

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE WOMEN OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR SOCIAL  
MEDIA USE AND PARTICIPATION

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF HUMAN RELATIONS

By

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Norman, Oklahoma  
2019

THE WOMEN OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR SOCIAL  
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BY

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative research project used a content analysis methodology to analyze the Twitter feeds from three women in Classical Studies in order to identify 1) how they are using Twitter to their advantage in a historically misogynistic field and 2) how they are using Twitter to form a community of women within academia to support one another. The three participants are scholars in Classical Studies, active on social media, continually attend conferences, and publish in the field. The Twitter feeds were scraped for data, and the Twitter feeds were collected for a content analysis that was conducted by two researchers. The findings of this research showed that women are using Twitter to support each other's work in the field and advertise their own re-readings of Classical history and mythology. This research can be replicated in different fields for future studies, as well as in conjunction with a quantitative analysis, concerning a small group of people and the implications of their social media use.

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The Women of Classical Studies and the Implications of Their Social Media Use and  
Participation

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

*General Statement of the Problem*

Social movements in Internet-based media have led to a significant increase in the conversation surrounding feminist issues such as gender discrimination and sexual harassment. Women are more empowered to vocalize and share their experience because of their ability to reach a global, visible platform from the convenience of the Internet. Since 2010, there has been a notable increase in the number of global women using social media to raise awareness about patriarchy, sexism, gender violence, and inequality (Turley & Fisher, 2018). Using this current climate between feminist social movements and social media, the present research targeted a specific sect of individuals currently active in a historically misogynistic field. Traditionally, white males have dominated the study of Classics, a branch of the humanities that focuses on Greco-Roman history, and reports of sexual harassment are shockingly prevalent in the field. According to a newsletter released to Australasian Society for Classical Studies, members reported acts of sexual harassment at conferences as well as their workplace and such types of “unprofessional behavior” were tolerated in the field “decades ago” (Mackay & Penwill, 2016, p. 2). While it is openly admitted that such behavior was once tolerated, it is evident that, despite the influx of women in academia as well as the progressive feminist movements, women in the field are still targeted and victimized.

*Significance of the Research*

This qualitative research project targeted active females in Classical Studies, who use social media personally and professionally, and who have spoken out or have been affected by the permeating misogynistic subculture of their field. Active Classicists highlight the implied

contributions that outside research can bring to Classical Studies as there is currently no known research done in Classics regarding how scholars are using social media for personal and/or professional use. Dr. Fiona McHardy (2016) expressed that data collection and research validation should be conducted by social scientist to approach “significant ethics questions” and can “validate survey methodologies” (p. 4). Data collection done by an individual within the social sciences fulfills an advocacy role as a voice for women in Classics and help Classicists measure the extent of the situation, the impact of misogyny on women in the field, and resources that women in the field utilize to connect to other females in Classical Studies.

If data can be collected from an outsider, then the goal would be to minimize the effects of previous bias or assumptions that those active in the field of Classics would carry with them. Within the social science aspect of this research, this contribution discusses how social media helps a targeted sect of women connect with feminist conversations within an assumed isolating line of work. Digital platforms offer an opportunity to advance feminist agendas, disseminate ideas, and offer solidarity (Locke, Latham, & Lyons, 2018). It was of interest to target this particular sect of individuals because they are assumed to be entrenched in a patriarchal, misogynistic field that still participates in a sexist culture in the very pillar of their lives and their careers.

### *Research Purpose and Questions*

The research was a qualitative research study of the Twitter activity of three active female academics in Classical Studies. It explored both the positive and negative roles of social media and its impact on the careers and personal lives of female academics within Classical Studies. The purpose of this qualitative study was to uncover a social media-based community that women in academia have built to share comradery throughout their field and discuss sensitive subjects such as sexual harassment and gender inequality. This research aimed to

uncover how women in academia empower each other and openly discuss personal agendas on a public platform. Ideally, this research uncovered a positive influential community within social media surrounding this field that is both lacking in female recognition, typically run by white males, and historically lacking in participation from minorities. The research aims/questions were as followed:

The content analysis sought to determine how an individual's use of social media and participation in social media has impacted their career whether positively and negatively. How are women in Classics using Twitter to discuss the academic and political culture? Has their participation formed a community of women in Classical Studies? How are the women in Classics using Twitter to promote their ideas, their work, and each other's successes?

#### *Assumptions*

The most significant assumption that led this qualitative research was that women in Classics are using Twitter and other social medias as a subversive platform to discuss controversial subjects such politics, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination that they would otherwise be discouraged from discussing in fear of retribution. It could have been the case that none of these women were discussing controversial subjects and that the current status quo is accepted as a community. Or they could have been uncomfortable discussing controversial issues on social media, so they refrain from having discussions on public platforms. This study was functioning on the assumption that women in Classics are turning to social media platforms to form community in an isolating profession. There are a few terms listed below for reference as the research is focused on two intersecting yet specific subject areas.

#### *Definition of Terms*

**Twitter**- social media platform, microblog, that allows users to post short segments 140 characters in length



**Microblog**- online platform that allows for short, frequent posts

**Tweet**- what the post on Twitter is called

**Hashtag**- attached to words or phrases to identify particular topics

**Tagging**- using the @ symbol to call out another member of the social media platform

**Classical Studies**- the study of Greco-Roman history, literature, and culture

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Academic institutions in the western hemisphere have been aligned with white men and their perspectives since its establishment. This tradition has continually resulted in women being overlooked in regards to research, academic pursuits, and promotions within academia. Hence this has changed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, women began integrating into the higher education system but were educated with white male perspectives that endorse specific social role of a woman such as domestic roles and child rearing (Rury, 1984). Women in higher education programs compliment these perspectives by supporting women enrollment in teaching and nursing careers. If women went to university at this time, it was to learn about domestic trades and responsibilities rather than debating philosophy or researching history. This discourse pushed a very specific set of courses for women resulting in education being a tool used by men to keep women within the scope of domestic servitude and reinforce male dominance. It was not until the era of World War II, when men were on the battlefield rather than in the colleges, which made it possible for women to pursue an advanced education. Women at this time were able to pursue higher education in fields that were once unpopular and discouraged for their gender (Flannery, 2010). Without the pervasive influence of male dominance during the war, women then felt free to pursue different fields of interest once kept from them as an excuse that it was beyond their skillset and beyond their social norm.

Once women began to stand against male patriarchy they began demanding their right to vote, legal rights in workplace and household, and their rights as individuals. The first wave of feminism focused on gaining women their right to vote (cite). The first wave of feminism empowered future women to come together in numbers and fight against the standard patriarchal society. In response to gaining the right to vote, empowered women continued the feminist movement to the second wave of feminism, which began from the early 1960s and spanned to

the 1980s, focused more on the woman and her rights as an individual. Second wave feminism is notable because its succession to the first wave of feminism, the number of women that took part of this wave, and the variety of topics that they addressed. Second wave feminism continued the first wave's efforts to fight against patriarchal oppression and was pivotal in defining sexual harassment as a method of female oppression for Title VII of the civil rights act in 1964 (cite).

This portion of the second feminist wave led to academic institutions beginning to establish programs to protect, promote, and advocate for women. Administrative offices such as women's centers and affirmative action programs were developed to address gender discrimination and sexual harassment on campus (Koikari & Hippensteele, 2010). The implementation of such programs seeks to address the disparaging gender gap, sexual harassment, and gender inequality. As the oppression of women in higher education became recognized as a form of male dominance to subdue the careers of female academics, it became necessary for universities to provide resources to negate the negative effects of gender bias and prevent perpetual sexual harassment. The increase of attention on women's rights during this time lead to policy-based agendas and legal tactics that focused on individual's rights (Koikari & Hippensteele, 2010). These measures were some of the most important steps in addressing gender discrimination on campuses. Now everyone is free to pursue higher education of their own volition and their own interests. Ultimately, this change did not come without challenges that are still present for women in higher education as the gender ratios are continually unequal in academic leadership, and women lack representation in academic policy creation. An increase in resources, administrative policies, and advocacy tools meant that women could participate in academia knowing that they now had the means to officially defend themselves against differences in pay, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination.

Misogyny is still heavily present in academia today. Misogyny is operational gender discrimination against women in social systems that reinforces male dominance (Illings, 2018). Misogyny is built into the structure of social institutions such as academia to prevent women from overthrowing the patriarchy that has held power in such institutions for decades. Misogyny in academia can be seen still today in the significant wage gap between men and women, gender inequality in scholarship, and sexual harassment in the field. In line with this contention, the present research project focused on the challenges that are still present for women in higher education and how those women are developing new tactics to recognize and stand against the pervasive misogyny that manifests in their salaries, gender inequality, and sexual harassment in academia.

#### *Misogyny in the Wage Gap and Underrepresentation*

Although men and women are equally allowed to continue their pursuits in higher education whether as a scholar or an administrator, sexual harassment and gender inequality in the field are still rampant and prevalent while being exemplified through significant differences in wages, lack of promotions for women, and the noticeable absence of women in higher education administration. Sexual harassment in academia arises in various forms and needs to be explored through analyzing interactions, measuring the gender ratio of the field, and responding to the astute and obvious differences that are the result of gender discrimination. Women in academia, specifically the humanities, account for less than a third of professors in academia in 2015 and continually earn less than their male colleagues (“Women in Academia”, 2017). Such statistics reveal that women are still not welcomed in the higher echelons of academia as they are neither compensated fairly nor are they chosen fairly for positions of power and prestige such as professorships as often as their male counterparts are promoted. It needs to be noted that this is not because there is a shortage of females in academia, especially the humanities. In fact, women

earned 61% of all master's degrees in the humanities and 54% of all the doctoral degrees ("Gender Distribution", 2017). With over half of the advanced degrees in the humanities being awarded to women, it begs to question why women are disproportionately awarded professorships, still lacking in competitive compensation, and number fewer in tenure track positions than men?

The wage gap between men and women in academia is a significant indicator of the pervasive misogyny in the field as well. Women typically earn about 22% less than their male counterparts in higher education despite no significant differences in publications (Carlin, Kidd, Rooney, & Denton, 2013). Even though women continually publish as many books and journal articles as their male peers, their salaries do not reflect the significant amount of writing that they contribute to the field. In fact, women typically earn more grants and receive more service awards than the male faculty in their field (Carlin et al., 2013). Earning less money puts women at an economic and professional disadvantage despite their work and accomplishments in higher education. It has been proven that men in higher education hold more positions of power and make a significantly higher salary than their female colleagues, and this reinforces the misogyny in the field that continually suppresses female scholars from influencing policy in academia or furthering their career.

### *Misogyny as Sexual Harassment*

In any industry, whether academia or other professional climates, sexual harassment is an omnipresent form of oppression and demonstration of power. For example, sexual harassment is classified as a form of sex discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights act of 1964, and studies link sexual harassment to broader patterns of discrimination power and privilege (McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2012). Sexual harassment can manifest in a variety of

situations from unwanted advances, discrimination based on sex, as well as acts of censorship. Harassment in any form is meant to keep the marginalized individuals in a marginalized state. Studies show that the vulnerable-victim hypothesis suggests that women, racial minorities, and other marginalized groups are subject to greater harassment (McLaughlin et al., 2016). It reinforces the status quo that only those with privilege, whether it is racial, gender, or socio-economic privilege, are the ones who maintain the power. The ownership of power in any industry means that those with power can make policies that affect the general population of subordinates. Positions of power in academia are more often held by men with 1 in 4 college presidencies held by women and women represent less than 29% of full professors (Ward & Eddy, 2018). It is the professors and the presidents of the universities that create the policies surrounding faculty that concern salary, harassment, and discrimination. If there is an unequal representation within the power that creates policies, then concerns are disregarded, misunderstood, or forgotten.

If the disproportionate standards in leadership, salaries, and policies are going to be explored in the humanities, then it is natural to analyze the interactions between men and women in academia. One of the most egregious statistics that narrates a prominent problem in higher education is that sexual harassment against women is historically present and remains present in academia. For example, “sexual harassment in academia has been described as an epidemic and a widespread educational hazard with stories of sexual harassment appearing in the media as early as 1980 and persisting today” (Tenbrunsel, Rees, & Diekmann, 2018, p. 2). While stories may have started appearing in the media in 1980, that leaves a large gap of time that sexual harassment in academia was considered a norm and remained covered up by universities, professors, and students. It is apparent that sexual harassment was considered a norm in the

academic community by the lack of recording keeping, the nonexistent reporting of sexual harassment, and the lack of resources available to women on campus.

During the second wave of feminism, crucial measures were taken to provide women with resources to protect them from various, prevalent forms of sexual harassment. In higher education though, sexual harassment is enduring because of the unequal gender ratios in higher education and it is an environment that tolerates sexual harassment. Higher education is hierarchal, dependent on relationships between students and professors, and involves isolating work (Johnson, Widnall, & Benya, 2018). Sexual harassment, in any form, continues to be used as a tool to retain the power of male dominance, and women in academia have not had the voice to fight back because of the isolating environment and the fear of retaliation because the male-dominated leadership in academia could incur a significant negative impact to their life's work. While industries have implemented measures to protect employees from sexual harassment, academia continues to be woefully behind because of the isolating nature of the field, the dependency on tenured (typically male) professors for advancement, and the tolerance to a historically gender-biased work culture.

#### *Misogyny as Gender Discrimination*

Gender discrimination in the field was not recognized sooner because white males have historically held the positions of power that created the policies. Since white males held the positions of presidencies and professorships in academia, sexual harassment was undefined or narrowly defined due to the lack of women in leadership. Women have remained marginalized in academia because they did not occupy leadership positions and still do not occupy such leadership positions as much as men. Since women are underrepresented in leadership, they do not have the power to redefine sexual harassment in the field, so sexual harassment such as unwanted advances, gender-based bias, and censorship still persists. Thus, women may

outnumber men when pursuing advanced degrees in academia but do not persist in the field because of the sexual harassment that women in academia endure.

Even though women are awarded more advanced degrees in higher education than men, it stands that such policies and resources are not implemented by women from leadership positions in higher education. Policies are implemented because of women's distressed outcries from the lower ranks of academia. Despite the efforts of women to achieve equality in academia, women hold the fewest tenured positions thus resulting in women holding far fewer leadership positions in academia than men because the rank of full professor "affords opportunities for leadership in faculty governance, extends national influence in the disciplines, and is a traditional prerequisite for climbing the leadership ladder" (Ward & Eddy, 2013, p. 3). Women may be accruing advanced degrees at a higher rate than men, but they do not persist in higher education because of male dominance and sexual harassment thus resulting in men dominating the field of academia. Male supremacy in higher education means that traditional white males exercise their dominance by not promoting women to professorships or tenure-track positions and by perpetuating sexual harassment in a male-dominated field.

### *The Current Academic Feminist Pushback*

This raises the question; what kind of push back is left for women if men continually suppress their professional careers and exploit them as females? As proven by the second wave of feminism, it is necessary that women turn to an uprising supported by a massive number of voices and disruptive outcries of dissent that cannot be ignored. The fourth wave of feminism refers to a feminism that began around 2012 and targets sexual harassment, rape culture, body shaming, and harassment associated with the use of social media (Srivastava, Chaudhury, Bhat, & Sahu, 2018). Feminist ideals and agendas are now easily accessible through hashtag



campaigns, cyber platforms, and online profiles that promote ideals of equality and condemn gender discrimination.

Social movements are defined as individuals collectively challenging authorities using public platforms to discuss their agenda via coordinated efforts in networks, organizations and communities (McCammon, Taylor, Reger, & Einwohner, 2014). Social media is one of the means activists use to coordinate their efforts and it allows for activists to reach their audience through real-time via the Internet. Through popular hashtags and re-sharing posts, activists and supporters can blast an idea or a movement up to the top of anyone's social media feed. Using social media as a platform to disseminate ideas and dialogues means that supporters of certain movements can reach thousands of people at a time. For example, 88% of people 18-29 years old and 78% of people between 30-49 years old utilize social media and a majority of those people use at least 3 different social media platforms (Smith & Anderson, 2018). In addition, this is only a reference of how many social media users there are, but there are also blogs, online articles, and discussion-based communities that use the Internet to share movements but these sources are much more difficult to track in terms of online traffic. This means that social movements now have a more reachable audience to disseminate and share ideas with is more widely connected and highly accessible than ever before.

While there is no data tracking the number of women in academia who use social media or online platforms to share their ideas or beliefs, it can be inferred that a significant number of scholarly women participate on some Internet-based platform based on the number of active social media users and the current push for academics to be present online. The Internet and social media platforms have become part of the day-to-day existence and have allowed academic life and the background of scholarship to maintain visibility (Bar-Ilan, Bowman, Haustein, Milojevis & Peters, 2015). Social media and constant Internet access give academics the ability

to disseminate scholarly knowledge in an accessible manner outside of traditional academic venues. This accessibility is enticing to academia because it gives scholarly pursuits attention and concern that had not been there before. Using social media as a scholarly outlet means that there are a significant number of individuals in academia, men and women, participating in social media and Internet-based discussions concerning everything from academics, current events, and social agendas. Women in Classical Studies have been part of this scholarly movement to utilize social media personally and professionally. Social media has become such an ingrained part of academia now that women feel more comfortable taking advantage of this outlet, and especially women in Classical Studies are turning to internet outlets to address their struggles in a male dominated field.

#### *Connecting to Women in Classical Studies*

This study centered on how women in academia, specifically females who study Classics, use social media personally and professionally and its impact on their careers and personal lives. Classical Studies is an established field in academia with a historic track record of gender discrimination and sexual harassment. One of the most prominent scholars in Classical Studies, Dr. Mary Beard, sought to attend King's College in Cambridge, but they had only just begun to admit women in 1972 and only 12% of the student population consisted of women (Mead, 2014). Dr. Beard received her doctorate and now teaches at Cambridge in addition to hosting many documentaries about Classical Studies. Mary Beard is one of the founding women in Classics, and her education in a male-dominated dominion exemplifies the gender discrimination aspiring female Classicists had to endure during the second wave of feminism. More recently, Dr. Beard is also highly active online and on social media. Because of her credentials and her participation in a male dominated field, she has to endure a significant amount of sexual harassment online and she equates the comments section to "attitudes that have long been concealed in places like

locker rooms and bars” in their misogynistic, derogatory nature (Mead, 2014, p. 15). Mary Beard’s popularity outside of academia makes her a more accessible target, and even the nature of her beginnings in academia as part of the slim ratio of women in Cambridge embodies just how much gender discrimination Dr. Beard has had to endure during her time in academia.

It is not only the more well-known academics in Classical Studies that have to endure sexual harassment or gender discrimination in academia. In fact, Dr. Rebecca Futo Kennedy (2018) writes on behalf of the Society for Classical Studies and claims that “women who go into academia to study Classics know that being a woman in a graduate program makes you a target for unwanted sexual attention or gender discrimination, but peers are unwilling to recognize the issue in fear of retribution” (p. 7). Such a profound statement is one not easily dismissed or lightly made. This statement comes from personal and professional experiences that women in varying stages of their academic career have shared with each other and such atrocious actions of gender discrimination are now merely common knowledge for those looking to participate in scholarly activities. In addition, archaeology is a major part of Classical Studies and harassment and gender discriminations have been brought to the attention of the nonacademic world via blogs and Internet-based articles. Sexual harassment is a systemic epidemic in field archaeology, and while it is an issue that is widely known about in the field, it is not widely addressed in dialogue and contracts because a majority of the directorial staff and administrators are males (Nakassis, 2017). While sexual harassment and gender discrimination is considered a norm in Classical Studies based on historical demographic evidence and the issue of common knowledge in the field, the contribution of Internet-based articles and blogs are being used to push back against and address the male supremacy problem in Classical Studies.

Although not arguably a feminist movement in and of itself, the #metoo campaign was used as a tool to address gender equality and sexual harassment issues. When the #metoo

campaign began on social media, not only did it facilitate conversation in Hollywood, but also academia. Women in academia felt more encouraged to share their experiences in a historically misogynistic field because they had the support of hundreds of other women retweeting the hashtag, upvoting the post, or sharing their stories. Female academics in Classical Studies took to addressing sexual harassment via #metoo as a way to “break the silence around the way that women are treated in our discipline...” (Hortensia, 2017, p. 7) Social media movements such as #metoo give women in Classical Studies an outlet to address systemic sexual harassment and gender discrimination issues that had since been ingrained in their field as the normal way of functioning. Women knew that if they pursued advanced education in Classical Studies that they would be subjected to sexual harassment, be less likely to receive tenure-track or professorship positions, and likely earn a lower salary in relation than their male counterparts. Now within academia, digital platforms offer an opportunity to advance feminist agendas, disseminate ideas, and offer solidarity in the field (Locke et al., 2018). Women now have more online visibility and means to connect with each other in solidarity than ever before with the increased use of digital platforms such as online blogs, social media outlets, and digital articles. These outlets are now used as interconnected platforms for women in Classical Studies to address sexual harassment and misogyny with a force that can no longer be ignored or kept quiet. The accessibility of the Internet and the mass usage of social media gives women the means to promote their ideas and their agendas from the palm of their hand.

### *Present Study*

This research was a general qualitative study that consisted of using content analysis methodology to analyze Twitter feeds of women in Classical Studies. This research analyzed the way that the females in Classical Studies utilize social media personally and professionally. The content analysis of the Twitter feeds explored both the positive and negative roles of social

media in both personal and professional aspects in their life. Ideally, this research uncovered a community of women that are building a platform to support each other in the field and address misogynistic tactics being used to oppress women in academia. The content analysis revealed a positive influential trend brought forth by social media in this academic field that is rife with sexual harassment, gender inequality, male supremacy.

### **Chapter 3: Design and Methodology**

This was a qualitative research project design. This was chosen as a qualitative research project because qualitative research emphasizes the collection of data in a natural setting and uses inductive and deductive reasoning to establish themes during data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this research, analysis happened through a specific research epistemology, constructionism, and explained that truth comes into existence in and out of the engagement with the realities in the world (Crotty, 2003). Constructionism is the ideal epistemology to use for this research because the truth comes into existence through the use of social media as a public platform and the engagement with an audience to address realities in their world. Qualitative research design in conjunction with constructionism is unique and significant in the regard that it highlights the importance of the subjects' environment, perceptions, and beliefs during data collection and data analysis. The subject's environment can be translated as either academia or the community they have built through Twitter interactions. Their perceptions and beliefs consist of commentary on Twitter that they feel the need to publicly share with the world and reinforce through retweets and likes. There are interactions that happen every day with different people and a variety of technologies, but the interactions within situations are translated through different experiences and understanding of the situations. Meaning is constructed from situations through lessons, experiences, and ideas that are absorbed. Essentially, because the meaning is constructed the subject and object are given a meaningful reality (Crotty, 2003). Interactions and interpretations of those interactions give the world meaning and realistic encounters. In this study, Twitter feeds and Tweets of women who study Classical Studies were analyzed because communication has evolved beyond and is no longer confined by face-to-face interactions, and platforms such as Twitter are based on the existence and interactions with users and an audience. Constructionism is a particularly important epistemology in research related to social media and

feminism because the reality emerges from the interactions within social media and the interactions that happen outside of social media as a result. This research included a content analysis of Tweets from women who study Classics and looked at the interactions, reactions, and interpretations of social media use. This research aimed to construct the reality between the interactions on social media with the reality of women studying Classical Studies, as digital platforms are continually being used to disseminate feminist ideas and shape conversations about sexism and misogyny (Baer, 2015). Social media is a new method of reaching an audience to publicly discuss issues, and women in Classics are using social media avidly.

This study was driven by feminist values and constructed realities. The lens that drove this study is viewed through feminism and the women whose Tweets are analyzed are active social media users studying Classics. The goal was to construct the reality between their social media use in relation to their professional identities; thus, uncovering relationships they have developed with other women studying Classics and interactions they share with each other.

The research was validated and the integrity of the analyzing process was maintained by two researchers, the primary investigator and thesis committee member, cross-referencing the data together. The inter-rater reliability for such a method is the number of agreements divided by the number of disagreements plus agreements to establish reliability (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The reliability for this qualitative research project was 99% (agreements, 3846 and disagreements, 5). Since there were two researchers looking at the data, there was less probability of bias or misrepresentation of the data.

### *Methodology*

The methodology chosen to extrapolate information for this qualitative research was a content analysis. A content analysis allowed the researcher to use operationalizing knowledge to analyze the texts, possible responses, and correlations to create inferences based on the analysis.

This particular content analysis utilized operationalizing knowledge meaning that the researcher has a knowledge of the sources (the sources being the Tweets), who writes and reads the sources, and what responses are possible and likely (Krippendorff, 2004). A content analysis allowed the researchers to analyze interactions between users and the dialogue happening with users at a given time through their activity on Twitter in the past and present. A content analysis for this study relied on the assumption that texts exist when someone engages with them conceptually (Krippendorff, 2004).

The subject matter for this research, the Tweets, exists based on the user experience and engagement with the texts, Tweets, and users. The subjects of this research were specifically chosen and are actively involved in a close-knit field, so the audience and dialogue were familiar to the researcher. In this case, the Tweets were the texts, the responses were the users that engage in the Tweets, and the correlations are the Tweets that contain similar subject matter. Analyzing the Tweets based on these functions allowed the researcher to infer relationships among women in Classical Studies and trends in topics being discussed on Twitter among women in the field.

### *Participants*

The sampling strategy for this study was purposeful sampling, specifically criterion sampling because of the boundaries of the research questions and the target audience. Purposeful sampling is intentionally selecting participants that can directly inform and address the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposeful sampling was significant for this research because it allowed for the participants to be chosen based on their significance to the research problem and allowed the researcher to construct an understanding of the central phenomenon being researched (Creswell, 2018). There were three participants chosen by the primary researcher based on specific characteristics: 1. The participants were females, active scholars in Classics who are producing relevant research to the field; and 2. who are actively attending conferences,



active on social media professionally or personally by posting at least three times a week, and accessible to the researcher.

The primary researcher had previous knowledge of the participants through background information and conference attendance. The Participant 1 earned her Ph.D. in Classics focusing in ancient tragedy, and she currently studies the appropriation of Classics by white supremacists. She runs an online journal that publishes articles on a variety of subjects concerning Classics and higher education. Participant 2 earned her Ph.D. in Classical Studies, and she specializes in Roman history regarding gender and sexuality. Participant 3 earned her Ph.D. in Ancient History, and she specializes in Roman law and late antiquity. The three women vary in age range to ensure variance in at least one aspect of their demographics in an attempt to achieve a well-rounded perspective on women's outlooks and experiences. All three scholars continue to attend conferences and publish relevant work in their field. The participants were selected by the researcher and their Twitter feeds were used as the data for the research.

### *Data Collection*

Unless the Twitter user has their account set to private mode (meaning only their connections can see their feed), Twitter is an open source platform and data is readily available to the public. The data was collected by a method called "scraping." Scraping is a data collection method that allows researchers to extract Tweets to collect data, examine networks and communities, and see how trends develop over time ("Web scraping", 2018). The primary researcher found a university graduate student in Library and Information Science who specializes in data collection and organization, familiar with data scraping, and within three separate sessions lasting approximately an hour, the two individuals were able to scrape the necessary Tweets from the Twitter database into Excel sheets and consisted of about 5,000 lines combined. For this project, the Twitter feeds of the three women active in Classical Studies were

scraped, collected, and analyzed. The Tweets were scraped into Excel sheets then converted into a portable document format (PDF) with each line numbered for easy reference. The data was coded, analyzed, and cross-referenced by two independent researchers over the span of approximately four and a half weeks. The data spanned from month 2015 to January 2019, the predetermined cut-off date because it was the time of the most recent national Classical Studies conference.

### *Data Analysis*

For this project, the Tweets from three different women in Classical Studies were the texts for analyzing based on their participation in social media and the field of Classical Studies. In this research, belief of the nature of human experience is that it is constructed by interpretations that exist within interactions. Social media interactions, such as using Twitter, are now common methods of communication for individuals creating a social network beyond face-to-face interactions. This created a human experience constructed by the interpretation and interaction between Tweets, retweets, and tagging. The Tweets were loaded into Nvivo version 10.2, a data analysis software owned by QSR International Pty Ltd (QSR), and two independent researchers constructed a schema to code each Tweet. As each researcher read through the data, they developed themes to correlate with each Tweet in an open coding format. For example, if a Tweet was about higher education, then they coded it under “higher education.” The researchers also cross-referenced each Tweet to ensure consistency in data analysis. If the researchers disagreed about a certain code or theme, then the data point was reanalyzed and discussed until they developed a consensus. The researchers disagreed on approximately 5 data points, but generally the researchers agreed on the development and coding of the data points. Upon completion of the coding, the researchers read through each node, coding subject, to identify themes and determine relationships.

*Trustworthiness*

One of the anticipated limitations of the research was that as a form of communication, Twitter, is an ever-changing, evolving source as participants continue to Tweet and interact on the platform. This is one reason a stop date had to be predetermined before data analysis is because conversation continues beyond the collection and analyzation process. While this is not a negative aspect of Twitter, it does mean that the data could reveal different relationships, interactions, or conversation topics after the data had been collected.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### *Brief Descriptions of Participants*

**Participant 1:** A woman who earned her PhD in Classics focusing in ancient tragedy, and she currently studies the appropriation of Classics by white supremacists. She runs an online journal that publishes articles on a variety of subjects concerning Classics and higher education.

**Participant 2:** She earned her PhD in Classical Studies, and she specializes in Roman history regarding gender and sexuality. She also emphasizes research in Roman social and cultural history.

**Participant 3:** She earned her PhD in Ancient History, and she specializes in Roman law and late antiquity. She is also active in Digital Humanities and, GIS, and Roman topography.

All three scholars continue to attend conferences and publish relevant work in their field. The participants were selected by the researcher and their Twitter feeds were used as the data for the research.

### *Development of Major Themes*

As each of the participant's Twitter feeds were logged into Nvivo two independent scholars read through them several times to create multiple codes. Some of the statements were included in several codes as it provided several meanings. The codes were identified with history, current politics, academic publications, and pedagogy. The multiple codes provided a data landscape for the development of two major themes: 1. Re-reading Classics; and 2. Building a Community.

*Re-reading Classics.* The first theme focused on women who study Classics are using their perspectives to re-translate Classical myths, texts, and history through a female's perspective. Historically, white males have dominated the field of Classical Studies, so in turn the translations and interpretations of historical events were all presented to the world from an

inherently biased perspective (Mead, 2014). Since the history of ancient Greece and Rome were upheld by white males, then the translations and interpretations were constructed with the white, male agenda and perspective.

*Building a Community.* The second theme, women who study Classics are using Twitter to connect to other women in the field, promote social and professional agendas, and create a new space for women in academia to build relationships. The number of male academics outnumbered female academics, and higher education, especially the humanities, is a particularly isolating space for scholars, especially women because they are outnumbered in the field (“Women in Academia”, 2017). This theme exemplifies self-promotion and connecting women in the field of Classical Studies. The following findings are discussed within the two dominant themes in the research.

#### *Re-Reading Classics Through a Female Lens*

One of the most prominent themes to appear in the Twitter feeds was how the subjects are using their female perspectives to interpret Classical texts, myths, and histories. The selected participants reference pop-culture and Classics to comment on current sexism or gender oppression trends and use the references create a relatable dynamic between Classics and current trends. One of the women retweets about Palmolive soap being marketed as “Cleopatra’s secret” and #popularclassics in the 1950s. The marketing strategy itself exemplifies how Classical references were and continue to be utilized by the white men who create advertising campaigns to oppress women. Cleopatra is a notable historical figure that is known for her sexuality and her unorthodox leadership in the ancient world. Using her as a figure to advertise for a dish soap and domesticity to modern women demeans her power as a political leader in the ancient world and creates this image that women can use domicile tactics to sexually appeal to men thus reinforcing male supremacy (Srivastava, Chaudry, and Bhat, 2017). It demeans her significance as a leader

in the ancient world and creates the idea that she is only appealing as a submissive, domicile female to serve men.

The notion of subjecting women to methods that reinforce male supremacy was also linked to classic images and pop-culture. There is a tactic to use pop-culture in reference to gender inequality in order to make gender inequality more accessible through humor. One participant comments:

*“no matter how often you explain that misogyny is a system that upholds patriarchy by punishing women who fail to conform, people will always claim you’re basically just the guy from Monty Python shouting “help, help, I’m being repressed.”*

There are two things happening here with this Tweet. First, she was referencing a popular movie, set in medieval history, that many fans find humorous and a wide audience appreciates the dry humor in this film. Referencing this film immediately drew attention to the Tweet and established a common ground between her statement and the audience. Research shows that humor creates a personal connection when relating a personal opinion or trying to engage fellow users (Holton & Lewis, 2011). Second, the comment referenced a character that is often laughed at by the audience because of his repressed state, so she used this humor as a platform to create a connection with her audience concerning her opinion and how frustrating it is to talk about oppression, in this case gender oppression, without some sort of humorous or pop-culture platform to engage the audience.

The selected participants of female scholars emphasized that the past is present through referencing pop-culture in the Twitter feeds. One participant tweeted about gathering materials for discussion on tragedy and how the story of Iphigenia shows up throughout history from Pompeii to current scenes from the hit TV show, *Game of Thrones*. Iphigenia is a character in Greek mythology who was sacrificed by her father, Agamemnon, on his way to the Trojan War

to please the gods. This scholar's commentary on the relevance of Classical myths reflected two things. First, she made a statement that Classics remains relevant and pertinent in society because it reaches a vast audience through pop-culture. Second, the subcontext based on the story of Iphigenia is that women are expendable and means to an end, and that message is being translated through history to current day in TV shows, such as *Game of Thrones*. Being aware of the gender constructs in mythology and how mythological stories permeate current pop-culture allows scholars to track the misogynistic nature of mythological stories and how they are related in pop culture.

Furthermore, when re-reading Classical myths, women brought in current social terminology and applied these views to ancient stories. One user discussed Euripides' *Ion* and how she was ashamed she would be "*slut-shamed*" for her rape so she does not discuss it with anyone for decades. "Slut shaming" is a term developed by society to describe how a culture shames women for their perceived sexuality and uses shame as a method of sexual and gender oppression (Webb, 2015). Slut-shaming is deeply impactful to women as it is a tool to oppress their existence and their sexuality. By appealing to their sense of virtue and value, slut-shaming essentially demeans women and creates a mentality that they are worth less if society shames them for their sexuality. By applying this definition to the Classical story of Euripides' *Ion*, this scholar bridged feminist issues today with myths from the Greco-Roman era. This created a unique opportunity for female scholars to discuss feminist agendas in the context of their studies.

Female scholars often use their scholarship, profession, and knowledge as opportunities to discuss feminist agendas or current issues. One woman used her Twitter as a platform to discuss how in

*"Classical history the definition of citizenship entails the right not be raped and implores the audience to treat current women as citizens in the same way that Romans defined*

*citizens.”*

This scholar used Classical history, an era recognized by a vast audience, to engage her audience with gender issues such as sexual assault and rape. Using Classical history as an example of a society that enacted policies to protect their citizens appealed to the general population that has knowledge of Classical history in addition to the white males that idolize Romans (McCoskey, 2018). The males perpetrating the sexual assault and sexual harassment crimes are the ones addressed here, and she was appealing to them through the history and the leaders that they idolize in an effort to compare them and create a message that they should value rights as the Romans did.

In addition to interpretations concerning sexual harassment, one participant comments about the sexual humiliation of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of sexuality, in the *Odyssey* and how it:

*..bears a striking resemblance to the actions of Brett Kavanaugh’s actions.”*

While sexual humiliation is not an uncommon trend in Classical mythology, she interprets the actions in the *Odyssey* as “*horrific*” and directly relates them to Kavanaugh’s treatment of women. This is significant because she used her interpretation of the gender relations Classical mythology to directly inform her audience about her opinions concerning Kavanaugh’s behavior and to condemn his actions. Her viewpoint directly appealed to others who study Classics including both men and women and informed her audience about the direct correlation between Classical mythology and current events. Furthermore, she also tweeted about how Greek myth is full of men who use their power and status to sexually abuse women. This directly related to her Tweet about Aphrodite in the *Odyssey* and shows how sexual abuse in Classical mythology was translated by white males and instituted as a norm in Classical texts and translations (Mead, 2014). As women continue in Classical Studies and continue discussions about current gender



relations, the interpretations and imagery of Classical myths will evolve as women use them as a device to appeal to their audience and exemplify the inequality of current events.

As there are an increasing number of women in Classical Studies that lent a female perspective to the relationship between historical and current events. One selected participant commented:

*“Zenobia, the last queen of the ancient city, Palmyra, is a rejection of ISIS treatment of women.”*

The treatment of women in the ISIS community is less than ideal from a western culture viewpoint. Zenobia, as a queen, was respected and held a position of power. The current treatment of women as far as ISIS is concerned is an acute juxtaposition of that reverence. As women and feminists increase their visibility and standing in academia, stories of women throughout the history of the Roman world will become more prominent because currently their role is obscured due to gender bias of the source material and translations (Distinti, 2015). It is acknowledged in the field that women in history have been glossed over because of gender bias of ancient historians and current historians. This trend will shift as women in academia feel more empowered to discuss the role of women in history and contribute their perspectives to translations and reinterpretations of historical texts.

Another aspect that female perspective lent to reinterpretation of history and Classical mythology is the idea that heroes and historical leaders are not characters to be revered, but characters that use tactics to harassment and misogyny to oppress women. One participant tweeted:

*“Poseidon, a mythological god, raped Kaenis and when Kaenis asked that the gods make her into an invulnerable man then she was punished for hubris.”*

In this story, the takeaway is that a woman cannot be compensated for her pain she incurred from the abuse unless the compensation is approved by men or she will suffer additional abuse. Such tactics reinforce the idea that anyone who suffers from harassment will be shunned in society, labeled negatively, and their social circles will turn away from them (Kennedy, 2018). This lesson in mythology directly mirrors the situation that women find themselves in when they suffer from sexual harassment in academia. If they are the subject of harassment, then they fear retribution from those more powerful than them.

### *Classical Scholars Building Community*

The other major theme to develop from the data analysis was that the classical scholars focused on the relationships women are building outside of the physical constructs of the office space. Community is no longer defined within borders or face-to-face interactions. Locke et al. argued that community can be virtual, and many communities are developing social media agendas that have different goals and objectives (2018). The participants are taking advantage of such opportunities to provide support and resources to each other. Women in Classical Studies continually support each other through social media tagging and recognition such as when one participant announced her support for another female academic in the field against death threats that she received for an article regarding white supremacy and racism in the ancient world. At the time, the participant stated in her Tweet that she was:

*“2 weeks out from tenure which is a precarious time to make political statements due to office politics and potential backlash for statements made on public sites such as Twitter.”*

The participant potentially jeopardized her tenure in order to publicly support her colleague and her beliefs. While this was a risky move in many ways, this goes to show the solidarity of the relationships built in a cyber platform. Another example of a supportive network is a little less

blatant, but there is explicit conversation regarding privilege from the second participant. She is commenting to another Twitter user that holders of privilege:

*“need to surrender the benefits of privilege before the power dynamics of privilege can change, but it is an extraordinary thing to ask in the current economic and political climate.”*

She was tweeting to a male user about the subject, and this emphasized her support of gender equality as a whole. While it is not explicitly regarding higher education, it is supportive of gender and racial inequality issues.

In addition, the participant also used Twitter to congratulate her colleague for her *“Special Service Award and her extensive work in the field of Classical Studies.”* As a public platform, Twitter makes professional support and acknowledgement accessible across the discipline, and it allows women to engage in direct support from other women in the field (Baer, 2015). Because Twitter is an open platform, the support between women is readily recognized and allows women to engage as a supportive force outside of physical constructs. Other forms of professional support are reinforced through Tweets regarding inclusion and emphasizing *“inclusive Classics”*. Participant one tweets about including Classicists with disabilities and chronic illnesses into the community by forming a group to support each other. Groups that include and support those who may feel left out of the field emphasizes the efforts on behalf of Classical scholars to fight the traditional patriarchy that is associated with the field.

In addition, social media has made it possible to work with other women in the field to and engage in public discourse. A participant tweeted that she:

*“worked closely with another woman in Classical Studies to write a blog post titled “Whose Job Is It to Support a Harassed Scholar?”*

This exemplifies that social media allows women in Classics to work together to address sexual harassment in the field while also supporting one another's work. Tweets and blog posts concerning gender oppression that tag other women in the discipline show how prevalent sexual harassment and systemic gender inequality is in the field.

These methods of promotion and connectivity also represent the community that women are building in the field through social media. They are using their relationships in social media to address current issues in the field and to support each other as professional females in Classical Studies. In addition to addressing current issues such as sexual harassment in the field, women in Classics also use Twitter to support each other's work addressing current issues such as political issues and white supremacy. A participant tweeted about how another;

*“woman in Classical Studies used her knowledge of Classics to address how the alt-right political faction has appropriated the Classical acronym SPQR...white supremacists have wrongly used antiquity to argue for the support of patriarchy.”*

This Tweet showed how the use of social media directly uplifts female scholar's work and addresses current issues. White supremacy is deeply connected to gender discrimination, and this Tweet showed how women are fighting systemic discrimination using their expertise of Classical Studies to denounce white supremacy and the appropriation of historical images.

Another way women in Classical Studies are using social media to support each other in academia is by supporting each other as mothers. A chosen participant publicly advertised childcare and family friendly activities for a large Classics conference, CAMWS, using Twitter. Attending conferences is crucial to a career in academia especially the humanities discipline because of the networking and research presentation opportunities. Typically having children is a set-back for women because they lose valuable time in their career and academia is very time-oriented especially in terms of tenure and promotion. With this Tweet, she advertised childcare

and supported female academics efforts to attend conferences. Motherhood is often used as an excuse to oppress women and argue that they can no longer fully participate in the field because now they have additional responsibilities (cite). It is up to women to support each other while pursuing a full-time career and balancing motherhood. Another participant also tweeted about a blog post on the site that she runs regarding motherhood in academia and how the author felt like she had to “*hide her family for fear of how other academics would view her or her scholarship.*” While motherhood should command respect, it is a social status that is frowned upon because gender inequality and social norms have argued that a woman cannot balance a career and motherhood but must rather focus on one or another. Women are often penalized by lack of promotions or harsh performance reviews for accomplishing both. These tweets showed that women support each other’s scholarship and personal lives while using this community they have built to also denounce racism, sexual harassment, and gender inequality.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research was a qualitative research project that analyzed how three women in Classical Studies are using Twitter as a platform to form a supportive community outside of a historically misogynistic field. Misogyny in higher academia is displayed through wage gaps, gender inequality, and sexual harassment. The women whose Twitter feeds were chosen for data analysis were women who have earned their Ph.D., continually produce research in their field, and are considered active on Twitter by posting at least three times a week. The purpose of this research was to uncover a community on Twitter that women in academia have built to support each other, and how they are using Twitter as a platform to discuss trials, self-promotion, and support. Twitter creates a space for dialogue and an exchange of ideas outside traditional fields of communication in academia such as conferences and face-to-face interactions. This study was significant because an outside researcher collecting data gives a unique insight to how women in Classical Studies are connecting to each other, using resources, and expressing the impact of misogyny in the field. A researcher from outside the field of Classical Studies minimizes bias or assumptions that a scholar in Classical Studies would carry with them during the research. Once the findings were collected and analyzed, themes developed from the work that addressed how women are using Twitter, how women impact the field of Classical Studies, and what topics women are addressing in this cyberspace.

### *Discussion of Findings*

From the development of the two major themes, the selected participant's tweets supported the purpose of the research which was to identify how women in academia are using social media platforms to empower each other and create a dialogue about misogynistic nature of the field. In higher education, women are subjected to gender oppression that is reflected in salary and promotion differences, gender inequality, and sexual harassment. Turning to a public

platform such as Twitter to engage in dialogue that reflects their social status gives them an opportunity to connect with an audience and other women in their field.

Women scholars in Classical Studies are lending their female perspective to interpretations in mythology and history, then relating their interpretations to current events. As women continue to engage in Classical Studies the historical role of women becomes more relevant because women's roles had been often glossed over by ancient and current historians (Distinti, 2015). Female scholars use these women in history to relate to current events such as Zenobia, the ancient queen of Palmyra, and the current treatment of women in the middle east. As women in Classical Studies utilize different avenues of discourse, such as Twitter, there will be more of an emphasis on how the representation of women in antiquity is reflected in current events because women in general have more focus on gender issues and biases.

Women scholars in Classical Studies also emphasize the representation of females from mythology and how mythology translates in pop-culture. Such as the relationship between Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigenia, and the same sacrificial scene in the TV show, *Game of Thrones*. This analogous relationship between the two stories exemplified how the status of females in stories has not changed over time and how stories have reinforced the idea that females are expendable characters. This exemplified how female scholars in Classical Studies readily associate women in history and mythology to women's representation in current pop-culture because of gender relations and gender issues. In addition, female scholars also tend to call out the heroes and male figures in mythology and history as rapists and perpetrators of sexual harassment. Often female scholars' re-readings of mythology such as the *Odyssey* or Euripides' character, Ion, emphasizes the trauma that these female characters endured from their abusers. Ion was afraid to come forward about her rape in fear of being "slut shamed" or the retribution Kaenis faced after being raped by Poseidon (Webb, 2015). The scholars in Classical

Studies used their perspectives as females to emphasize these tragic tales rather than glossing over them or idolizing ancient gods in myth.

The other theme that emerged from the data analysis was the community that these women in Classical Studies have built using Twitter. Social networking sites, such as Twitter, have changed the landscape of communication and now communities can be virtual rather than defined in borders or restricted to face-to-face interactions (Locke et al., 2018). Women in Classical Studies are continually using this community to support each other and recognize their contributions in their field through tagging and retweeting. These women have formed such a strong virtual community on social media that one participant states that she will continue to support her colleague despite her proximity to tenure and how her support might be regarded on a public social media platform.

Women in academia are also using Twitter to connect with other women in the field and engage in public discourse concerning issues such as sexual harassment and white supremacy. One of the participants tweeted about an article that she wrote with another woman in Classical Studies concerning sexual harassment in the field. Academia is a hierarchal and isolating field that is a breeding ground for sexual harassment because the victims are afraid of the negative implications of reaching out to the male-dominated leadership in fear of being shamed (Johnson et al., 2018). These women are using public social networking sites to address the misogynistic nature of academia and address sexual harassment as a tool to oppress women in the field because there is little support for the victims. These two themes became prominent in the data analysis, and they revealed that women in Classical Studies are lending their female perspective to re-reading Classical history and building communities outside of traditional roles.

*Implications*



The implications of this research were layered through Classical Studies, higher education, and feminist issues. The implications for this study directly related to Classical Studies because currently there is no research done in Classics specifically about how academics are using social media in the field. Social media is generally viewed as a personal use platform, but this study supports the notion that individuals are using social media to speak about both professional matters and personal matters. This associated directly to the implications for higher education as well because higher education does not utilize social media as a platform of support for scholars, but rather this research implied that it is up to the individual scholars, specifically females, to use social media and build a supportive community. This openly effects the working relationships in higher education and highlights the physical isolation that scholars experience in the field.

Furthermore, the implications of this study reflected that the sphere of influence that spans from Classical Studies will shift as women continue to re-read history with feminist viewpoints and use Classical Studies to discuss feminist issues. The women in Classical Studies are incorporating mainstream discussions such as pop-culture and politics into a small sect of people that will influence the future scholarship that reflects the overall historical view of western culture.

### *Recommendations*

For further research in this area, the researcher recommends expanding this into a mixed methods research study for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. For the quantitative aspect of the research, it is possible to gather Tweets from a much larger sample of individuals and use a method called “topic modeling” to discover abstract topics in a collection of documents (Li, 2018). Topic modeling is a computer-based analysis using a coding system called Python that takes all of the information from the Tweets and can build a model that represents the topics that

were represented in the data (cite). In addition to topic modeling, it would also be important to know how often a certain Tweet was retweeted or liked in a further content analysis. Expanding this study would also mean including additional female scholars in the field to see if the themes applied to a broader range of subjects as well. This research actually has a significant amount of potential as far as continuing to analyze women in academia and the personal and professional implications of their social media use.

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