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Folklore and Fraudulent Collegiality: Perpetuating Patriarchal Culture in Women-Majority Academic Departments

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Perpetuating Patriarchal Culture in Women-Majority Academic Departments

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Abstract

Discussions of gender-based discrimination in academia are often limited to outcomes within men-majority spaces. This approach is problematic in many ways, including identifying men as the sole sources of sexist ideas, behaviors, and structures within a binary view of gender. In this constructivist grounded theory study, 12 women doctoral students in women-majority departments discussed their conceptualizations of gender within their departments and academic culture more broadly. Findings suggest that folklore shared with and among women doctoral students in these spaces often masks patriarchy and perpetuates a fraudulent performance of collegiality.

Introduction

Sexism within academia remains a pressing issue (Bartlett & Gluckman, 2018; Flaherty, 2017; Flaherty, 2018; McMillen, 2017; Mitchell, 2017). Many narratives frame sexism as the fault of a few monsters, or individuals with deliberate malicious intent who are easy to detect if not defeat. Their actions are extreme and visible. Maybe not right away, but after time their destruction is too great that they cannot easily hide. Recent movements, such as #MeToo, have helped to shed light on the damage they cause (Anderson, 2018). While these monsters certainly exist, focusing on the extreme actions of individuals without attention to subtle manifestations allows this culture to go unchallenged.

In 2018, a graduate teaching assistant handbook surfaced at the University of Maryland Department of Computer Science, recommending that women TAs

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should deal with the sexist confrontations they were likely to encounter from men in their classes as politely as possible (Jaschik, 2018; Kerr, 2018). The chair retracted the handbook and published a statement saying that the Department denounced "all misogynistic attitudes toward women and will continue to work diligently to provide all students a warm and welcoming environment to learn and succeed" (Lin, 2018). A warm and welcoming environment is nice but not necessarily absent of misogynistic attitudes. In fact, the two cultures can and often do coexist without much notice.

Traditionally masculine academic fields are breeding grounds of gender-based discrimination (Hughes et al., 2017; Kuchynka et al., 2018; Xu, 2008). However, confusing gender representation alone with an equitable environment is inaccurate (Fox, 2020). Departments in which women hold similar numbers as or more positions than men, while they tend to offer climates more favorable for women (Dua, 2007), are not exempt (Fox, 2020). Compared to men, women graduate students and faculty across all disciplines are more likely to perceive negative climates, suffer negative personal and professional consequences, and leave academia (Maranto & Griffin, 2011; Solem et al., 2009). A warm and welcoming environment, even with best intentions, is not synonymous with an intentional, feminist academic environment (Fox, 2020; Gammel & Rutstein-Riley, 2016). Women's perceptions of culture in academia are important to study because they affect their emotional health, job satisfaction, and desire to remain in academia (McCoy et al., 2013).

Academics tell stories with data to communicate new findings, and they also tell stories to communicate the values and beliefs comprising the folklore of academic culture. This article further employs folklore and storytelling through creative imagery and drawings. Images can be useful in qualitative research when trying to examine and convey complex phenomena in more accessible ways than traditional academic writing alone (Weber, 2008). The complex dynamics of patriarchy in women-majority environments are difficult to convey, and the imagery of a meadow surrounded by a dark forest helps illustrate these dynamics.

The purpose of this constructivist grounded theory study is to explore the question: *How do women doctoral students in women-majority departments conceptualize patriarchy both within their departments and within academic culture overall?* Findings indicate that patriarchy within academic culture is often maintained through folklore and masked behind vague understandings of collegiality. This dynamic can be compared to the elements of a meadow surrounded by a dark forest, a folklore conceit used throughout this article to illustrate women's perceptions of patriarchy within women-majority academic departments.

Sensitizing Constructs and Supporting Literature

In the following sections I introduce the concept of collegiality as an often misunderstood aspect of academic culture. Next, I present the concepts of gender and patriarchy, another often misunderstood aspect of culture shared across var-

ious academic contexts. The result is a broad picture of how patriarchy is woven into the culture of collegiality within academia and how folklore contributes to its perpetual existence.

Academic Culture and Collegiality

Collegiality is often cited as the cornerstone of academic culture (Kligyte & Barrie, 2014; Macfarlane, 2016; Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010). Defined and interpreted in many ways, collegiality is assumed to mean a sense of collaboration and mutual respect among scholars with the shared goal of creating and disseminating knowledge (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010), cooperative interaction among colleagues (Buller & Cipriano, 2015), and a commitment to academic citizenship (Macfarlane, 2007). The sense of community within an academic department also comes from collegial attitudes and behaviors (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Kligyte & Barrie, 2014). While conversations about collegiality tend to center around faculty, this aspect of academic culture extends to interactions with students, colleagues, and the community (Macfarlane, 2007). Threats to idealistic views of collegiality are often attributed to the increasingly corporatization of higher education institutions (Berg & Seeber, 2016), yet neoliberalism cannot account for all discrimination.

The concept of collegiality is one that is often taken for granted or assumed to exist without much further audit (Kligyte & Barrie, 2014; Macfarlane, 2016; Massy et al., 1994; Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010). Upon further examination, however, collegiality has come to mean everything and nothing (Kligyte & Barrie, 2014; Massy et al., 1994; Riccardi, 2012), a loose sense of friendliness toward colleagues and passion for one's discipline. In reality, pure collegiality is a myth, and what remains is a charade (Kligyte & Barrie, 2014; Macfarlane, 2016; Massy et al., 1994). It is one of the most widely bought-into bits of folklore across all disciplines, and its vague definition provides a perfect disguise for oppression.

Transmitting Oppression: Collegiality and Folklore

Transmission of culture can happen in multiple teaching and learning processes (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Lee, 2008; Phillips, 2014; Van Fleet, 1979). Serving as a vehicle for cultural transmission, the folklore of a culture is the fluid collection of stories members of communities share to communicate their values (Jordan & de Caro, 1986; Van Fleet, 1979). To that purpose, folklore can be a valuable tool when used intentionally, yet it can be potentially dangerous when left unexamined. Warning a new colleague not to be late for work because the boss is strict might be helpful, but passing on this advice from one person to the next without reflecting on the fact that the boss is far more lenient with men masks the underlying power dynamics. People do not need to be intentional when sharing folklore because by nature it responds to its context (Jordan & de Caro, 1986). Folklore is both affected by a culture and a means of communication used to influence and exert control.

Collegiality is directly linked to the enculturation of graduate students and new scholars (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Kligyte & Barrie, 2014; Macfarlane, 2007). Faculty and advisers serve a gatekeeping function, deciding which opportunities to share and when (Lee, 2008). Traditional approaches to socialization assume that successful enculturation into a collegial environment means the values, folklore, and behaviors of one culture are clearly communicated to the new members (Boyle & Boice, 1998) without considering what is transmitted.

Gender and Academic Patriarchy

Gender and its construction within a society have an influence on cultures and cannot be separated (Phillips, 2010). Different cultures have varying ways of defining gender, gender identities, their subsequent roles, and their relationships to each other. Patriarchy centers power with men and oppresses all other genders (Hart, 2006; Miller, 2017). The most obvious expressions of patriarchy often come through gender-based violence (Fedina et al., 2018; Mohipp & Senn, 2008). Patriarchy also operates in ways more subtle than sexual assault by prioritizing the values of men over others, a possible dynamic within welcoming environments (Acker, 1990; Broido et al., 2015). Returning to the University of Maryland, passing on the folklore that women TAs should expect to encounter sexism while teaching could be considered a collegial act because it is an investment in doctoral student socialization. However, normalizing such a dynamic is problematic, not collegial.

Women within women-majority disciplines may enjoy positive work environments (Dua, 2007; Fox, 2020), but men are still advantaged (Williams, 2013). It is not uncommon for men to hold leadership roles and the highest-ranking faculty positions, for their agendas to dominate the norms of the department, and for their research to be most valued (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Where women are subjected to increased hostility in fields dominated by men, men in fields with more women benefit from their token status. These manifestations of patriarchy are often subtle, hard to observe, or easy to dismiss (Broido et al., 2015; Cobb-Roberts, 2011).

As is the case with gender-based violence, more subtle experiences of patriarchy in academia are more complicated for those with intersecting minoritized identities (Cobb-Roberts, 2011; Kalof et al., 2001; Montoya et al., 2016). Many incidences of sexism are also layered with racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, and other forms of oppression (Williams, 1994). Cultures that silence conflicts instead of openly discussing and collaborating through them reflect patriarchy (Miller, 2017), as well as middle- or upper-class, white femininity (Hayes, 2001). Collegial policies or behaviors that aim to minimize conflict in the spirit of a peaceful environment can prop up patriarchy, white supremacy, classism, and other oppressive systems. The influence of patriarchy complicates the core values of academia while simultaneously upholding oppressive systems (Dlamini & Adams, 2014; Hart, 2006).

Women can also experience cultural divides within academia because of its

organizational hierarchies. Women faculty, students, and administrators—though connected by gender—have varying obligations and objectives (Noy & Ray, 2012; Vaccaro, 2011). Therefore, they do not take a homogenous approach to gender and their own professional roles (Gammel & Rutstein-Riley, 2016; Ervin, 1995). Advising dyads between women faculty and graduate students can have many positive benefits, due in part to the gender pairing (Fox, 2020), though this is not always the case (Armato, 2013; Ervin, 1995; Heinrich, 1995; Rapp, 2001). One area where women are disproportionately affected by gendered structures is balancing work or school with family life, often motherhood and other caregiving (Gardner, 2008a; Mason & Goulden, 2004; Ramsay & Letherby, 2006; Sallee, 2014; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Women as individuals are not the main perpetrators of patriarchy (Armato, 2013), but their actions and beliefs cannot go unexamined when confronting patriarchal cultures in academia.

As a performance, collegiality, like gender, has become so ingrained within the academic culture that it goes unnoticed and unquestioned so long as people get along. Traditional academic cultures are not likely to survive in today's changing world due in part to younger generations' desires for equitable, balanced lives alongside academic careers (Quinn et al., 2007). In order to retain a talented and diverse community, academic culture needs to change.

Methods

This article originated from a constructivist grounded theory study exploring how women doctoral students with women advisers experienced gender and success within women-majority academic departments (Fox, 2020). Initially, my intent was to isolate the experiences participants had with their advisers. Interview questions during data collection targeted these interactions. It became evident, however, that gendered experiences separate from the advising relationship shaped how participants incorporated gender into their understanding of academic culture. Described in further depth within the Findings section, I have also used drawings and accompanying narratives of a meadow and dark forest. Methods outlined below address the following research question: *How do women doctoral students in women-majority departments conceptualize patriarchy both within their departments and within academic culture overall?*

Setting and Sampling Frame

Data collection for this study took place at State University, a public research university in the Northeast with approximately 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students. State University has roughly 60 academic departments, 10 of which met initial study criteria—departments offering doctoral degrees and at least 50% women faculty. My intention was to explore patriarchy in an environment not entirely dependent upon the presence of men.

In line with constructivist grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2014), theoretic sampling was used to gather a total of 12 participants. Participants met criteria for the study based on their gender identity, their status as doctoral students, having completed at least two semesters of study with a woman adviser, and belonging to an academic unit with at least 50% women faculty. Institutional research data were used to identify qualifying academic departments. Recruitment emails were sent to students in the qualifying departments using publicized student names on program websites and through several graduate student co-curricular organizations. Participants were also asked to recommend other qualifying colleagues through snowball sampling (Ortiz, 2016). I chose these methods of recruitment over contacting faculty or department administrators for access to their students due to the sensitive nature of this study. Some participants would likely share negative experiences, and I wanted them to feel free to share without the knowledge of anyone in their departments.

Study Participants

Many participants in this study expressed concerns about confidentiality, so no participants will be identified in relation to their departments. Broadly speaking, participants came from academic disciplines in humanities, social sciences, pre-professional fields, and STEM. The STEM identity was important for the women who identified as such, especially because they often struggled to convince others that their women-majority disciplines were populated with scientists. They ranged in age from early-20s to mid-30s. Some participants were single, some were living with partners, some were married, and one participant had a child and was expecting her second. Most identified as heterosexual, two as bisexual, and one as "straight-ish." Two participants identified as women of color, 10 identified as Caucasian or white, and several participants strongly identified ethnically with a religious tradition even if they did not practice the faith. Participants identified anywhere from working class to upper-middle class with several feeling a change in status due to their position as students. The decision to sample only ciswomen was not made to minimize the experiences of transwoman, transmen, and genderqueer students but rather to emphasize the importance of not examining gender from a man-centered perspective. A study combining all non-cisman genders would likely yield results reflecting the experiences of ciswomen and overshadow those of other gender identities. Further studies should focus on gender identities beyond ciswomen.

Data Collection

Data collection involved two rounds of interviews that took place approximately five to six months apart. All participants were involved in the first round of audio-recorded interviews which lasted between 75 and 105 minutes. Following initial analysis, I developed a second round of questions to further delve into sev-

eral early findings. Ten of the original 12 participants were re-interviewed in the second round, and two declined based on schedule conflicts. During the second round, five participants were involved in 30 to 45 minute interviews, and five participants chose to respond to the same open-ended questions via email. Data collection stopped following the second round after achieving saturation and participant interviews yielded no further new findings (Charmaz, 2014).

Data Analysis

Data collected from both rounds of interviews were rich, worthy of constructivist grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2014), and yielded many categories during open coding. Open coding with gerunds revealed patterns of behavior: passive actions associated with conflict (dismissing, avoiding, getting through, hedging), communicating values (warning, explaining, informing, overhearing), feeling afraid (humiliating, fearing, stressing, worrying), and building positive relationships (supporting, relating, sharing, accepting, collaborating). Several emerging but unexpected categories, such as collegiality and folklore, were engaging enough to warrant further interrogation.

Next, informal and loose axial coding was used to explore categories, subcategories, and their subsequent properties and dimensions. For example, folklore became a fully developed category through properties such as method of transmission, origin or author, characters involved, and lesson learned. Dimensions included degree of truth associated with the story, associated danger, and relatability. Finally, selective coding focused on the concepts of folklore and collegiality to develop the relationships between these categories and others. The five primary categories were folklore, patriarchy, masking, collegiality, and performance.

During data analysis, I used metaphors and drawings to continue my exploration of the relationships between findings. I came across the term folklore in reference to cultures having ways of sharing their own traditions and values (Jordan & de Caro, 1986; Van Fleet, 1979). Several women discussed meeting in a safe office space or elsewhere to discuss survival strategies for their programs, to vent about their stresses, to validate each other's concerns, and to encourage each other. Sometimes the transmission of folklore happened one-on-one with advisers, and participants differed in the extent to which they believed their advisers were intentional about sharing stories. Participants also had different ways of interpreting the gendered dynamics they encountered during their programs.

To further explore these different relationships and interpretations, I played with how I might draw patriarchy. Arguably, the most familiar embodied figure of sexism in the context of a woman's PhD program is often the creepy, older, perverted faculty member that everyone knows to avoid but is always a looming presence in the background. This figure is the benchmark against which women can compare their own experiences. I began to draw him as a monster, some-

thing easily identifiable as a threat. After that, the more subtle manifestations of patriarchy and sexism that made up the bulk of our interview content were more challenging to conceptualize. My initial drawings were smaller, harder to detect monsters such as spiders, but these images still alluded to an individual perpetrating actions rather than an environment that sustained a way of being. This issue helped bring into relief the difficulty of describing sexism that does not originate from an individual person. I changed my strategy to landscape images.

Choosing the right landscape was challenging. The environment could not feel threatening because that would not match the content of the interviews. The participants had positive experiences about their relationships at school and their passion for their work. There was safety associated with women-majority academic departments. The environment imagery needed to sustain comfort and challenges at the same time, and the challenges needed to blend in with the rest of the environment. After discussing these dynamics with colleagues, I landed on the meadow and dark forest imagery.

Trees and forests can have many meanings for various cultures (Crews, 2003). In folklore and storytelling, a forest can represent danger, darkness, and the unknown. It can also feel like a neutral or disinterested place for villainous creatures to hide. The meadow stands in contrast to the dark forest. There is a seemingly distinct divide between the clearing of the meadow and the forest, just like there is a seemingly distinct line between the perceived safety and comfort of a women-majority department when compared with the perceived threats within the rest of academia. There is more light and room to move around in the meadow when compared with the dark forest, but it is far from clear. Upon closer examination, there are also obstacles to navigate within these meadows. Implications for this ecosystem are further unpacked in the findings.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

Several steps were taken to increase trustworthiness for this study. Following each round of data collection, participants reviewed their transcripts. Only final edited versions of transcripts were used for analysis, reflecting clarifications to participants' responses and their concerns for confidentiality and anonymity. Multiple interviews and memos written during data collection and analysis serve as data triangulation from multiple sources (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Peer review was also used at all stages of the design and analysis process for consultations on ethics and methodologies. This study was approved through appropriate IRB processes.

Study Limitations

While questions from the initial study elicited rich enough data for a separate analysis, collegiality and folklore were not the primary foci. Data presented herein are substantial enough to support claims, but these constructs would have shaped

the instrument differently had they been identified from the outset. For instance, I purposely chose not to ask participants how they felt their experiences compared to men because I wanted to treat women's joys and grievances as worthy of attention independent of how men experience them. Not surprisingly, participants spoke often about direct experiences with men or compared their experiences to those of men. Those responses contributed to the bulk of this analysis.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of direct attention to identities outside of gender. Participants mentioned how other identities outside of gender shaped their experiences and sense of self, sometimes more so than gender. Race was the most prominently discussed identity other than gender. Many comparisons and connections can be made between the influences of patriarchy and white supremacy within academic culture, for instance the preferred culture of avoiding conflict to maintain civility. Ableism and heteronormativity were also notably influential structures for certain participants. Responses were compelling enough to warrant further exploration within and across these subgroups.

Findings

In this constructivist grounded theory study, I explored the question: *How do women doctoral students in women-majority departments conceptualize patriarchy both within their departments and within academic culture overall?* Findings suggest that students associate many positive feelings about academic culture with the presence of more women in their departments. At the same time, the presence of more women faculty and the associated collaborative and collegial atmosphere can obscure the more subtle manifestations of patriarchy. Frequently, incidences of sexism are excused as isolated events or bad habits of a single person, and these stories are circulated throughout the doctoral student cohorts as warnings to heed to navigate their programs without too much turmoil. Therefore, the folklore that is shared with and among women doctoral students in these women-majority departments often masks patriarchy, perpetuating a fraudulent performance of collegiality. This dynamic mirrors the elements of a meadow surrounded by a dark forest where the meadow represents the perceived safety of women-majority departments compared to the dangers of other environments in academia.

The Meadow in the Dark Forest: Collaborative and Collegial Culture

Collegiality was a theme present in all interviews, either directly or indirectly. Most participants described their culture as collaborative and warm. Activities they framed as collegial or collaborative involved the governing of their departments, shared research activities, and social culture. Women formed strong relationships with each other and enjoyed their work. They often formed close bonds with men they viewed as supportive, as well. Wendy felt included in the collaborative research spirit of her department:

> I feel like the environment is very welcoming, and that's definitely contributed to my experience. [The] culture of the department [is] definitely collaborative... Everyone is really interested.

Wendy and other students appreciated the numerous opportunities available to work with faculty on research projects and being welcomed as junior scholars in the field.

The full weight of the meadow-like environment only took shape in contrast to how participants expected graduate school to be and how they perceived the culture beyond their departments. In other words, part of the reason that the meadow felt so clear was a thick, dark forest that was daunting and seemingly impossible to navigate surrounded the meadow. The dark forest represented participants' perceptions of patriarchy external to their women-majority departments. Often, participants were surprised by how collegial their departments were because of the folklore that, by nature, graduate school would be highly competitive. Most participants were surprised to learn that was not the case with their departments.

> It's cut-throat in the sense that it is competitive by nature...I guess I worried that in graduate school it might be like that—someone else always trying to be better, or feel better, or myself feeling inadequate in some ways, but that was never the case. (Jocelyn)

The folklore they heard before starting graduate school contributed to the ways in which they perceived culture. Many women were surprised by the warmth of their departments, almost as if they came to graduate school and found themselves in the midst of a beautiful meadow surrounded by a dark forest. Within their departments, they could walk down the halls and find a few doors open if they needed to ask a question. They had potlucks with their cohort-mates and attended conferences with their faculty. Even if harassment, extreme competition, or other difficulties existed for other graduate students, these women felt a sense of security.

Those who felt a stronger divide between the faculty and students or did not have close personal friendships with their colleagues still described their departments as collegial. Lucy mentioned that though some students may have disagreements with each other from time to time about their research, she was not aware of any "sour relationships." Everyone behaved in a collegial manner even if they did not always agree.

For some participants, close relationships with other students and individual faculty served as a means of survival within a dysfunctional department behind a collegial mask.

> My particular committee members and faculty members that I get along with seem like they are supportive of each other, but there's not a lot of strong community I would say in the department in general, even though there's desire I think on the grad students' part for there to be a more integrated department community. (Hari)

Figure 1
Meadow Surrounded by a Dark Forest

CJ especially felt a strong compulsion to assist her fellow graduate students because of the shortcomings she saw within her department.

> I do think it's very collegial. I think we're all trying to help each other. We as grad students share a lot of things. We say who to work with or who not to work with. We'll share all of our exams with everyone. We share a lot. (CJ)

While participants did discuss examples of collaboration and collegiality, at times these terms served as synonyms for friendly or welcoming rather than interconnectedness or respect.

The Brambles: Perpetuation of Academic Patriarchy Through Folklore

Participants had shared understandings about academic culture, one of which was the idea that patriarchy was present at least within the broader world of academia if not within their own departments. In other words, most participants articulated feeling the meadow-within-a-dark-forest dynamic. Conceptualizations of what constituted academic patriarchy as well as the extent to which each participant felt she herself experienced it varied.

Although their departments had meadow-like feels in comparison to the dark forest surrounding them, these meadows were not entirely clear. Each meadow had brambles, pricker bushes, or dead trees that make navigating through more difficult. Many people tended to treat these barriers as isolated incidents or in-

Figure 2
Brambles in the Meadow

dividuals who could be avoided or endured while going through. They were not like the monsters within the dark forest who took extreme actions that perpetuated patriarchy. Instead, they blended in with the natural surroundings and typically did not warrant removal because the impediments they cause are not dangerous enough.

Academic Patriarchy Comes from a Few Men

Most participants recalled sexist incidents with individual men when asked about their understanding of gender in academic culture. These men were usually members of other departments or strangers from news articles. Several had friends in other fields or at other schools who had passed along tales about nightmare advisers and colleagues. However, many participants were adamant that their personal experiences had been free from patriarchy.

Participants' conceptions of gender-based discrimination were not shaped just by academic culture. Given the timing of data collection following the 2016 presidential election, it was not surprising that several participants associated patriarchy with the current political climate. Several women spoke about the solidarity they felt with the women in the departments because of the space they had to process how the latest election would affect them as women.

Sarah appreciated the shared vulnerability and passion to engage in activism she could express with women in her department.

> There is something nice about having a lot of women in the department, women who

> have been successful who are kind of similarly angry and motivated. I have friends who work in male-dominated fields and that's not the case...We're feeling personally affected and angry on behalf of many other people, and we're in this together.

Sarah and others appreciated having space to express their feelings with similarly-concerned women in their department. The support they felt reinforced the comfort that often accompanied women-majority departments. At the same time, Sarah mentioned that gender was rarely a topic of conversation outside of the political climate. Reflections were limited to headline-making incidences external to academia.

The presidential administration served a similar function that abusive men might in other departments. Because they were surrounded by equally outraged and oppressed women in their departments, it seemed patriarchy could not logically coexist in such an environment. While participants appreciated the shared uncertainty, these larger-than-life examples and the distance women felt from them masked the more subtle manifestations of patriarchy.

Patriarchy Exists Systemically in Spaces Dominated by Men

There was also acknowledgement of broader systemic issues in relation to gender inequality. Though she felt she never personally experienced differential treatment based on her gender, Sarah said "the top positions or the keynote speakers or big name in the field is usually a man." Participants acknowledged that even though their particular fields were dominated by women in numbers, men still held the most senior positions.

Charlotte encountered similar folklore about patriarchy external to her department that changed the way she viewed the gender dynamics in her field.

> We met with another researcher... and somebody had said something like "There are so many women [in our field]." But he said "But men are the ones who are the getting the work done...Look to see who is giving the talks. Who are the keynote speakers?" So that comment kind of stuck with me and heightened my awareness to make observations.

Still, some participants felt insulated because the students and faculty in their departments were almost exclusively women. All participants in this study also had women advisers, though gender was rarely a topic of conversation for most dyads. The dynamics of these relationships in addition to the shared sentiment that patriarchy could only exist in men-majority spaces allowed for subtle academic patriarchy to go unnoticed.

Individuals Occasionally Demonstrate Bad Behavior, But Is It Patriarchy?

While none of the participants shared personal experiences with sexual harassment, violence, or other extreme examples at the hands of men in their departments, some noted problematic gendered behavior. Many participants shared

stories about meetings or presentations where men in the department all sat in front, asked the most questions, spoke over others, took credit for others' ideas, or "mansplained" concepts. While some participants connected the space men occupied to larger systems of patriarchy, others dismissed the behavior as related only to individuals. Frequently, these patterns of behavior were also decoupled from gender altogether, and the degree to which participants associated them with patriarchy was related to the folklore surrounding these individuals and what it meant to be a graduate student.

Doreen described an experience presenting research findings to her colleagues when one of the senior men in the department questioned her about her results. In the moment, Doreen felt embarrassed and upset for being called out, especially as a new researcher. In discussing the incident later with her adviser, her adviser suggested the faculty member was just trying to help.

> He is picking apart the research, and that's what you're supposed to do. He is notorious for doing that so... It's just kind of getting past that first hurdle dealing with the first attack or the first comment. I don't think it was anything to do with like me specifically or that I'm her student or whatever.

In retelling the story, Doreen was equally dismissive as her adviser despite still feeling some resentment about the incident. She described his behavior as normal, unchangeable, and ultimately well-intended. Enduring his harsh criticism was a rite of passage, a shared milestone among students. This notion of individuals with poor constructive critiquing skills versus individuals participating in a larger system of patriarchy contributes to the folklore of collegiality. Caring relationships are antithetical to academic or professional success in that students should expect to endure harsh criticism as a necessary way of improving their scholarship. Her advisers' justification, and the one Doreen left with, was that those who feel comfortable doling out harsh public criticism are invested in student learning. The possibility that his pattern of behavior could be patriarchal and not a personal flaw never came up. Instead, Doreen and other students in similar situations were socialized to respond to questions of this nature politely and to the best of their abilities. Participants' interpretations of these brambles varied. Some participants, like Doreen, saw them as a natural part of the meadow. It was the responsibility of everyone else to figure out how to navigate.

At times, participants and their advisers would have conversations attempting to unmask some of the problematic patterns of behavior they noticed. Like Doreen, CJ experienced a public presentation during which she was interrogated by the only man in the room.

> He was the only man [there], and he just kept asking these kind of annoying man-questions...not thinking about the exam as a whole… You could feel it in the room to the point where...a woman [said] "Am I allowed to ask this kind of question?" to him… And it was that moment, I [thought] "You all get it."

CJ reflected on the experience with trusted women faculty after the presentation.

> [H]e was the only man in the room and what that gave him privilege to perform... How does he not see himself as taking up way too much space and being an asshole? And that's when I was like "Okay everyone knows this is going on."

CJ noticed the many levels of interaction happening within that presentation and how they mirrored larger patterns of patriarchal behavior. She noted her discomfort and confusion in the moment, but she also observed the discomfort of the other women in the room. Concurrently, CJ was aware of the performances the women were using and the subtle ways they would try to call attention to the man's behavior. Following the presentation, CJ and her trusted faculty extended this behavior from one individual to a larger system of patriarchy in which men have certain privileges over women. CJ also noticed that faculty had different approaches to these types of incidences, and the way they reacted to them or explained them to students contributed to the departmental culture. Performing collegiality in these settings was imperative if students wanted to be taken seriously as scholars. Participants like CJ reflected with others about these individuals and connected them to the dark forest, or larger systems of patriarchy external to their women-majority departments.

Many participants described patriarchal dynamics in relationships they observed between women in their departments, yet few participants characterized these relationships as such. Hari described the process of changing advisers as one that was invasive and felt unsafe.

> We were in her office, and I came to say "I think I'm taking my dissertation in a different direction, and that does not involve working with you anymore." And she was like "I'm glad that you're leaving because this other person can really serve your interests for that purpose in your dissertation, and not because you think I'm a bitch." With the door closed in her office. And then she tried to hug me, and I [thought] "Why is this happening?" I don't really like to hug anyone, but certainly not in that kind of situation.

Violating a person's sense of bodily autonomy and reattributing genuine conflict to bitchiness are patriarchal behaviors, yet the drive to perform collegiality as well as the absence of men made recognizing these dynamics difficult. While this might seem like a feminized interaction—the hug and casual use of the word bitch—it is laced with patriarchy. This woman violated Hari's sense of bodily autonomy and reattributed the genuine conflict about racism and sexism Hari experienced to bitchiness. At the same time, performing collegiality in this instance was essential for Hari to preserve a professional relationship with someone who played a gatekeeping function. Her new adviser prepared her for this conversation and the two strategized about how best to navigate the transition without causing conflict. The folklore women encountered throughout their programs and the subsequent performances they used, though they served as means of progressing through their programs, often masked larger patriarchal systems at play.

Patterns of Patriarchy Appear

In addition to individual men who seemed prone to sexism, some participants noticed subtle yet harmful behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs at play within their departments. For instance, Wendy felt that she had experienced differential treatment in relation to her role as a teaching assistant.

> There's a different dynamic between students and teachers that are women versus teachers that are men. I think a lot of students think that I'm too tough, that I should be nice and fluffy as a woman. But I'm like "No, you just need to work harder."

Wendy noted that the expectation to be gentle as a woman extended beyond the classroom since many students had sought her out to process personal issues. Other participants shared these care-centered relationships and noted the gendered patterns, yet many enjoyed these relationships.

Several participants echoed Rose's sentiment that "[i]t's hard to say because there are so many female students and so many female faculty," indicating a belief that men were the primary if not sole sources of patriarchy. The expectation for care became problematic when participants found themselves carrying the burden of supporting students they felt should be shared with faculty or, at times, felt was created by faculty.

Hari, too, noticed that while her field may be considered "feminized" in many ways including representation, gender equality did not exist structurally, behaviorally, or attitudinally.

> [L]ook at who our senior faculty in the department are right now… But what's interesting is that kind of dynamic reverse plays out with in grad students. Almost all of the graduate students who have leadership positions in graduate organizations are women. The male students don't feel like they need to actively be part of that professionalization.

Hari noted the same gender differential in leadership roles that others noticed, yet she also sensed a difference in the way men and women students in her department approached professionalization. For women there seemed to be a greater sense of urgency to prepare for the job market, but Hari felt that men assumed professional success would be inevitable.

Performing Collegiality and Masking Patriarchy

Performance played a big role in participants' experiences in graduate school. Their audiences included their advisers, faculty, fellow students, other scholars, their families and friends, future employers, and themselves. They described the pressures of having to speak, act, and dress in prescribed ways that felt unnatural or incongruous. Usually their justifications for the performances were to be treated like scholars, to fit in, or to try to hide their perceived weaknesses. Participants described the consequences for not performing as not being admitted into certain

networks, being viewed as less serious, and even being treated as a liability to one's or other's success.

Though most participants maintained that they had never personally experienced discrimination or even differential treatment based on their gender, evidence of patriarchal departmental culture was present across all interviews. A beautifully clear meadow with only a few avoidable brambles, upon closer examination, was actually overgrown with inescapable weeds. The inevitable contact with weeds came in the form of gendered divisions of labor, dress codes requiring all students to wear blazers to conferences, warnings about how to time pregnancy, and coaching away feminine vocal patterns. The degrees to which participants were bothered by these dynamics or connected them to the dark forest around them varied.

Linda's adviser required all students to wear blazers to conferences regardless of gender identity or desire to wear a blazer. Linda assumed her adviser wanted her and her colleagues to "look authoritative." Linda's opposition to the requirement was rooted in not having been convinced that she needed to perform authority more than she already was by being a "tall woman with broad shoulders." By not letting advisees choose their own outfits, her adviser both acknowledged the current culture in which women's authority is often questioned while simultaneously requiring her women advisees to overperform authority through dress.

Similarly, Jocelyn described how her adviser had coached her speech. Jocelyn was appreciative of the support her adviser had given to prepare her for a world in which she, as a woman, would need to perform in a certain way.

Figure 3
The Weeds in the Meadow

> I have a certain tone that makes me sound less confident...There's been studies that show that some people have this opinion that you sound less confident... and this tone is more common in women because they have higher pitch voices.

The performance of a normative vocal pattern when presenting, one that was assumedly less feminine and problematized, was deemed necessary for participating in an academic community. Jocelyn was grateful that her adviser had invested the time and attention necessary for preparing her for that hurtle. She and other participants felt that these dynamics were a natural part of academic culture. Every meadow has weeds, but that is better than a dark forest. If someday one must leave the safety of the meadow, maybe it is useful to know what to expect in the forest and how to navigate it. Advisers who helped participants adapt to patriarchy were often viewed as collegial, even while they are socializing their students into a normalized culture of oppression. This mentoring and socializing relationship was one that contributed greatly to Jocelyn's definition of a collaborative and welcoming department.

The normalization of women being viewed as inferior was present in most interviews. Some participants were so affected by the stereotype that they were hesitant to make any movements that would treat them as if they had different needs. Doreen in particular felt that efforts centered around acknowledging gender differences and working towards changing attitudes, behaviors, or systems might lead to comments about "female sensitivity" and ultimately more discrimination. She said "I understand that women need to be aware about more roadblocks, but I feel like that should be [the responsibility of the students and not the advisers]." Doreen appreciated professional organizations meant for women in her field, but she approached these organizations as a means for educating herself about and preparing for seemingly unchangeable obstacles that only women faced. Instead, women who felt similarly to Doreen shared the mentality that success as a woman required the need to stand taller to prove you deserved to be there, shifting the responsibility of combatting patriarchal attitudes and behaviors onto individual women over structural change.

CJ was attuned to the ways in which she changed her performance of collegiality depending on her audience. Her sense of genuine collegiality only applied to her relationship to her fellow students. "And sometimes I think we feel like we do the work that like... some of the faculty should be doing in terms of advising." Similar to Hari, CJ felt as if the collegiality among her fellow students was somewhat bolstered by the need to provide for each other where they felt faculty failed. Concurrently, CJ used fraudulent collegiality as a way to navigate the toxic aspects of her departmental culture.

> There are faculty that I feel pretty uncomfortable around… They want me to perform like a very particular type of grad student—adoringly and devotingly loving everything they do... And then there are definitely faculty that I would never ever work with… I think they've done really horrible things to other students in

> terms of like harassing other students by using their power [inappropriately]... And there's people between where I know how to be collegial around, but also I don't want to work with them.

CJ touched on many of the problematic ways in which collegiality can (dys)function. On many occasions, CJ discussed the politics she learned and who her safe allies were. The type of collegiality she discussed using towards those faculty she identified in the middle ground as not necessarily abusive but not genuinely invested in collaborative or mutually respectful relationships. She could perform collegiality for these faculty—being polite enough to work together while avoiding any more meaningful interactions.

Many other participants described, with varying degrees of intentionality, performing in this manner. The performances were learned behaviors and even attitudes that took shape in the folklore women heard. As illustrated in Hari's story about switching dissertation committee members, women performed this false collegiality for each other. Hari's replacement chair served as a guide to navigate the situation in a professional and collegial manner. "[My former committee member] knew that there was more at stake, and she was more invested in recovering that by making herself feel better than about my positionality." Hari had a sense that everyone involved knew they were performing a false sense of collegiality. She was deeply troubled by her former committee member's behavior, but these issues were not addressed because everyone involved saw value in not creating additional conflict.

Though participants differed in their reasons for and awareness of their performances, all the women shared experiences of subtle sexism being dismissed as a normal part of academic culture or just the problem of one rude man. This phenomenon was often made possible by the fact that everyone heard stories of abusive men in other departments or cultures where students were dangerously competitive with each other. Participants heard folklore even before coming to graduate school, so arriving in a welcoming environment with many other women made these stories about creepy men making sexual advances towards young women seem distant. Being able to hold the cold, competitive, and sexist environments they had heard about up next to their welcoming and collaborative environments they found themselves in made them feel safe from discriminatory treatment. Furthermore, most participants had very positive experiences working with their women advisers and colleagues. Still, a closer look at these experiences reveals the ways in which women, and others, talk about academic culture can often cover patriarchy.

All participants expressed satisfaction with at least one of their women advising dyads ranging from probably wanting to work with their same adviser again all the way to wanting to continue lifelong friendships. They appreciated how their advisers and other women treated them like capable and valuable scholars as well as whole human beings with needs and goals outside of school. Several par-

ticipants even said their motivation for participating in the study was the opportunity to rave about their advisers. Simultaneously, the conscious and subconscious drive to perform a fraudulent, patriarchal version of collegiality was evident.

Discussion and Implications: A Well-Worn Path

Collegiality, the idea that we should just get along, provides a perfect hiding place for patriarchy among other forms of oppression. Genuinely feminist environments do not happen by virtue of having more women, though that is certainly a positive move. This dynamic takes intention, and that starts with naming patriarchy for what it is. Because rather than a big clear meadow amid a dark forest, what is left is a well-worn path through the meadow that avoids brambles and normalizes the weeds growing all around.

Patriarchy, collegiality, and academic culture are inseparable, yet Rose's comment that sexism would be hard to observe because they are surrounded by women was one echoed across most interviews. This sentiment contributes to several commonly held misconceptions: (1) individual men who are sexist are the only source of patriarchy, (2) women cannot perpetuate patriarchy, and (3) communities in which there are few or no men are automatically feminist. These assumptions continue to exist in part through the folklore we share, normalize, or declare permanent. Many participants described positive departmental dynamics reflecting collegial values such as collaborating over scholarship and teaching and

Figure 4
The Well-Worn Path in the Meadow

a shared responsibility for service. At the same time, participants used collegial language to describe patriarchal activities.

Collegiality is often touted as the central pillar of academic culture, yet it is often used as a tool to maintain order and avoid conflict (Kligyte & Barrie, 2014). Just as patriarchy has been a way for those in positions of power to dominate subordinates (Miller, 2017), collegiality has also taken on a similar role in relation to gender-based oppression. Returning to Hari's decision to change her committee membership, deeper analysis reveals that Hari felt the hug was an invasion of her bodily autonomy, a practice characteristic of patriarchal values (Falter, 2016). Even the casual use of the word bitch implies that women are prone to petty grudges, despite the fact that Hari was potentially making a huge, life-altering decision by changing her committee membership. Devoid of open conflict, the interaction appears to be respectful, professional, and collegial even though all parties experienced it on a much deeper and gendered level. The performance of false collegiality served as a mask for patriarchy.

Hari's interaction took place without men directly involved, and she was not the only woman to find herself in a similar situation. CJ, Doreen, and others had stories about meetings where one man would occupy an entire space and effectively silence the rest of the room just through tone of voice, the number of questions asked, or body language. Sometimes, as CJ described, women in the room were aware of the dynamic and consciously made connections with each other about how the dynamic affected them. Too often, participants would conclude that behavior was well-intended or limited to an individual. When people named these dynamics for what they were—manifestations of patriarchy—participants were often confused about what could or should be done from there. Much of the departmental culture they absorbed meant deflecting the behavior. When they came into contact with oppressive systems, such as the lack of support for professional development, faculty pointed to the beautifully collegial culture students had created for themselves. Meanwhile, the systems graduate students created in response to the neglect they felt often created more work for women. Participants noted that women graduate students were responsible for the bulk of the social and professional activities for the department. When women faculty secured leadership positions, they were often responsible for addressing previously neglected issues around racial or gender discrimination, work required for changing departmental culture and fostering a true sense of collegiality.

Trying to combat patriarchy or even drawing attention to its manifestations as an individual can be a risk that not all women are able to take (Cobb-Roberts, 2011). Graduate students have the added pressure of needing to preserve their relationships with those in gatekeeping functions in order to complete their degrees (Lee, 2008) and, therefore, have even less freedom to confront patriarchy on an individual level. Folklore, sometimes used as a survival tactic, can help women determine which individuals to avoid or how to get around oppressive systems.

At the same time, folklore can mask the more problematic dynamics of departmental culture, dismiss these issues as isolated incidents, and misrepresent patriarchy all in the name of collegiality. The folklore of academic culture reflects patriarchal attitudes, beliefs, and systems already in existence. It also shapes the way students and faculty interact with their departments, institutions, fields, colleagues, and identities.

Implications for practice suggest that change must involve parallel processes on attitudinal, behavioral, and structural levels. The drastic yet necessary cultural shifts that are needed cannot be expected to happen if the onus is continuously placed on individuals. Individual men, while they can perpetuate patriarchy, are not the only vessels of oppression.

Women can and do perpetuate patriarchy because they have been socialized within this oppressive system (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997), but their relationships to power and oppression within this system differ. Participants had experiences with individual faculty, men included, who were incredibly and explicitly supportive of their personal and academic identities. At the same time, participants had experiences with faculty, women included, who participated in behaviors and expressed attitudes that contributed to a patriarchal academic culture.

Furthermore, gender was not a salient identity for all participants, and issues of patriarchy were rarely if ever discussed with their colleagues and faculty. Because patriarchy can often operate in subtle ways and is dismissed or even encouraged as collegiality, open recognition that these attitudes and behaviors are even patriarchal in the first place is lacking. Regardless of how salient gender may be to women's personal identities, others ascribe gender roles to them whether they are aware or not (Morita, 2009). Even faculty who express a strong desire to confront patriarchy in their departments, institutions, and fields are limited by the lack of resources, the constraints on their own careers, and their simultaneous oppression by the same system. Often, conventional success in academia comes with conformity to the oppressive culture, a process which erases marginalized identities (Montoya et al., 2016).

Collegiality should no longer be central in academic culture because it continues to mask oppressive practices (Kligyte & Barrie, 2014; Macfarlane, 2016; Massy et al., 1994). Interdependency is a far more meaningful concept (Kligyte & Barrie, 2014). Feminist mentoring practices, not just women advising women, are essential for changing departmental culture on all levels (Gammel & Rutstein-Riley, 2016). While organizational hierarchies remain what they are, power dynamics can still be exposed and altered to create equitable departmental cultures. Change in academia may be slow, but meaningful change can only be sustained through intentional shifts in attitudes, behaviors, and structures.

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