The Abstract (essentially the basic summary):

Workplace sexual harassment is pervasive internationally, and particularly within the United States. Archaeological fieldwork holds a particular set of characteristics which make women workers especially prone to experiencing sexual harassment. Narratives are increasingly used as mode of community development and activism, and this trend holds true for recent events in the field of archaeology as well. This study utilizes qualitative interviews to analyze the narratives of sexual harassment from women within archaeological fieldwork. The narratives gathered were previously shared by participants for three main purposes: (1) seeking validation, (2) building safety scaffolding for self and others, and (3) establishing connection and community support. Prevalent themes include safety during harassment as keeping silent, needing to keep the peace during the work period, and bifurcating workplace sexual harassment from poor work.

Some background info:

Frameworks

Four primary frameworks are employed to form both the methodology of the study and the analysis of the narratives. These included Discourse Centering (utilizing some discourse analysis techniques to understand narrative function) and Context Recognition (situating the narratives within larger sociocultural and legal contexts). The other two frameworks serve to conceptualize and define narrative itself and provide direction for analysis, including Narrative

as Apprehension and Narrative as Operational Change. Finally, in addition to these frameworks, a trauma-informed approach is used to discuss the narrative data and display the functionality of trauma informed care models for qualitative research.

Discourse-Centered

This study is positioned within a discourse-centered framework, meaning that some tenants of critical discourse analysis (CDA) are utilized, specifically within understanding the social construction of discourse. CDA specifically positions linguistic analysis within social theory and has broad application across anthropological study. It seeks to recognize how discourse affects, is affected by, and is indicative of social and political power, and specifically, distributions of power. Discourse centered frameworks inherently understand discourse within social constructivism and apply this to linguistic analysis, framing the speech event as interdiscursive. The CDA component makes it particularly useful for studies of inequality. This study utilizes this framework to understand these narratives as socially situated and reflective of power dynamics (Farnell & Graham, 2014).

Context Recognition

After understanding discourse as socially situated, these narratives in particular must be understood to be within a specific cultural context that exists around sexual violence. Women's existence in particular is formed within the threat of sexual violence. Even in the absence of sexual violence itself, the fear of sexual violence is nearly omnipresent and is thus a key component of how women view their experience within the world (Criado Perez 2019; Burke 2019). As such, it must also be recognized to be a key context in which these narratives exist.

Narrative as Apprehension

Ochs & Capps (1996) assert that "narrative is an essential resource in the struggle to bring experiences to conscious awareness" (p. 21). Narratives themselves provide an opportunity to establish continuity and understanding, especially after a fragmented event such as those which are considered potentially trauma (as sexual harassment and assault are). The sharing of narratives can serve to increase awareness and understanding within the sharer and the audience members as well. This can also serve as a form of socialization, and most notably, as a form of community building (Ochs & Capps, 1996). The participants narratives of harassment events and their previous sharing of these narratives are analyzed as potential functions both within and for community.

Narrative as Operational Change

Discourse centered approaches inform this study's analysis of the narrative data collected and position within a critical social view, but the narratives their past tellings themselves are also socially active. Narratives consist of the important lived experience of the sharers (Wood, 1992 as in Clair, 1996) and hold "power to interface self and society" (Ochs & Capps, 1996, p. 33), but, in particular, these narratives can act as foils for the dominant Narrative ("Narrative" with an uppercase "N" meaning the main socially-accepted theme or "reality") (Burke, 2019; Clair, 1993; Clair, Chapman, & Kunkel 1996: Ochs & Capps, 1996; Townsley, 2000). As such, these narratives and their sharing can be positioned as change agents.

Trauma Informed Practice Approach

This study synthesizes concepts and practices within the growing body of literature and practice which is "trauma informed". The term originates from a social work and healthcare model called Trauma Informed Care (TIC); TIC posits that practitioners should assume that all of their clients have some form of trauma in their background. It puts forth the Four R's of TIC

practice: Realizing how trauma can be present in diverse peoples and manifest in diverse ways, and that this trauma not only affects individual people but systems as well; Recognizing indicators of the presence of trauma; Responding to trauma by applying this framework to all decision-making; and Resisting Re-Traumatization through conscientious adherence to this framework. Trauma informed practice involves assuming that everyone you come in contact with could have some sort of trauma (SAMSHA, 2014). Very little literature covers how TIC can apply to researchers, especially researchers of sexual trauma, there does exist some guidelines for large empirical studies (Campbell, Goodwin-Williams, & Javorka, 2019). As such, I synthesize available information and trainings to present this study as an artifact within the developing body of trauma informed research.

Though it could potentially make the terminology less succinct and explicit, I centralize the need for a variety of strategic re-termings. People-First Language is a practice created by disability rights activists and has even passed into legislation in D.C. as the People First Respectful Language Modernization Act of 2006. It involves putting the disability in the sentence as something a person possesses, rather than as an adjective that describes (and, indeed, qualifies) the subject's personhood. In this practice, one would change "disabled person" to "person with a disability" (The Arc of the District of Columbia, 2006).

Though I have encountered a preference of people who have experienced sexual harassment and assault to be included in such sentence restructuration, both published works and gray literature remain quite void of this particular application, with the exception of trainings from the Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence. The Coalition recognizes that preferences can vary from person to person but recommends utilizing people-first language as a starting point (Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence, n.d.).

To categorize a person as a victim connotates that their victimhood is ongoing and characterizes a person by what has been done to them, rather than by what they have done, much in line with the argument behind decolonial discourse studies' opposition to "oppression porn" in academic literature. However, some victims (to use the term intentionally here) reclaim the label as a method of empowerment and reinforcement of the validity of their victimization in the face of widespread beliefs that rape, and most often acquaintance rape, are a myth. The term "victim" connotates, both legally and colloquially, a lack of complicity in the violative act and thus can also imply a lack of blame.

"Survivor" is another term utilized in reference to people who have experienced sexual assault. It focuses more on the person's ability to overcome the assault and has gained popularity for its implication of resiliency and strength. However, there is a growing resistance to it by some people who have experience sexual assault, due to its sometimes-pejorative interpretation and potential inaccuracies. It can paint a narrative of victim-to-hero, glorifying this victory aspect of sexual assault and obfuscating both the initial and long-term trauma and violence that need to be recognized in order for widescale change to be motivated. This can map out an inspirational story on people who do not owe it to others to serve as an inspiration. Additionally, the use of "survivor" can eclipse the fact that survival is a process, not a singular event. Finally, some people point out that their experience was not one in which their life was threatened, rendering the term inaccurate for them, and causing it to come across as a hollow honorific. Though, survivor can also refer to the increased rate of suicide (ten times higher than the national average) for people who have experienced sexual assault, and thus, those who have survived that possibility (Kilpatrick, Edmunds, & Seymour, 1992).

While there is little agreement on exactly what language to use in reference to someone who has experienced sexual harassment or assault, for this paper I use people-first language, despite its lack of mainstream usage in sexual assault work and studies.

Analysis

The collected narratives were transcribed and analyzed for common thematic elements and linguistic structures. Borrowing from discourse analysis practice, summary codes were identified throughout the narratives, though there were no significant in vivo codes shared between the three participants. The summary codes are split into two groupings, inductive and deductive codes (see Table 1).

A snippet of samples specifically from women in archaeological fieldwork:

Safety versus Action

A common element among the narratives is the dilemma of safety versus action; to speak up or defend oneself is positioned as aggravating the circumstances and to remain acquiescent with the sexual harassment. In one narrative, this was positioned as the participant's duty to "keep the peace."

Jane:
I kind of forgot about the pickaxe.
I don't know if it's cause I don't like to think about it ↑
Cause its kind of uncomfortable. ↑
Interviewer: ((nods))
Jane:
So I'm like 23 and it's like
super weird.
And I'm like
now I have to work with this guy.
I'm like
I still have a few days to work with him. (gets quieter)
So I gotta like
keep the peace. ↓

Jane inflects upward at “I don’t like to think about it” and “it’s kind of uncomfortable” (indicated by upward arrows) and looks upward for visual confirmation of interviewer understanding before continuing to discuss how a much older male coworker would stare at her and mime aggressively kissing his pick axe that he used during the excavations. She inflects downward at the end of “keep the peace” after pausing in the middle of the sentence.

Her use of “keep the peace” implies that it is at one of a binary function: to react to increasingly aggressive behavior of her coworker or to hold herself back from displaying any kind of outward reaction. While Jane looks upward and seeks an indication of agreement after describing the discomfort of the situation, she does not seem to need this confirmation of understanding for what specifically “keep[ing] the peace” would entail, or why it would be preferable. It is of note that the interviewer, myself, is also female and during the recruitment conversation gave a vague indication of having experienced workplace sexual harassment and participated in the whistleblowing process. This was largely in response to pervasive worries of a lack of gravity given to confidentiality. More data would be needed to solidify this hypothesis, but this assumption of understanding on Jane’s part could be an indication of trust in shared experience; that women, and perhaps women with shared experience, hold an innate understanding of how instituting defensive measures or outwardly responding to harassment can be dangerous. As such, this might function as a communication heuristic of sorts, allowing women to speak with each other more casually and briefly about these experiences due to a foundation of shared understanding. This may have an important part in the community building aspect of storytelling, which is discussed further below.

Liz also indicates this binary in her narrative about arguments with a male grad student at her field school.

Liz:

Like
the other grad student women ↑
When like Bill and I
would like
kinda have these spats ↑
and say something awful
and the other women would be like

Yeah I know he's a jerk
But we all have to live together.
So just like
Leave him alone.

In her telling, Liz shares that fellow students actually asked her to remain quiet. Though the field school had multiple genders present, it was only the female students who commented on the exchanges. In this case, the community building aspect is not as present in the form of activism as much as internalized oppression, believing it the sexual harassment receiver's duty to remain quiet so as not to anger the male harasser further, and going so far as to imply blame for reduced harmony in the living conditions on Liz, rather than on the harasser or on the management of the field school.

Liz later talked about how only years later, after talking about it with her wife, did she feel that she didn't actually have a duty to remain silent. She theorized that this may have been reinforced by the program management, which ignored her complaints when she finally went to them after the end of the field school, saying that "the director failed me."

Liz:

And the director of the project

a white woman

at the beginning had said like

We're working in this community.
We're working with these people.
And like
there's cultural differences.
But if anything is too uncomfortable ↑
Please tell me. ↑
And I have zero tolerance policy ↑

for sexual harassment. ↑
And um
((laughs))
that did not turn out to be
Um
enforced.
Or
true. ↓
…
Which like
you know if [director] had done the right thing
and
told [the harasser] he wasn't allowed there anymore because of it
then I might say
You know ↑
I might want to go back. ↑
And I might have said like
Oh I can put you in touch with this awesome person who runs the field school.
But like
Uuugh
there were good things about it.
But like
Yeah
she really lost my trust and
I don't feel especially bad
about like
badmouthing her. ↓

Of note is how Liz characterizes her storytelling about the failure of the director as Liz "badmouthing" the director, showing another side of the expected silence from those who experience sexual harassment.

Liz:
I told other [area] archaeologists ↑
and also students who are considering going on a field school in [country].
And I've like
told them the name of the field school
and like the name of the director.
And said
they're not to be trusted ↓

Throughout her discussion of the director and of warning others about the field school, Liz continually reoriented the narrative to be objective, interjecting comments such as "there were good things about it" (followed by her frustrated "uugh"), and reflecting on how her actions since have been caused by the inaction of the field school: "You know if [director] had done the right thing…I might have said like 'Oh I can put you in touch with this awesome person who runs the field school'". Here the "safety vs action" dichotomy is joined by this element of needing to warn others, showing a more nuanced understanding of how acquiescence does not necessarily equate to safety, though largely here for the sake of others, rather than for the sake of self.

Jane similarly mentions warning other women in archaeology about the harasser she has had experiences with.

Jane:
I usually tell people about him. ↑
Just like
If you ever run into a guy named Dan
just like
kinda
be aware.
This is kinda how he is.
Um
Because usually people I run into
they've worked with him already ↑
so they kind of like
trade stories.
Like
our time with him
or anything like that. (monotone)

However, Jane also indicates that the commonly known sexual harassment has not affected Dan's ability to be hired repeatedly in CRM.

Some brief findings:

Synthesis

Contrary to being gossip or unprofessional and/or casual discussions, sharing narratives of workplace sexual harassment seems to serve significant purposes among women in archaeology. On an individual level, it can serve to offer validation for an incident that is often discounted or undercut in many cultures, especially those in male-dominated workplaces like academic and commercial archaeology. No participants mentioned receiving any validation from the management level at the workplace in which the event occurred. One participant mentioned having the incident downplayed without any formal response. Another participant mentioned that the management level was the source of the sexual harassment.

This storytelling also seems to function as community building. Contrary to common conceptions that sexual harassment is a personal matter, all participants mentioned that sharing narratives of harassment has actually helped them in their professional networking, though largely only with female colleagues. Without formal responses processes in place, and the consistent rehiring of harassers, these networks can also serve as a method of holding harassers accountable, or, short of that, warning others to not work around these known sexual harassers.

Interestingly, there are some instances in which safety is posed as a foil to speaking out, rather than an action for it. This has largely been discussed at the individual level, that when the participant experiences harassment it is safer for them personally to not react outwardly. However, there is one instance in which the collective safety and livability of the field school, for the other graduate students present, was presented to the participant as a reason for her to become quieter and more acquiescent to the harasser. This idea of speaking out or self-defense as being potentially unsafe seems to function as an unspoken norm among women in these

conversations (including myself as the interviewer and, thus, a participant in the storytelling process).

Finally, there emerges an interesting dichotomy between being a “bad worker” and being a sexual harasser. Not only are these two never synonymized, pains were taken with multiple participants to conversationally position sexual harassers as also being bad workers, through such behavior as messing up archaeological data, arriving late to work, or displaying “bad morale”. This indicates that there is an underlying assumption that sexual harassment is not a component of the work one does; one can still be a good archaeologist or a good worker even if they harass their colleagues. This may complicate the validation process and be a reason as to why discussing sexual harassment is not commonly considered professional or formal. It is this aspect in particular which may reveal a need for utilizing purposeful discursive changes to influence cultural beliefs.

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