Title

Inclusive Construction: Women and Technology through Feminist Standpoint Theory

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Abstract: With the introduction of more advanced technologies in the construction industry, women have been employed in industry more than in the past. Feminist standpoint theory is employed in exploring how the two can be correlated.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, technology has significantly expanded opportunities for women in the workforce by enabling flexible work arrangements, remote work, and improved work-life balance. Digital platforms have enhanced networking and mentorship opportunities, while online education has increased access to skill development and STEM fields. Automation of routine tasks has freed up time for women to focus on strategic roles and career growth. These advancements have collectively empowered women to enter and thrive in various industries, including traditionally male-dominated sectors, while also supporting those with caregiving responsibilities [1]. This work is in partial fulfillment of the ENGR184 course using the blueprint curriculum in Ref.[2,3] and captured in a collection [4].

FRAMEWORK

Developed through feminist philosophy, standpoint theory examines how privileges and penalties vary with a person based on their lived experiences. Those lived experiences are set under a given social context and are shaped by power structures in our societies. Through analyzing penalties and privileges, marginalized groups can be determined based on social identities such as gender, race, or class. As a result, these groups gain unique insights into societal inequalities that dominant groups may miss [5]. Social contexts are molded by society's shared beliefs, customs, and practices. Furthermore, these cultural elements guide behavior, interactions, and understanding of the world around us. Social contexts range diversely and for example can be or be a combination of work, family, sexual politics, and motherhood just to name a few. On the other hand, power structures dictate who has power in a social context. Resultingly, certain groups of people are given power making them a dominant group whereas the groups with minimal power become marginalized. Objectivity is then determined by the dominant groups while the marginalized struggle to have their knowledge recognized. Oftentimes, the knowledge of the marginalized groups exposes flaws in mainstream narratives.

APPLICATION

To apply standpoint theory, the social context chosen was the construction industry. In the given social context, the standpoint of women revealed several penalties. When looking at the work environment, many women noticed how majority of the safety equipment in industry are designed for men, revealing systemic biases that may increase physical risks for women [6]. Additionally, 26.5% of women in construction reported they suffered sexual harassment with some stating it's often normalized as part of the industry's "masculine culture". Additionally, it was mentioned male-dominated sites perpetuate exclusionary norms, such as viewing trades like plumbing or masonry as "non-traditional" for women [7]. When looking at career development, women pointed out they face slower promotions and limited leadership roles due to stereotypes about their competence in technical or managerial roles [8]. The power structure at play is patriarchy. Optimistically, organizations like NAWIC and Women in Construction, Inc. (WIC) leverage women's shared experiences to advocate for

mentorship programs and equitable hiring policies. The programs provide ways on how the construction industry can further grow inclusive.

CONCLUSIONS

Future research can be done towards the intersectionality of gender and race within the construction industry. In that case, the standpoint of a Hispanic woman would be analyzed.

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