

Rivalry Among College Women

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore behaviors and characteristics of college women within the context of their relationships with their female friends, peers, and colleagues. Specifically, the study addressed unacknowledged feelings and covert behaviors directed toward women. In opposition to the frequently commended characteristics of women such as collaborating and nurturing, experiences reported by the subjects of this study describe their female peers, and sometimes themselves, as covertly malicious. Rivalry, unlike competition, surrounds women and has the potential to penetrate every relationship women have with other women regardless of the context of the relationship. By collecting data from college women at a large, research, state-affiliated university, this exploratory study employed grounded research methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to develop a theoretical image of the rivalrous woman.

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Chapter One

Background and Introduction

Literature from across disciplines has explored gender in a variety of contexts.

Comparative research of men and women is perhaps the most common. Although it is difficult to conduct research and question women's reality without comparing it against existing norms (typically masculine norms), recently exploration of, and about, women has emerged, including women in politics (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 1995), women and leadership (Guido-DiBrito, Carpenter, and DeBritto, 1986), women's personal development (Chodorow, 1974; Gilligan, 1993), and women in the educational environment (Hall & Sandler, 1984).

Women's relationships with family, colleagues, children, friends, etcetera are of particular interest among researchers. Gilligan (1993) argues that how women view and participate in their relationships is qualitatively different from men's relationships. In fact, some theorists assert that women's devotion to relationships is a weakness (Miller, 1976). Through the course of psychosocial development and socialization some might argue, a young girl's "ethic of care" (Kohlberg, 1958, 1981) emerges as the dominant feature that women unconsciously or consciously employ in their interactions with others. With Kohlberg's theory of moral development in mind, many scholars have inquired into women's relationships in various settings (e.g., home, professional, social). Regardless of the setting, researchers have found that women are characteristically sensitive and caring (Gilligan, 1993), passive and dependent (Sherman, 1976), and inclusive and collaborative (Rosener, 1990).

It is unlikely for each of these characteristics to exist in every woman and, perhaps, not at all in some women. However, assuming some combinations of these attributes exist in women,

these traits may influence the ways in which women interact with others. While previous research has focused primarily on traits specific to women and in contrast to men, little work has focused on women's relations with each other, or on the possibility of negative relationships among women.

Literature and research specific to gender is scattered across various disciplines including Women's Studies, Political Science, Education, Psychology, and Sociology. Much of the data used to make conclusions pertaining to gender has frequently been the unintended, irrelevant, and /or secondary results of non-related research projects. Consequently, uncovering the data related to gender proves challenging. Furthermore, differing platforms of research have been used, traditional (quantitative, theory-testing) and modern (qualitative, exploratory, narrative), creating problematic challenges in synthesis efforts. However, despite these challenges, the literature and research included in this study, significantly provides support for the contention that elements of women's behavior, beyond nurturing, sensitive, and caring, has yet to received due attention.

Two specific texts which focus solely on the negative experiences of women with their female peers significantly contributed to support for the present study (Briles, 1987; Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1988). In addition, and as will be discussed in greater detail in the literature review, references to the critical and perhaps rivalrous tendencies women have for their female peers do exist. Literature presented in Chapter Four, provides insight into the perceptions of women politicians (Rosenwasser & Seale, 1998), women in leadership (Rosener, 1990; Eagly, Makhijani, and Klenshy, 1992; Eagly, Mladenics, and Otto, 1991), women in social settings (Fletcher, 1993; Schaef, 1981), and women in college relationships (Holland & Eisenhart, 1988).

Context of the Research

To provide a context for the reader, the following personal example may illustrate the depth of rivalry among women. As an undergraduate student, I personally struggled with relationships among my female peers. As I proceeded through my own personal development, I began to question the criticisms I made of other women students with whom I interacted and even those with whom I did not interact. I questioned the validity, appropriateness, and truth of the criticism and, furthermore, seriously examined my motives. Why did I feel compelled to criticize my female peers? In retrospect what was the most damaging for me was that my critical notions (internalized or otherwise) were more about comparing myself against female peers and feeling as if I did not, and could not, measure up to the desirable attributes in the particular woman. My response to what I perceived as personal inadequacy was to develop an intense dislike and unfortunately an intense rivalry toward these women. Intrinsically, I knew that my behaviors and thoughts were not justifiable.

Statement of the Problem

The reality of women in rivalry or competition with other women, exemplified in behaviors as innocuous as internal criticisms of others to as harmful as overt sabotage, may be considered normal components of life. American culture exudes competition. These everyday interactions and relationships seem simple and straightforward as social norms reinforce competitive expectations that men and women live by. Further, it is widely recognized and referenced in everyday popular language (e.g., “cat fight”) and popular media (e.g., Ally McBeal, Sex in the City) that women are openly critical of other women. The nature of criticism among women is one component of rivalry among women.

Perhaps it is melodramatic to suggest that women in competition with other women independently warrants study. Yet, with little empirical information in existence about this topic, it seems that there is much to learn. The problems to be addressed by this study are informed by the varying literature and anecdotal information provided by college women. These problems include why women are rivalrous/critical of each other, when women feel a sense of rivalry with another woman, and effects of the rivalrous/critical relationships.

Research Question

This study's intent is to fill a knowledge void. As such, the research question for this study is: Is there a presence of rivalry among college women? To answer the research question, the data collected for this study will be analyzed and presented in the conclusions and resulting theory in Chapter Five.

Purpose

With the intense research and attention directed toward the socialization process of men and women, seeking to answer the many "hows?" of human behavior and interpersonal interactions is key to addressing what might be called larger social problems, particularly as they relate to gender (e.g., harassment, discrimination, assault). The phenomenon of rivalry among women is reinforced through language and character portrayals in the popular media. Confronting these images with all generations of men and women can further add to efforts that increase awareness and potentially to societal change.

At the college level, gendered education is a hot topic. No longer are institutions of higher learning educating the "gentleman scholar" (Komives & Woodard, 1996). In fact, women (of all ages) comprise the majority of college students in the United States (Pearson, Shlavik, & Toughton, 1989).

This shift in majority demographics has challenged colleges and universities to change and grow and become more inclusive of female students. Most significantly, masculine pedagogy has been challenged within all curricula. Students are encouraged to process classroom information through non-traditional lens. For example, “feminist theories of anthropology challenge existing ideas of ‘natural’ human behaviors by pointing to cultural patterns which disguise women’s inferior social position” (Humm, 1990, p. 11). Further, the increased legitimacy of co-curricular instruction has provided students with opportunities such as experiential learning (e.g., field study, co-op, service learning) and leadership development (e.g., peer education, student government) for college credit. New majors and minors are being offered to students such as Women’s Studies, a program that focuses on the study of power and gender relationships while using pedagogical techniques such as collaboration and multidimensional critical thought (Humm, 1990). These progressive methods employed in the college classroom are largely due to the research of such scholars as Gilligan, Belenky, Astin and Ku, Chickering, and Kohlberg.

With respect to those scholars and theorists invested in understanding gender, this study may provide confirmation of the characteristics found in women as asserted by Kohlberg (1958, 1981), Rosener (1990), Sherman (1976), and Gilligan (1993). These theorists have emphasized what some may consider gender stereotypes and socialized behaviors. Some of these stereotypes and behaviors are grounded in research data while others are grounded in assumptions. It is difficult to accept fully theories related to women (or men), and more importantly, assumptions that lead us to create stereotypes, because of the inconsistencies in research findings. A lack of confidence in what has been called gendered education exists. Therefore, all methods of educating--inside and outside of the classroom--must be monitored and caution exercised in

making assumptions about college students as alternatively, this study may confirm the less acknowledged assertions of Briles (1987) and Eichenbaum and Orbach (1988) that indicate negative and destructive relationships among women.

One possible example of the potential implications of this research for the classroom may serve to clarify the need for exercising caution when making assumptions based on gender. If a college professor or student affairs practitioner assumes or “buys into” the collaborative nature of women put forth by various researchers (e.g. Gilligan, Belenky, Eagly, Rosener), she or he might be inclined to develop a curriculum solely based on group work. While this example is not intended to devalue the importance of group work, there may be cause for concern if women are placed in situations whose effects are unknown (e.g., rivalrous) and are not properly identified or acknowledged.

If the study is able to address the “why?” of rivalry as well as the affects or rivalry, those in the helping professions may be more adequately prepared to investigate sources of insecurities and self-hate among women clients.

Outcomes of this research may be of particular interest to the student activities practitioner. From the student activities perspective, this study may have several implications for the structuring of student organizations, their governing bodies, and recognition programs. For example, in a Greek system there are separate governing bodies for fraternities and sororities. These distinctive structures intent, among other things, is to promote competition among just the men’s groups and just the women’s groups, but rarely among each other. In addition, perhaps a University’s student activity office develops a series of awards centered on student leadership. This program then recognizes the outstanding “woman” of the year and the outstanding “man” of the year. Structurally, this well-intended effort to recognize the contributions of students

stratifies by gender. This not only has implications for the status of women versus men in the much larger sense, it also creates an understanding that it is more of an accomplishment to be the best of the women or best of the men versus the best of everyone. If, in fact, there are detrimental affects of competition and/or rivalry among women that have been haphazardly considered, do these structures create opportunity for these relationships not only to exist but also to be cultivated? With what little is known about this supposed phenomenon, it is necessary to examine closely the structures, assumptions, and learning opportunities we provide for college students.

Definition of Terms

Various concepts are continually referred to throughout the course of this thesis. For purposes of this study, the following definitions are used for the study.

Rivalry: There is no universal definition or understanding of rivalry. Generally it can be stated that a rivalry is an effort to equal or exceed the accomplishments of another. Most references of rivalry imply a detectable behavior (Zubin, 1932) and these same behaviors occur between, or against, groups of individuals (The Oxford American Dictionary, 1999). This study attempts to further define the meaning of rivalry, yet for the purposes of introduction, the research qualifies the existing definition(s) as such: Rivalry are detectable or undetectable efforts by individuals or groups which result in the achievement of elevated status, reward, or self-fulfillment. Different than competition, rivalry can be detectable but it also may be undetectable, or rather not obvious, behavior that has a vague outcome.

Competition: Competition is frequently regarded as synonymous with rivalry. However definitions of competition emphasize individual achievement against her/himself. For example, The Oxford American Dictionary (1999) defines competition as “the testing of skill or ability.”

There is no mention of vying factions to “beat out.” Further, achieving equal status (versus greater status) compared to another is common in understandings of competition. For the purpose of this research, competition is defined as overt efforts intended to elevate an individual’s or group’s status, or provide rewards equal to or greater than the opposition. In contact with rivalry, competition is evident in overt behaviors that result in a more concrete and specific outcome.

Negative Effect: With respect to the definitions of rivalry and competition, negative effects refer to the responses of subjects when describing competitive or rivalrous experiences. These effects may be, but are not limited to, low self-esteem, guilt, physiological distress, or stress.

Relationship: A relationship, for the purposes of this study, includes interactions (limited or otherwise) with another person known or unknown on a personal level.

College Women: Female students at Virginia Tech who are classified by the University as student status.

Settings: In an effort to understand the presence of rivalry among college women, subjects participating in the study, were asked to reflect upon “settings” in which rivalry (or competition depending upon her definition) occurs. A setting may be a specific location, type of location, or situation in which a subject is able to articulate experiences or examples of rivalry or competition with women.

Limitations

The following are limitations inherent to this thesis. First, the nature of the study is largely dependent upon the concept of rivalry. This concept is one that evokes an image-like understanding and has subjective meaning depending on an individual and the context in which it

is used. Accurately abstracting meaning of this term from subject response, while a goal of the research, is limited by the researcher's own interpretation of the subjects' statement.

Similarly, defining concepts and terms at any point in this study limits the scope of the research as definitions vary from person to person. However, it is important to note that the design of the study allows for reflection and change, hence definitions may be altered at any time if necessary.

The subjects of this study are undergraduate women at Virginia Tech. The study is limited in that the subjects are from this institution. Subjects commonly had difficulty meeting at hours desirable to the researcher and frequently canceled or did not show up.

In an effort to identify a sample of convenience versus a random sample, this study is limited in that those interviewed were not identified through a preexisting defined population. Therefore, the results of this study may not be applicable to the larger female undergraduate population (Chadwick, Bahr, Howard, and Albrecht, 1984) or to women in general.

The interview protocol for this study provide the following limitations: Subjects are not informed of their purpose other than to be interviewed, prior to the study. According to Cannell, Oksenberg, and Converse (1977), when a subject is unsure of her role in the study, the subject may "tolerate" the study; hence, the information provided may be unreliable. In addition, interviews were lengthy and required significant thought and reflection by the subject. It is possible that subjects did not provide reliable and/or thoughtful information (Cannell, et al., 1977). Semi-structured interviews provide for the opportunity of maximum discovery; however, the discovery is limited to the researcher's ability to lead the subject appropriately through uncharted pathways as interview protocol can be abandoned or restructured at any time.

Constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) has the potential of limiting the results of the study. Allowing for flexibility of data collection proves problematic in data coding and analysis as information yields from individual interviews may occur in varying order. Information revealed in the final interview may not have even been addressed in the first interview may yield limited data to utilize in constructing conceptual categories and/or properties. In addition, the constant comparison is dependent upon the subjective judgments and interpretations of the researcher and as such, the unconscious insertion of researcher bias.

Organization of the Study

The study of rivalry among college women was designed to be an exploratory, qualitative project that sought to answer fundamental questions about the nature of relationships female college women have with their female peers. The thesis document is divided into five chapters that coincide with the structure of the study.

Chapter One articulated the background information relevant to this study as well as the context of the study with respect to researcher experience and motive. The research problem and research question guiding this study were provided in Chapter One in addition to the purpose and implications of investigating this phenomenon. Definition of terms relevant to this study and the limitations of the study conclude the chapter.

Chapter Two details the methodology utilized to collect and analyze data which was best suited to respond to the research question. The method of identifying the convenience sample of undergraduate women at Virginia Tech, a large, Southeastern Research I institution is outlined. In addition, justification and procedures of the unstructured interviews are provided. A description of data analysis procedures and outline of how the data is to be presented concludes the chapter.

Chapter Three documents the data collection and analysis and resulting findings. The findings are presented through a model consisting of a conceptual category specific to rivalry among college women. The conceptual category emerged throughout the course of the data collection and analysis. Each conceptual category is further defined by properties that allow for further clarification of the relationship between the category and the research question.

Chapter Four of this thesis contains a review of literature relevant to the topic of relationships women have with other women provides additional data used to answer the research question. The literature review, conducted after data collection and presentation of findings, includes research about women's psychological development, women's behavior, and the influence of culture on women and perceptions of women, and occurrences of rivalry and competition within women. Chapter Four concludes with a presentation of the findings relevant to the study derived from the literature.

The concluding chapter of this study, Chapter Five, is grounded in the findings as presented in Chapter Three (data) and Chapter Four (literature). Seven conclusions about rivalry and women are generated from the findings are presented in the chapter and are followed by a proposed Rivalrous Woman theory.

Chapter Two

Methodology of the Study

This research project was designed to address the presence of rivalry among college women. An exploratory, qualitative design employing grounded research methodology was deemed most appropriate by the researcher. This chapter includes justification of the methodology, procedures for data collection, procedures for data analysis, and a description of how the findings of the study will be presented.

Justification of Methodology

After various efforts to design a quantitative study to test a presence of rivalry among college women, three obstacles emerged. First, rivalry has subjective and abstract (not observable) meaning (Zubin, 1932) and was, therefore, difficult to operationalize into a testable variable as is required within the context of quantitative research (Reaves, 1992). Second, testing an abstract variable such as rivalry requires measurement of behaviors related to the variable (e.g., rivalry). As there is little known about the presence of rivalry among women (behaviors or otherwise), measuring (indicative of quantitative research) related behaviors proved problematic. Third, understanding the meaning of concepts such as rivalry, competition, rivalry versus competition, effects of rivalry, settings of rivalry, and causes of rivalry, requires an emphasis on the individually constructed thoughts and meanings of such terms by college women. These meanings are likely determined by personal experiences. The goal of quantitative research, while not to ignore personal meaning or feeling, is to quantify experiences and measure experiences/meanings on some type of scale (Reaves, 1992). As this was not the desire of the researcher, the benefits of qualitative research design were favored.

There are several noted strengths of qualitative research. The objective of qualitative research is to provide opportunity for subjects to interact with and give meaning to a given concept. In this study, the concept is rivalry. Another related strength is the likelihood of uncovering meaningful, multidimensional, and rich data. “Field work [individual interviews with familiar subjects] helps the researcher to ground observations and impressions in a richly elaborated context of the perceived world view and values of the subjects” (Chadwick, Bahr, and Albrecht, 1984, p. 211). This became beneficial to the present study as subjects were asked to thoughtfully define and examine their realities of rivalry. The researcher has the responsibility of articulating these definitions by way of observable behaviors or emotions, response to interview questions, and discussion with the subject (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Perhaps the most significant strength of qualitative research specific to this study is the flexibility of this methodology. In his study of the street corner society, Whyte (1955) notes that important data will be missed if the researcher [and research design] is not flexible enough to modify protocol as data collection progresses. In accordance with Whyte’s (1955) and Katz’s (1953) research, personal experiences in field research, flexible boundaries acknowledged the complex variables related to rivalry among women that emerged from this study.

With the prevalent obstacles inherent within the boundaries of quantitative research and the noted strengths of qualitative research, it was determined that a qualitative research strategy would most appropriately address the research question. The research question for the present study was: Is there a presence of rivalry among college women?

Qualitative research commonly produces what is known as descriptive data compared to the statistical data produced by quantitative research. One intended goal of descriptive data and this study is to provide a “snap-shot” picture of the presence of rivalry among college women.

However, this type of data makes no attempt to understand and explain a situation or given phenomenon (Reaves, 1992). It was in the interest of the researcher to explore beyond the scope of the snap-shot picture, a descriptive research technique, in an effort to provide possible explanations of the images of rivalry among college women.

This study is congruent with the main purposes of all exploratory research: (a) to satisfy curiosity (b) to build a methodology that can be replicated in future, more succinct research, and (c) to produce new questions and recommendations for future research (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1991). Although exploratory research can be designed for quantitative and qualitative studies, the flexibility inherent in the exploratory design lends itself well to qualitative research and to the study of rivalry among college women. Exploratory research design is commonly called upon when an interest in investigating the unknown and unfamiliar exists (Denzin, 1970; Reaves, 1992). The ability to explore rivalry among college women and describe it "... clearly and accurately is an important craft" (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1991, p. 42).

A common misconception of exploratory research is that flexibility within the methodology indicates a lack of purpose for a research project. Consistent with all stages of the present study's development, Adams and Schvaneveldt (1991) explain that flexibility allows for broad ideas and conceptualizations at initial stages of the study. As the study progresses through data collection and analysis, the purpose becomes more focused and specific. The purpose specific to this study fully articulated in Chapter One, is to gain insight and understanding into the supposed phenomenon of rivalry and women.

Exploratory research lacks an emphasis on testing existing theory (Reaves, 1992). It is suggested by some social scientists that all efforts to sharpen an inquiry and create greater insight into the unknown phenomenon do so within the context of a guiding theory (Denzin, 1970).

Other theorists, however, minimize the use of existing theory. Exploratory research need not be burdened with existing theory but rather, should be used only as a guide (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1991). Going one step beyond this casual use of theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967) became pioneers in the development of an exploratory research design when they articulated the need for social scientists to operate outside of the existing paradigms of social theory. In their book, Discovering Grounded Theory (1967), Glaser and Strauss present a method of exploratory research which generates theory as opposed to testing established theory. This theory becomes “grounded” through the process and interactions of data collection and data analysis. It is their assertion that this type of theory would assist in “closing the embarrassing gap between theory and empirical research” (p. vii).

The method of grounded theory emerged through the works of Glaser and Strauss in response to the use of stagnate theory and lack of new theory creation in the social studies. This “general methodology for developing theory” (Strauss & Corbin, 1975, p. 273) also sought to legitimize carefully constructed qualitative research. Since 1967, credibility of this method is evident by the number of studies articulating grounded theories (Broadhead, 1983; Charmaz, 1980; Corbin, 1992; Hall, 1992; also see Berger & Zelditch, 1993), and the expansions of this method by other theorists (Blumer, 1969; Vaughan, 1992).

It became clear to the researcher that the goals of exploratory research, as stated previously in this chapter, and suggested procedures of Glaser and Strauss, complement each other well. Implicit with grounded theory methodology is flexibility of subject sampling, data collection protocol, and data analysis, all held in high esteem within the realm of exploratory research. Grounded theory alleviates the problem encountered in the development of the present study with respect to the requirement of theory presence (even minimally) in exploratory (and

other) research. Finally, in that the outcome of grounded theory is theory development, this method provides insight into the relatively unknown. Hence, it was determined by the researcher that the qualitative methodology to be employed for the present study is grounded theory development.

Procedures for Data Collection

As was previously stated, grounded theory development must be flexible. In fact, Glaser and Strauss promote creativity in all aspects of theory development: modes of data collection, instrumentation for data collection, and to a lesser extent data analysis. In their texts, which further elaborates the benefits and values associated with generated theory, Glaser and Strauss clearly indicate that the procedures they offer are only suggestions. The procedures to follow are based on the writings of Glaser and Strauss (1967), other grounded theory research, and researcher preference.

Instrument

It was determined by the researcher that utilizing a semi-structured interview protocol was best suited for the study of rivalry among college women. The data collected from such interviews is beneficial to the development of theory in that it produces illustrative information about the topic from the perspective of the interviewee (Wright, 1979). “The interviewer explores many facets of the interviewee’s concerns, treating subjects [interviewees] as they come up in conversation, pursuing interesting leads, allowing his imagination and ingenuity full reign as he tries to develop new hypotheses and test them in the course of the interview” (Chadwick, Bahr, and Albrecht, 1984, p. 121).

The researcher favored semi-structured interviews for several reasons. The principles behind semi-structured interviews (e.g. flexibility, maximum discovery) are consistent with

qualitative research, exploratory methodology, and grounded theory development. With the benefits of interviews relevant to the present study, the researcher created an interview guide to be used for data collection. This guide (Appendix A) was flexible in that it permitted conversation to stray from the guide. However, it also supplied the researcher with fundamental questions that initiated the interview and provided a base of consistent data among all interviews. The initial interview guide consisted of the following eight questions: how might you define rivalry? When I say rivalry, what images come to mind? When I say rivalry, what feelings are you reminded of? In what settings do you feel rivalrous? In what settings do you feel other's have felt rivalrous of you? Have you ever felt rivalrous toward another female? What else should I ask when I interview other women about rivalry? Do you know college women I should interview?

The interview questions provided in the foundation interview guide were generated in response to: (a) the researcher's previous experiences with rivalry, (b) the texts of Eichenbaum and Orbach (1988) and Briles (1987), (c) two test interviews, and (d) thesis committee advice. Additional and/or revised questions were informed by previous subject interviews.

Sample Selection

This researcher thought that due to the subjective and abstract meanings associated with rivalry, responses from subjects might be more thoughtful and insightful if there was an existing relationship between the subject and the researcher. As such, female undergraduate students known by the researcher were contacted. These women were known to the researcher through graduate assistant positions with the Division of Student Affairs at Virginia Tech (e.g. Greek Life, Residence Education), advising relationship with an affiliate sorority chapter at Virginia Tech (Kappa Alpha Theta), cognate course work (cross listed undergraduate/graduate courses),

and graduate practicum (New Student Programs). It is acknowledged by the researcher that the method of convenience sampling, sampling units which are conveniently available to the researcher (Chadwick, Bahr, and Albrecht, 1984) does not represent a defined population and, therefore, outcomes of this study may not be generalized to a larger population of women.

Procedures

Once the interview guide had been established and deemed relevant to the study of rivalry among college women, the researcher began identifying female college women to ask to participate in the study. A list of 28 women was established. These women were contacted through various means. Those in the cognate course were asked via an announcement at the start of the class. Orientation leaders and Greek students were contacted via electronic mail. Freshmen students in the First Year Experience building and Kappa Alpha Theta women were contacted personally.

At the conclusion of each interview and in a follow up email, subjects were asked to provide the names of any female undergraduates who might have insight and/or would also be willing to participate in this study. Convenience sampling allows for the inclusion of snowball sampling procedures, in which a current subject voluntarily provides the name(s) of addition, potential subject. With the employment of snowball sampling, the possibility of developing conclusions applicable to the broader population exists depending if the pool of subjects is diverse.

Interviews were tape-recorded which allowed the researcher to be an active participant in the interview. Other means (researcher documenting each response) to record the data during an interview (researcher notes) proved problematic and limiting to the depth of the interview. Subjects were made aware of the recording and were afforded the opportunity to decline at the

start of the interview. At the conclusion of the interview, the tape was labeled by name of participant and sent for transcription. The tapes were transcribed to allow for maximum discovery and accuracy in data analysis.

Subjects were made aware of the following components of their participation in the study as part of the researcher's Master's thesis (see Appendix B for informed consent form): (a) interviews were to be tape recorded, (b) audio tapes would be labeled and transcribed according to name, (c) actual names would not be used in the thesis manuscript, and (d) statements/data taken from the interview would be used in the development of theory and/or to provide examples of that theory.

Allowing time for post-interview reflection was of interest to the researcher. Within the time-frame of one to three weeks post-interview, the researcher followed up with each subject in the form of electronic mail. The email asked for biographical information and any additional comments after the subjects had had opportunity to process the interview. (Appendix C). At this time, subjects were also asked to provide names of other college women who might be willing to participate in the study.

The researcher had no real incentive to offer subjects for their participation in this study. However, as the location of the interview frequently occurred in food establishments, coffee or ice cream was provided. Of the 28 students contacted, 16 became participants.

Data Analysis Procedures

Unique to Glaser and Strauss is a method of data analysis known as constant comparative analysis. This is a systematic method of reviewing and analyzing data as they are received by the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Following each interview, the researcher processed information provided by the subject by way of written memo. The memo (Appendix D)

consisted of several questions that prompted the researcher into reconfiguring the interview protocol for future interviews and which guided the researcher through data analysis procedures.

With each interview, the researcher identified themes as heard from the participants of the study such as rivalry occurs in specific settings; rivalry is commonly associated with other terms. The themes from each interview had the potential to produce conceptual categories related to rivalry specific to the sample of 16 college women. For example, conceptual categories may appear like this:

Conceptual Category I: Settings

Conceptual Category II: Associations/Context

The conceptual categories developed from themes heard in individual subject interviews consisted of various properties which more intentionally or specifically defined meanings of each related conceptual category. For example,

Conceptual Category I: Settings

Properties:

Classroom

Work

Social

Clubs and Organizations

Throughout data collection as certain themes emerged, the researcher made an effort to seek confirmation or denial of a potential category from future subjects. Ideally, conceptual categories and their properties would later serve as the foundation for the grounded theoretical outcomes developed from this study.

As the data collection/analysis progressed, the researcher compared and contrasted audio-tapes, transcriptions, memos, and individual interview themes of rivalry. The process of creating a more generalized base of conceptual categories and their properties with respect to rivalry among college women began with only two interviews completed and did not cease until finalization of the thesis occurred. Language within transcribed interviews was coded with colored highlighter that corresponded to the evolving conceptual categories and their properties. For example, Subject A indicated that she felt a sense of rivalry with her female peers in social settings. The extract from the transcription revealed,

Subject A: "...when I go to Top of The Stairs, like I won't go there anymore, I just feel like it's a fashion, beauty show. I'm not like this skinny, little 2/4 size girls who can slip into anything and prance around in it..."

Interviewer: "So, when you say 'prance around,' that's a negative?"

Subject A: "...I think that's what they do! They strut their stuff."

The researcher coded this response with blue highlighter to note a reference to Conceptual Category #1: Settings [in which rivalry occurs]. As well, words like, "prance" and "strut" may be coded to indicate derogatory comments towards female peers.

Perhaps the most significant component to constant comparative analysis within the context of the present study is the requirement (imposed by the researcher based on the suggestions of Glaser and Strauss) that each unit of datum will be compared and contrasted to each other to insure repetition of themes is been noted; additional categories will be identified, explored and/or possibly renamed, and that the properties within each category will be thoroughly developed. This process of configuring and reconfiguring data into the most accurate

of categories required constant analysis and processing of data. It was this process of data analysis that yielded the final conceptual framework of rivalry among college women.

Presentation of Data

Prior to submitting the findings of this study, Chapter Three begins with an overview of the characteristics of the subject pool and as well, brief biographical sketches of each individual subject. Following, several caveats pertaining to the completed interview process are discussed. And, finally, the findings, based on the 16 interviews, are presented by conceptual category.

Chapter Three

Findings of the Study

This chapter illustrates the research findings by providing descriptive information about the 16 college women and by presenting the conceptual categories developed through the course of data collection and analysis. The protocol employed to identify and recruit participants for this study can be found in Chapter Two; however, it is relevant to describe the 16 college women to provide a context for interpreting the findings .

Through the data analysis process, the themes related to women's experiences with rivalry were organized and reorganized in an effort to assign properties (or themes) to appropriate categories. A term that adequately encompassed the range of themes and responses with themes served as the title of a given category. Each category shown is a conceptual category of rivalry among women. Individual categories are further elaborated by properties that also emerged from the data analysis.

Description of the Sample

The participants in this study were selected and asked to participate by way of an existing relationship with the researcher as shown in Table 1. The main selection criteria were availability and willingness of the subject to participate. The existing relationships between the researcher and subjects were based on: researcher's graduate assistantship positions at Virginia Tech within the offices of Greek Life and Residential Life; required practicum experiences as part of the Higher Education and Student Affairs Masters program; common enrollment in cross listed graduate/undergraduate course work such as Women and Politics and The Politics of Presence; and on advising relationship with a campus sorority. Two subjects were asked to participate in response to a previous subject's referral (see Chapter Two for snowball sampling technique).

Table 1

Participant Identification Method and Demographics.

Subject Name	Interview Sequence	Researcher's Position in Relation to the Participation	Academic Level	Major	Q.C.A. _a	Has taken One Women's Studies Course
Beth	7	Greek Life Graduate Assistant	Junior	Early Childhood Ed	3.75	No
Bethany	15	Orientation Practicum	Senior	Residential Property Mgt	2.4	Y
Brooke	14	Sorority Advisor	Senior	Biology		No
Dian	1	Greek Life Graduate Assistant	Junior	Unknown		
Emily	11	Referred by previous subject	Senior	Electrical Engineering		No
Farah	3	Student in Women's Study course	Senior	Environmental Science and Political Science	3.18	Yes
Felicity	12	Residential Life Graduate Assistant	Senior	Math Education	3.4	No
Gina	4	Greek Life Graduate Assistant	Senior	Chemistry	3.3	Yes
Heather	8	Orientation Practicum	Junior	Unknown		
Katie	5	Residential Life Graduate Assistant	Junior	Animal Science		No
Katherin	2	Student in Women's Study course	5 th year	Political Science		Yes

Ruth	10	Residential Life Graduate Assistant	Freshman	Business	“bad”	No
Robin	13	Greek Life Graduate Assistant	Junior	Unknown		
Rebecca	9	Orientation Practicum	Senior	Unknown	3.8	
Susan	6	Residential Life Graduate Assistant	Senior	Unknown		
Sandy	16	Referred by previous participant	5 th Year	Statistics	2.2	Yes

a. Q.C.A. (Quality Credit Average) is based on a 4.0 scale. Providing this information was optional.

The 16 women participants were of various academic years and majors. Of the 16 subjects, there was one freshman, one sophomore, and three juniors and five graduating seniors. The remaining six identified themselves as seniors but not graduating in the spring of 1998. Additionally, majors ranged from Engineering to Education to Political Science to Property Management. All participants of this study were involved in their education beyond the classroom by holding a part-time job and/or were members of one community or campus organization. Of the 16 women (100%), one woman was African American (6.2%), one woman was Asian American (6.2%), while the other 14 were white (87.3%). The women interviewed in this study were between the ages of 18 to 23.

Subjects were open and relaxed throughout the course of their interview. This is likely due to the preexisting relationship with the researcher. Following are brief descriptions of each subject based on knowledge of the subject prior to the interview as well as information provided by the subject within her interview. The names of all subjects have been changed.

Subject: Dian

At the time of interview Dian was classified as a second-year student; however, she was beginning her third year at Virginia Tech. Midway through her sophomore year, her Army reserve unit was activated and sent to Germany. Her experiences as a female enlisted in the Army were positive and her reflections on the relationships she had with female colleagues and relationships female colleagues had with each other were insightful and thoughtful. As a student at Virginia Tech, Dian was involved in numerous activities including the yearbook, the Corps of Cadets (residential military preparation community), and she was a student worker in the office of Leadership and Student Organization Programs. In addition, while serving an eight-month

tour in Germany, Dian met an enlisted man in the Mexican Army whom she married upon her return to the U.S. They resided separately until she finished college.

Subject: Katherine

Of the 16 subjects in this study, Katherine was the least traditional with respect to her college career. As a student financing her Virginia Tech education independently, Katherine concurrently held full-time employment and full-time student status for the five years. At the time of interview, she was completing her fifth year, achieving senior status and approaching her 23rd birthday. She was employed in a management position with a Virginia Tech affiliated company. She was a political science major and considered herself active within the Montgomery County's (locality of Virginia Tech) Democratic party with future plans to be a politician. Her experiences with women mostly centered on roommate arrangements and as an office manager.

Subject: Farah

Farah was completing a double major in Environmental Science and Political Science at the time of this interview and was scheduled to graduate in December of 1998. Her activities ranged from athletics to honor fraternities to academic clubs. Additionally, she held leadership roles within these campus organizations. As a woman who reports being active in her attempts to educate herself about women's issues, she reported that her interactions with other women always bothered her. Her reflections of these interactions (all negative) mostly centered on social scenarios. Furthermore, Farah approached the researcher several times post interview hoping to continue the discussion.

Subject: Gina

Gina identified herself as a student leader, as the title had been bestowed upon her due to various leadership roles within the Virginia Tech community. At the time of her interview, Gina was preparing to graduate in two months with a Chemistry major and minor in math. She spoke candidly about her perceptions of women's relationships with other women, including her own, frequently referencing the negative side of these relationships. While she viewed herself as a woman who does not feel rivalry, she was able to articulate a scenario within student activities in which she felt certain she was perceived as another woman's rival. Gina reported a strong sense of self and self-confidence that she considered to be unique characteristics in based on her perceptions of her female peers. When discussing her self-confidence in contrast to her female peers, she attributed her strengths to supportive and encouraging parenting as well as to her attendance at an all-female high school.

Subject: Katie

As a junior majoring in Animal Science, Katie was a peer mentor and assistant in an all-freshmen residence hall. She had three sisters and spoke of close family relationships. Most of Katie's energy was directed to her academic pursuits. When speaking of relationships with female peers, she typically referred to classmates. Her major was predominately male and her comments were reflective of this dynamic.

Subject: Susan

Susan was preparing to receive her B.S. degree in Business Marketing in May of 1998. In her capacity as a resident advisor for three years, Susan had opportunities to work with a variety of students ranging from first-year to upper class students. What perhaps was the most relevant to this interview, was Susan's relationship history. After three years in a committed and long

distance relationship, Susan accepted a marriage proposal during her senior year. Her experiences with relationships or interactions with female peers appeared to be limited. Susan's limited insights of positive or negative relationships with women were equally as noteworthy to those subjects who reported negative experiences with women.

Subject: Beth

At the time of the interview, Beth was completing her third year at Virginia Tech in the Family and Child Development program. Though, unwilling to see herself as successful outside of the classroom, her co-curricular accomplishments were significant as she held leadership positions within several organizations and was selected to serve as a new student orientation leader the coming summer. Beth had never given thought to relationships with other women within the context of rivalry or even competition. After personally defining rivalry, she was able to describe a situation in which she felt rivalrous with a female peer. Her description was not limited to merely a description of the situation or behaviors of both parties in the situation, but included the thoughts, feelings, and emotions she had throughout what she described as a negative experience. Considerable reflection of this experience occurred during the interview..

Subject: Heather

Having just completing her junior year, Heather was looking forward to a study abroad program in Europe for six weeks. Following this abroad program, she would be an orientation leader for the remainder of the summer. Majoring in Finance, Heather was in a sorority and was an officer of the Panhellenic Council. Perhaps more hesitant to reflect on rivalrous relations among women than other subjects, Heather identified scenarios within social settings which she labeled as competitive and rivalrous.

Subject: Rebecca

Rebecca was approaching her senior year in Psychology. Her involvement on campus was broad ranging from intramural athletics to orientation leader. Rebecca indicated that she preferred spending time with men and that the majority of her friends were male. She found herself competing with women on a frequent basis. Rebecca made some rigid distinctions between what women compete with men for (school and career) and what women compete with women for (school, career, men, appearance, status, opportunities). With respect to gaining greater insight into the rivalrous relations among women, Rebecca was passionate about women's issues as well once presented, the rivalry among women. Though she had not given thought to the specific topic of rivalry among women, she admitted that she had spent considerable time thinking about her own growth as a woman.

Subject: Ruth

Ruth was the only freshmen interviewed and some of the anxieties she conveyed within the context of relationships with female peers reflected the typical freshmen anxieties such as fitting in and "failing out." However, the emotions and causes of rivalry that she articulated were notable and significant to the research. Ruth resided in an all-freshmen residence hall and frequently spoke of competition and rivalry with her roommate as well as observations she made of hall-mates. Ruth also articulated that she made a deliberate effort to spend more time with men than women as she felt more comfortable with men.

Subject: Emily

At the close of the interviewing semester, Emily would graduate with a degree in Electrical Engineering. This subject was interviewed by way of the snow-ball effect (see Methodology for further explanation). As such, the pre-existing relationship with her was limited

to a common acquaintance. Emily clearly dedicated the majority of her college efforts to her academic course work. Out of class organizations to which she belonged were generally academic in nature. She admitted never really thinking about rivalry among women, but noted she had intentionally avoided living relationships with other women for reasons which she articulated as behaviors associated with rivalry.

Subject: Felicity

An admittedly outgoing individual, Felicity spoke openly and eagerly throughout the entire interview. When composing her definition of rivalry, she continually focused upon thoughts and images of sibling rivalry. Felicity had one younger sister. She was a junior majoring in Math Education. She was involved in numerous campus organizations and was a resident advisor. In her response to the post-interview email (Appendix D) , Felicity commented that she was still struggling to make a distinction between her definitions of competition versus rivalry. This subject was not as adamant as others regarding a presence of rivalry among women, but noted that women were more apt to compete with other women than with men.

Subject: Robin

A junior in Marketing, Robin worked hard to earn leadership positions within the Greek community. As a sorority woman, she interacted frequently with women and other student leaders. Her reflections of feeling rivalrous with other women stemmed from concerns with her own competencies and from her perceived pressure of following in the footsteps of an already successful woman. Acknowledging the feelings she had, Robin reported making deliberate efforts to strengthen her relationships with other women by being fair and open-minded.

Subject: Brooke

Brooke was looking into graduate schools at the time of her interview. She was to receive her B.S. in Biology in the coming month. With high aspirations to succeed in her male dominated major, Brooke was involved in numerous activities which served as a strong support system throughout her college years. Active within her sorority, Brooke led chapter members through difficult periods of time such as a suicide attempt by a member and declining membership. In her role as a chapter leader dealing with these issues, she faced adversity from a particular group of women and emotionally commented on the negative effect this had on her. Brooke was a sports fanatic by ways of participation and observation.

Subject: Bethany

Preparing for her fifth year at Virginia Tech, Bethany planned on finishing a degree in Property Management. She was selected two years in a row to serve as an orientation leader for new students. She was also a member of a historically black sorority on campus. She admitted a strong kinship to this organization yet also noted the intensity of competition between her sorority and other black sororities. Bethany does not consider herself competitive with anyone but herself.

Subject: Sandy

Sandy told the researcher that in the upcoming month she would receive a B.S. in statistics and had accepted a job at Virginia Tech. Little is known of this subject on a personal level, as she was interviewed by way of snow-ball sampling. She held one leadership position during her five-year college experience. Sandy was an Asian American student but did not feel her ethnicity had any particular relevance to experiences with her female peers. She noted in her

post-interview email that prior to the interview, she had many times thought about the disturbing occurrences of rivalry among women--particularly social rivalry.

Caveats

It was interesting to the researcher that the subjects all spoke to the subject of rivalry within the contexts of their predominant modes of involvement as college students. For example, Dian, the subject called to active duty during her sophomore year, was able to articulate her meaning of rivalry based on her experiences in the military. Another subject, Gina, who was active in numerous campus organizations spoke of rivalry that she encountered within student groups and leadership roles. Regardless of the area of involvement--classroom, personal relationships, or employment, the women interviewed specifically spoke within the boundaries of their predominate areas of involvement versus in a broader, philosophical context. When pushed to speculate about rivalry in settings not as familiar, often the subjects could not respond or could not articulate as clearly as they had previously. For example, Susan, who had been involved in a serious, long term, romantic relationship, to comment about rivalry in social settings (a setting mentioned frequently by other subjects), struggled to provide additional information.

While the researcher had suspicions that a presence of rivalry among women existed, it was uncertain if subjects would confirm or refute this notion. In other words, anticipating responses from subjects was impossible. With the exception of one subject, the women interviewed for this study indicated that a presence of rivalry among women (specifically their peers, but many also referenced rivalries among all women) existed. Furthermore, at different stages within the interviews, and in different levels of intensity, the same subjects felt that rivalry has negative connotations.

In the post interview e-mail transmission, each subject was asked if, prior to the interview, she had ever thought about rivalry among women. Of the 11 women who responded to the follow up 6 of the women had thought about rivalry among women prior to the study. Frequently, post-interview conversations occurred between the researcher and subjects. In these interactions, several subjects volunteered that additional introspection about their own behaviors with female peers had occurred.

As was previously mentioned, the development of this study required the researcher and her advisor, to conduct several test interviews with college women. These interviews followed similar structure but were not audio-recorded. Data from the test interviews were not included in the findings of this study. Minority women were poorly represented in the study; therefore, it is perhaps significant to note a comment made by an African American student during a test interview. After considerable discussion of the possible settings in which rivalry occurs, the researcher was prepared to progress further in the interview. The subject quickly spoke up to reveal that an additional setting (after mentioning athletics and sibling) where she experienced and noticed rivalry was among black women. While attempts to explain this were vague, she considered the critical comments black women make about other black women a disturbing occurrence and, further, labeled this occurrence as rivalry. This subject's perception was minimally confirmed by the one black woman (Bethany) included in data analysis throughout the course of data collection.

Finally, it is well recognized that the sample of 16 women for this study has limitations due to size and demographics. Therefore, the data to be presented should be considered exclusively to the 16 college women. However, this does not negate the significance of the conceptual categories that condensed the themes of rivalry which these women addressed.

Presentation of Findings

The findings are presented by conceptual categories. The design of this study did not dictate prior to the data collection what potential categories might be developed. It was anticipated that multiple categories would emerge. However, as constant comparative analysis occurred, it became clear that the data collected, though meaningful, was somewhat shallow and did not lend itself well to multiple categories.

The researcher concluded that due to the deliberate design of the study followed by attempts to create categories in which data were forced to fit, only one category related to rivalry among women could be developed from the data. While this category was not consciously predetermined, it seemed obvious as analysis progressed that the data were revealing college women's meaning(s) of rivalry among women. Had the interview process continued and additional subjects interviewed, there is reason to believe that other categories would have emerged.

As stated earlier in this document, it was the researcher's intent to place a concept before each subject, ask her to interact with the concept, and through discussion determine meaning of the concept of rivalry. This task was completed thoroughly. The data, in a variety of ways, revealed college women's meanings of rivalry among women. Therefore, the data are presented by way of the conceptual category. The conceptual category was developed in accordance with the methodology and via Glaser and Strauss's (1967) method of constant comparative analysis. Furthermore, properties of this category are well established and grounded in the data. Table 1 illustrates the conceptual category of college women's meanings of rivalry among their female peers and the related properties.

Conceptual Category: College Women's Meanings of Rivalry Among Women

Throughout the course of data collection/ and analysis, the researcher was attempting to confirm or refute themes that emerged from one subject to the next. Yet, on a comparative level, it became evident that the information and insight provided by subjects associated with rivalry among women was repetitive from subject to subject. A subject, by interacting with the concept of rivalry, was revealing her own meaning(s) of rivalry and, specifically, of rivalry among women. This consistency allowed for the development of the conceptual category that addressed rivalry among women on a very basic level.

The interviews began with subjects attempting define rivalry as literally as possible. The rich data provided many opportunities to extrapolate meanings of rivalry other than by way of formal definitions. The properties of this conceptual category are summations of the various ways in which the subjects provided their meanings of rivalry. The properties are: (a) defining rivalry, (b) word and image associations with rivalry, (c) experiences and observations of rivalry, (d) causes of rivalry, and (e) effects and implications of rivalry.

Defining rivalry versus competition.

Subjects struggled to formally define rivalry. "A strong desire to win," "when you do things to purposefully make the other person look bad," and "a conflict between two or more parties with a history of struggles" are examples of the more fluent definitions. However, from the most clearly stated definitions to the most vague definitions, subjects' definitions typically included some form of the word, "intensity." Most subjects attempted to define rivalry by way of internalizing the term. Commonly they reported that rivalry was a feeling, a drive, and that the intensity in which she feels it can be sometimes overwhelming, such as "I knew I was feeling

Table 2

College Women's Meaning of Rivalry

Conceptual Category	Property	Descriptions/ Examples Provided by Participants
College Women's Meaning of Rivalry		
	Defining rivalry versus competition	Rivalry is mental – competition is Physical. Rivalry is personal – competition is impersonal. Rivalry is subconscious, not discussed, don't know why you do it -- competition is normal, positive...pushes you to perform better. Rivalry is, "under-the-covers anger"and intense -- everyone knows about a competition
	Language associations	"Cat fight," backstabber, aggression, jealousy, bitter, vicious, bitch.
	Experiences and observations	Frequently experienced in social settings. Men let "it"go whereas women obsess. Intense "most stressful experience of my life." Being excluded from social circles. All women judge other women whether they say it outloud or not. A

woman pointing out flaws in another woman is really reflecting her own flaws.

Causes

Unknown. Magazines depict women as “hoecymammas.”

Women are not supposed to be aggressive. Upbringing.

Insecurity. A woman’s status is dependent on her man.

Effects and implications

Disturbing, don’t want to work with other women,

distrustful of women. Fearful of becoming close to other

women and overly suspicious. Promotes the inequality of

women and men.

rivalrous because my blood boiled any time her name even came up in conversation.” One subject offered the observation that once a rivalry had begun, it became one-upmanship. Other subjects confirmed this observation. Subjects stated that oftentimes feeling rivalrous is troubling because the cause of it is unknown. They said that “Rivalry is like....what do you do it for? There’s something more behind it, but it’s subconscious.”

Offering subjects opportunity to define competition and contrast it to previous definitions of rivalry provided further opportunities to explore rivalry. Subjects were asked to put competition and rivalry on a continuum from bad to good. All subjects indicated that competition is not as bad (or as intense) as rivalry and placed competition closer to “good” relative to where she placed rivalry. Other comparisons of the definitions included, “competition involved working together towards the same goal, where a rivalry is working in opposition of another toward the same goal.” Competition was seen as a behavior, while rivalry was seen as a feeling. Rivalry is an unspoken competition, according to these informants, or perhaps “is an under-the-covers kind of anger that is hidden behind the surface and not allowed out.” “I’ve heard people say competition is a good thing, but I’ve never heard someone say rivalry is a good thing.”

Language associations with rivalry.

When subjects spoke of rivalry (particularly after speaking of competition) images frequently came to the forefront of conversation. Participants spoke of images of war, aggressiveness, sabotage, taking credit for someone else’s work, and The University of Virginia versus Virginia Tech. Language used in the same sentence as rivalry (when recounting situations of feeling rivalrous with other women) included, “she was prancing around,” “strutting her stuff,” “wearing that little string thing,” “she was a bitch,” and “my view is going to win over hers.” An additional word heard frequently was jealousy. One subject used the words bitter and

serious in describing her image of rivalry. When asked subjects indicates that the above language was negative and indicative of feeling rivalrous of other women.

Every subject save one noted that rivalry had a negative connotation. In fact, when asked to place rivalry on a continuum of good to bad as mentioned previously, all subjects placed rivalry close to bad. One subject expanded upon her negative connotation of rivalry while also comparing rivalry to competition. She indicated that the two terms have gender associations and that competition is masculine and, therefore, more widely accepted. Rivalry on the other hand, is the same thing as competition, but because women are not supposed to be competitive, rivalry became a term reserved for women engaging in competition. Subjects cited additional references to popular terms reserved for describing women and had negative connotations. “Cat-fight,” as confirmed by subjects of this study evokes images of women being rivalrous with each other. Subjects stated that the term was never used in the context of men not getting along and that the term seemed to reflect women in a negative light.

Experiences and observations of rivalry.

Every subject was able to reflect upon a situation of rivalry. Three subjects reported being the type of person who does not engage in rivalry, but had specifically felt that they were another woman’s rival. Notably, every real (and hypothetical) situation described by subjects involved a female peer. When asked, never did a subject report feeling rivalrous with a male peer. Furthermore, the majority of subjects reported that she never felt rivalrous or even competitive with men. “We’re just not in the same league,” “with men, there’s a friendship factor,” “they [women] want to be the best in their division,” “so, it’s just easier to compete against women...you know if you were like, the number one female, it would be equal to the number one male,” “so there’s no need...cause I just think they’re different,” and “ I think each

woman wants to inherently show everybody else that she's better than [other women]" were several comments made during the interviews.

Along similar lines of conversation, the subjects revealed that they perceive that that men experience rivalry among men differently than women experience rivalry among women. The range within this response included, "men are not rivalrous with other men," to "men are just more easy going," to "men are intensely competitive but not rivalrous, and even when they are competitive it stays 'on the field'." The participants of this study perceived that men do not make critical comments of other men related to appearances or even intelligence. Moreover, the majority of the subjects felt that men were not as critical of women as women were of women.

Those subjects who recounted more intense experiences of engaging in rivalry were able to reflect on the feelings of the given situation: "Right then [when you say it] it makes you feel better, definitely...but, then I think you go home...and in the back of your mind you're thinking, 'oh, she's really pretty, that's why I said that.' "I became very ugly to people...this situation was the worst thing I had ever encountered as far as the stress involved...I was thinking about it constantly. It almost overcame me," "it makes me feel bad, but I'm not going to not have the thoughts I do [about the rival]."

When the subjects described situations of rivalry, some reflected upon the conditions in place that made the situation rivalrous. One subject felt that because she casually knew her rival versus being a close friend with her, it was and easier to dislike her and make an effort to out-do her in every way possible. Yet, other subjects revealed that the reason rivalry was intense was due to the emotional connection with the rival. Regardless of the individual, subjects affirmed that there was an underlying feeling that something was to be gained or lost, such as reputation, boyfriend, or social status.

With regard to women being “critical” of other women, every subject agreed that women were vicious and judgmental when it came to other women particularly as it related to beauty, but it was also noted that women exuding leadership or intelligence were viewed more critically than others. Over 50% of the participants thought that critical comments and backstabbing other women were forms of rivalry, and were indicators of feeling rivalrous with another woman. Those who disagreed with this possibility stated that, “it’s not rivalry because it happens all the time,” or, “that’s just the way women are.”

Causes of rivalry among women.

At the conclusion of each interview, the subject was asked to speculate on the causes of the more negative side of relationships with women. What was consistent within the data leading to the development of this property was the range of response. Few subjects, (particularly freshmen and sophomore) could offer no causes other than, “that’s just the way women are”, while others made links to media imagery of women: “I think the fact that magazines do put pretty little girls out emphasizes and reasserts that this is what society wants, so this is why you look at other girls and think hoochymamma, look at that girl (these are negative terms). Often times, a subject referenced insecurities, “...that may be why girls do that, for that little instant of betterment, whatever kind of joy it brings them and...it outweighs the negativity or bad feelings that come with it [being rivalrous].”

Several subjects placed an emphasis on societal norms with respect to women’s ability to be open, honest, and confrontational with anyone. Women are taught not to be competitive. Once subject said, “women are going to be a lot more quiet about it [competition], because they’ve been told they’re not allowed to voice anger or opinions or to be outwardly competitive.” And finally, almost all of the juniors and seniors reflected that while there was an aura of equality for

women, ultimately, opportunity for women to achieve was still limited. Some said, for example, “women hold these lower roles in society...and they’re not told they can compete with the higher roles...and therefore they stick within little groups of women, compete within the groups of women trying to be the best of just women.”

Effects of rivalry among women.

All subjects, after indicating a negative presence of rivalry among women were asked to reflect upon what the implications of the negative side of women’s relationships might be. All subjects, with the exception of one, agreed that this side of women’s relationships is disturbing. With respect to implications, one subject notes that in her field of engineering, women hate working with other women because of the “cattyness” and choose engineering in an effort to stay away from women. Others noted that women who are casual acquaintances did not trust one another, and further, another subject feared that perhaps her friendships with other women were very superficial and could devolve rather easily due to a rivalry.

Data Summation

It was evident through the presentation of data that the various properties illustrated above provided meaning of rivalry as reported by college women. Each property can be viewed independently; however, each has more impact when viewed collectively. As well, it is likely that other properties have not been discovered and examined. Still, in an effort to summarize the properties of this one category, several conclusions can be made.

First, subjects struggled to place a tangible definition to the term rivalry. Yet, there were word associations, image associations, connotations, comparisons, and continuums that assisted the subject and researcher to further explore relevant definitions. Based upon the data from this

study, subjects defined rivalry as an intense, negative experience in which a woman engages in a competition with another woman with unstated purpose, rules, or behaviors.

Rivalry was perceived as a negative component of women's relationships with other women that often resulted in stress, guilt, and frustration. Through the wide array of experiences seen within the data, women observed, participated, and now, reflected on occurrences of rivalry. Due to their articulations of these experiences, it was reasonable to conclude that a presence of rivalry among college women did exist among the women interviewed.

Limited opportunity, poor self-esteem, socialization, and unconscious ambition to be the best contribute to the causes of rivalry among women. The negative rivalry among women's relationships with each other is concerning and problematic to women. Implications of this problem are the potential for damaging relationships, trustless friendships, and continued occurrences of rivalry among women.

Chapter Four

Literature Review

The literature regarding women and rivalry is varied and multi-disciplined. In-depth exploration into the subject matter is useful to understand the phenomenon of rivalry among women. The broad spectrum in which relevant literature was extracted for the purpose of this review includes research from political science, gender studies, student affairs, business management, psychology, and popular press/media. It was rare to discover literature that directly pertained to rivalry among women. Many of the sources provided insight through their secondary and tertiary findings.

The literature review begins by examining research that directly links the purpose of this master's thesis. Following these direct references, numerous examples, contexts, perhaps explanations of rivalry among women are provided. Such examples range from the experiences of college women to the culture of sexual aggression and perceptions of women in leadership to the criticism of feminist research.

Innate Inferiority

In *Women's Reality: An Emerging Female System in a White Male Society* (1981), Schaeff presented a theory of female inferiority that may be the root cause of dislike and mistrust among women. An early feminist concept, Schaeff simply and concisely addresses the negative relationships what exist for women.

Schaeff's theory utilizes the biblical reference of original sin--original sin, in which there is no absolution but constant attempts to overcome. Within the context of female oppression, the "original sin of being born female" (p. 23) posits that the sin of femaleness is that of innate inferiority to men. Attempts to absolve her self of this "sin" stem from the acknowledgement

from men that she is “different” from other women. The achieved personal validation enhances her self-worth, and she considers herself different from the “innately inferior woman.” This is where the dislike and mistrust among women originates, according to Schaef, who concludes that because a woman’s identity is dependent on the affirmation of men and not of “inferior women”, attacking each other becomes safe and habitual. Furthermore, in their quest for validation, women will not support other women seeking the same treasure. Other women taking part in a similar quest for validation are viewed as a threat to the limited rewards available in the validation chest for women.

Merged Attachment

The concept of differentiation is also referenced and considered fundamental to the theory of Merged Attachment (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1988). This theory, more complex and specific than the aforementioned original sin, focuses on the mother-daughter relationship and its effect on personal development and self-actualization. It portrays the complicated dynamics of friendship and betrayal. In a book, *Between Women*, that seems to hold the most meaning for this master’s thesis, Eichenbaum and Orbach assert that a new phenomenon of tensions and betrayal among women emerged in response to contemporary roles in which women find themselves. Their research prompted the development of their Merged Attachment theory.

Mother and Daughter

Merged Attachment theory (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1988) suggests that the development and social processes that foster shared connection among women are the same processes that cause restrictive and contentious relationships among women. The development of the merged attachment begins with the mother–daughter relationship. It is believed that a mother becomes emotionally conflicted between her desire to nurture and her requirement to respond to her

daughter's expression of needs. The daughter, sensitive to mothers' changing moods, learns that the cause of the inconsistent and sometimes hurtful care from her mother is connected to her own expression of needs. In actuality, the mother is unconsciously realizing that throughout her life, her own personal needs have gone unmet. To her daughter, therefore, mother interchangeably provides selfless and generous care while at other times is stingy, distant, and indifferent.

Daughter Identity Development

Based on mother's apparent internal conflict, the daughter learns that her personal needs are inappropriate and selfish and, hence, ceases to assert her needs leaving them to go unmet. She learns that autonomy is inversely equated with feminine. The "feminine" daughter soon begins to completely ignore her own need and instead satisfies others' needs. Subconsciously, she believes that by fulfilling others' needs, her needs will be fulfilled as well. Her own sense of self, becomes dependent upon her connections or attachments to others. The connected or "relational" daughter becomes an expert in providing compassion and nurture to others because she thinks she identifies with others' needs as they are her needs too.

Identity Crisis

Finally, according to Eichenbaum and Orbach (1988), the "conflicted" daughter emerges as she begins to develop a more conscious knowledge of her repressed needs. When she again attempts to meet these needs, her developed identity is challenged because she is no longer satisfying someone else's needs as she has grown accustomed to doing. One of her basic, human needs is to distinguish herself from others (Eichenbaum and Orbach). Yet, for a woman (as she painfully learned from her mother), being different, by actually expressing her needs and attempting to have those needs fulfilled, she breaks the sisterhood. Internally, the conflicted daughter is proud of a female peer who managed to distinguish herself yet criticizes and judges

that same woman based on her own feelings of anger and betrayal. Such self-hate is operationalized through intense competition. Her natural instinct is to sabotage another woman's efforts (friend, foe, or stranger) because of her overwhelming fear of abandonment from the sisterhood. She has learned that only the merged and attached relationship can work.

In the uninterrupted development of merged attachments, the daughter becomes unauthentic. Her self-believed ability to identify with others ("we are the same") makes it impossible to subjectively and impersonally empathize. Relationships become inherently restricted and unsupportive. Furthermore, she has yet to meet her own needs and begins the development of the next generation merged attachment with her own daughter.

Behavior and Merged Attachment

Beyond explaining their theory, Eichenbaum and Orbach continue by discussing abandonment, envy, competition, anger, confrontation, and romantic relationships within the framework provided by the Merged Attachment theory.

The premise, which elicits a fear of abandonment among women friends, is the engrained understanding that women must stay in the same "place" together or advance to new places simultaneously: "...we must all stay the same...if we differentiate, we break ranks. We are disrupting the known, the merged attachment" (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1988, p. 89). The woman who attempts to differentiate is challenged by her feelings of guilt, envy, and competition because she has learned that there are costs for self-actualization and autonomy.

Envy is an expression of wanting and declaring desire grounded in the vague belief that there is "not enough" for everyone. Those who feel envy also feel ashamed and hurt. Envy elicits mistrust and is responsible for images of revenge, which cause tension and distance between friends. The envy felt and directed toward other women is particularly problematic because of

the inability to confront the cause of the envy. Women, so threatened by envious thoughts about other women, react by employing self-hate because such an occupation is familiar and safe. The envious woman envies the woman who betrays the “attachment” and seems to be seeking and/or achieving an independent identity (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1988).

Because of the loss of attention from mother demonstrated throughout early stages of development, daughters are left feeling insecure. The insecure daughter makes efforts to please female friends or acquaintances to ensure that initial attention and perceived approval does not dissipate. According to Eichenbaum and Orbach (1988), competition is a required practice in our patriarchal and capitalist society (survival of the fittest). Competition, similar to envy, is a behavior used to obtain notable, individualized, separate-from-others status. With this explanation--specific to women--it is so noted that competition is therefore not about “being the best” but is about winning the most approval. The competitor sees another woman’s success as a mechanism in which to realize her own unfulfilled ambitions, and she sets forth to achieve self-fulfillment by using another woman’s success as her yard stick.

Anger is derived from an intolerance of difference. When a woman differentiates from expected behaviors of “common” opinion, those who have conformed feel betrayed, devalued, and angry. Women struggle with anger and associated feelings because there is no direct avenue for anger to travel. “Unless their position were the dominant or only position, their very selves are in question not realizing that by obtaining the approval or affirmation of other women, are external efforts to maintain the merged attachment, the woman becomes engrossed in a sense of perceived sense of betrayal and anger” (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1988, p. 138).

Women and Sabotage

In *Women to Women: From Sabotage to Support*, Briles (1987) provides convincing and specific examples of women who have been victimized by acts of sabotage from other women. Response to the survey Briles disseminated to 20,000 randomly selected women from *Who's Who Among American Women*, shows that acts of sabotage exist, that the associated behaviors differ from the competitive behaviors of men, and that sabotage occurs in various settings (e.g., small business, clerical, personal relationships, corporate). The author presents her research through a series of questions: (a) Does unethical behavior among women occur more often than unethical behavior between women and men? (b) Why are women more likely to sabotage each other? and, (c) Why are women likely to use covert, deceptive methods of sabotage? Briles offers eight explanations to the aforementioned questions. The explanations, derived from a diverse range of thought are: increased competition for women due to current social trends; a societal ethical crisis which has more impact on women; survival in the workplace; women's use of a more personal style of management (versus men); increased stress due to life pressures; women are still being held back from non-traditional positions; women view the world more situationally; and finally, women and men have differing perspectives of honesty and deception and deal with feelings of hostility differently.

One might expect the author to proceed with developing her argument consistently with the eight explanations of why women sabotage, however, this is not the case and as such, the presentation of assertions can be difficult to follow. Although compelling and insightful, interwoven in each chapter are personal narratives that seem disconnected from the overall attempt to provide insight in to what Briles (1987) passionately believes to be a “problem” in American society. Additionally, the text is plagued with redundancy from chapter to chapter.

Despite the deficiencies in the presentation of her arguments, the author seemingly provides numerous generalizations and/or conclusions based on the reported experiences. The causes of unethical behavior and sabotage between women appear to be based on personal feelings of jealousy, insecurity, threat, or simple dislike. Whereas, men act out of ego and desire for personal gain and moreover, evenly distribute their behavior to both men and women. A man's focus is the "end result" which seemingly allows for direct, unhidden actions, while women become engaged in the process or "the means" of sabotage that includes strategy, deceit, and covert behaviors.

Indeed, according to Briles (1987), a woman faces a "double-whammy" when it comes to the unethical actions of other women. First, women are inherently more trusting and women and men are more likely to trust women; hence, the door is open for sabotage to occur. Second, because evidence suggests that women are more situational and emotional, sabotage by the trusted "sister" is that much more harmful and damaging.

Briles concludes her research by suggesting three answers or solutions to the supposed phenomenon of sabotage among women. First, awareness is suggested. "We must be aware that there is, in fact, a problem...at worst many women are, and at best are perceived to be, unethical in dealing with other women" (1987, p. 254). Second, she asserts that "we must commit to change with conviction, energy, passion, determination, and stamina. Finally, we must take action by increasing the self-esteem of women, developing a meaningful concept of professionalism...learning 'the rules' of the game, becoming more direct in business dealings and in confronting unethical behavior" (Briles, 1987, p. 254). Ultimately, it seems that Briles is suggesting that women should conform to the masculine model of professionalism.

College Women

Moving beyond the realm of work place sabotage, other literature is specific to female college students and the influence, or lack thereof, that colleges and universities have on women's development. In their study, *Moments of discontent: University women and the gender status quo*, Holland and Eisenhart (1988) investigate the role that two southern colleges play in the reinforcement of patriarchal social systems. Although the researchers did not make conclusions regarding rivalry among women, as this was not the intent of their study, their data contributed meaningfully to this literature review. The researchers discovered, to their surprise, that the 17 women participating in this study reported that romantic heterosexual relationships generated the majority of their discontent with other women.

The study indicates a surprising lack of importance that women place on female friendships. As reported by the researchers, the student culture for women on both campuses studied emphasized the importance of male/female relationships. For example, although the historical foundation of women's fraternities provides opportunity for sisterhood among members, today's sororities were viewed primarily as "entertainment, support, and opportunities to meet men" (Holland & Eisenhart, 1988, p. 297). Women's relationships with each other are secondary to those with men and, hence, undervalued and underdeveloped. On one of the two campuses, the authors concluded that the participants "emphasized self direction and self reliance in such a way that it was difficult to achieve trusting relationships with other women" (1987, p. 297).

In their conclusion, Holland and Eisenhart note, "female solidarity was quite weak at both universities" (1987, p. 305). Only one subject described a meaningful and well developed "bond" to another female. This subject was the anomaly in this study. The subject shared that as

she deviated from the romantic [male] relationship norm, she was criticized by her parents and was cut off by other female friends because of what she described as jealousy.

Even though much insight is provided by these findings--insight which supports the possibility of rivalrous relationships among women--greater depth relevant to the “lack of female solidarity” as well as the reported inability to develop trusting relationships, would have been useful in developing a better understanding of this presumed dynamic among women.

Solidarity and Aggression

Arguably, a potential result of the inability to develop trusting female relationships and “lack of female solidarity,” as noted in the previous study is articulated poignantly in an essay by Fletcher (1993) which explains how women contribute to the culture of rape in our society. One dynamic rarely referenced in conversation or academics, is the contribution women make to the “culture of rape” as we know it. Women’s contributions are evidenced by their often negative, downplaying responses to allegations/incidents of rape, according to Fletcher. Such responses seem to indicate significant discontent among women.

In her essay, Fletcher (1993), an African American woman, describes a frightening experience of being physically manhandled by an unknown white man intrigued by her “exotic” appearance. Despite her protest to this man, it took another male friend to remedy the predicament. As she returned to her group of peers (the one aforementioned man and seven women), she was met by comments from the women intended to minimize her experience as well as her fearful reaction to the experience by suggesting that she not take it personally. The group opinion was that “they were trying to be friendly but didn’t know how to be” (1993, p. 438). Fletcher asserts that the women who failed--perhaps purposefully--to intervene

“epitomized the mark of female oppression: they [the women] entered into the conspiracy with the white patriarch for a false sense of security” (1993, p. 438).

Fletcher also tells the story of a high school female who allowed a group of men to “pull a train” on her. It was this teenager’s female peers who used words such as “allow” and “pull a train” to describe the activities of a “bitch in heat.” Are such comments, even occurrences, rivalrous? Fletcher does not directly respond to this question. She does envision a time when “women are connected to ourselves and each other, when we no longer feel the need and desire to conspire with men against each other in order to survive in a misogynist, violent culture” (1993, p. 440). By envisioning a time when “women are connected,” Fletcher implies that presently, there is disconnect among women.

Fletcher blames the tradition within our society, which promotes women competing with other women to “survive.” Women disconnected from each other are threatened by male attention designated for a woman other than herself (even inappropriate attention) and are indirectly competitive and hostile with the other woman. Within the context of rape and sexual aggression, competition and rivalry among women represent dangerous phenomena.

Women in Leadership

As was noted by Schaefer (1981), women who stray from the norm are competitive betrayers of other women. It is often noted that to achieve leadership status and to effectively lead, one must intentionally stray outside of the norm to be distinguishable from the rest.

Corporate Influence

Intense misperceptions and hostility as noted by Denmark (1993), challenge women in leadership. The majority of such hostility comes from other women. In her review of literature regarding women as leaders, Denmark concludes that while opportunities for women to obtain

leadership positions increase, perceptions and stereotypes that favor men's leadership continue to prevail.

More relevant, however, is her conclusion that it is women who value men's leadership capabilities more favorably than the capabilities of women. Men, in fact, rated women supervisors higher in leadership ability than did women. As an example, one woman shared the following comment: "women seem to often have a chip on their shoulders, always wary of someone trying to undermine her [sic] authority, are extremely competitive, suspicious and threatened by those that are new and/or younger" (1993, p. 354). In an unpublished study referenced by Denmark, it is noted that one-third of women leaders are not helpful to other women. Denmark's review of literature affirms that mistrust among women in the work force exists, and that women devalue the presence of women in leadership roles.

First Lady Leadership

More specifically, the connection between differentiation and leadership is also evident when we examine the frequent public and media attacks directed at United States First Ladies. In an article which tangentially touches upon the theoretical notion of increased attacks upon women leaders, rivalrous critique from the public and media of women in power is blatant. Winfield (1997) examines the historical role, and attitude toward, America's First Ladies, as described by the media.

Through repeated criticisms, representing the mistrust and skepticism placed upon women in a position of leadership, the history of the First Lady role is well documented. First Ladies, throughout the decades have been attacked and undermined by the media. For example, Rachel Jackson was chastised because of her supposed values, while Sarah Polk was denounced as being overbearing and Eleanor Roosevelt was simply threatening due to her streak of

independence (Winfield, 1997). More recently, much attention has been paid to former First Lady and now Senator, Hilary Rodham Clinton. Looking strictly at achievement, ability, and qualifications, it seems that Mrs. Clinton has managed to reach equality with men--a goal that women and supporters of the women's movement say is the ultimate goal of the "gender war." Yet, when in a position of leadership and power, Clinton's noted "incredible independence" is more than a flaw. She suddenly became everybody's favorite target for pointing out all that is dangerous about being independent, smart, impatient, articulate, outspoken, and ambitious ("The Laws of the Campaign," 1992).

For her overt interest in influencing presidential policy, Hilary Clinton was called and "over-bearing yuppie wife from Hell" by the Washington Post Magazine ("First Ladies," 1992). In Winfield's 1997 article, even a famous feminist scholar, Anna Quindlen asked, "What do we do with her?" (1997, p. 177) when debating the controversial merits of Hilary Rodham Clinton. The common link among these critiqued, judged, First Ladies, is not their questionable characteristics, independence, and overbearing nature, but their access to power and leadership and how women (and men) are threatened by their achievements.

Youthful Feminism

As women's access to leadership continues to develop, "younger" generations of feminists (self-defined or not), find themselves in positions of sales manager, department head, editor, Chief Financial Officer, etcetera. How these new opportunities affect female relationships is discussed in a collection of essays compiled by Findlen (1995). Numerous contributors provide their insights of feminism from the younger generation and specifically use descriptors such as "battle strategies" and "weaponry" within the context of female-to-female interactions.

In an essay entitled “Imagine My Surprise,” Neuborne (1995) describes an experience when her feminist upbringing failed her because of “programming” that occurs in our society. She continues to prophesize that sexist programming through the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, is more dangerous than ever to the young, educated feminist because we live in a time when old battle strategies are obsolete and women are left unarmed. “The old battle strategies are not enough, largely because the opposition is using new weaponry.... Mom couldn’t have warned me about email” (p. 32).

Neuborne continues by speaking of dangers from other women. Referencing the lack of mentorship from recently acclaimed “top women,” she notes that women are of the belief that there is “just one” woman’s slot at the top. This requires that all female competitors be killed off. A woman who remains silent while observing and perhaps experiencing sexism is considered a “danger from within our own ranks” (p. 32) because she allows sexism to continue, hoping that it will at some point work to her advantage. Neuborne concisely concludes her argument with this comment: “When I went to work, I assumed that other women were my allies. Imagine my surprise...” (p. 32).

Scholarly Betrayal

The phrase, “Imagine my surprise” taken from Neuborne, is appropriate for the final reference of this literature review.

It is well accepted that published works of research within any field of study are fair game for critique and debate. Yet, rarely is an entire field of study attacked from within its own ranks. Christina Hoff Summers, a self-defined feminist scholar, does just this in her book, *Who Stole Feminism? How women have betrayed women* (1994).

Throughout the history of the women's movement, a plethora of feminist theory has emerged. Theories about women (and sometimes men) have attempted to explain self-esteem struggles, professional lifestyles, motherhood, sexuality, abuse, and health, to name a few. Theorists vocalize disagreement with their feminist colleagues through responsible debate. The vocalized disagreement, is characterized on the front cover as "In Who....? A scathing indictment of the feminist establishment, Christina Hoff Summers exposes erroneous statistics and mean-spirited, male-bashing falsehoods..." while a review of the book in the Los Angeles Daily News states, "Christina Hoff Summers has done something lethally deflating to the pretensions of the shriller sort of feminists." (Back cover).

If one is looking for proof that rivalrous, contentious relationships exist among women, the title as well as descriptions of this book, provides just that. The content and politics of the book are not in question. However, its existence and choice premise, "how women have betrayed women," does contribute to the review of literature for this study. This text, classified in the discipline of women's studies, provokes a mistrust of published and frequently referenced feminist research by fellow authors from within the ranks. Regardless if the findings are legitimate, the pervasive theme of mistrust and betrayal among women is intended to be obvious, persuasive, and destructive.

Presentation of Findings

To label the literature review for this thesis as "eclectic" is probably accurate. As such, finding the relevancy of each citation is difficult and abstract. The findings relevant to rivalry among women are best presented through four categories: Women's Psychological and Identity Development, The Angry Foundation of Women's Relationships, Societal Impact on Gender,

and Contexts and Occurrences of Rivalry Among Women. These four categories from the literature data are presented (Table 3) below.

Data Summation

Beginning with the concept of original sin, we understand why a woman seeks to distinguish herself from other women and desire to prove to all others that she is anything but the inferior female. She simply is attempting to absolve herself of the sin of female inferiority. Yet, by doing so, she places her needs first, which consequently, disconnects her from the solidarity found within the community of “attached woman” creating an environment exuding betrayal.

A woman perceived to be seeking absolution or distinction in any setting--professional or personal--is seen as a threat to one’s own desire to achieve the fabled “glass slipper” or rather, the “prize” in a contest where there can only be one winner. The threatened woman wants what she does not have. The desire to possess the slipper has become personal due to her intense envy and then becomes secondary and abstract, while the process of obtaining the slipper becomes her primary focus.

Anger derived from betrayal and envy is at the core of women’s relationships with each other. Anger stemming from betrayal can be directed at a wrong doer (“you screwed me”), while anger generated by envy can be directed toward an intangible injustice (“it’s not fair”) and/or towards oneself (“I am not good enough”). Combining both sources, such anger becomes revengeful and even irrational. The wrongdoer becomes every woman; all women will betray so I will betray all women also. This anger is selfish and justifies revenge because an injustice has been committed; therefore, she can do what ever it takes to overcome the injustice. Finally, this anger becomes self-gratifying; If I can beat you, then I will be good enough.

Table 3

Presentation of Literature Based Findings Pertaining to Rivalry Among Women

Category	Illustration(s)	Supporting Author(s)
Women's Psychological and Identity Development		
	Overcoming the original sin of being born female	Schaef (1981)
	Unmerging the merged attachments between mother and daughter	Eichenbaum & Orbach (1988)
The Angry Foundation of Women's Relationships		
	Betrayal based on abandonment and differentiation	Eichenbaum & Orbach (1988)
	Envyng the "Glass Slipper"	Schaef (1981), Eichenbaum & Orbach (1988)
	Feigned solidarity, disconnect and sabotaging women	Briles (1987), Holland & Eisenhart (1988), Fletcher (1993)
Societal Impact on Gender		
	Expectation of women to be selfless and non-confrontational	Eichenbaum & Orbach (1988), Briles (1987)

Table 3 continued

Rigid expectations and limited opportunities for women	Schaef (1981), Denmark (1993),
Devalue of woman to woman relationships	Schaef (1981), Holland & Eisenhart (1987)
Maintaining a patriarchal society	Eichenbaum & Orbach (1988), Briles (1987), Denmark (1993), Fletcher (1993), Neuborne (1995)
Contexts and Occurrences of Rivalry Among Women	
Men, men, men....	Holland & Eisenhart (1987), Fletcher (1993)
Discourse within the academic realm	Summers (1994)
New battle strategies and lack of mentorship	Denmark (1993), Neuborne (1995)
Women of elevated status	Denmark (1993), Winfield (1997)

Relationships with women are seen as temporary (and perhaps are), unreliable, less important, and ultimately disconnected than those with men as well as the relationship men have with other men. Relationships among women are devalued by all age groups of girls/women resulting in continued experiences of betrayal. Public portrayals of the existing disconnect among women are so evident that girls and women will continue to accept the disconnect and further, the modeling of these low expectations will be the basis for which young girls form their relationships with other females.

While women participate in open and visible rivalries, the patriarchal culture continues to thrive as ultimately, men consciously or unconsciously enjoy not only the opportunities for continued dominance and power, but the “show” produced by women in rivalry. As a result, the “glass ceiling” (the unbreakable ceiling which prevents women from attaining higher level management positions in the professional arena) may rise but will never shatter because women are playing a significant role in holding back women. As well, the very real issues causing rivalry will continue to be unacknowledged, because the visible results are belittled by our patriarchal culture by being seen as a source of entertainment.

There will always be a perception and/or reality that there is only one “Glass Slipper” for women to aspire. Therefore, achieving the status of the “best of women” is sought versus the status of being “best.” As such, existing roles of women will remain static and as a result, the possibility of new roles for women will be unexplored. New methods of rivalry among women will emerge whether a result of technology or simply, those older methods are just plain “old”.

The conclusions to be presented in chapter Five will rely heavily upon the above conclusions submitted by this review of literature as well as upon the findings presented in

Chapter Three. It will be the consolidation of these two data sources that will support the researcher's conclusions and theory.

Chapter Five

Presentation of Conclusions and Theory

The following question is addressed by this master's thesis: "Is there a presence of rivalry among college women?" The previous four chapters described the background and need to answer this question, presented the research methodology employed to investigate the question, outlined findings from the research conducted, and discussed literature that contributed to the understanding of the question.

From battlefields to competitive sports, we have known and even expect men to behave competitively. Conversely, women are expected to be the antithesis of competitive which some define as collaborative. This reality is so embedded in our culture, that when a woman exerts overtly competitive tendencies she is scrutinized and seen as different from the feminine norm. Following this logic, a woman who displays covert competitive tendencies goes unnoticed and is seen as the epitome of the feminine norm. For example, a woman baselessly criticizes a female colleague to another woman (talks behind her back). With their newly developed "bond" developed at the expense of the criticized woman, the two women exclude her from their social circle. As a child, I recall very clearly my favorite children's story entitled Carole From the Country (Friedman, 1950) that portrayed the above example of the rivalry which I argue, exists commonly among women.

"Carole wished he [Carole's brother] would stay with her. She felt lonesome and out of things sitting here on the bench with grownups. As if Betsy read her thoughts, she got up, left her friends, and came to sit on the bench by Carole. This was another chance, Carole thought, to see if she and Betsy couldn't become good friends without including the others. How should she begin? Just then Carole noticed Ruth stand up, pull down her

tight dress, and sit down again. That gave her an idea. Back home, she and Helen used to feel as if they were even closer friends when they talked about someone else. ‘If Ruth wore longer dresses, she wouldn’t have so much trouble,’ Carole said to Betsy, as if she were telling her a secret” (pg. 73).

Because minimal attention has been directed toward “competitive” women, it is no wonder that we have yet to appreciate the nuances of competition and women, let alone the implications of competition between one woman and another.

In this final chapter, my conclusions and related theory, which respond to the research question, are presented. The conclusions were derived from the findings from the data and the literature. The theory to follow was developed, or rather is “grounded” on the aforementioned conclusions, and my interpretation, insight, and context regarding the relationship among women.

Unique Features of the Study

It is necessary to comment on the unique features of this study ranging from methodological choices to the nature of the literature review. Following the commentary of these unique features, conclusions will be concisely presented followed by the Rivalrous Woman Theory. This chapter concludes with a discussion of (a) the implications for college student affairs practitioners and higher education and (b) the need for future research.

Chosen Methodology

Considerable time was spent by the author exploring the question of interest in an effort to create a study that meets the requirements for graduation. This issue of supposed competition among women has maintained my interest after personal experiences and observations made in my college years. As discussions began with fellow graduate students, professors, practitioners,

and undergraduate women, my commitment to the topic deepened. The “study” has had many faces, mostly qualitative, and empirically structured. Each design was met with multiple challenges mostly related to instrumentation deficits. It soon became apparent that these challenges repeatedly emerged because of the lack of theoretical insight into the subject matter. It was then determined that a major outcome of this study should be “theoretical insight.”

Format of Thesis Document

The traditional master’s thesis follows a five-chapter model. This model accounts for a succession of chapters beginning with an introduction to the subject matter and “problem” to be addressed by the study. In the traditional format, the introduction generally is followed by a chapter designated for the purpose of reviewing relevant literature. This chapter is authored prior to the development of the research methodology typically found in the third chapter. The literature presented typically becomes the theoretical foundation, which informs the research method (qualitative or quantitative), and instrument of choice that “tests” the theoretical foundation. Chapter Four is used to present the data derived from the study. Finally, Chapter Five states the conclusions reached by the author/investigator.

Under advisor supervision, I pursued the subject matter and research design in an exploratory manner different from the aforementioned model. The literature review was not conducted prior to the methodological design found within chapter two, and instead the review followed chapter three, which presented the data. By opting to expand this study beyond “exploratory” conclusions, I have authored a tentative theory regarding rivalry by using the strategies suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory development is dependent upon observation, inference, and interaction with subjects and data findings, while requiring that

the literature serves as a second data set. This approach allowed for the findings to inform the literature search and for the literature to serve as additional findings relevant to the study.

Broad Nature of Literature

As frequently noted throughout each chapter, the cited literature--which provides additional meaning to the supposed occurrences of rivalry among women--is broad and multi-disciplinary. The broad nature of the literature provides richness to the study as the subject matter can be considered within such non-traditional, yet insightful contexts.

Limitations of the Study

While the aforementioned unique features of this study account for numerous strengths within the research, they also contribute to notable weaknesses. Grounded theory methodology permits great flexibility in instrumentation development, implementation, and data analysis. Such flexibility allows for, and indeed requires, greater involvement of the researcher that opens the door to researcher bias. Though the intent of this methodology largely relies upon the subjective inferences of the researcher to develop the final conclusions/theory unique to both the study and the researcher, appropriate measures can be taken to protect the integrity of the study's outcome. Such precautions were taken throughout the course of the project; however, due to the author's inexperience, some error and bias may have occurred.

Conclusions from the Findings

Before introducing the proposed Rivalrous Woman Theory, there are several key ideas that I will outline. These points attempt to synthesize what I have learned about rivalry, college women, women, and society, from this research project. The first several points are based from

the findings of the 16 interviews as discussed in Chapter Three while the last two points, stem from the findings of the extensive literature review in Chapter Four (see Tables 2 and 3).

Defining Rivalry Independent of Competition

At the start of this study, competition and rivalry were used interchangeably as it was unclear if the words held the same meaning and/or implications for women. The first conclusion necessary to present is that rivalry and competition have different meanings. Rivalry, not competition, is the accurate portrayal of the relationship(s) that exist between women.

Rivalry is characterized by intense and unconscious feelings of contempt covertly and passive-aggressively directed toward another woman in an attempt to elevate one's status above that of the rival. Competition is also characterized as intense; however, it is an experience with obvious players with prescribed actions governed by rules that result in an obvious outcome of a "winner." Competition may also promote excellence and inspire achievement.

There are three key differences between rivalry and competition: (a) the foundation of rivalry is based on feeling while competition is based on actual experience; (b) rivalry is noticeably void of rules or governance while the presence of rules and governance is inherent to competition, and, finally (c) the covert and passive-aggressive nature of rivalry makes determining a winner impossible and arguably, irrelevant whereas the obvious actions one competitor uses against the other clearly recognizes a winner. Despite these differences, there is a notable convergence of these terms. To be complete, both rivalry and competition must reach an outcome. Though the outcome of a rivalry is perhaps more vague by seeking an "elevated

status,” as compared to the trophy-carrying winner of a competition, both definitions imply that participants can mark the conclusion of the experience.

Rivalry Exists for College Women.

With the above definition of rivalry based on the data collected from this study, my second conclusion is that the presence of rivalry does exist for college women. The ability of subjects to articulate meanings of rivalry and corresponding examples of rivalry almost exclusively within the context of their relationships with other women serves as the primary basis for this conclusion. Though the study makes no attempt to refute the characteristics of collaboration and nurturance, for women, learning to be rivalrous toward other women is likely and no data were collected to support the development of a collaborative nature among women.

Rivalry Is Unhealthy and is a Negative Force for College Women

Putting aside any previous understandings, experiences, or definitions of rivalry, this study clearly concludes that rivalry in women’s relationships is, by definition, inherently negative. Women who initiated the rivalry did so because of their own insecurities, unfulfilled needs, and desires to achieve some form of affirmation. Women on the receiving end become bitter, suspicious, defensive, angry, and desensitized to unethical behaviors, which allow for a pattern of reciprocation to occur.

My conclusion is that rivalry, as understood by the subjects of this study, does not produce the desired success or achievement among those who participate. The women in this study who described feeling rivalrous with another woman share, whether acting upon those feelings or not, feelings of self-hatred, discontent, and confusion. Rivalry contributes to the deterioration of one’s self-image, the image of others, and can negatively interfere with her academic and social development.

Participating in Rivalry is Unconscious

The subjects who participated in this research project were not aware of the research question in advance of their interview. Throughout the course of the interviews, the issue of rivalry among women was deliberately, yet indirectly, investigated. As the interviewer, I was surprised that all subjects articulated negative encounters with, or observations of negative encounters between, other women, even though subjects were not directed to exclude men. As I pressed them to think more about their own behavior and thoughts, the subjects clearly struggled. They had never isolated these experiences and compared them against their own feelings and behaviors. By leading the participants to do so, it was as if an awakening had occurred. Slowly, some were able to acknowledge their feelings of contempt toward other women despite having no evidence that such contempt was justified. They reported that they never deeply questioned their thoughts or actions. That these women had never previously examined or acknowledged their experiences with other women, leads me to conclude that women's participation in rivalry is subconscious.

Feeling and Being Rivalrous

My final point based on the subject interviews pertains to the "actions," or lack thereof, that constitute "rivalry." In the definition provided above, I state that rivalry is an intense feeling. The use of the word "intense" is intentional. The participants of the study were purposeful about not specifying what behavior women employ when being rivalrous. The subjects who were able to acknowledge their contributions to rivalry between women, felt that rivalry does not exist on a continuum ranging from moderate to severe. In fact, feelings of rivalry are just as much an indicator of rivalry as are observable behaviors. Moreover, subjects really struggled with identifying "behaviors" when so many of these "behaviors" are not only frequent occurrences

that seem to be just part of life, but also because they are covert and/or passive-aggressive, such as talking behind one's back or the deliberate exclusion of a woman from a certain social circle. Rivalry can be a feeling or a behavior that is more likely to be indirect and camouflaged versus direct and exposed.

Social Programming

It is impossible to minimize the influence that our social environment has on personal development. Based on the literature review, I conclude that there are three key social expectations that contribute to problems associated with rivalry among women.

The first expectation is that of the female caregiver. Without debating the merits, American culture places the responsibility of being the primary caregiver upon women. Inherent in being the caregiver is the belief and reality that a woman's needs are not important and that her identity must be defined by the ability, or inability, to ensure other's happiness. She learns that being assertive is therefore not feminine and that selflessness is part of life. In essence, the expectations of the caregiver, force women to use covert tactics and perhaps manipulation to have her needs met as any overt tactic would conflict with expectations of the caregiver.

Second, despite media portrayals of the forever loyal and bonding nature of women's friendships such as the "Ya Ya Sisterhood," women's relationships with women are devalued and undermined by the expectation of women to be married. What could be worse than being an "old maid?" Women invest considerable time, energy, and emotion into friendships with other women creating what we think will be an impenetrable bond. Impenetrable that is, until a man enters the picture. It is expected that the heterosexual relationship will take top priority for a

woman, as the pressure of success (marriage) is a powerful motivator. By devaluing women's relationships with each other, women are destined to betray one another. Women's history of betrayal, serves as the foundation of the third societal expectation contributing to rivalry among women. A woman learns that another woman will betray her, and therefore, women are not trustworthy.

We see countless images of the untrustworthy woman. After all, what causes a "cat fight" between women? One woman either has (or is perceived as having), betrayed another woman. Sometimes the betrayal is in a professional setting and involves sabotage; sometimes the betrayal is as simple as becoming pregnant first. However, the most common image provided to us by the media is a betrayal involving the "theft" of a man. Soap Opera scripts are notorious for developing female characters that vie for the same man. When one woman "gets him" the "looser" typically will manipulate the man into getting her pregnant or leading him to believe she's pregnant. Soap Opera's are of course, exaggerations of "society," but fiction or non-fiction, the perception that women "trap" men through pregnancy is an age-old tactic. Women as young girls learn from their mothers, friends, television, and movies (and in my case a children's story), that women are not to be trusted.

The Inferiority Complex

Whether or not one subscribes to the concept of "original sin" as presented in Chapter Four, it is fair to conclude that women and men, for a variety of reasons, share a common belief that women are inferior to men. This general belief may be held in various degrees of consciousness because of the many messages, expectations, realities, and images of our culture. We are taught that women are the inferior sex. This is particularly evident as we learn more about relationships that women share. Women do not consider men to be their competitors or

rivals. Women continue to be driven by being the best of women, simply because being the best of “all” (men) is not within the realm of possibilities. Until women--and men--consider themselves truly equal to men, women will continue to compare themselves against women believing that there can only be one “winner”, and will continue to employ “feminine” tactics of rivalry to distinguish herself from other women. Wanting to distinguish one’s self from others is a natural human tendency. For women, seeking distinction is more complex. Perhaps because there are limited ways in which they can truly distinguish themselves from other women, or for other reasons, women perceive that the only avenue in which to achieve distinction is by “outdoing” another woman. Returning to an expectation stated previously, women are taught to be selfless caregivers. Wanting “more” than this in an effort (a) to have one’s needs fulfilled, and (b) to distinguish oneself from other caregivers (women) is seen as disloyal. Those left behind feel abandoned along with a range of other emotions such as anger, jealousy, and resentment. For women, the heightened desire to seek distinction (to absolve the original sin of being female), greatly contributes to their sense of rivalry with each other.

The Rivalrous Woman Theory

Grounded theory methodology permits great flexibility in instrumentation development, implementation, and data analysis. This flexibility allowed me, as the researcher, to continually interact with the research data and the literature relevant to the subject matter. The outcome of this interaction is the development of a tentative theory that addresses the problem as articulated in Chapter One.

Who is the “rivalrous woman?” It is my belief that there is no evidence which suggests certain distinguishing or unique characteristics of a rivalrous woman versus a non-rivalrous woman such as marital status, education level, profession, appearance, sexual orientation, ability,

and the like. Therefore, it is my belief that all women are rivalrous with other women. Much to my surprise, my theory is simple: Women are rivalrous with other women. The complexity emerges when we allow the theory to explain the “why” of rivalry among women.

Rivalry Among Women

Early in the development phases of this study, I spoke of my topic using the word “among” such as competition among women. One of my professors, using red pen, consistently indicated that grammatically speaking, “between women” was to be used instead of “among women.” After giving this thought and consulting a dictionary, I realized my error. It seemed obvious that competition indeed occurs “between” individuals and groups, rather than among them. Yet, crucial to The Rivalrous Woman theory is revisiting the use of “among.” As defined by the Oxford American Dictionary, it means “surrounded by, in the company of...by the reciprocal action of” (p. 30).

Perhaps competition, in its broadest sense does occur between entities, however, according to the Rivalrous Woman Theory, it must be understood that rivalry between women is in reality, rivalry among women. Rivalry surrounds women; it exists specifically within the company of women, and is dependent upon women’s reciprocity. Through multiple methods, women are socially programmed to see women as potential rivals, to feel rivalrous, and, likely, to behave rivalrously towards other women.

Rivalry Among Women is Unavoidable

In American culture, even conservative social scientists can agree that women and the roles that women fulfill are valued less than those of men. This is evidenced by the example of

the well-documented disparity in wages paid to women as compared to men performing identical work (i.e. “comparable worth”), as well as the consistently low earnings found within “feminine” professions (such as housekeeper, nurse, secretary, and educator). Due to the multiple ways in which our society assigns lesser value to women and/or women’s work, women--and men--have no reason to compare women with anyone other than other women. As such, women continually contextualize their successes, accomplishments, and even desires within the strict boundaries of the experiences, successes, accomplishments, and desires of other women.

While at a basic human level, comparing oneself to another is normal and perhaps even healthy, it becomes unhealthy when, because of both perceived and real obstacles, achieving “success,” for example, becomes dichotomized. One woman’s success, therefore, equals another woman’s failure. There is no place for those who fall in between success and failure. Women believe that only one can “win.” Any woman seeking “success” is, therefore, a threat and, thus, a rival.

By understanding the boundaries in which women measure themselves along with the belief in “one winner” we see how women are programmed to consider other women as the rival. Which woman is the “rival” is defined by the venue. In the venue of relationships, the rival is “the slut.” In the work place, “the bitch,” on the athletic field, “the butch,” in the classroom, “the teacher’s pet.” All of these titles are placed upon women BY women who believe that their chances of winning are reduced or eliminated by their rival.

So, now we see why this rivalry exists among women, but what is unique about woman-to-woman rivalry versus man-to-man rivalry, or woman-to-man rivalry (which I believe does not exist)? Equally disturbing is the programming society imposes on us regarding the value of women in the way in which rivalry among women occurs.

Throughout this thesis, the reoccurring discrepancy between common characteristics of women and what I have continued to assert, serves as the premise of the study. It has been asserted that women are collaborative and compassionate. I argue that these characteristics are specific to the “roles” that just happen to be most commonly filled by women. Although women’s roles have expanded in recent years, women are still trying to “win” at being the “best female” by being prettier than other women, outperforming women in the workplace, “snagging” the best looking and most capable man, etcetera. The “traditional” aspects of women’s roles remain in tact and are valued by our culture. It is still expected that women fulfill their obligations to play these roles. By supposedly possessing these female characteristics while ultimately trying to win, a woman has no choice but to conceal her competitive nature not just to others, but to herself. The key difference between competition and rivalry is overt versus covert and aware versus unaware.

Implications of Conclusions and Theory

The conclusions and theory resulting from this study provide an opportunity to develop practices and research in the area of female student development. With regard to practice, the conclusions and theory suggest a need to educate female students (as well as those who educate female students) about the societal influences that affect women’s relationships with women. For example, the awareness that this study provides for the 16 participants is particularly meaningful. If rivalry among women is addressed formally with college women through women’s studies courses, leadership programming, or sorority education, I believe that women will better understand their own motives and behaviors and will demonstrate greater tolerance toward their female peers. Their relationships would be more genuine and positive.

Another example of institutional practices that could counter the problems of rivalry among women exists in the opportunities for students to earn awards and accolades. For example, awards are often given to the “Woman of the Year” and to the “Man of the Year;” yet, given the findings of this study, an award for “Student of the Year” is more appropriate. Integrating awards so women directly compete against men as well as against women would elevate the status of women and help eliminate the drive to be the best woman among women.

The results of this study also suggest topics for future research on the topic of rivalry among women. Although I believe that all women are rivalrous, I also allow for the possibility of varying degrees of rivalry. For example, are there greater or lesser influences affecting rivalry among women within various cultural or ethnic groups? Is the dynamic of rivalry among women in lesbian relationships different from the dynamics of relationship of heterosexual women? Are there scenarios or contexts that promote rivalry among some women more than others?

Recent Developments

As a relatively inexperienced researcher, every step of this research project has been particularly challenging. An eager not-yet professional, I initially found myself “out of my element” as I struggled to articulate the problem I hoped to investigate, how to investigate it, and most certainly, how to analyze the data. My frustration grew with my efforts to incorporate literature in to the study. Yet, the challenge was invigorating, as I had no other choice but to put on paper the abstract examples of rivalry among women in as meaningful a manner as possible.

Five years ago, I was unable to make any conclusions based on data or literature. The over-attention I gave to inexperience, created much self-doubt. Was I perhaps overstating the problem or making a mountain out of a molehill? Five years post-data collection, I am now “in

my element” as a practitioner. I have examined and observed countless examples of rivalry among women in my various personal and professional roles.

Professional

As the Director for Greek Life, one of my responsibilities is to provide leadership and community development within the Greek community. In my experience(s) with the campus sororities, I have continually been frustrated with the covert, passive-aggressive, and even malicious tactics as described in my research, in which women, organizationally have used to be socially recognized as the “best sorority.” Putting aside the petty, though still significant, “behind the back” bashing of the rival sorority there have been numerous occasions in which representatives of one sorority comes to my office avidly renouncing another sorority because of alleged policy violations and/or “questionable behavior.” Eager to do “the right thing” by turning the “bad” sorority in, suddenly the accusing sorority loses conviction when asked for evidence more than rumor, becomes less troubled by the violation when a face-to-face mediation is proposed and moreover, will have no part in eradicating this great violation if it means an “accusing party” will be known to the accused. This passive-aggressive, non-confrontational method of “dealing” with conflict produces mistrust and even revenge, between organizations.

Additionally, in my professional life, I have had the opportunity to supervise two adult women in the three-person Greek Life Office. The conflict between these two women became elevated to an incomprehensible level and even involved a professional mediator. Putting aside the source of the conflict, the tension among all of us in the department, was in my opinion due to the mistrust and suspicion that these women had for each other that I do not believe would have existed had one of the two individuals been a man. Moreover, as the conflict grew, the tactics used to discredit the other to our customers (students) and professional colleagues within

the university, were similar to those described in this study. That is, indirect attempts to discredit the other with such behaviors as eye rolling, tone of voice, starting unfounded rumors, and excluding the other from relationships within the work place. Both women spent much energy in trying to become, or at least appear to be “Karin’s favorite” not because of a fear of being fired or even seen as the person more at fault, but specifically to hurt the other woman.

Personal

Being sensitive to the dynamics of women’s relationships with women has not precluded me from feeling rivalrous and perhaps even acting upon feeling rivalrous. At the start of my third year in my position, a new staff member was hired who immediately was recognized as outgoing, capable, organized, and “good with students.” Though I was aware that my thoughts such as “what if people like her better than me?” or “why is she putting her nose into area’s that are none of her concern?” were irrational, unjustified, and completely about my own insecurities, the threat to my success that I felt was overwhelming. This colleague and I became wonderful friends over the next two years. Again, because of my awareness of what I noticed going on in my own heart, I was very intentional about working through my anxieties to the point where all I saw when looking at this colleague was both a fellow professional and friend. Interestingly, however, towards the end of her tenure, she asked me to complete a professional evaluation of her in an effort to develop her skills as she transitioned to her next position. I was very honest with my opinions and made sure to base any “judgments” of her in concrete examples, and genuinely was hoping to provide her with constructive feedback. She was incredibly hurt and felt as if I had betrayed her. She even said that she felt like I used this review as an opportunity to “get one last dig in at her.” Despite my extreme sadness that our friendship was forever changed, I was immediately struck by her implication that I had taken previous opportunities to get “digs

in at her” when in fact, I had made such deliberate efforts to NOT do this, and moreover, that my overt honesty was clearly a surprise to her. It seems to me, that as professionals or friends, we as women, cannot hear honesty from other women and that this is perhaps part of the problem and cause of our covert interactions with each other.

New Research

Over the past two years, several recent books about women have emerged and have received considerable press: *Woman’s Inhumanity to Woman* (Chesler, 2001), *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls* (Simmons, 2002), and *Catfight: Women in Competition* (Tanenbaum, 2002). Each book directly addresses the topic of this study.

The focus of *Odd Girl Out* (Simmons, 2002) is on young girls. Countless examples of pain and humiliation inflicted by 3rd graders, 7th graders, or highschoolers upon their female enemies, as well as friends, fill this book. While tragic, I was not surprised by the topic or the content of Simmons (2002) extensive research, and feel confident that even though her findings have much more substance than mine, my study is attempting to provide the same troubling picture of women’s relationship at the college level.

By asserting that women view each other as adversaries, Tanenbaum (2002), the author of *Catfight: Women and Competition*, explores the ruthless competition among women within the contexts of “beauty,” “dating,” “work,” and “motherhood.” Believing that the competition is about who is the “better” woman, Tanenbaum recounts countless examples of women dealing with the disappointment of never being the “winner” in a winner less game. Her examples of the sabotage of women and by women, inherent in what she labels as competition, range from rape victims not finding support or being believed by their own female peers, to the unwillingness of women to hire a female financial planner to weight gain during pregnancy. In her introductory

chapter Tannenbaum, presents themes similar to those I have presented previously. For example she discusses; destructive envy, false solidarity between women, the role of men and our patriarchal society, the conflict between being competitive and truly feminine, and the “covert desire to surpass another necessarily becomes bound up with resentment, bitterness, pettiness, and in some cases all-consuming obsession” (Tannenbaum, p 18).

And finally, in *Woman’s Inhumanity to Woman* (2001), Chesler provides a solid argument that women are indeed aggressive, but in indirect ways, and toward other women. All of the language and/or examples participants of my study used are also used in this book such as “judging women harshly,” “holding grudges,” “disconnect,” “envy,” and examples of women holding sexist beliefs. Chesler (2001) utilizes data from interviews, myths and fairy tales, psychological studies, theories of human aggression, and much more to validate her argument that so many scholars, practitioners, journalists, and just ordinary women, continue to deny their indirect aggression toward other women.

Despite the opinions and/or conclusions posited by these authors being different from my own, clearly there are other’s who have noticed that something between –or among –women, not understood and not discussed, has been going on for a long time and is worthy of public scrutiny.

The Graphic Media

Finally, I feel compelled to reemphasize the significance of the media and the continued portrayals of women in rivalry with other women. Personally, it is affirming to see blatant examples of overt and covert “cat fights” in acclaimed TV shows such as *The Practice*, *Ally McBeal*, *Seventh Heaven*, and most notoriously, *Sex in the City*. And, how can I even begin to discuss “reality TV” programs depicting women at their worst such as *The Bachelor*, *Survivor*,

Joe Millionaire, or *For Love or Money*? For pure entertainment value, scenarios are intentionally designed with the specific intent of pitting woman against woman, in hopes of filming women at their worst as they display the cattiness, vindictiveness, and cruelty that women can inflict upon themselves. We, as the consumer, egg them on, wait with baited breath for the next episode and hope for even more drama to emerge. What is most disturbing is that the supposed humorous or dramatic portrayals overstate the reality and oversimplify the perception, and that we as consumers of popular culture have become insensitive and even contributors to the unhealthy relationships that exist among women.

Final Thoughts

Five years, post-data collection, I am now, more than ever, confident that my initial instinct regarding women's relationships with each other is correct and, further, that women have not been portrayed honestly or accurately in the majority of research about women's identity and psychosocial development. In fact, there is little to no acknowledgement of the impact women to women relationships have on our psychological development. As such, I assert that that the implications of my modest conclusions and theory strongly suggest a fertile area for additional research.

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Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Guide

Semi-structured Interview Guide

1. How might you define rivalry?
2. When I say “rivalry” what images come to mind?
3. When I say “rivalry” what feelings are you reminded of?
4. In what settings do you feel rivalrous
5. In what settings do you feel other’s have felt rivalrous of you?
6. Have you ever felt rivalrous with another female?
7. What else should I ask when I interview other women about rivalry?
8. Do you know any other college women I should interview?

Appendix B: Informed Consent

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants of Exploratory Projects

I. Title:

The Presence of Rivalry Among College Women: A Grounded Theory

II. Investigator:

Karin Rose Horstman

III. Purpose:

The purpose of this exploratory study is to seek information from college women on a presence or lack of presence, of rivalry among their female peers.

IV. Procedures

Subjects were identified through existing relationships with the researcher. These relationships stemmed from graduate assistantships, practicum experiences, sorority affiliation, and course work at Virginia Tech. Undergraduate women were asked to be interviewed by the researcher to provide data to be used in a Master's thesis. Interviews will last from one to two hours.

V. Risk:

There is no perceived risk to the subjects of this study.

VI. Benefits:

The information provided by subjects of this study will assist in understanding the nature of rivalrous relationships among college women.

VII. Extent of Anonymity:

All interviews are to be taped via audio-recorder and transcribed for purposes of data analysis. Tapes and transcripts will be labeled by subject name, but within the thesis document, subjects will be identified by a pseudonym. Tapes shall be stored in the personal living quarters of the researcher. Transcriptions will be completed by Ms. Penny Cook, a Virginia Tech staff member. Ms. Cook is sensitive to the importance of confidentiality and has agreed that the data provided by the subjects will not be compromised through the transcription process. Audio tapes will remain in the supervision of the researcher until all data is collected, analyzed and when the researcher has successfully defended the thesis document. Upon successful defense, the audio tapes will be destroyed.

VIII. Compensation:

There is no formal incentive to offer participants.

IX. Freedom to Withdraw:

All subjects are free to withdraw from the interview / study at any time.

X. Approval of Research:

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, by the department of Education Leadership and Policy Studies and the College of Human Resources and Education.

XI. Subject's Responsibilities:

As a voluntary participant in this study, I have the following responsibilities:

Respond to the questions posed by the researcher in an in-depth and honest manner.

Reply to the researcher's electronic follow-up transmission.

XII. Subject's Permission:

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

If I participate, I may withdraw at any time and without penalty. I agree to abide by the rules of this project.

Subjects Signature:

Should I have questions about this research or it's content, I may contact:

Karin Horstman 552-6737
Investigator

Dr. Don Creamer 231-9500
Faculty Advisor

Dr. H.T. Hurd 231-9359
Chair, IRB – Research Division

Appendix C: Post Interview Follow-up Email Transmission

Post Interview Follow-up Email Transmission

Thank you all again for participating in my research project! One last favor, if you could take two minutes to respond to the following questions in CAPS, I will be done with you!

Thanks, karin

1. Name
2. Major
3. Year
4. Q.C.A (optional)
5. Are you in any clubs/sports/community groups? If yes, what leadership positions have you held?
6. Have you ever taken a Women's Study course?
7. Have you ever thought about rivalry among women prior to meeting with me?
8. Anything you'd like to add about rivalry since our meeting?
9. Do you know other women I should interview?

Appendix D: Researcher Memo Template, Post Interview

Researcher Memo Template, Post Interview

1. Subject:
2. Time and Date of Interview:
3. Informed Consent? Yes No
4. What did I learn from this subject?
5. What previous interview responses were confirmed?
6. What new questions will I ask in the next interview?
7. Any themes emerge?
8. Sent follow-up email? Yes No

Karin Rose Horstman

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EDUCATION

Master of Arts and Education. *Student Personnel Services.*

Virginia Tech, Anticipated Summer, 2003

Bachelor of Science. *Family and Child Development: Human Services.*

Virginia Tech, May 1995

STUDENT AFFAIRS EMPLOYMENT

Director for Greek Life, Washington University. July 2001- current

- Manage all aspects of the Office of Greek Life, Greek Life programs, and Greek facilities.
- Advise the Interfraternity Council, Women's Panhellenic, Black Greek Council, Order of Omega, Gamma Sigma Alpha, their executive committees, judicial boards, programming boards, events, and publications.
- Develop and maintain strong relations with alumni/ae advisors and national representatives soliciting frequent involvement and support.
- Foster the development of an inclusive inter-fraternal Greek community.
- Coordinate the assignments to and regular meetings of the Greek Operations Team and the Greek Life Advisory Board.
- Collect and maintain all statistical information and organizational files related to the Greek community and its members.
- Respond judicially to individual or chapter behavior not aligned with the values held by Greek organizations, the University, and state or federal law.
- Provide leadership training to council and chapter executive officers, as well as educational programming and over-all advisement to Greek chapters.
- Assist councils and chapters with program planning, implementation, and evaluation. Special emphasis on leadership development, scholarship, membership recruitment, facility management, risk management, and new member education.
- Serve as a member of the Campus Life Team, supporting programs and services designed to enhance the out of classroom experience for all students.
- Coordinate opportunities for National Greek organizations not represented at Washington University.
- Coordinate event management programs including event planning, event registration, security arrangements, and risk management compliance.
- Oversee the fraternity and sorority recruitment processes.
- Collaborate with St. Louis area institutions to address the needs of National PanHellenic Council (NPHC) city-wide organizations.
- Serve on various committees upon request (University committee on alcohol, committee on sexual assault, housing development, selection committees).
- Work regularly with various campus and community departments such as the Police Department, Student Activities, Judicial Administrator, Residential Life, Student Orientation, Health and Wellness, and academic schools.

- Select, train, and supervise the Coordinator for Chapter Development, Coordinator for Greek Housing Programs, Greek Life Office intern, and work study students.

Coordinator for Greek Life: Washington University July 1998 – June 2001

- Oversee activities / behavior of Greek community through the creation / adjustment of policies when necessary
- Advise Greek community governing bodies (Interfraternity Council, Women's Panhel, Black Greek Council) as well as member chapters
- Convene and centralize multiple University departments providing operational services to Greek facilities
- Serve as on-call administrator for Greek related crisis situations
- Communicate regularly and effectively with University departments and community agencies such as WU Police, Judicial programs, Facilities, Office of the Chancellor, Clayton Fire Department, University City Police Department
- Provide programming and training for Greek officers (e.g. President's Summit, House Manager Training, Social Chair Training)
- Present workshops on Greek related topics upon request (Risk Management, Fraternal Values, University Operations, Rush 101)
- Advocate on behalf of Greek identified needs to the University administration (e.g. facility renovation, leadership programming, public relations, policy adjustment)
- Active team contributor within the Office of Student Activities staff (e.g. Service First, WILD, Take Our Daughters To Work, Blood Drives)
- Participate in numerous University committees such as: Committee on Sexual Assault, Alcohol Committee, Small Group Housing, and Greek Community Planning

Special Housing Program Assistant: The WING. June 1997 – May 1998

- Recruit, select, train, and supervised newly created paraprofessional staff of 8 prior to hall opening and throughout academic year
- Collaboratively evaluate the needs of residents and staff in The Wing with hall director to develop appropriate initiatives which support the goals of a first year experience program
- Promote the successful academic endeavors of residents by serving as a FYE 3-credit course instructor and by managing course administration
- Support, advise, and orient WING residents throughout the freshmen year via individual advising and program initiatives
- Serve as a campus referral agent for student staff members and residents of The WING
- Facilitate faculty involvement in The WING by providing faculty with course information and in-building program schedule
- Advise staff members on program development including budget requests, advertising, implementation, and evaluation
- Continual involvement on planning and assessment committees for pilot FYI program
- Develop content and design for WING newsletter

Orientation Assistant: Dean of Students Office. Jan 1998 – June 1998

- Coordinate the production of orientation “pop-up” video providing awareness on the following topics: alcohol use, sexual assault, sexual orientation, race and religious diversity, and civility / campus climate
- Identify current students willing to provide personal testimonies related to the aforementioned topics and facilitate their on-film participation in the video
- Intentionally edit content, pop-up bubbles, and music in order to effectively connect with first year students
- Design a corresponding discussion aide for Orientation Leaders to utilize in new student orientation
- Establish and implement an innovative training program for Orientation Leaders about the topics within the video as well as on group dynamics and facilitation skills

New Student Summer Orientation Check-in Manager: Dean of Students. Jan– Aug 1997

- Created check-in process for 10,000+ orientation attendees (parents and students)
- Supervised and managed staff of 25 Orientation Leaders during check-in process
- Served as Administrator On-Call for residence hall which housed orientation students and parents
- Liaison between Dean of Students Office and Housing Office for efficient room changeover and key redistribution
- Master of Ceremonies for the 1997 Student Life Preview
- Participated as an evaluator in Orientation Leader selection

Greek Graduate Assistant: Leadership & Student Organizations. Aug 1996 – May 1997

- Primary advisor to the National Pan-Hellenic Council
- Consulted with the Coordinator of Multicultural Programs regularly to ensure appropriate communication with the historically black Greek letter organizations
- Attended weekly Interfraternity, Panhellenic, and National Panhellenic Council meetings
- Coordinator and co-instructor for 3-credit Greek Peer Education course for 60+ Greek students
- Provided professional/administrative programming to student organization leaders and student organizations (parliamentary procedures, risk management, leadership, history of Greek life)
- Supervised informal and formal sorority rush and observed fraternity rush
- Advised Interfraternity, Panhellenic, and National Pan-Hellenic Council officers to promote successful communication and understanding of Council differences
- Composed “It’s Greek To Me” newsletter distributed to students, administrators, community, and National Offices
- Assisted in the facilitation of sorority advisor roundtables, Greek Life Advisory Committee, and national consultant chapter visits

Interim Area Coordinator for Greek Housing (Live-in): Residential & Dining Programs. Jan – May 1997

- Supervised and supported the 10 House Managers for 10 on-campus Greek facilities
- Served as Residential Programs liaison to the Office of Greek Life
- On call / emergency contact for residents (360) of Greek housing

- Designed transition program for 1997 to 1998 House Managers
- Provided leadership for Greek community development via program budget management and staff program implementation
- Effectively managed check-out of all Greek residents and closing of all facilities for summer 1997
- Established positive relations between the University Police and the Greek community

Office Assistant: Vice President for Student Affairs. Jan 1996 – Aug 1996

- Assisted in the development of the 1997 Division of Student Affairs budget proposal
- Received and assessed incoming calls from concerned parents
- Contributed in student recruitment initiatives and planning for the Virginia Governor's Fellows application process
- Provided administrative assistance to the Vice President and support staff

ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Purchasing Officer, Source Digital Systems: Tyson's, VA. May 1995 – Jan 1996

- Responsible for all equipment purchasing for customer systems in alignment with SDS budget and lines of credit
- Supervised incoming part status, customer system assembly, and delivery of customer system for a company averaging 1 million dollars in sales revenue per month
- Created customer invoices and served as accounts receivable representative and shipping / receiving clerk
- Mastered accounting /inventory management software
- Regularly inventoried and maintained in-stock equipment for system production use

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

- Risk Reduction for New Professionals – Pre-Conference Workshop. Association of Fraternity Advisors: December, 2000. Phoenix, AZ.
- Men of Principle Institute facilitator. Beta Theta Pi National Fraternity: July, 2000. Oxford, OH.
- A Valued Public Relations Plan. Gateway Greek Conference: January, 1999. St. Louis, MO.
- Reaching Your Incoming Class “Pop-Up” Style. National Orientation Directors Association Annual Conference: October, 1998. Austin, Texas.
- Reaching Your Incoming Class “Pop-Up” Style. National Orientation Directors Association Regional Conference: April, 1998. Pittsburgh, PA
- Greeks Helping Greeks: Peer Educators Promoting Student Success. American College Personnel Administrators Convention: March, 1998. St. Louis, MO
- Student Affairs and Campus Ministries: a Model for Collaboration. Southern Association for College Student Affairs Administrators Conference: October, 1997. Memphis, TN
- Greeks Who Lead Help Greeks In Need. Southeastern Panhellenic Conference: March, 1997. Atlanta, GA

ADDITIONAL INVOLVEMENT

- Risk Management Committee Member, Association of Fraternity Advisors, 1998-2000
- MGCA Awards Committee Member, January, 2000
- ACPA Liaison, Association of Fraternity Advisors, 2000-2002
- Housing and Risk Management training sponsored by National Interfraternity Conference
- Interfraternity Institute Graduate, Summer 1999.
- Training for Intervention Procedures (T.I.P.S.) trainer
- Project S.A.F.E. (Sexual Assault Facts and Education) facilitator
- Judicial Hearing Officer for Greek Organizations
- Compute-A-Rush software
- Gerhling Institute Graduate, Summer 2002
- Faculty, BΘΠ Men of Principle Institute, Summer 2000