WOMEN IN THE INTEGRATED CIRCUIT: A STUDY EXAMINING THE
INTERSECTION BETWEEN TECHNOLOGY, SUBJECTIVITY, AND THE ACADEMY

A Dissertation
by
LISA ANN MCNEAL

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Abstract

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Much research focuses on how faculty and students use computers in the classroom,

women's reticence toward technology, and women's negative experiences in male-dominated

working environments; however, there is limited research about how women faculty navigate

different technology discourses. The purpose of this study was to better understand the

complex role of technology in the lives of women faculty in higher education. This

qualitative case study was situated at the intersection of feminist critiques of technology and

feminist endorsements of technology, with attention to the postmodern concepts of

subjectivity and agency.

The study participants were five full-time, tenure track women faculty from diverse

academic fields with various attitudes toward technology adoption. In this qualitative case

study, multiple methods were used to understand how computer technology shapes the

professional, personal, and socio-cultural experiences of five women. The study's methods

included in-depth interviews, observations, document analyses, and tours of technological

objects. The research questions were: 1) How do women faculty navigate and put to use

different technology discourses? 2) How are their technology practices contextual and fluid? and 3) How does technology shape their subjectivity and produce agency?

This sonata-form case study featured interplay among dominant and tonic themes that represented each participant's typical (dominant) and unexpected (tonic) approach to technology. The sonata-form case study allowed the researcher to shift among several different themes, explore emerging tensions, and creatively present the findings. Additionally, each woman was assigned a metaphorical musical instrument to highlight her relationship with technology. Data from the in-depth interviews, observations, documents, and tours of technological objects were also analyzed theoretically. Data analysis was guided by theories that informed the study. Four key concepts were discussed: interruption, resistance, submission, and tension. These key concepts or theoretically rich words served as conceptual anchors and were used as the framework for analysis. The key concepts were informed by the theories from the research literature and the participants' stories. Implications for university administrators, information technology leaders, and faculty development staff are included along with suggestions for future research.