NETWORKS OF EXCLUSION IN A GENDERED ORGANIZATION IN THE HIGH-TECH INDUSTRY

A dissertation presented

By

Ethel L. Mickey

to
The Department of Sociology and Anthropology

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

In the field of

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Northeastern University
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

As part of the reinvigorated #MeToo movement against sexual harassment following the 2016 US presidential election, a wave of high-profile complaints of sexism have surfaced against prominent technology companies including Google and Uber. Innovative technology companies in the United States widely assert their commitments to diversity, but the high-tech industry nonetheless remains dominated by young, white men. Efforts to advance women in knowledge-based industries regularly focus on networking, evidenced by the plethora of support programs designed to help women build strategic relationships to overcome powerful, male-dominated networks commonly referred to as "old boys' clubs." This dissertation explores the everyday, gendered practices of networking through a qualitative case study of an American high-tech organization that I call Data, Inc. I contribute to gendered organizations theory, critical feminist studies of technology, and social network theory by examining the interplay between individual agency and organizational structures. I argue that networks and practices of networking inadvertently reproduce intersectional inequalities in work organizations in the new economy, characterized by intensified economic precarity and workplace transformations like globalization and the rise of information technology. Networking interactions reproduce exclusionary mechanisms such as implicit bias and stereotypes, creating symbolic boundaries that limit opportunities for women and minorities. An organizational framework reveals how features of Data, Inc., including its gendered segregation and masculine culture of engineering, serve to constrain women's relationships with influential organizational actors.

This dissertation project is comprised of three empirical articles. In the first paper, I explore the gendered networking strategies and behaviors of individuals working in high-tech – finding men to spontaneously build connections with each other through informal, masculine activities

like video games, while women struggle to make connections with influential colleagues at formal networking programs, as they are often only women-only spaces. This article critically examines the company's women's group, which I find to inadvertently exclude women of color or other marginalized women who do not fit the dominant company culture. The second paper examines the gendered organization and culture of the high-tech industry through the lens of Data, Inc., revealing how organizational restructuring leads to the implementation of bureaucratic features that differentially shape women and men's networks. Finally, in the third paper, I draw on my participant observation at networking conferences to show how women-only networking events individualize women's responsibility for their careers, circulating the neoliberal notion that women can "have it all" through practices of self-improvement. Women-only events ignore persistent institutional barriers to women's advancement and inclusion such as discrimination, stereotyping, and – paradoxically – women's exclusion from social networks. While the three articles engage unique research questions with their own theoretical foundations, they are connected through their overarching aim to understand how gender inequalities are reproduced in the new economy, and specifically in the white, male-dominated world of technology.

This research makes significant empirical and theoretical contributions to sociological studies of gender, work, and technology. The central questions of my dissertation – how networks and practices of networking may inadvertently reproduce inequalities in new work organizations – are especially urgent for STEM organizations at the leading edge of the U.S. economy seeking to create effective diversity initiatives. I conclude that networking and corporate networking initiatives do little to alter configurations of power and status in the technology industry, and in fact reify structural barriers to women's success. Women and marginalized workers themselves raise important issues with the programs being offered to them, yet their concerns remain whispers

in confidential interview settings or across bathroom stalls due to expectations of being misunderstood or fears of backlash. My project amplifies their voices to shift the discussion of gender inequality in high-tech away from "fixing" women and toward an analysis of the networks of exclusion endemic to the technology industry.

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It is perhaps unsurprising that in my study of networks, I came to realize the profound importance of my own support network, many members of which I would now like to thank.

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Chapter 1: Introduction & Theoretical Framework

Inclusion inspires innovation. – Tim Cook, CEO, Apple, Inc.[1]

> *I strongly believe in gender and racial diversity, and I think we should strive for more. However, to achieve a more equal gender and race representation, Google has created several discriminatory practices: Programs, mentoring, and classes only for people with a certain gender or race, a high priority queue and special treatment for 'diversity' candidates, hiring practices which can effectively lower the bar for 'diversity' candidates.* – James Damore, former Google software engineer[2]

Introduction

Apple, Inc. proudly displays the above quote from CEO Tim Cook on its website advertising job opportunities at the high-tech giant. The website describes the company's recruitment policy, emphasizing its commitment to diversity and equality as both economic and moral imperatives. Tech companies market their products as designed to "make the world a better place," and offer corporate discourses that give the appearance of their being modern, forward-thinking organizations, valuing merit and innovative ideas above all else (Alfrey and Twine 2017). Despite this discourse, troublesome stories have emerged from high-tech companies like Uber, Twitter, and Google to reveal rampant cultures of discrimination – particularly cultures resting on bias and stereotypes, sexism, racism, and sexual harassment. More recently, an internal memo circulated by Google engineer James Damore made national headlines as the author argued that women remain underrepresented in high-tech not because of

[1] See "A message from Tim Cook," http://www.apple.com/diversity/. Accessed March 31, 2016.
[2] Written comment in the 2017 memo titled, "Google's Ideological Echo Chamber," or what came to be widely known as the "Google Manifesto." Damore was fired from Google in 2017 after informally circulating a memo criticizing the company's diversity programs for ignoring biological differences between men and women, which he believed to explain the dearth of women in high-tech and the gender pay gap. Damore filed a complaint with the US National Labor Relations Board to dispute his firing, but the NLRB dismissed the case in January 2018. Full text of the memo can be found here: https://gizmodo.com/exclusive-heres-the-full-10-page-anti-diversity-screed-1797564320. Accessed January 15, 2018.

bias and discrimination, but because of inherent biological sex differences. Damore criticized the company for "lowering the bar" to actively hire more women and minorities, and then went on to argue that Google's diversity and support programs for women are misguided for trying to overcome biological sex traits such as women's "higher interest in people and men in things." He also argued that diversity and mentoring programs "only for people with a certain gender or race" create a biased environment against men, specifically white men – as seen in the brief excerpt above. Despite Google's formal and public repudiation of the memo, support from both inside and outside of the company could be found on social media outlets like Reddit, revealing a work culture that remains hostile to women despite corporate diversity initiatives and leadership supporting inclusion.

The high-tech industry in the United States has long been overwhelmingly white and male, with women and minorities making up only a fraction of the workforce. Companies have been reluctant to publically release their diversity reports and employment data, arguing that such data could reveal their business strategies to competitors (Evans and Rangarajan 2017). When some companies did release their data after much public pressure, the numbers hardly reflect the industry's alleged values of diversity, inclusion, and equality. For example, in 2017, 69 percent of Google's employees were men, and just 20 percent of technical jobs are filled by women (Google 2017). These numbers are consistent with other major tech companies, with Apple and Facebook most recently reporting that women hold 23 and 17 percent of technical jobs, respectively (Apple 2017; Williams 2016) – persistent trends that led the *New York Times* to declare that technology has a "man problem" (Miller 2014).[3]

[3] Diversity reports further reveal that these companies are on average about 55% white, and Asians make up 57 percent of the minority workforce in the industry (Ricker 2015). And while data on the age of employees is not

Gender discrimination remains pervasive to the technology industry – an industry believed to be the driver of creativity and innovation in the new economy. Certain factors allowed women entry into technical fields in the United States, such as the illegalization of employment and education discrimination through Title VII and Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, affirmative action programs of the 1970s and 80s, a labor shortage in the 1990s, and campaigns to promote the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) to girls and women students. However, the recruitment and retention of women in technology remains difficult even for leading firms. Women leave STEM fields at higher rates than women in other industries, with one study showing that 50 percent of technical women (engineers and computer scientists) switch to other fields, while only 20 percent of other professional women do the same (Glass et al. 2013, see also Hewlett et al. 2008). This trend not only impacts women's economic opportunities – with technical jobs conferring higher status and pay than most other careers[4] – but the underrepresentation of women also has consequences for American science and technology, with research linking diversity to greater innovation, collaboration, and economic profitability (Ashcraft and Blithe 2010; Ashcraft and Breitzman 2012; Noland, Moran, and Kotschwar 2016).

Networks of Exclusion in a Gendered Organization in the High-Tech Industry explores gender inequalities in high-tech by looking specifically at how networks and networking shape worker experiences. Networks are purportedly key resources in today's economy, crucial in job search and hiring processes, and providing resources such as support, tacit knowledge, and

usually included in these diversity reports, tech firms often celebrate youthfulness, evidenced by Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg stating: "Young people are just smarter" (Wong 2015).

[4] In 2016, high-tech industries provided about 12 percent of all jobs in the US but produced nearly 23 percent of output, defined as the dollar value of goods and services produced by the industry (Wolf and Terrell 2016).

connections. In the new, post-industrial economy, workers are told that they must network to navigate informal hiring processes, survive career breaks due to periodic cuts, and identify new opportunities in a precarious labor market (Williams, Muller, and Kilanski 2012). More so, networking is celebrated as an individual strategy to overcome gender labor market inequalities, and women are frequently encouraged to network to overcome structural barriers, gain social capital, and extend their reach into the upper echelons of organizations (Forret and Dougherty 2004). Efforts to advance women in knowledge-based industries regularly focus on networking, evidenced by the plethora of support programs designed to help women build strategic relationships to overcome exclusionary and powerful, male-dominated networks commonly referred to as "old boys' clubs." However, we know little about networking as a gendered social practice, or how corporate networking programs may challenge or reproduce inequalities in work organizations (see for example Kalev, Kelly, and Dobbin 2006). Organizations invest significant resources into programs aimed at advancing women in STEM, but do these programs accomplish such goals, or are they serving to perpetuate the power dynamics of the information economy?

To address this question, I employ a case study of an elite high-tech firm in the Greater Boston area, which I have named Data, Inc. This dissertation is based on semi-structured interviews with employees, observations at Data, Inc., and participant observation at networking events and conferences. These multiple qualitative methods allow me to explore the everyday practices of networking in a high-tech organization to reveal how the technology sector remains a highly gendered and racialized terrain despite diversity management initiatives.

My overall argument is that networks and practices of networking inadvertently reproduce intersectional inequalities in work organizations in the new economy. Networking interactions reproduce exclusionary mechanisms such as implicit bias and stereotypes, creating

symbolic boundaries that limit opportunities for women and minorities. An organizational framework reveals how features of the high-tech firm in this study, including its gendered segregation and masculine culture of engineering, serve to constrain women's relationships with influential organizational actors. More so, women workers describe the company's institutional diversity programs – such as a separate networking group for women – as alienating to those who do not "fit in" with the corporate culture, most notably women of color. I conclude that corporate networking initiatives grant organizations reputations as "women-friendly" but do little to alter configurations of power and status in the technology industry, and in fact reify structural barriers to women's success.

The dissertation is written as three, standalone articles, each with different units of analysis and lenses on gender and networks. Taken together, the three articles in my dissertation contribute to sociological theories of gender and work, critical feminist studies of technology, and social network theory by examining the interplay between individual agency and organizational structures. In the first article (Chapter 3), I consider how individuals "do" or perform gender in networking interactions, and I identify subtle interactive processes perpetuating stratification within STEM fields like high-tech. This article synthesizes network studies with feminist theories of gender inequality in order to identify how the agentic practices of organizational actors contribute to workplace inequalities. The second article (Chapter 4) draws upon a gendered organizational framework to examine how organizational features shape worker networks, relationships, and interactions. Using the case of going public, I argue that organizational restructuring in the new economy can lead to the adoption of gendered, bureaucratic features that configure organizational power and status in the hands of white men, while placing women in peripheral or dead-end jobs. Finally, the third article (Chapter 5)

explores how women-only networking events and conferences draw upon the popularized feminist ideology of empowerment, circulating the idea that women can "have it all" through practices of self-improvement. Together, the findings of these three articles problematize the assumption of networks and networking as sweeping solutions to advance women in high-tech.

This project contributes to sociological conceptualizations of gender inequality in the twenty-first century workplace. I apply sociological analysis to the technology sector, which remains a highly gendered and racialized terrain despite organizational diversity efforts. By considering how individuals "do" or perform gender in networking interactions, I identify subtle interactive processes perpetuating intersectional inequalities within STEM fields like high-tech. My project also contributes to research demonstrating the unintended consequences of diversity programs in elite work settings. By "studying up," I reveal the intersecting forms of privilege and inequality embedded within a leading firm in the knowledge-based economy operating in an otherwise precarious labor market.

The central questions of my dissertation – how networks and practices of networking may inadvertently reproduce inequalities in new work organizations – are especially urgent for male-dominated STEM organizations at the leading edge of the U.S. economy seeking to create effective diversity initiatives. Women high-tech workers themselves raise important issues with the programs being offered to them, yet their concerns remain whispers in confidential interview settings or across bathroom stalls due to expectations of being misunderstood or fears of backlash. My project amplifies their voices to shift the discussion of gender inequality in high-tech away from "fixing" women and toward an analysis of the networks of exclusion endemic to the technology industry.

In this chapter, I first profile the US high-tech industry, defining what I mean by "high-tech," and providing a brief history of the industry. I then move to a discussion of the technology industry in the Greater Boston area – the broader context within which this project was conducted. Next, I move to the theoretical framework of this dissertation, beginning with critical feminist literatures of gender, science, and technology. I discuss the sociohistorical and contemporary mechanisms of exclusion facing women in STEM fields like technology – drawing upon gendered organizations theory (Acker 1990; Kanter 1977) and status characteristics theory (Ridgeway 2011). I incorporate theories from the sociology of work to describe the shifting organizational landscape in the new, post-industrial economy, including the rise of precarious and contingent labor even for professional workers. This segues into a discussion of the role of social capital, networks, and networking in the new economy, and I point to several limitations of research describing "sex differences" in networks. I conclude the chapter with an outline of the articles in this dissertation, describing how this research begins the project of overcoming the limitations of social network theory by incorporating a critical feminist framework.

The U.S. High-Tech Industry

The high-tech industry is notoriously difficult to define, in part because, in today's information economy, nearly every company has a website and employs at least some technical workers. Technology also rapidly changes, further adding complexity to what is considered a technology or "high-tech" company. Studying high-tech in the 1980s, Gideon Kunda wrote, "High-tech is a world often portrayed by its residents as a place where the only constant is change, and every effort to describe it is already outdated – like yesterday's new high-tech gadget – by the time it is published" (1992: viii). Over thirty years of technological innovation

later, delineating the high-tech industry proves to be even more elusive. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) defines the high-tech sector as industries having high concentrations of workers in STEM occupations (Wolf and Terrell 2016; see also EEOC 2016). These include various types of engineers, IT workers, scientists, and managers of these workers. Technology jobs are not those simply requiring the use of computing technology, but those jobs that involve the production of innovative technology (EEOC 2016). In this dissertation, I use terms such as "high-tech," "tech," and "technology" interchangeably when discussing the organization under study and its respective industry. This decision reflects both the official, government definition of the high-tech industry as well as the language used by respondents in this study.[5]

The BLS further distinguishes between two groups of sub-industries within high-tech: high-tech manufacturing and high-tech services. High-tech manufacturing industries include industrial machinery, pharmaceutical and medicine, computer and equipment manufacturing, and semiconductor and electronic equipment manufacturing. High-tech services industries include software publishers, telecommunications, data processing and hosting services, technical consulting services, and other information services. Over the past 20 years, the high-tech services industries grew by 3.4 million jobs, while high-tech manufacturing industries declined by one million jobs (Wolf and Terrell 2016). As of 2014, high-tech services account for 52.6 percent of high-tech employment in the US, and the dominance of services is expected to continue (Ibid). The shift towards services corresponds with popular ideas of high-tech companies as software companies and startups, as opposed to more traditional manufacturing plants.

[5] Common parlance and the popular media also associate "tech" with "high-tech" as opposed to "low-tech," which refers instead to simple technology of a traditional or non-mechanical kind, such as crafts and tools pre-dating the Industrial Revolution. "Low-tech" can also refer to technology that is out of date or no longer being produced.

The U.S. high-tech industry attracted international acclaim beginning in the 1970s for its entrepreneurship and extraordinary economic growth (Saxenian 1994). Two economic regions – California's Silicon Valley and Boston's Route 128 – specifically garnered attention as the world's leading centers in electronics, particularly semiconductors. Silicon Valley has become the more celebrated of the two regional economies, in part due to its ability to achieve a turnaround during the national recession in the 1980s (Hyde 2003; Saxenian 1994). The high-tech industry became a model for success in the face of growing international competition, and investors, journalists, and social scientists flocked to Silicon Valley to understand this case (Shih 2001). Experts characterized Silicon Valley as an archetype of the flexible specialization economy, a mode of economic organization with decentralized organization structures, specialized firms, proximity to academic and venture capital institutions, and dense, overlapping networks facilitating innovation (Piore and Sabel 1984; Saxenian 1994). Flexible, specialized modes of production emerged in the post-Fordist era and increased firms' ability to adapt to rapid changes in consumer tastes and market trends – crucial in an increasingly global economy. Networks, and particularly intra-organizational networks, were considered part of what scholar AnaLee Saxenian termed the "regional advantage" of Silicon Valley (1994), with its high concentration of technology firms in a relatively small area creating an interdependent network of specialized firms. Organizational boundaries in the region are known to be more fluid, creating what has been called a "high-velocity" labor market, with workers moving rapidly among competing firms (Baron, Hannan, and Burton 2001; Hyde 2003; Shih 2006). The word *networking* came to describe the continual interchange of information and personnel between this structure of connected firms. With job hopping the norm among highly skilled workers in Silicon

Valley, individuals must maintain extensive networks across the region to supply them with job-relevant information and contacts (Piore and Sabel 1984; Shih 2006).

In addition to informal ties across firm boundaries, the high-tech industry has since become known for other distinctive features including the culture of startups, high labor mobility, nonhierarchical management practices, and venture capital (Hyde 2003; Saxenian 1994). Startup culture has particularly infiltrated high-tech and other industries, altering employee incentive structures and career planning. Startups usually forego bureaucratic features such as clear hierarchies, formal procedures and rules, and direct labor control in order to encourage creativity and innovation, part of larger trends of workplace transformations which I will discuss further below (Martens 2004). The startup culture of high-tech firms reinvented professional work as fun, young, and exciting to attract IT workers who tend to have fierce attachment to values of flexibility, innovation, and autonomy. Common practices in high-tech organizations include unlimited vacation time, free food and beer, and informal dress codes, shifting from white-collar to "no-collar" work (Hodgson 2004; Neff 2014; Turco 2016).

The high-tech sector in the US has become a major source of economic growth, a leader of innovation, and a cultural influencer. Following the dot-com boom of the 1990s and subsequent bust of the early 2000s, there has been a global technological revolution transforming the economy and nearly every aspect of social life (Harris and McAnaney 2016; Neff 2014). Technological advances are shaping every industry, with certain commerce centers in the United States (re)emerging as leaders in the digital economy – including Boston.

The "Hub": Boston's High-Tech Industry

The Greater Boston area and Route 128 ("America's Technology Highway") have long been celebrated as a center of high-tech innovation, but innovation in the area has shifted in recent years to metro Boston and Cambridge, with tech companies flocking to centralized areas such as Kendall Square and the Innovation District located in Boston's Seaport (Harris and McAnaney 2016). In a recent report, the US Chamber of Commerce named Boston the number one city poised to "capitalize on the inevitable shift to a digital economy" (Ibid: 4), with the San Francisco Bay area coming in second place. Factors contributing to Boston's top spot on the list include its supply of highly-skilled workers and a well-integrated startup community with connections to universities, hospitals, and research institutions. Boston's tech industry has rapidly expanded in just the last five years, recently crafting a highly competitive bid for Amazon's second headquarter office – solidifying the city's reputation as a national "epicenter" for innovation (Leung 2016). Since the new millennium, major tech and e-commerce companies have chosen to launch in Boston, including Acquia, Care.com, Constant Contact, Hubspot, Tripadvisor, and Wayfair. Other tech giants have also formed local offices in the greater Boston area including Apple, Microsoft, Google, Facebook, Amazon, and General Electric.

Despite the recent flurry of activity in Boston's tech industry, the region has long been a center of innovation. In the 1950s, the region was home to the nation's leading semiconductor producers, and during the 1960s and 70s, a proliferation of electronics producers and startups established facilities along Route 128 – the 65-mile highway circling Boston. Computer and software companies spread during the 1970s and the early 1980s, propelling Massachusetts into national and international prominence (Rosegrant and Lampe 1992). The state's history of innovation can be traced to the interplay of three institutions: higher education, the federal

government, and industry. The Boston and Cambridge area has one of the world's densest concentrations of academic institutions, with MIT particularly tied to the creation and growth of the area's technology community (Ibid). A driving force of the growth the local high-tech community has been research insights emerging from area universities, with universities also supplying highly skilled labor to tech companies, with most engineering schools developing formal programs linked to industry (Saxenian 1994). Boston is also home to one of the largest academic health communities in the United States, with medical schools, teaching hospitals, biotechnology firms, and pharmaceutical companies all participating in the globally-recognized medical research community. Technology startups and more established firms such as Raytheon were also heavily supported by federal military contracts to design and test minicomputers (Ibid). Route 128 attracted a diverse mix of companies and research labs, most of which produced technologically sophisticated military electronics and minicomputers requiring high levels of skill and constant innovation (Kunda 1992). While the success of the regional technology economy waned in the mid-1980s as the region faced an economic downturn, Boston had nonetheless by then established its national reputation as a "hub" of innovation.

Given the city's tradition of innovation and the recent developments of its high-tech industry, Boston represents an important site in which to study networks and networking. Technology underpins nearly twenty percent of workforce in Massachusetts, creating a dense, "technology ecosystem" in Boston and its surrounding communities (MassTLC 2015). The Massachusetts Technology Leadership Council describes the Boston tech industry as having a "high bump factor," meaning there is a high likelihood of planned or impromptu "bumping" into people whose different areas of expertise can spark innovation: "Massachusetts truly is one of the few places in the world where both organized gatherings and chance encounters regularly

create openings among industry, commerce, finance, academia, and government" (MassTLC 2015: 14).

The Greater Boston area is home to dozens of industry networking events on any given day, including happy hours, lecture series, meetups[6], and traditional "meet and greet" networking events. BostInno, a popular blog covering "the view from inside" innovation in Boston, curates a list of "approved" events each month, its coverage serving to narrow the list down to a couple of key events each night (BostInno 2017). While many of these events are open to all people employed or involved in the high-tech industry, a significant proportion of local programming targets specific groups of workers such as women, racial minority groups, and/or LGBTQ individuals. The various institutions comprising of Boston's technology ecosystem sponsor and host these various events and, as other researchers have found in Silicon Valley (Barley and Kunda 2004; Saxenian 1994; Shih 2006) and New York City's Silicon Alley (Neff 2014), networking is central to Boston's technology industry.

Gender and Technology

Early depictions of the high-tech industry portrayed a meritocracy, an industry lifting up the best and brightest thinkers without regard for gender or race in the quest for innovation (Shih 2001). But public perception of the technology industry has drastically shifted in recent years, with a series of high-profile discrimination and sexual harassment claims revealing the industry's

[6] Meetup is an online social networking service for people to organize around a common interest and meet offline, IRL or "in real life." Since the website's founding in 2002, the word "meetup" has become parlance for people creating offline communities around ideas and activities.

systematic exclusion of women and minorities (Alfrey and Twine 2017; Glaser and Molla 2017; Isaac 2017).[7]

Women are disproportionately underrepresented in high-tech, comprising only 35 percent of the workforce (EEOC 2016). And although the technology industry is known for its ability to attract highly-skilled immigrants (particularly Asian-born engineers), Blacks, Latinx, and Native Americans are underrepresented in the technical workforce, with women of color being the most underrepresented and marginalized group in the industry (Evans and Rangarajan 2017; Simard et al. 2017).[8] These employment trends reveal that the US high-tech industry remains a gendered and racialized industry that privileges white, highly educated men.[9]

Technology and engineering have long been male-dominated and socially constructed as masculine-typed work (Cockburn 1985; McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Wajcman 1991). In contrast to the "pipeline problem," which focuses on a lack of qualified women in the applicant pool for STEM jobs, feminist scholars instead have consistently identified how the structure and culture of STEM are gendered in ways that exclude or disadvantage women (e.g. Harding 1986; Hartsock 1987; Schiebinger 2014; Valian 1998, among many others). The pattern of inequitable treatment of women in STEM is often described as a metaphorical "chilly climate," consisting of

[7] Most notably, in February 2017, former Uber software engineer Susan Fowler published an account of her experiences at the company, alleging multiple instances of sexism and sexual harassment. Fowler's account went viral, leading current women Uber employees to speak out against systemic gender issues in the firm, and ultimately the ousting of the company's co-founder and CEO, Travis Kalanick. Fowler's essay was an important precursor to the reinvigorated #MeToo movement against sexual harassment in 2017, a campaign first started by activist Tarana Burke in 2007. Fowler's full essay can be found here: https://www.susanjfowler.com/blog/2017/2/19/reflecting-on-one-very-strange-year-at-uber. Last accessed March 10, 2018.

[8] Of the 22 high-tech companies in Silicon Valley releasing EEO-1 data in 2016, Apple employs the highest percentage of women of color, with 4% of their female employees identifying as black, 4% as Latina, and less than 1% Native American. Apple's numbers dwindle to less than 1% black women and 2% Latina representative in managerial and executive positions. Several companies do not report a single black, Latinx, or multiracial executive in 2016 – male or female (Evans and Rangarajan 2017).

[9] Women and minorities are similarly underrepresented in Massachusetts' technology industry. Women comprise only 29% of technical jobs in the state, and only 10% of board seats of Massachusetts-based technology companies.

subtle discriminatory practices as well as more overt forms of discrimination and harassment (Hall and Sandler 1982; see also Britton 2017). Page, Bailey, and van Delinder (2009) draw upon Connell's (1995; also Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity to describe the maintenance of informal and formal practices that institutionalize men's dominance over women in STEM, creating what has often been called an "old boys' club" or network (Brass 1985; Sonnert and Holton 1995; see also McDonald 2011).[10] Rather than focusing on gender differences in individual human capital, such as technical skills, or career aspirations, feminist scholarship draws critical attention to technology as a gendered institution (Fox 1991; Xie and Shauman 2003).

Neo-Weberian theories of social closure similarly shift from a human capital perspective to instead consider discrimination as a mediating process resulting in differential labor market opportunities (e.g. Parkin 1974; Reskin 1988; Roscigno, Garcia, and Bobbit-Zeher 2007; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). Social closure refers to processes by which powerful groups maximize their institutional advantage by restricting access and privileges to others – often through institutional exclusion, dominant group positioning, and opportunity hoarding (Weber 1968). Dominant group members undertake actions – closure – to preserve their privilege while subordinate groups hold some capacity to resist and change status arrangements (Parkin 1974). The use of "soft skill" criteria in hiring and promotion decisions, for example, leads to blocked

[10] The term, "old boys' club" originated in Great Britain, in reference to the alumni networks of elite, male-only, private schools. Some private secondary schools in the UK still refer to their alumni associations as the "Old Boys," and The Association of Representatives of Old Boys' Societies was formed in 1971 to give representatives of school alumni societies an opportunity to network and exchange ideas (http://www.arops.org.uk/j/index.php/about-us/about-us). The existence of old boys' networks was (and is) often blamed for the high proportion of former students from elite schools like Oxford and Cambridge in high-status positions in British government, business, and other professions. "Old boys' club" is now more commonly used in sociological research to refer to social networks occupied by high-status, white men (McDonald 2011).

opportunities for women and minorities, as gatekeeping actors draw on essentialist gender and race beliefs to determine who "fits" jobs best (Rivera 2015; Roscigno et al. 2007).

One social closure process reinforcing gender discrimination in the high-tech industry is harassment, including sexual harassment. Women entering the traditionally masculine and formerly homosocial spaces of STEM work organizations tend to experience exclusion and hostility as they threaten male privilege (Bystydzienski and Bird 2006; Valian 1998). Feminist theory points to how the structure of work organizations – and the gendered distribution of power in particular – tends to facilitate sexual harassment (Acker 1990; Britton 2000; Williams 1998). Women, tending to be segregated into gender-typed and low-status jobs, often experience harassment by their male superiors (O'Toole, Schiffman, and Edwards 2007). The hugely imbalanced gender ratio and asymmetry of power in the high-tech industry create a culture vulnerable to sexual harassment and other forms of abuse. In 2015, a group of women tech investors and executives conducted a survey of 200 senior-level women in Silicon Valley, finding that sixty percent of respondents reported unwanted sexual advances in the workplace, with a large majority of the advances coming from a superior (Vassallo et al. 2015). Even more recently, growing numbers of women in high-tech have come forward with their accounts of gender discrimination and sexual harassment, fueling a tidal wave of resignations of male executives and drawing national attention to the industry's widespread toxic culture of harassment (Kolhatkar 2017; Kosoff 2017). Social closure processes such as sexual harassment thus come about within the context of everyday interactions in organizations, through language, symbols, and behaviors aimed at preserving the status and power hierarchy (West and Zimmerman 1987).

Women's exclusion from technology can also be connected to the historical gender division of labor and the male domination of skilled trades that developed under the rise of capitalism (Cockburn 1983, 1985; Wacjman 1991). In technology, men engaged in collective efforts to protect and secure their employment conditions by retaining skill designations for their work and blocking outsiders' (women's) access to highly-skilled, technical occupations (Cockburn 1983; Wajcman 1991). In the early phases of industrialization, as powered machinery challenged traditional craft skills, men organized to retain certain rights over technology by actively resisting the entry of women into new spheres of production requiring technical skills (Cockburn 1985). Women instead found themselves working in what was considered unskilled work for the lowest pay, creating a rigid gender division of labor and a historical and cultural construction of technology as masculine. Technology and technical competence became monopolized by men, and thereby culturally associated with the dominant ideal of masculinity (Cockburn 1983; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). This "masculine culture of technology" remains fundamental to the reproduction of the gender division of labor even today (Wajcman 1991: 21, also Faulkner 2009). Defining technology as belonging to the masculine realm serves to exclude women from entering technical fields, push women to prematurely exit their careers, or force them to cope with their outsider status.

There has been little degree of change in the gender segregation of technical work, and in the contemporary high-tech industry, centered on computing and programming occupations, women continue to be segregated at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy (McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Padavic and Reskin 2002). In fact, computing was historically sex-typed as a "feminized" occupation, with exceptionally large numbers of women working in computer

programming up until the 1980s.[11] Computer programming was considered "not yet a science," but rather tedious, clerical work, and women often filled positions as "software" workers in hardware-oriented engineering companies (Ensmenger 2010; Wajcman 1991). Software was believed to be more social, requiring less "hard," technical mastery, and therefore of secondary importance to other aspects of computer work. The masculinization of software and computing occurred later in the 20th century, as again men actively worked to professionalize the field in line with other scientific disciplines, establishing structural and cultural boundaries in ways that excluded women from the field (Misa 2010). Newly-implemented aptitude tests and personality profiling in hiring processes, for example, privileged masculine characteristics. Increasingly specialized job titles and hierarchies distanced high-skilled labor from work seen as low status and routine, offering increased social status, greater autonomy, better pay, and improved opportunities for advancement for men (Ensmenger 2010). As men solidified their hold over computing and engineering, computer culture became associated with "nerds" – young, white, educated men who "tinker" with technology.

Formal and informal mechanisms reproduce the gendered association of technology with masculinity, as well as the corresponding stereotype of women as being technologically incompetent. Institutions of education, the family, and the media all transmit mutually reinforcing meanings that identify masculinity with technology. Hegemonic gender beliefs, especially the presumption of men's greater status and competence, also shape the institution of work, biasing interactions, relationships, and expectations, especially in traditionally male-

[11] The exact percentages of women programmers historically are difficult to pin down with accuracy, but most reliable sources suggest that approximately 30% of programmers were women in the 1960s. The first government statistics on the programming profession appear in 1970, when it was calculated that 22.5% of all programmers were women (Ensmenger 2010).

dominated fields such as science and technology (Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Ridgeway 2011). Men are presumed to be more competent than women in math and logic, and women's contributions to development and innovation are often hidden or undervalued (Wajcman 1991; Correll 2004; Zippel 2017). Women do not conform to the ideal worker image in STEM, with the ideal worker not only possessing strong logic skills, but also being fully devoted to work and unencumbered by family obligations (Bailyn 2011; Cooper 2000; Ridgeway 2011). This exclusionary, inhospitable work environment not only hinders the careers of individual women, but also contributes to high turnover rates of women and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and biases (Settles et al. 2006; Valian 1998).

Gender status beliefs, the ideal worker image, and other gendered symbols, values, and norms have become systematically embedded within STEM work organizations. Work organizations rest on assumptions of gender difference, with job descriptions, contracts, evaluations, and interactions privileging men while marginalizing women (Acker 1990; Kanter 1977). Gendered organizations theory demonstrates how work organizations are "defined by the absence of women" (Acker 1992: 567), and high-tech work organizations are no exception. Knowledge industries like high-tech are imbued with a "masculine ethic" (Kanter 1977: 22), as technical workers must "do gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987), enacting and achieving masculinity by placing devotion to work above all other obligations, working long hours and making themselves available via email 24/7, being what Marianne Cooper describes as the "go-to guys" (2000).

There has been growing scholarly interest in the definition and practice of masculinity in work organizations, drawing upon Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity (e.g. Bird 1996; Collinson 1992; Collinson and Hearn 1996; Martin 2001). Hegemonic masculinity is

understood as the pattern of practice allowing men's dominance over women (and other, subordinate men) to continue, and within the male domains of engineering and computing, scholars identify a dominant masculinity that centers on "nerd" or "geek" identity – one requiring aggressive displays of technical knowledge and hands-on ability, often at the expense of social skills (Alfrey and Twine 2017; Cooper 2000; Wright 1996). While formerly stigmatized, "geek" has become an aspirational identity in the high-tech industry, with companies tending to embody a hybrid "nerd-frat" culture of the "brogrammer," a kind of racialized masculinity that celebrates geek culture (Alfrey and Twine 2017; Wynn and Correll 2018). Nerd masculinity deviates from traditional masculinity in that it values technical skill and brilliance over physical appearance and athletic ability, and men compete to see who can work the most hours and cut the best code (Cooper 2000). Judy Wacjman (1991) describes the masculinity associated with technology as a "warrior ethic," and points to the culture of gaming[12] as the origin of this form of masculinity (144). Geek masculinity can be considered a unique occupational inequality regime (Acker 2006a), a heteronormative type of masculinity that is racialized and class-inflected, often characterized as white, Asian, and male (Alfrey and Twine 2017). With geek masculinity perceived as a form of symbolic capital, adherence to traditional femininity may be a liability for women in male-dominated technology firms (Alfrey and Twine 2017; Wynn and Correll 2018). With masculinity imbued in technical work organizations, women who fail to meet stereotypical expectations of technical workers often feel culturally excluded in the workplace.

[12] "Gaming" references the activity of playing video games online or on a personal gaming device (Alfrey and Twine 2017).

Calling attention to hegemonic masculinity in the context of high-tech demonstrates the importance of an intersectional analytic perspective to the study of workplace relationships and networks. Science and technology are not only male spheres, but white, heterosexual, middle- and upper-class institutions, and as such gender is but one dimension shaping the experiences of individuals in STEM work organizations. The limited numbers of black, Latinx, and Native American workers in STEM has led to studies that primarily focus on comparing the experiences of white, middle-class, and heterosexual men and women.[13] Yet feminist scholarship shows that social structures such as work organizations are composed of inequality regimes, "loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities" (Acker 2006a: 443). An important, recent study on female programmers, technical writers, and engineers of diverse racial backgrounds and sexual orientations finds that a "spectrum of belonging" operates in these occupational spaces dominated by men (Alfrey and Twine 2017). Racially dominant (white and Asian) LGBTQ women can successfully navigate workplace hostilities by distancing themselves from traditional femininity, but this strategy serves to reinforce the inequality regimes privileging male workers. Intersectional gender schemas and stereotypes therefore continue to limit women navigating gender-segregated occupational environments.

Gender stereotypes and status beliefs surrounding masculinity and femininity also shape the gendered division of labor found in technology companies, with women tending to work in non-technical enclaves that limit their career aspirations and organizational mobility (Ridgeway 2011; Stanworth 2000). Women working in high-tech often find themselves segregated into low-

[13] Important exceptions include work focusing on the experiences of highly-skilled immigrant workers in information technology – typically Asian engineers and scientists granted temporary status through H1-B visas (e.g. Radhakrishnan 2011; Rudrappa 2009; Shih 2006).

status departments doing traditionally female-typed work such as human resources, marketing, and communication (McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Padavic and Reskin 2002). Even women with technical backgrounds tend to enter firms in non-technical and non-budget oriented roles, which limits their ability to advance to management and executive –level positions. Women who do work in male-dominated engineering or other technical departments and teams experience tokenism – greater visibility, heightened cultural boundaries, and pressure to assimilate to preconceived notions of femininity (Kanter 1977). Tokenism serves to create a vicious cycle for women, limiting their ability to demonstrate technical competence and confirming men's stereotypes about them – constructing a glass ceiling for women in technology (Williams 1992; McKay 2006).

The gender composition of STEM organizations, including women's token status, contributes to gendered patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Scientific and technical work relies on the cooperation of people, research teams, and groups, who often work on interdisciplinary projects (Fox 2001). Some research has found the shift towards flat, flexible organizations based on cross-departmental teams allows for greater gender equity, institutionalizing formal opportunities for women to network (Smith-Doerr 2004; Whittington and Smith-Doerr 2008). But many gender scholars maintain that women professionals in science and technology continue to be disadvantaged through their exclusion from networks and mentors, limiting their access to work-related help, tacit knowledge, job information, and other opportunities (e.g. Cech and Blair-Loy 2010; McGuire 2002, 2012; Rankin, Nielsen, and Stanley 2007; Williams et al. 2012). Women geoscientists, for example, value networks and view networking as the primary means to advance their careers, but they nonetheless remain excluded from informal men's networks, which are centered on the traditionally masculine activities of golfing, hunting, and strip clubs

(Williams et al. 2012). The same study finds that when women scientists create their own support groups to counter this exclusion, their male colleagues actively delegitimize the women's groups such that it disadvantages women to join them. Similarly, research evaluating the effectiveness of formal initiatives to counter the social isolation of women and minority workers demonstrates the various effects of program type and content in terms of improving managerial diversity (Kalev et al. 2006). Mentoring programs – including personal guidance and support – can facilitate the career development of black women, whereas networking has modest effects for white women. Gender bias frames social relationships in workplaces (Ridgeway 2011) and, as I will discuss further below, men working in male-dominated STEM organizations tend to feel they can trust and work more easily with other men. Despite being formally included on teams and groups, women's experiences in these settings do not necessarily lead to the same opportunities and material resources as men.

This study affirms previous research finding that professional women and women of color continue to be excluded from strategic networks and mentors (Cech and Blair-Loy 2010; McGuire 2012; Williams et al. 2012). Women high-tech workers in this study tend to adopt a neoliberal approach to networking, rationally investing their time to properly network and achieve career goals, while men engage in informal friendships and socializing (Sharone 2013). Women's networking approach fails to align women with high-status men and provide them with the resources needed to advance. More so, similar to research by Christine Williams and colleagues on the oil and gas industry (Williams et al. 2012), I find that joining formal women's networks may place women at an organizational disadvantage, as adherence to traditional femininity in the male-dominated technology firm may be a liability for women. Even more troubling is the exclusionary nature of women-only networking programs for women of color, as

these programs often center on a privileged version of white, upper-class feminist empowerment. The structure and culture of networking in high-tech therefore continues to perpetuate hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion.

In this section, I have identified the various ways in which gender shapes the institution of technology, privileging men and disadvantaging women in high-tech work organizations. The gender discrimination against women in technology includes patterns of inclusion and exclusion that limits women's access to powerful industry networks. In the following section, I will provide background on the changing landscape of work in the United States to demonstrate how economic and organizational shifts correspond with a sociocultural significance of networks and networking. Then, I will move to a discussion of social network theory, developing my critiques of this body of work and outlining how the various chapters of this dissertation address these limitations.

Work Transformations in the United States

The world of high-tech has come to be seen in popular culture and among academics as a microcosm representing the complex, changing realities of the world of work (Kunda 1992). The American economy shifted considerably beginning in the 1970s, with the decline of the country's industrial centers and the rise of "new" industries including service, information and technology.[14] The organization of work has shifted in the post-industrial or what has been called the new economy, moving away from hierarchical bureaucracies towards the rise of flexible firms (Powell 2001). Increased global competition, corporate downsizing, and market volatility – including major economic downturns such as the Great Recession of 2008 – and the rise of

[14] According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. manufacturing employment fell from nearly 20 million in 1979 to 13.7 million in 2007 (Pierce and Schott 2012).

information technology, have created more precarious work and greater uncertainty for workers. These work transformations corresponded with a new political culture and belief system of neoliberalism, valuing independence and personal responsibility over public responsibility. Neoliberalism is a worldview that advocates the efficacy of the free market, individual responsibility over collective action, economic globalization, and minimal government intervention (Harvey 2005). Individuals in the neoliberal era face entrepreneurial pressures to be flexible and innovative, embrace change, and market themselves to survive the new economy (Blum 2015; Giddens 1998; Harvey 2005).

The logic of work organizations has shifted in the twenty-first century to coincide with these major work transformations. "New" organizations rely on decentralized leadership, project-based work, and the use of work teams and team evaluations (Williams 2013). One feature of new work organizations relevant to this dissertation is the rise of informal hiring practices, including the use of word-of-mouth and employee referrals to fill job openings (McDonald, Lin, and Ao 2009). Companies commonly offer incentives or bonuses to employees who help recruit talent, and as such people often receive unsolicited yet valuable information about career opportunities without engaging in a formal search (Lin 2000; McDonald et al. 2009). Knowledge-based industries like high-tech are thought to be at the forefront of the changing organizational landscape in the new economy, as companies compete in fast-paced, global markets and must continually manage change (Colclough and Tolbert 2001; Turco 2016). Demands for innovation require a continually advancing knowledge base, and so high-tech companies must be dynamic and flexible in terms of production, organizational structure, and acquisition of talent (Colclough and Tolbert 2001).

Under this new logic, work organizations have shifted economic risks and responsibilities onto employees, who must "prove" their value to guarantee continued employment. The high-trust model of employment, with workers dedicating a lifetime of loyal service to a single employer in return for job security, promotions, and benefits, has become increasingly anachronistic (DiMaggio 2001; Kalleberg 2011). Instead, short-term labor became a conscious firm strategy, and compensation increasingly revolved around stock options, especially in high-tech (Hyde 2003). Labor contracts tend to be temporary and contingent, and workers are expected to job hop or frequently switch employers in search of better opportunities – leading to what have been called "boundaryless" careers (Hall 2004; Shih 2006; Williams 2013). Even professional, white-collar workers face job insecurity in the era of "flexible" labor, and white-collar unemployment has steadily increased since the 1980s due to factors such as the availability of cheap labor abroad and the financial pressures of quarterly reporting (Lane 2011). Neoliberal discourse frames precarious employment as a choice rather than a constraint, and workers similarly idealize new forms of employment as means to achieve personal empowerment and freedom (Sharone 2007, 2013). Employed and unemployed workers both view themselves as free agents, constantly needing to develop their skillset and market themselves to potential employers (Barley and Kunda 2004; du Gay 1991; Vallas and Cummins 2015). This entrepreneurial discourse masks structural obstacles and tough labor conditions facing workers today, but Americans maintain the belief that their precarious employment can be solved through their individual efforts and the long-term promise of the U.S. economy (Lane 2011; Sharone 2013). Even unemployed white-collar workers who are experts in their field resist the idea that they are victims of neoliberal capitalism, instead believing the "losers" of the new economy to be those people who fail to adapt their job seeking approach (Barley and Kunda 2004; Lane 2011).

By the end of the twentieth century, the absence of secure, long-term employment has become naturalized in the new economy, and young people today do not expect lifelong employment at a single company (Lane 2011). While some theorists describe these workplace shifts as positive for workers in terms of liberating them from traditional modes of labor control (e.g. Powell 2001), only individuals with certain resources can navigate the demands of the demands of the new economy. The flexibility regime has exacerbated class and income inequalities, concentrating power and earnings amongst a handful of privileged people (Harrison 1994; Harvey 1989). Rising economic precarity most deeply impacts those workers in already-vulnerable work situations, including low-skilled workers, women of color, and single mothers, for whom inflexible jobs and unstable schedules are not empowering, but rather represent volatile situations (Kalleberg 2011; McCall 2001; Sennett 1998; Williams 2006). These groups of workers do not have access to the social and cultural capital needed to navigate the volatile landscape of the new economy (Rivera 2015; Royster 2003). Even amongst white-collar or professional workers in the contemporary US, there remains differential access to social capital and networks along the lines of gender, race, and class. Organizations in the new economy have adopted diversity management programs such as networking and mentoring groups aimed at improving the status of minority workers, but these programs tend to be primarily focused on firms' external legitimacy needs rather than the concerns of minority employees (Collins 1997; Dobbin 2009; Edelman, Fuller, and Mara-Drita 2001; Kalev 2014). In the next section, I discuss the role of networks in the new economy and discuss how they can serve as mechanisms of labor market inequality.

Networks, Networking, and the New Economy

In the new economy, networking is the most commonly and enthusiastically endorsed method for individuals to locate career opportunities (Lane 2011). Networks have long been understood as key career resources, a form of social capital helping workers to achieve goals, acquire information, move up the ladder, gain skills, and acquire legitimacy (Burt 2000; Coleman 1988). Since the 1980s, *networking* has become common business parlance for building and leveraging professional connections, solidified in the twenty-first century with the rise of social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn (Lane 2011). In the high-tech industry, with workers on average switching employers every two years (Peterson 2017), networking often plays a crucial role in determining individual success or failure in a precarious labor market, with most sources finding that between 80 and 95 percent of jobs are found through networking (Adler 2016; Bolles 2003; Fernandez, Castilla, and Moore 2000; Granovetter 1995 [1974]; Lane 2011).

More so, networking is celebrated by career professionals and academics as an individual strategy to overcome gender labor market inequalities. The role of networking in the advancement of women has a complicated history, with origins in consciousness-raising groups of the second wave feminist movement (Reger 2004), but some now arguing that networking has become a sweeping solution for organizations to claim to help women while renouncing responsibility for their inclusion.[15] Women in the male-dominated high-tech industry are frequently encouraged to network to overcome structural barriers, including the traditional, "talk to your friends and family" approach, as well as more formal, organized networking intended to

[15] Much contemporary public debate has centered on tech executive Sheryl Sandberg's advice to create "Lean In" circles, or peer groups of women to offer encouragement and ideas (see http://leanincircles.org/). For examples of feminist critiques of Sandberg, see McRobbie (2015) and Rottenberg (2017).

expand one's network through the deliberate accumulation of new contacts. Engaging in such practices is believed to improve women's positions in the labor market by increasing their social capital – or the resources (information, opportunities, and status) embedded in their social network relationships (Lin 2001).

However, networks also have a "dark side," serving as mechanisms of inequality, contributing to patterns of labor market exclusion and disadvantage by gender, class, race, and ethnicity (Gargiulo and Benassi 1999). Social network theory examining sex differences in networks, for example, shows how men and women's different network structures and outcomes limit women's access to resources and serve as barriers to mobility in a variety of industries and work settings (e.g. Brass 1985; Burt 1998; Forret and Dougherty 2004; Ibarra 1997). These studies acknowledge that networks help maintain gender inequality, but there are several limitations with the sex differences approach.

In this dissertation, I develop and address a feminist critique of social network theory. Drawing on key theories of gender and work, including gendered organizations theory (Acker 1990, 1992; Britton and Logan 2008), status construction theory (Ridgeway 2011), and doing gender (West and Zimmerman 1987), plus critical feminist theories of technology (e.g. Cockburn 1983, 1985; Wacjman 1991; Faulkner 2001), allows for a more complete understanding of the mechanisms of inequality reproduced through networks in the new economy. In the remainder of this chapter, I outline the limitations of social network studies examining sex differences, and then move to a discussion of how the articles in this dissertation work to overcome such limitations. First, I describe how network studies on sex differences overwhelmingly take a structuralist perspective, emphasizing how workers' structural location in organizations determines network composition and quality more so than workers' identities (McGuire 2000).

When gender features in social network research, it is almost always seen to influence networks indirectly. Actors, relationships, and organizations are all represented as abstract, gender-neutral entities. Network theory fails to consider how gender as a structure shapes formal and informal relationships in work organizations through norms, practices, and structures (Ely and Padavic 2007). This emphasis on network structures means that agentic perspectives are "rare" (Benschop 2009: 219), and often missing are the networking activities engaged in by individual actors (Ibarra, Kilduff, and Tsai 2005; McGuire 2000; van den Brink and Benschop 2013). Interactions constitute networks, yet we know little about how networks are socially accomplished by individuals, or the interactive processes people engage in as they build, maintain, or sever their network ties (Benschop 2009; Manning 2010; Ibarra, Kilduff, and Tsai 2005).

Limitations of Sex Differences Networks Research

In this dissertation, I define gender in line with feminist theory, as socially constructed, context-specific, embedded within social relations, and best understood within an interactive and intersecting framework (Ferree and Martin 1995; Lorber 2001; Martin 2004). Benschop (2009) writes that there is a "dearth" of critical feminist theories in the field of social networks (220). This is not to say, however, that network research does not engage with gender; in fact, network scholars have shown gender to affect individual networks in a variety of ways that disadvantage women (e.g. Berger, Benschop, and van den Brink 2015; Brass 1985; Ibarra 1992, 1993, 1997; McGuire 2002; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). For example, women are less likely than men to have high-status network members and to have diverse networks (Brass 1985; Campbell 1988; Ibarra 1992), and having a network of powerful and diverse members is crucial

in obtaining resources and power in organizations. Additionally, women are less likely than men to be centrally located in their work-based networks, limiting their access to influential organizational actors (Ibarra 1992).

Gender is almost always featured in network research in discussions of homophily in personal networks. *Homophily* is the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar in identity or group affiliations (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954; McPherson et al. 2001). Homophily eases communication and fosters trust and reciprocity; however, when women tend to be minorities in organizations and corporate inner circles, homophily contributes to an unequal distribution of valued resources (Ibarra 1992; Kanter 1977). Whereas men can easily tap into strategic network members, powerful coalitions, and high-status mentors and sponsors, token women and minorities in male-dominated workplaces must wield extra effort and navigate multiple social circles to access similar network benefits (Ibarra 1995; McGuire and Reskin 1993). As such, women tend to benefit from diverse network structures as their gender-homophilous networks tend to be negatively associated with organizational power and status and provide lesser quality information and resources (Brass 1985; Ibarra 1992, 1993; Lutter 2015; Petersen and Saporta 2004). Burt (1998) argues that women can be successful if they "borrow" social capital from a powerful (male) mentor, but most women have difficulty finding sponsors as compared to men, or receive less support from sponsors (Groysberg 2010). Homophily thus contributes to women's low-status networks, poor returns on mentorship, and consequent gender- and status-biased information creates cumulative career disadvantages for women (Lutter 2015).

While these studies examine sex differences in networks, network theory tends to take a structuralist perspective – emphasizing how workers' formal structural locations determine the

composition of their networks more so than individual identity characteristics (Campbell, Marsden, and Hurlbert 1986; Ibarra 1993; Marsden 1988). In other words, network theory posits that gender or racial differences in the status of employees' network members should be due to gender and racial differences in structural factors such as organizational resources, hierarchical positions, and the demographic composition of the work environment (McGuire 2000). The effects of gender on network quality and resources then are viewed as indirect, operating through structural arrangements that either enhance or diminish individuals' access to resources.

Along this line of thinking, if men and women occupy the same jobs and organizational positions, then their networks should be similar. Yet gendered organizations theory reveals how gender is an integral part of organizational structure, with norms, values, and positions constructed to privilege men and disadvantage women (Acker 1990, 1992; Kanter 1977). Women tend to be segregated into positions and departments with lower organizational rank and authority, trapped in networks that are less central to work organizations and provide less work-related help than men's networks (McGuire 2002). By considering gender as a variable (Alvesson and Billing 2009), network theory fails to address how organizations shape sex differences in networks (Ely and Padavic 2007). This line of research overlooks structural power inequalities, gender norms and values in organizations, and the complex interplay between organizational features and individual-level processes (Acker 1992). The gendered processes of inclusion and exclusion become oversimplified, as organizations are assumed to be gender neutral, concealing the gendered division of labor and the reproduction of inequalities such as occupational segregation and the wage gap (McGuire 2002; van den Brink and Benschop 2013). Applying a gendered organizations approach illustrates why women continue to be excluded from the most powerful workplace networks (McDonald 2011). Women's relative marginality in

work organizations may contribute to them accruing fewer interactional resources and less social capital than their male colleagues (McIlwee and Robinson 1992). These social-relational inequalities accumulate over careers, contributing to gendered variations in financial benefits, worker satisfaction, and patterns of inclusion.

Most research comparing sex differences in networks also tends to assume gender-neutral, rational actors, often implying disembodied ideal workers (Acker 1992). Benschop (2009) describes network theory's abstract actors as "structural dopes controlled by network structures," rather than agentic men and women engaging in gendered behaviors as part of organizational life (223). Gender influences behaviors in organizational settings – including strategies to obtain resources and build relationships (McGuire 2002). Hegemonic gender beliefs, especially the presumption of men's greater status and competence, continue to bias work interactions, relationships, and expectations across industries and contexts; these status beliefs hold especially true in traditionally male-dominated fields such as science and technology, where women's contributions to innovation are often hidden or undervalued (Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Ridgeway 2011).

Status characteristics theory suggests that workers evaluate each other based on the resources their gender is assumed to have, assessing risks and benefits of relationships based on stereotypical notions that draw gendered boundaries (Ridgeway 2011). McGuire (2002) finds that even when black and white women had high-status jobs, they received less work-related help from their network members than white men in equivalent organizational positions. Network members were less likely to invest in their relationships with women than white men because of cultural status beliefs surrounding gender and competence. Status characteristics

theory thus reveals how gender can have a *direct* effect on network benefits, and how women's networks can be less beneficial than men's even when they hold the same structural positions.

The most frequent criticism of social network research and its "structuralist legacy" centers on its failure to take human agency into account (Ibarra et al. 2005; Kilduff and Brass 2010; Kilduff and Tsai 2003). Missing is a focus on how actors behave in networks, or the *networking* activities that are consequential in reproducing organizational outcomes (van den Brink and Benschop 2013). Some organizational behavior studies analyze networking as an important career management strategy, with networking linked to positive career outcomes like increased job opportunities, promotions, and social support (Forret and Dougherty 2001, 2004; Tonge 2008). Yet networks are socially accomplished and dynamic, with individuals engaging in concrete, social practices to build, maintain, leverage, and exit social networks in the workplace (Benschop 2009). What remains under-researched are the production of meanings and subjectivities in networks, and identity only features occasionally in social network theory (Ibarra 1997; Ibarra et al. 2005; Shaw 2006).

Recent research by Yvonne Benschop and Marieke van den Brink proposes a "practice-based approach" that emphasizes the "process-relational core" of networking (van den Brink and Benschop 2013: 4; see also Benschop 2009). A focus on networking practices places emphasis on organizational actors and the dynamic, micro-level activities they engage in at work for personal, career, or organizational benefits. They integrate a practice approach to networks with a feminist perspective of gender as an ongoing, socially accomplished practice (Lorber 2001; West and Zimmerman 1987, among many others). Rather than viewing gender as a variable, they argue that network theory must adopt a feminist understanding of gender as a complex social practice embedded in organizational routines and norms in ways that produce or counter power

inequalities (Acker 1990). Gender theories place identity at their core, with identities being fluid, situationally produced through language, and embedded in power relations (Haraway 1991). Under a critical feminist perspective, meanings of masculinity and femininity are not fixed, but instead situational and fluid. Gender and networking are intertwining social practices as individuals "do gender" as they engage in professional networking behaviors (West and Zimmerman 1987). Networking and gendering are both relational and interactional activities, dynamic social accomplishments, and "doings" in organizations (Benschop 2009). And networking behaviors and relationships are influenced by hegemonic definitions of masculinities and femininities as gender frames interactions (Ridgeway 2011). This approach reveals the role of power in everyday social practices, and how networking reproduces or counters gender inequalities, as individuals come to know or challenge the ways in which their identities are constructed in networks.

As I have described in this section, ample evidence reveals that networks produce inequalities and sex differences in network structures and outcomes. However, social network studies fail to go beyond the identification of sex differences to critically question the (re)production of gender inequalities in networks and organizations. To begin to explore the relationship between networks, networking, and inequality, the conceptualizations of gender found in feminist theory are necessary. In this dissertation, I use a critical feminist lens and integrate key gendered theories of workplace inequalities with network studies. I argue that such an integration allows for an understanding of the mechanisms reproducing configurations of inequality in the new economy, with a focus on the high-tech industry. While high-tech is by no means the only sector in which employees leverage their professional networks to locate opportunities, given the gendered organization of the industry, I believe it represents an ideal

context in which to empirically examine gender and networks. In the remainder of this chapter, I will outline the dissertation, introducing the three empirical articles and how they incorporate gender theories to overcome many of the limitations of network studies described above.

Dissertation Outline

In the next chapter, Chapter 2, I offer a detailed description of my methods and methodology. I introduce the high-tech organization under study, Data, Inc., including the case selection, the ethics and process of fieldwork, and reflect on my location as a researcher. I explain the qualitative data collection approaches used for this study, including semi-structured interviews, observations, and participant observation.

The three empirical chapters that follow (Chapters 3-5) are structured in journal article format. Each of the three articles empirically approach networking from a different perspective, to address unique research questions. The articles are intended to stand alone, but taken together they contribute to a broader, interrelated story of the relationship between gender, networks, and workplace inequalities.

The first article (Chapter 3), titled, "Doing Gender, Doing Networks: Exploring Individual Networking Strategies in High-Tech," explores the simultaneous "doing" of gender and networks, or the agentic component of networking by incorporating a feminist conceptualization of gender as a social practice (Benschop 2009; Martin 2001; West and Zimmerman 1987). I draw upon qualitative interviews with high-tech workers at Data, Inc. plus observations in the firm to explore how gender inequalities in networks are reproduced at the individual level. As described above, network research tends to ignore agency. We know little about how networks are accomplished by individuals, and the processes people engage in as they

network. This article explores networking as a social practice embedded within a gendered organization – with individual practices enabled and constrained by both structural and individual mechanisms. I find that individual networking reproduces and constitutes power in everyday organizational life, with networking centered on gender-typed activities that reproduce homophilous networks.

The second empirical article (Chapter 4) is titled, "Going Public, Gender, and the Hybrid Logic of High-Tech: Organizational Restructuring in the New Economy." This article integrates theories of gendered organizations and organizational restructuring to investigate the implications of Data, Inc.'s transition from a startup to a public firm. Issuing an initial public offering (IPO) – more generally known as going public – is a common restructuring process for technology organizations. I argue that going public creates a hybrid organizational logic that leaves women at an increased disadvantage while consolidating men's power and status in the organization. This paper seeks to not only overcome the tendency in social network research to ignore how gender is embedded in work organizations, but also to update gendered organizations theory to account for transformations associated with the new economy. Most theories of gendered organizations assume a traditional, bureaucratic organizational model (e.g. Acker 1990; Kanter 1977); however, organizations in knowledge-based industries like technology represent what have been described as new or flexible organizations representative of the "Information Age" (Stanworth 2000). To better understand mechanisms of gender inequality in the contemporary workplace, feminist scholars have argued that gendered organizations theory needs "updating" (Williams 2013). This article attempts such an "updating" by applying gendered organizations theory to a contemporary high-tech company operating amid major transformations including globalization and the rise of information technologies.

The third and final empirical article (Chapter 5) draws upon my participant observation at high-tech networking events and conferences. Titled, ""'Eat, Pray, Love' Bullshit": Women's Empowerment through Wellness at an Elite Professional Conference," this article applies a critical feminist lens to one women's conference to illustrate how the collective space paradoxically individualizes women's career experiences. A dominant narrative has emerged among career professionals and academics alike that networks and networking empower individuals, and especially women, but this perspective overlooks how networks and practices of networking may produce unanticipated consequences for (re)producing inequalities. Networking is widely viewed as an effective (and necessary) means to improve women's status in the workplace, and conferences ostensibly provide spaces for women to build their social capital and counteract their exclusion from powerful "old boys' clubs." Networking events, mentoring groups, and conferences are part of the proliferation of diversity management programs in response to research pointing to the isolation of women and minorities as a source of workplace inequality (Kalev et al. 2006). Instead of evaluating the effectiveness of these programs, I critically analyze one event's messages surrounding women's empowerment with the goal of understanding how the broader culture and structure of networking in the high-tech industry perpetuates subtle yet powerful mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

In the conclusion chapter (Chapter 6), I suggest that studying networks and practices of networking is critical to understanding mechanisms of gender inequality in the post-industrial labor market, in times of increasing economic precarity and technological ubiquity. By building on theories of gendered organizations, status construction theory, and doing gender, this dissertation advances a more sociologically-oriented – and feminist – understanding of networks. I also build on my empirical findings to critique the corporate diversity efforts in high-tech for

reproducing structural inequalities in the industry. Feminist politics are playing an important role in improving women's status and inclusion in high-tech and STEM more broadly, but feminist principles can be appropriated in contradictory and troublesome ways. Women high-tech workers themselves raise important issues with the programs being offered to them, yet their concerns remain whispers in confidential interview settings or across bathroom stalls due to expectations of being misunderstood or fears of backlash. Future research should continue to amplify women's and other marginalized voices to support organizations in designing inclusive diversity efforts.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Networks of Exclusion in a Gendered Organization in the High-Tech Industry is a qualitative case study of a high-technology firm in the Greater Boston area of Massachusetts, which I have given the pseudonym, Data, Inc. To investigate gender and networks in the new economy, I employ multiple methods including semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and (non-participant) observation. The various qualitative data in this study include:

- 50 interviews with Data, Inc. workers
- 10 interviews with local technology industry experts
- 9 months of observations in Data, Inc. (over 100 hours)
- Participant observation at 18 networking events
- Organizational documents from Data, Inc.'s website, business journals, and press coverage of the company

A qualitative approach to network research uncovers individual perceptions and assessments of the relationships and networks of which they are a part. While quantitative network methods have gained prominence and widespread acceptance in the social sciences, such approaches often focus on proximate causes without asking for underlying meanings (Fuhse and Mützel 2011). This project's qualitative network approach is better suited to understand subjective meanings, such as individual motivations to pursue or drop relationships, as well as the expectations, values, and meanings attached to relationships. Qualitative network research also explicates the problem of agency, and allows the researcher to link network structure to individual agency (Hollstein 2011). This approach allows me to understand dually how meaning arises in a relational context and how relationships simultaneously create meaning. In-depth interviews reveal how men and women believe networks to work (e.g. networking strategies, practices, behaviors) as well as how networks matter (implications for their career success and mobility).

Observations provide key insights regarding how networking occurs in real time, including the practices, behaviors, and interactions of organizational members. Taken together, these methods illuminate gendered significance that individuals attach to relationships, interactions, and networks in the workplace.

In this chapter, I describe the research design of my study, the research setting and sample, the details of data collection and analysis, and the various strengths, limitations, and challenges of this approach. My approach to studying gender in this project is informed by feminist theory. As a feminist researcher, I view gender as but one dimension shaping the experiences of individuals embedded in organizational structures and in society more broadly. Despite the relatively homogenous nature of my research setting and the small sample size, I remained thoughtful of intersectionality throughout the development, implementation, analysis, and writing phases of my project. My research approach is feminist also in that it remains attentive to power and inequality, placing the voices of participants at the center of research. The goal of my project is to especially amplify the voices of women and other marginalized workers in the high-tech industry, with an eye towards social transformation. My research contributes not only to scholarly research on gender and work, but also to feminist activists seeking to improve the status and inclusion of underrepresented workers in STEM fields like technology.

Case Selection and Access

Data, Inc. is a publicly traded software company headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts that specializes in data processing, hosting, and related technology services. At the time of my study, the organization employed approximately 600 people, with multiple satellite offices across the country and in international locations. Data, Inc. has won several local and national awards

based on employee satisfaction. The firm occasionally sponsors events and conferences with industry organizations and professional groups, to foster its reputation in the local tech community. The technology trade press typically speaks positively of the firm, and it has become known as a Boston success story. As such, I had heard of Data, Inc. prior to beginning this study, but I did not know anyone who worked there. I became personally connected to an executive in the organization through the assistance of my personal ties in the local tech industry. Having lived and studied in the Boston area for nearly my entire life, I know many people working in the technology industry, including friends (and a partner) in junior- and mid-level positions, and some parents of friends who hold executive positions at local companies. When designing this project, I conducted snowball sampling in my personal network, connecting with everyone I personally know who worked in the local tech industry. I invited over a dozen of my personal connections to coffee so I could tell them about my research and to see if they could connect me with anyone who might be interested in allowing me to pursue the project in their company. I also am involved in the alumni association of the private high school I attended in the area, and therefore had access to lists of contact information for school alumni and parents. I reached out to several people on these lists who worked in technology companies, often at senior levels. Given the small, close-knit community of my high school, most people responded positively to my requests to meet. During this stage of the project, I conducted preliminary interviews with 10 industry executives and experts from Greater Boston, asking them about their experiences networking and how they viewed the role of networks not only in their careers, but in the local tech industry more broadly. These interviews were essential in shaping my research questions and also providing me with the "lay of the land" of the local industry, as interviewees often had long personal histories working in Boston tech.

I asked each of these initial interviewees to provide referrals for other contacts – specifically hoping to meet people interested in gender issues in technology. Through a referral of one of these preliminary interviewees, I was introduced to a woman executive at Data, Inc. (whom I call Susan) who agreed to allow me to conduct research in their organization. I met Susan in mid-February 2016, after our first meeting had been cancelled on my Google calendar invitation with no explanation. I had not communicated with Susan directly prior to our meeting, only her executive assistant, and as such I was a bit skeptical coming into the meeting. I had looked up Susan online to have a sense of her background, and learned that she was highly active in a networking group for women executives in Boston. She had been with Data, Inc. since its startup days, and had won several industry awards for her leadership. I introduced myself to Susan as a student researcher interested in how technology workers network in their companies and in the industry, and if and how gender plays a role in their networks. During this initial meeting, I gave her a 1-page handout describing my project and my questions. I told her I was looking for a company where I would be able to interview workers from different levels and departments. Susan proceeded to go through the questions on my handout one by one, offering her thoughts and experiences. She was an open book, telling me about a negative experience with a man on the board of Data, Inc., her aspirations and struggles with designing the woman's program at Data, Inc., and her general thoughts on how difficult it is to be a woman working in a male-dominated industry. She spoke for about 45 minutes straight, jumping around to different ideas, only pausing when an employee knocked on the door to ask her a question. I jotted down as much as I could in my notebook, not having expected Susan to go through my interview guide and essentially interview herself.

When she finished, Susan began to ask me questions. She asked how many people I would like to interview, and for how long. She was interested in whether the research would be published and what the title would be. I told her my intentions with the research, and that I would share my findings with her and company leadership. She thought the study could be presented at one of the women's program events, and could generate important conversations in the firm. I then brought up the importance of confidentiality. I told her that I would anonymize both interviewee names as well as the company name in any publications, to protect participants as well as the organization's reputation. Susan honestly seemed slightly disappointed about the conditions of anonymity – she seemed to think that the project would generate good press for the organization, but she agreed. She then mentioned that she would get me a small office to conduct interviews on site. She told me that she would have to ask the CEO, but she felt confident that he would be on board and she would arrange for me to meet with him (this meeting never happened). I asked her if she would like to see my Institutional Review Board proposal and the informed consent form for project participants, but she waved me off and said, "I really don't care." We agreed to touch base later in the week after she has had a chance to speak with the CEO and arrange for the room. By the end of the week, I received an email confirmation from Susan that the project had been approved, and she began sending out emails to recruit participants (for more on recruitment procedures, see below).

Obtaining permission to conduct my research at Data, Inc. from Susan was key to the project's success, as she cleared the project with other institutional gatekeepers (most notably the company CEO). Susan also took on the role of my project's sponsor because, as I will describe further below, she sent the initial invitations to Data, Inc. employees to participate in the study. I initially appreciated her sponsorship because it signaled my legitimacy to other employees, and

those who worked directly for Susan were quick to respond to interview requests. However, as the study progressed, I realized that being affiliated with Susan shaped both who was agreeing to be studied and how they answered certain questions. Susan has a reputation in the firm for being a vocal advocate for women, and so it was initially assumed that I only wanted to speak to women. This also meant that respondents (rightly) guessed my feminist leanings, and would be cautious to speak truthfully on topics related to gender in the company, such as the women's program (co-founded by Susan). Even more broadly, though, being affiliated with a company executive meant that some respondents believed I would be directly reporting to her and were therefore reluctant to speak openly. Some individuals were in fact surprised when I described the anonymous nature of the project. As I moved forward with the project, I developed certain strategies to limit my association with Susan (described below), and by the end of my fieldwork, very few respondents knew how I came to study Data, Inc.

Research Setting: Data, Inc.

In Chapter 4, I provide a detailed organizational history of Data, Inc., particularly its transition from a startup to a public firm. However, here I would like to briefly describe the organization to paint a picture of the research setting of this project. I will outline the organizational structure, its culture and physical office space, and describe its women's program. This is a study of gender, networks, and networking rather than an organizational ethnography per se, so I describe Data, Inc. to set the stage for the context in which respondents were operating. While I spent many hours in the company conducting interviews of employees and observations, my access was also limited in many ways, especially to formal organizational documents and procedures.

Organizational Structure

Unlike high-tech companies seeking to "flatten" its organizational hierarchy and limit boundaries between workers and executives, Data, Inc. has a more traditional hierarchy characteristic of a bureaucratic organization. A Board of Directors serves as the main governing body of the company, with the CEO and senior management team of chief executives and vice presidents running daily operations and profitability. The CEO had recently replaced the company's founder when I began my project, and with him had brought in several leadership changes. The leadership of Data, Inc. is predominantly made up of white men and the lack of diversity in leadership was felt to be a problem by the women in the organization.

Each vice president oversees their respective department: Product & Engineering, Operations, Product Management, Information Technology, Sales, Marketing, Legal, Human Resources, Business Analytics, Business Development, Finance, and Customer Care. Of these departments, Product & Engineering is the largest and most prominent in the firm, responsible for developing products and therefore most directly tied to the company's profitability. Product & Engineering, together with the Operations, Product Management, and Information Technology departments, represent the technical core of the organization, with other departments filling more support functions. Each department in Data, Inc. operates via a team system, with teams being comprised strictly of members within a single department (there are no interdisciplinary teams). Employees almost always work with and interact exclusively within their team, and few respondents report knowing coworkers from other departments. Despite the rise of project-based work in the new economy (Barley and Kunda 2004), only the teams in engineering worked on projects, in what they would call "sprints" – two-week, short-term but high-velocity projects that

are commonly adopted in software development companies using what is called an "agile" work flow process (Rigby, Sutherland, and Takeuchi 2016). Despite my repeated requests, I did not see a formal organizational chart. However, during my interview with the Vice President of Human Resources, he explained the organizational chart in detail, even drawing visuals on a white board for me. This conversation provided a general overview and corresponded with my own observations of the company structure.

Data, Inc. Culture

The fixed organizational structure seems to juxtapose the company's culture and physical office space – both of which presented as playful and open. The culture of Data, Inc. is casual, with workers often wearing jeans and wrinkled t-shirts. Data, Inc., like most tech companies, adopts "cool" features such as no dress code and unlimited vacation time to appease IT workers who tend to have fierce attachment to the values of autonomy, flexibility, and innovation (Hodgson 2004; Turco 2016). With the Product & Engineering department dominating in terms of numbers and status (see also Chapter 4), the organization rests on a culture of engineering – with technical skills like coding valued over "soft," people skills (Cooper 2000; Kunda 1992; McIlwee and Robinson 1992). When asked to describe the company culture, workers also tended to emphasize the dynamic, fast-paced nature of the work, with several telling me: "The only constant is change." Mentions of change also allude to the company's frequent restructuring. Data, Inc. successfully went public a few years ago, entering a new phase of its organizational life cycle. Following its IPO, new leadership replaced individuals in senior management roles and laid off entire departments. This frequent restructuring did not end after the company transitioned, and I observed two major rounds of layoffs through the course of this project. As

such, there was an underlying sense of unease within the organization that other scholars have described as being common in volatile industries such as technology (Barley and Kunda 2004).

Another change following the IPO was the company's move into a sleek, modern office, with amenities such as free beer and snacks and a game room. The company had only fully moved into the new office shortly before my study began, and therefore the employees were still getting accustomed to the space. The office design was quite impressive, with exposed metal beams and pipework along the ceilings and white, leather furniture in the lobbies and common rooms. The lobby looked like a five-star hotel, with hardwood floors, ornate glass chandeliers, and TV monitors flashing DATA, INC. Several times during this project, the receptionist gave tours of the space to visitors – including employees from other tech companies looking for inspiration as they re-designed their own offices. Data, Inc.'s office is one of its selling points to prospective employees, and they often hosted industry networking events to show off the space.

My "office" is a neglected meeting room off the lobby. It is tiny, approximately a 4'x8' room, with just enough space for two chairs and a small table. The walls of the room are painted with white board paint, and there are markers and erasers on the table. All of the doors at Data, Inc. are made of brushed glass – allowing for some privacy while still embodying the "open" office design. My office door is also brushed glass, and slides shut. I am concerned about the glass doors and protecting interviewees' confidentiality; outsiders passing by the room can see the silhouettes of people inside. However, the room is somewhat hidden, and most respondents have a hard time finding it – often telling me they never knew it existed prior to our interview. The glass doors also provide little soundproofing, and often the commotion in the adjacent lobby can be heard. Several interviewees would speak in hushed tones, aware that sound travels but also accustomed to the lack of privacy in the open office.

The work space of the office is located directly behind the main lobby. It is an open work space, but divided into three separate sections. The front section contains the non-technical departments, followed by the second section housing the Sales Department. Sales takes up a space about the same size as the section holding the other non-technical departments combined, and employees explain to me that separating Sales is necessary because their work is often noisier than other departments, with "Sales guys" on headsets, constantly making calls. Some Sales workers like to pace around the room while making their pitch, while others bounce a ball on the ground. The technical departments (Product & Engineering, Operations, and IT) are in a section in the rear of the building, separated by a wall, several meeting rooms, and the game room. The work spaces are all wide open; there are no cubicles, but rather groups of desks and workstations huddled together in pods. The pods are organized by team and department, and so employees sit only amongst their team members and rarely venture beyond their section. In fact, some non-technical employees admitted to me that they had never even seen the engineering work space, as their work never required them to go "back there." Even when I am given an initial tour of the office by the receptionist, I realize that she leaves out the engineering space, and I have to later ask to see it. With the open work space, computer screens are visible to everyone, and private phone calls are nonexistent. Employees work in near silence, and at times the only noise to be heard is the quiet humming of computers. Occasionally someone will shout out a question to a coworker, or stand and stretch. Some people wear headphones to drown out distractions, while others seem to have learned how to focus on their work within the open space. Every time I enter the work space I feel as though all eyes are on me, and I need to speak in hushed tones as if in a library. Only the senior-level executives have traditional, enclosed offices

located along the perimeter of the work space. Even these offices have sliding glass doors, most of which remain open throughout the day.

The cafeteria runs parallel to the work space, and is a hub of activity and socializing throughout the day. There are about twenty tables for employees to gather and share meals. Along one wall there is a modern, white kitchen with two refrigerators stocked with waters, sodas, and sports drinks, three different coffee machines, and beer on draft. The kitchen has a long countertop that is often filled with pastries leftover from a morning meeting. The company provides breakfast on Mondays and lunch on Fridays for employees – an incentive offered after the company started to move away from its unlimited "work from home" policy. There is also an endless supply of healthy snacks such as granola bars and veggie chips. Despite the free food, most employees of Data Inc. do step out during the day, and most buy their lunch from nearby cafés and restaurants. The cafeteria is also used as a break room, with some employees reading a book or scrolling through their IPads during the day. In addition to the cafeteria, there are other lounge-type rooms and mini-kitchens scattered in between the work spaces, with couches and refrigerators stocked with drinks.

In general, employees had mixed feelings about the new office space and how it shaped company culture. While most appreciated the perks such as free food, many employees described the modern décor as "cold," and found it strange that they remained somewhat isolated in their work spaces despite the intended openness of the office.

Women's Program

Before gaining entry into Data, Inc., I had heard from several people in my preliminary interviews that Data, Inc. could be a good potential site to study gender and networking because

of its internal career development series specifically for its women employees, called "Women at Data, Inc." The company advertises this program on its website and social media pages, garnering the company a reputation in the local high-tech industry as being a supportive place for women to work. Two women leaders at Data, Inc., Susan and Kathy[1] received backing from the company's CEO just over three years before I began this research to begin "Women at Data, Inc." (from here on, WADI). The cornerstone of the program was to be a women-only networking group that would meet every quarter for group discussions on site and during working hours. Susan explained to me in our first meeting that the founding goal of WADI is to advance women in technology leadership through two mechanisms: skill development and support (see also Chapter 3). Susan aims to create "safe place" for women to discuss their work experiences and then workshop ideas about how to best move forward. The inspiration for WADI came from one of Susan's personal experiences at Data, Inc., when she realized that male executives would form alliances to pass key decisions in meetings, often leaving women outnumbered. Susan decided to create a space for other women in the company to get together and build similar alliances. In addition to the quarterly, women-only networking meetings, WADI sponsored larger events open to men in the company, such as inviting an external speaker to give a talk on unconscious bias. I was especially interested in observing an established women's networking program in a high-tech organization, and I include a discussion of WADI in the findings section on women's networking in Chapter 3.

Despite my interests in WADI, no events or meetings were held during the nine months of my project. After hosting a couple of years of hosting well-attended events, WADI "fell off a cliff" for several reasons that I outline in both Chapters 3 and 4. As such, I had to rely on

[1] Pseudonyms

interview data with respondents who had attended WADI events or who had help organized the program. I also befriended an IT worker in the company who had filmed some WADI events for the company website, and he sent me his videos to watch.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this section, I will describe the various data collection techniques and methods employed in this project, including interviews, observations in the company, participant observation at industry networking events, and supplementary documents. I then will outline my data analysis procedure.

Interviews

I conducted interviews with 50 individuals employed at Data, Inc. from March to November 2016. The interviews capture individual accounts of networking and the role of networks in careers, feelings about networking, and their awareness of gender in networking. Interviews were semi-structured, covering topics of career trajectories, workplace relationships and teams, organizational culture, and networking experiences. Although I used an interview guide (see Appendix A: Interview Questionnaires), with questions slightly varying depending on workers' organizational level and department, I also improvised and deviated away from the guide. Certain questions regarding individual networking attitudes and behaviors were asked of every respondent in order to allow for comparisons. Respondents were asked about their relationships at work, previous networking experiences and outcomes, feelings about networking, and participation in various networking programs and events. I asked two explicit questions about gender in every interview. First, after respondents explained their networking strategies, I asked whether they believe men/women approach networking in similar or different

ways. Second, because of my particular research interests in women-only networking spaces, I asked women if they specifically seek out other women in the industry to network with, and if so, what they believe to be the value of networking with other women (e.g. intrinsic benefits, locating companies supportive of women, friendship, etc.). Gender emerged organically many other times during interviews as part of the conversation, without me specifically asking. In these instances, I could see how gender became salient to respondents in telling their networking stories. Finally, I asked all participants to fill out a basic demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B) to gather individual information on gender, class status, age, racial/ethnic identification, and level of education. In cases of phone or video interviews, I verbally asked interviewees about their demographic information. Two respondents declined to fill out the questionnaire, and several respondents left certain questions blank.

The majority of interviews were conducted in person and on site at company headquarters, in my small, private office for this purpose. In four instances, interviewees were working remotely so interviews were conducted via phone or video call – customary forms of correspondence in technology work settings. Despite my initial concerns that conducting interviews in the office may limit participants' willingness to be candid in their responses, most respondents openly discussed their work experiences, at times describing unpleasant relationships, expressing negative opinions of the company, or divulging company gossip. Interviews ranged from thirty minutes to two hours and, in all but one instance, I audiotaped the interviews with the respondent's permission. After transcribing two interviews myself, I hired a professional transcriber to complete the rest. The transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement. I later read over each transcript several times as part of the data analysis process. I also took

extensive field notes after each interview, reflecting on what was said or my observations of the respondent.

To recruit interview participants, Susan sent a description of my project and invitations to participate to approximately twenty employees via email in early March 2016. She focused her recruiting on employees whom she knew to have interesting stories, yet because she led a non-technical department in the company, this original list included primarily non-technical, women workers. From the initial contacts who agreed to an interview, I conducted snowball purposive sampling, asking respondents if they knew of coworkers (particularly from the core, technical departments) who might be interested in the study. Building upon preexisting relations through snowball sampling was appropriate for this study to remove barriers of entrance within the firm and to enlarge and diversify my sample (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Morrill 1995; see also Turco 2016). Respondents typically spoke to their colleagues in-person after our interviews to describe the project, asking permission to forward their contact information to me. Respondents then would follow-up with me via email providing email addresses for employees interested in the study. I reached out to these potential participants via email, introducing myself and the project, and then setting up a time for interviews. The receptionist also became a valued informant for me in this regard, as she seemed to know nearly everybody in the company due to her role and central physical location in the lobby. When I expressed my concerns to her about not connecting with engineers, she quickly sent out emails to engineers she knew to ask if they would be interested, and then scheduled the interviews for me based on their schedule availability. Finally, I secured additional interviews during my time observing and shadowing employees in the firm, which I will describe further below.

Observations

Observations of team meetings, social gatherings, and workplace interactions reveal the "doing" of networking practices in real-time (Berger et al. 2015). I spent over 100 hours in Data, Inc. over the course of nine months, including the hours I spent conducting interviews. Each week during these months varied in terms of the amount of time spent in the office. While in the early months of the study, I would spend 3-4 days in the office conducting interviews and observing, this cut down to 1 day a week as the project was winding down and interviews became less regular. On a typical day, I would have 1-2 interviews scheduled. I would arrive early for appointments, linger afterwards with respondents, and then spend a couple more hours in the firm, either asking to shadow an employee or "hanging out" in my office or the cafeteria (Woodward 2008). The office I was given was adjacent to the company cafeteria, allowing me opportunities to observe and participate in informal and formal interactions between workers. I occasionally met employees and secured additional interviews during more casual conversations in the cafeteria or during my observations in the office.

Once formal access was negotiated and my presence became somewhat regular, I was rather left to my own devices in the company. Even signing in to building security became somewhat trivial, as the guard came to know me and would wave me into the elevators without giving me a "Visitor" badge. The receptionist eventually stopped greeting me at her desk, and I would walk into my office or the cafeteria on my own accord. However, I still needed invitations and permission to attend meetings or other "closed" events, which I often negotiated with informants. Nearly all of my hours spent at Data, Inc. were during regular business hours. I presented myself in the firm as a student researcher. However, to many Data, Inc. workers, my identity and the exact nature of my project remained unclear. This was due not only to my own

vagueness, but also because the company size, physical layout, and frequent restructuring meant that many employees remained strangers to each other. I conducted overt observations as a spectator or bystander (Spradley 1980), taking field notes typically on a laptop or on my cell phone (commonly used devices amongst organizational members). This process allowed me to record as much as possible the socializing and informal networking that went on in the organization, and I took extensive field notes after each day spent in the company, recording my reactions to interviews, observations, and informal interactions.

At times, my role as an observer in the organization complicated my responsibility to maintain respondent confidentiality. Most respondents were willing to share their thoughts with me and then recommend to their colleagues that they also participate in my study – thus "outing" themselves as respondents. Throughout the course of my study, I established good ties with a number of employees, some of whom became valued informants or whom I asked to shadow. I also managed with the help of some of these informants to get invited to more social gatherings, such as lunch outings and drinks after work. In my role as an observer in the company, individuals whom I had previously interviewed would often say hello, introduce me to others, and mention that I had interviewed them for my project. However, in some cases I would run into participants who seemed uncomfortable with my presence in the company outside of the interview context. I was careful never to "out" anyone during my time in the company as a respondent. I would tend to act aloof, not suggesting that I had previously met anyone unless they indicated so themselves. While in some instances this approach may have made me appear rude, as if I did not remember meeting someone, I preferred this perception of rudeness to breaching confidentiality.

Over the last months of my fieldwork, I engaged in five day-long observations of a woman engineer whom I had become acquainted with over the course of the project. I spent these days watching her work and interact with team members, going to team meetings, sitting in on her meetings with her manager, having lunch, asking questions when possible, and sometimes socializing and goofing off. For example, the latest Pokémon game, "Pokémon Go," was highly popular in the company during my project, and I would sneak out with the engineering team on warm summer afternoons to play in the park. These more casual interactions allowed me to overhear interesting discussions and get a sense of how workers informally developed ties and friendships in the company.

Participant Observation at Networking Events

In addition to my research within Data, Inc., I conducted participant observation at 18 networking events in the Boston area over the course of a year (April 2016 – May 2017; see Appendix C for a complete list of networking events attended). I focused on technology industry events as well as events geared towards women working in STEM fields. These events ranged in format from all-day conferences to happy hours, speaker panels, and traditional "meet and greet" networking events. I attended these events to gain a sense of what networking looks and feels like in this industry, particularly for women. I often located these events through email list serves that I subscribed to or social media announcements. I also tried to attend the events hosted by organizations mentioned by employees at Data, Inc. and, in some cases, I attended networking events with respondents. This allowed me to specifically observe and participate in networking in ways similar to project participants, but also illuminated the discourses and messages of women-only networking spaces (see Chapter 5). At these events, I introduced myself to other

attendees as a student researcher studying gender and networking, which often lead to conversations with people about their experiences networking, the various events they have attended, and their feelings about networking. I would jot down notes during events if the chance arose. For example, during events with speakers, many attendees would write down notes in a notebook or on their phone, so it was not out of place for me to do the same. However, in most cases note taking was not possible, and so I would write down longer, ethnographic field notes immediately following the events.

Supplementary Documents

Despite initial promises from Susan and Human Resources personnel at Data, Inc. that I would be granted access to institutional documents such as hiring procedures and diversity policies, I was never provided with these documents, even after repeated requests. Being a publically traded company, however, Data, Inc. must file an annual report with the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) called a 10-K. These annual reports are legally required in order to keep shareholders and markets informed on a regular basis and in a transparent manner, and these annual forms are available to the public on the SEC website. A 10-K form includes the company's financial statements, a discussion of the company's business results and operations, information on the management team and their salaries, a summary of mergers and acquisitions, and brief employee information. I accessed and used Data, Inc.'s 10-K forms to learn background information on the organization, including leadership's perspective on the business results and future direction of the organization. Additionally, I examined the website of Data, Inc., its social media pages, and online press coverage and employee reviews of the company.

Reading these documents provided me with a fuller picture of the organizational context within which respondents were working and networking.

Data Analysis

I used NVivo to code interview transcripts and field notes, following an inductive, open coding techniques in my analysis (Charmaz 2006; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). Although I had previously identified some concepts that I would be looking for such as "networking strategy" and "network resource," many of the codes and concepts emerged from the data as I identified different patterns and ideas. Data analysis was an iterative process, going back and forth between data and literature. My analysis combined the findings from both the interviews and observations in the firm, developing themes through memo writing. Next I will describe my sample, providing demographic information of project participants.

Brief Profile of Participants

My sample is overwhelmingly white, young, and highly educated, representative of the overall company demographics and the broader high-tech industry (see Appendix D for a summary table of sample demographics). 32 of the 50 respondents were women. 40 of the respondents were white, 6 were Asian, 3 were mixed race, and 1 was black. 7 of the respondents reported being born outside of the United States. The average age of the respondents was 36 years old. The median educational level was a bachelor's degree. The average tenure in the company was approximately 28 months.

Through my purposive snowball sampling, I interviewed workers from a wide spectrum in terms of organizational position and department. I interviewed three executives and seven directors, engineers and secretaries, employees who had been with the company since its

founding and those who had been hired within the last month. Together their stories painted a picture of Data, Inc., including the teams, interactions, and relationships that shape the organization, its structure and culture. All respondents were employed by Data, Inc. at the time of interview, with 24 respondents working in technical roles in the firm.[2]

As mentioned above, I have anonymized the company and changed respondent names in order to protect their confidentiality. Anonymizing a company to manage reputational risk is common in organizational case studies and ethnographies (Turco 2016). In many cases throughout the dissertation, I have also changed certain details including organizational position, department, and tenure at the company to further protect respondents. I also believe that ensuring confidentiality is important for the validity of this study, as I wanted respondents to be open with me about their relationships and experiences, and to access the backstage of the firm. While my sample tends to be a privileged group in terms of education, occupational status, and race, they still stood to lose something from a breach of confidentiality – most notably, their jobs. As such, promising them confidentiality from their supervisors and peers was crucial in gaining their trust.

Reflexivity and Location of the Researcher

My identities as a white, highly educated woman in my twenties fit the demographic of Data, Inc., and as such allowed me to "blend in" with employees quite easily. Given the large size of the firm and the frequent turnover, I could sit in the cafeteria or walk around the office and "pass" as an employee. My identity and cultural capital facilitated rapport with most

[2] Several respondents were laid off, terminated, or quit the firm throughout the course of the project. I observed two major rounds of layoffs while conducting research – a common form of restructuring in volatile industries like technology (Barley and Kunda 2004). In a couple of instances, I became personally aware of respondents being laid off during my time in the company, while in other cases I discovered that respondents were no longer employed by Data, Inc. through their LinkedIn profiles.

interviewees, particularly among employees also in their twenties. I found that men over forty tended to be paternalistic, often offering me career advice or, in one instance, getting up to diagram technical concepts on a whiteboard. Women over forty, on the other hand, tended to be more guarded in speaking with me. While I in many ways could pass as an organizational "insider," my status as a woman in a masculine, male-dominated setting posed an unexpected challenge in the form of unwanted sexual advances. I quickly learned to adopt what I realized were (unspoken) self-protection measures taken by women employees, including dressing in loose-fitting pants and baggy sweaters. I also limited my observations outside of the office, always going with a larger group of people.

It was important to me that I did not align myself with any one group in the company – either workers or executives, engineers or non-technical workers, women or men. Despite my entry into Data, Inc. through Susan – who, as mentioned above, had a distinct reputation and following in the company – I was able over the course of the study to distance myself from her while still maintaining our relationship. One concern was my ability to tap into marginalized workers in the firm. While young white women were often eager to participate in the study, I had difficulty recruiting minority workers despite trying several different strategies. A part of this problem was due to the lack of diversity in Data, Inc. I would often go entire days in the firm without seeing a single employee of color. As typical with other high-tech companies, Data, Inc. employs more Asian-Americans and highly-skilled immigrant from Asia and Europe than Black, Latinx, or other minority workers (Evans and Rangarajan 2017; Simard et al. 2017). But a part of my difficulty reaching workers of color could be due to their disadvantaged positions in the firm. As perhaps the most marginal workers at Data, Inc., they may be especially unwilling to participate due to fears of repercussions or backlash. Towards the end of the project, one of the

few women of color who agreed to an interview asked me if I had talked to a lot of people of different races in the company. When I admitted that I have had trouble doing so, she said there are some people of color, but they tend to stick to themselves. She later attempted to put me in touch with some of her colleagues who identify as ethnoracial minorities, but none of them responded to her email. I also did not include the temporary and often "invisible" workers of the firm in this study, including the cleaning and maintenance staff. Despite their legitimate experiences as workers in Data, Inc., I chose to limit the focus of my study on professional individuals working within the technology industry.

Project Strengths and Limitations

This project, with a small, highly stratified population of employees, only begins to account for the ways in which race and ethnicity operate together with gender to shape the experiences of different groups of women (see Alfrey and Twine 2017 for an important discussion of intersectional inequalities in high-tech). Future research should consider different recruitment and sampling techniques, such as partnering with a minority-serving industry organization, to include a population of workers who are difficult to access. Another limitation of this project concerns the generalizability of the findings – which remains important in qualitative sociological research as a means to offer understandings beyond the limited purview of individual research. My organizational case study allows for an in-depth picture of a single technology firm. Data, Inc. is but one of hundreds of technology firms in the Boston area, and the experiences of its employees are thus shaped by features unique to the organization. Boston itself is a distinct regional technology economy, with its own distinct history, infrastructure, and culture. As such, the findings in this study are not empirically generalizable. However, the

strengths of this project derive from its analytic insights on the relationship between gender, networks, technology, and work organizations that contribute to theories of gender and work in ways that can be considered "analytically generalizable" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2011).

One study limitation centers on the use of interview data, which capture individual perceptions of the role of networking in their career histories. While in some instances I witnessed respondents at networking events, or watched them interact on teams in real-time, I most often relied on their reconstruction of past networking experiences and outcomes, and their perceptions of those experiences (Weiss 1994). Interviews necessarily include inaccuracies, as they represent their personal understandings of past experiences and relationships. Most people learn to interpret their experiences in terms of dominant language and meanings, and as such they learn to "translate" their experiences in deliverable, compact ways that often neglect certain details (Devault 1990). Yet a qualitative approach focuses on individual construction, finding meaning in the personal accounts and emphases (Charmaz 2008), and interviews have been used to collect rich narratives about gender practices in a variety of organizational contexts (e.g. Martin 2003; van den Brink and Benschop 2013). In instances where accuracy was important, such as regarding company information, I triangulated data by analyzing supplementary documents, media coverage, and business journals, systematically comparing and checking respondents' memories to these documents. Additionally, this project is limited in that it based on a single time period, and therefore cannot capture the potential long-term consequences of networking. While I spent several months in and out of the firm, I only interviewed each respondent one time.

A potential avenue for future research would be to conduct follow up interviews with respondents, particularly those who have left Data, Inc. or were suddenly laid off, to compare their initial, stated networking strategies with how they approached locating new employment.

My project's feminist, qualitative research approach allows for the collection and analysis of rich data on network dynamics. Much effort has already been made in sociology to collect quantitative data and perform appropriate statistical analyses. Yet a qualitative approach emphasizes that networks are not stable structures, but are continuously created, reproduced and modified in gendered social processes. Networks inherently hold meaning, emanating from individual actors' identities, motivations, attitudes, and values. Gendered cultural scripts and blueprints for social relationships shape social networks. Investigating the specific ways in which men and women workers understand and use their networks allows for an understanding of the complex, gendered experiences of workers in the new economy. My in-depth case study sheds light on how women and men build relationships and use professional networks, in ways that I hope will allow recommendations to work organizations to develop programs to effectively support their employees.

The next chapter begins the first of three empirical journal articles based on this project. In this first article (Chapter 3), I analyze individual networking strategies, revealing how employees "do gender" as they network in ways that place women at a continued disadvantage in Data, Inc.

Chapter 3: Doing Gender, Doing Networks: Exploring Individual Networking Strategies in High-Tech

Abstract

In the high-tech industry, networking is the most commonly and enthusiastically endorsed method for individuals to locate opportunities, and women especially are encouraged to network to overcome "old boys' clubs." Yet networking as a gendered process remains elusive for social network researchers. In this study, I explore the simultaneous doing of networks and gender, or the agentic component of networking, incorporating a feminist conceptualization of gender as a social practice. I draw upon qualitative interviews with high-tech workers from a single company, plus observations in the firm, to explore the reproduction of intersectional inequalities in individual networks. Women invest much time and energy into formal networking, but they find networking events to be inconvenient, uncomfortable or, at worst, exclusionary. While some women who fit the company culture find support in the company's official networking group for women, I find this women-only space to inadvertently exclude already-marginalized women workers, including women of color. Men strategically socialize, mobilizing masculinity to build professional ties through informal activities like sports, drinking, and video games. I find that these gendered networking strategies reproduce homophilous networks, create differential career opportunities, and further alienate marginalized groups of workers in the company. Examining gender and networking as intertwining social practices reveals the exclusionary potential of networking, as networking serves to reinforce the gender order in high-tech.

Introduction

Since the 1980s, networking has become common business parlance for building and leveraging professional connections, solidified in the twenty-first century with the rise of social networking sites such as LinkedIn. In the high-tech industry, networking is the most commonly and enthusiastically endorsed method for individuals to locate career opportunities, follow industry trends, and get ahead (Lane 2011). With high-tech workers on average switching employers every two years (Peterson 2017), networking often plays a crucial role in determining individual success or failure in a precarious labor market, with most sources finding that between 80 and 95 percent of jobs are found through networking (Adler 2016; Bolles 2003; Fernandez, Castilla, and Moore 2000; Granovetter 1995 [1974]; Lane 2011). More so, networking is celebrated as an individual strategy to overcome gender labor market inequalities, particularly for women working in male-dominated industries.

Women in high-tech are frequently encouraged to network to overcome structural barriers, gain social capital, and extend their reach into the upper echelons of organizations (Forret and Dougherty 2004). Networking includes the traditional, "talk to your friends and family" approach, as well as more organized networking intended to expand one's network through the deliberate accumulation of new contacts. Networking events, often sponsored by professional associations, allow people a setting to gather, exchange information, learn new skills, socialize, locate job opportunities, compete for top talent, and keep up with the rapid changes in the industry. Some professional associations specifically seek to advance women in high-tech, offering women-only networking events and groups (see for example Chapter 5). Despite the emphasis on networking as means to improve women's status in the workplace, networking as a gendered process remains "elusive" for social network researchers (Ibarra, Kilduff, and Tsai 2003). Scholarly interest tends to center on the structures of relationships, neglecting the role of gendered individuals as they network – building, maintaining, and leveraging professional relationships. In other words, the simultaneous *doing* of networks and gender, or the agentic component of networking, tends to be missing from networks research. In this paper, I approach networking and gendering as "intertwined" social practices (Benschop 2009: 223; see also Berger, Benschop, and van den Brink 2015). I explore interpersonal networking among high-tech workers as a gendered activity, asking: what are the networking strategies of high-tech workers, and how does gender, as well as race and class, shape their approaches?

Drawing upon interviews with 50 high-tech workers from one organization, plus 9 months of observations in the company, I find that individual networking reproduces

intersectional status hierarchies and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the high-tech organization. Women tend to engage in formal, organized networking to build ties outside of the company, often in the form of networking events. However, women find these events to be inconvenient, uncomfortable or, at worst, exclusionary. I pay specific attention to the company's official networking group for women employees, critically examining how this women-only space inadvertently excludes already-marginalized groups of women workers, including women of color. Women believe formal networking advances their careers, while simultaneously describing their approach as ineffective in terms of locating concrete opportunities such as a job. This creates a vicious cycle for women in high-tech, as they pressure themselves to network in ways that they largely find unsuccessful. Men, as cultural insiders and the majority group in the high-tech organization – find relationships and networking to come "naturally." They primarily rely on what I call *strategic socializing*, mobilizing their masculinities to build informal relationships both in and outside of the company. Strategic socializing centers on traditionally masculine, homosocial activities such as drinking alcohol, sports, and video games.

Exploring the subtle "doing" of gender and networking reveals how these processes together reinforce intersectional inequalities in the high-tech industry. I argue that focusing on individual networking attitudes, behaviors, and strategies reveals how gender, race, and sociocultural background become salient in interaction patterns. Most social networks research highlights the positive or instrumental benefits of social capital gained through networks, with social capital being the resources (information, opportunities, and status) embedded in social network relationships (Lin 2001). However, there is a "dark side" of social networks contributing to social exclusion in the high-tech industry (Gargiulo and Benassi 1999). The networking behaviors engaged by high-tech workers in this study create gendered networks, social capital,

and feelings of inclusion in the organization, in ways that further marginalize women – and particularly women of color. As such, I conclude that networking in many ways serves to (re)produce the gender order in this organization and the high-tech industry more broadly.

"Sex Differences" in Social Networks

Social networks are one gendered structure differentially affecting women and men's career experiences, resources, and outcomes in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), with women's exclusion from powerful, male-dominated networks contributing to what has been called a "chilly climate" (Britton 2017; Hall and Sandler 1982; Valian 1998; Xie and Shauman 2003). Professional women in science and technology recognize social networks as critical to their success, but cite their exclusion from high-status networks and mentors as the primary barrier to their advancement (Cech and Blair-Loy 2010). Women in high-tech organizations tend to be relegated to low-status, non-technical enclaves, limiting their interactions with powerful organizational members and contributing to women accumulating less social capital than their male colleagues over the course of careers (McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Padavic and Reskin 2002; also see Chapter 4).

Within social network studies, a wealth of research on "sex differences" has demonstrated how gender shapes the structure of individual networks in ways that disadvantage women (e.g. Berger, Benschop, and van den Brink 2015; Brass 1985; Ibarra 1992, 1995, 1997; McGuire 2002; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). This research often discusses gender in terms of *homophily* – the tendency for actors to interact and associate with others who are similar to themselves to foster communication and trust (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954; McPherson et al. 2001). When women tend to be minorities in organizations, homophily contributes to an unequal

distribution of valued resources, with powerful men operating in what have been called "old boys' clubs" (Brass 1985; Ibarra 1995, 1997; Kanter 1977). Because women's homophilous networks tend to be negatively associated with organizational status and provide lower quality resources, women instead tend to benefit from diverse networks. However, women's disadvantaged organizational positions typically prevent them from forming diverse networks (Brass 1985; Ibarra 1992, 1993; Lutter 2015; Petersen and Saprota 2004). For example, women benefit from "borrowing" social capital from powerful (male) mentors (Burt 1998), but most women have difficulty finding sponsors as compared to men, or receive less support from sponsors (Groysberg 2010). McGuire (2002) similarly finds that women face career disadvantages even when they have ties to powerful employees. As such, women's homophilous and low-status networks, poor returns on mentorship, and consequent biased information creates cumulative career disadvantages for women (Lutter 2015; McIlwee and Robinson 1992).

A major critique of network studies of sex differences is the tendency to emphasize structure at the expense of agency. The gendered networking behaviors of individual actors are often missing (Ibarra et al. 2005). Men and women in structurally equivalent organizational positions adopt different network approaches to access similar career resources (Ibarra 1997). Whereas men form gender homophilous networks, women develop diverse, "broad-ranging networks" to reach people beyond their immediate work groups to overcome exclusion and to access better resources. Women engineers in Silicon Valley locate resource-rich, women-based networks outside of their companies to identify gender-egalitarian workplaces and "job hop" (Shih 2006). Men also benefit more than women from engaging in networking behaviors, with women's attempts to increase internal visibility and network within their organizations having no effect on career outcomes, and their engagement in professional activities having a *negative* effect (Forret

and Dougherty 2004). In her study of women in finance, Blair-Loy (2001) finds that the stereotyped, often sexualized strategies women adopt to break into male networks inadvertently reproduce gendered boundaries, preventing them from earning top positions. These studies paradoxically suggest that there is in fact a downside of women's networking behaviors, and managerial studies have similarly found women to receive lower returns on their investments in networks than men (Wolff, Moser, and Grau 2008). Further exploration of the contradictory outcomes of women's networking is needed to understand whether women's attempts to network may be fruitless or in fact detrimental to their careers.

Doing Gender, Doing Networks

The above research on sex differences in networks tends to conceptualize gender as a variable (Alvesson and Billing 2009). Instead, the structural constraints for individuals operating in (gendered) organizations must be considered (Ibarra 1997; van den Brink and Benschop 2013). I build off the work of Yvonne Benschop and colleagues (Benschop 2009; Berger, Benschop, and van den Brink 2015; van den Brink and Benschop 2013), who conceptualize gender and networking as "intertwining social practices" (Benschop 2009: 223). Using a feminist theoretical perspective, I conceptualize gender as a routine and ongoing social accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction and organizational practices such as networking (West and Fenstermaker 1995; West and Zimmerman 1987; see also Poggio 2006). Organizations and their members often perpetuate gender inequalities through subtle, everyday practices such as arranging meetings, evaluating peers, or assigning work tasks (Acker 1992; Martin 2006). These practices simultaneously create gender differences and make the construction of gender invisible (Lorber 2005). Patricia Yancey Martin (2003, 2006) elaborates gender as a practice by distinguishing

between the two-sided dynamic of gender practicing and gender practices. Gender practicing is the dynamic, spatial-temporal accomplishment of gender through interaction, while gender practices are the culturally available repertoires to "do gender." Gender practices mutually reinforce organizational processes, and are always related to structures, hierarchies, and inequalities (Ridgeway 2011). This framework accounts for the agency-structure dynamic of gender, as people draw from the gender practices available to them in their interactions with others.

I conceptualize gender as a practice to allow for a better understanding of how gender is accomplished in interpersonal networking (Berger et al. 2015). The practicing of gender is mostly done without intent or reflection (Martin 2006), but the outcomes of such practices are gendered. This can be seen, for example, when men routinely act in concert to "mobilize masculinities" at work, conflating their masculine behaviors with work dynamics in ways that are not directed towards women but that women nonetheless experience as harmful (Martin 2001). As such, sexism and gender bias in networking persist in subtle forms, rarely recognized or addressed. While I approach this research with a gender lens, I adopt the feminist understanding that gender is but one dimension shaping the experiences of individuals. I explore how race, sociocultural background, and age intersect with gender to understand which identities together are salient for individuals in networking interactions. I am interested in the variations among women and men, to understand what McCall (2001) describes as "within-gender structures of inequality." In the next section, I outline the research design and methodology, and then move to a discussion of the findings.

Data, Methods, and Conceptual Framework

Research Context and Case

This article is based on in-depth interviews with 50 employees in a single high-tech firm that I call Data, Inc., supplemented by observations of meetings, daily tasks, and informal

interactions at the company over the course of 9 months. Data, Inc. is a software company headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts. The organization employs approximately 600 people, with multiple satellite offices across the country and in international locations.

I initially became interested in Data, Inc. as a potential research site to study gender and networking because of its internal career development series specifically for its women employees, called "Women at Data, Inc." The company advertises this program on its website and social media pages, garnering the company a reputation in the local high-tech industry as being a supportive place for women to work. Two women leaders at Data, Inc. received backing from the company's CEO just over three years before I began this research to begin "Women at Data, Inc." (from here on, WADI). The cornerstone of the program is a women-only networking group that meets every quarter for group discussions on site and during working hours. Susan, an executive and WADI co-founder, explains the program's goal as to advance women in technology leadership through skill development and support. Susan aims to create "safe place" for women to discuss their work experiences and then workshop ideas about how to best move forward. In addition to the quarterly group meetings, WADI sponsors larger events open to everyone in the company, such as an external speaker on unconscious bias.

Outside of Data, Inc., the Greater Boston area is home to dozens of industry networking events to choose from on any given day, including happy hours, lecture series, meetups,[1] and traditional "meet and greet" networking events. Data, Inc. would occasionally sponsor events and conferences with industry groups to foster its reputation in the local tech community. BostInno, a popular blog covering "the view from inside" innovation in Boston,

[1] Meetup is an online social networking service for people to organize around a common interest and meet offline, IRL or "in real life." Since the website's founding in 2002, the word "meetup" has become parlance for people creating offline communities around ideas and activities.

curates a list of "approved" events each month, its coverage serving to narrow the list down to a couple of key events each night (BostInno 2017), and I attended 18 of these events as part of my larger research project (see Appendix C). Boston has long been known as a center of high-tech innovation (Saxenian 1994), and was recently ranked the number one startup hub in the United States (Harris and McAnaney 2016). The Boston technology ecosystem includes local startups, globally recognized companies, and a constellation of research universities – most notably MIT and Harvard, as well as venture capital firms, hospitals, and research institutes. These various institutions cohabitate the Boston high-tech space and, as other researchers have found in Silicon Valley (Barley and Kunda 2004; Saxenian 1994; Shih 2006) and New York City's Silicon Alley (Neff 2014), networking is central to Boston's technology industry. As such, respondents in this study generally had much to say about their professional networking.

Data Collection and Sample

With the assistance of personal contacts, I was introduced to a woman executive at Data, Inc. who agreed to allow me to conduct research in the organization. This woman assisted with initial project recruitment, emailing approximately 20 employees descriptions of the study and inviting them to participate. From the initial contacts who agreed to an interview, I conducted snowball purposive sampling, asking respondents to refer me to coworkers who might be interested in the study. I occasionally secured additional interviews during my observations in the office. Building upon preexisting relations through snowball sampling was appropriate for this study to remove barriers of entrance within the firm and to enlarge and diversify my sample (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Morrill 1995). I interviewed workers from a wide spectrum in terms of organizational position and department. The majority of interviews were conducted in person and on site at company headquarters, in a private office assigned to me for this purpose.

In 4 instances, interviewees were working remotely and so interviews were conducted via phone or video call. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours and, in all but 1 instance, I audiotaped the interviews with the respondent's permission and later transcribed them for analysis.

Interviews were semi-structured, covering topics of career trajectories, workplace relationships and teams, organizational culture, and networking experiences. Certain questions regarding individual networking attitudes and behaviors were asked of every respondent in order to allow for comparisons. Respondents were asked about their relationships at work, previous networking experiences and outcomes, feelings about networking, and participation in various networking programs and events. I asked two explicit questions about gender in every interview. First, after respondents explained their networking strategies, I asked whether they believe men/women approach networking in similar or different ways. Second, because of my interest in women-only networking spaces, I asked women if they specifically seek out other women in the industry to network with and, if so, what they believe to be the value of networking with other women. Gender emerged organically many other times during interviews as part of the conversation, without me specifically asking. In these instances, I could see how gender became salient to respondents in telling their networking stories.

Workers at Data, Inc. tend to be predominantly white or Asian, male, and in their 20s or 30s.[2] The leadership of Data, Inc. is also largely made up of white men.[3] The sample reflects the

[2] I was never provided with company demographic information despite repeated requests. High-tech companies have been reluctant to release diversity reports and employment data, which could illuminate patterns of bias and discrimination in hiring, promotion, or retention. In 2017, 80 percent of Google's technical employees were men, 53 percent were white, and 39 percent were Asian (Google 2017). The demographic composition of technical workers was similar at other high-tech companies that recently released their data, including Apple, Facebook, and Twitter.
[3] I have not included the exact gender breakdown of leadership positions at Data, Inc. to protect the company's identity. The company's numbers are consistent with those in the broader high-tech industry, with women holding 11 percent of board positions and 14 percent of senior management in US technology companies (Ashcraft and

homogenous demographics of the firm and the broader high-tech industry [Insert Table 1]. 32 of the 50 respondents were women. 40 of the 50 respondents are white, 6 are Asian, 3 are mixed race, and 1 is black. 7 of the respondents were born outside of the United States. 32 respondents are women. The average age of the respondents is 36 years old. The median educational level is bachelor's degree. 24 respondents working in technical roles in the firm.[4] The average tenure in the company was approximately 28 months.

My identities as a young, white, highly educated woman allowed me to "blend in" at the company and facilitated rapport with most respondents. Additionally, with the firm's large size and frequent employee turnover, I could "pass" as an employee, and sometimes respondents would forget my outsider status, revealing company gossip or telling inappropriate jokes (Lofland et al. 2006). As such, my identities also shape the data in certain ways, including potentially limiting my access to employees of color, as I was more easily able to connect with company "insiders" (Emerson 2001). I had difficulty recruiting minority workers – in part due to the lack of ethnoracial diversity at Data, Inc. – but also related to the disadvantaged positions of workers of color in the firm. As perhaps the most marginal workers at Data, Inc., they may have been especially unwilling to participate due to fears of repercussions or backlash.

Data Analysis

I used NVivo to code the transcripts and field notes, following open coding techniques in my analysis (Charmaz 2006; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). Data analysis was an iterative process, going back and forth between data and literature. This paper focuses on the analysis

Blithe 2010). Additionally, high-tech leadership is disproportionately white, with whites holding over 83 percent of executive positions in the industry (EEOC 2016).

[4] I define technical roles as those engaged in computing fields, often housed within the Engineering, Operations, and Information Technology departments.

from interviews, but I have noted instances where I draw on my observation data. Interviews were analyzed to build an account of respondents' networking approach and strategies, and the practicing of gender within that approach. Observations in the firm complement the interview data, providing insight into the "doing" of networking and gender. People also do gender in interviews as they tell stories and reflect upon their networking experiences (Benschop 2009).

First, I open coded each transcript and field note (Strauss and Corbin 1990) for networking practices and attitudes, as well as for moments in which gender became salient in discussions of networking. The open codes surrounding gender included explicit references to someone's gender, remarks about the gender composition of networking events, the atmosphere of networking events or the company, comparisons of men and women's strategies, the irrelevance of gender, the social skills of women and men, gaining visibility, and gendered jokes. Then, I searched for patterns of networking strategies, which led to two categories: *formal* or *informal* networking [Insert Table 2]. Formal networking centers on activities hosted by an organization such as a professional conference or WADI. Informal networking activities are typically one-on-one interactions or small group socializing, including going out for a meal or a drink after work. After categorizing each respondent as either adopting a formal or informal approach, I discovered patterns both among and across gender groups.[5] In the findings, I present a few detailed examples from the data. I have selected accounts that represent patterns of experiences of other workers I interviewed, selected "in light of their evocative content, their ability to highlight the complexity and richness of experience" (Poggio 2006: 230). To protect confidentiality, I have omitted or changed details about the company and personal details of

[5] While respondents varied in terms of the degree to which they engaged in networking behaviors, I found that all respondents did engage in *some* networking (whether they explicitly recognized their behaviors as networking or not).

respondents such as names, specific job title, tenure at the company, and age where these are not relevant to understanding their experience.

Conceptual Framework

Throughout this paper, I draw on the concept of *networking*. While a *network* is defined as a set of actors connected by a set of ties or relations (Borgatti and Foster 2003), *networking* is more ambiguous from a social science perspective. This ambiguity results in part from the sheer proliferation of literature on networking in both popular media and academic literature, causing the term to become somewhat of a buzzword lacking construct validity. The ambiguity also comes from the fact that networking encompasses a wide range of activities. In general, networking involves proactively building and using contacts with people to be successful in one's career (Granovetter 1973; Wolff, Moser, and Grau 2008). The traditional sense of networking involves individuals communicating with people already known to them (Lane 2011), and a widely-used scale of networking behaviors includes maintaining contacts, socializing, engaging in professional activities, participating in community, and increasing internal visibility at work (Forret and Dougherty 2001). I utilize Benschop's (2009) definition of networking practices as "structurally embedded, dynamic, socio-political actions of people when they enter, build, maintain, use and exit their relations at work" (Berger, Benschop, and van den Brink 2015: 556). I include intentional networking strategies described by individuals in interviews, as well as taken-for-granted activities that individuals may not consciously conceptualize as networking, such as getting lunch with a coworker or presenting their work in meetings. Including both intentional and unintentional networking strategies allows me to explore the "routine and merely unreflexive practicing of gender" in networking (Benschop 2009: 222).

Findings

While individuals conceptualize professional networking differently, patterns of networking strategies and activities emerge along lines of gender, race, class, and age. In the discussion of findings, first I will outline the formal networking approach utilized mostly by women in this study. White women in their 20s and 30s, especially, describe the intrinsic benefits of networking with each other through the company's sponsored women's program. However, women who find themselves outside of the company's culture, such as women of color, find the program exclusionary and therefore develop alternative networking strategies. Next, I discuss the informal, strategic socializing characteristic of men. Most men tend to build professional relationships with other men through informal, masculine activities like sports, alcohol, and video games. While men find networking to come easily to them, women express much ambivalence surrounding networking. These different strategies reproduce patterns of inclusion and exclusion in the white, male-dominated organization.

Formal and "Diplomatic" Networking

Women at Data, Inc. are more likely than men to take a formal networking approach – attending meetups and conferences, joining professional associations, and getting involved with the company's networking group for women, "Women at Data, Inc." 17 of the women interviewed take this more formal networking approach (compared to just 2 men), while the other women are informal networkers or utilized a combination of formal and informal strategies [Insert Table 3]. Of these 17 women, 16 are white, whereas only 1 of the 5 women of color in the sample rely on formal networking mechanisms. This racialized pattern among women suggests

that formal networking may be exclusionary to certain groups of women – a point I will elaborate on below.

White women romanticize formal networking, espousing a "you never know" attitude surrounding these events. To them, there is some sort of untapped potential connection out there that could make all the difference in their careers, and this narrative inspires them to get out and meet strangers. Carly, a white engineer in her early-30s, encourages her junior colleagues to attend events with her, emphasizing the importance of "getting out there": "Even if you just show up for 15 minutes and you talk to one person, that's all that really matters." Similarly, in talking about why she attends external professional development workshops, Lexi, a junior-level white woman in IT, says,

> It's something I have to do if I want to advance my career at some point. Because one of these days I'm going to meet someone from HubSpot [a well-known Boston software company] and want to take advantage of the fact that I met them during this training and had this great working session with them. Whereas I could just be another random person in the stack of resumes.

Repeatedly, these women discuss the importance of building connections outside of the company as a future resource – often citing the fact that high-tech workers switch companies every couple of years. Elizabeth from HR is a white woman in her 20s, and she emphasizes the value in building connections for her "next step," because, "No one's going to be at a company nowadays forever. So whenever I move forward from Data, Inc., I want to have those networks that I can go to any company that I would like to." Heather, also white and in her 20s, has only been working at Data, Inc. in the legal department for six months when I interview her, but she expresses similar sentiments about networking as a type of insurance for the next opportunity:

> I'm 28. I have a long career ahead, hopefully. I want to keep a finger on the pulse of companies I think are really cool and where I may want to go next. Much as I love Data, Inc., I'm probably not going to be here forever. I think you only do yourself a disservice

> if you don't network. It's just not sustainable. We know people at least are staying in their jobs for a couple years now and moving.

White women at the start of their careers like Heather, Elizabeth, and Lexi share the belief that a chance encounter with a new person at a networking event could propel them forward, potentially leading to an opportunity at a dream company. Being recent graduates from elite colleges, some of these women have been trained in this networking approach popular among college career centers (Sharone 2013). Women at Data, Inc. also might be more likely to take formal approaches to networking due to their disadvantaged positions in the male-dominated firm. Women tend to hold less central structural positions in low-status departments, which often means that their informal ties do not render them connections to high-status organizational members (McGuire 2000; see also Chapter 4). As such, women may tend to follow formal outlets to increase their chances of meeting high-status people outside of the company.

I find most women in this study to feel reluctance towards formal networking, often describing networking with strangers as uncomfortable. Carly says, "I find it hard to socialize with strangers… but I do make an effort to go, have a drink, listen… Not being from Boston, I realize the importance of going out regardless of whether it feels really good or not." Having recently moved to the area, Carly pushes herself to regularly attend events to meet new people, but she finds it "really uncomfortable" because "by nature I'm a really introverted person." Andrea, a white junior manager in the legal department, describes networking as "petrifying," telling me "I suck at it." Jasmine, a black woman in operations, attends lecture series and conferences, aiming to get three new business card each time she networks. Still, she finds networking to be somewhat trivial:

> I think it's the small talk… For me, it's like putting forth all this energy, I'm a naturally shy person. I'm putting forth all this energy to meet someone to talk about what? The

> weather or their dog that I'm never going to meet or some TV show that I don't watch. I like more meaningful interactions.

In addition to the discomfort around making small talk with strangers, women frequently criticize the timing of networking events: usually after work hours, in the evenings, when they need or desire to be home with their families. Carly says she would rather go home most nights to be with her husband, and other women repeatedly lament: "I just want to go home!" While one woman located a networking lunch series, most other women feel as though they must choose between "sucking it up" and attending evening events, or going home and feeling guilty. Michelle, a white director in engineering in her late 40s, turns down several event invitations every week:

> For me, this is another stigma of being a woman. I can't even tell you how many invitations I get to go to these networking events at like five-star restaurants. From 6:30-8:30 come and hang out with your peers. I'd rather be home with my family!... I don't want to be out with a bunch of guys. If it was a bunch of girls, I might think differently. But I feel like it's just not relaxing for me. I would much rather be home with my family than out eating a $60 steak, as crazy as it sounds.

Michelle holds a prominent title at Data, Inc. and so she is flooded with event invitations, but she feels that events are not structured to accommodate people with children and families. Michelle also describes how these events tend to be male-dominated, and she has difficulty finding common ground with men in her industry: "It's just like oil and water." Carly similarly believes that men are quick to judge her, and therefore she is unable to build ties with men after a brief conversation at a networking event:

> I don't think I would get as much out of networking with men as I do with women. What I mean by that is, I think that—how do I put this into words? —I would say that a lot of men probably don't recognize the value of someone like myself, who is a pusher and makes things happen, until they work with me. So for them to meet and talk to me for ten minutes at a networking event, I'm also just naturally suspicious of men that schmooze.

Carly and other white women at Data, Inc. describe a preference for networking in women-only spaces. Carly frequently attends meetup events strictly for women working in technology, while others participate in the company's group for women - which I will now describe.

"Women at Data, Inc.": Empowering and Exclusionary

Despite their criticisms of formal networking, white women at Data, Inc. like Carly describe the intrinsic benefits to be gained from networking specifically with other women. The company's WADI program tends to attract young white women employees; of the 15 women in the sample who participated in WADI in some capacity, 11 of them are white women in their 20s and 30s [Insert Table 4]. While this group of young white women find networking with other women to be "empowering," the small subset of women of color participants describe negative experiences with the program. Despite the good intentions of women leaders at Data, Inc. to connect women from across the organization through an internal program, I find that WADI subtly excludes women along lines of race, age, and cultural background.

In describing the benefits gained from networking with women coworkers through WADI, white women frequently describe the unique value of connecting with other women in the company. Ramona from marketing says, "I look at it like it enriches me because it gives me ideas for what I'm doing that I may have never thought of," while Andrea describes the group as "women empowering women." Unlike professional women in other studies, the white women at Data, Inc. do not attempt to distance themselves from their womanhood in order to build social ties with powerful men (Blair-Loy 2001). Meg, a white director in operations, specifically seeks out women in the industry: "I look for women with attitude in tech… They're not afraid to say what's on their minds." Kathy is the other co-founder of WADI. She describes herself as a "100% super-feminist gal," and is on the leadership committee of a women's tech network in

Boston. She has a "personal passion" for connecting women in the industry, believing that strong networks empower women to succeed:

> I went to an all-girls school through ninth grade, so I've had the experience of really understanding what a network or a community of women can do… Women helping other women, to me it's really a no-brainer, right?... I think it's kind of my civic responsibility, just like I feel like I need to go vote.

Being established in her career with a strong network, Kathy focuses on the intrinsic benefits of what she calls "networking women to women." After telling stories of how other women have helped her along in her career, Kathy believes that providing similar help to junior women working at Data, Inc. is a kind of "civic responsibility," or a way to pay it forward, and she often engages in what she likens to "matchmaking" in the company, connecting women who did not previously know each other.

I find that the women who gravitate towards WADI embody the youthful, racial, and class privileges associated with the dominant organizational culture. Elite employers seek job candidates who are not only competent, but also culturally similar to themselves in terms of extracurricular interests, experiences, and self-presentation styles (Rivera 2015). At Data, Inc., company insiders describe their ideal employee as an "athlete" – someone who played organized team sports growing up, studied abroad, and adopts a "work hard, play hard" mentality. Rebecca, a white HR manager who has been with Data, Inc. since it was a startup, describes the ideal job candidate as the following:

> We look for people—we call them athletes—people who may not have all the skills required but have the drive and the passion they need to be successful, and they have to be able to then perform the skills part of it. I would say that's our number one qualifier, frankly, if we are looking for a candidate. But also a cultural fit for the work hard, play hard environment. There are definitely long days, but there are also times to celebrate

Rebecca draws on several stereotypically gendered attributes to signal the ideal worker: athlete, drive, passion, and the work hard, play hard mentality, underlining the hegemonic masculine

norms of the high-tech firm (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The ability to work long hours *and* celebrate achievements after work hours, for example, excludes workers with families or care work obligations – often women – who might need or want to return home after work. But importantly, the image of an athlete as an ideal job candidate is not only masculine, but reflects racialized class privilege as well – as human resources personnel indicate that they look to hire college graduates from elite schools who have played select team sports like lacrosse or studied abroad. Privileging such activities disadvantages traditionally underrepresented groups in high-tech, but allows certain women in the company, such as the white, affluent college-educated women, to culturally signal their fit with the "athlete" model.

The women who fall outside of the organizational culture tend to find networking opportunities within Data, Inc. like WADI to be alienating. Only 2 women of color in the sample have participated in WADI activities, but their stories of exclusion and social isolation stand in stark contrast to the experiences of the younger, white women in the firm. Lan, a woman engineer in her early 50s, an immigrant from China and a non-native English speaker, says she does not understand the humor and cultural references of the young, white women who help organize WADI. She recalls asking for clarification once on a pop culture reference at a WADI meeting, only to be laughed at by her women colleagues. She tells me that this incident made her feel "really stupid," and jokes and humor can be the "most difficult" for her to understand, since she moved to the United States later in life, as a married adult. Lan is initially skeptical of me, too, and declines being recorded for the interview saying, "You wouldn't be able to understand the tapes with my accent" (Field Note, 3/29/16). Despite her initial skepticism, Lan does open up in the interview, telling me, "I need more support" than most workers, because she has had it "tougher" than most of her coworkers. Lan recognizes that her background places her apart from

her coworkers, and as such the women's programming does not speak to her experiences or resonate with her needs.

Phoebe is the other woman of color in the firm who has participated in WADI; however, being in her 20s, American-born, and educated in an elite college, Phoebe has layers of cultural privilege relative to Lan. While Phoebe similarly distances herself from WADI, she offers a different – and more sociological – critique of the women's group. When I ask her about the program, Phoebe rolls her eyes and says, "Oh yeah, WADI." She says she finds the events "quite offensive" for relying on the premise that "the women are defective" and in need of fixing, rather than addressing institutional barriers or including men. While Phoebe thinks the main problem for women in tech is their isolation, she thinks the group "puts the pressure on the women to change." She continues:

> I always believe that it doesn't help a woman's position to segregate them, using these meetings and stuff like that. And a lot of times the advice that they give on how to be more successful in the business is not specific to women. It's good advice for people. Some of the talks targeting women, sometimes they will play upon stereotypical female features. Like rule number one, never cry at work. Like obviously!... It kind of gets me upset because I'm just like, "They're saying that I'm inadequate because I have all these female emotions. And I'm scatterbrained and I look angry when I'm talking seriously during a meeting."

Phoebe does not describe feeling personally excluded from the predominantly white group, but rather she faults the content of the program for both drawing on gender stereotypes and individualizing women's career problems – holding women accountable to build networks and improve their skill sets. Phoebe's critiques echo the work of feminist scholars who point to how neoliberal feminist messages are often compatible with capitalism, reproducing a self-regulating, economic subject (I explore the relationship between women's networking and neoliberal feminism in Chapter 5). She also asks, "Why weren't the men invited? Are we the only ones who

need unconscious bias training?"[6] She thinks that women in tech must network with men: "We need to know men too in order to be successful."

As a software developer in the engineering department, Phoebe also takes issue with WADI's focus on "soft" or non-technical skills such as unconscious bias training and salary negotiation. Other technical women in the study engage in similar boundary work (Lamont 1992), simultaneously distancing themselves from non-technical women and aligning themselves with (male) engineers in the firm. Women engineers often construct their professional identities in line with the masculine culture of engineering, and so distancing from WADI could be a performative strategy to gain acceptance and fit in as "one of guys" on their teams and departments (Faulkner 2009; Hatmaker 2013; McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Powell, Bagilhole, and Dainty 2009). Michelle explains that women in technical roles had expected WADI to focus on "actually doing technical stuff," or helping women develop skills in certain areas like coding or learning new software. Meg says of WADI:

> [It's] kind of cute but the engineering women felt like they weren't included in it. Because it was all this outgoing stuff that marketing and legal wanted to do. And we're like, 'It's not what we want to do. We want to code things.

Recognizing that a group of women engineers at Data, Inc. wanted a networking group of a different nature, Meg had organized a lunch group just for technical women: "We just talked about how we do code and process and stuff." However, it is striking that none of the 4 women of color engineers in the sample mention attending the lunch groups for technical women – suggesting that Meg's informal attempt to organize women engineers may also have excluded

[6] Men employees at Data, Inc. were in fact invited to the WADI event on unconscious bias training, but Phoebe's point speaks to her concern regarding the messages that women-only events send to both women and men. It is also telling that Phoebe perceived the event as closed to men, suggesting that perhaps their invitation was not well-advertised among the engineers.

certain women. Meg started working remote shortly after starting the lunch group, and so she admits that the group eventually fell apart.

The remaining women of color in the sample have not participated in WADI, and they seem to know little about the program. Jasmine describes herself as a "loner" in the company. Despite working at Data, Inc. for over 3 years, she tells me she has heard of WADI but knows little about it. Why Jasmine did not receive more information regarding WADI or a direct invitation to attend a meeting is uncertain, but I suggest that her overlapping positionalities in the firm as a black woman engineer who did not attend an elite, four-year college contributes to her exclusion. Jasmine is only 32, but after working full-time to put herself through school to earn a two-year degree in computer science with three children and an unpaid internship, plus periods of time spent on the welfare system, she feels much older than most of her coworkers, especially the women who have just graduated from elite colleges and universities. She repeatedly references her age throughout the interview and expresses disappointment regarding the lack of opportunities to meet other women in the company, particularly other women with children. Jasmine is the only person in the sample who describes the company culture as "cold":

> I feel like I've been here so long now, I should know more people and I don't. And it does bother me sometimes. I'll need to work with someone, or I'll know the name, I'll have seen the name for years and have no idea what this person looks like. This is not a big company, so I feel like I should definitely know more people.

After the interview, Jasmine asks me if I have spoken to "a lot of people of different races" from the company. When I admit that I have not despite trying, she says, "It's mostly white people around here. There are some people of color, although a lot are Indian, international, not black or Hispanic." Jasmine is aware of her outsider status in the firm, and what she interprets as age and racial differences between her and her coworkers also stems from her lower-class background, with class tending to be codified as race in the US (Bettie 2003). Jasmine is the only respondent

who discloses that she had been on welfare, and she unsurprisingly has difficulty relating to the experiences of more affluent, white women who attended four-year colleges. These more privileged women tend to be the women organizing and attending WADI, and while some of the white women criticize the group for its lack of direction, none of them hint at these exclusions or recognize the homogeneity of the program.

Alternative Networking Strategies of Women of Color

Jasmine, Lan, and other women who do not "fit" the mainstream company culture feel isolated from the company's offerings for women employees. However, these women develop alternative – typically informal – networking strategies. 4 of the 5 women of color use at least some type of informal networking approach, often relying on friends, family, or community members outside of the company for various career resources and support. Lan, for example, cites her immigrant network as vital to her wellbeing and success. She meets with a group of women weekly to exercise, performing traditional Chinese dance together, often in competitions. She tells me that she met most of these women when she first arrived in the US, and they are all relatively the same age with similar cultural backgrounds. These women are mostly professionals – including doctors and lawyers – but none of them work in high-tech like Lan. Nonetheless, the group helps each other make major career decisions, and Lan says, "When I was deciding if I should take this job [at Data, Inc.], they asked me questions, if it would be a good idea to work in the city, if it is a good next step for me." Lan gets emotional describing this group of women, and they are clearly a very important network for her, providing emotional support and friendship in addition to career advice.

Jasmine similarly has a strong, informal network outside of the company. Her sister initially encouraged her to go into IT, telling Jasmine, "You're so good at it!" and Jasmine

continues to go to her for career advice. Jasmine also finds it easier to build relationships with people she works with, and she maintains friendships with former coworkers: "If I'm working with you directly, then I can sort of build something there to find something, more like common ground. But I can't just pull something out of thin air." Jasmine keeps in touch "pretty regularly" in particular with two men she worked with at her old job through texts or phone calls, sometimes grabbing lunch: "[They] really helped me a lot. Gave me a lot of direction …Things to learn, trainings and stuff like that… Things to focus on. One really helped me get into IT." Phoebe takes a slightly different, informal approach to connect with other engineers in the company:

> A lot of it is I do random activities outside of just work. I joined the band for a little while and made a bunch of friends that way. I'm part of a Tough Mudder group. We're going to do the Tough Mudder next year and that was a good way to meet people.

In addition to joining the company band and signing up for athletic competitions, Phoebe frequently goes out to lunch with other engineers, plays video games during work breaks, or grabs drinks after work. She communicates with these different groups in online chatrooms during the work day via the company's instant messaging system (Field Note 7/21/16). These strategies have created friendships and allow Phoebe to feel a sense of belonging with the engineers.

That Phoebe and Jasmine develop friendships with men begins to suggest that their approach effectively allows them to diversify their networks and reach high-status organizational members. None of the women in this study reported making a connection through formal networking that led to a concrete, successful career outcome for them [Insert Table 5].[7] This is not to say that networking did not influence women's careers: half of the women used some type

[7] In fact, none of the 50 respondents experienced a concrete career outcome through formal networking.

of *informal* networking strategy in the process of obtaining their current position at Data, Inc. For the women who tend to rely more on formal opportunities to network, they are "forcing" themselves to network in ways that have little value in terms of producing tangible opportunities for them. This creates a vicious cycle within the technology industry, as women believe they are advancing their careers by networking, but their strategies are largely ineffective. The women of color discussed here take an informal approach similar to the strategic socializing engaged by men, which I will now describe.

Informal Networking: Strategic Socializing, Sports, and Alcohol

Men in this study tend to be cultural insiders both in Data, Inc. and the high-tech industry more broadly, fitting in with the dominant "athlete" culture. As such, men tend to forego formal networking opportunities such as conferences or structured events, instead opting to engage informally with people they already knew. Men act autonomously to network, mobilizing hegemonic masculinity to seek out or create opportunities to socialize with other men both in and outside of the company (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Martin 2001). I find similarities in networking styles among men across race, age group, class, and occupation, with 15 of the 17 men interviewed relying on the informal networking strategies that I describe in this section.

Men's approach to networking at Data, Inc. can be captured through Rohit. Rohit is an Indian-American, mid-level employee in his early 40s working in the technical Operations Department. Although Rohit is a racial minority in Data, Inc., research reveals how Asian men in the knowledge economy experience layers of relative privilege, and may not be evaluated by their racial status in the same ways as black or Hispanic men (Radhakrishnan 2011). White and Asian men are in fact the largest racial groups in engineering occupations, culturally representing

the ideal competent, technical worker (Alfrey and Twine 2017).[8] More so, the dominant geek masculinity of high-tech is often characterized as white, Asian, male, and heterosexual (Ibid). These complex ethnoracial dynamics within the US technology industry may account for some of the similarities found among men in this sample.

Rohit describes himself as a "professional butterfly," but he does not see much value in formal networking. He has not updated his LinkedIn profile in over seven years, nor has he ever joined any professional organizations or groups. Yet he tells me that in the over twenty years he has been working in high-tech at 4 different companies, he has never once formally applied for a job in the traditional sense: "It's just been all friends of friends or people that you meet over time." One of his strategies is to build respect and friendships with coworkers, and then maintain those friendships after people move on to different jobs. When describing how he networks within Data, Inc., Rohit says,

> I kind of network, like if I'm walking past somebody's desk. See that person there, chat for a minute or two or say hello… So maintain that relationship and maintain the rapport with them. There are always times when I drop the ball because there are 50 things going on. That relationship helps you because they don't call you out. They do whatever they can to help you out... It just makes it easier.

Rohit describes how the simple act of saying hello and catching up for a couple minutes can pay off when he needs a last-minute favor or help meeting a tight deadline. Maintaining relationships with former coworkers is another key to Rohit's approach:

> Then when people move on – so one of these guys, [Jim Clarke], used to be a senior engineer on the team, he moved on to another company. We used to go and grab a drink or two after work. We still grab a drink or two after work. We still maintain that relationship even today after he's left. Has he offered me a job? No. But if I look for a job, would I reach out to him? Maybe, because I know him. It's better to talk to somebody you know who is in the company…That's been my thing, *personal* networking.

[8] Of the 5 men of color in this sample, 4 identified as Asian, and 1 as mixed race (see Table 1). Asians make up 57 percent of the minority workforce in high-tech (Ricker 2015), whereas Blacks, Latinx, and Native Americans are the most underrepresented racial groups in the technical workforce (Evans and Rangarajan 2017; Simard et al. 2017).

Rohit emphasizes that the "personal" touch makes his strategy successful, in juxtaposition to the more formal networking amongst strangers at conferences or happy hours.

Like Rohit, about half of the men I interviewed at Data, Inc. describe grabbing drinks after work with current and former coworkers as part of their networking approach (compared to approximately 30 percent of women in the sample). For example, Chris from HR, a white man in his mid-40s, tells me he got his most recent job through a "barstool interview." One of the (male-dominated) engineering teams that I shadowed would go to a bar down the street from the office every Thursday ("Thirsty Thursday") after work, and would celebrate team milestones there as well, such as when a team leader was moving on to a new opportunity (Field Note 11/2/16). Informal socializing around alcohol is connected to the athlete culture, as college athletics – especially men's teams – notoriously have "fratty" cultures, with players engaging in behaviors like those engaged in by fraternities such as heavy drinking and hazing.

Networking centered on alcohol and after-work hours masks institutional biases against certain groups of workers and conceals power relations in the industry. Workers with families or care work obligations might need or want to return home after work, unable to keep up with the happy hour scene (van den Brink and Benschop 2013). And, considering the rampant culture of sexual harassment in the male-dominated high-tech industry (Kolhatkar 2017), women must carefully navigate dark barrooms and drunk colleagues – with many women in this study opting to avoid these kinds of situations altogether. No woman directly mentions sexual harassment as being their reason for avoiding after-work outings, but a recent series of high-profile cases has drawn national attention to the high-tech industry's widespread, toxic culture of harassment (Kolhatkar 2017; Kosoff 2017; Vassallo et al. 2015). Women do, however, refer to the "fratty" environment of the company, especially when it still functioned as a startup, and they describe

having difficulty navigating the "work hard, play hard" environment for fear of losing respect among colleagues (for a discussion see Chapter 4). And, during my 9 months at Data, Inc., I personally experienced 2 instances of sexual harassment and, as a result, I began to limit my observations outside of the office, attending after-work events only with a larger group.

Other people may not drink for personal reasons, including health or religious purposes, but the frat-like, "athlete" culture of the firm means that drinking is the social norm. Lan, who above describes being excluded from the women's program, does not attend celebrations with her engineering team because she has a serious allergy to alcohol. She describes how if she even smells alcohol, she will start to get sick. She says, "I rarely go to bars, and every time they [her team members] celebrate they go to bars. Any time a new product has been released, they go out for drinks." Even in instances when Lan has played a central role in developing the new product, she cannot participate in the celebration. She recalls one instance when her team suggested going bowling so she could join them, but the bowling alley had a bar and everyone was drinking around her – causing her to feel ill and need to leave. "I usually just go home after work instead," she says. Networking centered on alcohol does not only exclude women. Hugo, a white senior sales manager in his late, 50s laments: "The problem I have is I don't drink, or I drink a tiny bit. I don't like being drunk. And it's extremely loud and people are screaming to talk to each other." Informal happy hours and celebrations are more than social events – they provide space for employees to network, build friendships, and talk shop, and not attending could shut individuals out of deal-making opportunities (Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005). Employees must then adapt to these social norms or risk missing out on key networking.

In addition to going out for drinks after work, men engage in other casual activities with each other to socialize and build relationships. The activities mentioned by men in the study

include attending baseball games, playing ultimate Frisbee, going on ski trips, playing golf, or playing video games during breaks (like other high-tech companies, Data, Inc. has a game room in the office). Rohit is strategic about the relationships he forms even in his leisure time, joining a soccer team in Cambridge specifically so he could meet graduates from MIT. His teammates include men who worked in startups and venture capital, and Rohit often gets the "inside scoop" on their companies. This industry knowledge is a form of social capital, as Rohit gains insight into competitors or learns about new product developments well in advance of his coworkers. He also builds social relationships with people working in the different sectors of technology, who he can turn to if he finds himself needing work or another opportunity:

> I've got friends, like I said, all over the country. We catch up, we talk about their problems in their company and mine. We try to bounce it off each other. Close set of good friends. They've been in companies like Deloitte and the other [consulting firms], and they have been in contact with other people. You get to know somebody from somebody and they're like, "This is what's going on at Amazon, have you heard about it?"

Rohit's networking approach exemplifies strategic socializing, as he approaches his social life and leisure time instrumentally, attempting to build and maintain personal relationships with the potential to help him professionally. Men describe strategic socializing as coming quite naturally to them, often exuding confidence surrounding their networking style (Blair-Loy 2001). Men would often give me networking advice, positioning themselves as an expert on the topic. For example, one software developer spent several minutes listing off recommendations for different industry websites and online networking forums, while another advised me on the importance of body language in interactions. In general, then, there is a sense among the men at Data, Inc. that networking is not something requiring much effort, as to them networking is part of their casual socializing.

Men often fail to recognize that this socializing almost always occurs with other men – an observation that became apparent to me during my time at Data, Inc., when I was often the only woman present with the engineering team at lunch or playing Pokémon on our cell phones in the park during a break. But it also comes through in men's descriptions of their socializing. Greg, an Asian man in his 30s, works in IT but has formed a close-knit group of coworkers from across departments who would go on weekend ski trips together. He says,

> It was sort of a *brotherhood* or camaraderie. We all had common experience and we all had stories about customers that we shared together… It's a very tight knit group too. That's how I get to know people in different departments. (my emphasis)

Men generally forego formal networking, instead focusing their attention to building friendships with their coworkers (typically other men), intending to leverage those ties down the road for social capital in the form of help on the job, industry knowledge, or career opportunities.

Schmoozing and Fakeness: Moral Boundaries between Men and Women

Both men and women in this study engage in moral boundary work (Lamont 1992) to define themselves in opposition to other people who they believe are disingenuous or inauthentic in their approach to networking. Mixing friendships with professional relationships, as happens with strategic socializing, may create a moral dilemma for men, as they do not want to appear to have selfish intentions. I find that men carefully distance themselves from hypothetical others who network strictly with personal interests in mind, doing what one engineer describes as "nasty things" to get ahead. Akhil, an Asian sales executive, says that while "A lot of people network with something in mind to benefit," he does not have an "underlying agenda" when he meets people: "I don't say things just to impress them. I talk from my heart… I help people without any quid pro quo, without expecting any mutual benefit." While people build professional networks for a host of different rewards, networking is always motivated by some

form of self-interest (Baym 2015; Casciaro, Gino, and Kouchaki 2014). Men actively distance themselves from any hint of deception regarding the basis of their relationships, often creating boundaries between themselves and other people who they describe as "being fake." For example, Gene, an engineer of mixed racial background in his late 20s, proudly describes his ability to read people and adapt his interaction style to be compatible with different personalities. But he stresses that this networking strategy is not "fake":

> I'm being who I am. I'm just being very thoughtful about what I'm doing… Like I'm not changing who I am to be fake for someone else… I just realized that with this type of personality and what they do, I need to approach them this way versus this person over here even though I need the same thing [from them].

This symbolic distancing suggests that men feel a slight discomfort in their strategic socializing approach to networking. Pursuing relationships for self-interest and advantage can affect one's sense of morality, creating what researchers have described as feelings of "dirtiness" (Casciaro et al. 2014). Trust and moral character are crucial to organizational life and to individual's chances for advancement, so honesty must be signaled in friendships (Kanter 1977). Unlike the white women who value formal networking opportunities, men view these as spaces where "fakeness" and shallow relationships fester. For example, Nick, a white engineer in his 40s, admits that he occasionally attends conferences, but not with the intention of building relationships:

> Well, so I'll go to the event. For instance, I go to a conference, but it's really for the information and to hear a good speaker. I hate the schmoozing part. I don't know you, you don't know me. I don't care about you, you don't care about me.

Nick emphasizes the value of industry information from prominent speakers over relationships in formal networking settings. By framing formal networking as disingenuous, where "schmoozing" happens, Nick and other men can establish their informal style of networking as

morally superior – masking the instrumental motives behind their professional ties. This distancing serves as a moral self-justification of their own networking (Casicaro et al. 2014).

Women, on the other hand, express frustrations in their discussions of men's informal networking approach. For example, in comparing how men and women network, Heather says, "Women are probably event-driven and take the larger group approach…Take more of the proper channels. But men call their buddies and grab beers and talk." Julia frames it a bit differently, saying women take a "more active" approach to networking versus men's "passive" strategies. But Lisa, a woman of mixed racial background in her early 50s working in the Marketing department, is most candid in expressing her frustrations with the gendered networking styles she has witnessed:

> Men, it's a boy's club. They say their boy's clubs don't exist anymore and I didn't think they did, but they do, 100%... The men will go to sporting events or go out to dinner and sit there and bullshit and network and schmooze. Whereas girls can just go in, get a job done, and leave and do networking without doing all the schmoozing… It's much more diplomatic I think with the girls than the guys, from what I've witnessed… Whereas the guys are like, "Oh, let's go to a Red Sox game." OK, why do you need to go to a Red Sox game to get the job done?

Lisa feels disdain towards men who "bullshit" and "schmooze" with each other, which she views as a waste of time. Women, on the other hand, she says "can just go in, get a job done, and leave." Lisa's perspective represents a neoliberal understanding of networking, which emphasizes that workers be rational and instrumental in planning their time to achieve career goals (Sharone 2013). Taking the "proper" networking approach, however, represents a double-edged sword for women; an informal approach may be misconstrued as unprofessional or could lead to unwanted sexual advances, and yet would align them more closely with the high-status men in the firm (Blair-Loy 2001).

Conclusion

Through the analysis of how individual high-tech workers engage in networking, this study contributes to previous work on gender inequality in networks (Brass 1985; Burt 1998; Forret and Dougherty 2004; Ibarra 1997). In analyzing the agentic side or "doing" of networks, I differentiate between informal and formal networking approaches. This conceptual framework reveals patterns of networking strategies contributing to the gender order of high-tech. Many women in this high-tech organization invest much time and energy into formal professional networking, often putting themselves in potentially uncomfortable settings to advance their careers. Whereas younger, white women feel empowered by networking with each other, the small subset of women of color do not fit in with the company's dominant "athlete" culture perpetuated by the formal women's group. Instead, some women of color develop alternative strategies to foster a sense of belonging with their technical departments, allowing them to achieve status as "one of the guys." Their strategies in many ways parallel those of men at Data, Inc., who strategically socialize during work hours with their coworkers, usually other men, or pursue leisure activities and friendships that could lead to professional resources.

Gendered networking strategies result in various forms of gender inequality in the context of Data, Inc. Both men and women tend to engage in networking that creates homophilous networks, contributing to an unequal distribution of valued resources (Ibarra 1992). Many women at Data, Inc. actively seek out other women in formal settings where they feel more comfortable. While women in male-dominated industries form their own networks and groups to counteract their exclusion, but these groups are often viewed dubiously by male colleagues (Williams, Muller, and Kilanski 2012). The formal networking engaged in by women provides little – if any – definite opportunities in terms of career opportunities, and may serve to further

isolate the woman in the company. Adherence to traditional femininity may be a liability for women in technology firms, and other research has found women to be disadvantaged from joining formal women's networks (Alfrey and Twine 2017; Williams et al. 2012). But women experience a double-edged sword, because engaging in more informal networking can be dangerous in an industry known for its culture of sexual harassment (Kolhatkar 2017). Further, this study reveals how women-only networking may serve to reproduce organizational hierarchies among women, as already-marginalized women find the company women's group to be exclusionary. While women leaders at Data, Inc. intend to create a space for women in the company to build alliances, they inadvertently alienate women who do not fit ideals of privileged femininity compatible with the athlete culture. This finding parallels other research showing uneven effects of organizational networking programs for different groups of workers (Kalev, Kelly, and Dobbin 2006).

Men are cultural insiders, and they often socialize with each other through masculine-typed activities like sports and drinking. This informal networking is more effective than formal networking in terms of getting a job, but men are careful to frame their mixing of friendships and professional relationships as sincere. Men do not consciously exclude women from their social interactions and networks, and educated men in the new economy tend to profess gender egalitarian ideologies (Cooper 2000). However, men just being "one of the guys" allows them to act in accordance with institutionalized norms and gender expectations, but nonetheless their informal socializing creates social closure of women (Bird 1996; Martin 2001; McGuire 2000). Because men dominate powerful positions in this organization, they can freely engage in behaviors without concern for their gendered implications, and in fact their formal work becomes conflated with informal masculinity dynamics (Collinson and Hearn 1996; Martin 2001).

This study contributes to network studies by elaborating on networking as a practice, and by incorporating a feminist perspective of gender. By emphasizing human agency and the micro-level activities of organizational actors, I have shown how networking practices inadvertently reproduce organizational inequalities (van den Brink and Benschop 2012). Certain gender practices activated in networking reproduce the gender order, such as when men exchange information on soccer teams or give "barstool interviews." Professional ties in the field of high-tech are constructed and leveraged according to masculine norms and behaviors (Faulkner 2009). Because the exclusiveness of these practices remains largely invisible and taken for granted, the gender order is routinely reinforced (Berger et al. 2015). When women attempt to counter the status quo through their gender practices, by building ties with other women, they paradoxically reinforce their disadvantaged status as well as intersectional boundaries among women. However, calling attention to gender in networking also captures important instances of actors countering power inequalities through networking – such as in the case of women of color engineers engaging in strategic socializing to connect with male colleagues.

Considering these contributions, I would like to acknowledge the limitations of this study. First, the data collected primarily rests on individual accounts of networking practices. Hindsight bias is possible in interviews, and respondents may systematically reconstruct their networking practices. I did observe some networking practices in the firm, and, in some instances, I attended both informal and formal networking events with respondents. However, in most cases, I was unable to witness the networking described by respondents as it unfolded. Nonetheless, interviews have been used to collect rich narratives about gender practices in a variety of organizational contexts (Martin 2003; van den Brink and Benschop 2013). Future research could pair observations or shadowing techniques with follow-up interviews to capture

respondents more immediate reactions to different networking situations. Additionally, respondents were asked about specific resources gained from different network ties, such as getting their current job, but it is possible that I have failed to capture certain, perhaps more intangible, resources through the interviews. Finally, I have focused in this study primarily on gender, but gender practices are closely linked to other forms of inequality such as race, class, age, and sexuality – especially in high-tech, where the industry is dominated by white and Asian men, including highly educated Asian immigrants (Radhakrishnan 2011). I suggest the ways in which the overlapping identities of respondents in this study may contribute to their inclusion or exclusion in the organization, but my relatively homogenous sample prevents deeper insight into how intersecting identities become salient in networking.

Professional networking is central to the new economy in terms of finding a job (Wanberg, Kanfer, and Banas 2000), enhancing work performance (Forret and Dougherty 2004), ascending to top positions (Brass 1985), and being innovative (Whittington, Owen-Smith, and Powell 2009). As such, studying the simultaneous "doing" of networks and gender could provide clues into how the gender order is reproduced across a variety of organizational contexts and industries. Additionally, the insights from this study could be a useful warning to any organization developing a corporate women's program or networking group about the potential exclusionary effects of such initiatives. A growing understanding of the networking practices may illuminate the ways in which powerful actors maintain their positions through relationships and interactions.

Table 1: Sample Demographic Information

Characteristic	*Women (n=32)*	*Men (n=18)*
Race		
White	27	13
Black	1	0
Asian	2	4
Mixed Race	2	1
Age[i]		
30 and younger	10	4
31-44 years	14	8
45 and older	3	6
Nationality[ii]		
U.S.-born	27	14
Foreign-born	3	4
Education Level		
Advanced degree	7	8
Bachelor's	23	7
Some college	2	3
High school	0	0
Occupational Position		
Technical role	10	14
Non-technical role	22	4
Tenure at firm		
More than 3 years	8	5
1-3 years	15	10
Less than 1 year	9	3

[i]5 women did not disclose their age.
[ii]2 women did not disclose their nationality.

Table 2: List of Networking Activities
(adapted from Forret & Dougherty 2001)

Informal Networking Activities	Formal Networking Activities
• Keep in touch with business contacts via phone call, email, text, or social media • Hand out business cards • Send thank you notes or gifts • Share news or industry articles to keep in touch • Eat a meal with coworkers, clients, or other business contacts (go to lunch, dinner) • Participate in social gatherings with people from work (going out for drinks after work) • Talk about common interests at work • Ask for or provide professional advice • Play sports with coworkers or business contacts • Stop by others' offices or desks to say hello • Increase internal visibility by accepting highly visible work assignments, joining committees or task forces	• Participate in company-sponsored social functions (e.g. holiday parties, happy hours, and so forth) • Participate in company-sponsored sports leagues or clubs • Attend conferences, trade shows, or networking events • Attend professional seminars, lecture series, or workshops • Attend meetings of business-related organizations • Attend meetings of civic, community, and social groups (church) • Give professional seminar, lecture or workshop • Accept speaking engagements or teach a course • Publish articles in company newsletter, professional journal, trade publications, or websites • Maintain active social media profile (LinkedIn)

Table 3: Gender, Race, and Networking Approach

Networking Approach	Formal	Informal	Combination	TOTAL
# of Men	**2**	**13**	**3**	**18**
White	1	10	2	
Black	0	0	0	
Asian	1	3	0	
Mixed Race	0	0	1	
# **Women**	**17**	**6**	**9**	**32**
White	16	4	7	
Black	0	0	1	
Asian	1	0	1	
Mixed Race	0	2	0	
TOTAL	**19**	**19**	**12**	**50**

Table 4: Demographics of Women WADI Participants (n=15)

Age	White	Racial Minority	TOTAL
30 and younger	6	1	7
31-39 years	5	0	5
40 and older	2	1	3
TOTAL	13	2	15

Table 5: How Individuals Got Current Job

	Men	Women	TOTAL
Informal networking	10	16	26
Formal networking	0	0	0
Did not network (traditional job search)	8	16	24
TOTAL	18	32	50

Chapter 4: Going Public, Gender, and the Hybrid Logic of High-Tech: Organizational Restructuring in the New Economy

Abstract

Scholars of gender and work rely on a typology of "traditional" and "new" organizations to conceptualize the shifting logic of gender inequality in the workplace. While some argue that traditional bureaucracies would decline amid neoliberal workplace transformations, this qualitative case study of a high-tech firm reveals that pressures to conform to bureaucracy remain resilient even in the most innovative industries. Drawing on analysis of worker interviews, observations, and organizational materials, I analyze the gendered implications of an organization "going public," restructuring from a flexible startup to a public company. I suggest that a hybrid organizational logic exists in this firm with unique forms of gender inequality. The emergence of bureaucratic features shifts expectations of high-tech workers, privileging masculine qualities of technical mastery, visibility, and self-promotion. This creates a glass ceiling for women while solidifying men's power and status. By tracing the shifting workplace logics within a single high-tech firm, I demonstrate how going public represents an organization-level gendering process that perpetuates gender inequalities in the new economy.

Introduction

Gendered organizations theory has long pointed to the assumptions embedded in workplaces that privilege masculine characteristics and disadvantage women (Kanter 1977; Acker 1990, 1992). Organizational logic favors men by fostering ideal worker expectations of unencumbered workers with few responsibilities outside of the workplace (Acker 1990; Williams 2000). Christine Williams and colleagues (Williams, Muller, and Kilanski 2012; Williams 2013) argue that the gendered logic of work has shifted in the new economy due to workplace transformations like globalization and the rise of information technologies, with organizations increasingly adopting flexible forms compatible with neoliberalism. Williams (2013) distinguishes between two ideal types of this new, flexible organizational logic and the traditional, bureaucratic logic of the Fordist era of mass production. Drawing on a qualitative case study of an American technology firm, I extend and complicate Williams' typology and I

argue that innovative workplaces in the new economy embody a hybrid organizational logic with unique forms of gender inequality.

High-tech organizations tend to launch as small, network-based startups that aim to be dynamic and flexible in terms of production, organizational structure, and acquisition of labor (Colcough and Tolbert 2001). A key mark of success in the high-tech industry is going public, when a startup rapidly expands by becoming a publicly traded and owned company. Faced with external market pressures and uncertainty, high-tech companies restructure to adopt established, bureaucratic organizational forms to signal stability (Baron et al. 2007; Martens 2004). Feminist analyses of organizational restructuring have focused on the effects of downsizing, finding shifts towards flexibility to place women at a disadvantage through increased insecurity and work pressures (Halford and Savage 1995; Rubin 1996; Smith 1993). This study instead addresses how women and men workers in flexible companies experience bureaucratization – including the implementation of formal policies, hierarchies, specialized jobs, and full-time jobs with benefits.

Data derive from interviews with 50 employees, observations in the firm over 9 months, and organizational documents and press coverage. In addition to contributing to scholarship on gender, organizations, and restructuring, this article contributes to original empirical research on high-tech workplaces. The technology industry is notoriously gendered, valorizing technical, computing skills associated with men and masculinity (Cockburn 1985; Correll 2001; McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Wajcman 1991, among many others). Women working in STEM fields like technology must prove their competence, whereas men are assumed to "naturally" possess the skills of the ideal worker (McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Ridgeway 2011; Wynn and Correll 2018). Women's contributions in high-tech tend to be undervalued or ignored, with women

segregated in low-status, female-typed jobs such as human resources and marketing (Alfrey and Twine 2017; McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Padavic and Reskin 2002; Seron et al. 2015). Additionally, tech companies tend to host a young, masculine, nerd-frat culture of the "brogrammer" that alienates women (Alfrey and Twine 2017; Wynn and Correll 2018). Practices such as sexually explicit jokes and references, alcohol-infused work events and parties, and sexual harassment contribute to what has been called a "chilly climate" for women and people of color in technology (Alfrey and Twine 2017; Cech, Blair-Loy, and Rogers 2018; Faulkner 2009).

In the context of high-tech, I find restructuring to create a hybrid organizational logic as a flexible startup seeks to impose structure and control during a precarious moment of transition. The hybrid logic is characterized by an amalgam of new and traditional work elements, including hierarchically organized departments with project and team-based work, and full-time jobs with benefits with precarious careers. The hybrid logic shifts worker expectations; whereas the flexible startup valued long hours and a "work hard, play hard" team mentality, the hybrid company privileges technical mastery, visibility, and networking. While going public and the finding of bureaucratization represents a partial reversal of Williams' work, these restructuring processes nonetheless create differential opportunities for men and women. Women have difficulty meeting the masculine ideal worker expectations, and they face a glass ceiling as they are shuffled into non-technical jobs that are low-status in the firm and precarious. Men are assumed to be technically competent and take their visibility for granted, riding a glass escalator as they frequently advance (Williams 1992). By tracing the shifting workplace logics in this high-tech firm, I demonstrate how going public represents an organization-level gendering

process that results in gendered forms of insecurity, greater demands to fit a certain kind of worker, and thus persistent gendered inequalities in the new economy.

Gendered Logics and Organizational Change in the New Economy

A long tradition of gendered organizations scholarship has pointed to how gender is embedded in work organizations in ways that disadvantage women (for a review see Britton and Logan 2008). Building off the work of Joan Acker (1990, 1992, 2006a), this research demonstrates how work organizations rest on assumptions of gender difference, with job descriptions, contracts, evaluations, and interactions favoring men while marginalizing women. A key concept in Acker's theory is organizational logic, which describes the taken-for-granted systems of rules and policies, job descriptions, pay scales, and evaluations that govern organizations yet reproduce gender inequalities. Workplace policies and practices create expectations favoring men, with the "ideal worker" being characterized as rational, fully committed to work, and unencumbered by outside (familial) responsibilities (Britton 2000; Kelly et al. 2010; Williams 2000). These masculine attributes of success are often incompatible with expectations of women as wives and mothers, and as such women's professional advancement remains constrained (Benard and Correll 2010; Williams 1995).

Much research on gender and organizations is based on what has been called the traditional work organization. As an ideal type, the traditional organizational logic corresponds with Weber's (1947) definition of a "rational" bureaucracy, characterized by a clear hierarchy and division of labor (with explicit job titles and descriptions); formalized, written rules and procedures; and rewards and promotions based on performance (see also Martin 2013). This

logic was typical of the Fordist era of mass production, epitomized by the "organization man" who moved up an internal career ladder in exchange for a lifetime of loyal service to a firm (DiMaggio 2001; Whyte 1956). In her recent typology of organizations, Christine Williams (2013) distinguishes between the "traditional" bureaucratic work form and the "new" logic compatible with the contemporary neoliberal era. The new work logic features a flat hierarchy, with self-managed teams typically working on time-bounded projects. Flexibility and adaptability are rewarded over loyalty, with workers required to network and job hop to locate opportunities rather than moving up career ladders (Brody and Rubin 2011; Kalleberg 2011; Shih 2006; Williams 2013; Williams et al. 2012). This logic leads to what have been called "boundaryless" careers (Arthur 1994), and women in the new economy now struggle to meet ideal worker norms surrounding self-promotion and visibility (Brumley 2014).

Theories of flexible specialization anticipated the decline of large, centralized bureaucracies as organizations downsize and adopt flexible models amid workplace transformations like globalization and the rise of information technologies (Piore and Sabel 1984; Saxenian 1994). Williams (2013) argues that traditional bureaucracies have become "increasingly anachronistic," and that gendered organizations theory needs updating to account for inequalities in the new economy (620). As bureaucratic organizations have downsized and delayered since the 1970s, feminist scholars have argued that restructuring should be considered a gendered organizational process that often negatively affects women through increased insecurity and work pressures (Acker 2006b; Halford and Savage 1995; Rubin 1996; Smith 1993). Some evidence exists that women fare better in flat organizations than in hierarchical bureaucracies (Smith-Doerr 2004; Whittington and Smith-Doerr 2008). However, other research

demonstrates that reducing hierarchy can lead to job losses in women-concentrated functions, the exclusion of women from resource-rich networks, and the undermining of equal opportunity programs (Woodall, Edwards, and Welchman 1997). Within the field of nursing, restructuring also allows men to more easily climb career ladders, experiencing a glass escalator, as masculine characteristics such as efficiency and control of emotions become increasingly valued (Kvande 2002). These studies support the argument that flexibility can mask new or more subtle forms of gender workplace discrimination (Fraser 2009), and suggest that bureaucracy may aid women by providing rules to correct gender discrimination in hiring and promotion (McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Reskin and McBrier 2000; Padavic and Reskin 2002; Yang and Aldrich 2014). As such, gender scholars remain divided on whether organizational restructuring towards the new work logic benefits women.

The Hybrid Logic of High-Tech

In this context, I examine the logic of a high-tech[1] organization that has recently restructured from a startup to a public firm to contribute to understandings of how gender shapes work in the new economy. High-tech organizations tend to launch as small, network-based startups that exemplify elements of Williams' (2013) new work logic (Barley and Kunda 2004; Smith-Doerr 2004). Being key sites of innovation in the US economy, technology companies aim to be dynamic and flexible in terms of production, organizational structure, and acquisition of labor (Colcough and Tolbert 2001). High-tech companies notoriously attract talent through their flexible, "cool" features, including flexibility in work hours, informal dress codes, team-

[1] The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) defines the high-tech sector as industries having high concentrations of workers in STEM occupations (Wolf and Terrell 2016; see also EEOC 2016). These include various types of engineers, IT workers, computer scientists, and managers of these workers.

based work, and perks like free food and alcohol (Gill 2002; Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005; Wynn and Correll 2018).

Despite these flexible features, high-tech organizations face remarkably resilient pressures to conform to bureaucratic and traditional structures. The standard mark of success for a startup is issuing an initial public offering (IPO), more commonly known as "going public." Issuing an IPO opens the sales of a company's stock to the public on a major stock exchange, raising companies a considerable amount of money and prestige. Because going public represents a volatile, high-risk move for small startups, organizations tend to revert to more-established, bureaucratic ways of organizing to mitigate the effects of precarity. Neo-institutional theory predicts such institutional isomorphism, arguing that organizations conform to normative work models to signal their legitimacy outside of the firms' boundaries (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977). In the case of going public, companies aim to signal stability and predictability to potential investors by establishing hierarchies and formal control mechanisms (Baron et al. 2007; Martens 2004).

While neo-institutionalism is useful in predicting the emergence of bureaucracy among technology companies, these theories often ignore conflict and power dynamics within firms as they adopt a normative logic. In this case study, I analyze the gendered implications of organizational restructuring within the context of high-tech. I find that restructuring from a flexible startup to a more bureaucratic, public company represents a partial reverse direction of Williams' work (2013; also Williams et al. 2012), and creates a hybrid organizational logic with unique forms of gender inequality (Brumley 2014). Under the hybrid organizational logic, gendered features of the flexible startup coexist with many of the bureaucratic forms that Acker

(1990, 1992) based her original argument around [Insert Table 1]. The hybrid logic merges strands of the old with the new, including hierarchically organized departments with project and team-based work, and full-time jobs with benefits with precarious careers. The emergence of bureaucratic features within a flexible startup slightly shifts worker expectations, privileging the masculine qualities of technical mastery, visibility, and self-promotion, and creates a glass ceiling for women while solidifying men's power and status. In what follows, I analyze three aspects of the high-tech workplace: (1) the gendered logic of a flexible startup; (2) going public and gendered precarity; and (3) the hybrid logic, technical mastery, and visibility. By tracing the shifting workplace logics within a single high-tech firm, I demonstrate how going public represents an organization-level gendering process that perpetuates gender inequalities in the new economy.

Methods

Data, Inc. (a pseudonym) is a high-tech firm specializing in software and technology services headquartered in a large city in the Northeast United States.[2] I conducted in-depth interviews with 50 Data, Inc. employees, and observations in the company over the course of 9 months in 2016. Data, Inc. went public a few years prior, restructuring from a small startup of 30 employees working in a suburban warehouse to now employing several hundred people with multiple satellite offices in the US and internationally. Data, Inc.'s work force consists largely of engineers, software developers, and computer scientists, with Product & Engineering being the

[2] I have anonymized the company and changed respondent names in order to protect their confidentiality. In many cases, I have also omitted or changed personal details of respondents such as specific job title, tenure at the company, and age where these are not relevant to understanding their experience.

largest and most prominent department in the firm. The organization also employs non-technical workers, in departments such as Marketing, Human Resources, Legal, and Customer Care.

Through personal contacts, I was introduced to a woman executive at Data, Inc. who agreed to allow me to conduct research in the organization. This woman assisted with initial project recruitment, emailing descriptions of the study and invitations to participate to approximately 20 employees. From the initial contacts who agreed to an interview, I conducted snowball purposive sampling, asking respondents to refer me to coworkers who might be interested in the study. I also occasionally secured additional interviews during my observations in the office. Building upon preexisting relations through snowball sampling was appropriate for this study to remove barriers of entrance within the firm and to enlarge and diversify my sample (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Morrill 1995). I interviewed workers from a wide spectrum in terms of organizational position and department. The majority of interviews were conducted in person and on site at company headquarters, in a private office assigned to me for this purpose. In four instances, interviewees were working remotely and so interviews were conducted via phone or video call. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to two hours and, in all but one instance, I audiotaped the interviews with the respondent's permission and later transcribed them for analysis.

Workers at Data, Inc. tend to be predominantly white or Asian, male, and in their 20s or 30s.[3] The leadership of Data, Inc. is also largely made up of white men.[4] The sample

[3] I was never provided with company demographic information despite repeated requests. High-tech companies have been reluctant to release diversity reports and employment data, which could illuminate patterns of bias and discrimination in hiring, promotion, or retention. In 2017, 80 percent of Google's technical employees were men, 53 percent were white, and 39 percent were Asian (Google 2017). The demographic composition of technical workers was similar at other high-tech companies that recently released their data, including Apple, Facebook, and Twitter.
[4] I have not included the exact percentages of men in leadership positions at Data, Inc. to protect the company's identity. The company's numbers are consistent with those in the broader high-tech industry, with women holding

demographics reflect the homogenous composition of the firm [insert Table 2]. My sample of 50 is overwhelmingly white, young, and highly educated, representative of the overall company demographics and the broader high-tech industry. 32 of the 50 respondents were women. 40 of the 50 respondents are white, six are Asian, three are mixed race, and one is black. Seven of the respondents were born outside of the United States. 32 respondents are women. The average age of the respondents is 36 years old. The median educational level is bachelor's degree. All respondents were employed by Data, Inc. at the time of interview, [5] with 24 respondents working in technical roles in the firm.[6] The average tenure in the company was just over two years (28 months).

My identities as a young, white, highly educated woman allowed me to "blend in" at the company and facilitated rapport with most respondents. Additionally, with the firm's large size and frequent employee turnover, I could "pass" as an employee, and sometimes respondents would forget my outsider status, revealing company gossip or telling inappropriate jokes (Lofland et al. 2006). As such, my identities also shape the data in certain ways. Men over forty, for example, tended to be paternalistic, often offering me career advice. Women over forty, on the other hand, tended to be more guarded in speaking with me. My identities, informal recruitment style, and snowball sampling approach may have limited my access to employees of

11 percent of board positions and 14 percent of senior management in US technology companies (Ashcraft and Blithe 2010). Additionally, high-tech leadership is disproportionately white, with whites holding over 83 percent of executive positions in the industry (EEOC 2016).

[5] Several respondents were laid off, terminated, or quit the firm throughout the course of the project. I observed two major rounds of layoffs while conducting research – a common practice in volatile industries like technology (Barley and Kunda 2004). In two instances, I became personally aware of respondents being laid off during the course of this research project, while in other cases I later discovered that respondents were no longer employed by Data, Inc. through their LinkedIn profiles.

[6] I define technical roles as those engaged in computing fields, often housed within the Product & Engineering, Operations, and Information Technology departments at the company.

color, as I was more easily able to connect with company "insiders" (Emerson 2001). I had difficulty recruiting minority workers – in part due to the lack of ethnoracial diversity at Data, Inc.[7] – but also related to the disadvantaged positions of workers of color in the firm. As perhaps the most marginal workers at Data, Inc., they may have been especially unwilling to participate due to fears of repercussions or backlash.

Interviews were semi-structured, focusing on topics of workplace relationships and teams, organizational culture, and work experiences. I did not directly ask about changes in work activities or experiences as the company went public, but respondents frequently brought up these topics unprompted and spoke at length in their interviews about their experiences with the company's restructuring. 8 respondents had worked at the company since before Data, Inc. went public, and another 7 joined the company within the same year as the company filed its IPO as part of a hiring spree. In other instances, workers had joined the company after it had formally filed its IPO, but still describe the lingering effects of restructuring. I also conducted observations of formal and informal company activities such as team meetings, daily tasks, social gatherings, and workplace interactions, spending over 100 hours in Data, Inc. The majority of observations occurred during normal business hours, and I presented myself in the firm as a student researcher. I conducted overt observations as a spectator (Spradley 1980), often "hanging out" in my office or common areas, jotting down field notes on a laptop or cell phone (Woodward 2008). Observations enhanced my understanding of the organization's informal culture and underlying logic. I wrote more extensive field notes at the end of each day to record

[7] As typical with other high-tech companies, Data, Inc. employs more Asian-Americans and highly-skilled immigrant from Asia and Europe than Black, Latinx, or other minority workers (Evans and Rangarajan 2017; Simard et al. 2016).

my reactions to interviews, observations, and informal interactions. Finally, I read organizational documents located on the company's website, as well as business journals and press coverage of the company.[8] Reading these documents provided me with a fuller picture of the organizational history of Data, Inc., and at times were used to confirm information provided by respondents.

I used NVivo to code the transcripts and field notes, following an inductive, open coding technique in my analysis (Charmaz 2006; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). I open coded each transcript and field note to identify descriptions of the organization and its work culture. From this open coding, themes of organizational changes, precarity, and shifts in worker expectations emerged. I then conducted focused coding (Emerson et al. 1995) to look for narratives describing overall changes at Data, Inc. as the company went public and thereafter. Emergent themes from the focused coding included leadership changes, independent departments, and technical skills/knowledge and employee visibility as key elements for success in the company. The following discussion relies primarily on findings from the interview data, but I note instances where I draw on field notes and observations.

The Gendered Logic of a Flexible Startup

During its early startup years, Data, Inc. embodied many characteristics of the new organizational logic. Employees and media coverage both describe how the male founders of Data, Inc. secured venture capital funding and hired a small group to design the software and get it to market. Respondents employed by Data, Inc. during this time describe working on cross-

[8] Despite initial promises from Human Resources personnel at Data, Inc. that I would be granted access to institutional documents such as an organizational chart, I was never provided with these documents, even after repeated requests. However, being a public company, Data, Inc. must publicly file an annual 10-K report, which includes information on the management team and their salaries, a summary of mergers and acquisitions, and brief employee information.

functional teams, with software developers working alongside sales and marketing personnel. Teams typically worked on time-bounded projects, and Susan, a white woman executive in her 40s, remembers engineers working for "intense, short periods" on a project before moving on to another company. Paul, a white engineering executive in his 60s, emphasizes the flat structure of the company then, with workers collaborating – and at times disagreeing – across levels:

> All the people in the company wore a bunch of different hats and did whatever it took... Everybody was on one floor and if you had a question for somebody in marketing, you got out of your seat and you walked the 30 feet to the marketing person. And you asked marketing a question. Or if you had a problem with what they did: "Your marketing campaign just shot me in the foot." You flapped your arms and raised your voice and you said, "Don't do that again."

Job titles existed to differentiate between senior and junior-level people, but the hierarchy often felt irrelevant. The horizontal structure lent itself to a casual work environment and leadership approach, with company founders sitting at desks alongside their employees. Workers describe how the company's humble beginnings and flat structure created a culture of "one team," with workers adapting roles and responsibilities depending on the company's needs. Women describe how the team culture created a sense of belonging and imparted an egalitarian promise surrounding career opportunities. Andrea, a white junior manager, explains:

> It was a very small [group] – not very small – but it was a startup. It was fun, and exciting, and you did a little bit of everything. Susan [from legal] would help out a lot with HR because there wasn't any HR head. I'd get involved with planning company parties and stuff because they needed somebody to do it… We're all strong women and we liked being part of the business decisions. It was very much like we were all one team.

The team mentality lent itself to an all-hands-on deck approach to the work, with workers taking on tasks outside of their immediate job description for the betterment of the group. The

compensation structure of the firm at that time may have contributed to this team mentality, as organizational documents reveal that early employees received large shares of equity in the company – stock options that only vested once Data, Inc. went public. This is common practice among startups seeking to ensure loyalty, as employees feel a sense of shared ownership in the company's success. Rather than view the extra work as a burden, women like Andrea describe it as an opportunity to gain work experience in new areas and be a part of the "exciting" process of launching a new company – a company they have ownership in. Andrea also felt as though she and the other women were "part of the business decisions"; that is, she felt as though her voice equally mattered in terms of the direction of the company. Women perceived the small company size and team approach as allowing them new career paths and promotion opportunities. Jessica, a now-senior level white woman, explains:

> It just used to be a place where everything was super-open, people were given tons of opportunity to move up really quickly. If you showed promise in a certain area, you'd get promoted and given a lot of opportunity. There were a lot of young leaders, which was great. It was very much a young company in the fact that it was a little "work hard, play hard," which, um, was fine but it can get weird with people, and I try to not do that.

In line with the new organizational logic, Data, Inc. previously had no formal career ladders, but Jessica describes an openness that women perceived as allowing them to expand their careers at a relatively fast pace. Of the 8 employees in my sample who have been with the company pre-IPO, 6 of them are women, suggesting that the perceived culture of opportunity may have been present – although 5 of the 6 women are in non-technical roles. However, as Jessica indicates, these potential opportunities often came at a cost – including navigating a masculine "work hard, play hard" work culture.

The startup culture created a setting for masculine ideal worker expectations, with long hours and full-time commitment to the work rewarded. The small group worked tirelessly, and both men and women describe intense emotional engagement with the work. Susan describes working long hours, fighting with her coworkers over every little detail, and then going home and dreaming about the work: "[We] just all cared so much that when you have a new product it's like a piece of everyone is in it." Having been in her twenties and childless at that time, Susan could manage the time demands and in fact she misses the excitement of the startup days: "It's different now, and the people who were a part of it mourn the loss. Some people leave and then new people come in and the culture changes and the spark is gone." Other women are less sentimental about the long hours. Abigail, a senior-level white woman in marketing, says there was no structure in place to track overtime hours and get properly compensated, and she worked nearly twenty hours of overtime each week. She says, "I don't mind working more than 8 hours, but you have to give those hours back to me at some point." Expectations of long hours and full-time commitment to work reflected a youthful, masculinized standard, privileging workers with few commitments outside of the workplace.

Paired with demands to "work hard" came gendered expectations to "play hard," or socialize and celebrate with coworkers. Rebecca, an HR manager who has been with Data, Inc. since it was a startup, emphasizes both the ability to work long hours and fitting in with the company's social environment as aspects of an ideal job candidate: "We look for people [who are] a cultural fit for the work hard, play hard environment. There are definitely long days, but there are also times to celebrate with teams, and having that more social component." The ability

to work long hours *and* celebrate achievements after work hours excludes workers with families or care work obligations – often women – who might need or want to return home after work.

More so, the "work hard, play hard" mentality signals the fraternity "brogrammer" culture, and respondents describe alcohol-centered socializing during the startup days that mimicked fraternity culture. Caitlin, a white engineer in her 30s, explicitly refers to the company "a frat house" and a "boys' club," saying. "It was just a bunch of dudes [with] two guys running the show." She describes how her old boss would celebrate a company milestone with "The Beer Fairy," nominating a woman to take a cart around people's desks to deliver beer. Employees would often drink beer together in the office after – or sometimes during – work. Gene, an engineer in his 20s of mixed racial background, says: "Everyone went out to bars and stuff after [work]. I was hanging out with my coworkers every Friday." Because the company was not publically owned, it had more discretion in how it spent its money, and workers repeated tales of expensive, alcohol-driven company parties. Brian tells me: "The company party was huge. We weren't publicly owned so we could spend more money on that kind of stuff." Nick said, "It used to be a lot more fun to work here," then adding in a joking whisper, "Strike that from the record!" When I asked him to elaborate, he says, "Our Christmas party was amazing. We had a summer party on the roof deck of some hotel. It was so fun." Gene similarly remembers "swanky, open bar" parties at the most expensive restaurants in the city, and a summer party on a cruise boat.

Women do not similarly glamorize the old company parties, and none of the women interviewed lament the shifts in social culture post-IPO. Women – even young, childless women – instead describe having to carefully navigate the "work hard, play hard" demands. Katie, for

example, is a white woman who interned in the company's IT department as a college student in the "pre-IPO" days, and came back to work full-time after she graduated. She says, "Something that really drew me to the company and drew me back actually was that it was really young, upbeat, and work hard, play hard kind of mentality." Once she started her internship, however, she had concerns about socializing with coworkers: "When I was an intern, I was very hesitant to have strong social connections with people outside of work, just because I didn't know if it was appropriate. I just wanted to be very professional and be well respected." Despite being a college student with no family obligations, Katie hoped to secure post-graduation employment at Data, Inc. and feared that she would not be taken seriously at work if she engaged too much in the "play hard" aspects of the company culture. Joyce, a white sales manager in her early 30s, describes herself as "very friendly and bubbly," attending happy hours and sports games with coworkers. However, the she faced a dilemma when the men she worked with started to "tease" her and accuse her of flirting. She describes developing a strategy of drawing a "bitch line" to balance the demands to be a productive worker yet viewed as fun:

> It's hard to get respected as a woman, especially in IT. So, like I said, I have the bitch line up. You have to have a really solid conversation and show them you mean business and you want to work for them… But then also have fun… You have to be someone who is likeable. You have to be somebody who is persistent… But somebody who can let loose too and have a personality… You've got to be a little laid back, a little fun, but also rigid at the same time.

Joyce tries to balance the demands of work and play, and she articulates the gendered double standards to which women working at the startup were especially vulnerable. If women chose to "play hard" with coworkers, their actions could be misinterpreted as flirting, and, as Jessica says, "It can get weird with people." The cultural norms of Data, Inc. as a startup – buttressed by its

flat organizational structure – privileged masculine ideal worker standards that women struggled to attain.

Going Public, Restructuring, and Gendered Precarity

When Data, Inc. went public, it restructured, hired hundreds of new employees, moved into a modern, larger office, and shifted away from the "one team" culture with "work hard, play hard" expectations. The restructuring shifted the organization away from the "new" logic and towards a traditional bureaucratic model, including the establishment of a formal, centralized hierarchy and highly specialized division of labor distributed among departments. On the one hand, going public created opportunities for women, as the company began to hire women in greater numbers as it expanded its non-technical and administrative functions. Yet restructuring also created precarious conditions that left women increasingly vulnerable to layoffs.

The transition to a public company was still being felt by respondents at the time of this study. Caitlin refers to the company's "growing pains," and Julia describes the "constant turnover" of employees – creating a markedly different feel from the small "one team" of the company's earlier years. Elizabeth, a white woman from HR, says:

> We're in this rapid growth phase and change. When I started, there was only like 150 people here and now we're over 600. So I think we're at that weird stage where we're not a startup any more but we're not a large company.

In addition to "rapid growth," restructuring introduced insecurity as the company frequently dismissed employees, often in the form of layoffs. This represents a shift from the startup phase, when engineers would leave on their own accord after completing projects. I observed a sense of uncertainty among workers, and two rounds of layoffs occurred during the nine months of my

study. One woman was laid off on the morning that our interview was scheduled, which I only learned as I saw her packing up her desk in tears. The frequency at which these dismissals occurred can be seen in the following incident that I observed in the company cafeteria:

> Two men sit down for lunch, begin discussing work (they are engineers). They are older than most employees, both in their late 40s to early 50s, one white, one Asian. A few minutes later, a third man walks by and the white man yells out jokingly, "What're you doing here? You still work here?!" The three of them laugh and begin listing off names of people, trying to figure out who is "still around" and who's no longer employed by the company [Field Note, 6/1/16].

One dismissal particularly impacted the company – that of the company founder. Shortly after Data, Inc. went public, the Board of Directors replaced the company founder with a new CEO. Over the next couple of years, the new CEO overhauled the executive team, replacing some leaders who had been with the company since the beginning. Employees describe questioning their own job security in response to these leadership changes. Katie says, "We've had all this stuff happen internally that kind of makes people question what's going on… I stay positive and try to just get through it." Other workers are more cynical. Meg, a white director in operations tells me: "There have been a lot of management shifts over the last few years. I'm on my fourth VP of engineering in three years. What's the direction? Who knows? If you don't like this guy, wait for the next one." Walter, a white engineering manager in his 40s, explains:

> There's been quite a bit of turnover. Since this is an anonymous interview, I am led to understand that while there's a baseline of turnover in high tech, Data, Inc. has actually been quite a bit higher than that. Maybe the baseline was line 8-10% and we're more like 15%... It's crazy. Every C-staff person who was here when I started has changed except [for one]. They've all come and gone. Just tons of people have come and gone. I can't even keep track…It's very thrashy that way. There's an old Mark Twain saying, "If you don't like the weather in Cincinnati, just wait ten minutes and it will change." Every time I've been put in a situation where I haven't liked it, I thought, "Well, in a few months it will probably change again anyway," and it has.

Walter describes the high turnover at Data, Inc., but he does not personally feel worried about losing his job. While those around him have been fired or laid off, he has been able to ride out the changes. As an engineering manager, Walter may not feel as vulnerable as other employees – as respondents indicate that female-typed roles are more often targeted for layoffs. In my first month at Data, Inc., every employee working on the largest marketing team is laid off – with marketing one of the female-dominated departments in the company.[9] Phoebe confirms that women were mostly affected by the layoffs: "It was all females," while Michelle says: "There were definitely some women impacted in there." Meg also tells me that amongst the engineers recently laid off, she estimates that about half of them were women:

> I feel like the women in engineering have either left or been dismissed at a higher rate. And I've mentioned this to HR and a couple other people. HR was like, "No!" I'm like, "All right." And then other people were like, "Yes, it does seem kind of odd." Like they had a layoff a month ago in engineering and I feel like half of it was women. And [HR was] saying, "These are the people whose skills didn't fit with the future or weren't re-trainable." And I'm saying, "Why is that there's such a high percentage of women who weren't considered to be re-trainable?" This was a flag for me and I raised it.

Meg is skeptical about HR's claims that the women engineers laid off did not possess the right skills or were not "re-trainable," and she tells me that many of them were "really good." Considering that approximately 90 percent of the engineering department at Data, Inc. is comprised of men, laying off a group of mostly women engineers is troubling. Precarity is common in volatile industries in high-tech, but in the case of Data, Inc., the post-IPO precarity was gendered in that it appeared to target women and female-typed roles in the organization.

[9] The director of human resources at Data, Inc. estimates that the marketing department is about 80 percent women.

These precarious conditions come as Data, Inc. must meet the demands of the external labor market, held accountable to outside investors and the strict regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Employees stress the "red tape" and "scrutiny" that comes with working for a public company (the beer fridge is now locked during the work day). Brad says, "It's getting more corporate as it does grow. We have security trainings and there are certain things, like I think they've started blocking websites on computers." New leaders, perhaps recognizing worker attachment to the former culture, institutionalized some features of the flexible startup logic – including the informal dress code, teams, and project-based work assignments. Women and men acknowledge the tensions between the flexible startup and public company cultures. Elizabeth, for example, describes the company as being in a "weird stage." When asked to define the company culture, Meg says, "Culture is struggling," and Walter says, "It's very hard to describe because it's changed so much... To be perfectly honest, I would actually say Data, Inc. doesn't really have a culture." Katie adds: "I think we held onto [startup culture] as long as we could… [but] it's not really a startup anymore." In the next section, I will describe the hybrid organizational logic and how it creates ideal worker expectations that reproduce gender inequalities at Data, Inc.

The Hybrid Logic, Technical Mastery, and Visibility

A hybrid organizational logic emerged as Data, Inc. adopted some bureaucratic features, including specialized departments, a formal hierarchy, and full-time jobs with benefits. The hybrid logic yielded new worker expectations; workers must still work hard and invest long hours, but also demonstrate technical mastery and make themselves highly visible to company leaders. Women and men had similar perceptions that technical mastery and visibility were

essential to success. However, because women are shuffled into low-status, female-typed roles, they have more difficulty meeting these expectations and experienced a glass ceiling. Men are assumed to be technically competent and take their visibility for granted, frequently advancing in the organization.

Technical Mastery

A gendered division of labor emerged in Data, Inc. as the number of traditionally female-typed roles increased with the expansion of departments such as legal, marketing, and human resources. This division of labor maps onto an informal gendered status hierarchy, with male-dominated technical jobs conferring prestige and power. With technical workers responsible for developing products, they are most directly tied to the company's profitability. When engineering departments are in power, they define the culture of the workplace, including the formal and informal criteria for success, in masculine terms. Workers from across departments stress technical mastery as a key indicator of the ideal worker, while simultaneously devaluing "soft," people skills like management. Brad describes the need to be "tech savvy" and "passionate about technology." Rebecca from HR says of hiring new workers: "I think it's a very specific person that we're looking for. You have to be technical." Heather from Legal describes the key to success in the company: "You just live and breathe [technology]. I think you have to have an interest in it." Engineers tend to be more specific in terms of describing the need for "hands-on" or "practical" experience with certain technologies or software. Michael, a white engineer in his 40s, says:

> I'm looking for hands-on experience. Has a good understanding of how active director works, how [computer] networking works. There's a lot of different protocols of

> networking. You can't be a security engineer without knowing that. You just can't. You've got to know how firewalls work. That's a BIG one for security engineers. Firewalls, network protocols, how active directory works, how access controls work. It's one of those jobs, jack of all trades and master of none… [An] engineer has to have a pretty good breadth of knowledge.

Gene similarly emphasizes mastering a breadth of technical knowledge areas: "You [could] know exactly what you're working on and you could be a rock star at that, but here you have to be a master of so many things."[10] Engineers therefore feel pressure to engage in constant knowledge acquisition to keep up with ever-evolving technologies. Jason advises, "Never let your brain get stale," and Camila adds, "You have to be very up-to-date with the technologies, follow the news." Hugo, describing people he likes to work with, says, "They gather new information, new facts. They change their minds readily if the information requires it. If the evidence requires a change, you change." Paul says,

> My Skype message says, "Embrace change." So I've been in this business a long time and "The only constant is change" really fits the tech industry. You have to be really resilient. You have to be open to change. You have to be constantly a student and learning because things change very quickly. You can get up tomorrow and some new release of something will suddenly be a sea change for what your job used to be yesterday.

Engineers describe various strategies for staying on top of technology trends, adapting to industry shifts by teaching themselves new technical skills. Some read online forums and blogs, industry journals and bulletins, while others frequently attend conferences. Nick even reads new editions of computer science textbooks in his spare time. With change being a constant – both in the organization and with the technology – engineers feel that being up-to-date in their technical knowledge and skills is necessary to survive.

[10] The term "master" itself also denotes masculinity, with the word historically used to describe the male heads of domains such as households.

Paired with the pressure to stay relevant in terms of technical knowledge is the fear of ending up in jobs where technical skills would stagnate – typically management roles. Despite the tendency in high-tech for workers to frequently switch employers, most respondents aspire to moving up the career ladder at Data, Inc. Engineers discuss two different career paths available to them: management or software architect. Walter says, "Everybody starts in the tech space and then over the years, some people move out into management space and some stay in the tech." Women are more likely to hold managerial roles in the technical departments, including product and project managers.[11] While these positions confer management titles and represent a move up the ladder, they are devalued amongst engineers for their emphasis on "soft" skills like managing people. Engineers tend to reject management as a goal – including women who seek to fit in with the engineering culture. Phoebe, a software developer in her 20s of mixed racial background, describes the two paths she perceives as available to her,

> Software architect is kind of like the go-to, tech guru. They make big, architectural decisions. I imagine them as like the caterpillar from "Alice in Wonderland," sitting on a poof or something like that and just answering questions… And then there's just management. You wouldn't code as much so my skills would kind of stagnate. I would become more of a people manager. It's good to be able to know the product and be able to advise people that need help. But it is a lot of filtering BS.

Phoebe expresses a common fear that her highly-valued technical skills would "stagnate" if she no longer worked directly with the technology. She emphasizes the status associated with making "architectural decisions" related to the product, as opposed to the soft skills associated with managing others and "filtering BS." I witness Phoebe and her engineering team members

[11] In general, a product manager is responsible for setting the strategy and roadmap for a specific company product through its lifecycle, often working across teams until its release to market. One product could entail several temporary projects of varying sizes. A project manager is responsible for different projects, focusing on budget and deadlines.

on occasion teasing their own manager for not being able to keep up with their conversations about the product [Field Note, 7/21/16]. With management skills juxtaposed against hard, computing skills, junior management roles become feminized and tend to be filled by women. Lindsey, a white woman in operations who has worked at Data, Inc. for nearly three years, describes how her (male) boss has gradually shifted her into a project management role: "They're having me do project management now, which isn't really a direction that I wanted to go, but it kind of came out of necessity because of the [recent changes]." These management roles are considered dead-ends, with narrow job routines, little technical skill development, and few opportunities for upward mobility. Women engineers shuffled into devalued management roles hit a glass ceiling – they become too far removed from the product to be able to continually "master" different technologies, and therefore they are less able to conform to masculine ideal worker expectations surrounding up-to-date technical knowledge.

Visibility and Networking

The implementation of hierarchical features and the increase in the company's size require workers to be visible and strategically network in the organization to advance. They can no longer just shout across the room to get the attention of leaders, but must navigate the formal "chain of command." Paul, who above described the company's startup culture, explains the shift:

> It becomes kind of a different flow of information and communication. You kind of go up your chain of command and down their chain of command in order to get the message to the person who shot you in the foot and made your day miserable… It kind of changes the dynamic of the workplace.

In some ways, the expectation of visibility carries over from the startup days, when workers put in long hours both working and "playing" with colleagues. Yet, restructuring and the accompanying precarity slightly shifted demands of workers. After going public, the company switched to a regular, 9-5 workday, and institutionalized "work-life balance" policies including unlimited vacation time and the option to work from home. On the surface, these flexible policies appear to especially support women workers and those with family obligations. However, with the company in transition, frequently adding new employees while laying off others, workers feel obligated to be present and working in the office. Emily alludes to the pressures of keeping up with constant changes as she describes the company going "100 miles an hour." Jasmine says that "Workloads have changed… People just got busier when we came [to the new office.]" Workers feel pressure to be visible in the office to keep up with what many describe as the "crazy" pace of the work following the IPO. When asked about the new policies such as unlimited vacation, Elizabeth says,

> Unlimited – it can kind of go in the opposite direction, since there's always so much work to do that people are afraid to take time off since they don't have a certain allotment…There's this stigma here that taking time off isn't necessarily a good thing… There's just so much that has to be done, and we don't have a lot of people, and we're always fast, fast, fast. So think it's got to come from the top down, and unfortunately it hasn't, really.

Others similarly lament that they actually would have taken more vacation time if given a set number of days off. Greg explains how with the current unlimited policy, which he describes as "take [vacation] when you need it or take it when you want it," "people do not take advantage of it as much." Nicole, a white administrative assistant who works closely with the executive team,

coordinates the "stay-in-the-office initiative," with the company providing certain amenities for employees:

> A huge initiative is the stay-in-the-office initiative. That's why we have all the snacks and the drinks. You don't have to go out if you're hungry. We do breakfast on Mondays. It's like, 'Get into the office.' Lunch on Fridays. They actually do this really cool thing where they have this woman come in and she [waxes] eyebrows.

During the 9 months I conducted observations, Data, Inc. offered meals, workout classes (with showers in the office), and on-site medical appointments like eye exams. While on the surface these appear to be "cool" perks of the job, company leadership wants to maximize employees' hours in the office, thereby increasing productivity. Company leaders also deliver more subtle messages about visibility, evidenced by the following conversation I had:

> Martha from Marketing is telling me about the maternity leave policy at Data, Inc., which is a standard 3-month policy. Then she brings up Susan [one of the only woman executives]. Susan is visibly pregnant, and Martha tells me she is due over the summer but only taking "a couple weeks off." She goes on to say that for her previous pregnancy, "[Susan] took 3 weeks off, and she still was working from home during those 3 weeks, and she's non-stop." [Filed Note, 2/29/16]

Although the company offers maternity leave, women like Martha feel guilty taking the full 3 months, as women in leadership hardly take any time off. The work-life balance policies give Data, Inc. the appearance of a company supporting flexibility, yet the organization informally values visibility, keeping workers in the office by increasing workloads and offering certain amenities. For women with children, the expectation to be present in the office can be especially difficult to achieve.

Women and men recognize networking within the firm as a key means to achieve the visibility required for success. Women, however, must be strategic in their approach to visibility

following the company's restructuring, as a combination of structural changes limit their opportunities to interact with powerful men – including the organization's gendered hierarchy and division of labor. Jessica, a white woman from HR, says that, in some ways, relationships are more important than work performance:

> You can be really, really good at your job and if you don't form relationships here, you're going to fail and you will get fired. It's just a place that exists on relationships. I can't tell you how many people I've seen who come in and act like they can't be bothered just to get anyone's input or make friends, and they just end up not working out because no one wants to support you. No one's going to do you any favors if they don't like you. It's kind of cut-throat.

This "cut throat" environment with no one doing each other favors is a cultural shift from the "one team" approach to work during the startup phase. Jessica's perspective also draws attention to strategic networking, and women pressure themselves to gain "exposure" with top leadership, navigating multiple social circles to build and leverage relationships with the "right" people. Kathy, a white manager in the finance department, describes locating company "influencers," saying, "I often need to hustle to find the connection points and make those relationships." Andrea, who came to Data, Inc. with no technical background, describes her strategy: "I kind of made friends with people who seemed to really know what they were doing, just have regular conversations with them. Then when something comes up later about work, professionally, I can go to them." Despite their strategies, women have trouble advancing. Emily is one of the more tenured employees at Data, Inc., a director in marketing who has worked at the company for eight years. When I ask Emily where she sees herself in five years, she describes her desire to be a vice president, but is unconvinced if she can further advance within the organization:

> Emily: I think I would probably have to get more exposure with the executive team, which has been challenging because a lot of the things I do are behind the scenes. Nobody really sees what I do, which is why it works.
>
> Researcher: Are there opportunities in any formal way here for aspiring executives or aspiring managers to have that face time that would be needed?
>
> Emily: Not really.
>
> Researcher: So what would your approach be?
>
> Emily: My boss has been trying to give me some more responsibility when the occasion occurs. At the next exec breakfast we're trying to get me to share some results on a survey I did for the company. But I don't know… I feel like it might not go anywhere. This company is going so fast, 100 miles an hour. Nobody really has time.

Without networking and interacting with company executives, Emily believes she would not have an opportunity to advance because her work otherwise will remain invisible. She is skeptical whether her boss could help her achieve more visibility, and she lacks other, more informal opportunities to promote herself.

Men, on the other hand, often take their visibility for granted, and they expect to advance after putting in the work. Samar, a senior software engineer from India, says that while there is no formal mentoring in the company, "You just end up being mentored by the senior people on your team or almost anybody. When you're just talking about work, it just happens organically." Men like Samar who work in male-dominated technical departments more frequently interact with "senior people," typically other men. The high-status nature of these technical roles also renders them more visible to executives, who are most invested in the company's product. Men at Data, Inc. tend to tell stories of promotions "just happening," and feel like the company offers opportunities for career growth. Greg, an Asian IT worker whose job at Data, Inc. was his first out of college, received his first promotion after just nine months, and he has since consistently

advanced during his five years at the firm. When I ask about the process leading to his first promotion, he describes being surprised and feeling unsure if he deserved to advance.

> I never actually made a push for it. Because nine months is a decent amount of time, but I don't know if I had wrapped my head around all of the work at that point yet, at least the concepts behind it and how everything was run. This is my first corporate job so I haven't really been exposed to this before. I just went on my way, just working and keeping my head down. Someone noticed, which I'm grateful for. And I got bumped up. It's basically been a string of me saying yes [to opportunities], more than me going after anything specifically.

Greg does not feel like he had to strategize to get promoted; rather, he keeps his head down until "someone noticed" his work. Men do not mention explicit strategies to gain visibility with high-status others, which suggests that it is a natural part of their work life. In the hybrid work organization, expectations require employees to demonstrate technical mastery and to be visible. However, the structural features and cultural norms of this logic pose challenges for women trying to fit the ideal worker image. Whereas women experience a glass ceiling, men at Data, Inc. ride the glass escalator, often advancing into high-status roles working directly with technology. Although men and women in my sample are equally likely to report expecting a promotion within the next five years, women are more likely to say they will need to move to a new company to achieve their desired position.

Conclusion

The Data, Inc. case study complicates how we theorize about gender and organizations in the new economy. In contrast to previous research arguing that the traditional bureaucracy would give way to a "new" gendered logic compatible with neoliberalism (Williams 2013), this research demonstrates how pressures to conform to bureaucracy remain resilient even in the

cutting-edge industry of technology. I have argued that a hybrid organizational logic emerged as Data, Inc. shifted from a flexible startup to a public company with unique forms of gender inequality. The hybrid logic represents a fusion of the "new" and the "old," as the organization implemented specialized jobs, a clear hierarchy, and formalized rules alongside teams, projects, and remnants of the startup culture. Like those of traditional and new organizations, the logic of hybrid organizations appears gender neutral on the surface (Brumley 2014). In fact, after going public, this company hires greater numbers of women as it expands and formalizes work-life balance policies that would seemingly support women. However, I find that the hybrid organizational logic places women at a structural disadvantage that limits their ability to meet ideal worker expectations, reinforcing the glass ceiling for women in high-tech while solidifying men's power and status.

Men and women both describe major organizational shifts as Data, Inc. issued its IPO and began restructuring to a public company, but they experience these workplace shifts differently. When Data, Inc. operated as a startup, ideal workers adopted a "work hard, play hard" mentality, valuing long hours and participation in alcohol-infused team celebrations indicative of a fraternity-like "brogrammer" culture (Wynn and Correll 2018). Unlike men, women had difficulty navigating gender stereotypes and double standards in their attempts to meet these expectations, fearing their "play" to be misconstrued as unprofessional or sexually motivated (Faulkner 2009; Tierney 1995). Despite the masculine cultural norms, women perceived a culture of opportunity with the organization's flat structure and team approach work (Smith-Doerr 2004). This culture of opportunity shifts as the company restructures, as women are shuffled into low-status, non-technical roles in the company that are vulnerable to precarious

conditions (McIlwee and Robinson 1992; McGuire and Reskin 2003). As women integrate into traditionally male-dominated occupations, they are placed in feminized positions that were lower-status, less desirable, and lower paying (England et al. 2007; Reskin and Roos 1990). While women held non-technical roles during the startup days, the gender segregation of work becomes more visible with increased specialization and the devaluation of feminized, "soft" skills. Even the women engineers at Data, Inc. find themselves pushed into dead-end management positions. While historically the role of project management within the field of engineering was esteemed (McIlwee and Robinson 1992), at Data, Inc. these positions are devalued for their focus on "soft" skills rather than technical or computing skills. Sharon Collins (1997) similarly finds black executives in predominantly white corporations working in racialized management positions consisting of narrow job routines and little skill development, such that black managers remain on the periphery of firms, experience lower job ceilings, economic rewards, and status than their white counterparts.

This sex segregation and gendered division of labor at Data, Inc. are perpetuated by hegemonic gender beliefs about the abilities and skills of men and women (Ridgeway 2011). Both the gender composition of the job and the stereotypical gender-typing of the work activate gender beliefs surround the image of the ideal worker (Martin 2012). In the context of high-tech, where engineering and computer science jobs are commonly held by men and the required skills constructed as male-typed, gender is likely to be salient in defining ideal worker norms (McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Ridgeway 2011). Men at Data, Inc. are more likely to be considered fit for technical work and be promoted when it was their turn, while women must work hard to demonstrate their technical competence. Men frequently capitalize on their informal

relationships with high-status men to gain the visibility required for success, while women looking to advance had to wield extra effort and navigate multiple social circles to achieve similar visibility (Ibarra 1995; McGuire and Reskin 1993). Lacking access to high-status workplace networks has both emotional and material implications for women, limiting their opportunities to receive promotions, pay raises, and benefits (Pierce 1996; Roth 2006).

When informal stereotype bias is likely to disadvantage women, formal rules and bureaucratic procedures may level the playing field for women (McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Reskin 1988). However, I find that masculinity continues to pervade Data, Inc. as it shifts towards bureaucracy and adopts a hybrid logic, affirming other research demonstrating that the ideal worker remains masculine in the contemporary workplace (Brumley 2014). For example, the company's adoption of formal policies surrounding work hours and a traditional 40-hour workweek still assumes that ideal workers will not have direct responsibility for childcare (Acker 1990, 2006a). And the implementation of a formal hierarchy does not thrust women into top leadership positions, but in fact consolidates men's power (Ely and Meyerson 2000). Numerically underrepresented women in positions of power become gender tokens, and they must engage in masculine practices that unconsciously reproduce gender inequality such as foregoing vacations and maternity leave (Kanter 1977; Martin 2003).

Although this study is based on one firm, it contributes to understandings of gender and organizations. Most notably, I discover that the bureaucratic forms that Acker (1990, 1992) based her original argument around are still functioning in the new economy, indicating that contemporary organizations are increasingly contradictory, with elements of the "traditional" and "new logics combining in complex ways. I argue that organizational restructuring in workplaces

characterized by flexibility, most often found in innovation industries, creates a hybridity between traditional and new logics as these organizations seek to impose structure and control during precarious moments of transition. Conceptualizing the logic of Data, Inc. as hybrid allows for a fuller understanding of the gendered experiences of workers and patterns of inequality, and future research should explore other contexts in which the hybrid logic operates. The way gender infuses the logic of innovative, high-tech firms at the leading edge of the economy will likely have broader influence on gender dynamics in the new economy, as other industries and organizations seek to reconstruct the practices of these pioneering firms.

Table 1: Features of Hybrid Work Organizations*

Traditional Work Organization	Hybrid Work Organization	New Work Organization
Loyalty and seniority rewarded	Visibility and technical mastery rewarded	Flexibility and adaptability rewarded
Full-time jobs with benefits	Full-time jobs with benefits	Temporary and contingent contracts
Lifetime career	Precarious careers	Boundary-less career
Specialized job descriptions	Specialized jobs, projects, and teams	Project based requirements
Hierarchically organized departments	Hierarchically organized departments	Horizontal interdisciplinary teams
Career ladders	Career ladders	Career maps

*Adapted from Williams (2013)

Table 2: Sample Demographic Information

Characteristic	*Women (n=32)*	*Men (n=18)*
Race		
White	27	13
Black	1	0
Asian	2	4
Mixed Race	2	1
Age[i]		
30 and younger	10	4
31-44 years	14	8
45 and older	3	6
Nationality[ii]		
U.S.-born	27	14
Foreign-born	3	4
Education Level		
Advanced degree	7	8
Bachelor's	23	7
Some college	2	3
High school	0	0
Occupational Position		
Technical role	10	14
Non-technical role	22	4
Tenure at firm		
Hired pre-IPO	6	2
Post-IPO hiring spree [iii]	4	3
Hired to public company	22	13

[i] 5 women did not disclose their age.
[ii] 2 women did not disclose their nationality.
[iii] Defined as within the year of Data, Inc. filing its IPO.

Chapter 5: "'Eat, Pray, Love' Bullshit": Women's Empowerment through Wellness at an Elite Professional Conference

Abstract

Professional women's groups and conferences aim to improve women's status in the workplace through networking and the exchange of resources. This paper applies a critical feminist lens to one women's conference, illustrating how the collective space paradoxically individualizes women's career experiences. Drawing upon participant observation at the Innovative Women in Business Conference, I explore how the conference's goal to connect businesswomen is replaced by a focus on women's empowerment through individual control and wellness. The conference encourages women to engage in wellness practices such as egg freezing to improve their personal market value. By focusing on strategies to "have it all," the conference reconfigures the feminist value of empowerment to convert gender inequality to an individual affair. While most women embrace the neoliberal feminism of the conference, I find that many women attendees employ tactics to resist the wellness demands, or what one attendee refers to as "'Eat, Pray, Love' bullshit." This women-only conference represents a neoliberal, entrepreneurial intervention contributing to the (re)production of a self-regulating, feminist subject.

Introduction

"If you want to empower women, empower women through intelligence – not this 'Eat, Pray, Love' bullshit."

I overhear this statement in the women's bathroom at a major professional conference for businesswomen. I am not a businesswoman, but rather a sociologist attending this conference to explore networking in practice, as well as the complex, gendered messages of professional events like this one. It is late afternoon in May 2016, and the first Innovative Women in Business (IWIB) Conference is winding down.[1] IWIB is a grassroots networking group for female entrepreneurs in a major city in the Northeast United States, which has grown in just over two years from a private Facebook group of twenty women to over 4,500 active members today. IWIB's mission is to cultivate women's professional growth through monthly networking events,

[1] Despite being a public event widely covered by local media outlets, I have chosen to anonymize the name of the organization and conference to protect the identities of those women in attendance. As such, all subsequent citations referring the organization's official materials or website have been anonymized.

providing a platform to connect businesswomen in the local community. The group publicized this conference, their first major event open to non-members, as "A Conference to Women, by Women."

The inaugural conference was highly promoted in local news outlets, business blogs, and social media pages, with IWIB promising networking opportunities throughout the day as well as informational talks and panels relevant to the experiences of women entrepreneurs. Women-only professional groups and conferences such as IWIB formed in response to new feminist debates around the persistence of workplace inequalities for professional and middle-class women (Gill and Orgad 2015). Key issues in popular feminism include the poor representation of women in top leadership positions and "work-family balance." Networking is widely viewed as an effective (and necessary) means to improve women's status in the workplace, and conferences ostensibly provide spaces for women to build their social capital and counteract their exclusion from powerful "old boys' clubs." Networking has indeed become a buzzword, part of the proliferation of diversity management programs in response to research pointing to the social isolation of women and minorities as a source of workplace inequality (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006). And while some research has begun to evaluate the effectiveness of such programs in terms of advancing women (Ibid), I instead apply a critical feminist lens to one women's conference to analyze its messages surrounding women's empowerment.

Through my ethnographic, participant observation at the Innovative Women in Business Conference, I find that the broader neoliberal, entrepreneurial project of the self resonates in a professional women's conference. Conferences may appear to operate at a collective level, but they often individualize career experiences and aim to "fix" a lack of human and social capital in individuals (Kalev et al. 2006). By individualizing women's careers, the IWIB Conference

favors neoliberal feminism over the collectivist, social-welfare oriented feminism of the past to reproduce what scholars describe as a "feminist economic subject" (Rottenberg 2013). As such, the conference does little to challenge structural workplace inequalities or existing social stratifications, instead converting gender inequality to an individual affair by focusing on empowerment through wellness. While the linkage of female empowerment and wellness is a larger cultural phenomenon (Genz and Brabon 2009; Gill and Orgad 2015; Lazar 2006), I point to how wellness permeates into the market-based context of a professional conference. The IWIB Conference privileges discussions of balance and wellness over developing women's professional skills or networks, encouraging women to apply economic strategies to the spheres of family, leisure, and wellness. Wellness is framed as a feminized mechanism to create a better economic subject, as speakers encourage women to engage in practices of self-improvement, unwittingly drawing on women's anxieties around their bodies and dual roles as workers and mothers. The inclusion of wellness within the context of a professional conference explicitly links women's economic success to their ability to take care of their bodies and minds. I demonstrate how acts of wellness are framed not only as a means for women's empowerment, but also as a responsibility to improve personal market value.

As evidenced by the brief quote opening this paper, I will describe how many women see through what one attendee describes as "'eat, pray, love' bullshit" – in reference to the popular *Eat, Pray, Love* memoir (2006) by Elizabeth Gilbert and subsequent film starring Julia Roberts (2010), in which the female protagonist embarks on a global journey of self-discovery. Despite some women considering the conference's messages surrounding empowerment to be "bullshit," these messages resonate with the neoliberal capitalist order, part of the contemporary mode of feminism deeply informed by market rationality (Fraser 2009). As such, most attendees embrace

the conference and its values. In what follows, I incorporate theories of entrepreneurialism with research on neoliberal feminism to illustrate how a women's conference can represent a commercialized enterprise that redefines women's rights in terms of an individualist politics centered on lifestyle choices and personal consumer pleasures. Through a case study of the Innovative Women in Business Conference, I demonstrate how a women-only networking space represents an entrepreneurial intervention contributing to the (re)production of an autonomous, self-regulating feminist subject.

Networking in a Neoliberal Era

Networking conferences and groups proliferated over the 1980s as white-collar layoffs became increasingly common (Lane 2011). Today, networking events vary in structure from casual lunch meetings to raucous happy hours to lavish, all-day programs, as in the case of the IWIB Conference. Taken together, these programs are characterized as providing a place for members to meet, exchange information, and share career advice (Kalev et al. 2006). Despite being communal spaces, networking events reproduce the neoliberal ideology of individualism, as workers must act as "companies of one," marketing themselves to locate and procure opportunities in a precarious labor market (Lane 2011). A shift towards flexible work arrangements and the decline of white-collar job security means that individuals, whether working full time or unemployed, must be flexible and creative in navigating "boundaryless" careers (Arthur 1994; Kalleberg 2009; for a review see Roper, Ganesh, and Inkson 2010). Workers view themselves as free agents, constantly engaging in personal branding and networking (Barley and Kunda 2004; Vallas and Cummins 2015).

Yet rather than resist structural causes of precarity and unemployment, increasingly anxious workers idealize new forms of employment as means to achieve personal empowerment and freedom (Lane 2011; Sharone 2007, 2013). Individuals maintain faith in the logic and efficiency of the free market, consistent with the political culture and belief system of neoliberalism (Harvey 2005). This faith in the free market economy is in many ways buttressed by the bourgeoning self-help industry. Professional organizations and conferences adopt the self-help industry framing of the weak labor market as an unavoidable condition, encouraging individuals to instead take control of their career fates by finding their "authentic" selves (Sharone 2013). Through self-discovery, personal branding, and networking, contemporary workers are told that they can find their dream jobs. Networking is not only celebrated in the post-recession economy, but deemed necessary when competing for opportunities, with most sources finding that between 80 and 95 percent of jobs are found through networking (Lane 2011).

Job search practices like personal branding and networking require self-reflection and identity work (Vallas and Cummins 2015). Workers are encouraged to focus inward rather than outward, on personal beliefs and passions, such that structural obstacles become of secondary importance (Sharone 2013). Networking events and conferences may provide individuals with a sense of community, but the ideology of networking tends to suppress systematic critiques and collective action (Lane 2011). Instead, networking becomes part of the broader, entrepreneurial project of the self characteristic of the neoliberal era.

The Entrepreneurial Self

The post-industrial period is characterized by a blurring between the public and private spheres, with "work-life" or "work-family balance" presented as the ultimate ideal (Freeman 2014; Rottenberg 2017). Work and life have become melded such that entrepreneurialism becomes a way of life "not restricted to the running of a business but the enactment of selfhood more generally" (Freeman 2014: 57). Engaging with the self as an entrepreneurial project requires constant renovation and improvement, and there has been an ever-growing call for people to engage in self-care, cultivating a healthy lifestyle (Bloom 2017). Part of this emphasis on wellness comes in response to increased stress, anxiety, and loneliness among individuals experiencing greater economic volatility, overwork, and reduced public support (Ibid). A middle-class "therapeutic culture" offers technologies and treatments related to holistic well-being, including the expanded field of psychotherapy, yoga, meditation, and spa treatments aimed at connecting the mind and body (Illouz 2008). Foucault saw these new "technologies of the self" as means for capitalist enterprise, generating new, middle-class subjectivities (1988). The mind and body are economic resources, such that happy, healthy bodies are productive bodies – with individual workers responsible to cultivate their personal wellness (Davies 2015). There is also a moral component to wellness, with people who fail to meet wellness demands seen as "a direct threat to contemporary society" for their inability to contribute to economic prosperity (Cederström and Spicer 2015).

The neoliberal ethic of entrepreneurialism has become intertwined with therapeutic culture such that personal success now includes the achievement of wellness and health goals. The rise of capitalist values like competition, productivity, and profitability corresponds with the proliferation of the nonmarket value of personal wellbeing and fulfillment (Bloom 2017). This

trend is perhaps best exemplified by demands for "work-life balance," with the goal being to simultaneously meet professional demands and fulfill personal desires (Ibid). As I will describe in the following section, this expansion of entrepreneurialism into nonmarket spheres requires new practices of self-making that are decidedly gendered.

The Neoliberal Feminist Subject

Feminist scholars argue that neoliberal capitalism generates gendered economic subjects, as women must balance neoliberal demands with gendered expectations (Fraser 2009; McRobbie 2015; Rottenberg 2017, among many others). Rottenberg (2013) characterizes the new subject as feminist, and not simply female, in the sense that she is simultaneously aware of contemporary gender inequalities and neoliberal in her disavowal of structural forces producing these inequalities. Amidst what has been described as a "post-feminist" era, feminism has in fact made a comeback; however, the popular feminism being revived in the U.S. is compatible with the market values of neoliberalism (Eisenstein 2009; Fraser 2009; McRobbie 2015). The new feminist subject accepts full responsibility for creating a happy work-family balance, often through practices of personal well-being. Reconceiving women's liberation as the ability to happily balance work and family privileges heterosexual, white, middle-class women, and fails to take into account the reality of most U.S. women (Ahmed 2010; Rottenberg 2014).

For middle-class women, then, neoliberal feminist discourse produces a new form of governmentality based on individual fulfillment through careful "self-investments" (Rottenberg 2017). While both men and women are called upon to invest in their human and social capital, new types of entrepreneurial interventions are aimed specifically at "empowering" women.

Gendered technologies "from Prozac to facelifts are routinely described as tools of self-discovery and self-fulfillment" (Elliot 2003: 30) (see also Wesley 2003).

Feminist scholars have long pointed to how various interventions aimed at empowering women have been recast in neoliberal terms (e.g. Keating, Rasmussen, and Rishi 2010; Rankin 2001). I similarly discover that the IWIB Conference frames the pursuit of empowerment in ways that reproduce a neoliberal feminist subject. The conference disseminates the idea that women can "have it all" through certain wellness practices, but individual women are alone responsible for achieving a work-life balance. As a result, "We find all ideas of gender justice and collective solidarity thrown overboard in favour of 'excellence,'" with the focus on individual perfection (re)producing competition and hierarchies among women (McRobbie 2015: 16).

Women-only, feminist organizations have historically provided safe spaces for women to share their experiences and served as catalysts for sociopolitical changes (Ferree and Martin 1995). Yet in this case, the Innovative Women in Business Conference is largely depoliticized, perpetuating the individualization of women's career experiences and work-family conflicts. In what follows, I first outline my methodological approach, followed by an ethnographic description of the IWIB Conference. I demonstrate how the conference's goal to connect local businesswomen fades into the background as the day goes on, replaced by a fervent focus on women's empowerment through individual control and wellness. As such, the IWIB Conference contributes to the blurring of work and family and provides credence to neoliberal, entrepreneurial interventions aimed at "fixing" or improving individual women. I discuss how this women-only professional conference favors the values of neoliberal feminism, and thus furthers the reproduction of the feminist economic subject.

Methods

This article is part of a larger investigation into gender and professional networking. My method is participant observation, and the primary ethnographic data include field notes, photographs, and materials such as brochures collected at the conference. I also rely on the IWIB official website and social media pages, as well as press coverage of the event, for supplementary information on the organization and its conference.

I carried a small notebook at the conference in which I took extensive field notes. Because most conference attendees took notes (pads of paper and pens with the IWIB logo were provided on every table), I was able to take notes freely. I also carried my cell phone to take pictures, again a common practice among other conference goers. I gathered documents including the program from the conference and informational pamphlets on IWIB and its various membership options. All conference attendees also received a "goody bag" at the end of the day, which included documents and sample products from the various corporate sponsors of the event. Following the conference, I typed and detailed my notes, later writing reflexive memos. I coded my field notes and memos using a grounded theory approach, which includes initial coding, open coding, and extensive coding for emergent themes (Charmaz 2006). I adopt an inductive approach to analysis, with the key themes that emerged from this study unexpected, particularly the emphasis on wellness.

I use a feminist methodological approach, emphasizing personal reflexivity and paying attention to my positionality as a young, unmarried, childless, white, highly educated woman in the construction of this research (Harding 1987). My aim is not to paint the IWIB Conference as "good" or "bad" for women, but rather to uncover the complicated, and at times contradictory,

messages being given to working women by women in contemporary, patriarchal society. Nonetheless, I have chosen to anonymize the name of the organization and conference in order to protect conference attendees and speakers from public exposure. I have changed the names of the conference speakers, many of whom are prominent businesswomen in the region. However, I did include the name of the keynote speaker, Arianna Huffington, for two reasons. First, Huffington has given numerous talks across the country on similar topics in conjunction with her national press tour for her 2016 book, *The Sleep Revolution*. Second, Huffington is a public figure, often included on lists for "Most Influential" women in business and media, and her voice has in many ways shaped and disseminated messages of wellness and neoliberal feminism. I have thus included her identity to illustrate how the linkage of female empowerment and wellness has become a larger cultural phenomenon.

In the following sections, I walk through my observations as the day progressed and turn to my analysis. Because the conference in total included 22 speakers, my observations and notes are necessarily partial and incomplete. I was not able to capture any full speech, but jotted down general themes, notable quotes, and my impressions of the speakers. I also record audience members' reactions, particularly among the group of women seated at my table for the day. Through my memo writing and coding processes, I recognized that many of the speeches and panels had overlapping themes or offered similar advice to women, such that I was able to identify major ideas illustrated across the conference.

The 2016 Innovative Women in Business Conference

The two women founders of Innovative Women in Business met at a local networking event and connected over their shared frustration with the lack of sufficient networking opportunities for women entrepreneurs. They established IWIB aiming to create a signature local

conference featuring nationally-acclaimed speakers – a conference for women that was both "affordable and accessible." Press releases leading up to the IWIB Conference described the event as including a number of expert panels on money, personal branding, work-life balance, and "other topics near and dear to women pursuing careers." The conference schedule, published online prior to the event, included ninety minutes in the morning dedicated to networking before the official program would begin at 10:00am. Descriptions of the conference also mentioned a "professional networking station" in the vendor hall.

I arrive at the four-star hotel where the conference is being held just before 9:00am, to check in at registration and observe the morning networking. The conference takes up the entire third floor of the hotel's meeting and event space, and as I come up the escalator there is a sea of women milling around. Many women are in the registration line, but others are chatting in small groups, helping themselves to the provided Starbucks coffee and tea, or signing up for promotions at the sponsorship tables. As far as I can tell, there is no organized networking taking place, as I overhear women having casual discussions with their colleagues and acquaintances. One woman comments to another on the beautiful spring weather, saying she was thrilled to not go into the office today. I sign in at registration where I am given a pink wristband, which I am told by a smiling, twenty-something woman will get me my "goody bag" at the end of the day. Unlike other networking events that I have previously attended as part of this project, there are neither nametags nor programs handed out. I learn later, when one of the founders welcomes women to the conference, that the organization decided against nametags: "We promise we will never ruin your outfits by making you wear nametags." In protecting women's outfits, the organization jeopardizes its goal of connecting local businesswomen, as it becomes nearly

impossible for the women to remember each other's names, let alone their industry or company information.

Pink appears to be the color scheme of the conference: the registration tables have elegant pink and white floral arrangements on them, and the lobby is decorated with pink lighting and signage. There are several makeup stations set up where women are getting makeovers – sponsored by high-end cosmetic brands like Laura Mercier. Notable local businesses have sponsored the conference, including a women's hospital, a cycling studio, and a gift shop specializing in artisan goods. Each sponsor company has a table lining the lobby walls, and there are long lines of women at the tables with giveaways for beauty products, candles, and tote bags. Many of the conference speakers also have a table advertising their business or showcasing their products; for example, Arianna Huffington's new book, *The Sleep Revolution,* is for sale. The quality of free product samples is appealing to the conference goers, who remain in lines even as the program begins in the adjoining ballroom. While other local organizations tend to use membership dues or charitable donations to cover costs of their programs, IWIB's reliance on big-name sponsorship gives this event more of a corporate feel, with brands plastered on everything from the programs to the photo booth backdrop.

As I walk around, I notice that the women in attendance are predominantly white and in their twenties or thirties, but there are a handful of women who appear to be over fifty and some women of color in attendance. Most of the women are dressed in business attire – stiletto heels are the norm, with either dresses, skirt-suits, or slacks and a blouse. I have worn khaki pants with a blazer, but I feel underdressed in my flat shoes. I have made plans to meet up with a couple of women also attending – friends who work together at a large marketing firm – and so I send them a text message and locate them in the main ballroom.

The hotel ballroom is filled with roundtables, each seating ten people. I estimate there to be around 1,000 people in attendance. The tables have light gray tablecloths, dotted with pink floral centerpieces. Copies of the conference program are at each seat. At the front of the ballroom is a large stage with white leather couches set up, and two video screens abutting either side of a centered podium. Our table is in the center of the room, in line with the podium, but towards the rear. I chat with the women sitting at the table, introducing myself to those whom I have not previously met. Most of the women at our table are in their early twenties, identifying themselves as recent college graduates, but there are two older women who appear to be in their fifties sitting to my left. I look through the program, which indicates that everything will be happening in this ballroom, and so attendees will remain at their tables all day.

The program is organized by speaker, who will each have twenty minutes. Aside from two panels on personal branding and wellness, there are no speech titles or topics given. Only the speakers' names and professional titles are listed in the program. A surgeon from the sponsor hospital speaking in the afternoon is the only man in the program. I am surprised by this format; I had expected breakout sessions addressing industry-specific topics given the range of professional backgrounds in the room. At my table alone there are women who work in advertising, marketing, healthcare, and retail. The speakers therefore have the difficult task of reaching a variety of women which, as I will describe below, lends many of the talks to general pieces of advice considered relevant to all working women.

The IWIB Conference marketed itself as a space to "cultivate the growth of our city's most successful female business women and entrepreneurs through networking." However, I find that the structure of the conference prevents meaningful connections from being made among attendees; in fact, opportunities for networking remain altogether limited. The speakers are

scheduled back-to-back, so conversations among the women at my table only occur in quick intervals. I wish to ask other women their impressions of various speakers, but aside from the lunch hour, we have no time to have a conversation – and even then, there is loud music blaring. Additionally, Arianna Huffington's talk is the only one featuring an audience "Q&A," so dialogue between the women attendees is limited. Even the promised "professional networking station" remained elusive, perhaps lost among the sponsorship tables. While one of my goals for the conference was to meet women working in the technology industry, by the end of the day I have only spoken to a handful of the junior women at my table, and I do not remember their names nor do I leave with their contact information. I do see some women exchanging business cards out in the main lobby but I am unable to secure any direct contacts.

In this section, I have provided an overview of the IWIB Conference to illuminate how certain structural features hindered the organization's goals for the event. I will now dig deeper into my experiences at the conference to first describe how the event individualized women's career experiences, and also how it reproduced gendered wellness demands placed on contemporary working women. The discourse of the conference situates it as a neoliberal, entrepreneurial intervention contributing to the (re)production of a self-regulating, feminist subject.

"Control" and "Choice": The Individualization of Women's Careers

"The best jobs are the ones you create for yourself," Kelly Wong, the editor of a prominent women's magazine, tells the IWIB audience. Like the other conference speakers, Wong is on stage sharing her guiding principles to work, family, and life in general. While the speakers range in age, industry, and ethnoracial identity, their talks repeatedly emphasize the

themes of individual control and choice over careers. The emphasis on empowerment through individual control inadvertently urges women to disregard structural obstacles. As a result, the persistent structural, institutional, and cultural barriers facing women in the workplace remain invisible throughout the conference – instead perpetuating the self-regulating economic subject.

Wong tells the audience a story about the time she pitched herself to Facebook, hoping to get hired for her dream job. While she ultimately did not get the job, Wong describes the experience as beneficial because she learned to "take control" of her career trajectory. She encourages the women in the room, even those who have just started their careers, to visualize their dream jobs and develop plans to get there. She advises: "Whatever your level, be the exception." The moment a woman walks through the door of her company, Wong says that she should think about her plans to get to the next step. Two of the young women sitting at my table roll their eyes and nervously chuckle to each other in solidarity. They are fresh out of college, and have recently landed jobs at a prestigious marketing firm. Their shared laughter reveals their unease with the suggestion to already be thinking about their next job. Wong's advice places onus on individual women, from the moment they step foot in the office, to be exceptional and to create opportunities for themselves. The implication of this advice is that women can be agentic, self-serving actors who build their careers by working hard and making themselves noticeable.

The speakers generally breeze over career obstacles, instead stressing women's responsibility to accept, internalize, and overcome challenges through self-monitoring. In her 2013 bestselling book, *Lean In*, Sheryl Sandberg similarly encourages working women to "internalize the revolution," and converting gender inequality from a structural to individual affair is key component of neoliberal feminism (Rottenberg 2013). Two speeches exemplify the theme of internalizing career barriers as means to success. Donna Harvey is a black Caribbean

woman in her early 60s and the founder and CEO of her own media company. Harvey describes her difficulties as a young, black working woman working during the tumultuous, post-Civil Rights era. Yet she constructs a narrative of triumph due to the personal choices she made to self-monitor her attitudes and behaviors. Harvey describes how she has used being a woman of color to her advantage throughout her career: "Don't be bitter, get better," meaning rather than being bitter about her lack of privilege due to her positionality as a black woman, she chose instead to work harder and be better than everyone else. She encourages women to focus on their endless possibilities, viewing the metaphorical glass as "refillable," rather than half empty or full. Women, she says, can replenish their opportunities by pursuing their purpose in life with a positive attitude. Harvey recognizes the intersecting structures of race and gender, but she turns away from any discussion of structural inequalities to construct a narrative of achievement. Her career "was not a cakewalk," and was even at times "traumatizing," but she ultimately says, "I chose how to look at it." She chose to "be kind" to those around her – even those people who tried to limit her success.

Similarly, Shelley Fitzpatrick, a white woman in her fifties and CEO of Fitzpatrick Staffing Group, describes how she refused to attach meaning to her failures, instead allowing room for hardships in various arenas of her life. Women, Fitzpatrick says, need to learn to accept their vulnerabilities: "We need to surrender and dance with our limiting beliefs." She emphasizes being vulnerable and authentic, and the theme of women discovering their "authentic selves" reverberates across the conference speakers. Ofer Sharone (2013) finds that workers in the precarious, post-industrial economy must engage in emotional labor to produce and project an authentic self. Authenticity is framed not only as an end itself, but as a means for individuals to

achieve career goals. Women at IWIB are told that by working towards authenticity, they can accept their personal limitations and focus on their goals.

The speakers' stories at the conference tend to follow trajectories of initial hardship, followed by recognition and acceptance of personal limitations, and culminating in career and personal success. The message is that success depends on skills, beliefs, and presentations of self that are within one's control and can be mastered with practice (Sharone 2013). Speakers relied heavily on the ideology of meritocracy, echoing the belief that success comes to those women who work harder than anyone else, with some women sharing stories of working late into the night once their children have gone to bed, or sacrificing their weekends to catch up on emails. The idea that meaning in life can be achieved through personal choices resonates with neoliberal ideology (Baker 2008; Beck 2001; Giddens 1986). While some speakers acknowledge setbacks in their careers, the location of blame for these setbacks is in individual women's psyches. Rather than being encouraged to transform the world, women are instead to focus on the projects of perfecting their individual selves (Critchley 2007). This is not to say that women are passive beings without capacity to make decisions regarding their careers, but rather that the IWIB Conference's emphasis on individualism obscures the ongoing structural inequities, material forces, and cultural discourses constraining women's choices (Baker 2008; Beddoes and Pawley 2014).

The appearance of these neoliberal feminist messages in the media and popular self-help literature have been well-documented by scholars (e.g. Gill and Scharff 2011; McRobbie 2015; Rottenberg 2017), but their appearance within a women's professional conference represents their extension into a new context. Women speakers at IWIB may be concerned with issues of gender equity and social justice, but they repeatedly emphasize individual strategies to women's

success. Discussions of power, inequality, and discrimination are notably missing, lending the character of the conference to be largely depoliticized. Instead, the speakers adopt an approach to women's empowerment that largely centers on wellness and consumerism – lending credence to the popular feminist ideals of work-life balance and "having it all."

"Having It All": Empowerment through Wellness

Before lunch, I step out to the lobby to take a short break from the conference. I notice a smaller room off to the side with a sign reading: "Relaxation Room." The room is hushed, with large beanbag cushions laying on the floor, candles lit, and massage tables set up. Some conference attendees are getting free massages courtesy of a local spa, while other women are laying on the cushions and scrolling through their smartphones. The IWIB Conference places a strong emphasis on wellness and health, evidenced by features such as the Relaxation Room, corporate sponsorships from local fitness studios and health companies, as well as many of the themes emphasized by speakers throughout the day. Progressive womanhood in contemporary society is framed as a balancing act, with women's liberation reconceived as the ability to happily balance public and private aspects of the self (Rottenberg 2014). The conference repeatedly frames work-life balance as an ideal, and centers women's empowerment on the ability to balance a successful career, a satisfying home life, and – as I will illustrate – increasing demands for wellness. The inclusion of wellness within the context of a professional conference explicitly links women's economic success with their ability to take care of their bodies and minds. Acts of wellness become morphed into gendered economic demands, as women alone are responsible to engage in careful practices of self-management such as egg freezing in order to maximize their personal market value. The structural issue of work-life balance is converted into an individual obligation,

and again we see the conference as a space where feminist issues are present yet depoliticized. In this section, I will describe the gendered wellness demands disseminated at the conference, and how these demands contribute to the creation of a feminist economic subject. I will conclude by pointing to important moments of quiet resistance that I observed among the conference attendees in which it becomes clear they are not entirely duped by the neoliberal discourse of balance.

Wellness as Empowering Women

The theme of wellness came through the process of writing my field notes and memos; I had not expected a professional conference for innovative businesswomen to discuss fitness, beauty, or fertility, yet it became clear from the opening moments of the conference that balance and wellness would be central. In one such moment, during the opening remarks of the conference, one of IWIB's founders describes the conference as a space for women who "struggle to maintain work-life balance." Kelly Wong, the first speaker, emphasizes the importance of self-care: "Wellness is a luxury that all women deserve." By lunchtime, three of the six speakers have led the audience through some type of meditation, asking everyone to close their eyes, set an intention for the day, or reflect quietly for a few minutes. For example, Donna Harvey, described above, ends her speech with an inspirational reading. Before she begins reading, she asks us to close our eyes and meditate on the words. The passage is quite long, and most women around do not close their eyes; many women listen with their eyes open, or take out their phones. I myself have trouble focusing after a few minutes and do not listen to the entire passage.

Wellness notably comes to the fore in the afternoon program, with a thematic panel dedicated to the topic as well as a session on women's fertility. I will describe each of these

sessions in turn. The wellness panel includes five women, including executives from a career coaching firm, a juicery, and an organic skincare company. The panelists, sitting together on a white leather couch, each describe what wellness means to them. There is much discussion linking wellness to happiness. One woman tells the audience to "think of happiness as a bonus" because a positive mindset can lead to better health, productivity at work, efficiency, better relationships, and more money. Another panelist describes happiness as a muscle or a skill that, similar to riding a bike, will become natural with "regular practice." It is possible to have a "happier workout," expressing gratitude for fitness or practicing being still and silent. Happiness, therefore, is framed as something women must regularly work on to achieve wellness and subsequent career success.

The rise of the self-help movement, or what some have called the "happiness industry" (Davies 2015), is well-documented (e.g. Sharone 2013), yet the discussion of wellness at the IWIB Conference takes a distinctly gendered turn as it draws upon the feminist ideal of empowerment. While second wave feminists criticized normative beauty practices as oppressive, popular feminism today reclaims beauty and wellness practices as enjoyable, self-chosen feminist pursuits on the path to empowerment (Lazar 2006). The panelists repeatedly describe their healthy choices as empowering; for example, the founder of the juicery describes how wellness means not depriving ourselves of anything enjoyable, and she confesses to the audience that she ate a bread roll with her salad at lunch – a supposed act of empowerment. The founder of the skincare company describes how choices regarding what products women put on their skin can be empowering, saying women must research beauty products not only for themselves, but for their children too. She goes on to describe the "healthy" skincare products available at her store. Carla Freeman (2014) describes consumption-oriented, care-related, and self-directed

behaviors such as those discussed by these panelists as a form of gendered, affective labor that generate middle-class subjectivities. The flexible labor demands of creating and marketing the self now includes gendered, racialized, and class-based expectations of having certain material objects, enacting certain modes of leisure, or embodying certain lifestyles (Freeman 2014: 36). Popular feminism often ties women's individual agency and freedom to consumption, replacing the collectivist, activist politics of the past feminist movement (e.g. Eisenstein 2009; Fraser 2013). Many feminists view this mainstreaming and commodification of empowerment as a "selling out" of their principles – creating a "free market feminism" that operates within the capitalist system rather than challenging it (Genz and Brabon 2009: 5). Products and technologies are marketed as tools for women's empowerment, claiming to help them achieve perfection in all spheres of life, while contributing to the reproduction of the feminist economic subject.

Egg Freezing

The linking of work-family balance, women's empowerment, and neoliberal capitalism is exemplified through the IWIB Conference's session on women's fertility options. The program describes the session as a "fireside chat" between local TV personality Leslie Lincoln and fertility doctor Dr. Marco Bordonaro from Northeast Women's Hospital. Lincoln, a bubbly blonde white woman, has been the conference emcee all day, often encouraging the crowd to applaud at various moments. Following the wellness panel, Lincoln steps on stage looking uncharacteristically somber. She tells the audience that she wants to share something very personal, and the ballroom becomes silent as other women detect Lincoln's nervousness and shift in tone. Lincoln reveals that she is 33 years old and a single woman who wants to become a

mother, and therefore she has made the "difficult choice" to "take control of her fertility" by freezing her eggs. She introduces Dr. Bordonaro as her doctor, and together they will talk about the different options available to women, to provide knowledge for women to make decisions regarding their fertility.

The subsequent discussion between Lincoln and Bordonaro places individual responsibility on women to manage their bodies by timing pregnancies, all the while framing these choices as acts of female empowerment. Lincoln and Bordonaro sit across from each other on leather couches on stage, and Lincoln opens by explaining how women's "ovarian reserve" diminishes with age. Rather than waiting for the reserve to diminish completely, women have the option to freeze their viable eggs. At this point, I notice that several of the over-forty women in the room get up from their seats and exit to the main lobby, including the two women at my table. Lincoln then begins to ask her doctor general questions about egg freezing. Bordonaro explains that there is a "deadline" for women in terms of when the egg reserve will run out, as their eggs decline by the thousands every month. He explains the medical procedure involved in egg freezing, and describes it as an option to "push the pause button on IVF," which would come later in life as a woman decides to get pregnant. When Lincoln asks who this process is suited for, Bordonaro describes the small window of opportunity available to women to "take control" of their fertility, as women's ovarian reserves will eventually be depleted. The process of freezing eggs is therefore ideal for women ages thirty to thirty-five who want to "shift the deadline." By their late thirties, women's reserves are low enough that fertility and response to assistive reproductive technologies could be impacted. The quantity of eggs is one issue, says Bordonaro, and quality is another. In women's early thirties, 75 percent of their eggs are "normal," and this rapidly declines to ten percent by women's early forties. Bordonaro says in a

cautionary tone: “There is an ideal time for this, and the window can be missed.” As Bordonaro speaks throughout the session, Lincoln often nods and restates his information as means of confirmation. The two speakers repeat the phrases “empowerment,” “choice,” and “working within your timeline.” The fifteen-minute session ends with Lincoln describing feeling empowered by the option to take control over the biological timeline in which she is capable of having children, because she has been able to pursue her career without concern for her eggs.

As the session winds down, many of the young women sitting at my table agree that it was a “weird panel,” but they have trouble articulating why a session on freezing eggs felt out of place or uncomfortable to them. Postponement of childrearing has become part of the neoliberal feminist discourse surrounding investing in the self to enhance one’s personal market value, and upwardly mobile, middle-class women are increasingly being encouraged to invest in their careers first and to postpone maternity (Rottenberg 2017). Rather than an ideal achieved in the present, balance is framed as a promise for the future. If women carefully plan and sequence their careers and maternity, they will ensure enhanced rewards and personal fulfillment down the road. Catherine Rottenberg (2017) describes this as the “entrepreneurialization” of domestic life, as women become human capital who must “manage” their portfolio of family responsibilities (and motherhood in particular) alongside careers. New reproductive technologies such as egg freezing procedures are framed as means for women to ensure their future reproductive capacity. Egg freezing is particularly marketed as a technology for “fertility preservation,” with the narrative being that egg freezing is an empowering answer to women’s problem of anticipated infertility (Martin 2010). Women can use technology to delay childbearing and gain equal participation in employment with men; the process therefore gives women a sense of control over their careers, bodies, and fertility. Feminist scholars have long debated the social, political,

and economic implications of new reproductive technologies (which broadly include IVF, egg donation, and genetic testing in addition to egg freezing) (e.g. Corea 1985; Ginsburg and Rapp 1991; Rothman 1993), but there is growing cultural acceptance of healthy women using such technologies to postpone childbirth until after they have established their careers. This acceptance is evidenced by the employee benefits packages of companies like Facebook and Apple, which now include coverage of female employees freezing their eggs, as well as by this fertility session at a professional women's conference. Including a session on women's fertility at a professional conference for businesswomen directly links gendered expectations surrounding careers to women's anxieties about aging and reproduction. The IWIB Conference delivers the message that women can "have it all" by circumventing biological limitations through egg freezing.

Although egg freezing has the potential to expand women's reproductive options, the conference session serves to stigmatize women's inability to have children and to underscore the expectation that individual women must manage infertility treatments. Reproduction remains a normative part of the equation for middle-class women (Rottenberg 2017). It's not a question of *whether* women will become mothers, but rather *when* they will decide to become mothers. The conference reinforces the cultural expectation that women must navigate the dual responsibilities of career and family, by assuming that questions of fertility and childbirth will be relevant to attendees. Aside from Dr. Bordonaro, men are notably absent in this discussion about children, placing the sole onus on women to determine the appropriate timing of childbirth and revealing the gendered constraint of the neoliberal discourse of choice (Rottenberg 2017). Egg freezing is also an individualist solution to a social problem (Cattapan et al. 2014), and discussion of the structural context circumscribing women's reproductive choices, including the lack of

affordable, high-quality childcare and public support for work-family policies, remains absent from the conference. The session claims to offer technologies to free women from their "timeline" or biological clock, but instead it serves to reinforce the urgency at which women must decide about careers and family. Reproductive technologies are framed as tools of empowerment, and taking control of one's ovarian reserve becomes regarded as a moral responsibility of individual women such that they can "have it all" – simultaneously maximizing their career productivity, fertility, and wellness.

The IWIB Conference encourages women to ensure their future reproductive capacity, but does not acknowledge how the choice to freeze one's eggs is not available or accessible to all women (Cattapan et al. 2014). Egg freezing procedures are expensive, with costs estimated between $9,000 and $15,000, plus annual storage fees, and most insurance plans consider the procedure elective and do not cover it (Martin 2010). Like the broader cultural discourse surrounding access to reproductive technologies, the narrative at the IWIB Conference presents egg freezing as "developed for white, heterosexual, cisgender (nontrans), married (presumably monogamous) couples with substantial financial resources who are experiencing fertility problems" (Cattapan et al. 2014: 241). Egg freezing thus has potential to expand reproductive options only for certain, privileged groups of women, and does not alter the social structures or hierarchies reproducing inequalities. In the next section, I will elaborate on how the conference's narratives surrounding wellness and balance assume an ideal female subject, and how some women attendees resist this discourse.

Wellness as an Exclusionary Mechanism

The speakers at the IWIB Conference describe wellness opportunities as if they are freely available choices that every woman equally has the ability to make. When presented this way, wellness transforms into a gendered moral demand – something women ought to do to be good workers and mothers – and subsequently those who fail to cultivate their personal wellbeing are demonized (Metzl and Kirkland 2010). People who fail to meet wellness demands are seen as "a direct threat to contemporary society," for their inability to be healthy, happy, and – most importantly – productive workers (Cederström and Spicer 2015). However, many of the avenues of empowerment discussed at the conference come with a hefty price tag whether beauty products, gym memberships, or egg freezing.[2] Conceptions of a healthy body are linked to socioeconomic stratification, with a thin, fit body signifying social status – particularly for women – while other bodies are deemed abnormal or deviant (Upton and Han 2003). I find that the IWIB Conference, ostensibly aimed at the inclusion and advancement of women, creates a narrow image of what it means to be an "Innovative Woman in Business." The conference's discourse surrounding balance assume an ideal female subject configured as white, married to a man, a mother (or aspiring mother), working in a white-collar occupation, and interested in beauty, fitness, and health.

Most of the women attending IWIB admittedly embody these ideals; as mentioned above, the women conference attendees are predominantly white, recent college graduates, while the speakers tend to be white professional women in later career stages. Of the twenty-two speakers at the conference, only four are women of color and one woman discusses her background as an immigrant. Assumptions of the group as universally heterosexual are made throughout the day,

[2] The IWIB Conference itself came with a high cost: non-members could attend the conference for $170, and the cost for members was included in the annual membership fee of $425.

with repeated mentions of husbands in discussions of work-life balance. Additionally, the women overwhelmingly adhere to hegemonic expectations of femininity, wearing form-fitting dresses, stiletto heels, long hair, and heavy makeup. Discussions of work-life balance at the conference tend to reflect the privileged positionality of conference attendees, assuming conflicts due to long work hours and rigid career expectations incompatible with the intensive motherhood expectations of a "traditional" family. Missing from the conversation are women with inflexible jobs, low pay, or unstable schedules – workers who are one sick child away from being fired (Williams 2006). The conversation also excludes single mothers, women in alternative partnerships, and childless women.

Not every woman at the conference possessed this version of work-life balance, evidenced by some women's skeptical reactions to keynote speaker Arianna Huffington. In her talk, Huffington emphasizes the importance of eight hours of sleep every night to maximize productivity and wellbeing. She says that regardless of women having different versions of success, we should all pledge to get eight hours of sleep. Huffington delivers neoliberal messages of work-life balance, as she describes how people who get four to five hours of sleep per night are less productive, with sleep deprivation leading to incoherence and negativity. Last year, she tells the group, the U.S. lost eleven days and $63 billion in productivity due to sleep deprivation. Through sleep and what Huffington refers to as "charging our batteries," women can preserve the emotional and energy reservoirs needed to be good economic subjects (Freeman 2014). Sleep – like fertility – becomes another sphere for women to "work" on and regulate, part of the greater project of the flexible, entrepreneurial self.

As mentioned above, Huffington's session is the only opportunity during the conference for women to engage in collective dialogue – during the "Q&A" session following her speech,

the final speech of the day. A series of questions during the 45-minute "Q&A" center on the practicality of Huffington's suggestions. One white woman in her early forties stands up and describes her busy life as a business owner and the mother of two toddlers. She tells Huffington that the only time she can get work done is when her kids are asleep – usually in the middle of the night. The woman asks Huffington for suggestions, since a full eight hours of sleep is impossible. Other women around the room nod in agreement. Huffington acknowledges that her advice may be "nearly impossible" for mothers of young children to take, yet she encourages them to "find support teams" through their partners, family members, or babysitters, because, "We need to take care of ourselves in order to take care of others and run our businesses." A handful of women sitting at the tables in front of me turn to look at each other, smirking at the advice. Their reactions signal to me that these women do not have the kinds of "support teams," Huffington imagines, and as such her advice falls flat.

I point to this moment at the end of the conference to reveal that many of the women present do not buy into what one skeptical attendee described as "'eat, pray, love' bullshit" – or the neoliberal mandate to engage in wellness as part of the entrepreneurial project of the self. Similar evidence of their resistance could be seen in small moments throughout the day. For example, when some women checked their cell phone messages instead of engaging in the group meditations. Or when a local fitness studio led a stretching exercise after lunch, and hardly any women stood up to participate, instead choosing to sip coffee and eat dessert. And of course, during the session on fertility, during which young women expressed their discomfort with the conversation and women beyond the age of childbearing left the room entirely. The messages, indeed demands, for women to constantly work on themselves and cultivate a healthy approach to work and life are pervasive, and have trickled into spaces like professional conferences.

However, my observations of the women attending the IWIB Conference reveal that not all women passively accept these messages at face value; some women in fact refuse to go along with the interventions being presented to them.

Conclusion

While I observed some moments of modest resistance by women conference attendees, most women seemed genuinely pleased with the IWIB Conference. Social media posts using #IWIBConference2016 throughout the day and the week following were overwhelmingly positive, with women praising the conference and expressing feelings of gratitude and empowerment. Thus, the conference's emphasis on wellness resonated with many women, including my two friends, who decided to become members of IWIB following their experiences at the conference. The linking of control, hard work, and wellness as means to women's empowerment feels progressive, and other scholars describe how popular feminism resonates with white, middle class, and heterosexual young women like those women present at the IWIB Conference (Genz and Brabon 2009). bell hooks writes that this "new vision of female power works best for the middle class," with its message that "women can be procapitalist, rich, and progressive at the same time" (1996: 63). By making self-investments, working hard, and getting eight hours of sleep each night, women are told that they will achieve success and happiness in all spheres of their lives.

The compatibility of popular feminism and neoliberalism is well-documented, with studies examining the dissemination of free market feminism in the media, beauty industries, and girls' empowerment organizations (Banet-Weiser 2015; Gill 2008; Lazar 2006). In this paper, I have drawn upon my ethnographic, participant observation at the Innovative Women in Business

Conference to reveal how a professional women's conference reinforces the agenda of neoliberal feminism. Women-only professional groups and conferences emerged to address structural gender inequalities in the workplace – particularly women's exclusion from powerful social networks. Yet somewhere along the way, the IWIB Conference lost its collective, structural focus and instead individualized women's career and family experiences. Feminist issues are present at IWIB but, rather than fostering discussions of structural inequalities or creating a space for collective action, the conference encourages women to focus on what is within their control as individuals.

This case study also reveals how the linkage of female empowerment and wellness can seep into the market-based context of a women's professional conference. The central focus on wellness at IWIB explicitly connects women's economic success to their ability to take care of their bodies and minds. Acts of wellness are not only framed as a means for women's empowerment, but also as a gendered responsibility to improve personal market value. The speakers at the conference unknowingly tap into women's guilt and anxiety surrounding their inability to "have it all," encouraging women to invest in wellness products and technologies – many of which are conveniently offered by their companies in the booths out in the lobby. Women receive the message that, even if their work and family demands seem unmanageable, they have options within their control.

Like other feminist research criticizing women's empowerment organizations (e.g. Banet-Weiser 2015), I find that the IWIB Conference is a commercialized enterprise that reconfigures feminist values to produce an autonomous, self-regulating economic subject. This subject is aware of contemporary gender inequalities and may even identify as feminist, but accepts full responsibility for meeting demands of work, family, and wellness. I have pointed to

the ways in which the conference configured women's liberation as the ability to achieve work-life balance, thereby privileging white, middle-class, heterosexual women. With feminism being revived in the contemporary U.S., professional organizations increasingly form to address the persistent barriers to women's success in the workplace. With this new feminism complicit with patriarchal capitalism, scholars must consider whether feminist organizations serve to alleviate or reproduce configurations of gender inequality.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

I came to this project seeking to understand how social networks may serve to challenge or reproduce inequalities in the influential industry of technology. As with most qualitative research, what I discovered turned out to be a much more nuanced, complex story of gender, race, class, relationships, teams, networks, and organizations. Focusing on the case of Data, Inc. – a Boston software company – this project offers an empirical window into how elite technology workers navigate the world of work in the precarious, new economy. In a sociopolitical moment when the toxic cultures of discrimination and harassment of the country's most prominent high-tech companies are coming to light, I was granted a glimpse into one organization. For 9 months, I spoke with men and women about their work relationships and experiences, and observed them interact in meetings, on teams, and at lunch. I also attended 18 networking events unaffiliated with Data, Inc. to gain a sense of what networking looks and feels like in high-tech, particularly for women. I find that most workers employed at Data, Inc. – men and women – feel an enormous amount of pressure to network, and yet women particularly are dissatisfied with the opportunities to network available to them. This project has pointed to the structural and cultural factors of high-tech shaping one's network and networking practices, including the organizational division of labor, leadership, status hierarchies, project assignments, cultural symbols, social norms, and identities like gender, race, and class.

Through three empirical articles, my dissertation contributes to sociological conceptualizations of gender inequality in the twenty-first century workplace. I apply sociological analysis to the technology sector, which remains a highly gendered and racialized terrain despite organizational diversity efforts. In this concluding chapter, I would like to emphasize three key contributions of this project: (1) By considering how individuals "do" or

perform gender in networking interactions, I identify subtle interactive processes perpetuating intersectional inequalities within STEM fields like high-tech. Networking interactions reproduce exclusionary mechanisms such as implicit bias, creating symbolic boundaries that limit women's opportunities; (2) The organizational case study approach of this project further reveals how organizational factors moderate the relationship between gender and networks. This research contributes to gendered organizations theory by suggesting that a hybrid logic exists in innovative work settings – complicating our understanding of workplace gender inequality; (3) Finally, my project contributes to research demonstrating the unintended consequences of diversity programs in elite work settings. By "studying up," I reveal the intersecting forms of privilege and inequality embedded within a leading firm in the knowledge-based economy operating in an otherwise precarious labor market.

The "Doing" of Gender and Networks

Social network studies tend to be dominated by quantitative approaches, which have been important in understanding network structures and how varying structures enable or constrain access to resources and support (e.g. Burt 1992; Lin 2001). But networks represent mechanisms linking macro-level structures to individual-level behaviors, strategies, and meaning-making. Networks are not stable structures, but are continuously created, reproduced and modified in social processes. Networks inherently hold meaning, emanating from individual actors' identities, motivations, attitudes, and values. Cultural scripts and blueprints for social relationships shape social networks. Chapter 3 focuses on the "doing" of networks – or networking – to understand the micro-level activities engaged in by gendered individuals.

Investigating the specific ways in which men and women understand and use their networks allows for an understanding of the complex, gendered experiences of workers in the new economy.

Departing from social network studies that tend to view gender as a variable, I adopt a feminist understanding of gender as a complex social practice embedded in organizational routines and norms (Acker 1990). I suggest that gender and networking are intertwining social practices as individuals "do gender" as they engage in professional networking behaviors (West and Zimmerman 1987). This could be seen, for example, when men at Data, Inc. engage in strategic socializing – capitalizing on informal friendships formed through masculine activities like sports, video games, and drinking alcohol. Men do not consciously exclude women from their networks, but their being "one of the guys" allows them to act in accordance with institutionalized norms (Bird 1996; Martin 2001). When women attempt to counter the status quo through their gender practices, by building ties with other women, they paradoxically reinforce their disadvantaged status as well as intersectional boundaries among women. Also problematic is the de-legitimization of women's networking groups by men and some women seeking to fit the masculine culture of engineering, such that women working in male-dominated workplaces are disadvantaged from joining them (Williams, Muller, and Kilanski 2012). However, calling attention to gender in networking also captures important instances of actors countering power inequalities through networking – such as in the case of women of color engineers engaging in their own version of strategic socializing to connect with male colleagues.

Gendered Organizations in the New Economy

I fully expected when I began this project that Data, Inc. would be representative of the "new" or neoliberal work model, especially with its use of teams and projects and other flexible features (Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005; Williams 2013). Upon first walking into the office, Data, Inc. looked to me like a typical high-tech startup, with an informal dress code, open work spaces, and perks like free food and alcohol. I was later surprised to find that this expectation did not meet the reality, and workers continued to describe bureaucratic "red tape" and lament the organizational transition that occurred when the company went public. Over time, I discovered that this "new" organization was in fact operating much like the financial services firm studied by Rosabeth Moss Kanter back in the 1970s. Chapter 4 identifies the resiliency of bureaucracy in the neoliberal workplace, integrating theories of gendered organizations and organizational restructuring to demonstrate how the logic of Data, Inc. shapes worker experiences and relationships by gender. This chapter reveals a distinct type of organizational restructuring in the form of going public, and I argue that going public represents an organization-level gendering process that perpetuates inequalities in the new economy.

As the company transitioned from a flexible startup to a public firm, a hybrid logic emerges with distinct forms of inequality. The re-emergence of bureaucracy within the context of high-tech shuffles women into positions of lower status, power, and opportunity. Women at Data, Inc. find themselves in positions absent of vehicles to expand their highly-valued technical skills, participate in decisions, or build alliances outside of their team. The sex segregation and division of labor at the company are perpetuated by hegemonic gender beliefs about the skills and abilities of men and women (Ridgeway 2011), and women struggle to meet masculine expectations of the ideal worker norm (Acker 1990; Williams 2000). Men tend to dominate

highly valued technical roles and top leadership positions, and they are assumed to "naturally" possess the skills of the ideal worker (McIlwee and Robinson 1992; Ridgeway 2011). Studying organizational restructuring in the high-tech industry allows for a more nuanced understanding of patterns of inequality in the twenty-first century economy.

By using a gendered organizations lens, this chapter also addresses the critique of network studies for failing to take organizational context into consideration (Ely and Padavic 2007). Despite the tendency of social network research to rely on disembodied, rational actors operating in neutral workplaces (Benschop 2009), both individuals and organizations are shaped by gender, race, and class. This project discusses the structural and cultural mechanisms that contribute to women's relative marginality in work organizations, thereby affecting their professional networks (McGuire 2002; van den Brink and Benschop 2013). I demonstrate how the hybrid logic of Data, Inc. places women at a structural disadvantage that limits their ability to meet ideal worker expectations, reinforcing the glass ceiling for women in high-tech while solidifying men's power and status. As such, women at Data, Inc. accrue fewer interactional resources and less social capital than their male colleagues (McIlwee and Robinson 1992).

Networking as Diversity Management

Organizations invest significant resources into programs aimed at advancing women, particularly in the male-dominated STEM fields. Networking events, mentoring groups, and conferences are part of the proliferation of diversity management programs in response to research pointing to the isolation of women and minorities as a source of workplace inequality (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006). Feminist politics are playing an important role in improving women's status and inclusion in high-tech and STEM fields more broadly, evidenced by the

plethora of women-only programming designed to help women build strategic relationships to overcome the "old boys' clubs" in these industries. However, this project begins to demonstrate how corporate diversity efforts in high-tech may reproduce structural inequalities in the industry.

Chapter 5 critically examines one women's conference to illustrate how a collective space to support women inadvertently individualizes women's careers and further marginalizes certain groups of women, namely women of color, women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and LGBTQ women or women with diverse family forms. I demonstrate first how little networking actually happens in the context of the conference, with the event's goal to connect professional women overshadowed by a focus on lifestyle choices and personal consumer pleasures. I then argue that this conference represents a commercialized enterprise that redefines women's rights in terms of an individualist politics. The conference favors neoliberal feminism over the collectivist, social-welfare oriented feminism of the past to reproduce what scholars describe as a "feminist economic subject" (Rottenberg 2013). As such, the conference does little to challenge structural workplace inequalities or existing social stratifications.

Prominent high-tech companies like Google and Uber have women's groups and networks as part of their larger diversity programs (Google 2017; Uber 2018). In Chapter 3, I discuss the internal women's group at Data, Inc. and I suggest that the group subtly excludes women along lines of race, age, and cultural background – despite the good intentions of women leaders and those women organizing the group. The group perpetuates the company's dominant "athlete" culture that is accessible only to the younger, college-educated, white women. While this group of young white women find networking with other women to be "empowering," the small subset of women of color participants describe negative experiences with the program. Taken together, the findings from these chapters problematize the assumption of networking as a

sweeping solution to advance women in high-tech, as I find networking to reproduce hierarchies among women along lines of gender, race, class, and age. Using "empowerment" as an organizing frame for women's networking programs must continually be unpacked, as this frame tends to resonate mostly with white, middle-class, and heterosexual women (Genz and Brabon 2009; hooks 1996). More so, by individualizing women's career challenges in the technology industry and offering a corporatized version of feminism, networking programs ignore persistent institutional inequalities such as discrimination, stereotyping, and (paradoxically) women's exclusion from social networks. However, because the industry remains primarily in the hands of white men, there is minimal awareness of these issues or incentive to change the exclusionary culture and attitudes that pervade high-tech.

Project Implications and Moving Forward

This project suggests that scholars need to approach questions of networks and professional networking with a critical intersectional lens. Networks consist of interactions, relationships, values, and social norms, all of which are shaped by the intersecting identities of network members. This study focuses on a very small and elite group of workers in today's economy who have access to many privileges. The strategies they employ and the boundaries they create amongst themselves are important, as they impact who is included and excluded in one the most lucrative industries in the United States. As a white woman with an elite education and affluent family background, I have access to the cultural capital necessary to navigate a site where many researchers may encounter more resistance. At the same time, certain groups of workers remained elusive to me throughout this study. One such group is the temporary workers doing the "dirty work" at Data, Inc. such as cleaning, facility maintenance, and security. I

observed this group to be largely racial minorities who are non-English speaking but, because they are considered peripheral, or not "full-fledged members" of the organization, they were not included in this project's recruitment (Kunda 1992: 38). While this study focused on symbolic boundaries created amongst the (mostly) white "core" technology workers, future studies could focus on these different "tiers" of workers, and consider the implications of who is considered a true employee in the "spectrum of belonging" in this organization (Alfrey and Twine 2017; Kunda 1992).

This study also focuses on a single organization: Data, Inc. While both Data, Inc. and the Greater Boston area represent important sites to study the gendered implications of networking, this case study is necessarily limited in its scope. Future studies could advance this project and add nuance to my findings by exploring high-tech or STEM organizations that vary in terms of location, size, structure, or culture. Comparative studies involving multiple organizations could also provide a fuller picture of networking within the broader industry. Additionally, with high-tech being a global industry, it would be interesting to compare diversity or networking programs for women working in technology in Europe or Southeast Asia, for example. Comparative analyses would allow for a more fuller understanding of how work organizations in technology perpetuate subtle – and not so subtle – forms of inequality.

Another area for future research could explore the role of networking in different moments in workers' careers. My sample captured a range of workers in terms of age and organizational level, however common discourse suggests that networking becomes most useful during moments of career transitions or unemployment (Lane 2011; Sharone 2013). Even professional, white-collar workers face job insecurity in the era of "flexible" labor (Barley and Kunda 2004; Lane 2011), and research could better interrogate this relationship between

networking and precarity by targeting workers who have recently been laid off, for example, or who are actively looking for a new job. How people imagine they would network while unemployed versus how they actually navigate precarious conditions could be entirely different.

This research has practical implications as well, as it can inform U.S. technology companies as they seek to develop policies and programs to support underrepresented and marginalized workers in high-tech. Most companies want to win the "talent war" and claim that recruiting and retaining women are essential to that goal (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, and Axelrod 2001). While industry leaders, including some respondents in this study, point to the "leaky pipeline" and other supply-side related factors as their largest obstacle, this study suggests that companies are at least partly responsible for the dearth of women in high-tech careers (see also Wynn and Correll 2018). An important finding is that women high-tech workers in this study raise important issues with the programming being offered to them, often revealing their dissatisfaction and frustrations in interviews. Companies have the opportunity to be more mindful of their programming as well as the workplace culture more generally to avoid systematic bias. Organizations could apply what Shelley Correll (2017) describes as "small wins" interventions to achieve greater equality: concrete, implementable actions that produce visible results. Companies could survey members on events they would like to see, and establish formal committees with diverse members held accountable to design inclusive events, such as hosting a mid-day networking lunch or inviting speakers from diverse backgrounds. Creating networking events and conferences that are hospitable to women and other underrepresented groups will help attract and retain them as employees. High-tech organizations should also consider how to best support more informal networking and relationship-building opportunities amongst coworkers. Some women of color circumvent the formal networking program at Data,

Inc. altogether, adopting more informal networking strategies to connect with their mostly male colleagues. This finding affirms other research demonstrating that women of color strategically employ networks to challenge the status quo, creating inroads into organizations that may otherwise be blocked (Shih 2001).

The pace of women's integration into male-dominated fields has been "uneven" and "stalled" since the 1980s (England 2010). Even as women's share of the college-educated workforce has increased, women remain underrepresented in STEM fields – some of the most lucrative and high-status industries in today's economy (EEOC 2016; England et al. 2007). Like other STEM fields, technology is a gendered institution that privileges masculine qualities and favors men while creating a chilly climate for women (Faulkner 2009). Networks are key to advancement in high-tech, but women often have fewer opportunities to network outside of their immediate working group (Simard et al. 2017). It would seem that if only women engaged in certain networking strategies, they would increase their visibility, find mentors, and locate opportunities. However, the ways in which networking is structured in the high-tech industry – almost always occurring after work hours, centered on alcohol – excludes women, other workers with families, or those who wish to avoid compromising situations and becoming the next person to say #MeToo. Networking remains toxic for women, but if women avoid networking altogether, they may be shut out of important business conversations or deal-making opportunities (Blair-Loy 2001). Considering the demographic makeup of the technology industry and its leadership, understanding inequalities in high-tech demands a critical feminist, organizational lens to better understand the unintended and at times contradictory effects of practices aimed to make the digital economy more inclusive. My project has sought to amplify the voices of women and marginalized workers to shift the discussion of gender inequality in

high-tech away from “fixing” women and toward an analysis of the networks of exclusion endemic to the technology industry.

APPENDIX A: Interview Questionnaires

1. Interview guide for **(non-management) workers**

Current Position and Workplace Relationships

- What is your current position at this company? Can you describe to me what you do?
- How did you learn about the job opening for your current position? Were you actively looking for a job, or did this information just "fall into your lap?"
- Tell me about the individuals you interact with on a daily basis at work. Who do you turn to for important work matters?
    - How would you characterize your relationships with the people you work around?
    - Do you hang out with any of the people you just mentioned outside of work?
- Do you turn to different people for professional growth and career development, or are they mostly the same?
    - Can you describe anyone who has been particularly helpful to you in your career or who you would consider a mentor?
- How do you feel about the social environment or culture at work? Do you feel you fit in, and in what ways?

Value of Networking

- Can you describe an example of a time in your career where a relationship with one of your contacts led to a particularly successful outcome for you? (getting a job, completing a project, or achieving some other goal)
    - How did you initially develop your relationship with the person in this situation? Did you initiate the relationship, and how?
    - How do you stay in touch or maintain the relationship?
- How important do you think it is to know other people in the tech industry?
- How do people tend to network in the tech industry? What do you think it takes to build connections?

Networking Strategies & Practices

- What's important to you in a network relationship? What kinds of people do you try to develop relationships with?
    - (Women): Do you actively seek out other women to network with? Why or why not?

- If you wanted to look for a new job or promotion, how would you go about it? Who would you need to have a conversation with, and how would you approach the conversation? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?

- Do you think men/women would go about looking for a new job or promotion in the way you just described?

- How good/valuable/effective do you think your network is? Why?

- Could you describe a time when networking felt uncomfortable or awkward to you?

Career Mobility

- Where do you see your career five years from now? How do you plan to get there?
- How would you compare where you're currently at in your career to people you grew up with? What role do you think your networks played in getting you where you are today?

Organizational Initiatives

- I'd like to ask you about your participation in various programs or events. Have you ever participated in:
    - Career development programs hosted by your company
    - Team bonding activities
    - Career development or networking programs specifically for women
    - Events or programs that bring people together from across the industry
    - Professional groups or industry organizations

- What did these programs/events look like? What are your thoughts on them? What resources or connections have they provided you with?

Wrap-up

- Do you think I missed any important questions? Is there anything else you think I should know? Who else should I talk to?

2. Interview guide for **management and/or executive-level workers**

Current Position and Workplace Relationships

- What is your current position at this company? Can you describe to me what you do?
- How did you learn about the job opening for your current position? Were you actively looking for a job, or did this information just "fall into your lap?"
- Tell me about the individuals you interact with on a daily basis at work. How would you characterize your relationships with the people you work around? Do you hang out with coworkers outside of work?
- How do you feel about the social environment or culture at work? Do you feel you fit in, and in what ways?
- Can you describe anyone who has been particularly helpful to you in your career or who you would consider a mentor?
- Would you consider yourself to be a mentor to anyone? What kinds of things do you do to help them with their careers?

Value of Networking

- Can you describe an example of a time in your career where networking helped you in terms of getting a job, completing a project, or achieving some other goal?
- How important do you think it is to know other people in the tech industry? Do you belong to any professional groups or industry organizations?
- How do people tend to network in the tech industry? What do you think it takes to build connections?

Networking Strategies & Practices

- What's important to you in a network relationship? What kinds of people do you try to develop relationships with?
- If you wanted to look for a new job or promotion, how would you go about it? Who would you need to have a conversation with, and how would you approach the conversation? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?
- Do you think men/women would go about looking for a new job or promotion in the way you just described?
- Could you describe a time when networking felt uncomfortable or awkward to you?

Career Mobility

- Where do you see your career five years from now? How do you plan to get there?
- How would you compare where you're currently at in your career to people you grew up with? What role do you think your networks played in getting you where you are today?

Organizational Initiatives

- Can you describe what kinds of initiatives or programs that your company has in place to support employees, like career development or team bonding? Are there any initiatives in place to specifically support women? What are your thoughts on these programs?
    - Was there anyone in the company who particularly supported these programs?

Wrap-up

- Do you think I missed any important questions? Is there anything else you think I should know? Who else should I talk to?

3. Interview guide for **organizers** of networking initiatives

Current Position and Workplace Relationships

- What is your current position at this company? Can you describe to me what you do?

- How did you learn about the job opening for your current position? Were you actively looking for a job, or did this information just "fall into your lap?"

(Remainder of questions asked only if appropriate; that is, only if interviewee serves other roles in the company such as human resources; otherwise SKIP to next section)

- How do you feel about the social environment or culture at work? Do you feel you fit in, and in what ways?

- Can you describe anyone who has been particularly helpful to you in your career or who you would consider a mentor?

- Would you consider yourself to be a mentor to anyone? What kinds of things do you do to help them with their careers?

Value of Networking

- Can you describe an example of a time in your career where networking helped you in terms of getting a job, completing a project, or achieving some other goal?

- How important do you think it is to know other people in the tech industry? Do you belong to any professional groups or industry organizations?

- How do people tend to network in the tech industry? What do you think it takes to build connections?

Organizational Initiatives

- I'd like to ask you about your role in various programs or events. Have you ever been involved in planning or organizing:
    - Career development programs hosted by your company
    - Team bonding activities
    - Career development or networking programs specifically for women
    - Events or programs that bring people together from across the industry

- What did these programs/events look like? Where did the idea for these programs come from? Was anyone in the company particularly supportive of the idea? What are your thoughts on them?
    - About how many people have participated in these programs would you say? Who generally tends to participate? (Entry-level/management; men/women; certain departments)

Wrap-up

- Do you think I missed any important questions? Is there anything else you think I should know? Who else should I talk to?

4. Interview guide for **industry experts**

Current Position and Workplace Relationships

- What is your current position at this company? Can you describe to me what you do?
- How did you learn about the job opening for your current position? Were you actively looking for a job, or did this information just "fall into your lap?"
- Tell me about the individuals you interact with on a daily basis at work. How would you characterize your relationships with the people you work around? Do you hang out with coworkers outside of work?
- How do you feel about the social environment or culture at work? Do you feel you fit in, and in what ways?
- Can you describe anyone who has been particularly helpful to you in your career or who you would consider a mentor?
- Would you consider yourself to be a mentor to anyone? What kinds of things do you do to help them with their careers?

Value of Networking

- Can you describe an example of a time in your career where networking helped you in terms of getting a job, completing a project, or achieving some other goal?
- How important do you think it is to know other people in the tech industry? Do you belong to any professional groups or industry organizations?
- How do people tend to network in the tech industry? What do you think it takes to build connections?

Networking Strategies & Practices

- What's important to you in a network relationship? What kinds of people do you try to develop relationships with?
- If you wanted to look for a new job or promotion, how would you go about it? Who would you need to have a conversation with, and how would you approach the conversation? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?
- Do you think men/women would go about looking for a new job or promotion in the way you just described?
- Could you describe a time when networking felt uncomfortable or awkward to you?

Career Mobility

- (If appropriate) Where do you see your career five years from now? How do you plan to get there?

Organizational Initiatives

- In your experience, what are some examples of programs or initiatives that have been successful in promoting networking either among employees working in high-tech (these could include: team bonding activities, relationship building, career development programs)?
    - Would you do anything to change or improve these programs?

- Can you describe any successful initiatives specifically for women that you have come across in your career?
    - Would you do anything to change or improve these programs?

- In an ideal world, what kinds of programs do you think tech companies should be offering to help their employees get ahead? To help women get ahead?
    - Why don't we see more of these kinds of programs?

Wrap-up

Do you think I missed any important questions? Is there anything else you think I should know? Who else should I talk to?

APPENDIX B: Demographic Questionnaire

What is your current job title? _____

How long have you been working at this company? _____

What is the highest level of education you've completed?

- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Some college or technical school
- ☐ Trade/technical/vocational training
- ☐ College graduate (Indicate college major/s): _____
- ☐ Graduate degree (Indicate degree type/s): _____

In what year were you born? _____

In what country were you born? _____

What is your gender?

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Other _____

What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Black
- ☐ Mixed Race
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ White
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Middle Eastern
- ☐ Other _____

How would you identify yourself in terms of class position?

- ☐ Working class
- ☐ Middle class
- ☐ Middle-Upper class
- ☐ Upper Class
- ☐ Prefer not to identify

APPENDIX C: List of Networking Events Attended

EVENT NAME (Sponsor Organization)	DATE	LOCATION
Igniting Change: Women in the Business of Disruptive Technologies (The Boston Club)	3/22/16	Boston
Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power, and Relational Practice at work (Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons School of Management)	3/30/16	Boston
Northeastern University Women's Leadership Conference (Northeastern University)	4/2/16	Boston
W.O.M.E.N. in Tech (She Geeks Out)	4/13/16	Boston
Why It's Worth Taking Risks (MITX Influence(her))	4/14/16	Cambridge
Women in Science and the Burnout Factor (WEST)	4/28/16	Cambridge
The Innovation Conference for Boston Business Women (Boston Business Women)	5/9/16	Boston
You Raised Us, Now Work with Us: Millennials, Career Success, and Building Strong Workplace Teams (The Commonwealth Institute)	5/10/16	Boston
Diversity Speakers Series (Women Who Code)	6/23/16	Boston
Monthly Networking Event (She Geeks Out)	6/28/18	Boston
Annual Networking Night w/ Cross-Cultural Communication and Understanding (WEST)	7/21/16	Cambridge
Monthly Networking Event (She Geeks Out)	7/26/16	Boston
Hiring in Tech - What Companies are REALLY Looking For (ChickTech)	7/28/16	Cambridge
Entrepreneur CEO Panel Discussion and Rooftop Networking Event (0 Degrees of Separation)	8/10/16	Boston
Innovation in the Fortune 500 (Tech in Motion Meetup)	9/29/16	Cambridge
Fight Imposter Syndrome (WITI Boston)	10/20/16	Boston
Boston Startup and Tech Expo	11/1/16	Boston
Imposter Syndrome Panel (She Geeks Out)	5/2/17	Cambridge

APPENDIX D: Sample Demographic Information

Characteristic	*Women (n=32)*	*Men (n=18)*
Race		
White	27	13
Black	1	0
Asian	2	4
Mixed Race	2	1
Age[i]		
30 and younger	10	4
31-44 years	14	8
45 and older	3	6
Nationality[ii]		
U.S.-born	27	14
Foreign-born	3	4
Education Level		
Advanced degree	7	8
Bachelor's	23	7
Some college	2	3
High school	0	0
Occupational Position		
Technical role	10	14
Non-technical role	22	4
Tenure at firm		
More than 3 years	8	5
1-3 years	15	10
Less than 1 year	9	3

[i]5 women did not disclose their age.
[ii]2 women did not disclose their nationality.

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