of your time working there?

Amanda: From day one, until I stopped working there, it was just like a known thing from him.

Sexual harassment is a part of this organizational culture and is experienced by a large group of members within the organization. Next, I asked Amanda why she did not intervene. She proceeded to explain that sexual harassment has functions in the organization and that bystander intervention would disrupt this process. In a way, she allows sexual harassment to take place to get what she wanted from the organization.

Interviewer: What are some reasons for why or why not? You did not intervene?

Amanda: Like, it was almost something that just came with part of the job.

Everybody was in college, and he was super lenient with our hours and

when we could work when we wanted, and so it was like, almost like expected.

Interviewer: Was there a quid pro quo taking place? So, let's say that boss gives you time off, dude, he can harass you then, right? It's like an expectation. Do you feel like that was taking place?

Amanda: I feel it wasn't spoken for. But I feel like that was an underlying like, reason or motive that he had, like, oh, I'll let you do this. And you can go do this, but I'm going to always do this.

When probed, Amanda, expanded more on how the lack of intervention protected her in multiple ways.

Amanda: I would say that me intervening would put me at risk for oh, like, because I was actually higher paid there. Oh, he's gonna take that (her pay) now. Yeah, you know, I have bills I have college to pay for I have gas to pay for. And so, I think that was a main reason. But kind of like we all we all knew it was going on. I think that would be the basis as we all knew it was going on. So how do we deal with it? We're all out for ourselves, I would say.

Tara, a 34-year-old hairstylist, had a similar response to Amanda when it came to nonintervention in a small midwestern salon where she worked. Tara described her organizational culture as a system that functioned on sexual harassment. Tara sees harassment as a give-and-take of the job that must be followed if stylists want to be successful.

First, I wanted to see how Tara defined sexual harassment. Her response fell in line with all other participants, but she contextually explained the concept to be job specific.

Interviewer: How would you define sexual harassment?

Tara: Well, I mean, from the perspective of working in an industry job as a hairstylist, it can be verbally, that people say things that are inappropriate about it, you know, in a sexual manner. It can also be, of course, physical, unwanted touch, so on and so forth. Yeah, looking at a perspective of sexual harassment of you know, working in an industry job. There are clients, so you'd be cutting their hair. And they think that because, you know, you have to touch them to cut their hair today, it's okay. To say things to you.

Interviewer: Do you think that contextually speaking that this job in a way may give the impression that harassment is okay, because of that physical dynamic that takes place?

Tara: I don't know. That's a really interesting question. I don't know if it is the job itself, or if it is, societal, cultural, right? I mean, we see different, in different jobs people struggle with, you know, sexual harassment, right? Let's say in an office, I worked in an office for a while, it was kind of the same thing there. Because you were an administrative assistant, that type of position that you were in, then people can say whatever it is that they, they want to say to you. So, I don't know if it's specifically as a hairstylist, I think that that's a very interesting, um, that may be, you know, the touch

factor that, that, that maybe initiates that because you have to do that. You would have to touch people, they think that that's okay, sorry.

Interviewer: What is your experience being a bystander when sexual harassment occurred?

Tara: Um, so a lot of times, someone will try to, like ask, ask someone out, like out on a date and then that person like, so let's say these specific, so a hairstylist is cutting a man's hair, right? And he is attracted to her, so you know, maybe it's the conversation starts off with trying to be friendly. And then it escalates to like, 'Hey, you know what, you want to go out sometime? You know, or like flirtatious...' So, specifically, there was one time someone was trying to take pictures of a hairstylist's feet. Wow. And then the manager had to step in and get them out. And then there are other times when people have come in intoxicated, and they were saying inappropriate things about the hairstylist's genitalia.

Interviewer: Can you, can you be distinct here? What do you mean by that?

Tara: I don't, I mean, okay...

Interviewer: ...about her body?

Tara: I don't know, comments about her genitalia. I, I don't think I can recall it like specifically, like 100%...it wasn't about her breasts or anything like that. It was about her vagina.

When asked why she didn't intervene, Tara was vague in her response, and she stated that "the stylist (target) would not have appreciated me doing that." I found this very

interesting because this is where I started to see harassment as being collectively accepted and used as a functional component of this job.

Interviewer: it seems like there's almost a strategy taking place to not intervene... Do you feel like economically speaking there is?

Tara: Yeah, yeah. And so, and also think about to like, how, how oppression can work. Work is that, you know, you don't necessarily know who you are saying no to.

Interviewer: Can you speak more to that?

Tara: Yeah. So, if you say no to this person who is being inappropriate; hairstyling is about word of mouth. So, this person could come back and say, 'Hey, this person was a jerk to me,' on top of, you know, whatever it is that they did, so they could be being inappropriate to you. And you could tell them "No," and then their connections could also impact you in the future. So, it's not just that tip today. But it's also like, what happens next week, that person can have connections be like, "Hey, don't go there don't have don't get your hair cut by this person, because they were a jerk, or they were inappropriate."

Interviewer: Does, does that, do those thoughts go through your mind before you stop that guy from taking pictures or making comments about your friend? Because you know, the end may affect her future business as well.

Tara: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Tara: Absolutely.

I asked Tara to further her reasoning. From these interactions, I can see that organizational cultures run on the normalization of sexual harassment. In a way, it appears that members profit from the interactions between clients.

Tara: I mean, hairstylists, they don't make that much. If you look at, you know, the US labor, you know, bureau. So, it is, I mean, they don't make, make a lot or enough, you know, they're probably around \$36,000 a year. And I don't know if that's including tips or anything like that. So, you know, yeah, it 100% could impact them [Targets] negatively. If you are authoritative and tell people, you know, "Please stop talking to her like that."

In the Fear theme, I introduced Brittany, a 30-year-old director of an apartment complex and former manager of a small-town bar stated who was fearful of the owner, so she scaled back her intervention. However, she also stated that she was careful to intervene, echoing a similar response to Amanda and Tara, because she did not want to stop her colleagues from getting tips.

Interviewer: I'm curious because you made a comment about how you stood that you intervened to a certain extent. What did you mean by that?

Brittany: I mean, there were, specifically at the Bar and Grill, I would always stand up to the owner that was the sexual harasser because I had a position of power, but after so long, uh, standing up for it [sexual harassment] the same person continuing to experiences of sexual harassment and talking to them [the harassers] privately. And then them saying, "Oh, it's not that bad." And then they would, a lot of times because they're not speaking up, they benefit from it [sexual harassment] with what I mentioned earlier.

They get better shifts, they get more time off, they would benefit from it, and so when I would see them, taking the harassment exchange for benefits, it wasn't a great thing, but it did make sense for me to not cause strain in my life where they are, they're now accepting exchange for being harassed. And I'm the only one speaking up for them. If they're not speaking up for themselves, because they want the benefit, look like an idiot trying to defend somebody that doesn't want defended.

Interviewer: And also in a way, it goes back to that function of they, you are stopping their money from coming in. Right? You're stopping their, you're stopping their ability to get the hours if you intervened

Brittany: Yeah.

Tara, Amanda, and Brittany found that sexual harassment functions as it creates more financial opportunities for them and their colleague. Other participants found that sexual harassment functioned in a different, but useful way for the organization. Gigi, a 29-year-old waitress explained that sexual harassment was commonly used in the organization at the social level. Like the participants in Dougherty's (2001) study, sexual harassment was used to form interpersonal bonds and increase the opportunities for relationships. She explained how members have sexualized conversations with peers to create a romantic relationship.

Interviewer: Do you think that harassment was a normalized part of this particular work culture?

Gigi: Yes. (How so?) I guess like I mentioned, with the environment being pretty loose, as far as how conversation flows, there is a lot of time for a

conversation to happen in that workplace. And with that freedom, people kind of speak freely, even, um, in a sexual manner. So that, kind of, um, forces that type of environment for freely speaking on, maybe, um, over-the-line of what you would consider a conversation.

Interviewer: Would you say that, in this particular work organization, that sexual harassment has a function to social interactions? It has a purpose there?

Gigi: Um, I guess the purpose in, maybe finding a relationship. Maybe finding a relationship, even a sexual relationship. I think that would be the culture, or a big part of that culture is romantic relationships. So, people throw anything out there to see what kind of responses they get. It [sexual harassment], maybe, helps with that.

The power of the organizational culture is present in each participant that is mentioned in this analysis. Through the explanations and reasonings for why the intervention did not take place, I contribute to the awareness of fears of organizational consequences that would result if bystanders would go against the organizational culture. In the section below, I filter the behaviors through an organizational cultural lens—demonstrating how organizational culture contributes to bystander decision-making.

Amanda openly discussed that sexual harassment was a norm in this organization and was something that each member collectively, but individually, ‘dealt’ with. The interesting part of this culture is that sexual harassment functioned within the company. Bannon et al. (2013) stated that the more familiar organizational members are with behaviors, the more normalized the behaviors are among employees. Over time, these actions become norms. Amanda’s description of the blatant and open sexual harassment

seems, for this organization, nothing short of ordinary. Even when Amanda's boss exposed his penis to her and other staff members, she labeled this behavior as a normal part of the organizational culture. Brittany and Tara also normalized the function of sexual harassment as being a part of their jobs. Their accounts were not one-offs; rather, continuous, ingrained parts of the culture that took place nearly every time they were at work.

In Amanda's experience, members would playfully slap or joke with the harasser if they were harassed but would fail to intervene in the bystander role. There was never a serious attempt from bystanders to stop these behaviors. However, there was an underlying quid pro quo of cultural norms that were accepted and used by the targets. Amanda stated, "It wasn't spoken for. But I feel like that was an underlying, like, reason or motive that he had, like, 'Oh, I'll let you do this. And you can go do this, but I'm going to always do this.'" In typical quid pro quo situations, the harasser believes the target owes them sexually after doing minimal tasks for them. Within this culture, members openly knew about the harassment by the boss, and witnessed colleagues being harassed, but used it for their benefit—as a functional tool to protect their finances and flexibility within the organization. Dougherty (2001) found organizational members would engage in sexual harassment to cope with stress and to build stronger bonds within the group, but in the current study, members would allow peers to be harassed to protect their pay, hours, and flexible schedule. The need to protect one's ability to attain hours, money, and a flexible schedule were based on an element of organizational fear, as described in theme 1.

I stated in the previous theme that fear was reported by nearly all participants in their interviews as an element that affected their intervention measures in some capacity. The participants responded to sexual harassment in ways that strengthened their bonds within the organizational culture while protecting services and benefits from the organization. Tara and Amanda realized sexual harassment functioned for their organization, allowing themselves and their peers to make money. Brittany saw how her peers were 'okay' with the sexual harassment and that these behaviors functioned in the organization, causing her to limit her attempts to stop the behaviors. Gigi saw that sexual harassment functioned and was used to create relationships. She was fearful of stopping these behaviors because these interactions were collectively understood in the organization.

Each of the participants came into the organization with a larger cultural meaning of what to do if witnessing sexual harassment and where intervention would position them in a) society, and b) the organization. Dougherty (2023) stated that larger cultural understandings are brought into the organization and then enacted. Tara, Brittany, Gigi, and Amanda all enacted behaviors that sustained sexual harassment and its functionality in their organization. Brittany's perspective on intervention was to intervene. However, even she began to change her enactment when we understood sexual harassment's function within the organization and how normalized these interactions were.

Given that Amanda knew that the cultural norm was allowing sexual harassment to take place because the consequential outcomes would damage her ability to sustain her pay and flexibility, she decided to align herself with the organizational culture despite knowing these behaviors were wrong. From my interpretation of Tara's examples and the

limited organizational structures, I would suggest that sexual harassment is an enacted behavior within the organization. Later in the interview, Tara stated, “To be honest, I am not sure how different stylists are than sex workers.” Tara has a larger cultural meaning of what it means to be a stylist (Dougherty, 202D). She was not only aware of sexual harassment taking place within this organization but has connected larger cultural meanings to the role, giving her an understanding of what *must* be done to be a successful stylist.

In the second subtheme, I see that members functionally and strategically avoid intervention because they fear it would impair their organizational growth. This subtheme is much different than Protection. In the subtheme of Protection, members neglected bystander intervention to protect their flexibility within the organization as well as strategically avoid upsetting the harassers to maintain the ability to grow within the organization.

Future Growth

It appears there is an element of fear that takes place in all participants. For different reasons, bystanders are fearful of intervention because of the consequences that could potentially take place. In this theme, members expressed a lack of intervention because they were fearful of potentially stopping their personal growth within the organization. As a result, organizational members avoided intervention because they wanted to ensure they could advance their careers. In these organizations, intervention could have potentially impaired career advancement. The conclusions that bystanders make when calculating these fears come from their understanding of organizational culture and past experiences of consequential outcomes that have occurred for those who

intervened. From a functional point of view, sexual harassment has been a normalized part of each organizational culture mentioned in this analysis. Each participant demonstrated how the organization has aspects that function based on sexual harassment. The functional calculations that bystanders engage in lead to an overall dysfunctional outcome.

Jill, a 51-year-old technical educator, had a hard time picking an example when she witnessed sexual harassment, which could be explained by her definition of sexual harassment.

Interviewer: how would you define sexual harassment in just your own words?

Jill: So, in my own words because they're so I'm hesitating because there's layers.

So, sexual harassment would be blatant form, which could be an actual physical touch, (sexual harassment) could be an explicit statement, asking for some sort of a sexual favor. But it can also be the implicit or the kind of that, 'hey, I'm just joking' as well, but that would still qualify as sexual harassment?

Interviewer: Can you give me some more on the "I'm just joking statement" you just made there?

Jill: So, I would make that more of like a hostile work environment, kind of a field, where someone would say, 'Oh, you look mighty fine in that outfit,' or 'you're such an, you know, beautiful woman' or something along those lines that would make you feel uncomfortable but was sexual in tone.

Interviewer: Do you think that in a sense, maybe it's a cultural discourse, it's a cultural norm, as far as being, you know, a maybe a normalized part of the culture?

Jill: ... when I started thinking about different career fields and disciplines and organizations, because it would be different in different environments. So, you know, if I'm looking at the military, right, it would be that really frowned upon, but certainly happens behind the scenes, academia, we don't see it happens as much on the transfer (incoming students) side, but it happens more on the CTE side, the career technical. I think we might see it in restaurants and certainly with customer service environments.

These excerpts reflect Jill's definition of sexual harassment as a layered, but contextualized behavior. How Jill contextualized and framed sexual harassment gives the behaviors a normalized connotation depending on the organizational culture. Jill stated that it happens on the CTE side of education—the area in which she teaches—suggesting that harassment is a normalized behavior in this setting. I see Jill accepting these behaviors as being a part of the job and something she needs to navigate through if she wants to keep her career in this field. Jill described her experience with sexual harassment in a unique and peculiar situation. The harasser used his experience harassing other women to harass Jill. Jill stated that sexual jokes and comments are very common in this organization, almost causing her to be “blind” to them being negative and unwanted. She also stated that harassers will use sexual jokes and comments to greet people in the organization.

Jill: I believe they; I believe they think it's small talk or chit chat, not business.

And it's just a, it's a fill of silence before businesses started. Because I can redirect really fast, and they'll immediately get to work and it stops. So, it could be the space of not knowing what to do with a greeting or that small chat prior to business starting.

In this organization, there are functional aspects of sexual harassment that appear to be a normalized part of this culture. Members use sexual harassment to interact with each other to fill the silence. After probing, Jill shared an experience of a perpetrator describing a situation where he sexually harassed a student. While telling Jill this story, he made unwanted comments to her:

Interviewer: Do you think that if somebody would intervene and say, "Hey, fill-in-the-blank name, don't do that." Do you think there will be consequences in this setting?

Jill: I think it would depend on the person. And the reason why I'm saying this is because when it recently happened to me, and my response was, "I'm going to redirect you, and we're going to actually start doing the work right now." But then I just stopped the conversation. And I literally use that specific language. There was a physical, you know, like, whoa, that was my nonverbal response. Then he said, 'It's so weird, because I just got in trouble because I was teasing one of my female students, and the dean got on to me about it. I said, 'Well, that's between you and the dean. So, let's just go ahead and look at the data now.' And I just bypassed the whole conversation.

Jill was not only harassed but became aware of harassment taking place between the harasser and one of the students. Instead of stopping both harassments, Jill kept moving forward:

Interviewer: Was there a reason? Because, because now you have experienced this firsthand. Maybe, do you? What are some reasons for maybe why you avoided intervention?

Jill: I mean, I guess it was, I was on a time limit. So, I needed to get the job done. So, I only had an hour with them. And we had, I can't remember how much of the paperwork that we needed to do. So, for me to have stopped and delved into that would have taken up the time of the actual work that needed to get done.

For Jill, the fear of taking time from her job to get involved in intervention did not seem worth it. Jill described doing her job as actual work and did not give priority to the fact that another instructor was harassing a student. The intervention would have stopped her from doing her job, which indicates several organizational norms. First, Jill was accustomed to sexual harassment and witnessed it often. Second, Jill wanted to be seen as someone who does her job in the organization, and, finally, she did not view sexual harassment as a big enough situation for her to stop what she was doing to intervene. Functionally speaking, the lack of intervention not only sustained the organizational normalcy of sexual harassment that Jill mentioned (Carlson, 2008; Messerschmidt, 2018) but protected her position as someone who does well in their job.

Sexual harassment was more deeply intertwined than Jill knew or wanted to discuss. For example, the harasser stated that he was in trouble with the dean for making

harassing comments to a student. Oddly enough, this was when he harassed Jill. Not only did he continue to sexually harass after “getting in trouble” but disclosed to his target that he had been talked to by the dean for these behaviors. This puts into question a) the “trouble” he was in, b) the severity of the punishment, and c) the dean’s knowledge of the culture and the prevalence of sexual harassment. When I further questioned why Jill did not want to intervene, she said, “I just didn't want to fiddle with them anymore. Yeah, just done with the bad behavior. So, I was just not going to even address it.” Jill did not want to get involved due to the unfavorable consequences if she tried to stop the normalcy of sexual harassment.

Similarly, to Jill, Michelle, a 43-year-old marketing specialist, saw how sexual harassment functioned within her organization to advance careers. Michelle had witnessed sexual harassment frequently, and in many different contexts—some from unexpected perpetrators. Even though Michelle reported the behaviors, she found out there was an organizational “game” that was played to advance and protect careers.

Interviewer: So, my first question for you is, how would you first define what sexual harassment is to you?

Michelle: Um, I would say that sexual harassment is any unwanted, like, any unwanted comment, or suggestion. Any type of touching, unwanted, any type of like a social media content that would be unwanted, yeah. What a great first question. Yeah. That's a great. That's a great, that's good enough for me.

Michelle expanded her definition of sexual harassment to any unwanted comment or suggestion. Later in the interview, Michelle gave an example of how a boss at her organization would make unwanted comments.

From Michelle's explanation of sexual harassment and its frequency in her organization, I got an understanding that Michelle viewed sexual harassment as a cultural issue. I probed this assumption:

Interviewer: So, so, then you could argue that this is a part of that culture, then, where it's almost normalized to sexual harass? And if you go against that, then you should change, not the culture?

Michelle: Yeah, I had when I worked at (Hospital name), I had a boss who spoke to me this way and also my coworkers this way. She talked about that when you are a woman in your 30s, because a lot of us were like turning 30 when we worked there. Yeah. And she was like 70 (years old) and she was like, the boss from *The Devil Wears Prada*. She was horrible. But she would critique the younger, like the, the late 20s, early 30s women. She would critique their wardrobe and she would talk about how your 30s were a time when your brains met your beauty, and you could use it. And she would critique our hair. She would critique our makeup, our skincare, our nails, our outfits that we wore. And it was regular. It had been reported to HR by multiple people, but everybody's like, 'Oh, that's just Marilyn. You know, she's about to retire anyway. And really deep down she cares about you guys.'

Interviewer: It almost seems like Marilyn sexually harassed the staff.

Michelle: She did. She absolutely 1,000% did.

The is an interesting dynamic of how Marilyn is positioned in the organization as well as how the culture sees her. First, Michelle stated that people were aware of the fact that Marilyn sexually harassed other women and made comments about their appearances, but then downplayed the interaction and stated that she is nearing retirement. Second, this shows the culture in which the hospital functions. Even though the organization was aware of the harassment, nothing was done; excuses were made.

Interviewer: So, let me ask you a question there. Because this is a good example.

You watched Marilyn harass, not just you, but your, but your peers, and your colleagues. So why would you not, why did you not intervene in that situation?

Michelle: No, there we did.

Interviewer: Oh, you did, okay. That were made to HR?

Michelle: Well, I didn't make a report to HR. I had a coworker who did and I was supportive of her in that. And then there was a male that it made a report to HR. But he was met with...Actually no, I made a report to HR. I had lunch with that lady. I forgot about that. But was met with 'Well, she's you know, she's about to retire. That's just how she is. She really cares about you. You know, she never had children of her own.' But people were terrified of her. Like she cared. She'd been there a long time. She had a lot of connections, and she could do what she wanted.

Several parts of Michelle's response made the organizational culture transparent on how it views and uses sexual harassment. First, HR was aware of Marilyn's sexual

harassment. There had been multiple reports with zero action taking place. Next, the behaviors have not only been dismissed but have been framed as an act of caring. Finally, Marilyn was deeply connected in the organization—even to HR. Therefore, the intervention that could be done by any member was limited. When I asked Michelle what would happen if you intervened, she stated the following:

Michelle: Oh, yeah, she would make your life a living Hell. She would give you work that you didn't want to do. You would have closed-door meetings with her that, just upped your anxiety level 110 degrees, she would, you would feel obligated to go to lunch with her. You never knew what she was going to tell her boss. Like this whole idea of like secrecy. And oh, yeah, it was messy.

Just as Jill and Amanda reported, for Michelle, sexual harassment was deeply rooted in the organization. The opportunity to intervene was always there, but so were the organizational consequences. Michelle stated that the organization knew about Marilyn's behaviors, but, also, she and her colleagues were aware that they had to go along with the harassment to succeed and advance in the organization.

Interviewer: So how would members of your team participate in this sexual harassment? Like, how will they get involved with, you know, almost like allowing Marilyn to do these things? How, how did that take place?

Michelle: It basically was just like, Marilyn was in her, her 70s. Like, she just wouldn't retire. And basically, people just would say, 'you know, she's been, but she also did really impeccable work with people. She was highly connected within the organization. So even though like she wasn't in the

C-Suite, she interacted, like, on a first-name basis, with all the people in the C-Suite. So, she was highly connected. She'd been there for a really long time. She did good work. And she, she'd been there. I mean, she's old. Right? So people would say, well, she's been here a long time. But she would also, outside of the office, say really great things about all of us. 'Oh, you want Michelle to work on this! This is just, you know, this is right up her alley!' and 'this is her strength!' and 'you'll just really enjoy her!' But then she would come back and treat us like shit.

Organizational members were aware of the connections that Marilyn had in the organization. Her connection to executives made intervention a make-or-break decision based on the employee's goals of sustaining and advancing their careers. When I asked Michelle if this was a potential reason why fear of intervention took place, she replied, "Because, like, you know, if you want to get any, like if I wanted to get anywhere else within that organization, I needed her." As a result, people put a blind eye to the behaviors. Ultimately, Michelle learned that the functionality of participating in sexual harassment was something she could not partake in:

So, when I had Timmy [her son], I didn't go back to work. I'm, because I ended up going...My pregnancy was hard. I was on medical leave. And I didn't go back. I was there for three years. Like you could see this [how sexual harassment functioned], and I'm like, "I don't want to be a part of an organization that works that way." And I literally had no other job to go to. And I can remember sitting on the couch and going, "Something else will work out.

Members learn about organizations through organizational culture. Each participant described their experiences with intervention as conscious decisions that have been influenced by the organizational culture and the fear of outcomes if they did intervene; or if they did not. In turn, an organizational alignment takes place, with organizational members engaging in normalized behaviors to mitigate any impairment to their organizational growth.

The fear of losing potential growth that Jill and Michelle discussed is echoed by Will, a 34-year-old former Navy aircraft technician who saw his former supervisor frequently sexually harass a fellow female sailor. In this environment, sexual harassment functioned as it lessened the strain and stress of 12-hour workdays while being deployed. However, in Will's experience, "going with the flow" was needed to protect his current role and to avoid a change of duty or demotion.

Interviewer: What are some reasons for why or why you did not intervene?

Will: Well, first and foremost, I mean, he was a supervisor, my supervisor, my direct [said with emphasis] supervisor, specifically. And really, I mean, it's kind of at that time, you know, I was, 10 years ago, I was 21 or 22, and kind of the environment we were in, we all kind of joked about stuff that probably shouldn't be joked about in the workplace. But his always seemed to go just a little bit further than a joke.

Immediately, Will made sure that I was aware of the power this person had over him. He emphasized that the harasser was his direct supervisor. Next, Will made several comments about sexual harassment that need to be addressed. First, Will stated this was the environment, and that all the sailors participated in these types of behaviors. The

normalization, frequency, and participation of sexual harassment had given these types of behaviors meaning in this organization (Dougherty, 2023). The jokes and comments functioned to produce bonds, but also positioning in this setting. Will reveals that obstacles would have occurred that derailed his rank if he had tried to stop the behaviors.

Interviewer: What do you feel like would have been a consequence of stepping in and saying, “Hey, do not do this behavior?”

Will: Really depends on how high up I took it. You know? If I just went straight to him and said something, I don't really know, in hindsight, because he really kind of liked me and he was kind of a, as far as professional work goes, he was almost a mentor to me. So, I don't know how he would have received it. I don't really know that he would have taken a negative turn on me. Now if I had gone around him and talk to somebody else about it, so now he's in trouble with his superiors? Yeah, I could see me getting some negative kickback from that; either being sent to a different shift or sent to a different, uh, work center even.

To keep his role, Will chose a nonintervention approach that ensured he would not lose the position and potential organizational growth. The harasser was not only Will's direct supervisor but close friend and mentor. When I asked about why he thought this person harassed, Will stated, “I do think that, and this went for lot of different topics, not just sexual harassment, and [sexual] assault, but you know, just some bad people. And some, when they get put in a position of power, they feel like they're Superman.” Later in the interview, I asked Will if the power imbalances played a role in his intervention choices.

Will: ...you just, you just, you kinda gotta (sigh), it, you really have to follow the chain, um, on that one, the chain-of-command, um, you know. For me to do it appropriately. I would have to gone to him first. And we're talking to somebody, you know, 10 years, my senior. I was, and I'd only been in the organization for about 18 months at that time...it wouldn't have been well received.

Interviewer: There's some power there

Will: Yes.

Interviewer: Power imbalances.

Will: Yes.

Interviewer: Does that play a part in intervention?

Will: I think so. Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you want to expand on that at all?

Will: I'm just saying that same issues I had really, you know, fear of retaliation fear of, of harming your own career. I was there for the same reasons everyone else was—to learn and grow—and I didn't want to stunt my own career.

Will was able to see what would take place if he stopped the harassment. The normalization of sexual harassment and the establishment of meaning gave these behaviors function (Dougherty, 2001). If Will were to go against these norms, he would have risked stunting his career and being demoted, which caused him to enact the values of the organization that preserved power, and function (Dougherty, 2023). Others also enacted the toxic values that their organization prioritized.

The hospital Michelle worked for stated in their mission statement that their main concern is the health and well-being of employees and patients. Ironically, the employees' health and well-being both were diminished while working there. Michelle stated that an in-house pharmacist stated SSRIs and anti-anxiety medications were the highest prescribed to hospital employees. Sure, there can be other factors that affect employees' well-being, but people like Marilyn are a catalyst to these unwanted outcomes.

The toxic organizational values provided employees with a blueprint on how to engage in behaviors to reach their professional pinnacle. Dougherty (2023) stated that members bring into the organization their larger cultural meaning systems of societal expectations and roles. Once in the organization, members enact these expectations with results ending in one of two ways. First, members can be accepted into the organization. Their larger cultural meaning aligned with the culture, giving them an organizational alliance and agency (Dougherty, 2023). Or second, as Michelle experienced when she enacted her understanding of what it means to be a corporate employee but was corrected by the organizational culture. Once Michelle realized that to reach c-suite positions, she would have had to "play the game" of tolerating sexual harassment. She was not willing to participate which left her an outsider within. After a few more instances, Michelle left the organization.

And my thing was when I started to recognize that (how harassment worked in the organization), I'm like, I don't really want a part of this. Like, whatever it's going to cost me. I'm out of integrity here. And this isn't how I want to roll.

Michelle's decision to leave was based on a) not wanting to be a part of this toxic culture, and b) the negative career outcomes intervention would cause. Her experiences show the power and function of the organizational culture and its enacted values. The appearance of well-being and overall health is espoused by the organization, promoting itself as a healthy place to work. Contrarily, the enacted values of harassers, bystanders, and even targets suggest there are more powerful values in the organization that is used to functionally sustain and advance roles. As Michelle discovered, her options were limited. She could either participate in inappropriate sexualized behavior, or she could leave the organization.

Jill prioritized values and behaviors that positioned her as having a strong identity in her workplace. First, Jill believes that to be successful, she had to get her work done. This may stem from patriarchal systems, which can be unfavorable for women—especially women who try to disrupt the culture---or it can come from larger cultural meanings that provided *expectations* of behaviors. Jill placed her work over intervention. Also, Rosen and Nofzinger (2019) as well as (Neo et al., 2018) found that members will engage in behaviors that embrace organizational reward. Based upon the information given by Jill, the organization prioritizes sexual harassment because it serves a function (Dougherty, 2001) in everyday interactions, which creates organizational meaning (Dougherty, 2023) that encourages and discourages certain behaviors. Finally, Jill did not view intervention as “actual work” and quickly kept her focus on encouraging organizational behaviors.

Organizational members, over time, become aware of the favorable behaviors as they learn what brings organizational agency (Giddens, 1984). With awareness comes the

ability to establish personal meanings that are functional inside the organization.

Dougherty (2023) stated that organizations have core meanings that, essentially, describe what the organization is. Jill's lack of intervention creates and establishes several core meanings that protect her position within the organization. First, by doing "actual work," Jill is reinforcing her identity as a strong, productive worker—stemming from her larger cultural understanding of the role (Dougherty, 2023), as well as Jill's knowledge that her organization values those who work hard—not those who intervene. Second, by enacting organizational cultural values (e.g., sexual harassment), she had a) sustained power through how the organization attributes meaning to these behaviors, and b) increased her social and cultural status as she increased her organizational commitment and alignment (See Aranki et al., 2019; Bonn et al., 2021).

Sexual harassment functioned in each of the organizations that the participants discussed. Nonintervention sustained and created organizational values around sexual harassment and bystander decisions. The enactment of intervention/nonintervention was guided by the enactment of fear of organizational consequences. In the following theme, I explain how bystanders enact intervention/nonintervention based on their fears of organizational consequences.

Organizational Consequences

The power of organizational culture is adamant, thorough, and consistent. Participants reported organizational consequences that occurred or had the potential to occur if intervention/nonintervention took place. It is essential to understand that the underlying admission of consequences shared by participants is grounded in fear. Organizational culture determines the meanings of behaviors (Dougherty, 2023).

Behaviors such as sexual harassment give organizations meaning, by sustaining and normalizing the culture (Dougherty, 2001). If a person would go against the normalized, accepted behaviors of the culture, consequences could occur. Previously, I stated examples of how organizational cultures guide organizational behaviors. My findings suggest this could be due to the need to assimilate into the culture, or a fear of what happens if assimilation does not occur (Browning, 2017).

When I asked participants why they did or did not intervene, a large number stated that there was an inherent and conscious fear of consequences if they tried to stop the behaviors. More specifically, the participants feared the organizational consequences of violating cultural norms. Kish-Gephart et al. (2007) found that employees failed to confront and discuss certain organization issues because of the fear of the consequences on their personal and professional lives. Similarly, fears of organizational cultural consequences took place in two subthemes: Organizational Labeling and Loss of Social Status. I will talk about how participants avoided intervention to avoid being labeled the person that tried to stop the behaviors.

Organizational Labeling

Organizational labeling can increase or decrease a person's power in an organization depending on the nature, values, and norms of the organizational culture. Participants wanted to sustain power within the organization. As a result, they would not intervene to avoid being labeled by other members. There was a collective fear of how others would label them if they went against the organizational norm. Participants stated that they would avoid intervention because they did not want to be the person who disrupted the cultural norms.

Just as parents find their children being afraid of the inexplicable Boogeyman that lives in their closet or under the beds, participants were fearful of nebulous outcomes that could potentially take place from intervention. They were fearful of labels that seem real from within their organizations' cultural logics, but from an outside perspective, these fears seem illogical and improbable. Some labels appeared to be positive, and others were negative. The fears were real, but the outcomes were vague and ephemeral.

Will, a 34-year-old former Navy aircraft electrician described a time when he witnessed sexual harassment take place but chose nonintervention due to his fear of being labeled as the person who tried to stop the behaviors.

Interviewer: What is a time when you were a bystander while sexual harassment took place?

Will: Kind of uncomfortable situation...I don't know. Coworker of mine, female, younger, and a supervisor... He was also married, had a child, which also added to that level of uncomfortably. And he made callous jokes. Often regarding her physique. I mean, even just, you know, "hey, let's go on a date" type stuff.

After telling me that he did not intervene, I wanted to know more about organizational consequences.

Will: Well, first and foremost, I mean, he was a supervisor, my supervisor, my direct supervisor, specifically. And really, I mean, it's kind of at that time, you know, it was 10 years ago, I was 21 or 22. And kind of the environment we were in, we all kind of joked about stuff that probably

shouldn't be joked about in the workplace. But his always seemed to go just a little bit further than a joke.

Within this organization, sexual harassment was normalized. Will stated that he and his colleagues would joke about sexual topics, which progressed more and more. Dixon and Dougherty (2010) stated symbolic interaction is when members actively build an organizational culture through communication. Will and his unit had created a normalized way of speaking about sexual harassment that was framed as an accepted conversation. Will furthered his reason for not intervening when I asked more questions about why.

Will: Because if I were to go to my superior's superior and said something to him. And he didn't take it seriously. But he'd mentioned it casually in conversation to my superior. Now you're asking, now you're you just got yourself in a world of hurt, because not only is your boss's boss not believing you, but now your boss knows that you went behind his back and tried to report something that could potentially harm his career.

Interviewer: So, would you say here that there's an, inherently a fear of being known that "hey, I'm that guy who is, I'm the guy who told on that guy and who tried to stop it?"

Will: Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, you could essentially have been putting a target on your back. Because, you know, bad gas travels fast and "So-and-so got so-and-so hemmed up for talking to this girl inappropriately so watch what you say around him."

Several participants expressed fear of the organizational culture and its consequences. John, a 33-year-old male car salesman stated that “Out of 10 girls walking in the door, 10 are getting harassed,” showing me that sexual harassment was a powerful component of his workplace culture. Like previous participants, John defined sexual harassment as, “...unwanted sexual touch, or I’d say, words that are unwanted by someone.” When I asked for an example, John was vague in his responses, giving a vague description of guys making crude comments to females. However, I wanted to know exactly what John has experienced being a bystander.

Interviewer: What is your experience, though? Let’s use your definition of sexual harassment. What is your experience being a bystander while sexual harassment occurred?

John: Ok, we once had a customer come in with their daughter and she was going to make a purchase. Everyone found her to be attractive. And when she left the room, a couple of different guys had made very crude and sexual, sexually aggressive comments about what they would do to her. If they had the chance.

I believe the vagueness of John’s experience came from a) embarrassment of the situation, b) his fear of being connected to the comment, and c) his fear of revealing how normalized these behaviors are in his organization. By probing, I was able to get John to expand more:

Interviewer: Can you explain what exactly these comments sounded like?

John: One in particular said that he didn’t care if her mom was there, he would bend her over and fuck in in front of her mom in his office.

Interviewer: Was this in a front of a group of guys?

John: Yes.

Interviewer: What did the others say?

John: There was one that agreed. A couple didn't say much, and a few that chuckled. It was a small-talk situation. It made me feel uncomfortable, so I walked away.

A few things took place that are essential for understanding the fear John talked about later in the interview. First, excerpts such as these demonstrate the power of organizational culture as it normalizes behaviors. The common conversations that took place around explicitly and aggressively having sex with a customer in front of their mother is gruesome, but apparently common in this culture. Second, the types of behaviors that have been normalized as a part of the culture created a sense of fear for John which provide a reason for his lack of intervention. John reported that there was a fear of being labeled by the group based upon experience when other members confronted these behaviors.

Interviewer: What are some struggles that you faced when deciding to intervene?

John: I think the biggest struggles is, is you know, being afraid of the social backlash from the group.

Interviewer: Let's say a person walks in is attractive. And then a colleague is like "Hey, that's person is attractive." And you go against that? Would you feel as if you're going against that organizational culture?

John: For sure, yeah, I think for the most part, I mean, anytime, it seems like if someone does disagree, you know, someone, you know, part of the group

is making comments, at least for the men like, you know, if you disagree, they say, “what are you, gay or something?”

Later in the interview, John stated several other times that he was fearful of being labeled as the person who went against the culture:

John: I feel like, you know, seems to be quite a social norm. Now, when you don't agree with what others are saying (sexual harassment), you're kind of, I want to, I want to say, they're against you. But you know, they sort of they think differently of you like, oh, you know, kind of trusts and things around you.

When I asked John if sexual harassment was common, he stated that both men and women frequently sexually harassed each other in this organization. John discussed intervention that was not a possibility because it would trigger a social backlash. John had a fear of stopping the behaviors because of how commonly sexual harassment was used by the employees as a normalized way of developing organizational power and building interpersonal bonds (Dougherty, 2001).

It is essential to include another participant, Rosie, who, unlike John and Will, intervened while being a bystander. However, some circumstances are different from the previous participants that allowed Rosie to have more agency within the organization. Even though she was aware of the organizational culture and the consequences that could take place if she intervened, she still tried to stop the behavior.

Rosie, a 31-year-old director of education, who also works at a golf course, described sexual harassment as “a person doing something that makes a person feel uncomfortable and unsafe.” Rosie stated that sexual harassment happened quite often at

the golf course. She stated that managers will have friends come in who will engage in harassment. However, many of the staff do not intervene. When I asked Rosie what the potential consequences of intervention are, she replied with the following.

Rosie: Because whenever you intervene, of if you are known for intervening, then you are a bitch. And the people in the organization will say that about you. So, maybe a fear of intervention would be being labeled.

At the personal level, Rosie seemed to reject fear but was aware of how fear was an enacted value, and how it affected others in the organization. Rosie knew there were consequences, but still decided to intervene. She was openly boastful about her experience intervening. It was almost as if she did not care what the consequences were, she was still going to intervene every time at this organization. However, Rosie is aware of the fear of being labeled within the culture and how that may affect an employee's ability to have success in the organization. Rosie was very clear on her intervention:

Rosie: So, one time that I intervened, was about a year and a half ago, this man came up and was touching one of my friends. And she kind of said to stop, but he didn't really listen. And he continued doing it. And I said, 'Hey, don't touch anybody! Nobody in this field wants you to touch them!'

Rosie was aware of how common sexual harassment was in this organization, stating, "I think that they get attention from it. From home, from their peers, from the people that they're around. And even because, it's very much a club setting where they try to be friends with each other, that they get attention from it." Yet, Rosie still decided to intervene. Sexual harassment had value in this organization. Members used it to communicate and any disruption of that would be unpleasant. Rosie stated, "Oh, I was

labeled,” but still did not care. However, as indicated above, others who depended on this job as their main income were likely fearful of being labeled.

Clearly, in this organization, members are labeled for intervening. Over time, the fear of being labeled becomes more inclusive of the organizational culture and prioritizes sexual harassment over intervention. Rosie had more agency than other employees who worked there, stating that, “I have power in the ability that I do not need this job and I can afford to leave.” Rosie was not fearful of being labeled with the organization because she was able to leave if she was labeled. John and Will needed their jobs, and both stated they had bills that they were expected to pay. This also touches on larger cultural meanings because Rosie brought her own expectations and cultural meanings into an organization that rejected her intervention but found power in the fact that she was able to leave if needed, mitigating any fear of organizational removal (Dougherty, 2023). Rosie viewed her value, worth, and work ethic as something that would keep her in a job:

Rosie: I'm, I feel really secure in any role that I'm at, any role that I've done, I'm wanted there. And if I get to a point where I'm not wanted there, then I wouldn't stay with the wherever I'm at.

Rosie had agency. She did not depend on this job and stated that those who did would have a harder time intervening. Her view on the job and what it means to be a good worker is her understanding of Larger Cultural Meanings (Dougherty, 2023). Even though her understanding and assumptions of larger cultural meanings were rejected, and she was labeled, she continued to do what she thought was ethically correct. The other participants' fear came from how they would be labeled in the organization if they had gone against the organizational culture. Rosie was able to make decisions that were not

aligned with the organizational culture due to the agency and freedom she had through another income. However, the decisions made by John and Will were more aligned with their organizations.

Will's decisions were more relevant and aligned with his organizational culture and with his unit. It is essential that Will communicated around sexual harassment in ways that were organizationally aligned because of his fear of organizational consequences—more specifically, being labeled the person who disrupted cultural norms. Will stated that “this was the environment” that he had worked in—suggesting that sexualizing behaviors, such as the comments his supervisor made, were normal. Browning (2017) found that members were labeled undesirable names when they did not partake in cultural behaviors that were communicatively normalized. Sustaining organizational normalcy is a duty members must engage in to keep their cultural alignment and positioning. Will's decision to focus more on being a part of the organizational culture rather than going against it could come from his understanding of larger cultural meaning systems (Dougherty, 2023) that indicate what it means to be a masculine male when witnessing sexual harassment.

Like Will, fear of being labeled a particular title, in this situation, “gay” or “untrustworthy,” due to intervention was a reality for John. The fear of organizational consequences and being labeled stopped him from acting against the normalized behaviors in the organization.

Looking at sociological research, being labeled or marked leads to a decrease in social status (Brekhus, 1996). When individuals become stigmatized, they also lose social status (See Goffman, 1963, Link & Phelan, 2001). The fear of being labeled is connected

to another subtheme, which I argue is individuals are fearful of intervention because once they are marked negatively, or as someone who does not support sexualizing behaviors, they will lose status within the organizational culture.

Loss of Social Status

Participants were conscious of the organizational consequences that would follow if they intervened. In the previous section, fear of being labeled was a reason why participants refrained from intervention. However, there was another fear that was reported by participants—fear of losing their social status within the organization. Bonn et al. (2019) and Eger (2021) found that those who did not go along with cultural norms found themselves losing social status within the group. Browning (2017) stated that members were pushed away if they did not align with the culture. Throughout this paper, I have postulated organizational culture as a driving factor for organizational behaviors. I argue that members will enact behaviors that are favored by the organization to sustain membership within the culture, sustaining their social status. Organizational members were not only fearful of the harasser but were also fearful of organizational consequences—losing social status being one. Researchers found that bystanders would try to strengthen their connection to the culture by engaging in sexual harassment (Brooks, 2021). Members engage in behaviors that increase their organizational commitment due to the fear of being singled out (Strindberg et al., 2021) and rejected by their peers (Neo et al., 2018). The acceptance of, and engagement with, organizational behaviors has been found to increase members' worth and value within the organization by engaging in certain communicative styles which are viewed as desirable by the culture (Messerschmidt, 2018). However, based on the findings from my data, I found that

members are fearful of losing social status within the organization if they go against the norms, instead enacting behaviors that are more culturally aligned to preserve their organizational status (Browning, 2017).

Sam, a 33-year-old restaurant manager experienced sexual harassment quite frequently during his tenure at a small pizza ristorante. I found his response to be interesting because, at first, I do not think that he believed these behaviors to be wrong—merely a part of the culture. Sam made it clear that at the time of these behaviors, he was not in a leadership position, stating, “I would also like to lead with the fact that when these events happened, I did not have any sort of management control.” Sam was clear that he did not have the formal power to stop sexual harassment. Sam’s replies were limited, but there was a clear conclusion that he was fearful of losing social status within the organization. Mostly, the fear of losing his social status comes from the fact that Sam’s friends were the harassers. Sexual harassment was a social activity. Sam stated that sexual harassment was very common in this organization, and he had a hard time finding just one example.

Interviewer: What is your experience being a bystander while sexual harassment took place?

Sam: We had tanning beds on one of the sides of our establishment. We had workers who would creep through the door or unlock to spy on some of the unsuspecting female, uh, tanners.

Interviewer: Can you think of any other times you watched sexual harassment take place? You know, back to your definition of unwanted comments or contact? Can you think of a time when maybe a colleague or maybe

somebody working at the restaurant made a comment to a fellow colleague or anything of that nature that you that you watch take place?

Sam: A co-worker tried try to solicit her breasts in order to see me and another worker's penises.

When asked why he did not try to stop these behaviors, there was hesitation, then he begin to talk about how these people were his friends. In organizational cultural research, researchers described a loss of organizational status if members went against the norm. If organizational members were to try to stop existing behaviors, go against the norm, or do something that was against the organizational culture, there was a fear of being devalued by other members (Bannon et al., 2013; Barnes et al, 2021; Messerschmidt, 2018). Sam furthers this explanation.

Sam: Yeah, you are definitely ruffling the feathers of people you have to see every day and that isn't fun and possibility of losing friends, also, isn't fun. Sometimes I feel like you kind of give them a free pass.

Interviewer: Is there any component of, okay, these are all my guy friends? If I say "hey," to a fellow guy, "quit doing this," is there any kind of fear that you can think of that maybe stopped you from intervention?

Sam: They are your friends; you don't want to lose your friend. You don't want to piss your friends off.

Curious about his response, I wanted to find more information about how Sam connected intervention with losing friends. There seemed to be status given to those who do harass and a loss of status from those who do not.

Interviewer: it just seems like this is a part of the culture. If the normal way of communication is harassing, what do you think would have taken place if you try to stop that culture?

Sam: I feel like the amount of negativity from the rest of the group would probably been toward me instead of like, something happening to the offenders, it would have been more pressure on myself. So, I left (The situation).

Interviewer: So, you think that if you did intervene, that there would be more hatred and more backlash toward you, not the harasser. But you for trying to stop the harasser?

Sam: Yes.

If people subscribe to organizational norms, they are viewed as elite within the organization. Bell et al. (2021) stated individuals who were favorable and popular carried a high organizational social status. Sam's organization viewed sexual harassment in a more normalized, positive way.

Repeatedly, Sam said that sexual harassment was a part of the organizational culture. When I asked how common it was, Sam, while laughing said, "Oh, yeah, definitely. Man, I guess I shouldn't laugh. But, yeah." In this organization, I believe there was status and power given to those who participated in organizational harassment. I asked Sam more about why sexual harassment takes place so often, but no one stops it and he replied with, "I guess members of the group found it comical. It seems like it was almost an elevation of their status." Sam's awareness of the status harassers attained through sexual harassment guided why he did not stop these behaviors from taking place.

He was fearful that if he did try to stop these behaviors, he may have lost status in the organization.

The application of organizational culture through Sam's responses is easy, yet terrifying. Earlier in this paper, I suggested that members will behave and engage in communication, no matter how toxic or gruesome (Browning, 2017) if these are the norms of the culture. Clearly, Sam was, and maybe still is, blinded by the toxicity of this culture and he has tried to normalize these behaviors as being a part of the organization. In his responses, Sam stated that there are benefits to harassment and that those who engaged in these behaviors can increase their status within the organization, "Yeah, I guess I would have to say that there does seem to be a benefit, as long as it's something that the rest of the group does." He also stated, "I guess members of the group found it comical. It seems like it was almost an elevation of their status."

The fear of losing social status was mentioned by other participants, too. Gigi, a server at a restaurant in a mid-western state, claimed that sexual harassment was normalized in her place of work. She stated that "loose" conversations happened frequently and were often used to initiate and sustain romantic relationships. Furthermore, Gigi, stated that the freedom in the organization created an environment that was very sexualized and ingrained as a norm. Her responses were vague almost as if she were fearful of speaking on the issue with me. When I asked her to define sexual harassment, she struggled.

Interviewer: How would you define sexual harassment?

Gigi: Um, something that would have some type of, like, aggression, or tension, advancing.

Interviewer: When you say advancing, advancing what exactly?

Gigi: Like the initiator of that harassment intends to advance that (interaction) into a more sexual relationship of some type. And not even necessarily a relationship, but some type of deeper sexual interaction, if that makes sense.

Gigi was slightly confusing when sharing her experiences as she bypassed telling me about the actual experience, but rather focused on what her reaction was to the situation.

Interviewer: What is your experience being a bystander while sexual harassment occurred?

Gigi: In my workplace, I see it all the time. I never stand up. I never say anything.

Interviewer: So, when you think about these times that you have experienced sexual harassment taking place? What are some reasons for why you did not intervene?

Gigi: Um, I guess first of all, just being uncomfortable with confrontation. Another would be I'm not totally sure if the person is receiving it as harassment. Maybe it's something that they're open to, I just don't know if I would feel comfortable standing up for someone who maybe didn't want to be stood up to us.

Quickly, Gigi highlights the organizational culture. Previously, Gigi stated that members in this organization used harassment to develop romantic relationships. Therefore, Gigi seemed to be unsure if this was a situation where she needed to intervene.

Interviewer: Is there anything more here that you think of, for a reason to not intervene in this particular organization?

Gigi: Sure. So, then, in my case, it's a lot of loose conversation that happens. So, by someone being, you know (intervening), then they are like a tattletale, or someone may categorize you and make you an outcast in that environment. And that might be something that would keep me from saying something is to be ostracized from my workplace, because I decided to speak up against the grain, I guess, the environment.

Interviewer: So, what you're saying is, and I could be wrong here is that you think that if you would have confronted this person, that maybe there was a punishment of intervention?

Gigi: No punishment, but I would have been treated differently in the workplace, for having done something about it.

Like Sam, Gigi has a fear of losing status in the group. When I asked her about consequences, she stated the organizational culture would lessen the value of the person if they tried to stop what has been taking place. In this organization, sexual harassment, or as Gigi described them “loose conversations”, happened frequently. Over time, these become the norm and if bystanders try to stop this behavior, they can lose status within the group (Browning, 2017).

In organizational culture literature, members openly discuss their fears of being pushed away from the group (Walker & Artiz, 2015) as a reason to continue doing organizational behaviors that they may not necessarily agree with but see their worth. Also, Levin et al. (2002) stated that if harassers and bystanders were different in status, intervention would not take place. However, Gigi is aware that those who do harass attain higher statuses within the organization because of their ability to enact organizational

values (Dougherty, 2023). Therefore, her fear of lessening her value and social status within the organization was a reason to not intervene when sexual harassment occurs.

Gigi stated inappropriate conversations happen often. The frequency of these conversations and behaviors has created a normalized meaning around sexual harassment as it occurs in the organization, giving harassment organizational power. Referencing Dougherty's (2023) definition of organizational culture, meaning has been created and shared within the organization which has, in turn, created a barrier to intervention due to the consequential lessening of one's value and status if he or she decided to go against the cultural standard. Gigi stated, "If you go with the flow, you have more opportunities." In this organization, members have attributed a meaning to sexual harassment, giving it function in the organization to create relationships, and harassment is used frequently to determine a hierarchy and status system. If members go against this system, they will lose their place on the organizational totem pole.

Up to this point, organizational culture has been used to demonstrate the negative consequences of intervention. However, it is essential to know that organizational cultures create meanings that are both constructive and destructive depending on the interactions that take place (Dougherty, 2023). Thus far, fear has been described as an enacted value that causes negative outcomes, such as being labeled in an unwanted way. However, some participants expressed fear of nonintervention and how it would affect others' perceptions of them in the organization. Intervention and its consequences are based upon the organizational norms, values, and communication that takes place (Dougherty, 2023). If the organizational culture views intervention as positive behavior,

members are more likely to intervene because there is not an inherent fear of losing social status or being rejected by the culture (Carlson, 2008; Rosen & Nofzinger, 2019).

Candace, a 45-year-old former Master Sergeant in the United States Airforce, provided surprising, but meaningful information about organizational culture and bystander intervention. Candace openly discussed her experiences with sexual harassment. Some of the situations were far more gruesome than expected. One situation involved her peer being raped by another Air Force personnel with a baseball bat. Candace described the situation:

Candace: So now this is Sunday morning, afternoon, maybe, her and I met up for lunch. She acted normal, except for when she went to go sit down. She could barely sit down. It was kind of like she's very shaky her legs. And I asked her I'm like 'did you just go work out or something?' And then that's when she proceeded to say, 'Please don't tell anybody what happened.' And she was raped with a baseball bat.

The details of this event were horrific, but against her friend's request, she reported the crime, and the perpetrator is still in Leavenworth. Candace suggested that she was fearful of consequences from the organization—mostly their ability to handle the situation.

When I asked why she intervened, she stated:

Candace: I knew that was morally wrong. What he did. I didn't want that to happen to anyone else. And then, then it made me think about his wife and his kids. Is he doing something like this to his wife is something like this to his kids? I wanted like to protect everyone.

From this excerpt, two things are present. First, Candace has a Larger Cultural Meaning of what it means to be in the role she was in, but also an understanding of her position in the social group she was in. Second, there was a fear of losing this social status based upon the normalization, frequency, and expectation of her being the one who speaks up against sexual harassment. When asked how often it happens, she stated, “Yeah. And it's sad that it happens. Like, everybody thinks that the Air Force like ‘the chair force,’ this is the easiest [armed force]. Yeah, it's like, it's not as easy as you think.” Sexual harassment was not common in her platoon and group of Airmen. Candace was close with the people in her group. She was connected to those above and below her. Levin et al. (2002) found that bystanders were more likely to intervene if the targets were a part of the in-group. Each person that Candace intervened for was a part of her group. The symbolic interaction of intervention established a norm in this culture (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010)—she was expected to take charge and intervene. At first, I assumed that she was protecting her role, using intervention as a function to leverage herself in the organization. This is untrue because a) she has intervened at lower and higher levels, b) the larger Air Force culture is more tolerant of sexual harassment, and b) the intervention was more localized to her unit.

Organizational cultures create meanings for behaviors as well as give status and power to people (Dougherty, 2023). It is important to know that Candace’s colleagues viewed her identity as the one who intervenes:

Candace: I intervened from day one, even at, but I felt like, my voice didn't get heard much as the Airman. And then as I was gaining rank, like, they called me, Mama Soldier, was it because like, I was the oldest female

there, and girls would come to me, even men, they felt like they could confide in me. Because, I mean, I just, that's just the type of person I am.

In this organization, Candace had created a social status around trust, accountability, and intervention. Just as I have shown participants failing to intervene due to fear of losing their social status, it is likely that Candace did the opposite, intervening to sustain her social status as the “mama” of the group. Candace stated that her boss was, “very supportive” of her. She expanded and said that there are no organizational limitations to reporting sexual harassment and that leaders said reporting was something, “We have to do.” Clearly, those around Candace approve of intervention—this is the norm within this organizational culture.

Summary

Participants experienced a range of fears based on bystander intervention. Each participant was consciously aware of the organizational consequences that would take place because of intervention/nonintervention. Fear is the essence of bystander experiences in this study. Some participants were aware of the function sexual harassment had in their organization and were fearful of disrupting this norm that could cost them their protection and organization growth, while others were fearful of being labeled in the organization, which could lead to devaluing and loss of their position in the social hierarchy. The fears were nebulous, irrational, and at times, very unlikely. However, to these participants and their organizational culture, these fears are real, enacted, and powerful. In the proceeding section, I further explain the findings of this study and how the data applies to theory and practice. I also discuss the implications of this study, and areas that can be improved on for future scholarship

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

There have been numerous research studies designed to understand why sexual harassment occurs, and more importantly, why it continues to exist in organizations after training, punishment, and more awareness occur. Throughout this study, I provide insight into bystander intervention and demonstrate how organizational cultures encourage and discourage specific behaviors around sexual harassment. This project expanded on bystander intervention with an attempt to answer the following Research Questions: (RQ1): How do members use larger cultural meanings to understand bystander intervention? (RQ2): How do organizational members enact the relationship between sexual harassment and bystander behavior? (RQ3): How do sexual harassment and bystander intervention engage with espoused and enacted organizational values? (RQ4): How do bystanders negotiate organizational meanings during intervention opportunities to sustain organizational core meaning?

In the process of answering these questions, I found three major themes: Fear, (Dys)function, and Organizational Consequences. Fear is an overarching theme that is present in all participants' responses. (Dys)function consisted of two subthemes: Protection and Future growth. Finally, Organizational consequences also included two subthemes: Organizational Labeling and Loss of Social Status. To build these themes and answer the proposed research questions, I analyzed data through a lens of organizational culture and Trans-MOC. In this section, I include how I answered my research questions, followed by implications for theory, sexual harassment, and practical applications. Finally, I conclude with the strengths of this study, as well as limitations and future

research. First, I will show how my research answered each research question in this study.

Larger Cultural Meanings and Bystander Intervention

The primary goal of RQ1 was to see how bystanders, and organizational members in general, enter organizations with larger cultural meanings and expectations of values, beliefs, and norms. Members use these larger cultural meanings as guidance to create meaning around behaviors. I found that members commonly use larger cultural meanings to analyze the harassment and to determine their role and proper response as a bystander. These three aspects were present in participants as they used their understanding of societal norms and experiences to make sense of being a bystander. I will highlight gender and power in this process.

The women participants used larger cultural meanings to frame men as being more organizationally powerful and violent. Katie, even though she was the director of her organization, was fearful of what the perpetrator may do in response to intervention, stating, “You just never know how they [men] are going to act.” Katie also did not want to damage the man’s marriage and cause disruption in her organization. She viewed the man as organizationally and socially more powerful than her, attaching her view of the larger culture to her intervention response (Dougherty, 2023). Brittany also viewed her boss as potentially violent and more powerful. She had larger cultural assumptions about men in these situations based on her past experiences (Dougherty, 2023) which allowed her boss to control the situations.

Society is made up of normalized meaning systems that are built on larger cultural meaning systems (Dougherty, 2023). These experiences are then brought into

organizations. For Katie and Brittany, the normalized experiences they had regarding sexual harassment were dealing with hostile, angry perpetrators. Katie brought in her understanding of larger cultural systems when she witnessed that when bystanders tried to intervene, they faced hostile backlash from the perpetrator.

Brittany brought in larger cultural meaning systems that limited her ability to intervene because of the fear she had of the perpetrator, which is based on her societal experiences with men, masculinity, and sexual harassment. From a societal standpoint, she learned that bystander intervention could have physical consequences which prevented her from fully trying to stop the harassment from taking place. When she experienced sexual harassment first-hand, her ability to intervene was limited by the larger cultural meanings she had developed about potential gender.

In this study, participants had ontologically placed men as having organizational control and power over them. Tara and Amanda claimed that sexual harassment functioned in the organization, and they were able to use it to protect their hours, pay, and agency which suggests they have a larger cultural view that men have more organizational power and control—even when the harassers are not employees of the organization. Will made it clear that the harasser was his direct boss and had power over his ability to grow in the organization. Will also discussed how these leaders acted like “Superman” and acted with endless power. The superhero assumption comes from a larger cultural meaning, which, in Will’s mind, gave this person the power to do what they wanted in the organization (Dougherty, 2023). Building on this assumption of power, Will was also fearful of being labeled in the organization which could damage his ability to connect to the organizational culture (Bonn et al., 2021; Pham et al., 2018).

However, this is still a larger cultural assumption of what it means to be a masculine man as well as the power which his boss possessed. He used larger cultural meaning systems of masculinity to choose the organizationally correct responses to bystander intervention, which avoided being labeled less than a man, and losing his organizational ability to advance in his career.

Consequential awareness was present in all participants as they made sense of bystander intervention based on larger cultural meanings. John used larger cultural meanings to understand his role when it comes to bystander intervention. John's fear came from several different meaning systems. First, John is aware of the larger cultural meaning systems that determine what it means to be a masculine male. Rosen and Nofzinger (2019) stated that young boys would pull on hegemonic masculinity to determine what they *should* do when they experience harassment. Second, John had a larger cultural meaning of sexuality. He saw men to be masculine, powerful, and most importantly heterosexual which contributed to his fear of being labeled "gay" and losing masculinity within the organization. Finally, John's conclusion comes from what he thinks a man should be like when engaging in sexually explicit and harassing communication. The assumptions about larger cultural meaning systems that John stated were expressed by Will, too.

Rosie decided to choose a response that was different than the organizational norm. Rosie, who was one of the only bystanders who did intervene, stated that bystanders must stop sexual harassment behaviors when they see them. Her larger cultural meaning of bystander intervention is based on what it means to be a "good" employee—which consists of stopping her colleagues from being harassed. Even though

her expectations were different than the organization, the fear of consequences was limited due to her explanation that she did not need the job, so she was not fearful of being removed. Candace, who also intervened, was aware of the organizational consequences but pulled from larger cultural meaning systems of what it means to be a human. Candace went on to say that bystander intervention is something that should be expected of us, and we must make the right choice.

I found that members use larger cultural meaning systems to get a more concise understanding of what the consequences of bystander intervention may be. In this study, participants brought in their understandings of larger cultural meanings, and this affected their approaches to bystander intervention. In turn, members began to enact organizational behaviors that are more aligned with what is expected of them as org members. This means that bystanders bring in their expectations of the meaning around sexual harassment and bystander intervention but will adapt or reinforce these beliefs based on the organizational culture.

Enacting Sexual Harassment

The second research question aimed to better understand how organizational members enact the relationship between sexual harassment and bystander behavior. The enactment of behaviors that are favored by the organization took place by the participants in this study. Dougherty (2023) stated that members become exposed to organizational norms, and, over time, individuals begin to engage in these behaviors in their organizations. In a way, members begin to develop an organizational blueprint that allows them to see what constitutes the organization. I found that members enact

behaviors that advance their ability to assimilate into the organization and sustain cultural alignment as well as their organizational agency.

All participants labeled sexual harassment as “unwanted” and unpleasant, but the enactment of these behaviors functioned, providing benefits for them and some coworkers. It is crucial to understand that participants made decisions that mitigated consequences on themselves. All participants clearly defined what sexual harassment was in their own words as well as stated they knowingly were aware of these behaviors being unwanted and morally wrong. However, only three bystanders in this study reported intervening. Instead, participants would enact behaviors that were advantageous for themselves and their place in the organization.

I found that several participants used the sustainment of sexual harassment in an organization to benefit monetarily. Amanda stated the owner of her restaurant would sexually harass her and her colleagues. Amanda’s boss would frequently touch her and other servers, make sexual comments and even expose himself to them. However, Amanda and the rest of the organization downplayed the behaviors, laughing the interactions off, but benefitting from them as well.

Amanda and her staff knew that sexual harassment was intertwined with the organizational culture (Clair et al., 2019; Hemel & Lund, 2018; Rezendes, 2004). They collectively knew that the owner enjoyed making these comments and doing these behaviors. Amanda and her staff also knew that going against the actions of her boss could result in a) loss of hours, b) a more rigid schedule, and c) potential removal from the organization. Some organizations tend to be more open and susceptible to sexual harassment (McGinley et al., 2016) which means that sexual harassment has meaning

within these places (Dougherty, 2023). Amanda was aware of this norm and would not intervene because, in this setting, the desired outcome was attributed to those who went along with the behaviors (Eger, 2021). She and her staff also enacted these behaviors by joking around with the boss, being playful, and never truly trying to stop his behaviors because they knew there were negative outcomes, such as losing their flexible schedule and their staffed hours. Brittany, one of three that intervened, was eventually corrected by the organizational culture. However, this highlights the enactment stage of Trans-MOC. Dougherty (2023) stated that members come into organizations with larger cultural meanings of behaviors. Brittany brought into her organization the assumption that she needed to intervene and that targets did not want to be harassed. She then learned that, in this organization, sexual harassment functioned employees profit financially from the interactions.

Other participants enacted organizational behaviors that allowed sexual harassment to take place because of the unfortunate effects that would follow. Tara stated that in her salon, sexual harassment happened every day. She went on to state that clients would sexually harass stylists, make comments, touch, and even take pictures of their feet and comment on their genitalia. However, intervention would stop the commercialization of sexual harassment in the organization. Tara, just like the other participants, knew that sexual harassment was wrong, and to sit and watch was iniquitous, but if she tried to stop the client from harassing her colleague, it would stop her colleague from getting tipped, and potentially, damage the reputation of the organization, causing her to also lose money. She went on to state that there are normalized conversations between the stylist and client that are sexually laden. These interactions increase the amount of money

stylists receive in tips. Tara stated that there are strong similarities between hair stylists and sex workers. She stated that there is a fine line between allowing the clients to get away with just enough that sustains their ability to profit financially from the interaction, and not to the point where stylists felt unsafe. The enactment of sexual harassment was required for members to be successful in the organization.

Early in the interview, Tara was adamant about how there is no place for sexual harassment in the workplace and had given several different examples of how it had taken place in her organization—but chose intervention every time. Tara stated that harassment has been a part of her career for 17 years. However, Tara stated that there are no policies in place that prevent, punish, or even recognize client-stylist sexual harassment.

To be successful in this profession, Tara became aware of what normalized behaviors were within this role. Dougherty (2023) stated that members will enact organizational meanings through communication and behaviors, reflecting the larger cultural meanings they have brought into the organization. Tara has brought in an understanding of her role and once she realized that intervention is not an enacted behavior, her understanding of this culture was reinforced. When asked why she did not intervene, Tara stated, “I don’t think she (the target) would like that.” As a culture, members tolerate these behaviors because they know that their livelihoods can be affected if intervention takes place, which suggests there are enacted values of the organization that are not transparent.

I discovered organizational success is what bystanders were mostly concerned with. Just as Brooks (2021) found, to be successful in an organization, there needs to be a

cultural alignment between the member and the organization. Dougherty (2001) found that engaging in certain behaviors allows members to have organizational success. Enacting commonly used communication and behaviors allows members to attain status in the organization. Gigi stated that members at her restaurant would engage in sexual harassment to increase their social status among peers. The organization enacted sexual harassment to flirt with colleagues and to build romantic relationships. Clearly, in this organization, there was a function to sexual harassment. Gigi enacted these behaviors because she knew that if she went against the organizational normalcy of these behaviors, she would a) stop the organizational system and its process, and b) lose organizational status (Bannon et al., 2013; Barnes et al, 2021; Messerschmidt, 2018).

Based on Sam's experiences with sexual harassment, he also needed to enact behaviors that were aligned with the organization and its acceptance of sexual harassment. I learned that in Sam's organization, sexual harassment is normalized by both men and women as part of the organizational culture (Dougherty, 2023). Sam would engage in these behaviors because he did not want to lose his place in the organization. Given that the organization uses sexual harassment in day-to-day interactions, he knew that it was necessary to enact these behaviors to be part of the organizational culture. If he went against this norm, he would potentially lose his social status.

I found that members will enact behaviors that they do not necessarily agree with but do so to become more aligned with the organization and its culture. There are competing values that exist in organizations, and in the next section, I provide more information to show how this tension affects bystander intervention.

Espoused Versus Enacted Values

The third research question wanted to understand how sexual harassment and bystander intervention engage with espoused and enacted organizational values. It would be extremely hard to find an organization that openly promotes values of bullying, sexual harassment, or any other negative, destructive behavior. For the most part, organizations espouse values such as integrity, commitment, loyalty, accountability, respect, and ethics. I found that even though organizations promote preferred values, their enacted values are much different. These enacted toxic values demonstrate the motivation of the bystander as well as the power of the organizational culture.

On their company website, Blizzard states some of their values are protecting our fans, customers, and business, respecting others, and acting with integrity (About Blizzard Entertainment, n.d.). Currently, Blizzard is facing one of the biggest sexual harassment cases in history. Brookes (2021) reported that there was a frat-boy culture that consisted of discussing sexual positions and history, commenting on coworkers' bodies, and unwanted touching. The organization espoused positive values, but enacted values that are more negative. I found participants worked in organizations that promoted positive values, but instead, enacted toxic values.

Michelle's organization espoused values of health and well-being. However, Michelle and her colleague had to enact toxic values that had deeper meanings (Dougherty, 2023) and were commonly exercised by the organization (Eger, 2021). In Michelle's organization, members enacted values that were more aligned with allowing sexual harassment to take place because of the benefits that would take place if they hurt "nice people's" feelings. I found that in my participants' organizations, enacted values

have more power than values that are publicly espoused by the organization. In these organizations, sexual harassment was an underlying organizational value. Gigi, John, and Sam shared similar stories that explained the value their organizations ultimately valued and how these values were normalized.

Gigi stated that her organization valued sexual harassment because it was used to bring members together and to advance social status. Inherently, there is an enacted value that is attributed to sexual harassment because it has a functional purpose in the organization (Dougherty, 2001). She knew that if she did not enact behaviors that supported these values, she would face a loss of social status in the organization. The loss of social status and the group was a fear for Gigi, which caused her to enact nonintervention responses.

Browning (2017) found that organizational members enact some of the worst behaviors just to reduce threats to their organizational positionings. Sam found himself in a similar situation, enacting toxic behaviors to sustain his social status in the group. Sam stated that some of his close friends were the ones who would engage in harassment. To keep his social status, he enacted values that were aligned with the organization—no matter how toxic—to be viewed as a valuable member of the culture (Dougherty, 2023). John also found it necessary to enact values that were not espoused by the organization to ensure that his status position was secure in the organization.

The normalization and fortification of the organizational values inform members of the meaning and prioritization within the organization. However, enacted values are what motivate individuals to enact behaviors and communication that sustain the system and uphold the functionality of these actions. In most of these organizations, sexual

harassment had a purpose in the organization. From building stronger interpersonal bonds to leveraging one's career—harassment was valued. Tara and Amanda both were aware of the consequences that would take place if they attempted to stop sexual harassment—not just for them, but for their colleagues as well. When I asked Tara why she did not intervene, she stated “I don't think she (the target) would have liked that very much.” Tara knew that she and her colleagues must enact values that sustain sexual harassment because it is a functional element of the organization that provides her and her staff with financial gain.

From Tara's statement, I found that participants use sexual harassment and enact these toxic values in a way that has organizational benefits. Amanda stated that the organization had a system that if members allowed their boss to harass them, they were rewarded with flexible schedules and the hours they wanted. Bystanders had to engage in enacted values to attain agency and receive organizational rewards.

The final layer of Trans-MOC is the essential meaning system of the organization. The three previously discussed sections are the channels that lead to the center of the organization. In my research, I found a deeper, more complex rationalization of why bystander intervention occurs or not.

Core Meanings of Organizations

From the fourth RQ, I asked how bystanders negotiate organizational meanings during intervention opportunities to sustain organizational core meaning. I discovered the participants' experiences explain a) the meanings which the individual prioritized, and b) the core meaning of the organization. These findings are critical when determining expected organizational protocols of intervention. Also, the experiences that participants

shared provide a further, more detailed explanation of why bystanders are fully aware that sexual harassment is persistent in the organization but remain silent in their efforts to mitigate these behaviors.

The reasons bystanders do not intervene and continue to engage in behaviors and communications that allow the preservation of sexual harassment is found in the core of the organizational culture. Dougherty (2023) stated that the final layer of Trans-MOC is the core meaning of the organization. Core organizational meanings are essential to what the organization truly is. These meanings are “symbolic representations” of the organization (Dougherty, 2023, p. 17). These core meanings are organizational normalcies that guide organizational behavior. In a sense, core meanings influence decision-making around situations such as sexual harassment. In all the organizations mentioned by participants, at their core, sexual harassment and its meaning were identified through the values that were enacted by members. I found several meaning systems that explain how bystanders negotiated bystander intervention within their organization: cognitive, emotional, social, and identity. First, I will explain how bystanders negotiated the actual meaning of sexual harassment throughout the interviews.

Cognitive Meanings

Initially, I asked all the participants to define sexual harassment in their own words so that I could understand how they see certain behaviors in the organization. All of them defined sexual harassment as an unwanted behavior that could take place in different forms such as touch, verbal expression, and written forms of communication. However, participants, throughout the interview, began to negotiate their meaning of sexual harassment to lesser, more trivial behaviors. For example, several of the

participants qualified sexual harassment and why they allowed it to take place because it was “a part of the job.” Others stated that harassment was normalized because that’s “just how that person is.” As the interviews went on, once they placed themselves in the position of the bystander and a potential barrier for intervention, their definitions of sexual harassment aligned with organizational norms. Carlson (2008) stated that when members enact organizational behaviors, those behaviors become normalized. I believe that the normalization of sexual harassment that each participant has subscribed to allows them to see that sexual harassment is bad but is different when they are involved. To be clearer, as a cognitive definition, all participants stated sexual harassment was toxic, but when explaining a situation in which they were involved, they minimized the severity of the behaviors and the necessity for intervention. Next, participants negotiated bystander intervention through emotional meanings.

Emotional Meanings

Throughout bystander intervention literature, fear of organizational exclusion is commonly found. Going against organizational cultures creates a fear of exclusion from member interactions (Hoelscher et al., 2016), labeling (Rosen & Nofzinger, 2019), and removal from the organization (Browning, 2017). I found that fear is the motivator in nearly all participants and is a constant, lingering qualifier of decisions around the intervention. Nonintervention participants stated they did not intervene because of the fears they had of organizational consequences, such as being negatively labeled in the organization or as something that decreases their value. Dougherty (2023) stated that organizational culture can limit some emotions while promoting others. In these organizations, bystanders’ fear of intervention sustained and normalized nonintervention

responses. In my data, I discovered that participants negotiated emotional meanings of fear, unsure of what the harasser may do if they tried to stop the behaviors. The negotiations of emotional meanings suggest that the organizational culture is promoting fear to control bystander intervention, and to preserve sexual harassment. For example, John said that previously employees were emasculated when they spoke up against sexual harassment. Brittany and her staff were verbally abused then they tried to speak up, and Michelle saw peers become professionally stagnant for not “playing the game.”

However, bystanders are also to blame for the promotion of fear. Participants discussed their lack of intervention due to a fear of losing organizational agency, career growth, and financial stability, which in turn, normalizes sexual harassment. The participants that did intervene were aware of the potential consequences of intervention. Next, I demonstrate how these social and identity meaning systems were enacted and negotiated through bystander intervention/nonintervention.

Social and Identity Meanings

Organizational behaviors are negotiated through the process of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Within the process of organizational communication, members will collectively communicate and attribute meaning to behaviors (See Brown et al., 2007; Choo, 2002; Murphy, 2001; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). I found that members will collectively make sense of sexual harassment, attribute value to the behaviors, then decide their course of action. Social interactions build an organization and determine how a person is viewed within the organization's culture. I determined that members socially communicate around sexual harassment and avoid intervention to sustain their identities to a) their peers, and b) within the organizational culture. Tara stated that she would not

intervene because she knew that it would affect her colleague's tips. The social meaning of Tara's organization is that sexual harassment is a necessity for earning money. Tara did not want to create an identity as the person who stops financial gain for her fellow stylists. I found the same with Amanda as she did not want to stop the sexual harassment because the entire staff benefitted from the behaviors. Sam, John, and Will did not want to be known as the person who intervened because they knew there would be organizational culture dissonance. Brittany and Candance, two bystanders who did intervene were able to socially negotiate their identity because of the power they had within the organization. Brittany claimed that she had too much value to the organization and the harasser was aware of this. Socially, she identified as being a voice for her staff. Candance claimed that throughout her career, she had established an identity as the person who intervenes.

Organizations are dynamic and constantly changing, developing different forms of symbolic representation (Dougherty, 2023). At their core, these organizations enacted, encouraged, and expected sexual harassment to be allowed. Based on what I know about organizational cultures and their power (See Bonn et al., 2021; Dougherty, 2001, 2023; Dougherty & Sorg, 2020; Pham et al., 2018) bystanders will change their behaviors to match those of the culture or risk being punished and removed. The meaning systems in organizations demonstrate how and why bystanders negotiate their recognition of sexual harassment and the overall choice to engage in the intervention.

Several implications can be made from the information in this project. From this research, implications can be made about bystander intervention research, sexual harassment research, theory, and practice, and future research.

Implications

Implications for Bystander Research

In this study, I used two areas of research to make sense of sexual harassment and bystander intervention. Previously, there has been little, if any, research done analyzing bystander intervention through the lens of organizational culture, and zero research was done using Trans-MOC. Past research has looked at bystander intervention through an interpersonal communication lens (See Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005; Dinkin, 2019; Gurchiek, 2018; McManon & Banyard, 2012). However, this is ineffective and limited when analyzing bystander behaviors. Assumptions by these researchers are that bystanders have the agency (See Koschmann & McDonald, 2015) and security to intervene within their organizations. From my research, I have demonstrated that organizational agency and security are both determined by organizational culture. The findings of this study can be used to elevate current bystander research and demonstrate how organizational culture affects bystander agency.

The model provided by Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly (2005) breaks down bystander intervention based on high/low immediacy versus high/low involvement. The authors state that intervention takes place in a dynamic of these two elements but does not explain the reason why the levels of bystander intervention change. In my research, I did find that bystanders intervened in ways that are coherent with their model. However, I found further reasoning for bystander behaviors and why intervention approaches are chosen. Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly’s model assumes that bystanders are rational beings. I found that bystanders are irrational regarding intervention but are rational within their organization’s cultural logic. Furthermore, bystanders will choose their intervention

method based on what they feel will have their best organizational outcomes. Finally, more research needs to be done that compares male versus female bystanders. In my research, there is a clear distinction of agency between men and women. There needs to be more research that explores the organizational agency of the bystander based on their gender. The limited options that bystanders have, create implications for sexual harassment research.

Sexual Harassment

The premise of this study was to advance scholarship on bystander intervention, which would inevitably advance research on sexual harassment. Sexual harassment has been viewed and studied differently in different areas of academe. Organization components such as culture have been explored (See Keyton, 2010), but not through the lens of the bystander. Research has primarily focused on messaging and policies that could prevent sexual harassment (See Booth & Butterfield, 1986), or how individuals socially construct meaning around sexual harassment (See Clair, 1993, Townsley & Geist, 2000) but had yet to intersect these approaches around the bystander. This study fills that research gap and shows that gender affects one's ability to intervene.

The findings from this study demonstrate how bystanders pull from larger systems of meaning to understand and socially construct meaning about sexual harassment that enables a logical and rational response based on their organizational culture. This challenges the assumption that sexual harassment is a problem that can be stopped at the interpersonal level between the harasser and the target. The research in this study advances the idea that not only is sexual harassment produced by the organizational culture, but bystander intervention is as well.

Existing assumptions on why and how sexual harassment, not only enters organizations but thrives once inside, can be extended by the experiences shared by participants in this study. Out of 13 participants, only three intervened. The nonintervention of participants is equally bad as the behaviors of the harassers because it a) allows the harassment to continue, b) increases the normalization of sexual harassment, and c) gives more power and agency to the harasser. Nonintervention is a phenomenon that suggests sexual harassment is not an interpersonal issue, but rather a power issue that manifests in organizational cultures. More research needs to unpack the communication and practices of organizational cultures to find the core meanings of why sexual harassment exists in organizations. I would like to couple this research with internal employees of organizations who view sexual harassment from a different perspective. If I were to interview human resource professionals, leaders, and other organization officials, I could deepen and rationalize bystander behavior. Also, this will create a deeper understanding of the organization, its policies, and its culture. Novel research in this project has implications for Trans-MOC as a theory and framework for understanding bystander intervention and sexual harassment.

Theoretical Implications

Trans-MOC is nearly the perfect model to use to look at bystander intervention. This model provides a much deeper understanding of organizational cultures and the behaviors that follow organizational norms. My research advances Trans-MOC by bringing the addition of *fear* as a contributing element to the model. Dougherty's (2023) assumptions about organizational meanings and enactment are partially true. Sure, members act based on the core meanings and collectively agreed on organizational

values, but her model fails to include the element of fear. I found that members enact values and engage in organizational meaning systems because they are fearful of organizational consequences if they do or do not intervene and stop behaviors that are favored by the organization. This opens several doors for research and highlights the power of organizational culture, allowing for a deeper understanding of other organizational behaviors such as bullying, homophobia, or even racism.

An important contribution of this study is the process of normalization. In some organizations, bullying, sexual harassment, and racism are normalized by communication. Through Trans-MOC, I found that the normalization process occurs by members bringing in larger social meanings about society (e.g., masculinity, sexuality, gender, and power), and are transformed through organizational enactment. Typically, the enactment of these larger cultural meaning systems is done through nonintervention. Nonintervention surfaces other implications for the enactment of organizational values. Depending on the enactment of these values, more exposure to organizational meanings takes place. From Trans-MOC, I was able to see the negotiation and enactment of social, identity, emotional, and cognitive meanings.

Trans-MOC transcends the traditional organizational views of these meaning systems. I found that bystanders consciously enacted and negotiated values, making them normalized and meaningful within the organization. Regardless of their response, every member associated fear with bystander intervention, not just in response to sexual harassment, but what their attempts to stop normalized behaviors would do to them and their careers. Fear had become a meaningful value that was collectively enacted within their organizations. Fear was displayed as a meaningful value by Brittany being taken

into a closet to be verbally disciplined, by John avoiding intervention to keep his masculinity, and by Tara and Amanda letting their peers perform sexual behaviors so they would not lose money. From Trans-MOC, I found practical implications of this research.

Practical Implications

I believe that bystanders in general can benefit from this study. This research provides more insight into what it means to be a bystander of sexual harassment. In this project, I have given several examples of different bystanders' experiences. A lot of potential participants were unsure about what sexual harassment is and were therefore, unwilling to participate in the study. More education on sexual harassment may increase the ability to recognize these behaviors when they occur as well as take steps to stop them. Next, bystander intervention is a fearful process that few people have fully experienced. The experiences that were shared in this study are not isolated. Fear is common and I am sure it is a barrier to intervention, but this is organizational. The limitations of intervention came from the organizational culture. These behaviors were normalized and collectively enacted. The same development of destructive organizational behaviors could be used to create supportive, constructive behaviors.

Given that this is an organizational cultural issue, this research provides much more insight into sexual harassment training. Current training programs fail to see sexual harassment and bystander intervention as organizational cultural issues. Programs such as Green Dot look at sexual harassment purely through an interpersonal lens. As I have found in this research, organizational communication is the channel through which sexual harassment occurs. More inclusive and thorough training programs can be built around

bystander intervention through an organizational cultural lens. In this research, I explained that there are a lot of limitations that bystanders process when choosing intervention responses. Current programs are myopic in their understanding of bystander intervention and assume that bystanders have organizational and situational agency. As I have discussed, there are interpersonal and organizational fears that are present and real in bystander intervention which is not addressed and considered by current training programs. Current training programs should implement training that considers bystanders' emotional state and organizational position to determine what type of intervention is realistic. This requires a more complex analysis of organizations to take place. This leads to practical implications for organizations.

Organizations can benefit from this research. In my data, several participants stated that they did not go to human resources because a) the harasser was connected to human resources, b) they did not know who to contact, c) human resources had failed to enact punishment in the past, or d) there are no known protocols for addressing sexual harassment in the organization. The lack of policies and protocols enables members to create and uphold a toxic culture that allows sexual harassment to continuously occur while preventing bystander intervention. This suggests that the complexity of sexual harassment is deeply rooted within organizations. Current structures, policies, personnel, and even spatial layout may be the cause of why the organizational culture continues to advocate for sexual harassment. There is a misalignment between what organizations openly communicate and how organizations function. Practitioners could close this gap by educating organizations on the dialectic between espoused and enacted values. More organizations need to be aware of what is valued by members and if enacted values have

more organizational meaning and purpose than espoused values. Even though this study was able to show the experiences of bystander intervention through an organizational cultural lens that advances scholarship, there were several limitations.

Limitations

When I first created the proposal for this project, I looked at data on sexual harassment. In 2021, over 13,000 sexual harassment cases were reported to the EEOC (EEOC, 2021a). A survey done by National Public Radio, Chatterjee (2018) found that over 80% of women have been sexually harassed and over 30% were harassed at work (Rubino et al, 2018). Several studies have shown that harassment frequently takes place within organizations. My initial thoughts were how easy it would be to access participants and, surely, have them discuss their experiences being a bystander. However, I found limitations when it came to accessing participants when it came to building rapport, the fear participants had for sharing information, and their definitions of sexual harassment.

Access and rapport

Creswell and Poth (2016) stated that phenomenological researchers *may* have issues finding individuals who have experienced a given phenomenon. Given the high number of sexual harassment cases, I thought data collection would be easy. However, the topic itself was a barrier when it came to the full disclosure of information. Topics such as sexual harassment are dark and building trust with these individuals was a challenge that needed to be done in a relatively short time (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Hamilton (2016) found that the level of self-disclosure depends on the duration of time spent with an individual. In my case, a) most of these people were strangers, b) sexual

harassment is a dark topic, and c) there is a high level of vulnerability that comes with discussing unethical behaviors. Therefore, I had to be strategic in my efforts to ensure trust but to also increase disclosure of their experiences.

Initially, I planned to use snowball sampling (Tracy, 2019) to gain access to participants. However, I found that discussing experiences of being sexually harassed is much different than discussing the experience of watching someone else being sexually harassed. When I asked participants if they knew anyone else that may have a similar experience, most were hesitant to share. I continued to use snowball sampling, but the willingness to participate was much harder than expected. I do believe that several factors affected the openness of discussion.

Fear

Throughout this paper, fear has been an element of bystander intervention. Participants were inherently fearful of the harasser and the organizational consequences. However, I believe that bystanders are fearful of discussing their experiences witnessing sexual harassment—even outside of the organization. Several of the participants repeatedly asked me if there was anyone else that would read this paper. Also, others made sure that I would not use their real names, location of work, or identifying markers. Even after I ensured them of the research protocols, disclosure was not as I expected. Given that sexual harassment is viewed collectively as morally wrong, I believe this was another reason why participants were hesitant about disclosure. The participants could have been fearful of backlash from their employer or the harasser. Next, there could have been hesitation for full disclosure due to impression management needs. For example, if participants would give examples of why they did not intervene based on personal gain, it

appears unethical and gives the impression that the participant supports sexual harassment. This could be a reason why participants were hesitant to discuss their experiences being bystanders.

LCMD

Dougherty et al. (2009) found that sexual harassment is a term that people within organizations do not fully give meaning to the same way. Dougherty and her team found that there is a convergence in the language that is used around sexual harassment, but the meaning that is attributed diverges. In efforts to gather research, when asking people if they wanted to be involved in the project, a majority said that they have not seen sexual harassment take place. When I probed and began to give examples, they would agree that they did not view these behaviors as sexual harassment. Also, there were several interviews that I had to discard because once the discussion began, the participant said that they have not witnessed sexual harassment at work.

Participants

In my study, of the 13 interviews, only 3 were men. I would have liked to have gotten a balance of men and women, but a lot of the men who I asked to participate said a) they have not seen sexual harassment take place, or b) don't believe it happens as frequently as reported. Also, Dougherty et al. (2009) found that men and women look at sexual harassment differently. Specifically, women tend to view more behaviors as sexual harassment than men (Dougherty, 1999). This study could use a more diverse sample. Tracy (2019) argues that a more diverse sample size will allow a more collective explanation of the phenomenon. However, my participants mostly consisted of

females. The limitations of this paper suggest its strengths and the future direction of bystander research.

Strengths and Future Research

Looking at bystander intervention through an organizational cultural lens is revolutionary in how researchers have looked at a) sexual harassment, and b) bystander intervention. However, my sample is limited. The lack of males in this project does weaken the overall analysis of organizational culture. Research would benefit greatly from doing studies on organizational culture and bystanders, but to ensure more male participants. Most of the men that I asked to participate in this study were uninterested in participating. It appeared that they did not view sexual harassment as a problem that needed to be discussed. Again, this relates back to agency and how men and women differ when it comes to sexual harassment and the ability to intervene. This could also be contributed to the fact that all women in this study had experienced being a target of sexual harassment, while the men had not.

Next, fear was found to be a conscious element of bystanders in their regard to intervening. There must be parallels between bystander intervention and other organizational behaviors. The same approach could be used to determine how particular norms and values systematically become a part of the organization. Furthermore, this study, and most sexual harassment literature, focused primarily on the destructive behaviors within organizations. However, organizational cultures symbolically produce constructive behaviors as well (Dixon & Dougherty, 2010). Possibly, fear is a driving factor for many organizational behaviors. This project could be paralleled to other organizational elements to determine if organizational culture and bystanders are

catalysts for assured values and norms. Finally, the impact fear had on employees and how it became an enacted meaningful value needs to be considered in future research.

There needs to be more research on the enactment of courage in unwanted situations and how members negotiation fear when they are in organizations that value the behavior they are trying to stop.

Conclusion

Sexual harassment is a problem in the workplace. The issue continues to persist after training, policies, and research. In this study, I have suggested that sexual harassment and bystander intervention are organizational cultural issues that are deeper, and more complex than the interpersonal level. Using organizational culture research and Trans-MOC, I have explored how bystanders use larger cultural meaning systems to make sense of the culture, enact values and norms, and are reflections of the core meaning of the organization. Through this process, I have found that fear is the essence of bystander intervention. Bystanders are fearful that intervention/nonintervention will cost them their ability to be protected in the organization as well as their chances of organizational growth. I have also found that bystanders are fearful of organizational consequences such as being labeled or losing their social status. This study validates the necessity to see bystander intervention as an organizational cultural issue and advances current research on sexual harassment in a nuanced, more realistic direction.

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VITA

Tyler Sorg was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana in August of 1986 to Dawn and Gary Scott. Tyler grew up in the inner city before moving 45 minutes north to Hamilton, Indiana, where he would spend most of his adult life. He was a very active child, playing outside with friends, hunting, fishing, and playing baseball. He has an older brother, Monty, and a younger sister, Alexis. Tyler went to Hamilton Elementary and Hamilton High School. After high school, Tyler attended the University of Saint Francis where he played baseball on an athletic scholarship. However, due to injury, Tyler transferred from Saint Francis to the IPFW in Fort Wayne. At IPFW, Tyler studied communication. He had taken a class with Dr. Steve Carr where he found more interest in communication and was encouraged to apply for the master's program at IPFW.

After teaching for three years and working at Menards for six years, Tyler finished his master's degree and started working in sales. After two years of selling products for Univertical, a small company out of Angola, Indiana, Tyler felt like his life was missing something. He then decided to apply for Ph.D. programs. After getting a call from Dr. Meisenbach at the University of Missouri, he knew that was where he needed to be and decided to quit his job and pursue this dream. After receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Missouri, he will continue teach, research, and consult.