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It is entitled:
Breaking the Glass or Sealing It? Hegemony and Resistance among College Women Anticipating Careers

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Breaking the Glass or Sealing It?
Hegemony and Resistance among College Women Anticipating Careers

A thesis submitted to the
Graduate School
of the University of Cincinnati
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Department of Communication

November 2015

by
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B.S., Bradley University, 2013
Abstract

This study focuses on how college women, of different intersecting identities, perceive and subsequently manage career opportunities and barriers for women. By analyzing interview and survey responses about women’s perceptions of job market and future workplace interactions, the researcher finds participants both able to acknowledge that there is gender inequality, while also restraining themselves to career paths numerically dominated by women. The study finds that women reinforce and resist hegemonic discourses of patriarchy and meritocracy. This study expands on the ways that the theory of denotative hesitancy, or one’s reluctance to name situations and problems as a result of systemic oppression, occurs after organizational assimilation, but during anticipatory socialization.
Acknowledgements

I would like to give special thanks to Dr. Heather Zoller, my thesis advisor. Her support and guidance not only helped me grow as a student and a researcher, but also made the completion of this project possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Gail Fairhurst and Dr. Erynn Masi de Casanova, my committee members, for their thoughtful input and patience. I sincerely appreciate all of the wisdom you have shared with me.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

There are an estimated 72.7 million women in the United States workforce (BLS, 2013). Despite growth in workplace participation, women continue to face challenges at work. In 2013, white women were paid 77.4% of what white men were paid for the same work; Black and Hispanic women were paid an even smaller percentage of what white men were paid (Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 2014). Although women earn 60% of all undergraduate and master’s degrees while holding about 52% of professional-level jobs, only 14.6% of women are executive officers (Warner, 2014). In addition to lower pay and positions, women also experience a high rate of sexual harassment at work. Vagianos (2015) reported a recent online survey of women between the ages of 19-34, which found that one in three women has been sexually harassed at work. The 2009 Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, Jennifer Lawrence’s public statements about pay inequality in Hollywood, and Sheryl Sandberg’s best-selling book, Lean-In, have renewed public attention to the struggle of women in the workplace. In addition to research addressing the many obstacles for women in the paid and unpaid labor market, we need to know more about how discourses surrounding women in the workplace influence the way women prepare and search for professional work.

This study examines how college women perceive what their experiences in the job market and workplace will be like in relation to their intersecting identities. Intersecting identities include, but are not limited to: gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality (Rodarte-Luna, 2008). The study of the systematic oppression and discrimination of people with various combinations of these intersecting identities is called intersectionality (Thomas, 2004). The purpose of this research is to understand college women’s perceptions of obstacles in the job
market and workplace, and how those perceptions influence their professional development and job seeking strategies.

This chapter will preview the thesis, including its research questions, chapter development, and conclusion. First, I describe the study’s significance. This study is significant in both theory and practice. Past communication researchers have not examined how women anticipate potential obstacles they may face due to their intersecting identities. This study will connect theories of anticipatory socialization with critical approaches to intersectionality, and denotative hesitancy.

Theoretical Significance

Investigating women’s perceptions of work has theoretical significance in the field of communication. Organizational communication scholars have explored the experiences of women as organizational leaders (Baxter, 2011; Schnurr, 2008); however, there is a lack of literature available discussing women who are just starting their careers. Researchers have also explored the experiences of women at work as they relate to issues of discrimination in the hiring process (Rubini & Menegatti, 2014) and once they are assimilated into an organization (Sobre-Denton, 2012), but it is unclear how women anticipate entering the job market and working in particular organizations in relation to their gender. This study will fill holes in extant research regarding how young women anticipate the job-market and the workplace.

Too often, research focuses on one aspect of identity (e.g. gender) and ignores others. Research on the workplace sometimes focuses on the experiences of white, middle-class women (Bornigiorno, Bain, and David, 2013; Schnurr, 2008). This study attends to the intersecting identities of college women and how those identities impact their perceptions of the job market and the future workplace. Additionally, intersectionality, or the study of how people with various
combinations of identities are systematically oppressed and discriminated against, is rarely applied to this topic so using it as a lens will also add a fresh perspective to the current literature (Thomas, 2004). Young women from low-income neighborhoods likely perceive that they will have a very different career than teenage girls from wealthy neighborhoods perceive occupations and the likelihood that they will because of careers that the adult women in their lives have.

Practical Significance

In practice, this research will provide college professors, administrators, and potential employers a sense of how college women are anticipating the job market and the workplace. This will help us understand what students are actually learning from college programs as they predict their future job-market and workplace experiences. From a practitioner perspective, this study will provide educators feedback on what messages are resonating with students and will allow professors and administrators the opportunity to alter their messages accordingly.

Personal Commitment

As a woman and a feminist, I seek to aid social justice through my research by understanding and giving voice to women’s perceptions and experiences. While I am a woman, that is not my only identity, I am a white, able-bodied, college-educated woman from a working-class family. It is not my intention to speak for “all women” as women live vastly different lives depending on infinite combinations of intersecting identities that they may occupy. I have made an effort to practice reflexivity, reflecting on my own privilege throughout this research.

The topic of workplace discrimination and harassment is of particular interest to me because I have experienced both. Sometimes I reported the incidences, while other times I did not. During this research, some participants disclosed that they did not consider some acts harassment or discrimination, while some did see harassing behaviors as harassment, but did not
report it. This project does not seek to criticize the women who took part in this study, rather, their stories illustrate women’s active engagement in career issues, and show the progress which still must be made in education and the workplaces to gain greater equality.

**Organization of the Thesis**

In the following chapters, I delve into current literature, explain my methods, present findings, and discuss the implications of the research findings. In chapter two, I review relevant literature including works on organizational socialization, women in the workplace, organizational discrimination and harassment, and intersectionality. While college students have been a primary sample for scholars writing about organizational socialization, or how people become members of organizations both formally and informally, few researchers have looked at this theoretical area through an intersectional lens (Clair, 1996; Adkisson, 2013). Current work about women in the workplace often focuses on women’s competing roles as mothers and caretakers or women in leadership positions (Guendouzi 2006; Turner and Norwood, 2013; Parris Stephens & Townsend, 1997). Little attention has been paid to women outside of formal leadership positions who are not balancing motherhood and work. Finally, current literature about discrimination and harassment in organizations fails to address how students perceive future issues and rarely focuses specifically on how women understand workplace discrimination and harassment (Perriton, 2009; Dougherty, 2006; Keyton & Rhodes, 1999).

In chapter three, I outline my methodological choices. Using qualitative research methods, I collected 44 open-ended questionnaires and conducted 6 one-on-one interviews. In total, I collected data from 50 women who were in their Junior or Senior year of college. Once the data was collected, I analyzed it through a critical feminist approach, an intersectional approach and a hegemonic discourse approach. While this chapter allows the reader to
understand the researcher’s direction, the next chapter is where one can see the results of those research methods and means of analysis.

In chapter four, I present the results of this study. Many participant narratives reflect hegemony. Hegemony is the “non-coercive relations of domination in which subordinated groups actively consent to and support belief systems and structures of power relations that do not necessarily serve—indeed, may work against—those groups' interests” (Mumby, 2009, p.344). Hegemonic discourse, or the reinforcement of the status-quo, was apparent when participants denied the existence of hiring discrimination, or when they claimed that because of their chosen career field they would not encounter discrimination or harassment. Participants often pointed to their high academic achievement or their passion for their subject areas as to why they would be successful in their desired profession. Other findings included the hiddenness of privilege. Those women from low socio-economic backgrounds saw that one’s financial background impacted job opportunities, while those women from middle and upper classes did not recognize a connection between socio-economic status and jobs. Participants also were hesitant to call particular situations by their name. Women often would describe sexual harassment but would not call the behavior sexual harassment. Likewise, when participants were segregated by gender in their past work experiences, they would not use the word segregation. All of these findings not only answered my research questions, they also allowed me to add to the existing body of literature in a meaningful way.

After presenting the data from this study, in chapter five I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of this research. I have the opportunity to make recommendations for how educators and administrators should proceed to help aid their college students. Additionally, I
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explain the limitations of the study and present topical and theoretical areas for future research to explore.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This project expands the current literature in many subject areas including organizational socialization, women in the workplace, intersectionality and the meaning of work. This review of the literature shows that there are opportunities to expand communication theory to address women’s experiences. Researchers have studied anticipatory socialization (Claire, 1996; Adkisson, 2013) but have not utilized intersectionality in their analyses. Studies concerning discrimination and harassment also lack the useful perspectives provided by organizational socialization and intersectional identity theories. Even more specifically, studies involving sexual harassment can also benefit from intersectional and anticipatory perspectives; sexual harassment studies have not necessarily focused on women’s experiences or their point of view, but have taken a more generalized approach (Dougherty, 2006; Keyton & Rhodes, 1999). Finally, the meaning of work is intertwined with women in the workplace and anticipatory socialization, as it is often influenced by one’s social position and is initially developed during anticipatory socialization. Some scholars who have researched the meaning of work suggest that there is tension between individual and societal meanings of work, but have not taken this suggestion further in applying it to the tension which many women experience. This project fills the gaps in current literature on organizational socialization, women in the workplace, intersectionality, and the meaning of work.

Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization is “a process by which people learn the rules, norms, and expectations of an [organization’s] culture over time and thereby become members of that [organization’s] culture” (Eisenberg, Goodall, & Trethewey, 2010, p.123). Organizational
socialization is made up of three phases: anticipatory socialization, assimilation-encounter-metamorphosis, and exit (Clair, 1993). This study focuses on the anticipatory socialization phase of organizational socialization. There are two types of anticipatory socialization: vocational and organizational. Vocational anticipatory socialization begins during childhood, as individuals gain perceptions of different vocations. These perceptions develop from schools, family members, part-time jobs, friends, and the media (Jablin, 2001, p. 734). These perceptions are constantly changing as an individual is exposed to information about different vocations. Organizational anticipatory socialization typically takes place after a person chooses a vocation, when one is looking for work at specific organizations. Some college students are in the vocational anticipatory socialization phase as they choose a vocation while other students are in the organizational anticipatory socialization phase as they look for positions at specific businesses. Talking to participants who are in both vocational and organizational anticipatory socialization will provide a deeper understanding of how college women anticipate the workplace.

**Anticipatory Socialization.** Scholars have applied the theory of anticipatory socialization to answer a variety of questions with individuals at many life-stages. Adkisson (2013) focused her attention on first generation college students, asking them to identify the sources of anticipatory socialization which influenced their decision to attend college. She found that parents and educational institutions were the primary sources from which students gathered vocational anticipatory socialization information.

Robin Clair (1996) took a critical perspective on socialization. She asked college students “what’s a real job” to explore vocational anticipatory socialization and found that money and identity were closely tied to the meaning of work for college students. Clair’s findings supported her critique of the phase model of organizational assimilation. She explained “the division of
socialization into three stages… …suggest that individuals anticipate real jobs, which implies their current work is not real… …which devalues the work activities of numerous people” (p.265). Her work revealed underlying ideologies behind this popular organizational communication theory.

While Clair and Adkisson studied college students, they did not specifically address gender. Damaske (2007) does focus on gender as it relates to anticipatory socialization. She interviewed 80 registered voting women in New York City and asked them if, as children, they anticipated they would work for pay in the labor force or if their work would be unpaid as stay-at-home moms or homemakers. Using an intersectional approach, she found that all women from middle-class families and Black women from working-class families expected to work-for-pay continuously. In contrast, White and Latina women from working-class families equally anticipated participating in paid and unpaid labor. Damaske’s work accentuates the importance of intersectionality when studying anticipatory socialization. As Damaske did, I use an intersectional view to take gender, race, previous work experiences, and family education history into account as I seek to understand how female college students make choices about professional careers and plan for professional job searches.

College students are often going through both vocational and organizational anticipatory socialization, which makes this population a rich area to study and apply this theory. Anticipatory socialization is in desperate need of more intersectional approaches and this study will fulfill that need.

**Women in the Workplace**

More women began working outside the home for longer lengths of time in the 1960s (Women’s International Center, 1994) and by the 1980s, research about women’s experiences in
formal business organizations began to gain steam. Since then, research concerning women at work has continued to interest communication scholars, especially as it relates to work-life balance and leadership (Guendouzi 2006; Turner and Norwood, 2013; Bornigiorno, Bain, and David, 2013; Schnurr, 2008).

**Competing Responsibilities.** While women have integrated themselves into the workplace, research and popular culture both show that they are still saddled with most family responsibilities. Scholars have aimed to understand women’s competing responsibilities through a variety of lenses including: managing the stressors of work as mothers, handling work responsibilities as caretakers for aging parents, and sometimes juggling both (Guendouzi 2006; Turner and Norwood, 2013; Parris Stephens & Townsend, 1997).

There is a popular narrative about the woman who “has it all” which has been portrayed in popular film and television like Sara Jessica Parker’s “I Don’t Know How She Does It,” and Amy Poehler’s “Parks and Recreation.” These women work high-powered jobs and raise children with a spouse (Paludi, 2014; Robinson, 2014). These depictions of women reflect popular assumptions about a modern woman’s roles. To understand how these competing roles interact, Guendouzi (2006) interviewed high school teachers about how they balance their personal and work lives. Interviews revealed that mothers often ignore their individual needs in order to attend to family needs or work. Despite this, participants shared the constant guilt they felt about being away from their children and not doing more formalized family events. These mothers expressed guilt because of a socially constructed standard of motherhood which they compared themselves to. The strain of balancing competing responsibilities is not just an internal one, but is also material. In their study, Turner and Norwood (2013) found that women struggled
because they wanted to maintain the “good mother” identity, which breastfeeding bestowed upon them, but breastfeeding is at odds with what it meant to be “good workers.”

Not only do women face obstacles fulfilling the expectations placed on them as mothers, they also are much more likely to be the care-giver for an aging relative, making up 66% of all informal, or unpaid, caregivers (The National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, 2009). Parris Stephens and Townsend (1997) surveyed women who were employees, mothers, wives, and caregivers to determine which combinations of positive and negative experiences within those roles caused women greater depression and less life satisfaction. When stress was especially high in both the mother and caretaker roles, women were less satisfied with their lives. For those who felt their jobs in the workplace were rewarding, some of this stress was mitigated. This study is important as is shows how fulfilling multiple roles impacts women while also illustrating the complexities of women’s experiences.

The scenario of working women providing care for both their children and aging parents is so common that they have been given a name: the sandwich generation. The Journal of Employee Assistance (2008) specifically defines these women as “women between the ages of 35 and 64 who are "sandwiched" by the needs of their children and their aging parents” (p.1). While this group is called a “generation,” the journal defines the generation as “women.” This definition illustrates the assumption that it is the women in families who are expected to care for the young and the old, rather than their male counterparts.

This review demonstrates that literature about women in the workplace primarily focuses on women’s competing responsibilities. This body of literature provides insight into the challenges which exist for women in organizational life and informs the questions which interviewees will be asked in my study. My work will differ from most literature as it will ask college women how
they think they will handle possible competing responsibilities in the future rather than asking current working mothers or caretakers about their life satisfaction or their guilt. Addressing competing responsibilities for working women from a younger, less encumbered, perspective will shed new light into this area within literature about women in the workplace.

**Women as Leaders.** In addition to studying how women manage their competing responsibilities, many scholars have also emphasized the study of female leaders in the workplace. Specifically, a popular area of study has been the tension between traditionally feminine and masculine characteristics of female leaders. Researchers have found that women are considered less likable when they talk in a tentative manner and that women utilize humor and context to navigate between the traditionally masculine and feminine workplace expectations (Bornigiorno, Bain, and David, 2013; Schnurr, 2008; Baxter, 2011). What is lacking is literature about women in the workplace outside of leadership roles.

Bornigiorno, Bain, and David (2013) found that while male leaders faced no penalty for using tentative language, which is traditionally considered a “feminine” communicative style, participants reported that females using the same tentative language were less likable. Conversely, men and women were considered equally likable when using assertive (traditionally masculine) language. The tension between what is considered a masculine versus a feminine communication style among leaders is continued in Schnurr’s work. Schnurr (2008) analyzed how women leaders in the IT sector use humor at work. She found that these women use humor to balance traditionally feminine and masculine styles, allowing them to quickly achieve transactional and relational goals. Schnurr applauds this use of humor as it often modified or challenged masculine norms.
Like Schnurr, Baxter (2011) also analyzed discourse to study women leaders. Baxter’s findings showed women compare their communication with their male counterparts. This internal comparison is a small part of Bakhtin’s concept of double voiced discourse (DvD). DvD also includes reflexivity and an understanding that current texts are woven together with past texts and experiences. Women leaders are more inclined to practice DvD. While the practice of DvD is largely due to the unequal position of women in the workforce, it can benefit women when they are strategically communicating. Baxter found that women draw upon DvD, allowing them to use leadership discourse strategies in a mindful way.

It is important to study women who are leaders in the workplace because it provides a greater understanding of how women can successfully communicate with peers and subordinates as well as how women can challenge existing masculine structures. However, there is a need to study how women in entry-level positions communicate and make sense of work. For this reason, the current study will investigate how women who are about to enter the professional workforce understand their place in their future organizations.

**Discrimination, Segregation, and Harassment**

The previous literature explored women’s competing responsibilities and their leadership, however there are more ominous obstacles women face which have not yet been discussed. These obstacles include discrimination and harassment. Women face gender discrimination from the moment they submit a resume, into the hiring process, and throughout their work lives. Sexual harassment is another very serious problem which is all too common in workplaces. It is important to note that factors like race, class, and sexuality can greatly impact the degree to which a women experiences discrimination and harassment. Reviewing literature in this area will
allow me to better understand which questions to ask interviewees and how to ask those questions.

Discrimination. The following researchers explain how women are discriminated against from the very beginning of the hiring process and throughout their organizational life. Schmader, Whitehead, & Wysocki, (2007) studied the recommendation letters of potential associate professors and found letters of male applicants tended to include more standout words like “unique” or “outstanding” compared to letters of female applicants. Those who wrote the letters ascribed more agency to men than they did women. Women were described in more communal ways, and those with more communal traits were less likely to be hired. Even if a woman’s recommendation letter does not hurt her chances at attaining a job, Rubini and Menegatti (2014) found that imbalanced evaluations by those in charge of hiring may. Rubini and Meegatti analyzed the language used during the process of selecting associate professors. They broke down the selection committee’s comments of potential professors into description action verbs (DAVs) which are concrete, observable things about the person or the resume and adjectives which describe abstract notions about the individual or resume. Rubini and Menegatti found that when male selectors discussed women they did not want to hire, they used more adjectives and very few DAVs. On the other hand if they did not want to hire a man, they attributed it to concrete items, using DAVs. This is troubling because it shows women are more likely to be judged based on an interviewer’s personal feelings rather than their concrete accomplishments compared to their male counterparts.

When women do land a job and enter the workplace, discrimination that started during the hiring process, does not end. Sometimes, discrimination drives women to exit established workplaces altogether and prompts them to start their own businesses. Mckie, Biese & Jyrkinen
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(2013) interviewed 6 women business owners in Finland and Scotland, who were in their 40s, 50s, or 60s and had all started their own businesses after working in other businesses for most of their careers. All six women noted that gender discrimination was one of the reasons they chose to start their own businesses. Another important aspect of these entrepreneurial ventures was the greater control it gave these women over their lives. They could choose their own hours without being seen as uncommitted employees. These women explained their personal roles as caregivers (of both children and aging parents) as why they needed more control over their work and their work-times. Most of these women framed their entrepreneurship as born out of necessity (p.9). While these women were able to exit their discriminatory workplaces in lieu of being their own boss this step is often a risky one, requiring financial investment and a lack of security. Additionally, not everyone has the financial means to leave jobs where they face discrimination.

Sobre-Denton (2012) reflected on her own experiences with gender discrimination. She documented her boss denying female employees internet usage, and a stringent dress code in which she was required to wear dresses or skirts at the nonprofit neighborhood association where she worked. There were even spaces of the office (including restrooms) which she could only access with the key her male superiors possessed.

Policies which discriminate based on gender are not just enacted by men, but are also perpetuated by women. This is clear when Perriton (2009) attended a “Women and Leadership” corporate workshop created by women for women in senior management positions across Western Europe. At the workshop, women were told not to identify with women collectively and to not use gender as the basis for a complaint (p.230). This creates a way to silence discussion on gender inequality in the workplace.
While this research shows women are still discriminated against during the hiring process, not all women feel they should be considered a marginalized group. Jorgenson (2002) interviewed 15 female engineers about their experiences in a field made up of mostly men. The participants shared their mixed feelings about having female engineers classified as a marginalized group. Although the engineers said they were not treated any differently because of their gender, they contradicted those statements by describing particular events in which male co-workers made negative comments about women. Jorgenson’s work shows the often contradictory nature of what people say and what is observable in organizations.

All of these researchers present work which shows the prevalence of gender discrimination in the workplace. This begins before a woman is even offered a job through the language used in recommendation letters and in interviews. Discrimination continues as a woman assimilates into an organization because of formal or informal policies. Some women face such intense discrimination that they leave their jobs and become entrepreneurs. It is important to note that it is not just men discriminating against women, there are also women reinforcing discriminatory narratives and denying the presence of discrimination in workplaces.

Gender Segregation. Gendered segregation in the workforce and in workplaces has drawn the attention of scholars from a variety of disciplines (Wallace & Kay, 2012; Snyder & Green, 2008). Researchers have found that there are different types of gendered segregation in the job market and in the workplace leading to a variety of terms like: glass elevators, glass escalators, and glass walls. While some scholars have focused on the lack of high-ranking positions in certain occupations (Almer, Lightbody, & Single, 2012), others have taken a different approach, attempting to understand how men experience work in numerically female-dominated occupations (Snyder & Green, 2008).
Some scholars attribute the pay gap between men and women to workplace gendered segregation (England, 2005; Gauchat, Kelly, & Wallace, 2012). There are two types of gendered segregation which happen in organizations: vertical segregation in which men and women are separated into different hierarchical levels in organizations or occupation groupings, and horizontal segregation, where people of similar skill level are divided into different industries by gender (Alksnis, Desmarais, & Curtis, 2008).

Almer, Lightbody, and Single (2012) noticed that while historically, public accountants who dedicated their careers to one firm were named firm partners, many women in senior positions were instead being given director positions. After verifying their hypothesis with current accounting statistics, they asked women in post-senior manager (or director) positions within public accounting firms about the costs and benefits of their position. Participants described these director positions as terminal and as a “holding place” for women. Respondents also explained that partners are compensated more than directors and that in addition to lower pay, their role also did not provide them with the flexibility they desired. Obstructing women’s access to partner positions is not just limited to accounting, it is also seen in law firms. Wallace and Kay (2012) used survey data to test their hypotheses about women lawyers. In addition to finding that women are rarely named firm partners, they also discovered that despite women’s increased representation in law firms, many women lawyers were held to different expectations, which hindered their continued professional development.

While the previous studies focused on vertical segregation, horizontal segregation also happens in organizations. Snyder and Green (2008) found this to be true when they studied the experiences of male registered nurses. Within nursing, men did not tend to make more money or have higher-authority positions than women, but instead different job categories were gendered.
After interviewing participants, Snyder and Green found that men tended to work in areas of nursing which they perceived to be more masculine (trauma and intensive care units). These areas tended to be more fast-paced and high pressure. On the other hand, both participants of all genders described obstetrics, gynecology, and pediatric nursing as more feminine areas, best served by a woman’s “natural care-taking capacities” (p.292).

This literature on gender segregation leaves space for additional perspectives. None of the studies presented talked about the intersecting identities of participants and how that may further complicate the results of those studies. This literature has also individually looked at traditionally male-dominated professions and traditionally female-dominated professions, but has not looked across occupational categories to analyze larger themes of gender segregation. My study asked students from a variety of college majors about gender, as it relates to the job-market and the workplace, to better understand gender segregation across occupations.

Sexual Harassment. Like discrimination and segregation, sexual harassment is a major issue in workplaces. Many researchers have sought to address sexual harassment in workplaces, asking both employees and students about their experiences with and perceptions of harassment. Seeking to understand workers’ perceptions of who sexually harasses and why those people harass, Dougherty (2006) asked participants in both same-sex and mixed-sex groups to talk about sexual harassment within organizations. In all groups, participants agreed that sexual harassment happens because of a need for power. However, men look at power in a formal, hierarchical way, whereas women view power as something that is in-flux and constantly negotiated. Because of this, men view managers or superiors as possible harassers while women believe all organizational members could potentially harass. Even though the two different views of power emerged amongst participants, no one verbally recognized that this was due to gender. Different
views on power is important because most current policies do not take this into account, but this is not the only study which reveals that how sexual harassment policies are enforced and discussed needs reexamining.

Seeking to understand how men and women differentiate workplace flirting and sexual harassment Keyton & Rhodes (1999) showed groups of men and women video clips and asked participants which videos demonstrated flirting and which illustrated sexual harassment. Participants were then asked to share what cues told them the kind of scenario it was. The pair discovered that while participants could point out which verbal cues indicated sexual harassment versus flirting, few caught the non-verbal cues which were planted in the videos. Managers were no better at identifying sexual harassment than their subordinates and women were not more skilled at seeing sexual harassment than men. During participant discussions, there was more debate as to whether a scenario was or was not sexual harassment when the hypothetical organization had a sexualized work environment. Organizational culture often muddled individuals’ ability to distinguish varying behaviors.

While the previous two studies researched sexual harassment in the professional world, perceptions of sexual harassment are often formed prior to one’s entry into his or her formal career field. Sipe, Johnson, and Fisher (2009) asked over 1,000 college students about their anticipation of sexual harassment in the workplace. Female students anticipated sexual harassment in the workplace more than male students, however many of these female students did not believe they would directly experience sexual harassment, instead explaining that it may happen to others. Additionally, Sipe, Johnson and Fisher (2009) looked at the role of race in anticipating sexual harassment. They found Caucasian students were less likely to anticipate sexual harassment than students of color.
It is important to note that while Sipe, Johnson and Fisher asked about college student’s anticipation of sexual harassment, some students have already encountered or witnessed it. Wear, Aultman, & Borges (2007) interviewed women at five different medical schools about their experiences of sexual harassment. The students dismissed innuendoes and crude language as part of the culture, especially in operating rooms. They explained that in these situations, they would “blow it off” saying “it wasn’t a big deal” (p. 22). Beyond the sexual banter women had varied answers on what kind of behaviors they would be bothered by, from degrading comments about women to inappropriate physical contact. However, most women expressed that fear of repercussion or inaction would make them hesitant to report. These students often mentioned that the subjective portion of their grades could be influenced if they reported faculty members. Wear, Aultman, and Borges also found students feared reporting sexual harassment would hurt their overall team. Finally, one student compared reporting sexual harassment to complaining, which she was told was not acceptable and another woman explained that many medical students are people-pleasers, which adds to the lack of reporting. While this study focused on medical students it sheds important light to the sexual harassment women face prior to formal entry into their career field.

The current sexual harassment literature covers both students and professionals in the workplace. Three of these four articles did not focus specifically on how women experience sexual harassment. I am choosing to specifically interview women when talking about sexual harassment because they are much more likely to experience it in the workplace than men (Petrocelli & Repa, 2000). Wear, Aultman, and Borges (2007) did focus specifically on women when they asked medical students about their experiences, but much of the narratives the women shared were heavily wrapped in the context of medical schools and hospitals. My aim is to
understand how college women anticipate sexual harassment on a more broad level, across academic areas. While important work has been done in the area of sexual harassment, this study will be different because of the population and focusing on both past incidences of harassment and future anticipation of harassment. Covering both of these areas will allow me to gain a more well-rounded understanding about how an individual’s past may impact her perception of the future.

The literature about discrimination of women in the workplace provides a solid background to investigate if college women feel that discrimination is still a problem, or if it is a thing of the past. Because while all of this scholarship is important, as it reveals outrageous work practices, we need to understand the degree to which college women understand these realities, and how it influences their career choices. This study will supplement to the literature on discrimination and harassment, adding a new perspective.

**Intersectionality.**

In the previous two sections, past studies on women’s disproportionate experience with discrimination and harassment were outlined. However, it is important to note that women do not have identical experiences. This is especially true for women from different intersecting identity spaces. Types of discrimination reported and reporting rates are different based on respondents’ race, gender, age, income, and education (Watson et al., 2002). These characteristics are elements of each individual’s intersecting identities. Because of Watson’s, and other scholar’s, findings we now understand that talking about discrimination without also talking about intersecting identities leaves a great deal missing from the story. Mease (2011) illustrated this when she wrote “A female Latina experiences the world differently than a female Latina who is fluent in English, and she experiences the world differently than a female Latina who is fluent in
English and is from an affluent family (p. 158). This quote demonstrates the impact that our many intersecting identities play in our lives.

Like Watson, Ro and Choi (2009) wanted to look at discrimination and reporting through an intersectional lens. Noticing that discrimination studies had only sampled one or two races and focused on racial or gender discrimination, but not both, Ro and Choi surveyed 754 women from San Francisco to conduct their own research. Their sample included women who identified as African American, Asian, Caucasian, and Latina; over 80% of participants were ages 18-25. The team gained insight into how intersecting identities impact if and how often a woman self-reports being discriminated against. Women who reported financial difficulty or who were married reported more racial discrimination than other participants. Ro and Choi also found that more educated women and those financially strained were more likely to report gender discrimination than other sample members. Interestingly, Asian and Latina women had lower reports of gender discrimination whereas Caucasian and African American women reported gender discrimination at similar rates. While looking at discrimination among different races within the same study was good, there are more components to intersectionality than just race and gender.

In addition to race and gender, socio-economic class is another important intersecting identity and is often impacted by one’s race and class. Huppatz (2009) interviewed Australian women who were studying to earn nursing degrees at universities and TAFE (Technical and Further Education) programs. TAFEs are similar to vocational schools in the United States. Interviewees in universities tended to identify as middle class whereas participants at TAFEs usually identified as working class. When Huppatz asked participants about the socio-economic status, those from working class backgrounds quickly identified it and sometimes even talked
about how their lower economic status was an asset. Conversely, middle-class interviewees had a harder time articulating what socio-economic class they belonged to, saying that they had never thought about it. Huppatz contended that the middle-class interviewees’ “lack of reflexivity is actually a privilege of the dominant – they do not have to reflect on their privileged position or on the inequalities that result from it” (p.120). Differences in class were also apparent when Huppatz asked why they chose nursing as a future career. While most interviewees shared that caring for people was fulfilling, 12 of the 39 participants stated that the pay drew them to the profession. The majority of the 12 who shared this view also identified as working class. Huppatz’s study is important because it shows the very real class differences which exist for students anticipating work.

Huppatz’s (2009) study lacked dimensions of intersectionality including race, ethnicity, and sexuality. Ro and Choi (2009) also ignore the intersectional identity of sexual orientation, or a person’s “inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people” (Human Rights Campaign, 2015). Recently, news headlines have called attention to the realities of workplace discrimination for members of the LGBT community. In July 2014, Casey Stegall was fired from his job at as a children’s social worker after he introduced his fiancée to some of the students he worked with. When asked why Stegall was fired, the president of the organization said that Stegall put a “confused message out there [which] is counterproductive” (Ashtari, 2014). This case is just one of many which shows that LGBT members are also oppressed and discriminated against and should therefore be considered when examining intersectionality. In addition to taking a very different methodological approach than Ro and Choi, I will also allow space for participants to share their sexuality in interviews and open-ended surveys. Discrimination and harassment have rarely been studied in through an
intersectional lens, so focusing on these elements of a participant’s identity will allow me to look at discrimination and harassment in a different way.

**Meaning of Work**

Scholars have taken a variety of approaches to explain how individuals and organizations define the meaning of work and negotiate the role of work in their lives. As described earlier, Robin Clair (1996) asked college students “what’s a real job” to investigate what ‘real’ work meant to them and to explore how colloquialisms socialized individuals to define work, finding that “real jobs” are defined as jobs which provide a lot of money, utilize college education, and are enjoyable. Later, Lair and Wieland (2012) further explored how meanings of work develop when they asked students to give narratives of times in which they had been asked “what are you going to do with that major.” They found that students link their identity to their future work and that they assume a linear career model. This finding does not necessarily reflect their likely career experience, particularly for women. In their book, Wilen-Daugenti, Vien, and Molina-Ray (2013) wrote that “58% of women professionals describe their career path as non-linear” (p.121). These authors chose to describe the women’s careers paths as navigating a “labyrinth” rather than a “ladder.” Lair and Wieland’s study also showed that students’ identities are closely tied to their majors and intended career paths. This is important because it adds another area of complexity which this project will explore.

Lair, Shenoy, McClellan, and McGuire (2008) explored how people define their work to be meaningful and how this discourse can lead to elitism or empowerment. Lair et al (2008) defined the meaning of work as “the significance and/or purpose of work as attributed by the worker herself or himself” (p.173). This puts the locus of control within each individual when defining the meaning of work. Cheney (2010) refines this definition, explaining that the meaning
of work is highly contextual (p. 106). Cheney also suggests reframing the question of the meaning of work to include contexts other than the image initially evoked when one thinks of ‘work’ including leisure activities and some aspects of life at-home (p.120). Broadfoot et al. (2008) explained that the meaning of work is not simply shaped by individual agency, but is developed by many socially constructed factors including: race, class, and gender. There is also tension between societal and the individual’s meaning of work (Broadfoot, et al.). While this tension between individual and societal meanings of work has been noted, further research should be conducted to see how people attend to this tension. Specifically, women face additional tension because of traditional societal expectations regarding women’s role in the home with the family. The tension between societal and individual meanings of work is a rich area for researchers to advance both practice and theory.

**Critical Approaches to Organizational Communication**

Many scholars have sought to understand organizational communication with a critical approach (Mumby, 1993; Zoller 2014; Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Power is a central component to critical organizational communication (Zoller, 2014). One critical organizational scholar, Dennis Mumby (2004) defined power as “a dialectical phenomenon characterized by interdependent processes of struggle, resistance, and control” (pp. 240-241). This understanding of power is different than traditional definitions, as power is not defined as only coming from those in formal leadership roles.

The goal of critical approaches to organizational communication is to “investigate issues of power, domination, and control, with the goals of understanding, critique, emancipation, and social change” (Zoller, 2014, p. 596). Specifically, in this approach, scholars attend to “the power relations and ideologies that arise in organizational interaction” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011,
As briefly stated in the introduction, the goal of this project is also social justice, and thus I took a critical approach to studying communication in this study.

These goals are met through a variety of approaches within critical organizational communication. Mumby (1997) called for a discourse of suspicion, or “an attitude of questioning about and an examination of the deep structure of ideology, power and control within the organization” (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p.317). Mumby’s discourse of suspicion is not the only way in which critical organizational communication scholars can meet their goals. Trethewey (1999) studied women in organizations, but instead of observing these women as a passive participant, she asked for their opinions. While Trethewey’s approach is deeply informative on the experiences of women in organizations, Ashcraft and Allen (2003) have critiqued the very field of organizational communication, using textbooks to reveal that race has been treated as a separate, singular concept at that white workers are treated as the norm. This study will utilize the critical approaches to organizational communication which these scholars have developed and refined.

This review of the literature shows that there are opportunities to expand communication theory to address women’s experiences. Researchers have studied anticipatory socialization, but have not utilized intersectionality in their analyses. It is my aim to fill this gap by marrying the two research areas and to understand intersectionality and the anticipation of work in a more comprehensive way. Further, studies concerning discrimination and harassment can also benefit from being paired with organizational socialization and intersectional identity theories. Scholars conducting studies about sexual harassment in the workplace are not necessarily focusing on women’s experiences or their point of view, but have taken a more generalized approach (Dougherty, 2006; Keyton & Rhodes, 1999). It is important to understand how women anticipate
harassment in the workplace, as it is very likely that they will encounter it (Vagianos, 2015). We need to understand how anticipation of discrimination or harassment influences women’s choices regarding potential career paths, interviewing strategies, and jobs. Finally, while there is a wealth of literature about women with children who are established in their careers, more research should be conducted on younger women who have not yet entered the full-time workforce.

The literature about organizational socialization, women in the workplace (including their experiences with discrimination, segregation, and harassment), intersectionality, and the meaning of work influenced the research questions asked in this study. Through both questions, I sought to expand the research on anticipatory socialization, women in the workplace, intersectionality, and the meaning of work.

RQ1: How do college women perceive what the job market will be like for them?
   How do these perceptions influence their planned career choices?
   How do their social locations (gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity) influence their perceptions of what work will be like?

RQ2: How do college women view their roles in future organizations?
   How do their social locations (gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity) influence their perceptions of what work will be like?
   To what degree do they expect to face problems due to gender and how do they plan to manage those issues?

In this chapter, I reviewed current literature and found opportunities to expand theory in the areas of organizational socialization, intersectionality, discrimination, and harassment. Pairing these research areas together in a variety of ways will shed light on how women
anticipate the job market and the workplace. In this next chapter, I explain the methods I used to collect and analyze the data to answer the research questions.
Chapter 3

Methods

I used qualitative methods in this study to elicit deep responses in which participants could paint their own picture of their experiences rather than indicating, as a researcher, what their lived experiences should be. It was not my intention to produce generalizable data, as the purpose of qualitative research is contextual understanding (Willis, Jost, & Nilakanta, 2007). This project also utilized iterative analysis as the methodological framework for analysis, in which the researcher alternates between data collection and coding and the existing literature (Tracy, 2013). Feminist research principles also helped guide my study as my research questions are rooted in a passion for social justice issues. Hesse-Biber (2006) explained that the feminist researcher attempts to gain “an understanding of women’s lives and those of other oppressed groups…” and “is mindful of the researcher-researched relationship and the power and authority imbued in the researcher’s role” (p.117). I reminded myself throughout the project of my motivations for conducting this research and the position of power the researcher role provided me. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the questions which guided this study’s methodology and analysis were: 1. “How do college women perceive what the job market will be like for them?” and 2. “To what degree do they expect to face problems due to gender and how do they plan to manage those issues? When answering both questions, I paid attention to how women’s social location influenced her perceptions.

Methods Overview

After gaining IRB (institutional review board) approval, I used a qualitative approach and collected data through both open-ended surveys and individual interviews. Both the questionnaire and the interview guide were primarily made up of open-ended questions which allowed for “discovering the responses that individuals give spontaneously, and thus avoiding
the bias that may result from suggesting responses to individuals” (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec, & Vehovar, 2003 p.161). I utilized both interviews and questionnaires to reach a range of students while also allowing participants to talk about their lived experiences (Tracy, 2013). Finally, interview data strengthened and complicated the questionnaire data, providing more comprehensive answers to the research questions. Throughout the data analysis I used a variety of theories and subject-areas to understand the data, drawing from critical feminism, intersectionality, and hegemony.

Sample

To answer the research questions, I selected participants using the following criteria: individuals who identified as women and were formally registered as juniors or seniors at a large, Midwestern university. I contacted professors in the communication department about the study and asked if they would share the opportunity to participate with their students. Some professors offered a small amount of extra credit to students who participated in online surveys or in-person interviews. Additionally, I used an online student directory to contact members of on-campus organizations via email, inviting them to participate in the survey. I contacted student groups which were for women studying areas which are heavily populated by men. I did this to get a wider range of feedback rather than only getting responses from communication students. I also reached out to student groups which support African American women students to ensure that my questions about intersectionality were answered. Finally, I contacted some students through informal networks within the university. The goal was to gather 20-90 online survey responses and to interview 7-14 individuals who had not already participated in the online survey. 44 women completed online surveys and I interviewed 6 women. In total, I surveyed or interviewed 50 students for this study. I will describe demographic data in the following sections.
Surveys

I distributed online open-ended questionnaires to women at the University of Cincinnati. See Appendix A for survey questions. I used the website SurveyGizmo to collect all survey information. At the close of the survey, students earning class extra-credit were directed to another survey so they could provide their name and professor without having that identifying information connected to their survey responses. I did not allow participants to participate in both the open-ended survey and the interview, as this could give unequal amount of voice to certain participants.

The survey participants’ demographics reflected the institution fairly well in terms of race and age. The survey respondents were slightly more racially diverse than this university’s student population is: 88% were White, 14% were Black or African American, and nearly 5% were Asian. 93% of survey participants identified as heterosexual, nearly 5% identified as bisexual, 2% identified as asexual, and 2% declined answering the question. Only 1 of the 44 survey respondents was married. Survey respondent age ranged from 20-46 with an average age of 22. The 44 participants in this sample represented 16 different majors at the university. This sample was large enough to gain a breadth of data, while keeping the coding of an extremely open-ended questionnaire manageable.

Interviews

To find interviewees, I asked the other graduate students in my department if they knew of any undergraduates who would be willing to talk with me. This is how I connected with four of the six interviewees. The fifth interviewee met with me because her instructor told her about the opportunity, and the sixth interviewee had been a student in a class I had once assisted during a previous semester. I contacted all of my interviewees via email to ask if they were interested in
participating and then setting up interviews at convenient times. Interviews lasted between 23 and 38 minutes. All interviews were loosely structured, with a brief schedule of questions. See Appendix B for interview questions. I planned to conduct 7-14 interviews based on Tracy’s (2013) suggestion of 5-8 interviews for pedagogical value. When determining my plan, I left space for flexibility, because the number of interviews was also dependent on the depth of written responses. At the close of the study I had interviewed six students. I stopped at six interviews because of time constraints. While there was a limited number of interviewees, their responses were rich in detail, which helped thoroughly answer the research questions.

I provided a small, free coffee drink to each of my participants as a small way to thank them for their time. While not planned, this was often a way I established rapport. Talking about their drink choice gave us a casual topic to begin our conversation. Using a discussion guide, I gave each interviewee a brief overview of what she could expect from the interview, including the anticipated duration. I then made sure each participant understood her participation was completely voluntary and that she was free to leave at any time and free to decline any question. I also encouraged the interviewees to tell me if they were uncomfortable at any time during the interview and to share if they needed anything from me. The semi-structured interview was guided by a list of questions (Appendix A) developed to answer the research questions and to understand the lives of the interview participants. To ensure accuracy, I asked each participant for permission to record our conversation. Once I received this permission, I turned the audio-recorder on and began asking each participant questions, following the interview guide. As participants spoke, I adjusted my questions to what they said, realizing that not every question on the interview guide fit each person. Additionally, sometimes I added more detail into the questions based on the information each woman disclosed. Instead of asking “Do you think you
will face any challenges in the workplace due to your gender?” I asked “So you mentioned that you won’t have any trouble getting hired at a hospital, do you think you will face any challenges due to your gender once you begin working there?” This told my participants that I was actively listening to them, rather than just robotically reading a list of questions. Showing that I was genuinely listening to interviewees allowed them to open up and provide thoughtful answers. After each interview, I fully transcribed each audio-recording, without “cleaning up” slang or half-spoken words. I did this to ensure that each individual voice was preserved, which is an important tenant of feminist interviewing practices (Devault, 1990). To ensure the interview participants’ identities are kept private, the names given to interviewees in this thesis are pseudonyms and are denoted with an asterisk (*).

Analysis

As previously mentioned, I took an iterative approach to analyzing the data, meaning I went “between considering existing theories and research interests on the one hand and emergent, qualitative data on the other” (Tracey, 2013). I used the research questions to develop initial themes, however new themes emerged throughout the research. I analyzed the data until no new themes emerged from the research.

After conducting and transcribing three interviews, I highlighted commonalities. I then consulted the existent literature on those commonalities to determine if what I saw supported or challenged other works. After collecting two more interviews, I again repeated the process. Srivastava & Hopwood (2009) explain that this method is “a deeply reflexive process” in which a researcher continues “revisiting the data and connecting them with emerging insights, progressively leading to refined focus and understandings” (p.77). This process was repeated once more after I transcribed all six interviews. Throughout this process commonalities I thought
I saw initially were not supported at the end. At one point, I felt that the only hegemonic discourse present was patriarchy, it was not until I read more about meritocracy that I could see that it was also apparent in the data. This added more dimension to the study. It was not until closer to the end of this process that the findings presented in the results chapter became clear.

The data I collected from open-ended questionnaires were consistent with interview findings. This showed me that while the interviewees and survey respondents did not have identical experiences and expectations, there was some commonality between their stories. At the same time, interview data strengthened and complicated the questionnaire data, providing more comprehensive answers to the research questions.

Throughout the data analysis I used a variety of theories and subject-areas to understand the data. I drew on literature on critical feminism, intersectionality, and hegemony. Critical feminism guided my reading of the data, pressing me to read deeper than Liberal Feminism’s “sameness and standardization” (Ashcraft, 2014, p.128). I regularly looked for subtleties after reading about intersectionality, realizing that it is often what is not said which reveals privilege. Finally, I looked at hegemony in terms of power and resistance (Mumby, 2003). At first, I believed that few of the participants were showing resistance, but then after reading about the dialectical approach to studying the power of and resistance to hegemony, I revisited the data and changed my opinion.

These research methods coupled with the qualitative, iterative methodology led to important findings about hegemony, intersectionality and denotative hesitancy. Hegemonic discourses included patriarchy and meritocracy as many participants shared their belief that gender will not be an issue for them and that they will be judged on their skills and experiences. About midway through my data collection, denotative hesitancy began to emerge as a theme. I
found it odd that women described their experiences with workplace harassment shortly after saying that they would not face discrimination or harassment in future workplaces. Finally, I did not come to my intersectional conclusions until I had collected all of the interview data as it was what was not said by white participants from middle and upper class families which led to my findings. The next chapter provides more detail to these findings.
Chapter 4

Hegemony and Resistance

The goal of this research is to better understand how college women anticipate possible obstacles in the job market and in the workplace and the implications of their perceptions on their career planning. After interviewing six women and collecting 44 complete survey responses, answers to the research questions emerged.

In this chapter I will share the interview and survey responses which reflect hegemonic discourses, the role of intersectionality, and denotative hesitancy. The tension between reinforcing and resisting patriarchal and meritocratic discourses appeared when participants were asked if gender would impact their job search and their workplace experiences. While some participants denied the existence of hiring discrimination, or claimed certain career fields would protect them from discrimination, other women acknowledged that men are more likely to be hired and are more likely to make more money for the same work. Likewise, some participants felt they would gain employment because of their hard work due to their belief in a meritocratic system, however other women recognized that employers may not hire them for their dedication alone. The differences in opinion were especially pronounced when interviewing women with very different intersecting identities. Those participants from middle or upper class backgrounds rarely saw the connection between class and job access whereas those from working class backgrounds saw the relationship. Finally, many participants hesitated to call particular situations by their name, often describing sexual harassment without calling the behavior sexual harassment. Likewise, when participants were segregated by gender in their past work experiences, they did not use the word segregation. These findings not only answered my
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research questions, they also allowed me to add to the existing body of literature in a meaningful way.

These results stem from the research questions, which guided this study:

RQ1: How do college women perceive what the job market will be like for them?

How do these perceptions influence their planned career choices?

How do their social locations (gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity) influence their perceptions of what work will be like?

RQ2: How do college women view their roles in future organizations?

How do their social locations (gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity) influence their perceptions of what work will be like?

To what degree do they expect to face problems due to gender and how do they plan to manage those issues?

Hegemony

Throughout the surveys and interviews, many participant narratives reflected hegemonic ideology. Mumby (2009) synthesizes multiple definitions of hegemony explaining that it is “non-coercive relations of domination in which subordinated groups actively consent to and support belief systems and structures of power relations that do not necessarily serve—indeed, may work against—those groups' interests” (p. 344). Mumby also argues that hegemony is not an all-powerful, always constraining force, but is made up of a constant dialectical tension between power and resistance. Viewing hegemony and power structures as in constant tension with resistance, rather than all-powerful forces imposing upon people without agency, allows for a more complex understanding of power relations. Mumby (2005) explains that a dialectical view “enables the study of resistance as a set of situated discursive and nondiscursive practices that
are simultaneously enabling and constraining, coherent and contradictory, complex and simple, efficacious and ineffectual” (p.38). A dialectical view of power and hegemony allowed for a deeper understanding of my participants’ contradictory answers about how they anticipate the job market and the workplace.

Patriarchy and meritocracy are discourses which operate hegemonically. Participants’ narratives revealed participation in and resistance to patriarchal discourses, meritocratic discourses, and hybrids of the two. First, I will discuss instances when participants engaged in and resisted patriarchal discourses. Then, I will show participants engaging in and resisting meritocratic discourses. Finally, I will show cases in which patriarchic and meritocratic discourses overlapped.

**Patriarchy.** Patriarchy is the “political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially female, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence” (hooks, 2004, p. 18). Patriarchy is maintained through hegemony and coercion (Clair, 1993). Patriarchal discourses were present throughout the interviews and survey responses. While oftentimes the individuals perpetuated these discourses, there were moments when the women showed resistance.

**Denial of hiring discrimination.** The first hegemonic, patriarchal discourse apparent in participant interviews was the belief that patriarchy does not constrain women. When asked if they would face obstacles attaining employment due to gender, many participants stated that they would not. Beyond gender, some participants felt that no intersecting identity listed in the survey would impact their ability to gain employment. 5 of the 44 survey respondents said that none of the following would impact their ability to get a professional position in their desired field:
gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or social class. One woman wrote “I don't believe that any of those factors will impact my ability to get a job.” Another participant also held this view, stating “I don't feel like it will be impacted by any of the factors.” Two of those five respondents explained that while they felt their gender would not impact their ability to gain employment, it may have other negative implications in their professional lives. One woman explained “I feel that my gender will not affect my ability to get a job, but that it will affect my estimated salary while being compared to males.” Another participant also explained obstacles to being a woman in the workplace despite her belief of fair hiring practices “In my chosen profession, I do not anticipate any of the above characteristics will impact my employment prospects. Possibly my salary or long-term mobility within an organization, but not my employment.” This participant viewed her gender as inhibiting her in the workplace, but not during the hiring process.

An interview participant also maintained that she would not face hiring barriers due to gender. Tiffany* explained “I feel like a lot of companies, now that our generation [millennial] is moving into the company, they’re seeing just because he’s a guy doesn’t mean that he’s better.” Tiffany’s view that women are equal to men simply due to the progression of time is a part of a larger hegemonic, patriarchic discourse (Semali & Shakespeare2014). This statement also reflects meritocracy because Tiffany feels that she will not be judged as a woman, but by her skills. While these participants believed there was no gender-based hiring discrimination, others pointed to their specific occupation when explaining if they would or would not experience hiring discrimination.

**Context determines hiring discrimination.** All women who participated in face-to-face, individual interviews noted that their anticipated career field influenced how they felt about the degree to which their gender would be a barrier to gaining employment. Katie* said “I guess if I
were going into a more male-dominated field I would probably have problems with that [hiring discrimination based on gender], but because it’s communication there’s tons of females in that major, so anyone hiring a communications major probably would expect a female to be filling that role.” Other participants also reported that their intended careers were numerically dominated by women, and suggested that because of this contextual factor, they would easily attain their desired job. When asked if she felt her gender would impact her ability to attain a position in her desired career field, Amber* stated:

I’ve noticed that most social workers typically are women…..Social workers are just seen as more of a woman job because it is more nurturing, you deal with children. Typically anything that deals with children, there are more women in that workforce. So I’m feeling positive about it. I won’t really know until I get there.

Amber not only pointed to the high number of women in social work, she also made observations about how working with children is considered a “female position.” In addition to social work and communication, participants felt there were other professions in which being a woman was an advantage because of large numbers of women already in the field. When asked if she felt gender would impact her odds of attaining a position, Sarah* replied “no, but physical therapy is much more female-dominant in the job-market.” Like Amber, Sarah recognized the context of the profession which she was planning on entering. None of the interviewed participants felt they would have difficulty attaining a job because of gender. Without being prompted, these women pointed to the context of large numbers of women in their respective fields as the reason they would not gendered hiring discrimination. While these women pointed to context as the reason they will not face discrimination, gender segregation in the job market is in itself discriminatory.
Like the interviewees, the women who participated in the online survey also called attention to specific situations when discussing whether gender would influence their ability to get a job they desired. 75% of online survey participants felt that gender would impact their ability to get a job. Of these women, 16 or 48% explained in an open-ended answer that gender would hurt their chances of gaining employment; the other 52% said that gender would benefit their job search or did not specifically indicate how gender would impact them. One student reported, “Gender can help or hurt depending on the situation. Some of the fields I have worked in have been typically woman dominated so I did not feel that my gender was working against me.” Another online-survey participant echoed this sentiment, writing “I feel like females are more likely to get a marketing job.” Just like the women who participated in interviews, both of these survey participants note that their chosen fields influence their anticipation of possible discrimination.

While many participants expressed that contextual factors would protect them from gendered hiring discrimination, some survey respondents felt their future occupation would leave them vulnerable to hiring discrimination. During the online survey, if participants selected gender as a factor which would impact their ability to get a job, they were asked to explain why. One respondent answered, “I feel that being a woman will make getting a job as a doctor more difficult because it is a male-dominated field.” Another woman reported context would impact her experiences, writing “trying to get into a very male-dominated, male-centered (athletes) field will make finding the job I want hard and moving up hard.” Whether participants felt their gender would help them or hurt them in their chosen field, they all noted that context greatly impacted their chance of facing hiring discrimination.
All of the quotes presented in this section reflected on the level of women or men in an occupational area as a factor which influences the likelihood of discrimination. It is important to note that all participants were not prompted to reflect on their specific career context when answering if they felt gender would influence their ability to find employment. Perhaps these women selected their professional path in part because of the number of women in the field. The gendered careers these women described, reflects horizontal job segregation. As previously mentioned, horizontal job segregation happens when people of similar skill level are divided into different industries by gender (Alksnis, Desmarais, & Curtis, 2008). In addition to the hegemonic, patriarchal discourse that gender does not constrain women from attaining positions, participants also felt men wanted different things from their future jobs than women.

**Patriarchy’s burden on breadwinners.** When I asked if men want different or similar things in their careers as women, all interview participants said that men look for different benefits. Then I asked what men want from jobs, and all six interview participants reported that it a high salary is very important to men. Katie reflected, “men want to make a fair amount of money after graduating,” and that “having a stable job with good hours and good benefits” was also important to them. Other participants felt that it was not only money that men are after, but also power and leadership positions. After apologizing for how rude she felt her answer was going to sound, Tiffany explained:

they just want money. They want to be CEO, in the C Suite… …a lot of them are just looking for the top dog position. When like I feel like I just want to be a part of a team. I know one of my friends, when somebody asks him what he wants to do when he’s old, he says ‘I just want a lot of money and a lot of power.’
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Like Tiffany, Nicole* reflected on men’s desire for power and status saying “I think that men think the money as a more important priority or that a high title is more of a priority than the ‘warm work environment.’ Having that corner office and the prestigious title is more of a male trait.”

While these perceptions may not be surprising, as the participants continued to reflect, one revealed that men were expected to achieve status through money. Amber expressed that women are not constrained by societal expectations the way men are, saying:

Men are very… they’re all about power, all about wealth… …I’ve even had guys in college tell me about how they don’t like what they’re doing, but they’re doing it because of the salary. Men, I feel like the main thing they look for, is the high salary, the stability, and to just look more masculine. It is just like this expectation society has for them. I feel like for us women it’s more like “do what you want to do.” Cause I feel like it’s still relatively new for women to go to college, do what they want, the whole world is open to them. That’s my theory on it. I just feel like it’s still obvious that men are expected to be the breadwinners. They are still expected to take care of the family. I almost feel like men would find it as an insult if their wife made more than them.

This statement reinforces hegemony by implying that women can do anything and it is men who carry the weight of patriarchy. However, in keeping with the dialectical view of hegemony, this statement also acknowledges the constraints of the male breadwinner role. The women did not acknowledge income implications when sharing that men desire money and power, despite that women make significantly less money than men do over their lifetime (Cover, 2013). Interestingly, the participants characterized wanting to make a lot of money as a bad thing which was exclusive to their male peers.
**Resistance to patriarchy.** While participants perpetuated patriarchal discourses, they also resisted them, recognizing injustices. Two interview participants demonstrated resistance to patriarchal discourse. When asked if men want similar things in jobs as women do, Taryn* steered the conversation to how men and women are treated differently, saying:

I actually think men have it easier. If they want to follow their passion, they could do that no problem, without any worries from their families. For example, if you move to another country, people really fear for females’ safety, especially if they’re going to Latin America or something… … But you never hear people tell guys “Oh be safe down there!”

Amber also recognized the unbalanced perceptions of men and women, reflecting “I just feel like a lot of time people think like oh women can’t be engineers…. …there’s all these expectations. All these bad things happening to women, especially, in like the army and stuff.” Here, Amber points out the expectations imposed upon women while also recognizing violence against women in the workforce. Recognition of gender as a constraint was not limited to interview participants. Survey respondents also understood that gender plays a major role in one’s ability to gain employment. 36% of survey participants indicated, in an open-ended question, that gender would negatively impact their ability to get a job after college. 83% of survey respondents felt their gender would impact their experiences in the workplace. One survey respondent said that gender would impact her experiences in future workplaces, “Because first women aren't paid as much as men.” Despite the large number of women in the study who denied that discrimination exists, this participant acknowledged pay inequality. Other women in the study focused on the interpersonal aspects of gender discrimination, saying that “having to prove myself, because I'm a woman” would be an obstacle and that “men pick on women.” One survey respondent wrote:
I feel like most workplaces have gender as a potential problem. Just some men saying: oh, you can't do that; you're a girl. Or “the only reason you can do that is because you're a girl.” It would be annoying to hear that a lot.

These interviewees and survey participants show an awareness that gender does constrain them. This is in resistance to the dominant, patriarchal discourse that women are treated the same as men.

**Meritocracy**

Participants also participated in hegemonic discourses when expressing their belief in a meritocratic hiring system. Newman, Johnston & Lown (2014) define a meritocracy as “where material outcomes are awarded based upon individual initiative, hard work, and ability” (p. 327). Many Participants revealed that they believe individuals are hired based on personal traits, academic achievement, passion, and career preparation.

**Earning a position through academic achievement and preparation.** Tiffany reasoned that because women tend to be better students, they are more hirable, stating “I know two of my guy-friends don’t go to class, don’t really participate, they might squeeze by and pass, but I go to class and pay attention and am actually learning.” While there is research to support this participant’s statement that women perform better in school, these same studies note that this does not translate into fair hiring practices or pay (White House Council of Economic Advisers, 2014; French, 2014). Tiffany continued, saying “if they would rather have that guy that slacks off than me, then I don’t even want to work for them, because that says a lot about the company.” Despite resisting companies who discriminate in their hiring practices, she continues to champion meritocracy, wanting to disassociate herself with companies which do not subscribe
to merit-based hiring. This comment also reveals her assumption that she will have other opportunities and will be in a position to pick and choose where she works.

Similarly, other interviewees revealed that their pursuit of school beyond their bachelor’s degree would make them more hirable. Amber explained:

I feel like with me, going the extra stride and getting a master’s degree will help ‘cause…. More people than ever are going to college nowadays, but a lot of people don’t want to go the extra step and get their master’s degree… …all my friends even say “no, I’m done, four years, I’m done” and I’m like “why not?” Two more years, it increases your salary, it increases your chances of getting a better job, even a more respected position. And they just don’t want to.

Here, Amber contrasts her friends’ lack of interest in pursuing more formal education with her ambition to earn her master’s degree and then reasons that she will more easily attain a more desirable position.

In addition to believing that getting high grades in college and pursuing advanced degrees will ensure a desirable position, developing professional skills during college is another way college women feel they can beat the odds of a sluggish economy. When asked about how the condition of the job market, Taryn responded: “I know it’s kind of shaky now…. …But I have confidence in my professional skills and my communication skills, so hopefully that will be to my benefit.” While she acknowledges unstable job market conditions, Taryn hopes her merits of professionalism and communicate ability will allow her to succeed despite a shaky job market. Along with greater participation in class, attainment of higher degrees, and developing professional skills, some participants expressed that their enthusiasm for their chosen field would make them better candidates.
Passion makes a better candidate. In contrast to how participants described what men look for in a job - money and power, they often explained that their passion drove their career choice. While half of interviewees used the word “passion” at least once when explaining what led to their career choice, other participants described their passion for their future career without using the word “passion.” When asked what factors were most important to her when deciding on a career path, Taryn said “I think what was most important was definitely doing something I was passionate about… …after I graduate I still want to be doing something that I am actually passionate about, even if I have to be working in an office.” Participants also applied the importance of passion to the job market. When asked how she expected the job market to look, Nicole stated “I think being passionate is important.” This statement shows that there is a meritocratic belief that passion will increase one’s chances of attaining a job. When asked what led to her choice of social work as a career Amber also used the word passion, saying “I have always had this passion for helping people… … I knew I wanted to work with kids, I knew I wanted to help people, so this [social work] just brought it all together.” The use of the word passion was not limited to interview responses, it also appeared in survey responses. When asked “Are there specific businesses or organizations which have stood out to you while thinking about potential places to work? If so, what are the specific organizations which stood out to you and why did they stand out to you?” One survey respondent wrote “Seacrest Studios has a radio/television station in a children's hospital (I'm interning there this summer) that broadcasts just within the hospital. I feel this is a good combination of both of my passions within communications.”

While some participants did not explicitly use the word “passion,” many still discussed their passion for their future career as what drives them to work hard in school, with the hope of
attaining a job. When asked what had drawn her to her chosen career field, Katie replied “I like communication and I like the medical field and when I found that there was a tie between the two I was like: oh this is perfect!” This participant revealed that she enjoyed aspects of her future career. Other participants shared that their personal history spurred them to pursue a profession. This was the case for Sarah who explained “I went through physical therapy, and my friend went through physical therapy so I’ve been around it a lot and knew that’s what I wanted to do…. The best part about being a physical therapist is working with the patients and seeing them get better over time.” Sarah showed her enthusiasm for physical therapy without overtly saying she was passionate. While many participants showed that they have thought about the meaning of work and how it relates to their interests, the inclination to choose what they have been exposed to as meaningful or interesting may also be inadvertently segregating themselves into lower-paying positions traditionally occupied by women. These past examples have illustrated the assumption that merit determines one’s job opportunities. Sometimes our assumptions about jobs and careers reveal multiple hegemonic discourses are in action at once, strengthening each other.

In one case, the interplay of patriarchy and meritocracy was very pronounced. I asked each interviewee if she thought she would face challenges getting a job or once in the workplace because of their gender. When asked this question, Nicole answered:

No, but I think men in general are more aggressive about getting jobs. And me personally, I’m not an aggressive person…. …But I don’t think that really applies to your qualifications. If your qualifications are there, it’s more about just aggressively expressing that you’re qualified for the position, which I think women don’t grasp as well as men do…. … In terms of the job market, I think that opportunities are there if you’re willing to work for it and compete for it. I think it’s always been that way, but it’s just
dependent on your willingness to get what you want. You can do it but you have to be willing to work harder than the next person.

This quote shows how patriarchy relies on meritocracy and individualism to maintain its omnipresence. Nicole views her lack of aggression as a personal flaw which could keep her from attaining positions despite her qualifications. This is done without noting that boys are socialized to be more assertive whereas girls are socialized to be more passive (Babcock & Laschever, 2003). Nicole’s comment expresses hegemony and patriarchy because it reveals the assumption that it is better to be assertive (or aggressive) when sharing your qualifications with a potential employer. At the same time, Nicole relies on the idea that if she works hard enough she will be hired for a desirable position despite the differences in “aggression” between men and women.

**Resistance to meritocracy.** Most participants expressed that they believe individuals are judged on merit in the job market and in the workplace. However, some individuals shared that it was not always the quantity or quality of effort which would determine employment and workplace outcomes. When asked what factors, if any, would impact her ability to attain a job, one survey respondent wrote, “I lack social capital, connections, and friends in high places.” This participant offered an explanation as to why, despite her efforts, she may face challenges securing professional employment. During her interview, Taryn* discussed her fear that employers would not interview her because of her ethnic name, saying “sometimes people know from my last name that I’m [a minority], sometimes they just read my first name and they read it as Tyrone* and think that I’m a black male. That really does scare me during the application process.” The recognition that her name, rather than her qualifications will be looked at first undermines meritocratic principles.
Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the “overlapping social identity dimensions which constitute every human individual” (Pompper, 2014, p.45). These social identities include, but are not limited to: gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, sexual orientation, and (dis)ability. When searching for the answer to RQ2, it became clear that women with different intersecting identities have very different perceptions about how gender would or would not impact their experiences searching for a professional position.

Race and Ethnicity. Participants belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups stressed the impact of race and ethnicity in the job-search and adjusting to the workplace. Those participants who identified as white without Hispanic origin rarely recognized race or ethnicity as an influencing factor in job searches and acclimation.

Of the 43 survey respondents who chose to provide their race and ethnicity, two identified as Asian and six identified as Black or African American. No survey participants identified as Hispanic or Latino. While most women from racial minority groups identified that both race and gender would impact their ability to attain a job and their experiences in the workplace, they focused primarily on race in their explanation. One woman wrote “the stereotypes against blacks are strong and you don't really know when you’re going to face them.” Another wrote “sometimes I feel ethnicity is not well perceived therefore one is judged before they get a chance to prove themselves.” Finally, one participant wrote “I believe race will have an impact because coworkers all have their own beliefs and ideas and it can influence work relationships and settings as well.” The fact that these women identified race, ethnicity, and gender as factors which impacted them, but chose to focus on race in their explanations shows the complexities of intersecting identities in relation to the workplace.
Interview participants belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups showed a heightened awareness of gender discrimination in addition to racial and ethnic discrimination. Taryn expressed how gender and race interplay with one another, often referring to her family’s country of origin when answering interview questions about gender. When asked “what do men look for in a job?” Taryn explained:

I’m from a small [minority] family, so they’re really close-knit… so I have to live at home. So even the thought of moving away from my mom is like I’m abandoning her. I feel like if it were one of my brothers she would be like “yeah, see ya later!” Because you’re a girl they’re concerned about all that kind of stuff- your safety.

Taryn’s response shows how ethnicity, gender, and culture are inseparable in how one experiences the world. While these participants were aware of the influence of race in how people act towards other in the workplace, only one person who identified as White or Caucasian saw race as having anything to do with workplace experiences. Sarah who identifies as White did talk briefly about race in the workplace when asked “do you anticipate any problems in future workplaces for anything like your gender, age, race, class, socio-economic level?”

Well, since I am *lowers voice* a white person, I don’t think I will have to deal with any issues regarding race. But coming from my end, I need to be aware not to treat people any differently because of their race. So, I don’t think I would treat anybody any differently, but I might see it. So there is a chance that I could see somebody being mistreated for things such as that.

This was the only participant who identified as White or Caucasian who expressed that she may see a co-worker treated unfairly because of race or ethnicity. For the most part, White participants did not express that there was potential for members of racially marginalized groups
to be treated differently during the hiring process or in the workplace. In addition to race and ethnicity, socio-economic status is another intersecting identity which some participants identified as something which would influence their job search.

**Socio-economic status.** The impact of socio-economic status was hidden for most middle-class participants, while those who described their families as low-income could see how income level influences one’s ability to gain employment. Amber spoke about the influence of income when asked what the job market was like, saying:

> A lot of it also depends on what is open to you, based off what you have. Like my parents are both currently unemployed and the job market is not good for them. They’re high school graduates when most people are going to college nowadays and they also want the young kids, they want all this stuff… …I was raised in a government assisted family, and like you don’t really learn a lot about that [the job market]. It’s kinda like, they don’t even know.

As a follow-up question I asked what resources she used to learn about the job market, Amber replied:

> It was mainly all on my own, just me sitting and thinking what do I want to do? Then I would usually go to the college, or to [the career center], some place like that to ask them how to do something. But my family had no help on this. They didn’t even know what was going on. They didn’t even know about me changing my major all the time. A lot of it was just researching everything on my own, whether it's online, whether it's going to someone at school, whether it’s just talking to an advisor. I had to use all the sources through the school.
Amber was keenly aware that family income determines your level of job-literacy, explaining that she had to figure out things on her own or with the help of her advisors. While Amber saw the impact income made on thinking about career choices and the job market, this was invisible to other participants.

When asked how they heard about past and current jobs, four of the six interviewees said they found the opportunity through family members, family-friends, or neighbors. When asked about how she heard about past internships, Katie said “I looked a couple years ago at [a company] ‘cause my neighbor worked there and she was like ‘I think they have an internship in the communication department’.” Because neighborhoods are full of individuals from similar economic backgrounds, Katie’s connection was influenced by her socio-economic status, even if she could not see it. After talking about her current internship, Katie reflected on some of the experiences of some of her peers:

I have a couple of friends that are getting ready to graduate and I just ask them “oh what are you looking into? What are your options?” I think it’s like “I don’t know where to start” is a lot of what I hear. Or “I don’t know of anybody hiring,” just that kind of… they don’t know where to go- mentality. Or just “Oh I’ll think about it after graduation.”

While Katie has been able to make connections she needs to attain an internship, improving her marketability, some of her classmates do not have these same networks to know who is hiring.

Another participant relied greatly on her sister and her sister’s connections to attain past and current positions. When asked about how she discovered her current internship Tiffany* explained:

My sister actually texted me a picture, a screenshot from Facebook of some guy that she knows that posted about it. And then she sent me his contact information, I was emailing
him. He sent me the HR information from the organization and I sent them my resume and got an interview. And so yeah, it worked out really nice. I definitely had some connections there.

This participant overtly acknowledges that her connections helped her, even though she stated that her socio-economic status would have no impact on her ability to gain a position in her desired career field. Finally, while Nicole stated that jobs were available as long as one worked hard enough for them, she benefitted from interpersonal networks. When asked what she thought the job market would look like when she graduated, Nicole said “I think depends a lot on your own personal network. For example, I wouldn’t have known about my internship… unless somebody personally told me about it. I was personally referred to my internship.” The impact of socio-economic status was invisible to Katie, Tiffany, and Nicole, who had networks which they utilized to attain past and current internships. This stands in stark contrast to Amber’s awareness that her economic background has left her with little knowledge about the job-market. The intersections of gender, race, and class showed varied levels of awareness among participants.

Despite this variation, across races and socio-economic classes, participants often refrained from naming issues of gender inequality in the workplace.

**Denotative Hesitancy**

Drawing from Habermas’ (1971) work on systematically distorted communication, Clair (1993) explained that denotative hesitancy is one’s reluctance to name situations and problems. While denotative hesitancy happens to individuals, it is not an individual issue, it reflects systematic oppression. Denotative hesitancy is less restrained than denotative conformity because while individuals are apprehensive about articulating words outside of the dominant discourse, they are capable of doing so. In my study, the women interviewed avoided naming the
pay gap, segregation, and harassment. Participants also hesitated to report past cases of harassment and qualified the situations in which they would report hypothetical discrimination.

**Gender inequalities in the workplace.** Inequalities in the workplace like the pay gap and gender segregation exist (Hegewisch, Liepmann, Hayes, & Hartmann, 2010). However, most participants avoided naming these issues, instead choosing to describe them in other ways, or dismissing the inequalities altogether.

**The wage gap.** When asked “Do you think you’re going to have any issues finding a job for reasons like gender, race, class, anything like that?” Taryn responded “Not really. I mean, I know that there’s that whole pay difference thing, all that stuff.” Denying the personal impact and labeling the wage gap as “the whole pay difference thing” dismisses the importance of the wage gap. Another interviewee also hesitated naming the pay gap. When asked if she had seen anything in the media about women in the workplace, Amber answered “There’s always that thing where men make more than women… …Also men typically get more promotions than women.” Again, this participant avoids naming the situation, and instead calling it “that thing.” During the survey, participants were asked to select which of the following they felt would impact their experiences in the workplace: gender, race and/or ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and other. Respondents were then asked to explain why they chose the categories they did. Not only did participants show denotative hesitancy when discussing the wage gap, they also avoided naming segregation in the workplace.

**Gender segregation in the workplace.** Tiffany expressed unhappiness that positions were gendered in a previous organization she worked for, but rather than calling it discrimination, she uses the term “old fashioned” stating:

The pizza place I worked at, only girls were allowed to be hostess or waitresses. They
didn’t have any males out on the floor. And so all the guys were in the kitchen. And I hated being a waitress… …I would rather be in the kitchen where no one can see me and I can just do whatever and get away with it. So I thought that was weird, but it was a very old-fashioned family, so I guess they just wanted the waitress –like the women doing the stuff.

Tiffany continued to talk about how gender impacted her experiences at work in a more recent position, saying:

At [the store I worked at] it was (stops halfway through saying the word segregated). Girls only work in the fitting room because there was like a whole side for girls’ clothing. All of the women could work in every department, but the guys couldn’t work in the fitting room. And the guys, they typically didn’t work in the women’s section putting the clothes back just because… I don’t know why… … And then like in the lingerie section, they wouldn’t work back there ‘cause I feel like some customers might be a little creeped out by guys putting bras and stuff back. So, at [the store] I feel like women, I could pick up shifts in the men’s department of the fitting room, but guys could only do the guy’s section or the cash register. So it was kind of like skewed in our direction.

When explaining how gender impacts her experiences at work, Tiffany almost calls the separation of gender what it is, segregation. However, she stops herself and instead of using the word segregation, chooses to describe the separation which is enforced at that workplace.

Finally, this participant notes that it was “skewed in our direction” meaning women. While this is true, this was the case at a low-wage, retail job, which women make up more of employees for this type of position. The National Women’s Law Center (2014) calculated that while women
make up 47% of the national workforce, they make up 66% of the low-wage workforce, which is considered a median wage of $10.10 or less per hour.

**Harassment.** The U.S. Equality Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (2015a) defines harassment as “unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.” Specifically, the EEOC defines sexual harassment as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature” (2015b). Only interview participants were asked about experiences with harassment and reporting harassment, the online-survey did not include questions about this topic. During the interview, each participant was asked to define harassment in their own words and then were encouraged to answer the questions about harassment based on the definition they had given.

**Sexual and gendered harassment.** While many participants reported never experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace, when telling stories about their past and current jobs, they revealed hearing inappropriate sexual remarks. After saying she had never experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, Taryn disclosed a recent work experience, saying “the other day somebody called me something not very nice, something that is not my name. *laughing* It’s not like we are at the club.” When asked if she anticipated facing harassment in future workplaces, the same Taryn replied “I hope not but… I’m small and I’m nice, so people think I’m meek and timid; so maybe not necessarily harassment, but maybe they will think they can take advantage of me in certain ways, stuff like that.” While this participant feels that others may try to take advantage of her because of her stature and demeanor, she doesn’t want to call it harassment or sexual harassment.
Another participant explained that crude jokes were a part of the environment she worked in, saying “the company I work for is Christian based, so they have a really, he tells – the CEO would come in and tell like what I thought were funny jokes, but some person might think that they’re kind of raunchy and not acceptable in the workplace. It’s just like the- I don’t even know-the environment?” This participant reveals the organization’s culture, and specifically its religious roots are reasons the jokes are funny rather than raunchy. When she explains the jokes her CEO tells, rather than saying “some person may see the jokes as sexual harassment,” she chooses to use the words “kind of raunchy” to avoid naming the situation. Despite the passage of more than 20 years, these findings are consistent with Clair’s (1993) findings that women refrain from using sexual harassment definitions when they appear to apply. She noted that “the legal term sexual harassment is more likely to be used by groups who have been empowered to do so…. ….women without legal expertise are less likely to use the term sexual harassment when describing encounters of a sexually harassing nature” (p.121). Not naming situations what they are, or denotative hesitancy, can decrease an individual’s chances of reporting unfair and unsafe situations. Hesitation to report situations was another theme which emerged from the data.

**Hesitation to report.** The Globe and Mail (2014) shared that in an Angus Reid online poll, four out of five respondents who had been sexually harassed at work did not report it. The interviews conducted for this study support these previous findings that women do not always report harassment or sexual harassment. This is exhibited by the following statement made by Katie:

I guess first, I think it would depend on if I thought it was extremely intentional or if it was just kind of a side comment that hopefully wouldn’t affect anything and then if I felt
it was well-grounded, and that I was completely offended by it, then I would probably speak to whoever is in authority over me.

Here, Katie reveals that if she feels comments are not “extremely intentional” they are not necessary to report. Additionally, she feels the need to ensure that her complaint is well-grounded before taking steps to report harassment. Katie was not the only participant who felt she needed a lot of evidence in order to report incidences which made her uncomfortable. Tiffany described a time where she felt uncomfortable on work-property but did not tell anyone about the incident, saying:

I remember I was walking out of work and I used to be the last one there, just to get enough hours I had to stay until 5:30 and everyone else left at five. I was walking out and there were guys in the shared parking lot and I was just thought ‘ugh, no, don’t look this way.’ And I don’t know what exactly they said, but it was something that seemed inappropriate. I just ignored it, got in my car and drove away. But it was nothing in your face…. …it wasn’t like they were like really close. If they were really close to me I would have been concerned…. …they just shouted something. And I didn’t even know exactly what it was, so I didn’t make a big deal about it.

Again, Tiffany felt that because she couldn’t make out the details of what the men were saying, she would not have grounds to report the situation. Also, she emphasized the physical distance which kept her from being more concerned about the interaction. While these two participants were concerned about having enough evidence to report people in hypothetical and past situations, other participants did not report incidents because of how they viewed the perpetrators. Amber explained a previous work experience which she considered reporting, but did not because she felt the person’s behavior was due to ignorance, stating:
My manager at [a restaurant], which is actually one of the reasons I quit. She was an older woman, probably bout in her 60s, you know from past generations, and we had a lot of minorities working in [the restaurant] and she directly stated to me, in the workplace, that her kids know better than interracial dating. And I was so mad, and I thought about calling corporate, but then thought ‘no if people are that ignorant, I’m just gonna brush it off.’ So it’s just crazy the people you meet in the workforce, in managing positions, to have these radical views and to directly state them to people who are below them in that job place.

This participant chose not to report the incident, but did quit her job partly because of the offensive conversation. Amber also explained another unreported incident which made her uncomfortable, but says she would have reported the harassment now, saying:

Yes, I worked at [a fast food chain] for two years when I was in high school… …I had this manager who was very sexist. A very sexist manager. When we were that young, we used to joke around about it, it wasn’t a big deal, but as I’ve gotten older, I get more angry ‘cause the more education I get, the more I feel like you can’t do that. He actually, I remember, told us one time that a woman could not be smart and pretty. Told us that.

And he would act like all of us were stupid in the workplace.

Amber did not see her manager’s behavior as a big deal at the time, she did not label his actions as harassment or bullying. Even though now she does not feel her manager’s behavior was okay, she still refrained from calling his behaviors harassment or bullying.

Participants’ responses perpetuated and resisted hegemonic discourses of patriarchy and meritocracy. It was clear that intersecting identities influenced participants’ ability to see and resist these dominant ideologies. Despite this, most interviewees from a variety of racial and
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socio-economic backgrounds experienced denotative hesitancy, or the reluctance to name discrimination and harassment what it is. Not only did this data answer the research questions, it also provides us with theoretical implications and provide practical lessons. The next, and final, chapter explains what can be learned on both of these fronts.
Chapter 5

Discussion

This study posed two research questions. Research question 1 was “How do college women perceive what the job market will be like for them?” In relation to this question, I also sought to understand how these perceptions influenced their planned careers and how social location influenced these perceptions. Research question 2 was “How do college women view their roles in future organizations?” I specifically focused on the degree to which women expected to face problems due to gender and how they might manage those problems. When answering this question, I paid attention to how women’s social locations (gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity) influenced their perceptions. In this chapter, I answer the research questions and describe the theoretical and practical contributions of the research. I will also discuss the limitations to this study and avenues for future research before concluding.

Hegemonic Discourses

Research question 1 asked “How do college women perceive what the job market will be like for them?” The respondents indicated they perceive the job market will be manageable despite job-scarcity, and that a meritocratic system will ensure they achieve their professional goals. Participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds showed the most resistance to this meritocratic ideology, supporting it less frequently than their upper and middle-class counterparts. Women from poor and working-class families spoke about the importance of social networks, explaining that they were without this social resource. However, even these women who recognized the flaws in meritocracy felt they could still overcome social barriers and attain desired positions.
Most participants pointed out the contextual factors they believed would increase their odds of attaining professional positions. These contextual factors reflected gendered patterns of organizing. Specifically, women noted that because of the number of women in their intended career field recruiters and interviewers would expect to see female applicants. These findings suggest that these women may be self-selecting into female-dominated career areas, contributing to job segregation or “glass walls” (Woods, 2013). This observation invites further research as to whether or not women are actively choosing numerically female-dominated career fields in order to lower their risk of hiring and workplace discrimination. While these participants reported high numbers of women in their intended career fields, they do not mention the roles which women play in those positions or the amount of power women have in those careers.

While many participants felt gender would not impact their job-seeking process, some were able to articulate potential problems. These women noted that it was their specific context, entering numerically male-dominated fields, which would cause them to be disadvantaged in the hiring process and in the workplace. This stands in contrast to Jorgenson’s (2002) work with female engineers which revealed that the engineers did not see themselves as marginalized or disadvantaged. However, Jorgenson’s sample was of women already assimilated into workplaces, rather than college students not yet established in their intended careers. More work should examine the expectations of women in numerically-male dominated fields to see how their perceptions of gender discrimination may change over the course of their entry and assimilation into an organization.

**Denotative Hesitancy**

Research question 2 asked, “How do college women view their roles in future organizations?” Interviews revealed that women in this study predicted they would be treated
like any other employee and did not anticipate experiencing harassment in the workplace, even among those that had faced it in past organizations. Nearly every interviewee said she did not anticipate facing any kind of harassment in the workplace. However, many of these same participants also told stories about past experiences in which they were harassed. These conversations reflect denotative hesitancy. As previously discussed, Clair (1993) (drawing from Gramsci [1971]) described denotative hesitancy as a form of discursive closure, as marginalized groups may be reluctant to name systematic practices of inequality, saying “the legal term sexual harassment is more likely to be used by groups who have been empowered to do so… …women without legal expertise are less likely to use the term” (p.121). Participants described uncomfortable work experiences, yet did not consider the unwelcome behaviors “harassment.” Had I asked interviewees if they anticipated facing any uncomfortable situations, rather than harassment, due to their gender the data may have looked very different. This is because hegemonic discourses disempower women from using the term harassment. Not naming harassing behavior harassment may prevent women from reporting degrading and dangerous workplace conduct (Mukherjee, 2014). Interestingly, women belonging to ethnic and racial minorities often focused on their race or ethnicity as a more likely source of harassment compared to their gender. These findings show the importance of intersectionality and that every woman’s experience in the workplace is different, due largely to her social identity.

Theoretically, this research has built on Clair’s work in denotative hesitancy. After interviewing 50 women about sexual harassment, Clair (1993) suggested that researchers investigate how women anticipate denotative hesitancy (p.133). Following that call, my study asked women to predict if they would face challenges in the workplace. I found that denotative hesitancy extends beyond current organizational members, and extends into the conceptions of
job seeking women, during anticipatory socialization. This finding is important because it shows that if we want to promote gender equality in the job market and workplace, then colleges and universities need to work to empower women to use phrases like “sexual harassment” and “gendered segregation” prior to their entry into the professional workforce.

The Effects of Intersectional Identities

Feminist perspectives in organizational communication encourage attention to intersectionality. This study reinforces the importance of intersectionality in understanding the discrimination people face. Reflecting the tenets of standpoint feminism, while those from racial minorities and low-income families were more aware that things like race and class impacts one’s ability to attain a job and to succeed in the workplace, these challenges were largely invisible to those from White, upper-middle class backgrounds. This finding reflects extant research about racism in current literature. Andersen (2001) explained that the popular race-blind ideology has kept the conversation of structural racism outside of the public consciousness. This denial of difference is also seen in anti-racist practice, which is problematic because ignoring race does not acknowledge systematic inequality (Sefa Dei, 2011). In addition to race, class was also an identity which blinded some to privilege. Khan and Jerolmack (2013) observed students as an elite preparatory school saying that they had worked hard to achieve admission, right before explaining which classes they knew they were supposed to take thanks to a social connection. The preparatory student’s inclination to say meritocracy led them to their current place in life without recognizing their privilege mirrors the findings in my own study. Women from working class backgrounds saw the importance of class and social connections whereas those from middle and upper classes did not acknowledge the role class plays in seeking employment.
Overall, the participants in this study felt that gender will not be a factor in finding professional employment or in their future workplace experiences. These participants believe that hard work will pay off because of a meritocratic system. Some respondents, especially those of racial minorities and lower-economic classes, showed resistance to these dominant ideologies recognizing that women and racial minorities are discriminated against. However, the tension between power and resistance remained in play, as these same women believed that they could overcome this discrimination. Additionally, participants did not feel their gender would impact their future workplace experiences, despite recounting past situations in which co-workers or managers harassed them. The participants often did not call harassing behaviors they experienced “harassment” or “sexual harassment” which is reflective of Clair’s (1996) work. These findings show that denotative hesitancy extends beyond those assimilated to an organization, to those who are still in the anticipatory socialization phase. These college women exhibited a precedent denotative hesitancy, where even when they predicted that they would not face harassment, they referred to uncomfortable situations which could happen based on past experiences.

Not only does this study expand work on denotative hesitancy, it also develops our understanding of anticipatory socialization. Women chose numerically female dominated careers which showed that they were both exerting agency and resisting hegemonic ideologies and simultaneously perpetuating gender discrimination. This demonstrates that precedent denotative hesitancy and the process of organizational socialization is entrenched is hegemonic ideology. The current phase model of socialization assumes that one learns how to handle situations after organizational entry (Jablin, 2001), however the women in this study show that hegemonic ideologies have taught them how to react (or not react) to workplace situations before joining the
organization. This study shows that the phase model of organizational socialization is not complex enough to reflect individuals’ realities.

As previously mentioned, denotative hesitancy reflects hegemonic ideologies (Clair, 1993). In some ways, the women in this study consent to problems in the workplace by denying contradictions, which is a function of ideology according to Giddens (1979) (Eisenberg Goodall, & Tretheway, 2010). At the same time, these women seem to respond to perceived inequities by choosing female-dominated areas, seemingly unaware of the ways in which this perpetuates gender segregation and can lead to wage gaps. Mumby’s (2005) understanding of hegemony as a constant tension between power and resistance explains this incongruity. These women are both exerting agency and being pushed back by patriarchal structures. This study further supports Mumby’s (2005) that hegemony is best understood as a struggle of both power and resistance.

**Practical Implications**

Despite popular attention to gender problems in the workplace, many college women are unaware of the prevalence of workplace discrimination and harassment. Existing curricula and career programs do not seem to be addressing inequality, or helping women and minorities to prepare for potential problems.

These findings provide important guidance as to how college educators and administrators should work with students. Only those students from poor or working-class families recognized the importance of socio-economic class in attaining a job. Those from higher socio-economic classes were less likely to believe that hiring discrimination exists. When asked, “Where do you get your information about what the job market will be like,” all interviewees and 20% of survey participants reported gaining information about the job market or workplace from their professors. Other popular sources students cited were the internet (48%) and family
members (20%). This suggests that professors play an important role in what students know about the job market and the workplace. Faculty and staff members should spend more time engaging students about the realities of inequalities and the discrimination women and minorities still face. Supplementing inequality lectures with memorable class activities or assignments may also help students retain these important lessons (Foyle, 1995). Students should be challenged, in the classroom, to recognize their own privilege so that what has been invisible to those of privileged groups can become visible. Finally, developing internship courses in which instructors lecture on topics like workplace harassment and worker’s rights is another site in which students may be able to become empowered to address potential discrimination and harassment.

College administrators also have an important responsibility to supply college students with the knowledge they need. A major take-away from this study is that university counselors can be much more sensitive to the intersecting identities of students. Many administrators stress the importance of networking to students as well as the benefits of having internships (Adams, 2012), however students from lower socio-economic backgrounds may not have the same types of connections as their peers. Students may be able to manage this issue by attending professional panels and job-fairs on their college campuses. A better understanding of the different backgrounds students come from is important in understanding how to help college students through their own unique job searching process.

Future Research

Future studies should focus on how women are choosing their majors. Many participants said they would not face hiring discrimination because they chose majors and careers which are numerically dominated by women. However, it is unclear if these women chose the careers because of the large number of women already established in those professions. While studies
have acknowledged that there are a lack of women in certain professions, like policing and corrections (Grube-Farrell, 2002) few have asked women why they chose not to enter these fields. Other scholars have looked more closely at the career decision-making process which female students make but have not asked women to reflect critically on why they chose those fields, instead assuming that women have been unwittingly socialized to pursue a position without asking participants about their journeys (Barbulescu, 2013). Asking women to reflect, in-depth, about what led to their career choice is an important theoretical area waiting to be addressed by future researchers.

Future research should involve a larger number of participants, to gain a greater breadth of perspectives. Additionally, different research methods should be employed to gain a more complete understanding of how women anticipate the job market and the workplace. While interviews have many benefits, allowing participants more time to reflect via diary entries may evoke different stories and responses to questions.

Including more women from differing marginalized groups would also complicate and add to this study’s intersectional findings. As the literature review showed, the expectations and experiences of women in the workplace for those who do not identify as heterosexual is seriously understudied. Only 3 of the 44 survey participants identified their sexuality as something other than heterosexual and no significant themes were identified with such light data. Additionally, no Hispanic women participated in the study, making it unclear what answers may have come from a more racially diverse sample. Finally, there are women with even more overlapping identities which should be considered, especially as they face greater levels of oppression (Thomas, 2004). Attending to the experiences of marginalized groups can help scholars and practitioners better understand how to advocate for better resources for students as they prepare for careers.
Limitations

The primary limitation of this study was its short timeline which did not allow for multiple rounds of data collection. While I discovered that participants pointed to context to explain why they would not face discrimination, it is unclear if the reason these women chose their major and career path was because of the high number of women already in that field. Additional rounds of data collection could investigate this important finding further to determine if women are segregating themselves either consciously or unconsciously.

Another limitation was the small number of participants involved in this study. While my goal was to have 7-14 interviews, only 6 students elected to participate. More time for data collection would have added to the richness and depth of the data. Additional time and resources would have also allowed data to be gathered from a more representative sample. While I do not intend to generalize my findings to all college women, interviewing women who belong to particular identity groups may have allowed for deeper understanding. Only 6 of the 50 participants were African American or Black, and there was not one participant who was an American Indian. Nationally, African American students make up 15% of college students and American Indians account for about 1% of college students (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In addition to race, ethnicity was also not shown in a representative way through this study. No participants were Hispanic or Latina, despite representing 15% of college students in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The singular geography of this study also limited the completeness of the data. This research was conducted at a large, Midwestern university and results may look very different in different regions of the United States. Likewise, women outside of the U.S. would also probably anticipate the job market and the workplace differently.
Finally, interviewing and surveying students from more diverse academic backgrounds would be beneficial. The 44 survey participants represented 16 different majors, but the 6 interviewees only represented 3 majors. There were participants in traditionally “hard sciences” like biology and biochemistry, but the majority of women who participated came from “softer science” backgrounds like communication, history, and creative writing. Part of this was due to my connections on campus, despite reaching out to women in male-dominated majors, I was less familiar with those departments. Teaming up with a well-known graduate student to do interdisciplinary work may be a great way to gather more diverse data in future research.

Conclusion

While popular media has brought attention to women’s struggles in the workplace (Sandberg, 2013; Vagianos, 2015), these stories do not appear to be reaching college-aged women. This study set out to understand if women anticipated achieving their professional goals despite their gender. Participants revealed that because of how hard they worked in comparison to their male classmates, they believed that their gender would not negatively impact their jobs hunt or their workplace experiences. This and other data make it is clear that the Horatio Alger myth, that one can triumph over circumstances by just working hard enough, is still alive and well (Cloud, 1996). Studies have shown that women are still being paid less and facing hire levels of harassment (Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 2014; Vagianos, 2015). So the challenge we now face is challenging the dominant ideology of meritocracy.

The second area this research explored was how women anticipate harassment in the workplace. Participants were hesitant to call workplace harassment what it is- harassment. This can have major effects on whether or not someone chooses to report the behavior and on one’s psychological and physical well-being (Rettner, 2011). Not talking about unacceptable behaviors
HEGEMONY AND RESISTANCE AMONG COLLEGE WOMEN

openly, allows them to persist, so it is essential that current and future organizational members feel empowered to call harassing behaviors harassment.

Additionally, this study shows that those who belong to racial minorities and those from low-income families see hiring discrimination whereas those from White upper-middle class backgrounds cannot. This demonstrates that there is still much work to be done to move towards equality. Those who have privilege must understand that they have it, before they can see that others do not and can be inspired to resist hegemonic ideologies.

Future work from both researchers and practitioners must be done to increase awareness of continued discrimination against women and minorities, so that they dominant discourses can be challenged and resisted. Work must also be done to empower women to call harassment what it is- harassment. Educating students about continued discrimination and harassment will help empower them to resist hegemonic ideologies.
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Appendix A

Online Survey

You are being asked to take part in a research study of how women who are students at the University of Cincinnati perceive the job market and the workplace.

You must identify as a woman and be a junior or senior (by credit hours) undergraduate student at the University of Cincinnati to participate.

If you agree to complete this survey you will be asked 19 questions about gender, the job-market, and the workforce. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we make public we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part in this survey, you are free to stop at any time.

If you have any questions, you may contact Hannah Bush at bushhh@mail.uc.edu.
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<td>I have read and understand the above information.</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consent to take part in this study</td>
<td>□</td>
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Survey Logic: Participants must check both boxes to be admitted to the survey.

1. What is your age?  

2. What is your ethnicity?  
   a. Hispanic or Latino  
   b. Not Hispanic or Latino  
   c. Other  
   If other, please specify  

3. What is your race? (Select all that apply)  
   a. American Indian of Alaska Native  
   b. Asian  
   c. Black or African American  
   d. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander  
   e. White or Caucasian  
   f. Other  
   If other, please specify  

4. How do you identify your sexual orientation?  
   a. Gay  
   b. Lesbian  
   c. Bi-Sexual  
   d. Heterosexual  
   e. Other  
   If other, please specify  

5. What is your relationship status?  
   a. Single  
   b. In a committed relationship, but unmarried  
   c. Engaged  
   d. Married  
   e. Other  
   If other, please specify  

6. How do you identify your economic class? (For example: working poor, working class, upper class, etc.)  


7. If you are financially dependent on your parents, please answer the following question according to your estimate of their income level. If you are financially independent, please answer the following question according to your personal income level.

| What is your annual income level? | a. Less than $39,999  
| b. $40,000 - $79,999  
| c. $80,000 - $119,999  
| d. $120,000 - $159,999  
| e. $160,000 - $199,999  
| f. $200,000 or more |

8. What are you majoring in at the University*?

9. What is your class standing, by credit hours, at the University*?

| If other, please specify |
| a. Freshman  
| b. Sophomore  
| c. Junior  
| d. Senior  
| e. Other |

10. Do you know what job you want to have when you graduate?

| If yes, what job do you hope to have when you graduate? |
| a. Yes  
| b. No  
| c. Not Sure |

11. Do you have work experience?

| If yes, please list any and all work experience you have and the length of time in which you worked at each. |
| a. Yes  
| b. No |

12. Have you thought about potential organizations or business which you may find employment at?

| If no, what would an ideal workplace be like? |
| a. Yes  
| b. No |

| If yes, Are there specific businesses or organizations which have stood out to you while thinking about potential places to work? |
| a. Yes  
| b. No |

| If yes, what are the specific organizations which have stood out to you and why did they stand out to you (good or bad)? |
| a.  
<p>| b.  |</p>
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| **13.** | How difficult do you think it will be to get a job when you graduate? | a. It will be easy to get a job  
   b. It will be somewhere in between easy and difficult to get a job  
   c. It will be difficult to get a job  
   d. It will be easy to get a job, but it will be difficult to get a job that I want |
| **14.** | Where do you get your information about what the job market will be like? |   |
| **15.** | Do you anticipate that any of the following factors will impact your ability to get a job? (Please check all that apply.) | □ Gender  
   □ Race  
   □ Ethnicity  
   □ Sexual Orientation  
   □ Economic Class  
   □ Other |
| If other, please specify |   |   |
| **16.** | How do you feel your ability to get a job will be impacted by the factors you selected in question 15? |   |
| **17.** | Have the factors identified in question 15, impacted the organizations which you are considering working at? | a. Yes  
   b. No  
   c. Not Sure |
| If so, please explain |   |   |
| **18.** | Do you anticipate that any of the following factors will impact your experiences in the workplace? (Please check all that apply.) | □ Gender  
   □ Race  
   □ Ethnicity  
   □ Sexual Orientation  
   □ Economic Class  
   □ Other |
| If other, please specify |   |   |
| **19.** | How do you anticipate the factors selected in number 18 will impact your experiences in the workplace? |   |
Establishing Rapport

1. What is your major?
2. What year of school are you currently completing (junior, senior, etc.)?
3. What career or job would you like to have once you graduate UC?
   A. What appeals to you about that career or job?
      i. Do you think it will be difficult to attain a position in this field?
   B. If you do not know, do you have some general ideas about what you want to do?
4. What factors are most important to you when considering what career you want?
   A. For today’s college students, do you think men and women look for the same thing in a career?
   B. For today’s students do you think men and women think what makes a good job is similar or dissimilar?
      i. Why do you think so?
5. Have you started to look at potential organizations or businesses which you would like to work for?
   A. If so, what are some of the organizations you would like to or not like to work for and why?
   B. If not, what makes an organization a good place to work for? What is the ideal workplace like for you?
6. What do you think the job market will look like once you graduate?
   A. What is the job market like for your major?
   B. Where do you get information about what the job market will look like?
7. Have you worked anywhere before?
   A. Where are some of the places you have worked and how long did you work there?

8. Do you think you will encounter any trouble finding a job because of your gender? Because of your race?
   A. Why do you think so? (Probe about media accounts, friends’ experiences, etc.)
   B. Will your personal and family network be helpful when you look for jobs?

9. Do you think you will face challenges in the workplace due to your gender?
   A. Why do you think you will (or will not) face challenges in the workplace due to your gender?
   B. Are there any other factors besides gender which you feel will create challenges for you in future workplaces?
      i. If so, please describe how you think these factors will create challenges for you in future workplaces?
      ii. Do you feel that your race will impact your experiences in the workplace?
         a. How do you feel your race will impact your experiences in the workplace?
      iii. Do you feel that your socioeconomic class will impact your experiences in the workplace?
         a. How do you feel your socioeconomic class will impact your experiences in the workplace?

10. Have you heard any accounts from media sources (including books, television, news articles, radio broadcasts) about women’s experiences in the workplace?
    A. What are the biggest things you took away from hearing or reading those accounts?

11. If you think you might have a long-term partner or spouse, do you expect that person will work full-time? How would you expect to manage a two-career household?
12. If you think you might have children someday, how do you think you will manage child-rearing and work?

13. How do you define harassment in the workplace?

   A. Have you ever experienced gender or racial harassment in the workplace?

   B. Do you know anyone working professionally who has experienced racial or gender harassment?

   C. Do you anticipate facing any harassment due to gender or any other factors in future workplaces?

   D. If you were harassed in the workplace, what do you think you would do? Or how do you think you would handle it?

   E. Have you ever experienced gender or racial harassment in the workplace?