Throughout society, many believe women are not succeeding professionally because of the institutional barriers created by men in the American workforce. However, women may be more competitive with other women than with men, especially when limited job positions are the goal. Competitiveness among women can be explained by a phenomenon called horizontal hostility. An examination of this phenomenon may explain the lack of women in upper management. Participants included women from two university related professional organizations. Information about women’s relationships with other women was found by using face-to-face interviews. Women identified HH, behaviors associated with HH and motivations for engaging in HH. This information may prove useful to professional women within higher education as
well as other professional organizations in their efforts to support the advancement of women.
Women and Workplace Communication:

A Study of Horizontal Hostility

by

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Erin A. Stone, Author
I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the people who helped me through this process: Dr. Celeste Walls, for her guidance, advice and mentoring from the first brainstorming sessions to the last series of revisions, my parents Tillman and Debbi Stone and my sister Katelyn Stone, for their love, support and patience with me throughout my college career and my fellow graduate students, for their input, constructive criticism and much needed writing breaks. Finally and most of all, I would like to say thank you to my wonderful husband Kris, for whom without I would have not been able to complete this great accomplishment.
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to Graymo and Tappa who instilled in me the importance and value of a good education. Without these lessons, the completion of this work would not have been possible. May life always be filled with butterflies.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The number of women in the American workforce is increasing. A special report by Spraggins (2004, p. 11) stated that from 1970 to 2000 the number of women in the civilian labor force increased from 38% to 47%, an increase of approximately 9% over the past 30 years. However, even though their numbers are on the increase, women still struggle to advance to prestigious positions in American businesses. Only 2.2% of the chief executive officers for Fortune 500 companies are women.

According to Fortune Magazine (2006, p. F32-F43) only 2 female CEOs are ranked in the top 100; one is ranked 56th and the other is ranked 100th. Consequently, despite their increasing presence in U.S. organizations, women remain under-represented in the ranks of upper management. Scholars and practitioners alike have offered many reasons to explain this phenomenon.

Until recently, many, if not all of these reasons have placed the blame for the lack of women in upper management on the biased, patriarchal structures in the American workplace (Bates, 2002; Gallese, 1991; Marks, 2005; Mooney, 2005). For example, despite the fact that women comprise 51% of the U.S. population, they remain underpaid for the completion of work comparable to that of their male counterparts. Socio-historically, this has resulted from reified ideas about the masculine gendered role of the breadwinner. Today, women are as likely as men to be the breadwinner in American households. Despite this, women are denied access to top management positions. As a result of this denial, women often don’t have the requisite experience for these positions and, in turn, are often unable to demand pay comparable to that of their male counterparts.
According to Spraggins, (2004, p. 12), women who are “full-time, year-round workers aged 16 years and over,” earn roughly 74% of what men earn. Although patriarchal biases remain a valid explanation for the lack of women in upper management positions, there may be more viable, less examined reasons involving women themselves.

One of the top goals of the women’s movement was fighting for equality with men. In that context, women were in direct competition with men, especially within the corporate sector. Yet, while some women were out fighting “the man” and attempting to level the playing field within patriarchal institutions, other women sought to advance themselves by undermining female coworkers through the use of rumors and sabotage. As a result of these dual and competing strategies in the quest for the limited number of top level management positions, women failed to realize that they may be competing not only against men but also against other women. Female vs. female competition may have a strong impact on women’s professional careers. This concept of members of the same oppressed group (e.g., women) fighting against each other instead of the differential forces that are oppressing them (e.g., patriarchal structures) is defined by Kennedy (1970) as horizontal hostility (HH).

Well-documented obstacles and limitations can negatively affect women’s self-concept in terms of their abilities at work (McKenna et al., 2003; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). In turn, women’s lowered self-concept is often internalized and the resulting negative feelings and perceptions may compel them to engage in HH.

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1 When compared to men, women can be thought of as an oppressed group in the American workforce. The oppression of women stems from the limited number of positions and limited earning capacity that women have obtained versus their male counterparts.
Unfortunately, HH may be limiting women’s potential for professional advancement largely because women are unaware of it.

To increase women’s awareness of HH, an in-depth examination of this phenomenon may shed light on the ways that it contributes to the struggles women face at work. More specifically, if these experiences can be better understood, women’s potential for professional advancement may be enhanced. Accordingly, this paper aims to (a) define and explore how HH negatively impacts women. More specifically, I will examine how (b) HH may prevent women from promoting and supporting one another and (c) the ways that it functions to perpetuate heteropatriarchy by maintaining internalized oppression among women. Before beginning my discussion of HH, I first provide a theoretical justification for its use.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

**HH Justification**

Although various reasons have been offered to explain why women are not consistently advancing to the same professional levels as men, the “glass ceiling” phenomenon is the reason most commonly used to explain why so few women occupy upper-level management positions in America’s corporations. The term “glass ceiling” (GC) is used to describe the institutional, patriarchal and largely unseen barriers that keep women from obtaining upper management positions within many companies (Cotter et al., 2001; Frankforter, 1996; Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986; Valian, 1998). As the term suggests, the “glass ceiling” allows women to see top positions but blocks their advancement to those positions.

There are, however, at least three significant weaknesses in the GC literature as a viable explanation for women’s lack of professional advancement. As Frankforter (1996) reported, the GC concept has been applied to mid-level management only. More research is needed to see if the GC phenomenon impacts women at upper-level management positions.

Second, as a result of a concept called new tokenism, women are not being employed on the basis of competence and ability but instead on their ability to fill affirmative action quotas in organizations (Frankforter, 1996; Mooney, 2005). As women fill these positions solely based on gender, rather than explicit qualifications,

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1 “New tokenism exists in organizations in which, in efforts to appear diverse, women occupy positions of high visibility but relatively low power, so that they may appear to have ‘made it’ to the outside world, when internally they are still scrambling for a sense of security” (Mooney, 2005, p. 112).

2 First generation affirmative action relies on filling quotas with little or no concern as to the competence of the individual filling the position.
there is no way to assess the impact of the glass ceiling concept as the sole factor limiting their advancement.

Finally, in addition to the weaknesses mentioned above by Frankforter (1996) and Mooney (2005), one additional significant flaw can be found in the literature on the GC concept: to date, few theoretical perspectives, including GC, have highlighted communication. Interpersonal factors, including communication, could potentially impact a woman’s ability to advance professionally. This is a drawback because, according to Meyers (1996, p. 36), “consideration for any executive position requires an essential quality: excellent communication skills.” In turn, communication skills are essential to workplace advancement, especially in competitive corporate America (Robar, 1998). Thus, it is reasonable to presume that if women are going to be able to achieve executive status, they need to excel in communication.

Based on the foregoing, the GC concept is no longer solely sufficient for explaining women’s lack of executive achievement. Instead what is needed is a more extensive examination of oppressive gendered relations created by both men and women. HH offers a theoretical basis for such an examination because although women continue to compete with men for limited top level management positions, they also may compete more fiercely with each other. The patriarchal implications of HH, a subset of GC, may suggest that competition among ambitious women also plays a role in women’s lack of advancement because the available pool of top level management positions for women is limited. Thus, HH needs to be examined in conjunction with GC, to better explain the limited number of women in top level management positions.
**Horizontal Hostility**

**Definition.** Originally coined by Kennedy (1970), the term horizontal hostility (HH) has been used to describe the situation in which members of the same oppressed, powerless and marginalized group fight amongst themselves. Members of these groups take out their anger, fear, lowered self-esteem, frustration, and mistrust on those closest to them, those as vulnerable as they are, and those who have equal or less power or status than they do. Scholars have suggested that HH occurs because oppressed\(^3\), powerless and marginalized persons often are unable to fight those that are oppressing them because these persons are competing for scarce resources such as power, positions, tenure or authority. (Chesler, 2001; Domínguez, 1994; Greer, 1999; Penelope, 1992; Rosabal, 1996; Shaw & Lee, 2001; Tannebaum, 2002; Thomas, 1998, 2001; Thompson, 1993; Torres, 2003).

To understand how HH works, Blasingame (1995, p. 230) presented the following:

Horizontal hostility generally works like this: when an individual or community member is subjected to daily hostility and negative images of themselves (e.g., a lesbian or gay person experiencing homophobia), it is nearly impossible to shield one’s inner self from emotional penetration of the negative messages. One therefore comes to devalue oneself from this hurt. As the hurt grows, a person may find himself/herself lashing out at those closest to one in the community. Often, people channel anger, hurt, and pain into judgments of each other, in much the same way as those who engage in oppression have done.

Penelope (1992, p. 61-62) further analyzed the process of how HH occurs between oppressed groups and highlighted some of the behaviors commonly associated with HH. She offered a multi-layered definition to explain how HH is

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\(^3\) Oppression is the exploitation of those without power by those with power (Dunn, 2003).
manifested between members of oppressed groups. The first layer is called “perceptual-descriptive,” and involves recognizing and labeling another person’s behavior. This occurs when one member of the community makes an uninformed judgment about another member of the community. The second layer, labeled “interactional,” is used to disseminate the perceptions of and information about another person’s behavior within the community. For example, members may choose to disseminate newly learned information through the processes of gossiping, rumor spreading and name-calling. The dissemination of the information to the community leads to the third layer called “acceptance-repetition,” which describes how “what we think” becomes “what we know.” For example, if a member of the community receives new information about another member through the process of gossip, they have the choice to use this information or disregard it. Members who choose to use this information start the process of HH all over again by disseminating information to even more members of the community. In turn this will cause members just learning this information to make judgments and perceptions of their own.

One of the major impacts that the process of HH has upon oppressed, marginalized group members is that it divides them and prevents such members from working together to build alliances needed to fight oppression (Blasingame, 1995; Passman, 1993; Penelope, 1992). The oppression exerted by members of the dominant group is learned by members of marginalized groups, who, in turn, oppress each other, continuing their victimization (Penelope, 1992; Pharr, 1988; Kennedy, 1970). Another reason that oppressed group members engage in HH is because they fear retribution by members of the dominant culture for seeking to share power with
the dominant culture. It is much safer for oppressed group members to express their feelings of fear, anger and frustration toward those of equal or lesser status than it is to express these feelings towards those oppressing them (Ostenson, 1999; Pharr, 1988).

Oppression is the exploitation of those without power by those with power (Dunn, 2003). Because men still occupy a majority of the positions of power within the workplace context, they are not considered oppressed. Conversely, given this definition, women in the workplace, can and should be thought of as an oppressed class, especially in higher levels of management. Because of this, the focus of this study is exclusively on women. I believe an extensive examination of HH may enhance women’s opportunities to advance professionally by focusing on a previously under-examined source of their workplace difficulties: other women.

The phenomenon of HH is largely under-examined and limited in terms of academic research. While there have been several real-world discussions specifically focusing on the concept of HH, only five research articles comprise the academic discussion of HH. As a consequence of this paucity of research, I will review the existing research in depth. Additionally, throughout the literature, because HH has been used interchangeably with horizontal violence (HV), I use them interchangeably here and have divided the literature review accordingly.

**Studies of Horizontal Hostility**

A majority of the literature surrounding the concept of HH deals with the topic of social minority group\(^4\) relations. White and Langer (1999) looked at the presence of HH in the relationships between similar minority groups. A two-pronged study was

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\(^4\) A group “defined in terms of size, power, and the status of the group in terms of its social norms relative to those of wider society (Newman, 1974, p. 448).
conducted in order to test the hypothesis that minority group members would express HH towards members of another group that was similar to the first group but deemed more mainstream.

In the first phase of their study, White and Langer (1999) examined members of three Jewish congregations: Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox. Based on congregational affiliation, participants completed a questionnaire asking them to evaluate the similarity and dating potential between every possible group pairing. The results from this study confirmed the main hypothesis that members of a minority group will express HH towards members of a similar, more mainstream minority group. More specifically, in this study Conservative Jews, who occupied the middle of the mainstream-extreme continuum, expressed HH towards Reform Jews, a group considered to be more mainstream.

The second phase of this study examined members of collegiate soccer teams (varsity, junior varsity (JV), and intramural). Participants were asked to rate the average team member from each of the three teams in terms of three traits: soccer playing ability, honesty, and intelligence. The results of this study also confirmed the hypothesis that members of a minority group express HH towards members of a similar but more mainstream minority group. Specifically, in this study, varsity soccer players, an elite minority group occupying the extreme end of the mainstream-extreme continuum, expressed HH towards JV soccer players, a more mainstream minority group occupying the middle of the mainstream-extreme continuum.

Overall, White and Langer (1999) found HH to be present in the relationships between similar minority groups. Specifically, HH is likely to be expressed by a more
extreme minority group towards another minority group that is seen as similar but more mainstream. Even though minority groups share a common identity (i.e. minority status) tension between these groups is likely, especially when these groups are compared to the mainstream majority. What this research offers is a guide for future scholars to examine how minority group members with a common minority identity, such as women, may work against their own self-interest by oppressing each other.

Because the second phase involving collegiate soccer teams doesn’t really fit the definition of a social minority group, the general conclusion of this study is only plausible from the results of the first phase involving Jewish congregations. Specifically, in Phase 2, attempts to link athleticism to societal marginalization seemed contrived and suggested limited validity. Conversely, the religious group results seemed more easily linked to socially constructed notions of minority status and therefore, have more relevant implications for real-life oppressed groups such as women in workplace contexts.

In a continuation of the previous study, White, Langer and Schmitt (2006) examined the presence of HH between multiple similar minority groups. This study consisted of three separate phases that proposed three distinct hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that evaluations of a similar, more mainstream minority group will be more negative than evaluations of a similar more extreme minority group. The second hypothesis was that evaluations of a similar, more mainstream minority group will be more negative than evaluations of a dissimilar, more mainstream minority group. Finally the third hypothesis was that when the mainstream majority is part of the
comparison-continuum, minority group members' evaluations of similar, more mainstream groups will become more negative and their evaluations of similar, more extreme groups will become more positive.

The first phase of the White et al., (2006) study examined the evaluations of four Greek political party affiliations that naturally fell along the following political continuum: Conservative, Socialist, Progressive, and Communist. Participants evaluated the social traits of honesty, intelligence, fiscal responsibility and attractiveness of one member from each of the four political parties. Each party was represented in a black and white photograph of ten Greek men and women.

With the exception of the Progressive party, H1 was confirmed. Specifically, less mainstream Socialist party participants evaluated more mainstream Conservative targets less favorably than more extreme Progressive targets. However, evaluations made by Progressive party members were not compared across political coalitions but were instead compared on a within-group basis only. As a result of this aspect of Phase 1, it did not support H1. Confirming H2, more extreme Communist party participants evaluated similar but more mainstream Progressive targets less favorably than dissimilar but more mainstream Conservative targets. Thus, generally speaking, Phase 1 and 2 of this study suggested that HH does exist between groups that naturally fall along a distinctiveness continuum. These results may prove useful when examining a distinct continuum of minority groups outside of the political arena. Specifically, this information may aid in lessening tensions between similar minority groups (e.g., feminist groups or other religious denominations).
In the second phase their research, White et al., (2006) examined whether the presence of the mainstream majority contributed to HH by causing participants to think of themselves as part of the majority. Researchers recruited individuals at a Vegetarian Food Festival, with vegetarians as the mainstream majority and vegans as the extreme minority group. Participants were divided into two groups and chose a meal, a season and a form of exercise. In order to establish the level of mainstream majority salience within the study, participants’ questionnaires began differently. The first group, labeled as high salience, was asked to make their selections according to what they felt were Americans’ favorites. The second group, labeled as low salience, was asked to make their selections according to their own personal preferences.

Consistent with H3, vegetarians evaluated vegans more positively when vegetarians were considered the mainstream majority. Conversely, vegans evaluated vegetarians more negatively when vegetarians were considered the mainstream majority. Phase 2 also found that HH arises when the mainstream majority is part of the comparison-continuum, which suggests that the presence of HH between similar minority groups is dependent upon the presence of the mainstream majority. Thus, to understand when HH is likely to occur between similar minority groups, one must consider the positive correlation between the salience of the mainstream majority and the expression of HH. In short, if the mainstream majority is not salient, HH is less likely to be manifested.

Interestingly, a problem occurred in Phase 2 of the study when attempting to distinguish between intergroup and intragroup relations. The differences between participants’ self-identifications made it difficult to classify them into one of two
specific groups. For example, vegetarians could be perceived as more extreme if the evaluating participant self-identifies as part of the all non-meat eaters group (i.e. intergroup relations). Conversely, vegetarians could be perceived as a similar, more mainstream group if the evaluating participant identifies as a vegan or separate from non-meat eating vegetarians (intragroup relations) only.

Respondents’ self-identification also led to another limitation. Specifically, because respondents own definitions of vegetarianism may have differed, it is difficult to determine if these definitions were consistent across all respondents. Thus, the internal validity of the study is threatened due to the way the research was conducted (Frey et al., 1991). Clearly, if the goal of the study is to compare two similar minority groups, then the members of each minority group should have commonly held definitions of vegetarianism. These issues led to a third phase of the study, which was conducted to clarify the distinction between intergroup and intragroup relations.

In the third phase of their study, White et al., (2006) examined the preferences of Ivy League students. This phase had two hypotheses, H1: Dartmouth students would express HH towards more mainstream Cornell students when the mainstream majority (e.g., non-Ivy League students) were present and H2: Dartmouth students would have more favorable evaluations of more mainstream Cornell students when they shared a common in-group identity (e.g., Ivy League status). Researchers assigned participants to one of four groups, where they chose a meal, a color and a form of exercise. The first group made their selections according to general college students’ favorites. The second group made their selections according to their own personal preferences. Consistent with the second phase of this study, the
questionnaires began differently for the first two groups in order to identify the salience of the mainstream majority. Researchers assigned the two remaining groups to either a common identity group as Ivy League students or a minority ingroup as Dartmouth students. Overall, Phase 3 confirmed Phase 2 and supported H3: the presence of a mainstream majority increases HH towards similar minority groups. In this study, therefore, Dartmouth students expressed HH towards more mainstream Ivy League students.

As was the case in first phase of the White and Langer study (1999), the results of Phase 1 and 2 of The White et al., study seemed to be more applicable to social minority group relations than the results of Phase 3: the Ivy League phase. The participants in the third phase of the study do not fit the definition of a social minority group for one main reason. Like the varsity collegiate soccer team, Dartmouth and other Ivy League students are different from non-Ivy League students because “Ivy League students have a high minority status” (White Langer, 1999, p. 349). The affiliation that Ivy League students have with their academic institutions provides them with a source of power that non-Ivy League students do not have. Because of this, Dartmouth students do not comprise a social minority group and therefore, the applicability of the findings to real-life social minority group relations may be limited.

From collegiate and religious denominations to Greek political parties, HH has been studied and found to exist in the intergroup relations between various social minority groups. Although the bulk of this research has demonstrated that social minorities do engage in HH, none of the research focused on gender. Therefore, research is needed to determine if these same findings apply to women as a social
minority group which is why gender is the primary focus of this study. Unlike horizontal hostility, the concept of gender has been studied within the phenomenon of HV, however, only implicitly. Specifically, studies that have looked at the occurrence of HV have done so in the socio-historically, feminine gendered professions of nursing and K-12 education administration.

Horizontal Violence

Freire (1970) coined the term horizontal violence (HV) when he conducted research on oppressed minority groups in Brazil. Horizontal violence is defined as the use of power and sabotage, via attitudes, actions, and words, directed horizontally at coworkers. Often HV and HH are used interchangeably in the literature (Blanton, Lybecker, & Spring, 1998; Chesler, 2001; Dunn, 2003; Friere, 1970; Funk, 2000; Lee & Saeed, 2003; McCall, 1996; McKenna, Smith, Poole & Coverdale, 2003; Mougey, 2004; Wilson, 2000). Thus, they are used here in the same fashion.

Nursing. The nursing profession has often been a “target for oppression” (Lee & Saeed, 2001, p. 15) because of the lack of power that nurses hold within hospital hierarchies. The oppression and victimization experienced by nurses may, in part, stem from the fact that socio-historically the nursing profession has been seen as a feminine-gendered profession. The oppression that nurses experience may also stem from the power imbalance between doctors and nurses, as doctors hold most, if not all, of the power in hospital settings.

Skillings (1990) examined the perceptions and feelings of six, white nurses about their experiences with HV in Northern New England. Participants were composed of staff nurses and nurse managers all of whom worked within a hospital
setting. Through individual participant interviews and a final group interview, the study revealed three major findings: a) oppression is a socially constructed, multidimensional reality that occurs in the nursing profession; b) nurses’ oppression results from systemic lack of power (i.e. nurses are subordinate to doctors, administration and other hospital management); and c) there are specific practices by which to overcome oppression.

In another study McKenna, Smith, Poole & Coverdale (2003) focused on first year registered nurses’ descriptions of their experiences with HV. An anonymous survey was mailed out to nurses who had recently graduated from nursing school and who had registered as a nurse during the previous year. Participants were asked to describe their experiences with four types of behaviors associated with HV: covert behaviors, threats, attempts at humiliation and physical intimidation. In addition, the questionnaire also asked the participants to rate the level of distress caused by HV and to describe any training they had received in order to deal with these events.

The data suggested that more than half of the participants reported feeling undervalued, neglected, and humiliated. These participants also reported being physically and verbally abused by other nurses at work. Age appeared to be a factor in experiencing HV, as participants who were under the age of 30 were more likely to experience HV than those who were over 30. Furthermore, the level of stress caused by these events was rated as moderate or severe by 31% of the population, resulting in participants experiencing both psychological and physical consequences.

Generally, newly registered, first year nurses were more likely to experience HV than more experienced nurses. Based on this conclusion, one could reason that a
correlation exists between occupational tenure and one’s experience of HV; specifically, the less tenure a nurse has, the more likely that nurse is to experience HV. However, this is only applicable within the nursing profession. Further research is needed to see if this correlation exists for other types of novice employees in other professional contexts. In addition, research should focus specifically on the various types of experiences (e.g. threats, physical intimidation, etc.) related to HV as presented in this study.

The research by Skillings (1990) and McKenna et al., (2003) explored the oppressive situation that white, middle-class female nurses have faced in their professional lives. The participants’ insights from this study may be helpful in the recognition of and the fight against HV in the nursing profession, even though all of the participants were white, middle-class women. Specifically, the results of this study suggest that context is central for understanding how marginalization functions at multiple levels. Specifically, in this particular setting white, middle-class women were indeed oppressed; in larger societal contexts, this may not have been the case. Nevertheless, the results from this study are a useful means for gauging the prevalence of HV and exploring potential remedies to HV. Next I discuss the literature on HV in the context of education.

*Education administration.* Similar to nursing, HV has been examined in the feminine-gendered context of K-12 education administration. In an effort to raise consciousness about the phenomenon in this context, Mougey (2004) conducted a study of female administrators’ (e.g., principals, superintendents, etcetera) experiences in the Nebraska K-12 education system. Specifically, she was attempting to explore
female administrators’ experiences with HV as they advanced. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, the administrators’ experiences were examined and, based on participants’ responses, classified into four distinct categories related to HV: antecedents, behaviors, consequences (both positive and negative), and desired outcomes. Sub-categories also emerged from each of the four categories in order to demonstrate how extensive K-12 administrators experienced HV.

Women who engaged in HV felt jealousy, fear and a lack of power, three of the themes present in the antecedent category. As a result of these feelings, women engaged in such behaviors as name-calling, sabotage, and the use of belittling remarks towards one another. Beyond that and similar to McKenna et al., (2003), female administrators who experienced HV, experienced both positive and negative consequences. Negatively, women experienced isolation, self-doubt and exclusion.

The fourth category revealed that female administrators were able to develop strategies to overcome HV. Some of the strategies involved personal action and reflection such as avoiding the negative and embracing the positive in both people and situations or seeking therapy to increase personal strength. Other strategies were relational, involving an increased use of humor and listening and supporting other employees, particularly other female employees. These strategies may be a way to link women who have dealt with HV (via mentorship) to women who are just entering the field of education administration and will, more than likely, have to deal with HV.

The behaviors that Mougey (2004) was able to identify in this study are beneficial because they offer women a way to label their experiences and may lead to the development of effective strategies to deal with and potentially defeat HV.
Despite this benefit however, there are some important limitations to her work. Similar to Skillings (1990), gender was not explicitly identified as a variable of interest. Instead, because the nursing sample for this study was composed solely of women, gender was implicitly emphasized. Because the prevalence of HV may be more common among women than it is among men in professional settings, an explicit examination of gender, as it relates to HV, seems warranted.

Thus far, research has suggested that women often sabotage other women in their attempts to advance professionally. Accordingly, the ability to advance in corporate America can be hindered by unanticipated competition from other women. Consequently, we need to learn more about women’s relationships with each other in the workplace in order to better prepare women to champion their own advancement options. The results of my research may help women to better understand the obstacles they face in the workplace, ultimately aiding in improving the quality of their lives.

Now that I have examined a number of interrelated studies on HH and HV, I’ll next present a theoretical explanation of societal expectations that may further explain why women may be more likely than men to engage in HH.

*Gender Schemas*

The different roles that men and women fill in their everyday lives can be explained as socially constructed patterns of behavior called gender schemas (GS) (Bem, 1981; Valian, 1998). Gender schema theory explains that children learn about what it means to be male and female from the culture and society in which they live. Children adjust their behavior to coordinate with not only the gender norms and
expectations of their culture and society but also with the gender they must ascribe to according to their biological sex (Bem, 1981).

Because societal and cultural norms teach boys and girls to behave differently from a very young age (Agars, 2004; Mooney, 2005; Raymond, 2001; Valian, 1998), the behaviors that are considered socially acceptable for boys are very different from the socially acceptable behaviors prescribed for girls. Boys learn through their toys, games and male role models that physical aggression, outspokenness, strength and power are all standard masculine behaviors. Girls, on the other hand, are taught through similar methods, that quietness, reservation, nurturance and equality are all part of socially acceptable feminine behaviors (Mooney, 2005).

Even if people feel that they are impervious to gender schemas and the impacts that such schemas have on how they behave, the gender specific lessons that children are subjected to in every aspect of their childhood often continue throughout adulthood. Valian (1998, p. 30) demonstrated this concept when she stated:

> Everyone, it appears, is likely to be affected – deeply and nonconsciously – by their culture’s view of what it means to be male and female. Even people who consciously espouse egalitarian beliefs do not realize how profoundly they have internalized their culture’s norms.

To summarize, the overwhelming presence of gender schemas in society creates strict definitions of acceptable behavior for women. At times, these expectations may dictate the behaviors that are acceptable for achieving one’s goals, including the use of HH.

*Linking gender schemas and HH.*

Because scholars (e.g. Valian, 1999, 2001; Bem, 1981) have asserted that gender schemas follow one into adulthood, arguably it’s also clear that they are likely
to be present in the workplace. Often times, the same characteristics of silence, unassertiveness, nurturance and emotional and submissive behavior that many girls learned as children, constitute acceptable behaviors in women’s professional lives.

For example, because some women tend to be more emotionally expressive than other women, this can lead others to perceive them as “unstable and unreliable” (Wentling, 1995, p. 2). To combat that stereotypical expectation, some women may tend to be silent and emotionally distant. Moreover, in an attempt to achieve professional success, other women may compete more fiercely with their female peers by indirectly undermining said peers. The behaviors may often reflect aspects of HH (e.g. indirect/passive sabotage), in order to align with feminine gender schemas.

Gender schemas also lead to the devaluation of women and the work they do by overrating men and underrating women in professional settings. Sometimes this occurs in small, barely visible ways. However, according to Agars (2004) and Valian (2005) these small disparities accumulate over time to provide men with more advantages than women. To even the playing field with men, women may choose to engage in HH directed at their female colleagues.

It is critical that women walk a fine line between successful management of the appropriate feminine gender schemas in the workplace and their attempts to be professionally successful. For example, “a woman who is very feminine runs the risk of seeming less competent; the more she typifies the schema for a woman, the less she matches the schema for a successful professional” (Valian, 1999, p. 15). Thus, women need to demonstrate a certain degree of independence, toughness and masculinity in order to be seen as competent and taken seriously at work. In short,
while engendering nurturance and flexibility, some women simultaneously use HH. Yet, if they demonstrate these characteristics too harshly or too overtly they may lose their femininity. In other words, there is a double bind of acceptable behaviors for women, comprised of a balance between masculinity and femininity (Kisch & Ryan, 1991).

Some women have attempted to move beyond traditional schemas and forge new career paths. Yet, the difficult choice to break away from the pack and go out on one’s own in the workforce may be professional suicide. This is especially so when women attempt to enter into traditionally masculine gendered professions. Interestingly, it may be that women, not men, are the biggest enforcers of feminine gender schemas. When one woman stands out from the group, other women are the first to recognize this particular woman as a traitor to her gender. Consequently she is ostracized and labeled by other women for not conforming to sex-role defined behaviors (Hardiman & Jackson, 1980). The presence of gender schemas in the workplace and the enforcement of said schemas may cause women to lash out at each other, creating a double-bind for professional women. Either professional women remain in oppressed groups that are always one step behind men professionally or, they challenge the status quo and risk being shunned by their female coworkers. Although the glass ceiling may explain women’s lack of advancement in large part, it is also critical to recognize that women can also suffer professionally at the hands of other women.

In order for women to overcome HH and therefore help themselves advance professionally, it is extremely important to look at the relationships they have with one
another at work. Accordingly, in this paper I will discuss how a communication perspective examining HH/HV may help women manage their relationships with each other more effectively. In turn, better management of their relationships is likely to help women more effectively navigate the path to corporate advancement.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine if HH existed between women in the workplace and to learn what specific behaviors women associated with HH. More specifically, using face-to-face interviews participants were asked to discuss their interactions, relationships and experiences with other women, highlighting and describing specific instances of conflict, competition and other repercussions associated with HH. Participants also were asked to reflect on and describe the strategies and behaviors they engaged in to deal with the difficult situations they experienced with other women in the workplace.

The experiences that participants described during the interviews were used to answer two important questions: 1) does horizontal hostility exist between women in the workplace and if so, 2) how do women identify horizontal hostility (e.g. what specific behaviors did women associate with HH in the workplace)?

Research Design

Because qualitative research methods, such as observation, interviewing and case studies allow researchers to explore more detailed information about a particular subject, they are useful when attempting to better understand social/human phenomena (Mougey, 2004). In this case, interviews allowed for a greater depth of understanding of HH in the three following ways: first, interviews allowed participants to respond to questions in a detailed manner. According to Frey and Fontana (1994, p. 36) qualitative interviews allow data to be collected “without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry.” Thus, because open-ended questions were used, participants had the opportunity to fully describe their
experiences instead of having to choose from a limited range of options, which, often
do not reflect respondents’ actual experiences. Second, the use of semi-structured
questions allowed for the retrieval of specific information. Specifically, the use of
probing questions allowed me to tease out respondents’ more nuanced reflections.
Critically, interviewers can therefore avoid leading the participant to answer one way
or another. Finally, interviews offer participants a more personal environment, in
which to discuss their experiences. As a result, a certain level of trust is developed
between the interviewer and the participant and that, in turn, can lead to an even more
in-depth discussion of participants’ experiences. For those reasons, the use of face-to-
face, semi-structured interviews was the primary means for learning about women’s
experiences with HH.

Sample

Women from two university-related professional organizations were
interviewed and asked to describe the interactions, relationships and conflicts they had
with other women in the workplace. I used a non-random, purposive sampling
technique in order to obtain participants with three important characteristics: (a)
participants had to be female, (b) participants had to be employed in the university
setting as a means of access and (c) participants had to be a member of one of two
professional organizations on campus with objectives that included the support and
advancement of women. In addition, white women were chosen to avoid muddying
the waters with the confluence of race and gender. Thus, this study will not be
applicable to women of color who may face different and even more oppressive
constraints than white women.
In recruiting from these two different professional organizations, a diversity of positions, fields, and professional backgrounds were obtained. Positions held by participants ranged from an office manager to an assistant to the director of a large department. Tenure was also varied, averaging approximately 8 years. Women’s ages ranged from 32 years old to 60 years old, with an average age of 51. All respondents resided within 20 miles of the university campus and had various educational backgrounds ranging from some high school to completion of graduate school. To maintain participant confidentiality, each woman interviewed was given a pseudonym.

*Interview Protocol*

The questions used in the interview were adapted from the questionnaire “I Can’t Believe She Did That” (Mooney, 2005). Some of the demographic questions such as respondent name and marital status were eliminated from the original questionnaire because they were irrelevant to the present research. Additionally, because confidentiality was a critical component of my study, participants were asked to refrain from using any self-identifying information or other information that could be used to identify the women they mentioned in the interviews. (See appendix C for a copy of the interview protocol.)

*Procedure*

All female members of both university-related professional organizations were sent a recruitment letter through campus mail. It described the purpose of the study and invited them to participate in face-to-face interviews. Individuals who were interested in participating in the study were then asked to contact either the principal investigator or the co-investigator via telephone or email to set up an interview.
letters were mailed and 25 interested responses were received. As a means of keeping
the sample size and the interview data manageable, the first 10 women who responded
were selected for participation in the study. The remaining women received an email
response thanking them for their interest and informing them that the necessary
number of participants had been attained.

Email was used to schedule interviews with selected respondents. Attached to
the interview scheduling email was an electronic version of the informed consent
document that participants were asked to review prior to the interview. At the start of
the interview, both the participant and the co-investigator reviewed the informed
consent document. Additionally, at this time participants were reminded that an audio
recording was going to be made of the interview. Once participants’ understanding
about the audio recording was established, the informed consent document was signed.
After signing the form, participants were informed that they could ask questions
before, during and after the interview and that they could choose to withdraw from the
interview at any point.
Chapter 4: Results

Via face-to-face interviews, the participants in this study shared their experiences of HH. The information was categorized according to the key concepts or issues that provided answers to the following research questions: 1) does horizontal hostility exist between women in the workplace and if so, 2) how do women identify horizontal hostility (e.g. what behaviors did women associate with HH in the workplace?)

Coding Scheme

The coding scheme used to analyze participants’ experiences was developed after reviewing the relevant literature (Blasingame, 1995; Freire, 1970; Kennedy, 1970; McKenna et al., 2003; Penelope, 1992) in conjunction with the researcher’s intuitive experiences. Specifically, key aspects from the definitions of HH and HV presented in the literature review were used to identify behaviors commonly associated with HH, including, but not limited to, gossip, abuse and sabotage. My intuitive experience was also a factor in developing the coding scheme. As a female who has worked with and had conflicts with other women, I was able to use my own and others’ real life experiences to aid in the coding scheme process. More specifically, as a female I have witnessed, engaged in and been subjected to many of the behaviors associated with HH and based on those experiences, added the following categories:

Data Categorization

Three main categories along with a series of sub-categories emerged from participants’ responses. The three main categories were a) the acknowledgement of HH, b) the identification of the behaviors associated with HH along two dimensions (i.e., covert and overt behaviors) and c) the recognition of women’s engagement in
HH. The last category could be further broken down into three categories: a) realization and remorse, b) justification of own HH behaviors and c) necessity to report the problem. Finally, as a result of acknowledging that HH exists, five sub-categories also emerged from the data set to explain why women engaged in HH: a) jealousy, b) protection of self and job, c) difficult people, d) emotions and e) help, respect and support. All of these categories will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Analysis

Information derived from participants’ experiences was used to answer two research questions: a) does horizontal hostility exist between women in the workplace and if so, b) how do women identify horizontal hostility (e.g. what specific behaviors did women associate with HH in the workplace). The following analysis will address each research question in terms of the previously discussed categories.

Acknowledgment That HH Exists

Jealousy. Many of the participants often felt that women are jealous of other women in general. Specifically, most of the women in this study reported that jealousy of other womens’ responsibilities and opportunities is one of the major causes of conflict between women in the workplace. One of the women in the study, Jessica, described how jealousy could rear its head in the workplace:

... in some cases women may be their worst enemy. Because they won’t support other women. They won’t help. Only because, I think there is more of a jealousy factor. You know if you get the job and I wanted to do it but I just couldn’t, then I think women’s emotions play more into things like that. I just feel there’s a lot of jealousy.

This was confirmed by others as well. Jennifer asserted that conflicts between women stemmed from “jealousy of lots of different things. Probably uh, it can be seen as uh, jealousy of that woman’s position. It could be jealousy of certain relationships.” Stephanie indicated that she sensed jealousy from the other women she worked with because of the opportunities and recognition she received from a job well done. More specifically, she said, “I get lots of work and recognition and that might not go over so well sometimes.”
Not only were women jealous of the opportunities other women had but they were jealous of female new-hires. Nicole reported that she felt the women she worked with resented her for taking over a supervisory position that they could have easily applied for. She explained:

In the end they realized that they did have the skills and abilities to apply for the job and they regretted not applying for the job and I felt they took it out on me a bit. Um, and kind of resisted, “well she doesn’t know what she’s doing, we have to tell her, so why should she be our supervisor?” So, a hostile environment basically.

Jessica also experienced a similar HH situation and felt similar resentment from her female colleagues when she started in a new position:

Um, at the time I think because I was so new, walked off the street. I don’t know if I was resented but it took a long time to warm up to me. I think building the trust factor and feeling comfortable, you know that they could speak and say what they wanted to say.

As demonstrated by the above-mentioned comments, it is clear that women experience conflict because of jealousy. Specifically, women are jealous of the acquisition of limited positions that some women have been able to attain. In addition, jealousy also stems from the opportunities and responsibilities that other women are receiving in the workplace. As a consequence of these jealous feelings, sometimes women may feel that once they have a job, they need to defend both their positions and themselves. This is consistent with the scarcity of resources, which many scholars (e.g., Tannebaum, 2002; Thomas, 2001; Torres, 2003), have suggested contributes to HH.

Protection of self and job. Women have not been in the American workforce as long as men have. As a result, they may feel that they need to work harder to attain quality positions and, once there, defend such positions at all costs. Both Thomas
(2003) and Torres (2003) talk about how fighting over limited resources, such as the limited number of positions available to women, can produce HH. In talking about the job competition between women, Amanda described a very strategic and militaristic way to approach defending her position at work:

Well you’ve got to keep an eye on the competition and um, you know if their making a move on you or you are getting ready to make a move and their in a strategic position to help or hinder, you’ve got to do what you’ve got to do to make sure that, that turns into help and not hinder. Or that you blast them out of the water.

Nicole felt that a lot of women are simply trying to protect what they have worked so hard to achieve:

I see a lot of um protecting turf. When I feel like someone is um, impinging on my area or responsibility, I have a sense of being threatened or needing to defend myself.

Although Nicole and Melissa agreed, Melissa shifted from militaristic terms to sports terms when discussing how women seem to protect their jobs:

I would say protecting turf, protecting their job. Um, you don’t want somebody else to come in, and do something that they do, better. You don’t want to be seen as useless. . . People are very protective of what they do and they want to be seen as the only one that can do it but if somebody else comes in and sneaks in and says “hey I can do this faster or better” then well . . .

Lee and Saeed (2001) explain that HV is an attempt to gain control. A situation described by Stephanie offers an example of women’s need to control:

I seem to encounter that sort of rigidity more in women than in men. Like we need to, like whatever processes need to be done, they need to be done this way. There’s only one way to do it, you know. You need to, I don’t know um, when it’s that there’s usually lots of different ways of doing things. . . I think it’s kind of a control issue. I think, in the women I’m thinking of, and you know um, just it’s very hard to really relinquish control of something and so they just want you to know and have it done a certain way or they, I don’t know, then want to have control.
Aside from peers and colleagues defending and “protecting their turf” at all costs, managerial staff members engage in self/job protection as well. Sarah recognized that her supervisor was trying to defend her position at work when she said, “I think she was very threatened . . . that the people she was supervising were more capable than she was.” She also said that when it came to a supervisor protecting her job, Sarah and other employees needed to “kind of, you know, protect ourselves and stay out of harm’s way and not rock the boat kind of thing.” Jennifer also remarked that sometimes supervisors are very difficult to deal with when they feel threatened:

I had a supervisor who would reprimand you in front of people. I was a student at the time and um, I think I got teary-eyed, waited for break, went on break, um cried a little, talked with other people in the office. They assured me that it has happened to everyone, at one time or another. And that I shouldn’t be too hard on myself or um, you know, get a little more hardened to it because we’d probably see it again.

Defending oneself and one’s job may not come as easily or naturally to women as it does to men. Gender schemas for men have traditionally included the characteristics of aggression, outspokenness, strength and power (Agars, 2004; Mooney, 2005; Raymond, 2001; Valian, 1998), whereas gender schemas for women tend to include quietness, reservation, nurturance and equality (Mooney, 2005). Consequently, some women may feel the need to take on more masculine characteristics in order to defend their workplace gains. This is confirmed by Amanda who said:

I think . . . there are women who handle competition by just being brutal and not drawing on their strengths of being a gatherer, a nurturer and some of those traditionally feminine behaviors.
According to the participants’ experiences, competition among women is certainly present in the workplace. However, sometimes the conflicts that women have with each other are not caused by feelings of jealousy or by being threatened but rather by everyday interactions with difficult individuals. Because of increased competition for and limited access to resources, both of which impede women’s efforts to advance, women and other marginalized persons may be more difficult to deal with. In turn, HH may become more prevalent.

*Difficult people.* Some conflicts between women are caused by interacting with what the participants have labeled as challenging or difficult people. Amy explained it very clearly when she said, “you know there’s always somebody in the building that is unpleasant.” She continued:

> Like I said there was always a couple who were, you know, a little snippy. I can think of one. She and I didn’t get along. We were sort of peers but yeah, neither one of us oversaw the other. And there was some friction there primarily because our personalities were so different. She was very um, uh again controlling, very rigid, um, not people oriented and I was the opposite.

Amanda too talked about a situation that she had with another woman in the workplace who was spreading rumors about her throughout the office. In retelling the discussion she had with the woman, Amanda said:

> “And the other part of it is you’re just being crappy to me. You know you’re calling me out in public and you’re telling stories about me. You’re saying I didn’t do this, that and this. And I checked in with you regularly.” I guess I felt like she was discriminating against me but wasn’t really discrimination, just her being a nasty woman.

Jessica also had to deal with a “nasty woman” for years in her department. It eventually got to the point where all Jessica could do was walk away from the situation and laugh about it:
And I said “well who the heck are you?” I said “you can get the ok from my, the associate dean, my boss and then if he says I will do, I will do it.” But I said “I am not going to sit here and argue and fight with you because you are not altogether.” And so, and she worked her way up and she’s proud of it and she does a good job and everything but I don’t think she is any better than I am or you are but she does and sometimes we get her a crown to wear on her head.

(Not her direct supervisor but women who have their PhD) Heather has dealt with some difficult women in prominent positions:

Women PhDs are difficult to work with, on average. Now I’ve had the exception. I’ve worked with a lot of female faculty. I think it’s because they’ve had to work so hard to get that PhD and they’ve lost some of their, not femininity I don’t like that word, their kindness and their empathy. I just feel that they have and that’s too bad. I’ve always wished that could be better.

Not only do women have to deal with difficult female coworkers but, as mentioned before, sometimes they have to deal with difficult female supervisors. Funk (2004, p. 6) reported that female leaders will attempt to act powerful over their subordinates when they realize “they have little or no power, except that given to them by men,” which, because of new tokenism, is very limited. This often results in the female supervisors engaging in HH. Stephanie described stories that she has heard about other female supervisors on campus who were difficult to work with:

I’ve heard of other women supervisors who don’t allow their employees to do anything, like go to trainings. For example, one woman wouldn’t allow her employee to come to the lunches put on by one of the professional organizations on campus or wouldn’t allow her to be on a committee because it might take up a little bit of work time.

Arguably, women are probably more likely than men to be described as difficult by other women but such descriptions are not limited to positions and hierarchy. The long held stereotype of women’s emotional instability also plays a role (Wentling, 1995). I next turn to a discussion about how women’s emotions impact the conflicts they have with other women at work.
**Emotions.** Emotions, especially anger and frustration, are inextricably linked to HH (Dominguez, 1994; Passman, 1993; Thomas, 1998, 2001). Furthermore because women tend to be more emotional than men, other women may often report that females are difficult to work with. This can exacerbate HH, and in turn, may contribute to negative perceptions of women. A few of the participants discussed how women’s emotions have impacted the relationships between women in the workplace. For example, Heather reported “women do tend to be more petty about things than men. I think that’s just part of our nature. We’re more emotional.” Jennifer was more blunt, explaining that women’s emotions make it more difficult to work with them:

Um, I think that it is more difficult to work with a female, for a female. I find them a lot of times to be more, at least the bosses I have had, to be more, I know I shouldn’t say this but, emotional. More um, what do I want to call it, judgmental. And the men that I have worked for, um making a mistake is noted but it’s not as big a deal. It’s like ok, move on, and you know, and I think I know I and maybe others tend to internalize it more. . . I think it’s harder for women in general to let go of a situation because, I don’t know all about other women, but a lot of us, I think replay it in our minds, over and over again to see what we could’ve changed or where. We blame ourselves first maybe before we look at it as it’s the way the situation is and go with it from there.

Gender schemas that present women as more emotional are one explanation for why women tend to internalize the situations in their lives more than men do (Valian, 1999, 2001). Jessica noted similar characteristics of women’s tendency to over-analyze situations they’ve been involved in:

And I, I feel females have a tendency to really dwell on something and stretch it out and make it last for days. Where a male listens to it and says ok we’re going to do this and it goes on and it’s kind of forgotten but I think sometimes, I know I do, I feel it personally and then I’ll you know, go home and boy I should have said this or I should have done this or why didn’t I, you know.
While emotions are a central negative characteristic associated more with females than males, and therefore with HH, equally problematic is the lack of help, respect and support of other women.

_Lack of help, respect and support._ In expressing her thoughts about women helping other women in the workplace, Jennifer offered the following:

I think women need to find how to help each other and link to the things that are necessary. You know when we talk about it, men have been out there in the workplace longer, they have more connections than women do and so women need to help each other find those connections and give each other a leg up instead of you know, being overly competitive and trying, maybe it’s trying to prove themselves, I don’t know. I’m not a psychologist.

Yet it may be difficult for women to help one another because of their oppressed group status in workplace. Based on the presence of new tokenism in the upper levels of management, women lack power and therefore should be thought of as an oppressed and marginalized social minority group (Mooney, 2005; Newman, 1974). HH is a way for women to deal with their oppressed and marginalized status because along with a tendency to avoid helping other women, they also lack respect for their peers.

According to Blanton, Lybecker & Spring (1999, cited in Lee & Saeed, 2001, p.18) engaging in the process of HH “indicates a lack of mutual respect and value for the worth of the individual and denies another’s fundamental human rights.” Amy confirmed this by stating:

Mostly other women I’ve talked to who’ve been in conflict with other women it was just you know, “she doesn’t think I’m doing a good job” or you know “she doesn’t realize what we do in our department. How hard we work.” Those kinds of things but yeah I think lack of respect is probably the best way to describe it.
In addition, Elizabeth offered that women tend to not realize that other women go through difficult situations, whether professional or personal, and many times it is a situation that many women have been through in the past. Women need to realize that they have probably been through a similar situation and need to be respectful of that. Elaborating further, she said:

We have a woman in the office, my kids are grown, well she has one still at home. So there are times when she’s really stressed and, and takes off a lot of time and the other women grumble about that and you have to understand that you were doing that 10 years ago. She now has that situation and in order to have a productive workplace, we have to be accepting of all the different family nuances, of all the different requirements and the different people.

According to Dunn (2003, p. 2) “complaining and other forms of non-therapeutic and destructive communication” are also common characteristics of HV. Thus the “grumbling” that Elizabeth talked about is an example of women engaging in HH. In addition to a lack of respect for women in the workplace, as the following section illustrates, there is also a lack of support for women professionally.

Two women had a difficult time discussing with their supervisors the conflicts they experienced and did not receive the support and guidance they were looking for. Melissa said “there was one time when I was having issues with another employee and I went to my supervisor and she told me she wouldn’t help.” Jennifer also had a difficult situation with reporting her problem to her supervisor for multiple reasons:

Part was, I think I was, you know, the fact that I didn’t see anywhere else to go. Um, I thought I had exhausted all the, all of the possibilities and really wasn’t getting help and there are a lot of reasons for that. The HR person was not an HR person. You know um, unfortunately with the state system lots of times there are things that you, if they walk the certain edge they can really push you but you can’t really do anything.
Adding to Jennifer and Melissa’s comments was Heather. She felt the situation between women is getting better but they still have a lot of work to do before there is a significant change in their relationships. She said “they’re dropping some of the petty stuff. They’re starting to realize that they can’t fight amongst each other. They’ve got to support each other.” Amanda realized how she was behaving in an unsupportive manner towards another female employee. She said “I would catch myself just being not mean, you know like vicious to her, but um not trying to understand her. Not trying to, not taking the time to get at what she was really trying to say.”

It is interesting to see that women feel it is necessary for women to support one another and that with this support the relationships between women may improve. Yet, women do not have time to make this a reality. Jennifer clarified this when she said:

I don’t think a lot of them feel like they have the time. You know they’re trying to be wife, mother, have a job um, you know and they’re and that leaves little time for anything else, if anything. You know and um, so, I don’t think it’s a purposeful thing. I just think it kind of happens and I think our lives um, the lifestyle in America moves too fast.

One reason for such a lack of camaraderie between women in America these days, can be explained by gender schemas. In a society where women are often pressured to be all things to all people, they must conform to certain gender schemas. In the workplace however, they are required to conform to a completely different set of gender schemas than when they are at home (Valian, 1999). As they try to manage both rival self-conceptions, they find themselves with little time for anything else.
After examining the participants’ experiences with other women in the workplace, it is apparent that women not only are engaging in HH but they are also able to identify some of the specific behaviors that are characteristic of HH. I’ll next focus on the behaviors that respondents associated with HH.

*Behaviors Associated with HH*

HH occurs when members of an oppressed group express anger, fear, mistrust and frustration towards other members of their group resulting from an inability to fight the forces oppressing them (Chesler, 2001; Domínguez, 1994; Greer, 1999; Penelope, 1992; Rosabal, 1996; Shaw & Lee, 2001; Thomas, 1998, 2001; Thompson, 1993). However, the ways in which members of oppressed groups express HH can vary. Farrell (1997), cited in Wilson (2000), has suggested that HH can be expressed either covertly and/or overtly. Its covert forms include such behaviors as sabotage, exclusion and undermining, while its overt forms include such behaviors as abuse and neglect. Notably these behaviors do not occur in isolation but rather in combination with other negative behaviors. This distinction is supported by a study conducted by McKenna et al. (2003) where participants reported experiencing a range of both covert (e.g., exclusion, neglect and undermining) and overt behaviors, (e.g., criticism, abuse and humiliation) they associated with HH.

*HH overt behaviors.* While overt behaviors were less common for the participants in this study, that does not mean that women were not engaging in overt behaviors with one another (McKenna et al, 2003). Jennifer experienced a situation with a verbally abusive supervisor. She said “I had a supervisor who would reprimand you in front of people and I learned that I never wanted to do that again. Or I never
wanted to do that and never wanted to see that again.” Jennifer was able to use this situation to develop her own managerial skills by applying what she learned from this experience to avoid using such blatant, negative criticism with her own employees.

**HH covert behaviors.** One common way to express HH covertly towards other group member is through the sabotage of another’s work or their opportunities to be successful. Often, according to Dunn (2003, p. 1) HH occurs “when sabotage is directed at coworkers who are on the same level within an organization’s hierarchy.” This is a central feature of HH because women are considered more powerless than men at work. According to societal notions of feminine gender schemas, women tend to take on quieter and more reserved characteristics (Valian, 1998; Mooney, 2005). As such, it may be easier and safer for women to use more indirect and covert behaviors towards other women. Melissa offered an example of sabotage where one woman took credit for another woman’s work. She reported, “people sneak in back behind and pull out something and then say ‘Oh, I did this’ and make themselves look better and make another woman look bad.”

Also when she applied for a managerial position within her department, Elizabeth experienced what she felt could be labeled as sabotage from two women she works with:

They, I don’t know if it was jealousy. I have a degree. And there’s only, at that time there were no other degrees in the office and so I kept getting increases in pay and reclassifications because I had the degree and also I worked for it. And when um, there was an opening in the office for a management position um, the person who handled it had everyone in on the interviews and to make the decisions. So I did not get the position even though I was qualified for it because two or I think it was about two women in the office, who are both gone now. And I don’t know what, whether it was jealousy or they wanted the increases in pay but they didn’t want to work for the degree.
Not only was Elizabeth been subjected to sabotage by her female coworkers, which may have resulted in not obtaining a desired position, but she also experienced another covert act of HH: exclusion from the interview and decision making processes. Jennifer reported that she too has experienced exclusion from other women at work:

The feeling that is generated when those two talk about the conference that they are going to and get to go to by themselves. Then you hear things that they did while they were at the conference and there really never is any inclusion of anyone else to say “you know, well, you know we’re getting together to go to this conference and you know, maybe it’s one that you’d like to go to or maybe it’s one that would benefit you.”

Finally, because Nicole was unable to discuss her situations with management, she also experienced exclusion and separation from her own supervisor:

Upper management was very separated and segregated from staff so it was inappropriate for myself to approach upper management even though you know, there wasn’t any sensible reason for that but it had to go through her to upper management.

Participants also experienced other covert behaviors that could only be described as underhanded and subtle. For instance, Jennifer explained that when it comes to women and conflict with other women, tensions tend to be more subtle:

When I think of the word conflict I think of a fight and you know it’s not always, it’s not always that way. It’s a lot more subtle lots of the times. Um, whispering happens quite often. Those kinds of subtleties I guess is what I thinking of.

Nicole experienced a negative situation that directly affected her job but was unaware of it until after the fact.

Someone in human resources decided she wanted a job that had recently opened up and rather than making the announcement of a position open, all who qualify may apply, I wasn’t informed. The next thing I knew um, there
were interviews going on and uh, the person, someone in personnel took that supervisory role and became my supervisor.

While participants offered a few examples of sabotage, exclusion and undermining, gossip was the covert behavior most commonly experienced by the women in this study. Gossip can be used to destroy someone’s credibility (Thomas, 1998), which, in turn can destroy a person’s professional career. Amanda’s credibility was almost destroyed by a woman in her office. She explained:

I had a colleague a couple of years ago who told lies about me to other people and to my boss. There were no repercussions for her and I just have to trust that someday, you know, that, that will follow her. But yeah, I feel like she really got away with assassinating my character.

Elizabeth has also dealt with her share of women who gossip:

Um, we do have one woman in the office, she does, you can’t, I mean I wouldn’t tell her anything because the whole campus would know. And uh, you know you sort of wonder what she says about you when you’re not there. Um, so I don’t say very much to that person and um, watch carefully what I do say.

Sometimes the gossip that goes on in the workplace between women is not necessarily to destroy a person’s credibility. Rather, the purpose is to vent frustrations about certain people and subjects as a way of dealing with difficult situations at work. Melissa found this to be true when discussing the differences between women with or without families:

I’ve been told by some of the women that don’t have kids that I manage my family rather well and I don’t let it interfere so much with my job but I hear a lot of people complaining about how, how they wish when they, if there was a vacant position open, that their ideal candidate would not have a family, not have another, you know that other thing taking time away from the doing the job. Like I said while I’ve never experienced it, I see it happening quite a bit.

Situations involving gossip can be difficult to deal with as Sarah mentioned, “um, there’s a fine line between what you hear second hand is happening and what you’ve
experienced and have the right to, to interfere with.” In other words, women may hear information about another individual but because of their position within an organization, they may not necessarily be able to act upon it.

It can be difficult to do any job when coworkers are engaging in HH. Whether it is subtle and covert activities or involves overt negative behaviors, HH can also leave women feeling undervalued. In addition to discussing their frustrations with the experiences of and the behaviors associated with HH, participants also described their own engagement in HH as well.

Respondents’ Assessment of Own HH Behaviors

Realization and remorse. Throughout the interviews, women commented on their behaviors towards other women and why they felt they behaved in negative, unprofessional ways. Half of the women had remorse about their actions in certain situations. They realized that the ways they behaved were wrong. Jessica described a situation where she engaged in HH when dealing with a difficult individual:

I don’t think that was a professional way to be. I mean she can stomp her foot but I don’t have to “Oh cry like a baby.” I got a little sarcastic after it went on for a half hour or so. And I, in those situations, I feel like, I will talk to you later when you’ve calmed down and walk away or meet her out behind the barn.

Amanda also had a difficult time dealing the woman who was spreading rumors about her in the office and too engaged in HH:

You know we tried to handle it graciously and um, I tried to handle it graciously and I didn’t completely. You know I was completely gracious. I feel like I failed that pretty poorly and you know I point blank said “you’re a liar and you are not supportive and I don’t understand what you’re doing.”

Jennifer realized that her lack of experience in her job led to her behaving in a negative way. She said that “probably the biggest thing was that I was trying to be the
best and I saw my own um, probably my own lack of experience and ability to handle the situation” as causing her negative behaviors. In learning about another woman’s behaviors in the workplace, Stephanie confronted a woman but did not handle the situation very well and was remorseful after the fact. She said “I had discovered that she had been doing something that was wrong and when I talked to her about it, I didn’t talk to her about it in a very nice way. You know I was more confrontational. I felt really bad.”

In another situation, Amanda realized that even though an employee is difficult to work with, that does not give her the right to treat them poorly:

I think I got to the end of my rope with somebody, a woman that I supervised. She played the victim role and it sort of pushed on my button. So unfortunately I learned, having been a survivor I know well the tactics of an abuser and those are strong words but that’s sort of the reference that I have, so that when she went into victim mode it just made it easier to be mean to her. But that was after like five years of sort of building up “it’s time for you to go, it’s time for you to go, it’s time for you to go.” And so, which doesn’t excuse my behavior at all.

Jennifer also realized that she had behaved in a way that was unprofessional:

I discussed the situation you know with some of my friends and I shouldn’t have. Um, I think I thought you know I’ve got to get some help here some how and I wasn’t getting help from personnel. So, I really came to my wits end. I thought I had really tried to do everything I could do. So, but that was not professional. I shouldn’t have done that, uh talking with my friends.

Justification for own HH behaviors. Although some respondents’ engagement in HH was realized, some women in the study felt that their actions were justified. Thomas (1998) explains that one indication of HH is the process of faultfinding or placing blame for a situation away from the self and onto another person. One reason for this process of faultfinding is that women, as powerless individuals, tend to have a
more external locus of control or a belief that the outcome of their actions is dependent upon the actions of others (Neill, 2006).

In the present study, three participants used an external locus of control as justification to engage in this process of faultfinding with other women they worked with. In short, women who engaged in HH blamed their actions on their subordinates. Sarah discussed that at times her employees lack of understanding a situation would cause her to engage in HH. She reported, “I might have spoken in a way that was misinterpreted. Sounds egotistical doesn’t it but it’s true.” Amanda was also unaware of her behaviors towards her employees but realized that sometimes the difficult situations between her and her subordinates were caused by “their lack of understanding of a situation.” In addition, Jennifer discussed her remorse; but she also explained how she could see no other options for resolving it:

I wish we had never gotten to the point that we got to. I really do. Yeah, I never want to have conflict like that with anybody. I don’t, you know. I think as long as, if we could’ve just sat down and talked about it um, but I don’t think either one of us, for whatever reason, could’ve done that at that point in time.

These three participants felt that the behaviors of their subordinates justified their use of HH. The remainder of this chapter will focus on womens’ needs to discuss their experiences of HH with others in the workplace.

*Necessity to report the problem.* In discussing ways to deal with HH among women in the workplace, many women feel that there is a great need to seek help from others by reporting the problems when they occur. Funk (2004) recommended that women should be informed about HH and use that information to work with other women to combat HH. Specifically she argued that, “women and girls should become
aware of the existence of horizontal violence and work together to understand this phenomenon, the psychological reason behind female-to-female discrimination, and the powerful messages that such behavior has on others” (Funk, 2004, p. 9). Sarah seemed to agree when she described the need to go to a supervisor when problems occur at work:

I will, there are times that it happens, if I will see a colleague mistreated and I don’t mean in a blatant way but just in clear um, and especially if it’s a person who hasn’t been there, you know like me, I’ll come up and say “If you’re so willing, I wish you would go and talk to our supervisor or that person’s supervisor.”

Sarah also suggested using sources outside of work as a sounding board for advice and objectivity on difficult workplace situations prior to reporting HH problems to a supervisor:

Well, if it is really problematic enough, and I’m talking about pay discrepancy or how we divvy up our work or even as far as credit grabbing, maybe if you have a mentor or a trusted person who has some objectivity that you could bounce that idea off them and say “Ok, I want you to tell me am I just being, have I lost my grasp of what’s real here?” Talking sometimes to be objective and say “here’s the situation as I see it. This is why I’m not happy. I would like to be part of the solution.” And then going in knowing that your idea is not necessarily the way but approach it in a way like that.

Amy too commented on how dialogue can help one deal with HH at work:

It’s very difficult when you feel like you’re all by yourself but if you’ve got people you can talk to about things then it really does make a difference. It’s not to say that those other people are going to resolve your problem but just the fact that they’re listening usually makes a difference.

Amanda explained that as women, we need to talk to one another when we are faced with difficult situations as a way of dealing with them:

I think the other thing is we have to be, declare what, when it hurts and to say you know, “I don’t know what’s happening here but it’s not feeling very good to work with you right now.”
HH between women in the workplace is apparent and has been amply illustrated by the data provided in this study. However, the satisfaction of women’s awareness of the phenomenon is mitigated by their admission of engaging in HH themselves. Accordingly, women not only need more information about HH, but also more information on how to develop strategies to avoid its use. If such information is not provided, horizontal hostility will continue to slow the progress of women, resulting in inequitable treatment that will further lessen women’s opportunities to become equal members in our society (Funk, 2004).
Chapter 6: Discussion, Implications and Conclusion

In the American workplace, women are not advancing at the same rates that men are. A commonly accepted reason for this is the patriarchal concept of the “glass ceiling.” However, only part of the explanation for the lack of women in upper management can be attributed to GC. Because horizontal hostility is a patriarchal subset of GC, a combined focus on both GC and HH may better explain women’s lack of advancement in the workplace. In short, although it is under-examined, HH also may play a role in women’s lack of advancement. For this reason women need to be able to identify, understand and defend themselves against HH if they wish to succeed professionally.

After conducting a series of face-to-face interviews, it is clear that women are engaging in HH in the workplace. Participants in this study were not only able to recognize HH in other women and in themselves but were also able to describe specific behaviors associated with HH. Although some women in this study were remorseful, others justified their use of HH.

This study contributed three important things to the literature: (a) an explicit examination of gender, (b) an extension of the studied contexts to include professional women in secondary education and (c) an emphasis on communication. First, this study explicitly examines the concept of gender. In the relevant literature, gender was examined only implicitly in two of three contexts and not at all in the third. Specifically within social minorities, status was examined and gender was never mentioned. Although other studies examined gender, that was largely because of the gendered nature of the occupations (e.g. nursing and teaching). Because I used gender
schemas as the theoretical lens to frame the study, I was able to better emphasize the prevalence of HH between women in particular.

Secondly, this study extends the examination of HH beyond sports teams and religious congregations to the context of secondary education. This is critical because university related professional organizations have among their objectives to help their female members advance professionally. As a result of examining behaviors associated with HH in this study, organizations may be better able to combat the negative impacts that such behaviors have on their female members.

Finally, this study highlights the relationship between communication and HH. To date, there are no studies that have specifically examined verbal and nonverbal communication in relation to HH. This is an important oversight because communication is an essential professional skill pertaining especially to workplace advancement. Moreover, because communication clearly enables women to manifest HH (e.g., gossip, sabotage and covert abuse), it cannot continue to be ignored or only implicitly discussed. On balance, the presence of HH suggests that women may be unable to support one another and therefore, unable to work together towards achieving both their personal goals and the goals of the organization. This means, in turn, many women will continue to struggle to advance professionally.

Limitations and Future Implications

Although this study looked at women within a university setting, there were some limitations associated with the sample. It was limited by age, professional status and race. Specifically, the sample included women between the ages of 32 and 60 and excluded non-white women, students and professional faculty. Accordingly, my
results are limited. In particular, if younger women had been included, there may have been a greater prevalence of HH among these women because of their inexperience in the workplace, supporting the findings of McKenna et al. (2003). Additionally, if women just starting out their careers had been included, there may have been a greater prevalence of HH between these women. As new hires, these women may have to compete for a more limited number of positions than established women.

Future studies need to examine women at other levels (e.g., women deans, college department chairs and organizational members) within the university setting to see if HH is prevalent among them. If HH exists between these women, the relationships they create with their peers may limit their ability to advance. Further, it stands to reason that younger, less established women attempting to advance will have a harder time succeeding, especially if higher status women are engaging in HH.

Finally non-white women were purposefully excluded from this sample in order to focus on gender exclusively. Had women of color been included in this study, the intersectionality of race and gender may have made it difficult to explicitly study the relationship between HH and gender only.

A second limitation of this study involved the interview protocol. Participants’ unfamiliarity with the term HH may have led to unnecessary confusion when discussing their experiences. In order to get them familiarized with the concept, examples of HH could have been provided to participants, potentially making it easier for them to discuss their experiences related to HH.

Finally, because HH is so pervasive and oppressive and because women’s self-esteem is lowered due to the internalization of this oppression (Penelope, 1992;
Blasingame, 1995), women’s interpretations of HH actually may have reflected HH. In other words, because women are judged by different standards than men, they may have accepted such standards and aligned their behaviors accordingly. In turn, women may have undermined themselves by using flawed standards to judge their own and others’ behaviors in the workplace.

Broadly speaking, this study confirmed two things: (a) women are aware of the concept of HH and (b) HH exists among women in the workplace. On the basis of these findings and in order to maximize their potential for professional advancement, women need to have as much information as possible about HH. To that end, information derived from this study can aid corporations in developing employee training seminars. In particular, because these data offer examples of the communication behaviors related to HH, it could be presented as a means of teaching employees how to identify HH. Additionally, because women are made aware of the communication-related behaviors associated with HH, they also may be better equipped to handle HH when it arises in the workplace. This, in turn, should help women’s potential for advancement in their careers.
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Appendix A

Participant Recruitment Letter
Dear Prospective Participant:

Over the last few decades women have made great strides in the workplace. Women are now becoming Chief Executive Officers and members of executive boards within major corporations. However, women face more and more competition in the workplace today than ever before. What many people do not realize is that not only do women have to compete with men for the prestigious top positions within companies but more often women also have to compete with other women for these sought after jobs.

As a woman beginning my personal journey into the workforce, I feel that it is important for women to fully appreciate and understand the potential obstacles to advancement they may face. This is why I am asking for your help. I would appreciate your participation in an interview discussing your own experiences with women colleagues and workplace competition. Your responses will be used as part of the research necessary to complete a graduate level thesis. Your identity will not be revealed as any identifying information will be destroyed after the interview is completed. Furthermore, more participation in this study is voluntary; you may refuse to answer any questions during the interview for any reason and you can chose to stop participating in the study at any time.

The answers you provide will be kept confidential to the fullest extent permitted by law. Special precautions have been established to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Names and other identifying information will only be used during the interview process, destroyed once the interview is completed and will not be used in finished thesis. During the course of the interview audio recordings will be made, coded for research purposes and then destroyed after the research is completed. There are no foreseeable risks to you as a participant in this project, nor are there any direct benefits but you may eventually benefit from the insights gained from the study. However, your participation would be extremely valued.

If you are interested in participating in this study or you have any questions please contact Erin Stone at 541-908-2655 or by email at stonee@onid.orst.edu or Dr. Celeste Walls at 541-737-5396 or by email at drwalls@oregonstate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research project, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator at (541) 737-4933 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

Thank you for your help. We appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Celeste Walls  
Principle Investigator

Erin Stone  
Student Researcher
Appendix B

Informed Consent Document
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Women and Workplace Competition
Principal Investigator: Dr. Celeste Walls, Speech Communication
Co-Investigator(s): Erin Stone, Speech Communication

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in a research study designed to look at the competition between women in the workplace. The hypothesis of the study is that women subconsciously compete with each other in negative ways that may negatively impact women’s ability to advance professionally. Specifically, this study hopes to discover the communication related actions and/or habits that women engage in, consciously or subconsciously, while in the workplace. The results of this study will be used solely in the presentation and publication of my master’s thesis.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This consent form gives you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that may not be clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you are a woman that is currently employed at an academic institution.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

During the interview you will be asked a series of questions relating to your experiences interacting with women in the workplace. The interview will be scheduled for one hour.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?

There are no foreseeable risks to the participants of this study. Based on the nature of the questions it is possible that participants may implicate themselves or someone else as having engaged in unethical or compromising behavior. Participants will be asked not to use names or other identifying information when reporting such instances. If participants desire, comments regarding such implications can be erased from the audio recordings of the interview in the presence of the participant before the interview is completed. Although there are not foreseeable risks, participants and others may be impacted by the results of this study.
WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

There are no direct benefits to participants involved in this study. However, participants and others may benefit indirectly from the results of this study, although that is not guaranteed. The results of this study may provide important insights into horizontal hostility, which may impede women’s advancement in the workplace. Thus women may be able use the results of this study to potentially enhance their professional lives.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be charged for anything related to this study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

The information you provide during this study will be kept confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, any demographic information collected during the interview will be used for statistical purposes only. After these data are reported in aggregate form, it will be destroyed. Pseudonyms will be used in all reported data.

One aspect of this study involves making audio recordings. The audio recordings will be used in order to transcribe all relevant information. Only the principal investigator and the co-investigator will have access to the audio tapes and the tapes will be destroyed after the research is completed. The taped interviews will be locked in a cabinet and any relevant information derived from them will be transcribed and entered into an electronic file that will be password protected.

Regardless of whether or not the results of this project are published, your identity will not be made public. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure your confidentiality. All relevant data will be seen by the principal investigator and co-investigator only. Results, analysis and discussion of the data will be seen by members of my thesis committee who include Dr. Celeste Walls, Dr. Trischa Goodnow, Dr. Susan Shaw and Dr. Michael Scanlan as well as the public at large if the study is published.

DO I HAVE A CHOICE TO BE IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.
You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. You are free to skip any question that you would prefer not to answer during the course of the interview. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports.

If we obtain new information during the course of this study that might affect willingness to participate, you will be promptly informed.

**WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Dr. Celeste Walls, (541) 737-5396, drwalls@oregonstate.edu or Erin Stone, (541) 737-5391, stonee@onid.orst.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-4933 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

(Signature of Participant)     (Date)

Principal Investigator’s Name
(printed):

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

(Signature of Principal Investigator)     (Date)

Co-Investigator’s Name
(printed):

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

(Signature of Co-Investigator)     (Date)
Appendix C

Interview Protocol
Thank you for meeting with me today. I really appreciate it. Do you have a signed copy of the informed consent document I sent you? Good. If you had a chance to read it, then you know I will be tape recording our interview. If you have any questions now or at any time, during the interview, please feel free to stop me at any time. What I would like to discuss today are your experiences with other women that you have worked with. I am particularly interested in any information you can offer about your relationships, interactions, or conflicts that you have had with women in particular. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Demographics
1. Age:
2. Place of Residence:
3. Education:
4. Current job title:
5. Length of position:
6. Previous job title:

Work with other women
1. How often do you work directly with other women?
2. In what capacity do you work with other women? (e.g., do you work with other women on projects, assignments or other work issues?)

Respondent’s characterization of work personality
1. Do you consider yourself to be an ambitious person (e.g., desire to advance, strive to be the best in the department/field/area, do what it takes to get the job done)?
2. Why or why not?
3. What are your top three (3) career goals?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
4. Do you consider yourself to be a competitive person?
5. Why or why not?

Personal Strengths
1. What are your personal strengths at your job?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

Other’s assessment of subject’s strengths
1. Do the women you work with view these as strengths?
   a. Probe: How do you know that other women view these as strengths?
Work relationships

Supervisor
1. Have you ever been a boss?

2. If so, then how would you describe your relationships with your female employees?

3. Did you ever have any conflicts with your female employees?

4. If so, then how did you deal with the conflicts?

Subordinate
5. Have you ever had a female boss?

6. How would you describe your relationship?

7. Did you ever have a conflict with your boss?

8. If so, then how did you deal with the conflicts?

Mentee
9. Have you had any female mentors or female role models in the workplace?

10. What was your relationship with them like?

11. Were there any conflicts?

12. If yes, describe the conflict.

13. What strategies did you use to resolve the conflict?

Levels of competition
1. Have you competed with another woman in the workplace?

2. Can you describe a specific situation where you competed with another woman in the workplace?
   a. Probe yes: what happened?

   b. Probe no: since you cannot recall a specific situation where you competed with another woman in the workplace, can you give me a hypothetical situation that would describe a typical competitive situation in your area of work?

   c. Have you experienced conflict with another woman in the workplace?
3. Have you experienced workplace conflict?

4. Can you describe a specific situation where you experienced conflict with another woman in the workplace?
   a. Probe yes: what happened?
   b. Probe no: since you cannot recall a specific situation where you had a conflict with another woman in the workplace, can you give me a hypothetical situation that would describe a typical situation involving a conflict in your area of work?

Discrimination
1. Have you ever experienced discrimination from another woman in the workplace?

2. Can you describe the situation?
   a. Probe yes: what happened?
   b. Probe no: since you cannot recall a specific situation where you experienced discrimination from another woman, can you tell me what type of discrimination is typical in your area of work?

Conflict Resolution
1. Have you ever behaved toward a female colleague in a way that you weren’t proud of or satisfied with?

2. Do you remember a specific event where you behaved in a way that you weren’t proud of or satisfied with?
   a. Probe yes: what happened?
   b. Probe no: since you cannot recall a specific situation where you behaved in a way that you weren’t proud of or satisfied with, can you give me a hypothetical situation that maybe describes a situation such as this in your area of work?

3. Why do you think you behaved in this manner?

4. When conflict arises between women at work, what do you consider to be one of the main sources of that conflict?

5. What, if anything, should be done about these conflicts?

6. When you have had a conflict with another woman in the workplace, have you found yourself in a situation that you could not resolve to your satisfaction?
7. How was it resolved, if at all?

8. Do you wish things had played out differently?

9. If so, how?

Gender Schemas
1. Did you participate in competitive sports or games with other girls growing up?

2. As an adult, do you participate in competitive sports or games?

3. Does what you learned on the “playing field” transfers to the workplace?

4. How does it transfer to the workplace?

5. While growing up, what lessons did you learn about competition and conflict with other girls and women?

6. Do these lessons transfer to the workplace?

7. How do these lessons transfer to the workplace?

Subjects’ expectations about women’s responsibility to support each other
1. Do you think women have a responsibility to support other women professionally?

2. How have you in the past or how do you currently support other women professionally?

3. Do you think women tend to support each other professionally?

4. Why or why not?