SOMEONE’S IN THE KITCHEN, WHERE’S DINAH? GENDERED DIMENSIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL CULINARY WORLD

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SOMEONE'S IN THE KITCHEN, WHERE'S DINAH?

GENDERED DIMENSIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL CULINARY WORLD

A Dissertation in Education
With a Concentration in Curriculum Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally cooking is considered to be women’s work, yet the vast majority of professional chefs, particularly in the upper echelons of restaurant work, are men. These curious gendered patterns stimulated interest in delving more deeply into the gendered nature of restaurant work. Existing research on this topic has concentrated on the front of the house (dining room) but has not addressed the gendered nature of the male-dominated back of the house (kitchen). This study looks at the gendered nature of the professional culinary kitchen (back of the house), how gender relations are constructed through culinary education and in the professional kitchen, and specifically how gender is done in culinary education and the professional culinary kitchen. The inquiry focuses on three research questions: How does gender present itself in the culinary world, how does chef education challenge or contribute to the normative gendered patterns in the culinary world, specifically the back of the house, and how do the experiences of women chefs perpetuate or contest gender binaries?

Using a life history methodology, I interviewed four women executive chefs to collect data about how they experienced the professional culinary kitchen with particular attention to the gendered nature of that experience. In culinary school, the four women chefs felt that both men and women students were treated equally, but in the professional culinary kitchen, they soon found out that the gendered nature of work was not equal; it favored men, making promotion very difficult for women seeking executive chef positions. To understand the data, a feminist post-structural theoretical framework, focusing on difference, language, discourse, power and knowledge, was used as an analytical lens. Patriarchal discourses permeate home, educational and workplace domains where gender stereotypes and double standards made it difficult for the
women chefs to navigate the professional culinary world as well as work/life balance. Binary ways of thinking (masculine/feminine) privilege men over women, yet these women chefs have found spaces where they can thrive using their own strengths and resilience to have successful careers in the professional culinary world.
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Zita O. Rommel (1918-2005), who always encouraged me to succeed.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Since I was a young girl, as young as kindergarten age, I have been perplexed by the construction of gender identity. My outspoken views concerning inequalities of discrete gender categories have decidedly separated me from the mainstream views of my peers. My questions about gender have been centered on a critical set of questions that challenge the status quo. Starting in kindergarten, I wondered why boys were not afraid of bugs but girls were. In later elementary school, my questions turned to why girls who were better than boys in sports were encouraged to show femininity by always letting boys win. In high school, the dress code was changed, allowing girls to wear pants to school. Why was the dress code changed to allow girls to wear pants but not for boys to wear skirts? In college, most women I knew, including myself, were studying to become teachers or nurses, whereas the boys I knew either entered the trades or went on to become doctors, lawyers or business men. Why was that? Couldn’t women become doctors? This line of questioning ran throughout my adolescence, but in retrospect the most defining time for gender for me occurred during my development as a young adult.

Young adulthood is not only a time for career preparation but also a time when most people are considering whether or not to marry. For me, it was a time of weighing the pros and cons of navigating life with or without a husband, a time that demanded I understand my strengths and weaknesses and what type of partner would facilitate my growth as a human being. For me, the division of labor was a looming issue. Whereas many of my young women friends were looking for someone handsome who would take care of them, my perspective was quite different. The characteristics that supported their notion of being taken care of included someone who earns a high wage, fixes the house, maintains the car… and the list goes on. Clearly their
notions were tied up in gender-specific ideas of the division of labor. When enumerating my “list of qualities,” I was more concerned about being in a relationship where we both were competent in most areas and could pick up where the other left off or substitute for one another as time and circumstance allowed. This seemed logical to me—to shift gender out of discrete classifications and move life into a more situational framework. Though most women agreed with me that the characteristics I looked for in a mate would be desirable as well as practical, they felt it was highly unlikely I would find that kind of partner. They settled; I didn’t.

The division of labor between the sexes has been a defining aspect of society. Traditional roles of women taking care of the domestic side of life and men working outside of the home for financial gain have been the standard for most of modern American life. In my own life, there was a period of time in which family responsibilities were a priority. I did not buy into the idea that one could have it all, specifically not all at the same time. I learned quite a bit from the discourse of parenting; however, after my son left for college, it was time to reinvent myself. During my son’s childhood, I taught elementary school. At the time he graduated from college, it had been about 25 years since I earned my master’s degree in special education, and with the exception of taking a business and computer class at an area junior college, I had not been back to university life during that time.

In preparing to enter a doctoral program, I wrestled with the idea of going back to school in another area to both reacquaint myself with student life as well as put myself in contact with others who I could use as both academic and professional references. I decided to go to cooking school; after all, several of my relatives were chefs, both baking and culinary, and I had cooked in my own home for over 30 years. I asked myself, “How hard could this be?” I figured I would have an edge on the other students who, on average, were 25 years younger than I was. It turned
out that I was right, at least about the part that cooking wasn’t hard, but to my surprise, the
culture of the professional culinary kitchen brought challenges that I hadn’t anticipated.

Within the first few weeks of classes, I came to several important realizations. First, as a
woman in culinary, I was in the minority. The majority of students in my classes were men,
probably 85% percent. The domestic kitchen context of childhood that was solely occupied by
women was now the professional culinary kitchen dominated by men. Second, behavior in the
kitchen was gender specific. For the most part, men did the heavy lifting, women did the dishes;
men cooked the entrees, women made the salads. Also, casual comments such as “Come on
ladies, let’s clean up” (when I was one of only three women students) were meant as a pejorative
label used to motivate and control women in the male-dominated space of the professional
kitchen. This gendering of the kitchen was not part of the intended (manifest) curriculum but was
certainly part of the hidden (latent) curriculum; the professional culinary kitchen was a very
gendered place.

The most surprising part of my experience was that I was learning very few skills I didn’t
already know as a result of years of cooking in the domestic realm. As a matter of fact, there
were a few things I, myself, taught the chefs, particularly in the area of international cuisine.
Reflections on all these experiences had me somewhat confused. As a child, I was socialized to
believe that boys didn’t cook, girls did. In fact, boys were considered “sissies” if they cooked,
and girls who didn’t cook were considered lacking skills that eventually might hinder them from
entering into the holy state of matrimony. I thought I had risen above these realities in defining
marriage, for myself, as a more equal partnership—this was after all, a sign of the times, in the
midst of the women’s and civil rights movements. Now in the professional culinary kitchen I was
surrounded by men who were cooking and what’s more, after graduation would be paid for it. It obviously wasn’t solely the act of cooking that was feminine.

Most of my academic and professional career has been spent in the field of education. The one exception was graduating from a professional culinary school with an Associate of Arts in Science (AAS) degree in Culinary Arts. This degree was based more on hands-on career education necessary for gainful employment in the professional culinary kitchen. To my surprise, upon graduation I was asked to teach in the Baking and Pastry Department, specifically Introduction to Baking. Though I was hesitant at first since I had very limited workplace experience in the restaurant industry, I did have extensive experience teaching in elementary schools, and so I decided to take the job. Little did I know then that this decision would bring me to where I am today: doing gender research in the world of culinary education.

I remember well, it was after teaching the five-hour class, two hours of lecture and three hours in the kitchen, that Chef Martha (a pseudonym, as used later in this dissertation) and I were putting leftover ingredients into the reach-in coolers under the worktable. I started a conversation with her by speaking of the differences I had observed between male and female students regarding grading and evaluation. I commented that in my experience, the typical male student didn’t take criticism well. This seemed particularly true on the day of a practical exam.¹ During the product evaluations, a reoccurring comment made by male students who weren’t particularly happy with their evaluations was, “But Chef, I like it like that.” In contrast, female students who made almost perfectly baked goods would be over-critical of their nearly flawless products and promise to do better next time. Male students seemed to brag about their creation of a single muffin, whereas female students would continue on with the next confection without saying

¹ A practical exam is a timed test during which a culinary student makes a food product for chef instructor review.
much at all. I commented to the chef that it seemed that the men in the class wanted the highest praise for making one good muffin, whereas I had made hundreds of them in my lifetime, many times without acknowledgement. It was at that precise moment that Chef Martha straightened up and told me that what puzzled her was that women cook their whole lives at home but men have the vast majority of jobs in restaurants. This seemingly innocent conversation at the end of a long workday laid the groundwork for this research, “Someone’s in the Kitchen, Where’s Dinah? Gendered Dimensions of the Professional Culinary World.”

As a starting point, reminiscent of my conversation with Chef Martha, the problem as I see it is if cooking has traditionally been considered women’s work carried out in the domestic realm, why are women underrepresented in the professional culinary kitchen? Often girls learn to cook from a young age, but it is considered not suitable (not masculine enough) for boys to cook. Later in life, however, women typically continue to cook for themselves and their families, while men rise to the top level of cooking by becoming paid chefs. If cooking wasn’t masculine enough during childhood, what changed in adulthood?

Much of the research done in the restaurant field has to do with either the front of the house (dining room) or the comparison of the front of the house (dining room) with the back of the house (the kitchen). The dining room is typically mixed or female dominated (with the exception of some ethnic and higher priced restaurants). Whereas the dining room if not female dominated is at least mixed, the back of the house (kitchen) has been traditionally male dominated. There has been very limited, if any, research on the gendering of the kitchen itself. Findings from this study may raise awareness of gender issues in the professional culinary kitchen and in turn help organize curriculum that is sensitive to issues of gender.

These experiences led me to the questions that are driving my current research today:
1. How does gender present itself in the culinary world?
2. How does chef education challenge or contribute to the normative gendered patterns in the culinary world, specifically, the back of the house?
3. How do the experiences of women chefs perpetuate or contest gender binaries?

Though cooking is primarily, if not solely, the responsibility of females in the domestic realm, why are women underrepresented in the professional culinary kitchen, especially in top positions? More specifically, we don’t know how the processes of becoming a chef contribute to or challenge the status quo in which women are underrepresented. More broadly, I am interested in how chef education contributes to or challenges the status quo in which women are underrepresented.

I have reviewed pertinent scholarship (in the following chapter) in an effort to lay the groundwork for considering the question, how does chef education contribute to or challenge the gendered status quo in the professional culinary kitchen? A feminist post-structural theoretical framework will be discussed in chapter three as the lens through which interview data will be analyzed. Of particular interest to this research is how discourses are constructed and how difference, language, discourse, power and knowledge contribute to the gendered dimensions of the professional culinary world. Chapter three also discusses the methodology and methods used to explore the gendered dimensions of the professional culinary kitchen.

Findings are presented in Chapters 4 through 8, beginning with biographical descriptions of the four chef participants in this study (chapter 4), and moving to themes that emerged inductively from the data. These include an initial chapter on gendered norms (chapter 5), followed by chapters that examine gender in three domains: culinary school (chapter 6), the workplace (chapter 7), and family life and the home (chapter 8). Chapter 9 situates the findings relative to feminist post-structuralism and is followed by the concluding chapter.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Culinary World: What We Know

By the eighteenth century, the term *Cordon-bleu*² was applied to anyone who excelled in a particular field. The term became chiefly associated with fine cooks. Some say this is because students at the school founded by Madame de Maintenon at Saint Cyr wore a blue sash during their last year of attendance, and that among skills they mastered was cooking. Others claim this association arose after Louis XV bragged to his mistress, Madame du Barry, that only men made great chefs. The lady believed otherwise and invited the king to a small meal prepared by her *cuisinier*. It was a great success and the king exclaimed, “Who is the new man you have cooking for you? He is as good as any cook in the royal household.” “It’s a woman cook, Your Majesty,” Madame du Barry replied, “and I think you should honour her with nothing less than the *Cordon-bleu*. (Le Cordon Bleu, History, n.d.)

Since the beginning of time, meeting the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, along with procreation, have all contributed to the survival of the human race. The sexual division of labor provided a framework within which to provide these necessary components of survival with efficiency. Still today, though sex roles are constantly being challenged and redefined, they remain a representation of societal expectations.

Most people have memories of interactions with food, many of them citing examples from the culinary efforts of grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters and/or female friends, and many childhood memories are also situated within meal times. Many stories are positive, sometimes negative, but one thing is likely: most of the stories center around women in the kitchen. While women seem to be the main actors in home kitchens, they are not equally represented in the professional culinary kitchen according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Though women represent approximately 55% of food service workers in the United States, they occupy only roughly 20% of upper managerial jobs in the professional kitchen (US Bureau of

² Cordon bleu is French for blue ribbon.)
Labor Statistics, 2009). In addition, only one-quarter of all eating and drinking establishments are owned by women (National Restaurant Association Restaurant Industry Pocket Factbook, 2010). Though domestic cooking has been considered women’s work, cooking in the professional culinary world is male dominated. Male dominance does not mean there were no women at all in the professional culinary world; rather, it means that the limited number of women in culinary have either occupied jobs with lower prestige (prep cooks, dishwashers) or those women who have advanced to the line or have made contributions to the professional culinary world have been overlooked in the literature. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the research on gender dynamics in the professional culinary kitchen through available historical and current literature to understand the contributions of women to the field of culinary arts. Further, it is important to identify the barriers associated with low representation of women in upper management positions in the culinary arts.

Organization and Job Descriptions of the Professional Culinary Kitchen

When reviewing statistical data regarding the state of today’s professional culinary world, job titles and job descriptions are important pieces of information to consider. The organization of the modern professional culinary kitchen is heavily influenced by the work of Georges-Auguste Escoffier (1847-1935), commonly known as the “father of twentieth-century cookery” (Gisslen, 2003, p. 4). He is credited not only with the simplification of classical cuisine/menu but also with reorganizing the professional culinary kitchen. Escoffier’s system of kitchen organization is referred to as the “Classical Brigade” system (Gisslen, 2003), based on a system of organization used in the military (Cooper, 1998). He divided the kitchen into “stations” depending on the type of food produced. The station chef was responsible for a specific station.
Stations and the number of employed chefs were adjusted to the size of a particular restaurant. A brief overview of the brigade system is presented in Table 1.
Table 1: Escoffier’s Brigade System of Kitchen Organization

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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| EXECUTIVE CHEF        | • Responsible for all aspects of food production  
                       • Menu planning  
                       • Purchasing  
                       • Costing  
                       • Planning work schedules                                              |
| SOUS CHEF             | • Directly in charge of production  
                       • Minute-by-minute supervision of staff                                      |
| STATION CHEFS         | • Responsible for particular areas of production                                                                                             |
| **Saucier** (sauce cook) | • Makes sauces, stews, hot hors d’oeuvres; sautés food to order                                                                              |
| **Poissonier** (fish cook) | • Prepares fish dishes (may be done by saucier in some kitchens)                                                                              |
| **Entremetier** (vegetable cook) | • Prepares vegetables, soups, starches and egg; depending on the size of the kitchen the preparations may be divided among a fry cook, vegetable cook and soup cook. |
| **Rotisseur** (roast cook) | • Prepares roasted and braised meats and their gravies; broils meats and other items.  
                                • Some kitchens may also have a grillardin or broiler cook to prepare broiled items who may also be responsible for the preparation deep-fried meats and fish to order. |
| **Garde Manger** (pantry chef) | • Prepares cold foods, including salads and dressings, pates, cold hors d’oeuvres, and buffet items                                      |
| **Patisser** (pastry cook) | • Prepares pastry and desserts                                                                                                               |
| **Tournant** (relief or swing cook) | • Replaces other station heads                                                                                                                |
| COOKS AND ASSISTANTS  | • Assigned to particular stations and carry out tasks assigned to them. As assistant vegetable cook may wash, peel and trim vegetables. As they become more experienced, cooks and assistants may be promoted to station cooks and then to station chefs. |

Though the basic tenets of Escoffier’s Brigade system are still in place and used today, many modifications have been made to accommodate the present-day restaurant industry. Menu choices, type of establishment, size of establishment and physical facilities, including equipment, have added to the organization of the modern professional kitchen. That said, in a fine-dining restaurant/hotel, it is much more likely that the hierarchy of staff will start with the executive chef and then include a sous chef, line cooks and food preparation cooks.

Technically, the word chef is the French word for “chief.” The chef supervises and coordinates back-of-the-house (kitchen) operations and personnel, which include food preparation, kitchen and storeroom areas. Other duties include quality control, menus, schedules, training, cost control, enforcement of sanitation standards, meeting with clients to plan special menus, and purchasing food items, supplies, equipment and pans (Brefere, Drummond and Barnes, 2006). The executive chef is a full-time chef who is the department head responsible for all culinary units in a restaurant, hotel, club, hospital or other food service establishment (ACF as cited in Cooper, 1998). Sous chef (sous meaning “under” in French) is the person who is second in command in the kitchen (Gisslen, 2003). This chef is in charge of supervising the line and insures food quality and sanitation standards. The sous chef usually is a “cooking” chef, whereas an executive chef is administrative. When the executive chef is not present, the sous chef takes over. An executive pastry chef is one who is the department head of the pastry department, supervising all of its operations. Line cooks are those who produce the plated food (Cooper, 1998). Food preparation cooks and assistants are those workers who prepare the food to be cooked on the line. This may include cutting fruits, vegetables, meats or anything else that needs to be prepped for cooking or assembling. The organization of the professional culinary kitchen contributes to the mission of the restaurant: feeding customers. Though this organization of the
kitchen seems reasonable, there is also an assumption about the division of labor among men and women workers. The following section will discuss sex and gender and how it impacts the division of labor.

The Division of Labor: Sex and Gender

The division of labor, that is, “who does what” has been a topic of discussion for quite some time (Fenstermaker, 2002, p. 105). Both historically and traditionally, labor has been divided according to one’s sex. According to McCann and Kim (2003), “The biological fact that women have the potential to give birth has grounded many scientific, spiritual, political, and social explanations for their differential rights, roles, and obligations” (p. 12). Typically, “husbands are the primary breadwinners, so-called, and wives the household workers” (Fenstermaker, 2002, p. 105). Socially constructed notions of gender support this sexual division of labor. Though gender is socially constructed, it nevertheless has supported and helped maintain the gendered status quo. Fenstermaker (2002) states, “Old habits and routines die hard, precisely because change requires so much effort” (p. 107).

For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to at least broadly define and distinguish the terms “sex” and “gender.” As previously mentioned, the division of labor agreed upon as a way of survival was based in part on one’s sex. According to West and Zimmerman (2002),

Sex is a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males. The criteria for classification can be genitalia at birth or chromosomal typing before birth, and they do not necessarily agree with one another. (p. 3)

Gender, on the other hand, is a social construct regarding culture-bound conventions, roles and behaviors, as well as relationships between and among women and men and boys and girls (Harvard School of Public Health, 2006). The roles and behaviors are the criteria used to
define what it means to be feminine and/or masculine. Traditionally, it was thought that gender was “fixed” by around age five; however, West and Zimmerman (2002) challenge that assumption by positing that gender is “an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct” (p. 4). Understanding sex and gender may help us understand the division of labor in the professional culinary world.

Both men and women have added to the historical texture and the present-day practices of the restaurant industry. Though women’s contributions to the professional culinary world have not enjoyed widespread recognition, as have the contributions of their male counter-parts, women have played a significant role in helping today’s culinary landscape. A look at the history of culinary innovation brings to light the contributions both men and women have made to the professional culinary world.

**History of Culinary Innovation**

Most of what we know about food comes from two places, the domestic realm of home cooking and the professional realm of professional cooking. *Domestic* cooking refers to the cooking done relating to the family or the household, traditionally done by women. *Professional* cooking encompasses cooking that is done outside the home as a wage-earning occupation and is typically done by men. The following sections will cover the contributions of men and women to culinary history, the role of cookbooks in gendering eating and cooking activities, the professional culinary world and how options for providing meals for families has opened the door for the expansion of the restaurant world.

**Men’s Contributions to Culinary History**

Humans and their relationship to food have evolved over the centuries. As stated earlier, women were largely responsible for domestic cookery. There has been some speculation that it
was women, through the rubbing of sticks together, who actually were the first to discover fire (Cooper, 1998). Women throughout the ages, and still in large part today, hold the sole responsibility for providing edible, cooked food for their families. When and where then did the introduction of men into the culinary arena take place?

In the Middle Ages, guilds were formed in England to assure quality manufacturing methods and consistent pricing of prepared food items. Guilds were centered on specialty cooking. For example, during the reign of Henri IV of France (1533-1610), there were guilds for rotisseurs dealing with main cuts of meat; pâtissers, who cooked poultry, pies and tarts; tamisters, who baked bread; viaigriers, who made sauces and stews; traileurs, who made ragouts; and proté-chapis, caterers who organized fests and celebrations (Labensky, van Damme, Martell and Tenbergen, 2005). Membership was limited to men, even though women did much of the baking. The food produced in the guilds was sold to taverns, inns and individuals at markets. This structuring of enterprise led to the development of the first restaurant by Boulanger. Boulanger set up a restaurant that was different from an inn. In his establishment, the cooking of his restoratives or soups was done on the premises. The actual word restaurant is a modern rendition of the word restorative (Labensky and Hause, 2003).

Historically, men assumed the position of “hunters” in the societal division of labor. Men used tools to help them hunt. Some of these tools or weapons were further used to defend territories. Men formed armies and went off to war, leaving women at home to care for the family. Given that the army’s population was male, there were no women in the ranks to cook for them; hence, individual men were singled out to cook for their units. Using their mother’s recipes as a springboard, they cooked for the soldiers and subsequently developed their own recipes (Cooper, 1998). In peacetime, men continued to cook, revamping domestic cooking into
a profession. Auguste Escoffier, an army man himself, known as the “King of Chefs and the Chef of Kings” (Cooper, 1998, p. 13) brought the Brigade system, a military system of organization, into the kitchen. This system helped streamline the kitchen to be more efficient and harmonious. Escoffier later paired with Carlton Ritz to form the well-known Ritz Carlton Hotel chain.

Other men also are credited with contributing greatly to the field of culinary arts. There was Apicius, who wrote the first cookbook; Beauvilliers, who in 1782 formed the first modern-day restaurant; Benjamin Thompson, credited for inventing the first stove in 1800; Charles Ranhofer, the first internationally known American chef; and the list goes on (Dornenburg and Page, 2003). One might ask if there have been significant contributions made by women to the field. The answer to the question is an emphatic, Yes!

**Women’s Contributions to Culinary History**

During the Middle Ages, Caterina de Medici, the wife of Henry II of France, brought her chefs from Italy to France to reconstruct the art of eating. Not only did she bring with her talented Italian chefs, she also introduced the French to eating utensils and table settings. In 1796, Amelia Simmons published *American Cookery*, the first cookbook for Americans. Fanny Farmer, principal of the Boston Cooking School, introduced measurement into the kitchen; this had a direct effect on the consistency of commercial cooking and baking (Dornenburg and Page, 2003). At the same time as Farmer was leading the Boston cooking school, Mary Distel founded the magazine *La Cuisinière Cordon-bleu*, in which famous chefs shared recipes and techniques. She began to offer cooking classes associated with the magazine. Distel and Madame de Maintenon at Saint Cyr opened the world famous Le Cordon Bleu cooking school in France, which still graduates some of the most celebrated chefs in the world (Le Cordon Bleu, 2006). In
1948, history repeated itself in the United States. Two women, Frances Roth and Katharine Angell, opened the New Haven Connecticut Restaurant Institute, which later became known as the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), the premier cooking school in the United States. Julia Child, a world famous chef and graduate of Le Cordon Bleu, Paris, hosted her own cooking television show, *The French Chef*, which first aired in 1963.

The seventies started an era in culinary in which women were starting to blaze the trail for future generations of women in the upper management echelons of the restaurant industry. Alice Waters opened Chez Panisse in 1971 in California, promoting her ideas on sustainable agriculture. The food she cooked was grown in her garden in the rear of the restaurant. She has become an icon and a mentor, paving the way for many women in the restaurant business. During this time frame, Chef Madeleine Kamman published *The Making of a Cook* (1971), the first book of its kind authored by a woman that explains the why of cooking. In her book, she also bridges French techniques with American ingredients. In a subsequent book, *The New Making of a Cook* (1997), she made revisions that address and reflect on the changes in culinary culture since the sixties and seventies (Kamman, 1997). Chef Leslie Revsin was the first woman to become the executive chef of a major hotel kitchen, the Waldorf-Astoria in New York in 1972 (Dornenburg and Page, 2003). Following suit, Chef Debra Sardinha-Metivier became the first executive chef of a Hilton Hotel in America (“Hilton appoints first”, 1998).

It is evident from the literature that even though women were the first domestic cooks and they also made significant contributions to the professional culinary world, it has taken a while for them to rise to the top positions in restaurants. Women have made astounding contributions to both the domestic and professional culinary worlds. They have written cookbooks, founded and managed cooking schools, worked as food writers, created wonderful
food throughout the ages… and yet much of their work has gone unnoticed and until recently has been glossed over by the male-dominated professional culinary community, including chefs, food writers, educators, and business owners as well as the general public. A contributor to the invisibility of female cooks (chefs) is the very backbone of culinary arts, namely, the cookbook.

**Cookbooks and Gender Roles**

As mentioned earlier, Apicius is the epicure credited with having written the first cookbook, *De re quoquinara* (On the Subject of Cooking). He wrote it as a historical account of culinary, where many cooking techniques and formulas were written down and the cookbook was used as a cooking manual (Dornenburg and Page, 2003). Professional cookbooks to this day are written in a straightforward way designed to be used as a reference for those working with the preparation, cooking and plating of food. Up until recently, pictures of chefs in these cookbooks have been white males. This is slowly changing—pictures of women and chefs of color are represented in many professional cookbooks today.

Domestic cookbooks, however, carry messages other than techniques and recipes for cooking. For the purposes of this review, the majority of cookbooks discussed will be those written from the 1940s to the present. Though cookbooks can be used by anyone, some may target gender-specific audiences. In 1941, The Settlement Cook Book company produced a cookbook that obviously was written for women: its title, *The Way to a Man’s Heart, The Settlement Cookbook*, was intended to be a cookbook or manual that gave women the skills to find a man and to keep him through the execution of culinary skill (Neuhaus, 1999). The inside front cover states that the book contains “Tested Recipes from The Milwaukee Public School Kitchens, Girl Trades and Technical High School, Authoritative Dieticians and Experienced Housewives” (Kander, 1941). Cooking in the ‘40s and ‘50s indeed was perceived to be the way
that women could ensure catching a husband and, hopefully, keeping him (Inness, 2001; Kander, 1941; Neuhaus, 1999).

During this era, food preparation was viewed as a woman’s activity that not only kept her family happy but also her comfort food was to keep our nation satisfied while men went off to war. A happy woman was one who found fulfillment in the kitchen. She needed to understand gender differences in food tastes, the need for nourishment and at the same time feel honored to hold such a place in our society (Inness, 2001; Shapiro, 2005). To help facilitate woman’s place in the kitchen, electrical appliances as well as convenience foods helped women to meet the needs of their families and at the same time give them a sense of freedom (Inness, 2001; Neuhaus, 1999; Shapiro, 2005).

Cookbooks also have contributed to our societal constructs of femininity and masculinity. For example, salads, Jello, and “fluff” foods are considered feminine choices, whereas masculine choices center on meat and potatoes (Inness, 2001; Neuhaus, 1999). In addition to gendered food choices, there also is an assumption that men and women have different portion preferences. These preferences are assumed in how menu items are written in a variety of restaurants. For example, compare the menus in steakhouses located in Chicago: Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse, part of a chain restaurant, and Chicago Chop House, independently owned.
Table 2: Comparison of Menu Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse</th>
<th>Chicago Chop House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Filet</strong></td>
<td>Chicago Chop House New York Strip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The most tender cut of corn-fed Midwestern beef.</td>
<td>(16 oz.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(24 oz.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(20 oz. bone-in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Petite Filet</strong></td>
<td>T-Bone Steak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A smaller, but equally tender filet.</td>
<td>(24 oz.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ribeye</strong></td>
<td>Porterhouse Steak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An outstanding example of USDA Prime at its best. Well</td>
<td>(48 oz.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marbled for peak flavor, deliciously juicy.</td>
<td>(64 oz.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Filet Mignon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10 oz.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(16 oz.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roast Prime Rib of Beef Original or Charred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18 oz.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bone-in (24 oz.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In writing their menu, Ruth’s Chris makes assumptions about portion size and labels them in a gender specific way—petite and cowboy—clearly feminine and masculine characteristics. This type of gender-specific language may make it awkward for patrons to choose the food they wish to eat. Consider the menu offerings at the Chicago Chop House. The food offerings in this menu are listed in a straightforward fashion by weight.

In the 1950s, the construction of the fictional character, Betty Crocker, property of the General Mills Company, was a marketing technique used to bridge the gap between old cooking techniques and new methods of cooking. Betty Crocker was an example of a “living trademark” (Shapiro, 2005, p. 30). Between 1949 and 1964 she was played by actress Adelaide Hawley.
(born Dieta Adelaide Fish) on television, making her a “living trademark” for General Mills. (See, for example, Betty Crocker’s 1950s spice cake commercial (captbijou, 2009). Since domestic cooking was a gender-specific feminine role, General Mills thought that women would listen to the words and advice of a woman spokesperson as opposed to a male spokesperson: Betty Crocker was born. Betty Crocker, through her columns, radio shows and appearances, taught women how to use stoves and electrical appliances and how to cook with convenience foods such as frozen peas and box mixes (Marks, 2005). Further, the boxed cake mix helped women provide food for joyous occasions such as birthday parties for their loved ones and hence helped them to maintain a “nurturing” role in the family as unpaid work.

In modern-day circles, the act of cooking has penetrated the male domain; some men have learned to cook within certain parameters. In her book, Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture, Inness (2001) constructs “The Male Cooking Mystic” (p. 18). She names five assumptions that underlie men’s roles related to cooking, all of which seek to reconstruct domestic cooking while maintaining the social constructs of masculine identity. First of all, if men choose to cook, they are careful to make sure that their masculinity is not threatened. Cookbooks such as Boy Meets Grill (Flay and Schwartz, 1999) are targeted towards men and make it acceptable for them to cook in the domestic sphere. Second, men’s choice of food further protects their masculinity. Dishes distinguished by Inness as being “some fluffy frippery such as marshmallow-and- maraschino Jell-O salad” (p.18) are side stepped while meat and potatoes remain the center components of the male diet. Third, the type of food men cook speaks to gender specificity. Grilling a steak on an outdoor grill is acceptable, whereas cooking meat with ingredients such as coconut or pineapple chucks is more representative of a woman’s taste (Inness, 2001). Fourth, men can cook things other than meat and barbeque, but only
occasionally. When they do participate in this type of cookery, their efforts are highly praised (Inness, 2001). Finally, cooking skill is still considered to be a strategy that has the potential to both attract and “keep” a man. A woman’s tastes are often considered secondary to the man she is trying to please. Though this still is very often the case, the trend is slowly changing. Cookbooks such as *Cavemen in the Kitchen: A Man’s Dating Aid/Cookbook* (DesMarais, 2003) and *The Cookbook for Men Whose Wives Don’t Cook* (Hamilton, 2006) are giving men the opportunity and permission to cook for the women in their lives. Though we are a long way from equality in the domestic kitchen, we are slowly making progress in welcoming men into a traditionally female domain.

*Today’s Professional Culinary Kitchen*

The restaurant industry has made significant strides since the inception of the first restaurant, started by Boulanger in the 1700s. Menus have changed, kitchens have modernized, customer service has been fine-tuned, the emergence of restaurants as financially profitable businesses has occurred, culinary schools have graduated many chefs, and last but not least, there has been an increase in the number of women joining the restaurant work force. Nearly 55% of those working in the food service industry are women (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009), but they are underrepresented in the upper-echelon of management and only hold approximately 20% of the jobs at the upper levels. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009), women make up the majority (56.9%) of first-line supervisors, defined as those who supervise workers engaged in preparing and serving food, and women represent 20.7% of chefs and head cooks, those who “direct the preparation, seasoning, and cooking of salads, soups, fish, meats, vegetables, desserts, or other foods, plan and price menu items, order supplies, and keep records
accounts.” Under this definition, the classic definitions of chef/executive chef and sous chef apply.

When entering a professional culinary kitchen, one can readily see it for the male-dominated environment that it is. Whereas cooking in the domestic realm is typically unpaid work done by women, the majority of professional cooking is paid work done by men. Professional cooking is done outside of the home, outside of the “women’s place,” and for wages, which is the traditional masculine role of supporting a family (Inness, 2001). Further, adaptations to the cooking environment, such as the wearing of uniforms, volume of people served and modification of the military-based “brigade system” as set up by Escoffier to organize the professional kitchen (Table 1) are further evidence of the gendered nature of the professional culinary world. Since 1963, chef certification programs (American Culinary Federation, ACF) and awards for excellence in the field help to separate professional culinary arts from the female-dominated role of domestic cookery (American Culinary Federation, 2010).

**Cookery: The Domestic Realm**

The process of domestic cooking, particularly the assumption that cooking is women’s work, is not an isolated phenomenon but one that is influenced by many variables. In recent history, the roles of women have primarily been connected to their home and family. Men went out to a workplace environment to earn a living wage while women stayed at home to tend to the domestic side of life—the house and the children. Coltrane (1989) states that mothering is often seen as “the quintessence of womanhood.” The tasks that are involved in motherhood center on the “feminine” predisposition to care, whereas the tasks of fathering are more limited and include “begetting, protecting and providing” (p. 473). The assumption that women are naturally better suited for a life of domestic-oriented work has contributed to a somewhat “commonsense”
approach to how we view issues in the sexual division of labor. This commonsense approach not only has contributed to the construction of the gender binary but also has helped to reproduce it. How couples manage their family workload is largely dependent on their “gender ideology,” their expectations of what gender is as well as their gender strategy, which Hochschild (2003) defines as “a plan of action through which a person tries to solve problems at hand, given the cultural notions of gender at play” (p. 15). According to Hochschild (2003), the gender ideologies constructed during childhood influence the gender strategies one chooses to negotiate daily life as an adult. This is not to say that gender-specific practices and attitudes are always conscious; nevertheless, they help shape our interactions with others.

Learning to cook is a gendered part of a child’s education; it usually is considered women’s work. During childhood, girls may learn to cook through direct instruction from another woman in the family, such as a mother, grandmother, sister, aunt or friend. Oftentimes, females learn their roles not through “direct instruction but rather through observation” (Hill, 2001, cited in Endrijonas, 2001, p.167). Hill (2001) further states that in the postwar years of the ‘50s, young girls’ attendance in the kitchen was “fairly casual” (p.167). Meals cooked in the home were predominantly the responsibility of the female head of the house, with the girls in the family assisting and helping when it was needed. It wasn’t until women had homes of their own, usually after marriage, that they learned how to cook (Endrijonas, 2001). Most women learned the majority of what they know about cooking through the use of cookbooks and other media, including television and magazines. The invention of the television in the 1920s and the proliferation of women’s magazines helped to teach women how to cook. Programs such as The Galloping Gourmet, The French Chef and The Frugal Gourmet contributed to women’s knowledge of cooking. These programs presented classical cooking in terms that housewives
understood (Frei, 2008). Magazines such as *Women’s Day, Family Circle* as well as *Good Housekeeping* further contributed to culinary knowledge through articles and recipes aimed at food preparation in the home.

Domestic cooking often has been characterized through time as simply food preparation. Upon closer scrutiny, cooking is much more than food preparation; it entails more than cutting, dicing and regulating a heat source. It draws from several other aspects of daily life, including finances, shopping, taste preferences, nutrition, health issues and advanced planning both in the purchase of food and its preparation. Feeding a family, then, is much more than simply food preparation; it is a conduit through which women could fulfill their “nurturing function within the family” (Endrijonas, 2001, p. 169). Today, the landscape upon which domestic cookery is situated has changed considerably. With more and more women entering the workforce, time constraints have caused women to rethink their approach to feeding their families. Both modifications and alternatives to the traditional home-cooked meal have been necessary to accommodate busy work schedules.

In this era of busy, activity-packed lives, there are several ways meal times can be managed. Cooking classes for family members, off-site test preparation kitchens, the use of prepackaged convenience foods and outsourcing duties such as hiring a personal chef/nanny/housekeeper can provide help with specific needs. If nutritional needs are best met off-site from the home, eating out in restaurants where food needs are outsourced to a professional restaurant staff is an option. Resources outside of the home also may include meals provided for in-school/work settings, such as a lunchroom or a cafeteria, where subsidized and/or payment options are offered.
According to Raj Gill (2007), in the UK, “a more recent and indeed growing trend among home cooks is enrolling in cookery demonstrations and master-classes, during which they get a chance to watch their favourite chefs in action”(p. 2). In the US, people also are enrolling in cooking classes. These classes are offered by junior colleges, private stores such as Sur La Table, manufacturers of cookware such as Calphalon, cooking specialty stores such as Flavour in Forest Park, Illinois and/or, in some instances, restaurants themselves. The format of classes varies according to the particular venue. Some classes are demonstration only, with the perk of students afterwards eating food prepared by the chef, while others are hands-on, with a dish first demonstrated by a chef, and then under her or his watchful eye, replicated by students. Information regarding food history and food science is included in the class. There are demonstrations and classes that specialize in skills such as cake decorating or bread baking, all with the intent of teaching skills to be used in the domestic kitchen. Wine-pairing classes also can add to one’s repertoire of culinary skills. Classes generally are not gender-specific unless otherwise noted. There are, however, exceptions: some classes are available only to men.

Celebrity Chef Mario Batali, under the sponsorship of Dewar’s, runs a class called “Man with a Pan” in New York’s Soho district. Men come to the class to learn how to cook primarily in the hopes of attracting the attention of females (Bernard, 2003). Another all-male cooking class experience is a membership benefit of The Gastronomic Society of New York started by James Marzo, a foreign exchange night trader for Citibank, who is single. The class is a gathering of men who learn to cook and share great conversation. Marzo states: “It’s a great way to get together for male bonding without having to sit in a bar, drink beer and eat pizza…. You’re learning a skill and talking about something more than sports” (Gutner and Flanagan, 1994, p. 1).
Cooking classes are a way to help people learn the skills needed to prepare meals for themselves as well as others.

Another answer to busy schedules and food needs has been seen in services such as Let’s Dish! International, a store where customers choose from a catalogue of recipes and then assemble meals from already cut and prepped ingredients. It is reported that within a time period of two hours, customers can put together 12 uncooked entrees to be taken home and stored in their refrigerators or freezers, ready for use. All recipes are portioned for groups of four to six people, and the prices range from eight meals/$160, between $3 and $5 per serving, or 12 meals/$200.00, between $2.80 and $4.15 per serving. It also is possible to have some of the facilities assemble meals for an additional $40 (Fulton, 2006, p. 2). According to Bert Vermeulen, president of the Easy Meal Prep Association, based in Cheyenne, Wyoming, the industry had a slow start in 1999, but it has skyrocketed from $7.2 million to $270 million in 2006 (Fulton, 2006, p. 2). This option also provides the opportunity for couples to work together and assemble meals; predictably, however, most customers are women.

For over 50 years, convenience foods have been a way to prepare quick and easy meals at home. These prepared convenience foods are sold in both the frozen section as well as the canned goods section found in most grocery stores. In order to market such products, establishments such as Costco, H Mart, Trader Joe’s, Dominick’s and Jewel offer product tasting while customers shop. Food companies traditionally associated with convenience foods, including but not limited to Sara Lee, Campbell’s, Swanson’s and Green Giant, produce these products. The restaurant industry is also represented with brands such as Taco Bell and Frontera that are now part of the domestic food scene and available for purchase and use in the domestic
kitchen. It is also customary in some grocery stores to have tastings of food samples accompanied by discount coupons to further stimulate the purchase of sampled products.

Finally, an option that has seen tremendous growth in the last 30-some years is eating out in restaurants; not only on vacations and/or for special occasions but also as part of the daily meal regime. There are many choices of restaurants that may meet the needs of both individuals as well as families, ranging from fast food to fine dining. Considerations for patronization often include a child’s menu, special deals such as a “kids eat free on Tuesday” option, informal atmosphere, substantial food portions and, of course, reasonable, affordable prices to meet a variety of household budgets. In addition to restaurant service, carryout menus may be available, which makes it easy to call in a food order and pick it up on the way home from work.

Meal choices today have expanded our notions of acceptable ways to provide food for both our families and ourselves. In so many ways, the professional culinary chef has both come into our homes and has invited us out into their “home”—the restaurant. In a sense, time constraints have helped to blur the line between homemade and restaurant-style foods. Whether it is a cooking demonstration, a hands-on cooking lesson, the making of convenience foods, or eating in a restaurant, professional culinary arts are represented. With an increasing demand for food choices that include chefs’ participation in a food research lab or as a chef in a restaurant/institutional kitchen, it is no wonder that the area of professional culinary arts has become a viable career choice in today’s society for both men and women. To meet the need for trained chefs, chef education has become a major component of today’s restaurant/foodservice industry.
**Becoming a Chef: The Professional Realm**

Becoming a professional chef is a very interesting and sometimes confusing endeavor. As previously mentioned, there are both explicit and implicit practices that shape and reproduce the notion that cooking is a domestic feminine chore. The professional culinary realm also has explicit and implicit practices that contribute to the construction of cooking as gendered.

Professional kitchens are portrayed for the most part as aggressive, busy, competitive, primarily male-dominated environments. Television shows such as *Hell’s Kitchen* and *The Iron Chef* portray the professional arena as a fast-paced, stressful environment. The professional kitchen is often characterized as one rife with stress, frustration: a difficult environment, one that is to be tamed by the talented few, specifically, the male chef. Traditionally and still in large part today, “the line” in the back of the house (referring to the cooking stations) is male-dominated (Bourdain, 2000). Even though professional kitchens are male-dominated, John DeLucie (2009), a recruiter turned chef and currently executive chef/partner of Greenwich Village’s Waverly Inn, observes in his book, *The Hunger: A Story of Food, Desire, and Ambition*:

> I have no doubt women are conceptually swifter than men, hence their ability to multitask better. In the case of a busy kitchen, they can manage the numerous components of an elaborate dish better than most guys—and that included me at this neophyte stage. (p. 47)

If this is the case, why aren’t more women a part of the professional culinary world, especially in the upper echelons of restaurant work?

In his seminal book *Kitchen Confidential*, chef and author Anthony Bourdain (2000) takes readers on an adventure through what he terms “the Culinary Underbelly.” Many of his experiences within the culinary world are easily recognizable to people who work in the restaurant industry. Of particular relevance to the present discussion on becoming a chef is his characterization of what it means to be a chef and who answers the call of this profession. These
questions are particularly important, especially in an age in which the media provides us with much of our information regarding the professional culinary kitchen. Oftentimes, restaurant work is seen as glamorous, when the cold hard reality is that it is demanding work coupled with long, sometimes unpredictable hours and low pay.

“Kitchen work has both rhythm (periodity) and tempo that stems from customer demand” (Fine, 1996, p. 60). The tempo set in a restaurant is dependent on time periods during which customers come in for meals. These time spaces are generally divided into three broad time periods: breakfast, lunch and dinner. These periods have the potential to be slow at one extreme and very fast paced at the other. During these periods, time considerations as well as consistent quality of product, service time and accommodating the unexpected (a dropped pot of stock, an injury) all are part of a day in the life of a chef (Fine, 1996). In order to meet customer demand, the chef and staff need to have a skill set far beyond knowing how to read and execute a recipe. Besides a strong background in culinary education, according to Bourdain (2000) a chef must be able to” remain clear headed, organized and reasonably even-keeled during hectic and stressful service periods” (p. 61). Combined with the small kitchen space and the number of people working in a professional kitchen, a chef must be able to work well with others (Bourdain, 2000). Kitchen work often is referred to as a dance in that when everyone is doing his or her job, it flows towards a final outcome (Bourdain, 2000, p. 56). Who, then, in a broad sense, is most likely to choose a career in professional cooking?

Though some people look at professional cooking as glamorous based on the portrayals of chefs on television programs and in magazine ads, Bourdain (2000) elaborates on the real nature of the job,

Line cooking—the real business of preparing the food you eat—is more about consistency, about mindless, unvarying repetition, the same series of tasks performed
over and over and over again in exactly the same way. The last thing a chef wants in a
line cook is an innovator, somebody with ideas of his own who is going to mess around
with the chef’s recipes and presentations. Chefs require blind, near-fanatical loyalty, a
strong back and an automaton-like consistency of execution under battlefield conditions.
(p. 56)

In addition, a cook needs to embrace a work ethic that includes showing up for work when
scheduled, working long hours until the work is done, working well with others, working clean
(cleaning as you go), and being organized and able to focus in the often chaotic and fast-paced
environment of the kitchen (Bourdain, 2000).

Traditionally, people who have been attracted to the lifestyle of a hands-on career in
professional cooking have been a varied group. Three-star chef Scott Bryan refers to restaurant
workers as the “fringe element,” people for whom something in their lives has gone terribly
wrong (Bourdain, 2000, p. 62). Bourdain (2000) further elaborates:

Maybe they didn’t make it through high school, maybe they’re running away from
something—be it an ex-wife, a rotten family history, trouble with the law or a squalid
Third World backwater with no opportunity for advancement. Or maybe, like me, they
just like it here. They’re comfortable with the rather relaxed and informal code of
conduct in the kitchen, the elevated level of tolerance for eccentricity, unseemly personal
habits, lack of documentation, prison experience. In most kitchens, one’s freakish
personal proclivities matter little if at all. Can you keep up? Are you ready for service?
Can I count on you to show up at work tomorrow, to not let the side down? That’s what
counts. (p. 62)

Though this characterization of the restaurant chef may be typical, the phenomenon of the
celebrity chef has opened the door for a wider variety of people to attempt to join the ranks of the
professional culinary kitchen. From high school students to middle-aged career changers, there
are a variety of reasons people choose to pursue a career path towards becoming a chef. Other
reasons for attending culinary school may include desiring credentials that lead towards
becoming an executive chef of a top fine-dining restaurant, a degree that will allow advancement
into senior management positions, higher wages, deeper knowledge to write about food,
knowledge and credentials to open a restaurant, and improved restaurant management skills for a family business (USA Study Guide, 2007).

Some 60 years ago, professional chefs received very little academic training (Frei, 2008). Still today, it is possible to open an independent restaurant without credentials and degrees from a culinary school; however, a degree in culinary arts can provide the career professional with useful tools to be successful in today’s ever-changing business world. Restaurateur Kevin Rathbun, owner of three restaurants in Atlanta, states,

I didn’t use to care about culinary education on someone’s resume…. I was interested in their experience. Now that the pool of job candidates has expanded (thanks in part to the Food Network), I appreciate a resume with real culinary education… they speak the language. (Borelli, 2008, p. 1)

Matching nutritional needs with individual tastes, the culinary professional, particularly the owners and executive chefs, are in the business of selling what people will buy, that is, matching particular taste combinations and services with a target market. They also are conscious of a strategic plan in which not only customer satisfaction is a goal but also the maximizing of profit and the cutting of costs (Harrington, Mandabach, Thibodeaux and VanLeeuwen, 2005). Whereas in a family, members who do not like certain foods can avoid them and hope for something better tomorrow, in the restaurant business the match of people to services are monetarily connected and hence have a direct connection to survival of the business. This being said, let’s look at what career educational options are available to those interested in pursuing a successful career as a chef.

**Celebrity Chefs**

For approximately the last 10 or so years, the phenomenon of celebrity chefs, as portrayed on channels such as the Food Network, have had a dramatic impact on the world of professional culinary arts. Before the inception of the Food Channel, Julia Child and her
program, *The French Chef*, was one of the first TV shows to inspire viewers to seek professional culinary training (Frei, 2008, p. 62). Today, programs such as *The Iron Chef, Hell’s Kitchen, Live with Emeril* and *The Barefoot Contessa*, to name a few, continue to present professional culinary training as a career choice. Today, the more than 600 culinary schools nationwide are prepared to train students for a career in culinary arts.

There is no doubt that television has had an immense influence on the number of students attending culinary schools today. The cooking programs on the Food Network demonstrate cooking techniques, food history, science and trends, but they also do one other thing—they entertain a wide-range audience. Food television is entertainment (de Solier, 2005). Television has given professional culinary chefs a newfound status; however, at the same time, the programming might not present a realistic picture of the culinary industry (Frei, 2008). Frei (2008) has some valuable advice for those who are considering a career as a chef:

> What chefs want prospective cooks to know—true with many time-honored trades—is that such huge rewards as those depicted on television go to a precious few, and certainly not without a great deal of personal investment and sacrifice. (p. 62)

Though it might be entertaining as well as educational to watch celebrity chefs work (perform) on the Food Network, cooking in restaurants is difficult, grueling work that very seldom leads to celebrity status. Bearing this in mind, it is important to understand the several educational choices available to prospective culinary students. Choosing the right type of culinary program can help prepare a student for a career in the culinary arts.

In today’s business realm, we see the emergence of restaurants and often, thanks in part to the Food Network, remain interested in the biographies of those who decide to become chefs and/or open restaurants. Formal education and credentials have been the path chosen by many celebrity chefs who have learned their trade while attending a formal cooking school. Cat Cora,
featured celebrity chef on the television program, *Iron Chef*, is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) located in Hyde Park, New York. Emeril LaGasse, celebrity chef, cookbook author, and television host graduated from Johnson and Wales culinary program in Providence, Rhode Island. Julia Child, one of the most celebrated chefs of all time, was a graduate of Le Cordon Bleu in Paris.

Though formal education has been a chosen educational path for many chefs, there are other routes available for people aspiring to become chefs, including work-place learning (family based, employment based) and self-study. The celebrity chef Mario Batali, after completing a degree from Rutgers, decided to enroll at the Le Cordon Bleu School in France to learn the skills necessary to become a chef. After a very short time and without earning a culinary degree, he decided to leave Le Cordon Bleu and embarked on a journey of learning on the job in several restaurants in Europe. His credentials include winning The James Beard Chef of the Year award in 2005, writing cookbooks and owning several successful restaurants. Similarly, celebrity chef Alice Waters, owner of Chez Panisse, the first sustainable restaurant in the United States, is one of the most famous chefs in America. Her academic degree is in French cultural studies. Her life in France brought her face-to-face with fresh market produce and sustainable agriculture. Though she does not have a degree from a culinary school, she enjoys the outstanding reputation of her famous restaurant and remains one of the most powerful advocates for fresh, organic produce and sustainable agriculture. Finally, Rachael Ray, celebrity chef and talk show host, was raised in a family restaurant business. She herself held several jobs in the restaurant industry and became a household name based on her cooking skills, recipes and talk show status. She does not have a formal culinary degree. The following section will consider ways for chefs to prepare for a career in the professional culinary world.
**Guilds and Apprenticeships**

Becoming a chef has undergone tremendous change since the days of the Guilds. To better understand today’s educational/training options for chefs, it is important to understand the history of work, particularly apprenticeships and guilds. The following history is a very broad and general description of the apprenticeship and guild systems. Apprenticeships and guild programs varied from country to country, sometimes from village to village. Though women made up approximately half of the work force in the Middle Ages, they are rarely mentioned (Collins, 1989; Swanson, 1988). Most women teachers (masters of apprentices) in 16\textsuperscript{th} century France did not have guild status, and further, the apprentices under their supervision would not expect to obtain guild status upon completion of the apprenticeship (Loats, 1997). If this is so, and apprentices taught by women did not have access to guild membership, who did?

There were two types of guilds in the Middle Ages, the merchant guilds and the craft guilds. Merchant guilds were very powerful and decided how trade was conducted in the towns, whereas the craft guilds were concerned with the manufacturing of goods. Craft guilds that are relevant to the discussion of culinary are bakers, brewers, butchers, fishmongers and innkeepers who also oversaw drinking and dining in their establishments. Swanson (1988) says,

Traditionally, medieval craft guilds have been seen as groups of men, pursuing a specific craft, joined with their fellows in exclusive associations which were designed to protect their interests against competition as well as to provide mutual support and friendship….The overwhelming impression gained from surviving records is that craft guilds in the later middle ages primarily served a political and administrative purpose, and were deliberately created to do so. (pp. 30-31)

It is argued that the guilds of the Middle Ages formed as a result of the “spiritual influence” of the Catholic church (Kerrish, 1935). At this time, faith and everyday life forged into “an organic social unity” and “sense of brotherhood” (Kerrish, 1935, p. 505). Rules and regulations pertaining to guild membership were modeled after religious principles. Examples of
these rules and regulations include fines for slander of another guildsman, the prohibition of roasting chestnuts in public on Sundays and Holy Days, the set-up of elaborate booths to take away from the financial success of others, and finally, taverns and inns were closed until noon on Sundays and Holy Days (Kerrish, 1935).

Entrance into a guild was typically available upon completion of an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships were regulated by the guilds. In certain countries, the guilds regulated the number of apprentices a master could have (the most common was no more than three); this number was affected by three factors: (1) competition with sons, (2) attitudes of journeymen (apprentices provide lower-wage labor, taking jobs away from journeymen), and (3) the machinery available for use with the apprentice. The guilds also regulated wages and length of service (Nicholas, 1995). Apprentices, according to Nicholas (1995), fell into four groups: adults, orphans, children or adults who wanted to follow a profession different than their fathers’ profession. Contracts outlining both the master’s and apprentice’s duties during the apprenticeship were drawn up and signed. The identifications on apprenticeship agreements were gendered. The masters (typically male) were identified through the name of their occupation, while women were identified by their relationships, such as marriage (Loats, 1997). Both females and males participated in apprenticeships separated by gender-specific occupations: for females, household labor, and for males, marketplace labor.

There were several advantages to the apprenticeship system. First, after completing the length of the contract, a person would earn a journeyman certificate, which enabled him or her to join a guild. Guild membership was important in that members received higher wages, and the guild looked out for the interests of their members. Second, the employer typically financed the work training with both room and board as well as the transference of skills. This took the
financial pressure off of families, particularly poor families. Third, the job training met certain standards both in length and content of agreed contract. Finally, job stability helped trainees plan for future employment (Elbaum, 1989).

Apprenticeships as outlined above have changed, particularly in the United States. The European apprenticeship programs did not enjoy the same success in America. According to Elbaum (1989),

The increasing ease of geographic mobility, the rising tide of western settlement, and perhaps the spread, after the Revolution, of an ideology of personal liberty all made enforcement of indenture commitments more difficult. (p. 346)

One factor that contributed to the decline of the apprenticeship is the issue of the runaway apprentice (Elbaum, 1989). Insufficient extradition laws put the brunt of finding runaways solely on the master himself. This procedure was highly expensive, and in the final analysis, was not worth the effort and money. With the traditional apprenticeship on the decline in America, it was time to reformulate the needs of the New World and readjust job training for the present time. Though there are apprenticeship programs available in modern-day America, most notably ones offered by the American Culinary Federation (ACF), these programs are not a form of indentured servitude but rather are a combination of both paid workplace experiences and classroom learning leading to a credential.

**Informal and Formal Education**

In American society, most if not all people have experienced learning in both informal and formal educational settings. To better understand the distinction of the two educational realms, let’s refer to general definitions put forth by Titmus (1989):

Informal Education: “The lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience, educative influences and resources in his/her environment-from family and neighbors, from work and play, from the market place, the library and mass media.”
Formal Education: “The structured, chronologically ordered education provided in primary and secondary schools, in universities and specialized courses in full-time technical and higher education. (p. 547)

In addition, a middle category, non-formal education, refers to the organized forms of education that do not lead to a degree or entry into a level of education (LaBelle, 1982). An example might be a person who takes a cooking class as a matter of self-interest, not intending to obtain a degree. These course offerings may be offered by a community center or be an adult education opportunity offered by a professional cooking school to the public.

Whereas attitudes, values, skills and knowledge are also part of formal education, formal education is designed to facilitate a predetermined set of competencies deemed important for a particular credential, in this case a certification, diploma or degree in culinary arts. Informal culinary education leads primarily to job placement based on skills learned on the job without a formal curriculum (school) to structure the learning environment; these learning experiences do not culminate in a certificate, diploma and/or degree.

In the culinary arts, an example of an informal learning environment might be learning cooking skills in a home or professional kitchen with a person teaching cooking skills that are applicable to the professional culinary kitchen. This type of learning may be extended to learning on the job in a restaurant owned by a family member and/or learning on the job at a restaurant of choice. In a formal learning environment, for example a culinary school, teaching is typically done by a certified, degreed and/ or industry-experienced instructor whose goal is to teach a particular curriculum that one must complete in order to earn a certificate, diploma or degree in culinary arts. Though an internship or externship is often required of students in a formal program, cooking as well as management skills are introduced in a formal classroom setting. The particular credential earned from a culinary school may be important in securing a job and rapid
promotion throughout the restaurant setting. Non-formal education courses tend to be attended by people interested in honing their own personal cooking skills, not by those aiming for a professional chef career.

At this point, it is helpful to introduce a word that often has bearing on one’s culinary experiences in both informal and formal education settings, the stagiaire and the stage. Stagiaire is a French word, meaning intern or trainee. A stage is a short stint done at a restaurant by a cook to both gain additional experience in the professional kitchen and also to enhance one’s resume. Stages in this country are typically done on a volunteer, non-paid basis. The typical duties of a stagiaire are to prepare the food for cooking. This might include cutting vegetables and meats, cleaning fish, etc. Rarely if ever does a stagiaire cook. It is also worth mentioning that not all restaurants are open to stagiaires. Some restaurants do not welcome them, while others not only welcome them but also may depend on them. Both formally and informally trained cooks may do a stage.

In the context of this research, informal chef education includes workplace training not associated with a requirement of a formal culinary education program. Workplace learning includes participation in a family-owned business, such as “growing up” in the restaurant business and/or other restaurant employment that has taught the process of cooking outside of a formal program. When formal chef education is referenced, it includes formal post-secondary education that leads to a credential, certificate, diploma and/or degree. Another approach to formal education would be an apprenticeship program, such as ones offered through the American Culinary Federation (ACF), which includes both workplace experiences as the bulk of the career training as well as a school environment (junior college, university) one day or more
per week. The ACF apprenticeship is a formal program leading to a credential. The following section will discuss the types of culinary programs that are available to up-and-coming chefs.

**Types of Culinary Programs**

There are basically six types of culinary programs available: diploma, certificate, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, and ACF apprenticeships. Typically diplomas, certificates, associate’s degree and bachelor’s degree programs are offered in career-driven culinary schools, whereas master’s degrees are offered in university settings. Associate’s and bachelor’s programs require an internship. The ACF apprenticeship requires full-time employment in a sponsoring restaurant in addition to coursework. Culinary programs can be public, private or for-profit (Hertzman and Stefanelli, 2008). Tables 3 and 4 describe the basic culinary programs that lead to certificates or degrees.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diploma/certificate programs</td>
<td>• Programs may be completed in less than one year; provide the essential skills for entry-level jobs in the restaurant industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Diploma programs may be offered at prestigious schools, thus giving name value to a diploma/certificate (but they are not degree programs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree programs</td>
<td>• This two-year degree track is the most popular for chefs, bakers and restaurant management students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Programs offer a well-rounded range of culinary skills; may position a student to go on two more years for a bachelor’s degree.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Associate’s degrees are available in culinary arts, patisserie and baking, baking and pastry, and/or food and beverage management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Skills taught include knife and equipment skills, characteristics of major cuisines, cooking techniques, food safety and sanitation, preparation and presentation and menu development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree programs</td>
<td>• Four-year programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Offer liberal arts courses as well as courses of concentration such as culinary arts, culinary arts management, baking and pastry arts and restaurant and hotel management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree programs</td>
<td>• Master’s degrees are offered through universities, concentrating on theory and academics, not just culinary skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Courses may include nutrition and food science, human resource management in hospitality settings, cost control in hospitality settings and quality improvement.</td>
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### Table 4: American Culinary Federation (ACF) Apprenticeships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apprenticeships</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• American Culinary Federation Apprenticeships provide hands-on skill development in the workplace.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The guidelines for this apprenticeship program are registered with the US Department of Labor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The student must be at least 17 years of age, a high school graduate, pay the required registration fees, join the ACF as a student culinarian, complete 2-3 years of full-time, on-the-job training under the supervision of a qualified chef and take a minimum of 12 specific courses through an approved institution, college or online program (some programs might offer an associate’s degree).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Upon completion of the program, the student is a certified cook. After graduation the certified cook may go on for other well-respected ACF certifications, including Certified Executive Chef (CEC), Certified Master Chef (CMC) and Certified Executive Pastry Chef (CEPC) to name a few. There are 14 food service designations.</td>
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</table>


The commitment to completing a culinary program and becoming a chef is an important one that hopefully leads to a rewarding career. Though cost, program length, program flexibility and location are important factors in deciding on a particular school, there are also additional things to consider. In a recent study, *Developing Quality Indicators for Associate Degree Culinary Arts Programs: A Survey of Educators and Industry Chefs*, Hertzman and Stefanelli (2008), professors from the College of Hotel Administration, The University of Nevada, found that educators and industry chefs identified the five most important quality indicators for an associate’s degree program in culinary arts. These indicators include sanitation of kitchen laboratories, industry experience of faculty, subject experience of faculty, required internship and placement rates (Hertzmann and Stefanelli, 2008). Further, according to Care Ferreira, department chair of the Hospitality Department at Horry-Georgetown Technical College, “a
Good school is one that combines academic excellence with technical skills in a real-world setting…” (Rhea, Sy and Goodman, 2003, p.1). Also worth noting is the ever-changing world of the culinary arts, in which trends and new products are part of the food culture landscape. Jan Bandula, certified master pastry chef, comments, “A good culinary arts school should offer instruction by industry professionals; small classes so students can receive enough attention; and an attitude toward learning that is progressive, yet respectful of tradition…” (Rhea, Sy and Goodman, 2003, p.1). An additional opinion by Angela Goodman, executive chef from the California School of Culinary Arts, touches on the need for developing skills to become a life-long learner. She adds, “A good school offers education and training opportunities that include current technology and equipment and emphasize the value of life-long learning” (Rhea, Sy and Goodman, 2003, p. 2). As with all vocational/career type programs, bridging the gap between school and the real world can be a challenge.

From my personal experience in the culinary world, both culinary and baking courses typically have a specific classroom format that includes both a lecture and a lab period. It is often up to the chef instructor as to how the lecture and lab times are structured. Most often lecture is a time of relaying information about ingredient functions, food science (culinology) and topics in the industry, such as marketing, plating and new ingredients. In addition, usually a chef will demonstrate the products that are to be made that day in lab. Sometimes and usually at the discretion of the chef instructor, if the topic of the day’s lesson warrants, the class may go on a field trip to a market, trade show, meat-packing plant or restaurant of interest. Guest speakers may be invited to speak in the lecture hall. These speakers may include but are not limited to organic farmers, restaurant owners, sommeliers, vintners (vine makers) and bakers.
As I have typically seen in culinary classes, during lab the chef instructor might demonstrate the products to be produced, but typically the students go into the commercial kitchens and begin preparing the day’s products. As students are prepping and cooking, the chef instructor is circulating throughout the kitchen to help out and answer any questions. At the end of the day, each student brings his or her dishes up to the chef for critique. Additionally, students are required to complete homework assignments and take written tests and practicals (cooking competencies) throughout the course as indicated by the syllabus.

Instructors who teach general education and business classes, as well as chef instructors, are knowledgeable about their particular subject areas; however, it cannot be assumed that they are trained educators. Some of the instructors have taken courses in education on how to teach, while others have not. To address the issue of professional development amongst culinary/baking instructors, many culinary schools provide institute days during which educators give presentations on teaching techniques. Chef instructors participate in several professional development days during the school year. Depending on the needs of the faculty, a professional development coordinator organizes speakers and activities that focus on the improvement of teaching skills. The American Culinary Federation also is a resource for chef instructors to take a course and become a Certified Hospitality Educator (CHE). This course of study centers on the principles of adult education and career development. Since the discussion is centered on post-secondary education, most students are 18 years of age and older. Educators need to understand the ways that adults learn in order to provide an appropriate environment conducive to learning.

Ways of Learning: Adult Education

Career development is an essential part of living in our American society. Becoming a chef, in this discussion, is situated in a post-secondary educational setting; in other words, it is
mostly an adult endeavor. The following section will discuss adult education and how it is accomplished in a post-secondary educational setting.

The formal term for adult education is andragogy, as opposed to pedagogy, which refers to child education (Kelly, 2006). For purposes of this discussion, andragogy will refer to students in post-secondary schools, typically 18 years and older. Historically speaking, in 1833, Alexander Kapp was the first to use the term andragogy. In 1927, Lindeman shifted from using the word andragogy to using the term adult education. In 1984, an American, Malcolm Knowles, embraced not only the term andragogy, but also developed it as a philosophical methodology (Rachal, 2002). It was Knowles’ assumptions of andragogy that have had a profound effect on the design of curriculum for adults. To better understand andragogy, it is helpful to compare it to the assumptions of pedagogy. Originally, Knowles started with four basic assumptions of andragogy in 1975. Jarvis summarizes and compares the four assumptions of both andragogy and pedagogy in Table 5.
Table 5: Comparison of Pedagogy and Andragogy (Assumptions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Andragogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The learner</td>
<td>- dependent</td>
<td>- moves towards independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- teacher directs what, when, how a subject is learned and test that it has been learned</td>
<td>- self-directing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- teacher encourages and nurtures this movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The learner’s</td>
<td>- of little worth, hence teaching methods are didactic</td>
<td>- rich resource for learning, hence teaching methods include discussion, problem-solving, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness to</td>
<td>- people learn what society expects them to, so that the curriculum is standardized</td>
<td>- people learn what they need to know, so that learning programs are organized around life application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to</td>
<td>- acquisition of subject matter</td>
<td>- learning experiences should be based around experiences, since people are performance centered in their learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning</td>
<td>- curriculum organized by subjects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


For Knowles, “education from above” is pedagogy, while “education of equals” is andragogy (Jarvis, 1985, p. 51). In subsequent years, Knowles added two more assumptions, motivation (1984) and the need to know (1989) to his original list of four (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005, pp. 64-69).

In sum, adults need to have a reason to learn. Adults are responsible for their own lives and thus tend to be self-directed. The experiences of adults play major roles in their education. Though experience can be positive, Knowles understands that it may also have negative effects. He states, “As we accumulate experience, we tend to develop mental habits, biases, and presuppositions that tend to cause us to close our minds to new ideas, fresh perceptions, and
alternative ways of thinking” (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005, p. 66). Adults need to examine their beliefs and expand their thinking. In addition, as people mature, they tend to find their identity in terms of the experiences they have had. Adults also are ready to learn what they need to know for their particular stage in life. This is particularly true in the sense of career training. Finally, adults are more life-centered and are more interested in problem solving in real-life situations (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005, p. 66).

**Transformational Learning**

When considering adult education, it is easy to think of it as simply skill acquisition to realize one’s career aspirations. Competence in short-term goals may be realized through instrumental learning, i.e., learning that lends itself to empirical evaluation (Mezirow, 1997, p. 8). This may include the immediate goals of learning a skill; in culinary terms that may mean becoming proficient with knife skills and a variety of cooking techniques that will be necessary in the workplace. While instrumental learning is part of adult education, according to Mezirow (1997), the central goal of adult education is “autonomous, responsible thinking” (p. 5). Mezirow’s theory of *transformational learning* helps develop autonomous, responsible thinking. “Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991, 1995, 1996) is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). A frame of reference is a “meaning perspective…a structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions” (Taylor, 2000, p. 16). “Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition and feelings. They set our line of action” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). Whereas adults have a tendency to either accept or reject ideas that don’t fit in with preconceived ideas,
transformational learners may “move towards a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminatory, self-reflective, and integrative of experience” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5).

According to Mezirow (1997), frames of reference are composed of two dimensions, habits of the mind and a point of view. He defines these two dimensions as:

Habits of mind are broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes. These codes may be cultural, social, educational, economic, political, or psychological. Habits of mind become articulated in a specific point of view—the constellation of belief, value judgment, attitude, and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation. (Mezirow, 1997, pp. 5-6)

To illustrate these dimensions, Mezirow uses the example of ethnocentrism, the tendency to think that others outside a group are inferior to that of your own. The point of view that results from this habit of mind is comprised of the feelings, beliefs, judgments and attitudes we have towards people outside our groups. These people may be, for example, homosexuals, welfare recipients, people of color or women (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6). Another example, related to my study, may be the commonsense notion of gender-specific roles, particularly the sexual division of labor. This may lead to a point of view that only women cook in the home and only men cook in the professional culinary kitchen.

Transformational theory presents four ways in which a person can transform their point of view: 1) elaborate on an existing point of view, 2) establish a new point of view, 3) transform our point of view based on experience, and 4) transform our frames of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions on which our interpretations, beliefs and habits of mind or points of view are based (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7, emphasis in the original). It is difficult to reflect critically as long as what we learn fits into our existing frames of reference.
Whereas children begin to learn how to think autonomously, adults build on this foundation learned in childhood. Mezirow (1997) states,

Adults are:
1. more aware and critical in assessing assumptions—both those of others and those governing one’s own beliefs, values, judgments, and feelings;
2. more aware of and better able to recognize frames of reference and paradigms (collective frames of reference) and to imagine alternatives; and
3. more responsible and effective at working with others to collectively assess reasons, pose and solve problems, and arrive at a tentative best judgment regarding contested beliefs. (p. 9)

Adult education then is “an organized effort to assist learners who are old enough to be held responsible for their acts to acquire or enhance their understandings, skills, and dispositions. Central to this process is helping learners to critically reflect on, appropriately validate, and effectively act on their (and others’) beliefs, interpretations, values, feelings, and ways of thinking” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 26). “Transformational learners, with social or organizational change as objectives, seek out others who share their insights to form cells of resistance to unexamined cultural norms in organizations, communities, families, and political life; they become active agents of cultural change” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 30). In this regard, transformational learners may influence the traditional notions surrounding gender in the professional culinary kitchen through the development of autonomous thinking leading to organizational change.

The area of culinary arts, particularly chef education, is one area in which the principles of transformational learning can be applied and realized. A well-rounded culinary education has potential for transformational learning to take place. Adults elect to attend a post-secondary culinary school. They come to their education as adults ready and motivated to learn what they need to know in real-life settings. Adult learners come to educational environments with a variety of experiences that allow educators to use a number of different methods to facilitate
learning. Since experiences of students vary, it is important to individualize instruction to meet each student’s specific needs. Finally, adults as transformational learners can be encouraged to reflect on present belief systems to expand their points of view related to behavior in the workplace as well as opening up their exposure and acceptance of world cuisine, those different from their own.

**Contextual Learning**

Chef education today is concerned with teaching skills that will be used in the foodservice workplace, including both academic and technical skills. In general, culinary arts education embraces a contextual teaching model in which academics and hands-on experiences are integrated into real-life settings, in this case, the restaurant or, in a broad sense, foodservice. According to the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, contextual teaching is defined as, ... teaching that enables learning in which students employ their academic understandings and abilities in a variety of in-and-out of school contexts to solve simulated or real-world problems both alone and with others. Using contextual teaching strategies, teachers help students make connections with their roles and responsibilities, as family members, citizens, students and workers. Contextual learning is characterized as problem based, self-regulated, occurring in a variety of contexts, including the community and work sites, involving teams of learning, groups and responsive to a host of diverse learners’ needs and interests. (Howey, 1998, pp. 19-20)

Contextual learning is that which includes both academics and hands-on experiences both inside and outside of school. Traditionally, educators have debated the importance of academic or vocational training. Currently, there is an effort to combine academics with vocational training. Dale Parnell, father of Tech Prep, a program of study that begins in high school and continues at a postsecondary institution, states, “The basis for good teaching is combining an information-rich subject matter content with an experience-rich context of application” (March 1996, p. 1). In the field of culinary arts, the majority of instruction is based on students carrying out cooking activities that demonstrate cooking technique; however, students also need to know
basic mathematical computations (adjust food quantities, order food to be cooked), how to write (menu descriptions, orders) and have the ability to read (orders, recipes). In addition, food culture and food history may be important depending on what type of establishment they are working in or planning to open.

A historical background of vocational educational programs helps one to understand the development of vocational training systems. The end of World War II brought with it the return of eight million soldiers back to the United States. In order to delay the soldiers’ reentry into the workplace, the US government provided educational opportunities through the Service Readjustment Act (GI Bill) and the National Education Defense Act. To take advantage of the educational benefits of the GI Bill, many of the returning soldiers attended college and universities to become teachers, engineers, doctors, lawyers and other professionals. College and university programs relied on “abstract/conceptual learning—learning, reading and absorbing abstract concepts” (Bond, 2004, p. 30). Later in the 1950s, in response to the “space race” and the Cold War, there was a need for more scientists, mathematicians and engineers (Bond, 2004, p. 30). Again, the instruction for these professions was based on abstract, conceptual understanding mainly taught through the lecture method. Not all students were able to achieve using the abstract/conceptual concepts presented in lecture form. In response to low achievement, high level of student frustration and growing problems of discipline, vocational programs were included in the educational benefit portion of the GI Bill. Environments that used “hands-on techniques” were made available for those who did not achieve at high levels of abstract learning. The difficulty here was that these courses of study tended to be “watered down” (Bond, 2004). Educators started to look at the combination of academics and hands-on experiences in real-life settings as a way to provide basic academic skills as well as vocational
training to those who were not suited for abstract conceptual educational programs. In the next section, two types of vocational programs will be discussed, the traditional apprenticeship and the cognitive apprenticeship.

**Vocational Programs: Traditional Apprenticeships and Cognitive Apprenticeships**

Vocational programs have long used apprenticeship as an instructional method that relates learning to the concrete, physical world (Bond, 2004). Typically, there are three steps to the traditional apprenticeship, including modeling, scaffolding and fading. Modeling usually involves some sort of skill demonstration, and in culinary, it would be a demonstration of a cooking technique by the master (chef). In this step, the apprentice can observe concepts in a visual form. Instead of the master using words to explain a skill, he/she demonstrates the skill for the student to reproduce. Scaffolding is the temporary supportive framework that the master gives to the apprentice. During this process, the master does most of the work and leads the apprentice to the next step of participation. The third and final step of traditional apprenticeship is fading, during which time the master withdraws a supportive framework and the apprentice assumes more and more responsibility of carrying out the task. Throughout the entire process, the master coaches the apprentice, continually providing guidance and clarification (Bond, 2004).

Another form of vocational education is the cognitive apprenticeship. Though traditional and cognitive apprenticeships are similar in that they both present “abstract thoughts in a manner that makes immediate sense to the learner,” there are also some basic differences between the two styles (Bond, 2004, p. 32). In order to make the transition from traditional apprenticeships to cognitive apprenticeships, Bond (2004) suggests:

… identify the competencies related to the tasks and make the abstract concepts visible; demonstrate the utility of the task to the learner so the student understands how the
concept or principle relates to work or other real-world situations; and enhance the transfer of learning through differentiated instruction by presenting a diversity of situations and discussing the common elements of the task.

Learning/teaching strategies are pivotal in utilizing cognitive apprenticeship methods and in integrating the knowledge domain with skill development. (p. 32)

Cognitive apprenticeships include modeling, scaffolding and fading in much the same way as traditional models, but in addition, they include articulation, reflection and exploration. Articulation is a process where the teacher discusses knowledge, reasoning and problem-solving with the student. Reflection is where the teacher encourages the student to compare his/her progress with that of the other students in class. Finally, exploration is a process whereby the teacher, according to the student’s progress, encourages the student to both think and solve new problems independently. Throughout this process, the teacher uses particular differentiated instruction to meet the individual needs of each student (Bond, 2004, p. 33). Cognitive apprenticeships are often seen as successful ways to teach workplace skills. In a culinary arts program, what is learned beyond cooking skills?

**Curriculum: Manifest and Hidden**

Schools as educational institutions are concerned with the teaching of skills and transfer of knowledge that will enable students to become productive members of democratic society. Much effort is put into programs that will help us work towards the goal of becoming contributing citizens. Though many of us remember the days of learning our math facts or reciting the capitals of the 50 states, we also remember learning things that were not part of the textbook, such as attitudes, beliefs and how to get along with others. Subject matter such as math and social studies are part of the manifest curriculum, while the attitudes we were exposed to may be part of the hidden or latent curriculum.
The manifest curriculum is part of the educational program, which “consists of such factors as guides, textbooks, bulletin boards, and lesson plans” (Banks, 2005, p. 23). It is through the manifest curriculum that skills are directly taught and educational competencies are met. In the culinary setting, learning specific vocabulary, knife skills, cooking techniques and sanitation standards are all part of the manifest curriculum. There is, however, another curriculum present in a classroom that is often considered even more important than the manifest curriculum, the hidden or latent curriculum, also known as “untaught lessons” (Jackson as cited in Banks, 2005 p. 24). This is that part of the curriculum that no one explicitly teaches but is implicitly taught and learned. According to Banks (2005),

> It is a powerful part of the school culture that communicates to students the school’s attitudes toward a range of issues and problems, including how the school views them as human beings and its attitudes toward males, females, exceptional students, and students from various religious, cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. (p. 24)

The hidden curriculum is evidenced in several different ways in formal school settings. For example, social biases, including gender bias, may be evidenced through invisibility, linguistic bias, stereotyping, fragmentation and/or cosmetic bias (Banks, 2005). Invisibility happens when the majority of reading and other educational media, such as lectures and films, hide the contributions women, for example, have made to the professional culinary field. Second, linguistic bias in language signifies implicit attitudes concerning a particular vocation. An example may be found in the use of the word *chef*, which usually conjures up a male image. If a chef is referred to and she is female, she will be referred to as a *female chef* implying that the normative chef is male unless otherwise noted. Third, stereotyping permeates the culture of the professional kitchen and is most likely perpetuated through the hidden curriculum in chef education programs. For example, if a female chef is carrying a 50 pound bag of flour and asks for help, a male chef may think that she is not strong enough to carry the bag, so he tries to take
it away and carry it instead of opening the door to the room so she can put it in its space on the shelf. If the chef carrying the bag were male, another male chef would most likely open the door instead of helping to carry the bag. Instructors also may rely on the use of stereotyping when giving out orders. Men may be asked to move tables, and women may be asked to wash dishes.

Fourth, fragmentation marginalizes women in professions by viewing their accomplishments as interesting side stories, not included in the mainstream of professional food service history. Finally, cosmetic bias occurs when women are pictured in culinary school advertisements and/or textbooks but in reality are not typically parts of the culinary work force. Though the hidden curriculum is not planned and is often unconscious, it may nevertheless play a role in the gendering of restaurant work. In sum, the work and workplace of professional culinary chefs may be influenced by what is learned as a result of both the manifest and hidden curricula. One area that may be influenced by both curricula is the gendered structure of the professional culinary world, specifically the restaurant.

**Gender Analysis of Restaurant Work**

Gender analysis of workplace environments has held the interest of both the general public as well as scholarly researchers for years. A common site for discussion of gender and work environments is that of occupations categorized as service work. According to Kutscher and Mark (1983), “The broadest definition of the service sector encompasses all industries, except those in the goods-producing sector—agriculture, mining, construction and manufacturing” (p. 21). The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), whose standards are “used by Federal statistical agencies in classifying business establishments for the purpose of collecting, analyzing, and publishing statistical data related to the U.S. business economy” (NAICS, 2011), lists eating and drinking establishments by type as service industries
(retail trade). Restaurant work falls under the category of service work and for purposes of this discussion; the restaurant will be the specific site of concentration for our analysis. Restaurants are generally divided into two parts, “the front of the house” (the dining room, service) and “the back of the house” (the kitchen, production). “The front of the house” is made up of waitstaff and “the back of the house” staff includes cooks and dishwashers. According to Cobble (1991):

Historically in the United States food service work has been highly sex segregated, with sharp craft-based divisions separating “appropriate” men and women’s jobs. Waitresses served in less lucrative restaurants such as the local diner or lunch counter where little or no advancement could be expected. Male waiters, on the other hand, were privy to the most prestigious fine dining restaurants where much higher earnings were prevalent and advancement as a waiter d’hotel, captain, or other higher status position could be expected. While a definite hierarchy existed between waiter/waitress work, there were even greater boundaries and more status inequality between the food and beverage servers and bartender/cooks. (p. 221 as cited in La Pointe, 1992, p. 379)

In addition to occupational differences, there are both informal and formal ways of maintaining sex segregation amongst male and female restaurant workers. Degrading or sexually exploitative uniforms for waitresses, unfairly stereotyped ideas about differences in skills, derogatory terms of address and sexual harassment are some of the important patterns that emerge daily (LaPointe, 1992).

The front of the house or service portion of the restaurant has been a location for researchers to study the dynamics of service and gender (Bird and Sokolofski, 2005; Iacobucci and Ostrom, 1993; Erickson, 2004; Hall, 1993; Tibbals, 2007; LaPointe, 1992). Iacobucci and Ostrom (1993) studied the two components of service: (a) the core service (task oriented) simply stated, the service being provided in the context of restaurants, the meal being served, and (b) the relationship service (social oriented), the friendliness which the meal is served. Their findings suggest that the gender of the service evaluator, the gender of the service provider and the notions of competence of both core and relationship components of service all may affect the
evaluation of service. Generally speaking, women seem to be more sensitive to relationship aspects of service and men to core aspects (Iacobucci and Ostrom, 1993).

In connection to the relationship component, researchers have looked at how waitstaff cope with the stresses of their service jobs. Waitstaff are accountable not only to their managers but also to their customers. Staff receives a minimum wage from their employer but makes large portions of their earnings from tips. Whereas waitstaff are helping to bring money in for the owners, they are also responsible for making tips that supplement their own low hourly wage. Though there is a suggested percent of the meal purchase price for tipping, it is only a guideline. Service workers develop coping strategies to do their jobs efficiently and also profitably. This balance may be affected by two strategies, “detachment” and “investment.” Erickson (2004) identifies “detachment and investment as distinct strategies servers use to cope with emotional labor and to protect their emotions and sense of dignity while at work” (p. 556). Detachment requires the server to substitute “real” feelings with appropriate behavior, practices and attitudes required by the job. This may be seen in a sense as care, but it is delivering the service that is requested in a professional, detached way. Investment, on the other hand, is when an employee “tends to be more passionate about their work and insist on the significance of the social interactions with customers” (Erickson, 2004, p. 560). Interestingly most waitresses in Erickson’s study were invested workers.

Though there has been research done on the sex segregation of the front of the house and also the sexual division of service staff versus kitchen staff, little attention has been paid specifically to the gendered relations in the back of the house or kitchen. This gap in the research needs to be explored to understand the gendering of the professional culinary kitchen. Historically, and in large part still today, waitresses are hired based on the assumptions that “a
true waitress is a woman with a strong mothering sense who gets genuine satisfaction sending you back out the door better off than when you arrived” (Elder and Rolens, 1985, p. 7; italics added). “Of the culinary crafts, bartending and food preparation positions were the most ‘masculinized’, most prestigious, and highest paid” (Cobble, 1991, p. 221, as cited in LaPointe, 1992, p. 379).

**Women in the Back of the House**

Today with the wide variety of restaurants available, it has become increasingly difficult to understand and compare restaurant jobs from establishment to establishment. Though the word chef may be used, it is not always clear what the job entails. In order to better understand job placement and the demographics of sex in the restaurant world, it is helpful to use statistics as set forth by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. In order to interpret these statistics, it is essential to consult the US Bureau of Labor Statistics’ annual publication, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-2009 Edition*, the latest edition available, to describe and help the public understand the definitions of particular occupations within the category of food service.

Job classifications and descriptions as set forth by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics describe the current job titles and positions available in the United States as opposed to historical facts of the restaurant industry as discussed in the earlier sections on culinary definitions and history. Statistics as presented by the Bureau revolve around the subcategories of food preparation and serving-related occupations by gender, as shown in Table 6.

Although we know the numbers of men and women employed in the front and back of the house, more nuanced research is more common in the front of the house (dining room); the gendered nature in the back of the house (kitchen) has not been studied.
Table 6: Food Service Occupations by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Back of the House: Kitchen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chef/head cooks</td>
<td>348,000</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st line supervisors of food prep/serving</td>
<td>597,000</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooks</td>
<td>2,004,000</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food preparation workers</td>
<td>748,000</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Front of the House: Dining Room</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartenders</td>
<td>404,000</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined food preparations workers/servers including fast food</td>
<td>341,000</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter attendants, cafeteria, food concession/coffee shop</td>
<td>264,000</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiters/waitresses</td>
<td>2,005,000</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food servers, non-restaurant</td>
<td>169,000</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining room/cafeteria bartender helper</td>
<td>320,000</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishwashers</td>
<td>263,000</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>79.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host/hostess restaurant/lounge coffee shop</td>
<td>258,000</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food servers, non-restaurant</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>-1*</td>
<td>-1*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data not shown where base is less than 50,000


Upon first glance, it may be difficult for the casual observer to distinguish between the descriptions of the jobs in Table 6 in relation to a hierarchical system. For those in the restaurant business, the hierarchy is all too familiar. The first category to be discussed in terms of the back of the kitchen work force is the food preparation workers, who:
… perform routine, repetitive tasks under the direction of chefs and cooks. These workers ready the ingredients for complex dishes by slicing and dicing vegetables, and composing salads and cold items. They weigh and measure ingredients, go after pots and pans, and stir and strain soups and sauces. Food preparation workers may cut and grind meats, poultry, and seafood in preparation for cooking. They also clean work areas, equipment, utensils, dishes, and silverware. (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010)

From the description, then, the food preparation worker typically prepares food for the chefs and cooks to use in the cooking and/or assembling of the dish. This category may be seen as the “grunt” work of the kitchen and often is an entry-level position for those who have little or no experience in restaurant work or are recent culinary degree graduates. Statistically in 2009, 58% women and 42% men held the position of food preparation worker.

Next in the job hierarchy is what is referred to as first-line supervisors/managers of food preparation and serving workers. These positions are mid to low-level management positions. In 2009, 56.9% of first-line supervisors were female while 43.1% were male. When discussing women’s upward movement in management, it should be noted that there is a wide discrepancy between mid/low level management and top management as is the case of executive/head chef positions in which males make up a significantly higher (79.3%) percentage of the category than females (20.7%).

Cooks are mainly responsible for measuring, mixing and cooking ingredients according to a variety of recipes. They also use a variety of equipment, including pots, pans, cutlery, ovens, broilers, grills, slicers, grinders and blenders. Depending on the size of a restaurant, there may be the utilization of the line cook. A line cook works at a specific station (line) and is responsible for a certain task, usually a cooking method including but not limited to roasting, grilling or vegetable cookery (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Cooks cook ingredients ahead of time or, in some cases, make them to order. In 2009, 58.5% of cooks were male while 41.5% were female.
Finally, the last category to be mentioned makes up the upper echelon of the back of the house (food), executive chefs and head cooks. Within this category, there is considerable latitude depending on the size of the establishment. Clearly being the executive chef of a large chain hotel is very different than being an executive chef in a small establishment, though both are still called executive chefs. Statistically in 2009, the Bureau reports that 79.3% were males and 20.7% were female.

After considering the list of back of the house restaurant occupations, it is certainly interesting how the gender divide widens as it reaches the upper level of executive/head chefs. At a usual entry-level position, that of food preparation worker, the sex balance is 58.0% female and 42% male. The next level, that of first-position supervisor/manager, shows 56.9% females as opposed to 43.1% males in the same position. Though this would appear to be encouraging, as we go farther up the hierarchal ladder, the trend seems to slow down. Cooks make up a significant portion of the jobs found in the industry, over a million and a quarter. The sex breakdown is 41.5% female to 58.5% male. By the time we get to the top level, executive chef/head cook, the gap widens farther to 20.7% female to 79.3% males. These gendered patterns are not unlike those in other occupational areas. I turn to research in the corporate world, specifically the concept of the glass ceiling, to better understand this dynamic.

**Women in Management**

There is limited research available on women in middle and upper management (executive chefs, possibly sous chefs) in the food service industry. Studies done in the corporate world will be drawn upon to help explain issues facing women in the area of upper management. Though this literature doesn’t directly focus on food service, it does focus on women and work and makes a contribution to the study of organizational hierarchy and career promotion.
Throughout history, women have been faced with many circumstances that seem to reflect a patriarchal bent and sometimes even a double standard. This is certainly evident in the area of employment outside of the home. Catalyst, an organization dedicated to the advancement of women, found in a study of Fortune 500 companies that equal numbers of women and men aspire to top corporate positions regardless of whether they have children under 18 at home. Women use some of the same strategies for business success, as do their male counterparts. Work quality issues affect men the same as women, women surpass men in higher education, and women hold more than half of all management (majority middle management) and professional positions. Yet women struggle more than men to secure promotion to the upper echelon of management (Catalyst, 2005).

The term “glass ceiling” was first introduced in a 1986 article written by Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986) for the Wall Street Journal entitled, “The Corporate Woman (A Special Report): Cover—The Glass Ceiling: Why Women Can’t Seem to Break The Invisible Barrier That Blocks Them From the Top Jobs.” The article addresses how women advance in their careers and then seem to hit an invisible barrier, which stands in the way of their access to top positions in management. This invisible barrier is termed the glass ceiling. According to the US Department of Labor (1991), the definition of the glass ceiling is:

…those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management level positions. (Report on the Glass Ceiling Initiative)

In 1991, motivated by the survival of United States business success in an emerging global economy, under Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991, a 21-member, bipartisan Glass Ceiling Commission was formed. The mission of the Glass Ceiling Commission reads as follows:
A Glass Ceiling Commission was established to conduct a study and prepare recommendations concerning the following:

1. Eliminating artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities; and
2. Increasing the opportunities and development experiences of women and minorities to foster advancement of women and minorities in management and decision making positions in business (Public Law 102-166-Nov. 21, 1991 Civil Rights Act of 1991-Sec.203, Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995)

As a result of four years of research, the Commission identified three types of barriers to the advancement of qualified women and minorities: societal, governmental and business.

Societal barriers address a “supply barrier to educational opportunities and attainment” (Redwood, 1995, p. 2). Generally, though the number of women earning degrees has steadily increased, these degrees don’t necessarily lead to executive positions (Catalyst, 2004).

Governmental barriers refer to progress made in offering opportunities to diverse groups and also both monitoring and enforcing those laws and policies that are already in place (Redwood, 1995, p. 2). Finally, there are business barriers, including recruitment practices, corporate cultures that are not welcoming to diverse groups, and according to Redwood (1995), “pipeline barriers that restrict career growth because of poor training, inadequate mentoring, biased rating and testing systems, few or no internal communication networks, and limited rotational job assignments leading to the executive suite” (p. 2). Based on their findings, the Commission identified seven areas of systemic business practices to help dismantle the glass ceiling: leadership and career development, rotation/nontraditional employment, mentoring, accountability programs, succession planning, workforce diversity initiative and family friendly programs. It is important to point out that most of the glass ceiling research pertains to large organizations that hire multiple individuals in the same kinds of positions. In the restaurant industry, whereas some establishments are owned by large corporations such as MacDonald’s and Darden who hire multiple individuals under the same job descriptions, small, independently owned restaurants
may hire only one executive chef and sous chef, thus making it difficult to compare positions within an establishment.

In relation to the glass ceiling and its effects, it is important to differentiate it from other structures of discrimination. In 1999, after Cara Carleton Fiorina became the CEO of Hewlett-Packard, the first female chief executive officer of a Fortune 500 company, there was a perception that the glass ceiling no longer existed. At the same time, Catalyst, an independent research group, maintained that the glass ceiling was alive and well, especially for women of color (Cotter et al., 2001, p. 655). To investigate these two perspectives on the presence of the glass ceiling in corporate America, Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia and Vanneman (2001) contribute to the discussion of the glass ceiling by defining four criteria that help distinguish glass-ceiling inequities from other forms of discrimination. Using random effects models and data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, they examined gender and race inequalities at the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles of white male earning (p. 655). Though they understand the limits of their guidelines (such as the inability to control for all job-relevant characteristics, perceptions of gender inequality and males and females entering and exiting workplaces in unequal proportions), Cotter et al. (2001) provide a framework to assist in better understanding the effects of the glass ceiling. Their criteria include the following:

- inequality representing a gender or racial difference that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee,
- inequality that is greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels of an outcome,
- inequality in advancement into higher levels, not only the proportions of each gender or race currently at those higher levels, and/or
- inequality that increases over the course of a career (Cotter et al., 2001).
To understand the dynamics of the glass ceiling, it is helpful to identify the so-called “invisible barriers” that make up the glass ceiling. These barriers include gender stereotypes, leadership, family-work conflict, mentoring and networking and hiring practices/wage disparity.

**Gender Stereotypes**

Gender stereotyping and discrimination are significant barriers experienced by women in the workplace. Gender stereotypes are a set of widely held beliefs about characteristics deemed appropriate for males and females in a particular culture. These characteristics include physical appearance, attitudes, interests, psychological traits, social relations and occupations. Stereotypes may be divided into two broad groups: descriptive and prescriptive. A descriptive stereotype labels the personality characteristics a person does possess, whereas prescriptive stereotypes are those words that describe the personality characteristics males and females should possess (Gaur, 2006, p.13). In other words, descriptive stereotypes label “what is,” and prescriptive stereotypes point out what “should be.” A descriptive example would be “she is a strong, authoritative woman”; a prescriptive example would be “she should tone down her personality and be more lady-like when dealing with her employees.” These kinds of stereotypical beliefs, both descriptive and prescriptive, may limit women in the workplace particularly when they are attempting to navigate a typically male-dominated environment.

Gender stereotypes often leave women in a double bind; their behavior is perceived to be either too feminine or too masculine. If you act feminine, you may be perceived as not being as effective as a man, and if you act masculine, you are not fulfilling the gender role expectation standards of being feminine—either way, you lose (Warren, 2009, p. 9). Gender stereotyping also affects women in leadership roles, family-work conflict, mentoring/networking and hiring practices and wage disparity.
Leadership

Perceived differences in leadership style between men and women have been the subject of much of the research concerning gender and organizational culture. According to Aguinis and Adams (1998), “The main factor contributing to women’s slow organizational advancement is that female managers seem to be perceived and evaluated as being less effective and competent than male managers” (p. 415). Men and women are not only seen to have different leadership styles but also men consider females to be less skilled in problem solving. Both men and women believe that women are perceived as more nurturing while men are perceived as “influencing upward and delegating” (Nugent, as cited in Laff, 2007, p. 35). These “essential” characteristics may be further understood in their relationship to leadership style.

There are two dominant styles of leadership relevant to the discussion of gender stereotypes: transformational and transactional. Transformational leaders seek to:

… motivate subordinates to transcend their own self-interest and then develop subordinates to achieve these standards. Charisma, inspirational motivation, optimism, excitement about the mission and its attainability, intellectual stimulation, encouragement to question basic assumptions, new perspectives and individualized consideration, development and mentoring of followers and attention to specific needs are all part of the transformational process. Transactional leaders, on the other hand, seek to clarify responsibilities and how they are carried out by subordinates. (Powell, Butterfield and Bartol, 2008, p. 3)

Women are most closely associated with a less direct style, namely transformational leadership, while their male counterparts are connected with a more aggressive, direct style, that of transactional leadership (Aguinis and Adams, 1998, pp. 425-426). Research shows that 80 percent of female executives use a participative (transformational) style when the middle manager was also a female, but only 50 percent of female leaders used the transformational approach when the middle manager was a male, which was close to the proportion observed for the male-led teams (Langford, Welch and Welch, 1998, pp.7-8). Upon further analysis, this
finding may suggest that after taking a specific situation into account, in this case the gender of the middle manager, both men and women adjust their leadership styles to fit the situation rather than to uphold stereotypical notions of behavior. The business world embraces a masculine style of communication, which includes being assertive, independent and individualistic. Women’s communication patterns involve team building, being sensitive to others’ needs and being people oriented (Taylor and Waggoner, 2008, p. 2). These perceptions may hinder women from climbing the corporate ladder. Leadership stereotypes are one impediment to career development for women; family-work conflict poses yet another barrier to successful career advancement.

**Family-Work Conflict**

Many times, women are perceived to be less productive on the job because of family responsibility. Since family responsibility is viewed as being more intense than leisure time activity engaged in by women who have no family obligations, it is assumed that women with families are not as able to put forth the needed work effort for promotion. A research study conducted by Lobel (1992) found that neither the number of school-age children nor the presence of preschoolers in a home significantly affected work effort. Instead, high levels of career importance were found to be associated with high levels of work effort.

Women are still expected to carry out the majority of household duties in the home. Traditionally, men have worked at jobs outside of their homes, while women stayed at home and ran the household. As the economy shifted in the eighties, women found themselves working both inside and outside of the home; they now had two jobs instead of one. Potuchek (1997) refers to this as the “superwoman” model (Gordon and Whelan-Barry, 2004, p. 3), and Hochschild (2003) calls it a “second shift”. In the last two decades, women have asked for more support from the male heads of household. In a research study done by Gordon and Whelan-
Berry (2004), three groups of women, (1) early-life women (younger than 35 years); (2) midlife women (35-50 years old); and (3) late-life women (older than 50), were given a survey asking questions about spousal/partner support in the domestic realm. The older the woman, the more financial support was given to them by their spouse/partner. Help with domestic chores was low across all age groups. In terms of career-supporting roles, the early-life and late-life groups viewed their male partners as mentors more than the midlife group did. Whereas male spouses of all groups acted as sounding boards, only spouses/partners of the young group had a calming effect on their female spouse/partners. For all groups, support from male spouses/partners was associated with life satisfaction (Gordon and Whelan-Barry, 2004).

In today’s economic climate, if two parents are working, it would seem logical to assume the domestic chore assignment might be restructured; this restructuring has appeared to change, with men taking on more responsibility in the home, yet women remain largely in charge of domestic tasks. In her groundbreaking book, The Second Shift, Hochschild (2003) tackles the subject of two-income families and the division of domestic work, the majority of which is done by women, in what she terms a “second shift”. The second shift is done by the woman in the house in addition to her paid job outside of the home; it includes time spent doing the majority of domestic chores, including housekeeping and childcare. Hochschild estimates that women work the equivalent of one month more than their husbands per year between their occupational job and their jobs at home. How couples manage their family-work load is largely dependent on their “gender ideology,” expectations of what gender is as well as their gender strategy, “a plan of action through which a person tries to solve problems at hand, given the cultural notions of gender at play” (Hochschild, 2003, p. 15).
Related to domestic responsibility is the notion that many women aspiring for top positions feel that they are unfairly asked to choose between a personal life and a career. This is particularly evident in restaurant work. The hours are exceedingly long and the work is demanding. “It would be difficult to be a conventional person and have this type of lifestyle,” says Mindy Segal, owner of Hot Chocolate, a restaurant bakery in Chicago’s Bucktown neighborhood. Segal, 38, admits that she has no social life. “My life is the restaurant,” says Segal (Reed, 2006, p. 3). Sarah Stegner, former executive chef of the four-star Ritz-Carlton dining room, left her post to have a child. Currently she is co-owner of Prairie Grass Café in Northbrook, Illinois. She still works 12 hours a day but takes two full days off to tend to her family. Other modifications to domestic responsibility have aided women in maintaining a family and restaurant life simultaneously. Pam Mazzola, 47, co-owner of Boulevard in San Francisco, hired a full-time nanny in addition to enlisting the help of a very understanding husband (Reed, 2006). Patricia Bartholomew states that some women leave the culinary arts field when they have a family or they find a related field such as teaching, as she herself did (Bartholomew, as cited in Panitz, 2002).

Clearly, women have made concessions when deciding how to deal with both domestic and work responsibilities. Research findings support the notion that women, more than men, are proactive when trying to blend family and work. Further, the person involved in household labor shows evidence of more job attribute preference over time (Konrad, 2003). In addition to growing families and younger children, increases in husband’s educational attainment, work hours and employment as a professional or manager also contributed to women’s work restrictions, whereas men’s job trade-offs were largely unrelated to familial characteristics (Maume, 2006).
**Mentoring and Networking**

Mentoring has held a prominent position in discussions of the glass ceiling. It has been perceived that mentoring relationships can help facilitate career development and attainment (Tolson, 1998; Kram, 1983; Blue, 2002; Ragins and Cotton, 1993). To Lin (2001), “Both mentors and elite contacts can be seen as social capital, defined as investment in social relations with expected returns” (as cited in Pagli and Moore, 2004, pp. 459-460). Putnam (2000) further elaborates that in mentoring relationships (social capital), “connections among individuals, their social networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them,” encompass the mentoring relationship (p.19). Hansman (2003) summarizes a mentor as one who guides and assists mentees and protégés (p. 14). To further clarify what a mentor is, it is helpful to look at both the types of mentorships that exist and also how mentorships are used throughout the course of one’s career, particularly when there are gendered processes and/or outcomes.

There are two types of mentoring: formal and informal. Formal mentoring programs are those set up by companies for their junior employees, while informal mentorships are those that are set up outside of the formal organizational structure (Palgi and Moore, 2009, p. 460). Research has shown that mentor relations have affected corporate culture in several ways, including more promotions (Dreher and Ash, 1990; Scandura, 1992), higher incomes (Chao et al., 1992; Dreher and Cox, 1996; Whitely et al., 1991), reduced turnover intentions (Viator and Scandura, 1991), greater career satisfaction and easier socialization (Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1993; Blake-Beard, 2001). Drawing from this research, companies have set up formal mentoring programs in order to foster a positive and optimally productive work environment for their employees. These programs are sanctioned by an organization, are short in duration, are contracted for a specific amount of time, have a predetermined frequency and location and are
goal driven. Formal mentors are often more motivated to be good organizational citizens rather than developmental supporters of a protégé, and they tend to demonstrate less favoritism (Blake-Beard, 2001, p. 3).

As formal mentorships are initiated by an organizational structure, informal mentoring relationships are initiated when two people are attracted to one another based on the foundation of perceived similarity (Byrne, 1971; Tsui and O’Reilly, 1989). Informal mentorships typically last longer than formal mentorships, usually between three to six years, during which meetings occur when desired, and the goals of informal relationships evolve over time (Blake-Beard, 2001). While studying mentorship, Kram has identified four phases of the informal mentoring relationship: initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition. During the initiation phase, the relationship gets started. The initial 6-12 months are meaningful for both the mentor and protégé. The turning points of the relationship are that expectations are met, with the senior manager providing coaching, challenging work and visibility and the junior manager providing technical assistance, respect and desire to be coached. There are increased opportunities for interaction around work tasks. During the cultivation phase, the psychosocial connection expands. Both individuals continue to benefit from the relationship. Opportunities for more meaningful and more frequent interaction increase, emotional bonds deepen and intimacy increases. The third phase, separation, marks a significant change in the relationship, usually as a result of organizational change and/or psychological change to one or both individuals. At this stage, the junior manager wants to work more autonomously, and the senior manager is preparing for the redefinition stage and is unable to mentor as before. Opportunities for interaction are impacted by job rotations and/or promotions, and sometimes the lack of opportunity disrupts positive interaction. The final phase, redefinition, occurs when the relationship either changes and
becomes a friendship or ends altogether. At this point, any tensions from the previous phase recede and are replaced with gratitude and appreciation. At this point, peer status is achieved (Kram, 1983, pp. 609-622).

Women have particular difficulty finding informal mentors. Ragins and Cotton (1993) assert there are not enough women in upper management to fill mentoring positions while the women occupying lower management positions may be overwhelmed with requests from women at low levels of management. Women facing this situation may turn to males for mentorship. According to Ragins and Cotton, cross-gender mentorships are difficult and pose several barriers to women, including sexual issues, sex-role expectations and blocked opportunities. Approaching a member of the opposite sex may be misconstrued as a sexual advance. Working with a same-sex protégé may eliminate potential problems of spousal jealousy and resentful coworkers. Sex role expectations also might affect the mentorship relationship in that traditional sex-role expectations encourage men to be more aggressive and women to be more passive. It may be difficult for both men and women to act outside of these stereotypical expectations. Finally, compared to their male counterparts, women have limited access to fewer opportunities, both formal and informal, to develop mentoring relationships. Women don’t have access to the same settings that men do, such as clubs for men and sports activities, venues where typical mentorships are cultivated (Ragins and Cotton, 1993, p. 2).

The study of cross-gender mentorships raises another question, particularly one that concentrates on gender effects in mentoring relationships. In a large-scale study by Burke and McKeen (1996), gender effects in mentoring relationships were explored. Several components of mentorship were in agreement with current research; most mentors were older males who were upper managers, met their women protégés early in the women’s careers and had a mentoring
relation that spanned approximately five years. Female mentors were younger and held low management positions that yielded lower salaries. Though women who had male or female mentors report similar experiences, there are two notable findings that shed light on mentoring for women. First, women mentors tend to leave organizations early, thus impacting mentorship relationships. Second, most female mentors are low-level managers who lack resources and influences that may limit their usefulness to their protégés (Burke and McKeen, 1996).

Closely related to the topic of mentoring is that of networking. Networking, according to Dr. Ike Gibson, regional consultant for the Florida Department of Education in Tallahassee, Florida, “…is a systematic way of integrating systems of communication for both personal and professional enhancement” (as cited in Register, 1999, p. 42). Through networking, people gain access to information from a variety of sources. While Eddleston, Balderidge and Veiga (2004) argue that women appear to have limited opportunities for networking created through mentoring, O’Leary and Ickovics (1992) state, “networking is essential for success in any professional career” (as cited in Linehan, 2001, p. 2). A study of 50 senior female managers from Fortune 500 companies and The Marketing Guide in Ireland was conducted to gain insight into networking for men and women. Men were privy to an “old boys network” that consistently excluded women. This exclusion helped support stereotypes and male-based practices. Men formed both formal and informal networks connected with both work and socializing groups where women were not necessarily welcome. The subjects of the study believed that networking is especially important for those women who had no mentors who supported them during their training (2001). In addition, Ledvinka and Scarpello claim that while women may be as capable of networking, the networks may not be as effective because they are not well integrated into organizations (as cited in Linehan, 2001). Four interviewees recommended that networks be
open to both men and women and that single-sex networks are not helpful to either side (Linehan, 2001).

As pointed out earlier, despite reported higher rates of education and a stronger presence in the workplace, women still have a difficult time navigating organizational structures. The “Think-Manager-Think-Male” perspective makes it difficult for women to fit into the management systems of companies (Warren, 2009, p. 9). It has been suggested that one way to navigate a male-dominated workplace is for a woman to become “one of the boys.” This strategy, according to Merrick (2002), is “harder than it looks,” and often simple role-reversal practices may bring about other difficulties, such as alienation and hostility (p. 94). This navigation of the masculine/feminine gender bind has many women trapped in lower management positions and paid lower wages than their male counterparts, despite the legal protections that are in place. Whereas some women are successful in business and advance to the top of organizations, many do not. This suggests that perhaps the traditional gender binaries can create a no-win situation for women: being too feminine is limiting in the business world, while being one of the boys is seen as un-ladylike and can be threatening to men.

In the professional culinary world, both mentoring and networking are important to workplace success. It is especially challenging for women to enter into mentorship relationships with other women or men, and they are also let out of male oriented networks. In 1993, a group of eight nationally known women chefs and restaurateurs started a professional culinary organization fittingly called Women Chefs and Restaurateurs (WCR). The mission of the organization is “to promote and enhance the education, advancement and connection of women in the culinary industry” (WCR, 2010). According to their website, most women join the organization to increase networking opportunities and career advancement and to enhance their
skills. The organization offers networking, professional and support services to women in the restaurant industry (WCR, 2010). In 2002, the group started a mentorship program that facilitates both face-to-face meetings and emailing mentorship opportunities (WCR, n.d.). They also hold networking events that women can attend to connect with other women in the restaurant industry.

**Hiring Practices and Wages**

Hiring practices and wages have also been a concern for women in the workplace. Gender stereotyping may influence hiring practices, particularly discrimination. Discrimination in hiring includes psychological factors such as stereotypes, lack of fit and social identity improvement (Chien and Kleiner, 1999, p. 2). Many of the problems surrounding stereotypes are that they are inaccurate overgeneralizations that don’t take the qualities of an individual into consideration. Stereotypes such as men are strong and active while women are weak and passive can weigh inaccurately on who is hired and who is passed over. Since the business world is viewed as a masculine domain, women may be at a disadvantage. Stereotypical misconceptions concerning gender may contribute to a sense of what Heilman (as cited in Chien and Kleiner, 1999), calls “lack of fit.” Chien and Kleiner (1999) explain the “lack of fit” model as follows:

The lack of fit model explains that expectations about an individual’s success at a particular job are critical in the hiring processes because these expectations are very likely to influence the personnel evaluations and decisions. These expectations are determined by the fit between the perception of the individual’s attributes and the perceptions of the job’s requirements, and whether the personnel decisions are biased depends on how the term fit is defined. If the fit is seen as good, then success will be expected. However, if the fit is seen as poor, then there will be a cognitive tendency to perpetuate and confirm the expectations that are formed in the first place. Once expectations for an individual are formed, they bias subsequent perceptions and judgments. (p. 3.)

The expectations of an individual’s success at a particular job may be influenced by gender stereotypes and may not be related to what the job actually requires. This model is useful
in explaining that if women are not perceived as being a good fit in a typically male-dominated arena, then they may not be hired. Finally, the recruiters’ gender seems to also bear on the hiring process. Research has found that both female and male recruiters evaluate male applicants more favorably than female applicants. An explanation for this may be that females lower in status attach themselves to applicants of higher status, namely males (Chien and Kleiner, 1999). Chefs may use recruiters to find jobs in the professional culinary world.

Contributing to the discussion of hiring practices may be that of referral hiring. Referral hiring, according to Tassier (2008), is:

Any means by which an employee learns of a job through a social contact (which may include familial contacts), or a firm learns of a potential applicant through an employee who is a social contact of the potential applicant. Thus, I consider referral hiring to be any means of transferring job information that occurs at least in part through social contacts of social networks. (p. 1)

It is estimated that up to two-thirds of people procure jobs through a referral system of hiring (Granovetter, 1995; Ioannides and Datcher Loury, 2004; Bewley, 1999, as cited in Tassier, 2008). Referral hiring is used in the professional culinary world and is realized through the use of networking. For example, Aramark, a company that provides services such as facilities management, uniform/work apparel, food service/refreshments, lodging/guest services, clinical technology services and clean room services has instituted an employee referral option. Awards range from $500-$5000 per referral based on the job. Awards are given after a new hire has reached 60 days of service on the job if the referrer is still an Aramark employee (Aramark, Employee Referral Programs, n.d.-a, p. 1).

Preferences for using referral hiring include that the employer has more certainty in the quality of a new hire, the formal hiring process may be cheaper and employees may gain an insider view of the company through the referrer and thus may be a better fit for the company.
(Tassier, 2008, p. 8). Though referral hiring is not the only cause of gendered hiring practices, it may contribute to workplace segregation. If social networks are segregated and referral hiring is based on social networks, referral hiring may be one way to reproduce segregation in the workplace. According to Tassier (2008), a segregated workplace that hires by referral may limit the jobs available to groups with low rates of employment in given industries or firms.

Stereotypes may be an underlying factor in the discussion of pay disparity amongst men and women. For some time, the commonsense notion of “equal pay for equal work” has seemed reasonable and in fact is supported by federal law, specifically the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Equal Pay Act prohibits employers and unions from paying employees based on their sex. It further states that “equal pay” should be implemented based on jobs requiring “equal skill,” effort and responsibility performed under similar working conditions (Legal Information Institute, Federal Statute 29 USC 206:2, as cited in Hessaramiri and Kleiner, 2001, p. 2). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin (Chien and Kleiner, 1999). There are several factors that contribute to pay disparity, including hours worked, women/family conflict, experience/tenure (men spend 1.6 years out of the workplace as opposed to women’s 14.7 out of the workforce during their working years), discrimination, expected productivity, job performance evaluation and gender-specific bargaining techniques (Sahm, as cited in Hessaramiri and Kleiner, 2001). Again, women are not content with less, however, it is expected that women will be satisfied with less. Both men and women make lower salary offers to women because they think women expect less. The lower negotiated salaries for women may be based on the belief that they might not be as qualified as men and don’t justify a higher salary (Solnick, 2001, pp. 189-200).
Pay disparity is seen in the professional culinary world. According to the StarChefs\textsuperscript{3} survey of 1000 chefs (78\% of respondents were men), across the USA there is still a pay disparity among chefs at the upper levels of the industry. The majority occupying the upper levels of the culinary world are white men. The results from the 2008 survey are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Executive and Sous Chef Salaries by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>$67,639</td>
<td>$52,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Chef</td>
<td>$76,305</td>
<td>$62,379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sous Chef</td>
<td>$44,160</td>
<td>$44,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Sous chef wages are close, with women having a slight edge; however, 87\% of the respondents were men. Male executive chefs (90\% of respondents) make $15,000 more than female chefs (StarChefs, 2008).

In conclusion, there are a variety of factors that work against gender equality. Women in the workplace are affected by gender stereotyping, perceived differences in leadership styles from those of men, family and work, lack of mentoring and networking opportunities, hiring practices that may exclude them from employment and pay parity. As we consider women’s absence in the professional culinary world, it is interesting that nothing is mentioned about the skill of cooking. There has been no discussion about whether or not women are skillful cooks, but rather if they can handle the male-dominated environment of the professional kitchen. The

\textsuperscript{3} StarChefs is a magazine written for culinary insiders that includes a shop, job finders, culinary school listing, event community, features, expert forums, news, chef biographies, recipes and rising stars.
notion of the glass ceiling may help us to understand how invisible barriers based on gender stereotypes and not lack of professional culinary skills have contributed to women’s place in the professional culinary world.

Through a discussion of what we know about the culinary world, chef education, restaurant work and the notion of the glass ceiling, it is clear that kitchens, whether they are domestic or professional, are gendered spaces. As is evidenced by the literature, gender stereotyping and structures have had tremendous impact on the restaurant world. Using statistics, we can understand only so much about the restaurant world; the data only contributes to part of the landscape. A significant part of the puzzle is how women chefs themselves make sense of their experiences in both the educational setting as well as the professional culinary workplace. This research may provide useful information in helping us move forward to both understand our gendered existence and how we can respond in particular ways to enact gender-equitable change. Important to this discussion is how a feminist post-structural theoretical framework will allow us not only to look at what gender categories we function within but also to question the male/female binary itself.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

When doing research, methodology and methods help facilitate a relationship between the researcher and participant(s) that leads to emergent data that are aimed at answering particular research questions posed by the researcher. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical perspective of feminist post-structuralism as a framework for analysis, history of feminism, methodology of life history approach (Personal Narratives Group, 1989), methods for recruitment, data collection, data analysis and ethical concerns of the research.

Theoretical Perspective: Feminist Post-Structuralism

What is feminism and how has it surfaced historically in America? McCann and Kim’s (2003) definition of feminism includes two dimensions: women’s subjugation to men and “political activism by women on behalf of women” (p. 1). The main tenet of feminism is recognition of women’s subordination to men. McCann and Kim (2003) speak to this subordination: “The biological fact that women have the potential to give birth has grounded many scientific, spiritual, political, and social explanations for their differential right, roles, and obligations” (p. 12). Oakley ascertains that gender is socially constructed and biological sexual differences are minimal (as cited in McCann and Kim, 2003, p. 14). Nevertheless, gender-specific characteristics have evolved into commonsense belief systems and have essentialized both males and females. Male characteristics are the standard to which women are compared, thus both constructing and maintaining gender binaries (De Beauvior, 1949). Much of feminist theory and activism has focused on deconstructing the binaries. In order to understand feminism, particularly as it relates to feminist post-structuralism, it is useful to discuss the history of
feminism. Therefore, I will first provide a broad overview of feminism, followed by the analytical framework used in this study: Feminist Post-Structuralism.

**Feminism: Historical Perspective**

Typically the women’s movement is divided into “waves.” The term “wave” is used signifying the cultivation of new ideas while simultaneously rooting them in older, more established ground (Kinser, 2004, p. 129). The first full-scale women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 is often seen as the beginning of the American feminist movement (Kinser, 2004, p. 127; St. Pierre, 1999). The main issues of the first wave included temperance, civil rights and social reform (Tobias, 1997, p. 14). Susan B. Anthony worked to criminalize the sale of alcohol using Biblical principles (Kinser, 2004; Tobias, 1997). Women were viewed as the moral authorities in their homes; hence, they took a stand organizing the Temperance Movement to keep alcohol and its negative effects out of the home. Anti-slavery and equal rights campaigns were highlights of the women’s rights agenda. Social reform also was on the rise. Florence Nightingale founded nursing programs, Jane Addams founded the Settlement House and the social work movement, and Florence Kelly organized labor on behalf of women (Tobias, 1997, p. 14). Organizations such as the League of Women Voters, The National Consumers’ League and the Women’s Trade Union all were influential in working towards equal rights for people, particularly women.

Feminism tackles issues related to gender and inequality, often framed around the subject of difference, specifically the differences between the biological sexes and the socially constructed notions of gender. During the first wave, difference was a major issue when discussing human rights, particularly women’s rights. Kate Millet (1969) summarized three dimensions on which gender was traditionally differentiated: temperament, role and status.
According to traditional views, women are emotional, men are rational, patriarchy explains differences as natural and essential and what men do gives them more social status than women (Millet, 1969). The first-wave feminists embraced these differences as essential, meaning they were natural, a characteristic of being male or female, but demanded equality in procuring and executing their right to vote. The winning of voting rights marked the end of the first wave of feminism.

The second wave of feminism (1960s-1980s) was centered squarely on the rights of women. According to Tobias (1997), at least three different groups acknowledged the unequal status of women: older professional women who made it in a man’s world but were not leaders of women, housewives who were influenced by the groundbreaking book by Betty Friedan (1963), *The Feminine Mystique*, and leftist college students of the 1960s who named the feminist movement, *The Woman’s Liberation Movement* (pp. 74, 76). The expanded argument on difference in the second wave was centered primarily on the premise that except for gestation, men and women should be treated exactly the same. Women should be allowed to do whatever men were able to do and vice versa (Tobias, 1997). To accomplish this goal of equality, Betty Friedan helped organize the National Organization of Women (NOW). NOW addressed the issues of women in the second wave, namely, education, welfare rights, equality of opportunity, pay and working conditions, social provision of childcare and reproductive rights, the right to choose if and when women would produce offspring (Weedon, 1997, p. 1). Women attempted to form a united front, a “we”, a “sisterhood” (Mann and Huffman, 2005, p. 59).

White, middle-class, heterosexual women were the primary participants in the first and second waves of feminism, and the salient issues reflected their lived experiences and forms of oppression. Even though the second wave concentrated on bringing all women together as one
voice, women of color felt left out since many of their concerns were different than those of white women. Audre Lorde (2007) summarizes the sentiment as follows:

> By and large within the women’s movement today, white women focus upon their oppression as women and ignore differences of race, sexual preference, class, and age. There is a pretense to a homogeneity of experience covered by the word sisterhood that does not in fact exist. (p. 282)

> It was this renouncement of a unitary notion of woman that set the stage for the third wave in feminism. It became apparent that the discrete categories of race, sexual preference, class and gender did not sufficiently address the issues of woman’s oppression. Third-wave feminism centers its efforts in a formulation of a new and different epistemology to expand the notion of identity; one such camp is that of feminist post-structuralism.

Throughout the history of feminism, from its inception up until the present, ideas of difference have been articulated in different ways. Liberal feminism argues that women and men are basically the same (both human) and that women deserve to be afforded the same rights as men: difference should be overcome. Other forms of feminism position patriarchy—the social underpinnings of gender inequality—as key; difference originates in a biased social structure. Radical feminist thought posits that men and women are different and women need to reclaim their bodies from the patriarchal hierarchy. Several types of feminism seek to change the patriarchal structure of society, not simply win rights within a patriarchal structure, whereas socialist feminism understands oppression as coming from the cultural and economic status of women. Inherent in these theories is the acceptance on some level of gender classifications. Theorists recognize that gender binaries are present, and they seek to work within the limits of these categories. Feminist post-structuralism seeks a different epistemological standpoint that reaches beyond binary thinking. This is important to my study because binary thinking contributes to the gender-specific status and role of women in the professional culinary kitchen;
the acceptance of binary thought helps to maintain and reproduce the status quo, that which I propose to challenge.

**Feminist Post-Structuralism**

Feminist post-structuralism seeks to replace the analysis of a patriarchal hierarchy rooted in a binary by acknowledging pluralities and diversities and articulating new conceptual ways of thinking based on acknowledging difference. According to Scott (2003):

We need theory that can analyze the working of patriarchy in all its manifestations--ideological, institutional, organization, subjective, accounting not only for continuities but also for change over time. We need theory that will let us think in terms of pluralities and diversities rather than of unities and universals. We need theory that will break the conceptual hold, at least, of those long traditions of (Western) philosophy that have systematically and repeatedly construed the world hierarchically in terms of masculine universals and feminine specificities. We need theory that will enable us to articulate alternative ways of thinking about (and thus acting upon) gender without either simply reversing the old hierarchies or confirming them. And we need theory that will be useful and relevant for political practice. (p. 379)

Feminist post-structural theory recognizes pluralities and diversities and questions the very social practices that both inform and reproduce gender-specific categories. According to Britzman (2000), feminist post-structural theory:

… raises critical concerns about what it is that structures meanings, practices, and bodies, about why certain practices become intelligible, valorized, or deemed as traditions, while other practices become discounted, impossible, or unimaginable. (p. 30)

The idea that the masculine/feminine binary is essentialist, as in many perspectives, leads to a commonsense or normalized notion of gender. As women and men live within social structures, there is a tendency to treat commonsense thinking in a way that reproduces ideas and practices in social groups and institutions, such as families, workplaces, schools and society at large. Feminist post-structuralism seeks to understand the gendered power dynamics that differentiate the accepted and unaccepted status of women (Davies and Gannon, 2005, p. 318).
There are several critical features of feminist post-structural theorizing that are important to the study of women in society, including difference, language, discourse, power and knowledge. The following sections will define and discuss these features and how they relate to the present study.

*Difference*

The concept of difference is a theme in feminist post-structuralist thought that speaks to reevaluating the binary way of thinking. The subjugation of women to men is an outcome of a particular acceptance of the meaning of male/female, man/woman, and masculine/feminine. When considering these words, it is clear that the concept of difference is based on contrasting one thing to its perceived opposite or counterpart. These contrasts sort people into either/or categories, or binaries: male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine. Whether or not woman is “the second sex” as De Beauvoir (1949) suggests, the order of either/or binaries in common usage suggests that the term listed first is the dominant term (e.g., as in men and women but not ladies and gentleman). Binary thought is found in patriarchal discourse, is related to power and agency and positions women in relation to a male norm. In this case, biological difference is used as a basis for sorting people into roles based on a socially constructed paradigm with particular meanings given to gendered frameworks. Some feminisms, as cited earlier, use gender-based binaries to fight for rights and position in typical patriarchal hierarchies. Others, however, seek to challenge the binaries and the assumptions about biological bases of gender, and male norms as being the measuring stick against which women are judged. Discrete binary systems do not account for more meaningful notions of difference. Feminist post-structural theory seeks to question the binaries themselves as a strategy of contesting social norms through recognizing ways in which “difference” is understood and acted upon. When is difference a recognition and
enactment of the binary, and when is it a more complex understanding of variety or diversity that recognizes multiple realities and equity across difference? Important in my current study are the ways women chefs experience difference in the professional culinary world. Are they positioning themselves as part of a binary or contesting that binary in how they name and position gendered issues relative to a more complex understanding of difference and gender equity? In this study, “difference” will be examined in the narrative data of the participants to understand how they engage in a notion of difference (e.g., reifying the binary or challenging it), and also through analysis across the five elements of feminist post-structuralism. That is, an important component of questioning binaries is to understand how they are constructed through language and become discourse, and how knowledge and power are embedded in the ways that discourse situates gender differences.

Language and Discourse: Definitions and Distinctions

Before going any further, it is important to define and distinguish between language and discourse. Language is much more than the linear exchange of information through the spoken or written word. According to Gee (2011), there are three functions of language, “saying, doing and being” (p. 2). Saying or informing is the exchange of information through language. An example of this exchange might be; “Today I’m going to school.” In this case, I am simply using language to relay information about what I am going to do. Language cannot be conceived or delivered in a vacuum, but rather is always connected to both doing and being. The second part of language is doing (action); that is, language allows us to do things. We use language to invite someone to an event, embark on married life, climb the occupational ladder, and to do many other activities in our daily lives. Finally, language has a being or identity component. Identity is connected to both the saying and doing components; language allows us to communicate in particular ways to
specific groups of people. For example, a doctor uses a particular set of words to diagnose and treat patients. At home, he/she may use other language more appropriate to communicate with those at home. During free time with friends, the same doctor may use yet another type of language to associate with others during a sporting or book club event. The language we use forms our identities within and between groups.

Words are not simply defined by other words, but also by their position in a “game” or practice. Take for example the word “wife”. We can understand “wife” to be a female spouse. Using that definition doesn’t tell us much about what a wife is. We know in a traditional marriage she is the female person in the two-person dyad, where the female is subservient to a male. How you are perceived as wife would be characterized by Gee (2011) as a “social good,” that which is wanted and valued by society (p. 5). If you are perceived as a “good wife,” you gain social benefit, and if not, you lose the social good. Being perceived as a particular type of wife, in this case a traditional good wife, is valued by some, but not by others who might see this type of person as having little sense of self outside that subservient role. Many feminists may value a broader sense of self outside that role and see the “good” wife as more of a “whole” person, acknowledging that she is a multi-faceted whole person with needs outside of caring for her family and is not wholly defined by that role. “Language is a key way we humans make and break our world, our institutions, and our relationships through how we deal with social goods” (Gee, 2011, p. 7). It is through language that we construct discourse.

When considering discourse, Gee (2011) makes a distinction between discourse with a lowercase “d” and Discourse with a capital “D”. Discourse with a lower case “d” refers to language, so in this paper I would use the term “language.” When we speak or write we are
participating in discourse: communicating our thoughts. Language (discourse with a lowercase “d”) is not enough; doing and identity require more than language. According to Gee (2011):

It requires, as well, that we act, think, value, and interact in ways that together with language render who we are and what we are doing recognizable to others (and ourselves). In fact, to be a particular who and to pull off a particular what requires that we act, value, interact, and use language in sync with or in coordination with other people and with various objects (“props”) in appropriate locations and at appropriate times. (p. 31, emphasis in the original)

In this regard, Discourse with a capital “D” refers to a characteristic (emphasis) way of saying, doing and being. The characteristic way in which we say, do and are is represented by a particular way people act according to the practices of a certain group. Referring back to the example of “wife,” we can see how gender-specific characteristics are accepted for both wives and husbands, particularly in relation to the roles in the sexual division of labor. Traditionally, women are seen as nurturers who take care of the emotional needs of their families, and men are embraced as providers, working primarily out of the house for a wage. After these roles are accepted and reproduced, they become commonsense. This notion of gender-specific behavior as commonsense shapes the identity of children, which is maintained and reproduced. The experiences of people in discourse are represented through language, and language in turn helps to structure and name multiple discourses. Language values a gender hierarchy and binary; it defines women as secondary to men, hence reproducing and maintaining discourses that favor men over women.

Language. Language is an entry point for understanding how social relations are conceived (Scott, 2003). It is “the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested” (Weedon, 1997, p.

4 Other scholars use the terms language and discourse similarly to Gee’s “discourse” and Discourse. Though discourse for the rest of the paper will be spelled with a small d, it refers to Gee’s definition of discourse with a capital D, thus following the conversations of others, including feminist post-structural scholars.
21). Feminist post-structuralism maintains that there are not enough words to adequately describe all of the attributes associated with a particular referent. St. Pierre (2000) uses the example of the word “woman.” The term is designed to name a group of humans that possess a set of common traits; however, the term “woman” is not specific enough to name accurately all meaning systems with the word “women.” When the term woman is used, it brings to mind a category, which according to St. Pierre (2000) “privileges identity over difference” (p. 480). Language values a gender hierarchy and binary and defines women as secondary to men. The discourse structured by language presents a woman in a particular way, limiting her opportunity to choose her own way of being.

For the feminist post-structuralist, there are no fixed meanings; language is in a continuous state of change. The moment we express a word its meaning has already started to change. Language is always located in a discursive text that is ever changing, thus language is open to constant interpretation and re-interpretation (Weedon, 1997). This notion that the meaning of language is socially constructed, not fixed, is ever changing and is a basis for the implementation of societal change.

In the context of this research, language plays a role in how women chefs experience the professional culinary world. Stereotypes that are regarded as commonsense notions of identity may affect women chefs in the workplace. Stereotypical thinking regarding physical strength (women can’t lift heavy pots), leadership style (women’s leadership style is too “soft”) and the ability (or not) to handle the stress of the kitchen all may contribute to why women chefs are often overlooked for promotion.

The functions of language help chefs navigate the terrain of the professional kitchen. On a basic level, language helps those working in the kitchen to carry out necessary tasks in a
timely, efficient manner. Language can also be used to degrade employees or mark territory. Within the English language, there are words that are gender specific. For example, when speaking about a man, one might use these words: him, he, Mr., sir, gentleman. When speaking about a woman, words like she, her, Ms., Miss, Mrs., mam and lady are commonly used. In many professional kitchens, degrading comments may be bantered around, ones that are sometimes meant “in fun”\(^5\) while at other times are meant to degrade. Let’s take the example of a male chef attempting to make his line cooks (typically all men) work faster by calling them “ladies.” Embedded in this usage is a discursive message that the cooks—like “ladies”—are too gentle, weak to carry out their jobs. Further, it is assumed the men chefs will work harder at their job to uphold and validate their masculinity. In this study, I’ll examine the ways that language connotes gendered meanings.

*Discourse.* Discourse, as stated previously, is more than simply the saying, doing and being of language; it is a *characteristic* (emphasis) way of saying, doing and being. That is, “Discourses” are socially and culturally produced patterns of language that constitute power by producing objects (or subjects) in particular ways (a housewife, for example, could be positioned as fulfilling her natural role through traditionalist discourses of gender essentialism, or could be positioned as a victim of oppression in some types of liberal feminist discourse). (Francis, 2007, p. 56)

Discourse is made up of a “who”, a *socially situated identity*, the kind of person one is seeking to be, and the “what”, a *socially situated practice* or activity that constitutes the “who” (Gee, 2011, p. 30, italics in the original). The “who” and “what” are not discrete, but rather are in relationship with one another; in other words, you are who you are in part through what you do, and what you do is partly recognized for what it is by who is doing it (Gee, 2011, p. 30).

\(^5\) Usually male-centric humor.
When considering discourse, there are several points worth mentioning to round out the definition stated above. First, there is a recognition component that is key when understanding discourse. Others recognize you as a particular type of “who” engaged in a particular type of “what” in the here and now. Using our previous example of the traditional “good” wife, a woman is recognized as a good wife (who) if she is nurturing (what) in the domestic realm. In this case, a “good wife” in the traditional sense may be recognized if she does not work outside the home, thus, her primary roles are to fill the social, emotional and physical needs of her family. Further, it may be assumed that her connection with her family is all she needs to feel fulfilled. She is all sacrificing for the sake of her family. Second, discourses are not units with discrete boundaries; they are always being created and recreated by people. An example of this is seen in the influx of women into the work force over the last 50 years. Whereas most women (especially middle and working-class women) traditionally have worked inside the home, today many more women are participating in the workforce. The boundaries of women have expanded from working within the home for no wage to working outside the home for a wage. Third, discourses can meld together, or they can split into other discourses. For example, women can come together to form a feminist band and at the same time develop particular political orientations such as liberal, radical and/or feminist post-structural varieties of feminism. Though they are all working for women’s rights, they have differing philosophies on how it should be accomplished. Fourth, discourses can be on a grand scale (a social movement) or a small scale (within a family); they are limitless and there is no real way to count them. Finally and importantly, people belong to multiple discourses simultaneously. In the context of this research, a woman chef may belong to and engage in several discourses, various discourses in a variety of social spheres. Worth noting
is that a variety of discourses can work simultaneously and may be in concert with each other or they may be in conflict with one another.

In the professional culinary world, there are underlying beliefs that produce and maintain the discourse of work in the professional culinary environment. Members of this particular discourse recognize the beliefs and stereotypes that concern the perceived abilities or inabilities of men and women to work in the back of the house environment. These beliefs may be warranted, or they may be commonsense notions that have led to a double standard. An example would be a boss who will not hire women chefs because he thinks they cannot lift a 40-gallon stock pot. The reality in the professional kitchen is that a man chef also can’t lift a 40-gallon pot of stock by himself and needs to enlist a fellow worker to help him, but this is not acknowledged. Further, it is important when enlisting help with a full stock pot to find a partner of similar height since lifting the pot with ease is dependent to a large degree on two carriers of similar heights for better balance. The point here is that a woman chef may be told she is not able to lift the pot, but a male chef typically is assumed to be able to do so without question. The discourse, belief system, if not challenged, maintains and reproduces these assumed notions that women are less capable because they’re women.

Feminist post-structuralism understands discourse as ever changing, unstable and integral in shaping ways of seeing the world in discursively constructing realities. Individuals in society participate in multiple discourses. Broadly speaking discourses that position people in society include economic, social and political discourses (Weedon, 1997, p.21). According to Scott (2003), discourse is “a historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories and beliefs” (p. 379). Scott further asserts that discourses overlap, influence and compete with one another and appeal to one another’s “truth” for authority and legitimation.
Human identity is affected and produced in multiple discourses that are “constantly shifting, rendering them at times powerful, and at other times, powerless” (Baxter, 2003, p. 27).

Davies and Gannon (2005) add:

Gendered subjects exist at the point of intersection of multiple discursive practices, whose point being conceptualized as subject positions. The individual is not fixed at any one of these points or locations. Not only does the individual shift location or position, but what each location or position might mean shifts over space and time and contexts. This understanding is central to the fluidity and multiplicity of subjectivities that is central to feminist post-structural thinking about change and agency. (p. 320)

Further, gendered discourses are not “transparent or innocent” (Davies and Gannon, 2005, p. 319); subjects are shaped from external societal factors that may privilege one subject over another. For example, traditionally men were the breadwinners for their families, meaning that they worked for a wage, usually outside of the home, and that wage supported the family. Money is important not only for survival but also for maintaining a certain, desired standard of living. Women, mothers in particular, were defined as nurturing caregivers within the domestic realm. They took care of the needs of their families, making it possible for their husbands to go out into the workforce. Along the way, men garnered higher status because they were working to support families, while the work of women in the house was not considered as important. This may be seen when someone asks, “Did your mother work while you were growing up?” The answer is typically, “No, she was a stay-at-home mom.” A more enlightened response would be, “Yes, she worked in our home.” Being a “stay-at-home” mom doesn’t suggest any work or meaningful activities. Not only are we shaped by discourse, but also we may support and defend it. Women in traditional heterosexual relationships may understand their work to be in the home and justify it by feeling they are contributing to the household, which they are; however, working primarily in the domestic realm may not acknowledge their being outside that of nurturing and care giving. These understandings of discourse from a feminist post-structuralist perspective
allow us to analyze how discourses constitute women’s identity (ies), being and action. How discourses position women in the professional culinary world, as women and as chefs, and how women chefs exist in and act on that discursive space are guiding questions in my study.

**Power**

Traditionally, power was viewed as belonging to certain groups and exercised over others: parents over children, bosses over employees, teachers over students, men over women, etc. Foucault defines power as not belonging to a group; it is not a “thing” but a productive relation that is found at all levels of every social body (1980). Further, there is no power without resistance. “Power is understood in terms of a line of force and is not the property of one gender” (Davies and Gannon, 2005, p. 258). The mechanisms of power produce different types of knowledge. According to Foucault (1980):

The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power. … Knowledge and power are integrated with one another, and there is no point in dreaming of a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power…. (p. 52)

Power is relevant to the study of gender because it provides a framework within which to analyze both gender construction and gender relations through discourse. It is a dynamic, shifting part of discourse that is ever changing through interactions with others. According to Weedon (1997), power,

… inheres in difference and is a dynamic of control, compliance and lack of control between discourses and the subjects constituted by discourses, who are their agents. Power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects. (p. 110)

In the professional culinary world, power can be manifested in a variety of ways. First, physical dominance, that is, men are typically taller and larger than women. Even when men are shorter, it is assumed they are still physically stronger than most women, thus supporting an
assumption they are better suited for jobs in the kitchen. Second, the professional culinary kitchen is a competitive environment. This competitive environment embraces cooking competitions and practical joking that sustains a hierarchy and that assigns bragging rights to some and not others. Third, power can also be displayed by particular responses to performance evaluations made by superiors as well as customers. As previously stated, taking criticism seems to be difficult particularly for men in the kitchen. Evaluations are often disregarded as not meaningful, especially if they are negative. Finally, there are stereotypical beliefs about food that help bosses steer women to specific jobs in the kitchen. Women may be seen making salads and desserts, but rarely work the line, cooking the entrees, which are generally meat dishes considered more important and worthy of male attention. Salads and desserts are peripheral to the main meal, reflecting a position of women as peripheral to the main, male chefs.

Power in the professional culinary world may also be evident in hiring and promotion processes. Typically, the person doing the hiring is male, and if he doesn’t view women as being capable to work in the professional kitchen, he has the last say and women are not hired. If a woman is hired, she may be hired for specific jobs, jobs that are considered “feminine” jobs such as making salad or desserts, but not making the entrees, the main part of the meal. Much of the power in the kitchen comes from the line, where food is prepared at stations: the line is the kitchen. The cooks on the line are always assumed male unless otherwise stated, much as doctors are assumed male unless labeled a “woman doctor.” Not having access to the line also means that women do not have access to certain types of knowledge, such as developing expertise in the various cooking techniques used at each station, learning to work side-by-side with other cooks to produce a final product and of course taking part in the social interactions that take place as being part of a line. Knowledge and power are integrally related (Weedon, 1997, p. 171).
“Feminist poststructuralists argue that in patriarchal societies, knowledge and power work systematically to marginalize women, defining us as “other” to the patriarchal order of meaning” (Weedon, 1997, pp. 171-172). Knowledge, then, is also a critical element of feminist post-structuralism.

**Knowledge**

Feminist post-structural thought is not bound by unity and universal truth; that is seen particularly in its ideas centered on knowledge. Knowledge is always constructed, not discovered; contextual, not foundational; is always singular, localized and from a particular perspective rather than totalizing or universal; and knowledge is always egalitarian rather than hierarchal (Baxter, 2003, p. 22). Understanding that knowledge is constructed and is in a constant state of change, feminist post-structuralism helps to analyze how knowledge is situated in discourse and how it constructs gendered identities. While playing in gender-specific fields, children acquire knowledge about what is expected of them in later life, and this learned knowledge sorts them into a preconceived, socially constructed category of woman, particularly mother, and man. The members of gender-specific groups (men/women) are privy to particular “knowledge” that helps them form a gendered identity. For example, while girls are playing with dolls, they are left out of the male group that is building structures, and vice versa, boys who are pretending to go to work are not engaged in taking care of babies. In the culinary world, women who are relegated to gender-specific tasks, such as cooking on the line, do not have access to knowledge that may facilitate their climb up the occupational ladder. In the professional culinary world, if women are sorted into jobs such as prep cooks, salad makers and pastry cooks, they are left out of the social and skills knowledge learned on the line. Not having access to knowledge at
all stations of the kitchen may influence the ability of women chefs to climb the occupational ladder leading to executive chef positions. In sum, knowledge is power and power is knowledge.

In conclusion, feminist post-structuralism is a useful theory when trying to answer the questions of how women chefs experience the professional culinary workplace and also how chef education contributes to or challenges the gendered status quo in the culinary world. By recognizing and analyzing the gendered nature of difference, language, discourse, power and knowledge in these environments—chef education and the professional culinary world—we can understand how meaning is formed and how change is possible.

To explore issues related to language, discourse, power and knowledge and difference as they are manifested in gender dynamics in the education and experience of women executive chefs, this study will help us understand the gendered nature of the professional culinary kitchen (back of the house), how gender relations are constructed through culinary education and in the professional kitchen and specifically how gender is done in culinary education and the professional culinary kitchen. As indicated in chapter one, this study is focused on the following research questions:

1. How does gender present itself in the culinary world?
2. How does chef education challenge or contribute to the normative gendered patterns in the culinary world, specifically the back of the house?
3. How do the experiences of women chefs perpetuate or contest gender binaries?

Methodology

To explore the experience of women executive chefs, I am using a life history approach (Personal Narratives Group, 1989) as the methodology of choice because it enables an in-depth look at meaning making of lived experience through how people story their experiences. I collected data as narratives or stories, and thereafter analyzed the data in a fairly generic manner
by coding and categorizing the data and seeing what themes bubble up from the data. I then used five concepts—difference, language and discourse, power and knowledge—related to feminist post-structuralism as analytical lenses.

**Methods**

The research took place with women chefs in and around a large metropolitan area in the Midwestern United States. The large metropolitan area is known for its cuisine and restaurant culture, ranging from street food (hotdogs, ice cream, etc.) to fine dining and every conceivable food offering in between. Since women executive chefs with experience in the professional culinary kitchen are rare (under 20 percent), they are more likely to be working in a city in a large metropolitan area that has a thriving, diverse restaurant and hospitality industry rather than in rural areas. In this study, locations are not named in order to protect the privacy of the participants and to make it more difficult for readers to identify them.

**Sample Selection**

There were four women executive chef participants in the study. There are very few women chefs who have reached the level of executive chef of a hotel/resort or institutional setting. Women are the focus because most of what we know about the cooking experiences of women is situated in the domestic realm, whereas most cooking in the professional realm is documented as being done by males. This research is interested in learning more about how women experience cooking in the professional realm. Executive chefs have worked their way up the professional ladder, so they have stories to tell of their experiences at various levels of workplace positions in the professional culinary world.

The four women chef participants have experience being executive chefs either in restaurants owned by others or as owners of their own restaurants. Chef Jenn was an executive
chef of a corporation dedicated to the home cook, Chef Chris was the interim executive chef of a restaurant owned by a corporate chain, Chef Stella was a sous chef in a country club and now is chef/owner of a café, and Chef Dee owns a critically acclaimed restaurant in a large city in the Midwest. They all were able to tell stories of their workplace experiences and how they made meaning of these experiences. Additionally all chefs hold credentials from culinary schools in the United States. Chef Jenn has associate’s and bachelor’s degrees in culinary arts and a master’s degree in adult education. Chef Chris has an associate’s degree in culinary arts, a bachelor’s degree in culinology and a master’s degree in nutrition. Chef Stella has a bachelor’s degree in business computers/culinary arts. Chef Dee has a bachelor’s degree in archaeology and a certificate in culinary arts.

Recruitment

Using collegial networks, I asked three women chef instructors at the culinary school I worked in if they ever had been executive chefs; two said they had been executive chefs. I briefly explained my research and information sheet for participation to the two chefs. The two chefs, Chef Jenn and Chef Chris, agreed to be in my study.

Before the interviewing process began, to schedule more participants I sent out a flyer to three well-known women chefs in the area. One of the chefs responded via email and said she could not commit to 3-4 interviews because of the time constraints of being an award-winning restaurant owner but agreed to meet for one interview; however, this unfortunately did not work out. The other two chefs did not respond. I then sent out two more letters/flyers to two other women chefs but received no response. During this time, I found out that the wife of one of my chef instructor colleagues was married to a restaurant owner. He gave me her card, and I called her, explained my research and talked about the information sheet for research participants in a
study, and she agreed to be interviewed. After completing the interviews with the first three women chefs, I decided to try and recruit one more participant. I sent out letters/flyers to two more women chefs. I received an email response from both of them stating that they were interested in hearing more about the study. One chef did not answer any of my follow-up emails, whereas the other chef gave me a number and time to call her and discuss the study. She became my fourth participant.

The participants and I agreed on a time and place to hold the first interview. At the end of each interview, we made plans for the next interview. At the first meeting, I explained the study fully and reviewed the Information Sheet for Participation in Research Study form, including the receipt of a $50 gift card to Jessica’s Biscuit, a discount cookbook website, at the end of the final interview in appreciation for their participation. I gave them a copy of the Information Sheet for Participation in Research Study form for their records. I also taped their consent to participate before the first interview actually started.

**Data Collection**

Audiotaped interviewing was the primary data collection method in this study. The semi-structured interviews were modeled on Seidman’s (2006) three-part interview protocol. The length and intervals between interviews were determined based on the amount of time the chefs could take off their busy schedules to participate in the study. Before the first interview and after each subsequent interview, a place and time was agreed upon to hold the next interview. Chef Jenn (in her home) and Chef Chris (at a public library and at a public place downtown after work) participated in three, 60-90 minute, audiotaped interviews. Chef Dee participated in two audiotaped interviews; one at her home, approximately 120 minutes, and one at her restaurant before opening, approximately 90 minutes. Chef Stella participated in two audiotaped interviews
(both at her café), one 90 minutes and one 45 minutes in length. All tapes were kept in a locked box, waiting to be destroyed at the completion of the study. Additional probing questions were asked as the conversation emerged. Interviews were completed within a four-week time span spaced three to seven days apart as per Seidman’s three-part interview protocol; spacing interviews three to seven days apart “allows time for the participant to mull over the preceding interview but not enough time to lose the connection between…interviews” (Seidman, 2006, p. 21).

The first interview focused on the participants’ experiences of personal history, food, history and cooking history. The second interview concentrated on experiences related to education, culinary school and work. The third interview was concerned with reflections on meaning and included questions about the gendered nature of their histories and experiences (Appendix A). I piloted a similar Interview Guide with a fellow chef colleague (as part of a doctoral course) and have made appropriate revisions to it since that time. At the end of the third interview, I asked the participants if they would agree to a possible fourth brief meeting for the purpose of member checking. After the last interview, I thanked them and presented them with a $50 gift certificate to Jessicasbiscuit.com (ecookbooks.com), a discount cookbook site, in appreciation for their participation.

Throughout the research process, I memoed about issues including but not limited to “future directions, unanswered questions, frustrations with analysis, insightful connections and anything about the researched and the researcher…” (Saldana, 2009, p. 33). Memoing is helpful particularly to the analysis process. I memoed after each interview, prefacing each memo with the date and context of a particular occurrence I might need to recall during the analysis. I’ve found in previous research that clearly written, detailed memos help a researcher recall particular
details, which might have been otherwise forgotten. Memoing also will include emerging thoughts about potential analytical points that can be revisited during the analysis process.

**Data Analysis**

After each interview and before the next interview with the same chef, I transcribed the tapes. Transcribing soon after each interview may help me to make needed adjustments to the Interview Guide (see Appendix A) used in subsequent interviews (Seidman, 2006). Pseudonyms were substituted for real names for both people and places in the transcriptions and write up of the study to protect the participants’ identity; any information revealed in the interviews that might reveal identity will be eliminated or disguised (with pseudonyms, leaving out some detail, or using vague language) in the written transcript.

After each interview was transcribed, I coded the transcripts. According to Saldana (2009), a code in qualitative inquiry “is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (p. 4). Coding is not a precise or exact science but instead is primarily an interpretive act. “Coding is the transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis” (Saldana, 2009, p. 5). The objective of coding is to understand the deeper meaning embedded in these narratives, and, subsequently, to identify themes.

The data analysis includes both open coding and focused coding. Open coding is the initial stage of analysis where the researcher scrutinizes the field note, interview or other document very closely: line-by-line, or even word by word (Strauss, 1987, p. 28); this is used to get at themes of the data inductively. At this stage of analysis, the researcher is not looking for “truth” or “real” meaning, but instead, uses open coding to open up the inquiry (Strauss, 1987, p. 30).
Focused coding helps organize smaller categories (themes) into larger ones. “Focused coding requires that the researcher develop a set of analytic categories rather than just labeling data in a topical fashion” (Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p. 311). For the focused coding process, I used the five feminist post-structural themes of difference, language, discourse, power and knowledge to begin analyzing the interview data. I then used both open and focused coding to analyze nuances within these themes.

Since I am an inexperienced researcher, I coded by hand as opposed to using coding software, which was more beneficial for two reasons. First, it reinforced my knowledge of the interview content. Secondly, learning new software for organization of data, not analysis, may prove to be a significant amount of work with little benefit for this type of research. I transcribed the data in the following designations: the speakers (Stephanie for researcher, Chef Jenn, Chef Chris, Chef Stella and Chef Dee for the interviewees) are notated next to the left margin, and the raw data is typed, double-spaced leaving a three-inch margin on the right. The space on the right is divided into two spaces, one for open coding and the other for focused coding.

During the process of coding, I kept a memo of such things as research concerns, theoretical framework, goals of the study, central research questions and any other major issues to guide me and keep me on course. As I coded, I wrote memos related to the research and coding process. I also coded and categorized memos to help in further analysis of data. In my write-up, I’ve included short life histories of each participant as a way to present their storied selves as closely tied to how they talk about their lives and experiences. I’ve represented the analytical themes in a way that is also storied, e.g., that you anticipate that they, too, will tell stories of the gendered nature of the culinary world, and of the feminist post-structural concepts of difference, language, discourse, power and knowledge and how they are intertwined.
Ethical Concerns

I explained up front to each participant that participation is voluntary and the participant can withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without penalty. I also discussed the risks and benefits of the study: there are no anticipated risks other than those encountered in day-to-day life, and benefits are to society should the study help us to understand the gendered nature of the culinary world and educational processes. If there are any questions that are deemed of a sensitive nature, the participants may decline to answer them without penalty. There are no personal benefits from their participation in this study. The major benefit of participating in this study is to add to the existing body of knowledge on gender in the field of culinary arts. The time commitment, four, 60-90 minute interviews, will be conducted three days to one week apart, ideally, and all four will be done within a four-week period. Participants will be given the opportunity to obtain a copy of the final study should they be interested.

Trustworthiness

Traditionally, the criterion used for assessing quality in quantitative research is the validity and reliability of the research study. The concepts of validity and reliability draw heavily from the positivist philosophy upon which “scientific” or traditional inquiry is situated. Qualitative research draws upon the assumptions of multiple and often-subjective realities, and thus calls for parallel criteria that speak to quality in research (Seale, 1999). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the concept of trustworthiness in assessing quality. Essentially, the trustworthiness of research speaks to how audiences can be assured that the research is rigorous and legitimate. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the criterion for trustworthiness in qualitative research includes four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.
Credibility refers to the believability of the research: Is the research worth reading and believing? Transferability is a concept that replaces generalizability found in positivistic research. Positivist research generalizes the findings of a study’s sample to the larger populations, whereas qualitative research is concerned with context and interactive dynamics and does not name as its purpose generalizability. This being said, a reader may find that qualitative research findings may be applicable or transferable to a setting with which he/she is familiar, and thus transferability is determined by the reader based on his/her knowledge of that other setting in light of “thick” descriptions in this study. Dependability relates to the extent to which others can trust the research data and analysis. Member checking, debriefing and audits can help facilitate both the process and results of qualitative research. Finally, confirmability addresses the issue of the verification of the research: can the data be confirmed or verified?

When considering trustworthiness in research, it is crucial to use a number of strategies to ensure that credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are being addressed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For the purpose of this research, the strategies of peer debriefing, member checking, using thick description and audit trails will be used to address the concerns of trustworthiness.

Peer debriefing occurred one time; that was all that was necessary. The debriefer was a fellow doctoral student who is knowledgeable about the process of qualitative research and completed the required human subjects training required by DePaul (CITI). The debriefer met with me to discuss the data but did not code any of the data. The debriefer read through a couple of pages of anonymized data, and we discussed it. The debriefer did not know the identity of the participants, as pseudonyms were used during our discussion. My faculty sponsor, Dr. Karen
Monkman, has completed the CITI training and did not look at any raw data; she looked at lists of points that were categorized according to the codes that emerged.

*Member checking* was done during each interview to make sure that I understood what the particular participant was relaying. Several times during particular interviews I repeated what the participants said and asked questions to clarify the meanings they were expressing. The participants agreed to an additional (possibly a fourth) interview if necessary to go over analysis for accuracy. At that time, I discussed the emerging analysis and asked each participants for her thoughts and reactions. Additional interviews were not necessary.

*Thick description* refers to quoting verbatim and using detailed description in reporting on the research. The write-up of this project used data to “show” the readers the points that I asserted. Using thick description allows the data to speak for itself and for the reader to “see” the points more clearly, as well as to determine credibility, transferability to other settings or contexts and dependability of the data and analysis.

Finally, I kept a detailed *audit trail* consisting of a clear record of the research processes. This includes a timeline, personal notes, notes on how interviews were set up, memos and all other miscellaneous paperwork including correspondence connected with the research. The purpose of an audit trail is to have a clear record of how the research procedures unfolded, so that it can be referred to in analyzing data (in case the procedures influence the findings) and to enable others to verify that the research was done well.

**Conclusion**

In sum, through the methodology of life history (Personal Narratives Group, 1989), I used up to three, 60-90 minute semi-structured interview protocols with four women executive chefs (sous chefs, line cooks) who all hold credentials from a culinary school. They were asked
to tell stories of their experiences in the professional culinary world and in their educational processes. Data was coded inductively in order to build theory about the gendered nature of culinary education and experience. In addition, a feminist post-structural theoretical framework, including concepts of language, difference, discourse, power and knowledge, was used to code data transcribed from the audiotaped interviews. Using such research tools as memoing, peer debriefing, member checking, thick description and keeping an audit trail, I will uphold the four components of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. It is my goal to explore the ways that women chefs make sense of their experiences in the male-dominated world of the professional culinary kitchen.
CHAPTER 4: FOUR WOMAN CHEF BIOGRAPHIES

Before looking at the data that was collected from the interviews held with each of four women executive chefs, it is helpful to have background on each of them to familiarize the reader with their positionality within the professional culinary world. The following next four sections will provide the reader with basic biographical data about each chef, including but not limited to demographics, childhood, education, work experience, as well as family life. The chef biographies include those of Chefs Jenn, Chris, Stella and Dee.

Chef Jenn

Chef Jenn was born and raised in a white, upper middle-class suburb of a large city in the Midwestern United States; as Chef Jenn puts it:

It’s upper-class white and everybody, my friends, my friend’s parents, not so much my parents’ cuz my mom did not grow up in this environment; […] my mom kept us really grounded. But everyone else around me, we were supposed to be you know, doctors, lawyers, girls are supposed to marry wealth.

She was one of three children; her brother being the oldest, her sister the middle child and then Jenn, the youngest. Her paternal grandparents were of Swedish descent and passed down Swedish cooking traditions to their children and grandchildren. Her mother worked in the home and cooked everything from scratch. Her father was an insurance underwriter, and in his retirement, he became a gunsmith, something in which he has always had an interest. Jenn’s dad also enjoyed grilling outside for family meals and get-togethers. As a child, Jenn helped her

6 “[…]” denotes text that has been extracted by the author to improve readability (but not change the meaning of the participants’ talk, while “…” denotes a pause in the interview.)
mom in the kitchen while her siblings went out to play. Her brother would join in the cooking
activities on occasion; her sister, on the other hand, had no interest in cooking.

As a Kindergartener, Jenn found traditional learning boring; she was not an engaged
learner. This changed when her teacher was teaching the class how to make peanut butter balls. It
was this cooking activity that helped motivate Jenn to learn how to read. She soon found out that
if she learned to read, she could make different foods using recipes.

In middle school, the curriculum was gendered. In seventh grade, girls took home
economics while boys took wood shop. The community in which Chef Jenn grew up had
gendered expectations of their children. Girls were to marry wealthy and be housewives, while
boys were expected to be doctors, lawyers and business owners. Home economics for the girls
included more than simply cooking. When describing the home economics class, Chef Jenn
states:

It wasn’t all just cooking; […] They covered a couple of subjects […] we cooked for a
little bit, I remember we made like biscuits and cookies and egg sandwiches, pancakes,
that kind of stuff, but then we made dresses like we got out the sewing machines. […] we
had to follow a pattern. […] Then there was this whole weird like becoming a woman
section you know where they talk about menstruation, and like tampons and pads and all
this stuff and that’s what they wouldn’t let the guys in. […] That was seventh grade but
even in eighth grade it was still so like homemaker like it was Home ec. In eighth grade
students could choose their electives.

During high school, Jenn was not a very good student. She comments:

When I was in high school I had that same attitude of, “Why am I here?” [Laughter] I
mean I barely got out of high school barely, barely, barely. Ah, I never failed a class but
there were definitely some Ds mixed in there [Laughter] and Cs, rarely an A.

During high school, Chef Jenn took culinary classes and now, as opposed to middle
school, cooking was an elective and everyone could take it. The classes taught the fundamentals
of cooking and the science behind cooking. Still in high school, at age 16, Chef Jenn got her first
cooking job in a chocolate shop as a counter clerk. The chocolate shop was a high school and
college hang out. Though she started as a counter clerk, she quickly worked her way up to making chocolate candies. It was a great deal of responsibility. She comments:

> And so like I was there about 6 months, they started to let me dip pretzels and then, what else would they have me do? It’s like, clean up, help them be a little apprentice and then ultimately I’d figured out, he explained to me how to temper chocolate … and then, that was a big responsibility because if it’s not tempered properly, and you go make the turtles and they bloom\(^7\), you can’t sell them.

It was this experience at the chocolate shop that gave Chef Jenn the drive to go to culinary school.

After graduation from high school, Chef Jenn decided that she wanted to attend a university in the Western United States for the experience of going away to college. Education was a priority with her parents, who encouraged their children to go on to college. She attended for two years, but then because of poor grades, she decided to come back to her hometown and attend culinary school. Not only did Chef Jenn learn to cook in classes, but the school also sent students out to get practical experience by catering in big major hotels. A former high school friend called Jenn and asked how she liked culinary school (he was also thinking of attending), and she answered, “Great, I’m getting straight As, best thing I ever did for myself.” Based on her response, her friend decided to go to culinary school, and they graduated together and are still in the industry.

After she graduated from culinary school, Chef Jenn worked in pastries at a ski resort up in the mountains; it was seasonal work. After having an altercation with her boss concerning unfair gendered management practices, though she helped the cooks on the line when they were overwhelmed, they would not return the favor, stating that pastries were easy; she was the only

\(^7\) During tempering if the chocolate crystals are not emulsified properly, if it’s not 89°F, those compounds, the cocoa butter and the cocoa liquor, the milk solids, they still stay separate so it looks like someone blew smoke over the chocolate.
worker that was not hired back for the next season. She subsequently opened a chocolate shop with two fellow women culinary graduates; this establishment was open for two years and closed, mainly because they had differences in work ethic and styles of management. Shortly after the chocolate shop went out of business, Chef Jenn fell and broke her ankle and had to return to her hometown in the Midwest. She was hesitant about coming back to the city because her prior experience working in hotels was that the back of the house was primarily Hispanic, and she was afraid she would not get a fair chance at promotion.

And once I got back to the city I […] really didn’t. I wanted to come home because my friends and my family were there but at the same time I didn’t want to come back because I knew what the culinary scene was like in the city […] from working in the hotels at the culinary school in the Midwest. […] Getting that kind of experience I knew that it was going to be all his, young Hispanic males and like the chefs […] are all […] white guys, […] white older males but there’s really no women. […] I was […] afraid that I was going to be stuck in the dungeonous basement.

Back in the city, Chef Jenn looked for jobs, and after much persuasion, Chef Mary, owner of Homecooks, a cooking school and store for people who cook at home, hired her as a clerk and chef instructor. Chef Mary was a lesbian who only hired women to work for her. To supplement her income, Chef Jenn also worked as a waitress in an upscale restaurant. After a year of working at Homecooks, a former culinary instructor asked Jenn to come and work under her at Corporate Cooks, a cooking school owned by a company that makes kitchen equipment, pots and pans. At Corporate Cooks, Chef Jenn taught kitchen classes, wrote curriculum, menus and recipes, and the job in the end was doing mostly catering. She was promoted to executive of operations, and after a five-year run and great reviews, she was laid off due to financial problems the company was having.
After being laid off, Chef Jenn returned to the same culinary school where she previously graduated with an AAS degree some 12 years earlier. She now enrolled in the bachelor’s degree program. To her surprise, the school had changed tremendously.

Now when I went back for my bachelor’s, in 2005; […] years later, it was different. It was way different. […] I was older, I was 33 at this time going back to get this bachelor’s degree. I’d already been an executive chef; I’d worked for years […] in the industry. […] I definitely came in with a chip on my shoulder. I was, “Why do I have to be here; […] can I just pay the money and give me a piece of paper?” because (laughter) I was in a hurry.

After graduating from culinary school with a bachelor’s degree, Chef Jenn was hired to be a high school recruiter for the school. Her job was to visit high schools and try to recruit students for culinary, baking and hospitality programs offered by the school. She wanted to be an adjunct instructor but was not given the chance. Chef Jenn did an outstanding job as a recruiter, so the administration wanted her to stay in that position. Wanting to return to the kitchen, Chef Jenn then took a teaching job at a culinary school out east and ran the dining room in their inn. Due to a downswing in the economy and low student enrollment, the school closed the inn, and Chef Jenn came back to the Midwest and found a teaching position at a for-profit culinary school in the city, where she is currently employed. Last year, she earned a master’s degree in adult education and leadership.

When asked about her future career aspirations, Chef Jenn was quick to respond with plans for starting her own business, maybe while keeping her current teaching job. Chef Jenn has recently undergone bariatric surgery, the sleeve⁸ procedure to help facilitate weight control.

Before Chef Jenn had her surgery, she gave the following insight into her future business plan:

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⁸ …the one I’m going for is it’s called the sleeve, where it’s just your stomach, they cut out, your stomach is shaped like a bean and they cut out the bean of your stomach and that’s it. No, so it looks like a sleeve (laughter).
My plan A would be, I want to have the surgery. I’ve already started writing all my recipes and testing them, because I want to be prepared when I have the surgery, which is going to be in the next month; […] so then I’m prepared and I can try it and […] see how it goes. I think I need to have the surgery, see what the adjustments are, see how I feel about it, see what […] foods are working […] and what foods aren’t […] and then adjust. […] I would then love to be able to open it up to the other patients in my doctor’s practice and maybe get five or six people enrolled into this diet program, and it’s not just a program, I mean it’s forever. […] Then what I’d like to do is then expand it out and have the insurance companies that are already covering 100% of the trainer, the psychologist, the doctor, the surgery, have this be included as well, so now there’s no anxiety, this is your food, it’s delivered to your door.

As of this interview, Chef Jenn is still teaching culinary courses at a for-profit culinary school, and she is taking a doctoral course and is working on her business plan.

Chef Chris

Chef Chris grew up in a tight-knit German community in a town in the Western United States. She is the youngest of two daughters; her sister being six and a half years older than her. Both Chris’ parents worked outside of the home. Her mother cooked from scratch, often using the fruits and vegetables they grew in their substantial home garden. Her father did not like prepackaged food and expected everything to be made from scratch. Chef Chris remembers:

My parents were very much […] anti-fast food and when we had meals; since my dad hated prepackaged food, it was always a protein, a starch, a veg so it was always putting together a composed meal, every meal that we had, so it was always a big deal.

So it was up to the women in the family to prepare meals, with one exception: on the weekends her father grilled steaks. Chef Chris cultivated a love for cooking at the early age of six and began helping her mother prepare meals in the kitchen. When Chef Chris was a little older, her mother and grandmother gave her a subscription to Bon Appetit magazine. It was in the magazine that Chris found a variety of recipes that widened her scope of what other people around the country and world ate. She fondly recalls the story of trying to make Indian-style chicken from a recipe she found in the magazine:
I just got into it more and more and I remember when I was […] 12 or 13 I tried doing […] this chicken that was marinated with yogurt; it was Indian style chicken that had like this weird spice rub in there and yogurt. […] I still think of that dish cuz it was so awful. But I think that’s one thing for me why I was so into food is that I felt that […] growing up in the western United Stated and then having moved to another region during middle school, I felt had somewhat of a sheltered viewpoint on food. […] I had this Bon Appetit [magazine] and I was looking at all […] these recipes; […] I always wanted to cook something I was not used to. […] God love ‘em; my parents were very willing to try a lot of my dishes and that chicken was awful! [Both laughing]

Chris attended a Catholic high school that didn’t offer home economics or any cooking classes. By age 15, with special permission, she landed a job as a prep cook and baker at a corporate chain restaurant, a steakhouse. She liked restaurant work, but her parents were hesitant about making this a career. Instead, they encouraged her to go and earn a degree, perhaps in food science.

Education was a priority with Chef Chris’s parents. Obeying the advice of her parents, Chris went to college for two years and took classes in food science. She did not like the course of study at all. She said:

I tried to do something that was food based and in food science, which the first year and a half was great; I really liked it. […] Then […] we started going to the dark side of food where there was a lot more chemistry, biology. You had to take both semesters of organic chemistry, protein chemistry, microbiology; […] it was not what I loved to do. I mean the whole creation of […] putting foods together; see how they taste, […] trying different ethnicities and pretty much much how it […] was, “Let’s see how much science we can put into the food.” […] If we’re taking the fat our of ice cream what are we going to put in there to mimic the mouth feel of fat; that type of thing so […] I really did not like it.

While Chef Chris was attending college she also worked at a dairy plant making ice cream and cheeses, which she found interesting. Chef Chris grew more and more disenchanted with studying food science in school. She took a job at Good’s Brewery and Grill. The owner of Good’s, a man, encouraged her to follow her passion for food. She was the only woman in the kitchen and managed to start out as a dishwasher, was promoted and learned the stations (sautéing, grilling, etc.) and became the sous chef. Sooner than later, she dropped out of school.
to work full-time at Good’s, which deeply disappointed her parents. When asked how her parents responded to her dropping out of school, she answered:

When I decided to quit and work full-time at Good’s [restaurant] there was […] a period where we didn’t talk for almost a year and […] a half. It went over like a fart in a car pretty much. […] This was not what they had wanted me to do. […] They […] definitely thought that this wasn’t a career that was for women; they didn’t think it was a career for me, they’d thought it was pretty much a dead end. […] Pretty much just thought I was going to flounder.

After working at Good’s for about a year, Chef Chris decided to work at an Italian restaurant for more varied experiences. This restaurant was not a good fit for her, and she went back to Good’s, where she took on roles in research and development, writing recipes; some of the food items she developed are still on the menu some 20 years later. Her parents suggested to Chris that if she really wanted to go to culinary school, she should try the local community college. Chris decided that going to a community college was not what she wanted to do, so she found a culinary school in the Northeast United States that she felt would meet her need to expand her knowledge of professional cooking. At this point, though her parents did not particularly like her decision to go to culinary school, they did offer their support. For years, her relationship with her parents was strained, particularly since she made her decision to attend culinary school to become a professional chef. During the application process, she had to secure a loan to pay for her schooling; her father agreed to go with her to sign her loan documents. She relates a funny exchange she had with her father while signing the documents.

But I thought it was funny where you sign on the loan documents, my dad put his name down and it says “relationship”, would you like to put “father” or would you like me to put “stormy” or do you want me to put father down? [Both laughing]

Culinary school was a time of learning cooking from a different perspective, and she was looking forward to the challenge.
Chris relocated to the Northwest and found a job at Otto’s, a seafood restaurant. She had known the general manager of Otto’s; she previously worked at Good’s, so that connection helped her land the job. Chris admits:

Actually, the reason I got hired into the kitchen is that his general manager was a woman (chuckle, Chris) and she had actually worked at Good’s as well, so there is kind of that common history. [...] Immediately we [...] hit it off. She said, “Well, I don’t know if Etienne is going to like this but [...] if you were able to handle it in Good’s kitchen [...] with the volume of business, [...] I know that you’ll be able to handle [...] the back of the house here [...] with flying colors.”

Chef Chris started working as one of their lead sautés, and in three weeks, she was running the 14-burner station by herself; within another two weeks, she was promoted to sous chef.

Chef Chris had years of experience in the restaurant industry before she entered culinary school. She liked her school because the curriculum was based on real-life restaurant work. She pointed out:

What I really like about my school was that [...] we actually had an *ala carte* kitchen or a bistro that was busy, I mean busy, *busy*. [...] We had [...] course lunches, course dinners and everything that was school bought. It was [...] our butcher shop and charcuterie class, we had orders that we had to fulfill for the kitchens so we weren’t just cutting [...].

Chef Chris enjoyed the urgency of the line. She states:

Yea, I mean I would definitely say I’m an adrenaline junkie with the fact that I would honestly live and breathe for that dinner rush where you have [...] tickets coming off of the printer and actually touching the floor, [...] I lived for that stuff.

After graduating from culinary school, Chef Chris did an internship at an Italian fine dining establishment. She started as a prep cook, and after her internship was over, she was hired on as a sous chef. After working there for approximately a year and a half, Chris decided to move to a large city in the Midwest. While her parents focused their attention on encouraging her to get married and have a family and possibly have a more family-friendly job, Chris had other plans.
Chef Chris is gay and has no interest in having a family. She related her feelings on the subject:

When I was in culinary school, I was living with my sister and her husband um and 2 weeks after I’d moved there my sister gave birth to her first child and good God there were so many times where I was able to pull the card not my kid… and I was so glad! … I just think that honestly, […] I never would have had kids instead of being in the kitchen; I knew it just wasn’t for me.

Continuing on with her career plans, Chef Chris went through the interview process and landed a job with a large corporate restaurant chain. Though she worked her way up to sous chef and for a three-month time held the title of interim executive chef at the chain’s Spanish Restaurant, she was never promoted to executive chef. During her tenure as the interim executive chef, she actually trained a man chef to take over as the executive chef. She went to the company’s French Restaurant as a sous chef, promised by her bosses that she was on the fast track to becoming their executive chef, but she left due to complications from a very serious kidney infection. At that point, she decided to earn her master’s degree in hospitality management and got a job as a chef instructor at a for-profit culinary school, where she still teaches today. Though she likes teaching, she knows she will not be teaching at the school long-term. Her future plans include getting a PhD in kinesiology and doing research on food deserts and oases, trying to help broaden healthy food choices for underserved, low-income populations.

Chef Stella

Chef Stella was born and raised in a southern suburb of a large city in the Midwestern United States and is of Slovak/Polish descent. She is the fourth of five children; she has two older brothers, one older sister and one younger sister. Her mother worked in the home and cooked from scratch every day. Her father owned a department store and barbequed on weekends. Chef Stella didn’t cook much at home, but she baked with both her mom and her
grandmother. Though she liked to bake, she didn’t like to eat sweets, so when she baked, she gave her homemade bakery goods to the neighbors. As a teenager, Chef Stella went to cake decorating classes sponsored by Wilton. She perfected her craft by making cakes for others, mainly to celebrate life events.

Chef Stella went to an all-girls Catholic college preparatory high school. The high school courses she took were geared to facilitate college admission; she didn’t have an opportunity to take cooking classes in high school. At her parents’ request, she completed two years of college at a small, private college majoring in business (computers/accounting). After she finished her two years, she and her mother visited culinary schools and finally agreed on one on the East Coast. She entered culinary school with no previous restaurant experience. When she started culinary school, she got a job working on the line in a local family-owned chain, Backo’s. Though the work she did initially was unskilled (microwaving, heating up, making salads and sandwiches and cooking burgers), she learned some of the skills and culture associated with restaurant work. She particularly was drawn to the urgency of the kitchen. In her own words, she admits the rush of the kitchen is fun:

You know, […] it was fun. […] I just got in the kitchen, the tickets started coming up, my heart was pumping, it was just like adrenalin. […] I was like, “This is a lot of fun. Oh my God, I’m putting food out.” […] I mean you get yelled at and all that, but then you work just like everybody else, nobody gives you a break for not lifting mats and doing all that which was fine with me.”

She learned a lot on the line at Backo’s and also in her classes in culinary school classes, which included both front of the house and back of the house. During her time at the culinary school she met her future husband and business partner, John. Stella and John graduated from culinary school, and soon after, they married.
As a newlywed, Stella got a job at a country club and worked her way up from the line to sous chef, not executive chef, and then to the assistant manager of the front of the house. She stayed there for approximately eight years. During that time, her husband worked at a major hotel and then at another country club. To supplement their income, Stella took a part-time job for a few years as a breakfast/lunch cook at a day care center.

After being overlooked for a couple of management positions at her country club and interviewing and not being hired at another country club, Stella decided to start a family. She and John had a family, a boy and a girl, a year apart. When asked if she was a stay-at-home mom when she had children she responded:

We talked, we talked long and hard about it, and if I could be at home, I wanted to be at home. I just felt that was the best and then until it was time [...] to go out and do what I needed to do, but it was hard, I won’t lie. It was a it was very hard just being with kids all day and no adults and all that, and my kids were a year apart exactly a year apart, so they were really, they were my focus, and I loved it. I loved it, I loved being at home with them, and I loved every minute of it, but I missed cooking, I missed doing all that. So, what I ended up doing I think maybe when they were 3 or 4, [...] I threw out there [...] that if any body needs something catered or desserts. [...] just friends, “I’ll do it.” [...] That’s kinda where my catering [...] started, word of mouth.

When the children went to school, Chef Stella was bored so she set out to find a part-time job, as she puts it,

OK, I get a job, just part-time, I’ll get a mother’s job; [...] looking for something to do. And I looked for a while [...] and then this place here came up in the paper; [...] mother’s hours, [...] just [...] what was it 9-2. [...]. Part-time cooks, (chuckle) not mother’s hours.”

She took the part-time job as a cook at a small café by a train station. They sold breakfast foods, lunch, pastries and food for catered events. The owner wanted Chef Stella to buy the Café about a year after she started there as a cook. Stella said,

No, I didn’t want to, she wanted me to, she wanted to sell me the restaurant a year, like years prior, cuz I think I was here 4 years before I actually bought the place, um, but like after my second year, she was itching already to sell and she was looking for people and
she’s like, come on Stella why don’t you…I’m like No, no my kids are too young…I don’t want to, I don’t want to, I just wasn’t ready, I probably could’ve, but I just, I didn’t, I didn’t want to slight my kids.”

Her children are now 16 and 17 years old and they both work at the café. Her husband helps sometimes at the café. They also own an award-winning fine dining restaurant in another state and are thinking about opening up a third place. Though they are both still working in restaurants and John teaches in a culinary school, Stella and John have considered running a bed and breakfast in retirement.

Chef Dee

“Everyone Eats” has been a driving force in Chef Dee’s career as chef and restaurant owner in a large city in the Midwest. Dee was born and raised in the Midwestern United States; she is the middle of three children with an older brother (deceased) and a younger sister. Her brother was a musician and died tragically several years ago. Her sister is a free spirit, an artist and clothing maker, who has raised four children. As a child, Dee always considered her siblings as having all the talent in the family; it wasn’t until later that she realized that she also had talent; she came into her own set of strengths and talents as a chef and restaurant owner.

An interest in cooking was cultivated throughout her childhood. She describes her parents as “adventurous eaters.” They ate foods that were prepared by her mother from scratch, such as lamb and artichokes. The one thing that Dee remembers from her childhood is not simply the foods they ate together as a family, but rather the “whole dining experience.” She describes a typical mealtime together where her family dressed for dinner, sat at their dinner table adorned with fresh linens, and pulled out chairs for her mother, sister and herself to be seated comfortably. The family socialized during the dinner hour, talking about topics of interest, saving TV watching for afterward the meal.
Early on in Dee’s childhood, her mom worked in the home, and her dad worked in sales. As the children grew older, her mom went back to work as a market master, in charge of running a large outdoor market in their city. As time went on, her dad decided to start his own lighting business, during which time her mom became his office manager and secretary.

Her father loved food and considered himself a gourmand. He continued to learn about foods and sophisticate his palate by subscribing to *Gourmet* magazine. They spent many happy hours together trying to make the recipes found in the magazine. She fondly recalls how she and her dad made Caesar salad, he coddled the egg and she cut up the vegetables for the salad. It is no wonder that the first Girl Scout badge she earned was her cooking badge.

While Dee’s mom was out working at the market, someone needed to be home to put the meat loaf in the oven for the family’s evening meal, and considering how much Dee loved to cook, she was the obvious choice to help her mother with the evening meal until she arrived home. At this point, cooking was a fun hobby, and Dee had no way of knowing this would eventually lead to her life’s vocation of being a chef/restaurant owner. In addition to cooking with her father by following recipes from *Gourmet* magazine and helping with family meals, Dee says she became very interested in the fresh market where her mom was the market master. Seeing all the fresh vegetables and fruit selections opened her eyes to a variety of products and experiences.

During her teens, Dee spent her first two years in a public high school; she later transferred to a private high school, which provided a much better atmosphere for academic pursuits. It was there that she met and started dating her future husband and business partner. After high school, Dee went to a small private college in the Midwest to study archaeology, which she loved. Dee was interested in discovering things about how people lived and putting
the pieces of their existence together. During her last year in college, she studied in Central America, coauthoring an article in an academic archaeological journal with her professor. Though after graduation she explored professional cooking, to this day she still subscribes to the archaeological journal and keeps up with current topics and work in archaeology.

After graduation, Dee and Jim were married, and she took a year off to make some money towards graduate school. She decided to work in a restaurant. Her first job was as a prep cook in a corporate food chain. After working in the back of the house, she noticed that the waitstaff in front of the house made appreciably more money, so she asked if she could be transferred to the front of the house as a waitress. Meanwhile, her husband Jim was working as a bartender at a local pub. Though working in two different places, they both decided that they loved the restaurant business: to them it was like a play whose players changed everyday. According to Dee, “You know, it’s kind of like a play, every night, you know, and the actors are sometimes different, but that the story line is pretty much the same, but it’s the interaction with the audience that keeps it really interesting.” After some discussion, Jim’s parents sent them both to culinary school out east.

Culinary school was an interesting experience. Dee and her husband/partner were from out-of-state, older and married, which put them in a category of their own, somewhat ostracized for being non-residents where the school was located. They both came in with significant knowledge of cooking, but nevertheless, they learned as much as they could, especially the business side. The program was a six-month certificate program. After graduation, full of confidence and youthful optimism, they returned to the Midwest and focused on getting jobs.

Chef Dee had limited experience in restaurant work. She worked for a short time in a French café but didn’t really like it. She applied for a couple of jobs but didn’t get them.
worked in a place owned and run by women and didn’t like the environment and culture of the staff; they were not passionate about their work and did not work well together as a team. After working in a couple of restaurants, Chef Dee and her husband decided that they could do better by opening up their own place. They were familiar with business ownership because not only were Dee’s parents’ business owners, but her husband/partner’s family also owned a food container business. Dee and her husband/partner had the passion and business knowledge to open a restaurant, though they had not cooked on a line or had any extensive restaurant experience. They were young and enthusiastic and opened a gourmet catering business together in their home state, which lasted five years until they moved on to their next venture. At that point they decided to move to a large city in the Midwest and try their hand at an American fine dining restaurant, Winnie’s. During this time, Dee and her husband/partner made a monumental decision, in order to be successful they needed eyes both in the front of the house and the back of the house. Based on their skills and interests, they decided that Dee would be in charge of the back of the house and her husband/partner would be the front of the house manager, a strict division of labor that still stands in the center of their success today. Jim is not a formally trained sommelier. According to Dee, when asked if he is a trained sommelier, she responds:

No, no, he, he, um no he’s just loves it, reads about it, talks about it; […] he breathes wine the way I breathe food […] he really does. And he’s talked about, um getting his um somm [sommelier] but, it’s for him, it’s kind of like, why? Why, do I need to prove it to myself that […] I got […] the plaque on the wall? He doesn’t and as far as […] our business goes, […] it wouldn’t make any difference for the business, it would be just for his own satisfaction, and he doesn’t are…he’s self-fulfilled.

Also her husband/partner is a businessman, a numbers guy, which makes him suitable to manage the front of the house. Dee says,

It wasn’t a weird thing either, it was […] like, “Well, we can do this, sure, absolutely.” […] The reason we stopped cooking together was first of all, my husband/partner is not […] a good cook. I mean, he likes to cook but he’s not a cook, […] I’m a cook. My
[husband/partner] is a business man, he loves numbers, he loves math, he love’s formulas, he loves figuring stuff out [...] and he’s also, [...] a real wine geek. [...] We’ve cooked together cuz we had to; [...] we really thought we both needed to cook the food [...] and get it out what we didn’t realize that the manager that was host, [...] we couldn’t see outside the kitchen door.

At Winnie’s, their first fine dining restaurant, he constructed an impressive American wine list matched to the culinary creations of Dee. After about 13 years, they closed, moved and re-conceptualized. Their current restaurant, the award-winning Arrow, has been open for approximately 10 years.

In addition to running a very successful restaurant, Chef Dee is involved in hosting benefit dinners for the community in the neighborhood where her restaurant is located. She is also involved in several outreach programs, bringing food knowledge to those who are on a very limited income. One of her most prized honors is an award recognizing her mentorship of young female chefs.

When asked what she plans on doing next, in addition to owning Arrow, she says she’s not sure, but she would like to continue her philanthropic work and do something combining gardening (she is a master gardener, no fruits or vegetables, just flowers) and cooking.

**Conclusion**

The women chefs in this research have varied experiences in both the domestic as well as the professional culinary world. All of them come from a rich food history, which began in their childhood homes. Though they were encouraged to cook at home, once grown, their parents encouraged them to finish their educations before embarking on a culinary career. Before entering culinary school, Chefs Jenn and Chris had experience working in professional culinary kitchens, while Chefs Stella and Dee did not. Upon graduation from culinary school, all the chefs worked in culinary kitchens. For Chefs Jenn and Chris, working in both private and corporate
kitchens gave them the opportunity to climb the occupational ladder, but only so far. Chef Stella worked in both the front and back of the house as a manager and sous chef, also experiencing promotions only partially up the ladder. While raising her children, Chef Stella did private catering and also worked as a cook in a small café that she eventually ended up buying and still operates today. Chef Dee has owned catering businesses and several successful restaurants. All the chefs found ways during their lifetimes to navigate the gendered professional culinary kitchen while working towards a family/life balance. The following four chapters will present data compiled from the interviews held with the four women executive chefs. The data is divided into four chapters, Gendered Norms, Gender in Culinary School, Gender in the Workplace and Gendered Life in a Culinary Family.
CHAPTER 5: GENDERED NORMS

Gendered norms, those constructs that define behaviors as masculine or feminine, are pervasive throughout society. These norms are maintained, reproduced and sometimes contested. The interviews from this research produced examples of gendered norms in terms of what is expected from men and women based on preconceived notions of “commonsense” gender constructs as experienced by the four woman chef participants. The following sub-sections will discuss gendered norms as they relate to life expectations, emotions, authority/decision-making, what constitutes work, types of work and sexual conduct of workers in the professional culinary kitchen.

Life Expectations

During the first interview with Chef Jenn, she described the affluent community she grew up in and its expectations, both explicit and implicit in their lifestyles. Though her parents did not necessarily share all of these values, nevertheless, they were communicated to Chef Jenn through her interaction with friends and others in the community including educational networks.

Chef Jenn: […] It’s upper class white and everybody, my friends, my friends’ parents, not so much my parents cuz they did not grow up in this environment; […] my mom kept us really grounded. [According to] everyone else around me, we were supposed to be […] doctors, lawyers; girls are supposed to marry wealth. […] You’re […] supposed to […] get married, have kids, have a fabulous house, fabulous cars, fabulous vacations.

This notion of girls marrying into wealth also carried with it the expectation that girls were to become housewives. The school curriculum starting in seventh grade was gender-specific; it was mandatory for girls to take home economics and boys to take wood shop. In addition to learning how to cook as part of the home economics curriculum, the girls also learned
about menstruation, taught by an older woman. Boys were not allowed in the class, it was solely for girls.

Stephanie: When you were […] in those classes, what kind of message did you get when you were young, […] why were you taking home economics?

Chef Jenn: Oh, solely because we were girls […] and this is definitely the [culture of the] town that I grew up in. You’re going to marry a guy, […] take care of the house, […] be able to clean and do all the things […] a nice housewife should.

As mentioned earlier (Chapter 4), home economics in seventh grade (during the 1980s) was not all cooking; it was also “about becoming a woman.” In high school, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, home economics turned into more of a culinary class.

Chef Jenn: So in high school it switched around a bit because the home ec […] was more all cooking, it wasn’t cooking and dress making, and back when this was definitely the basics of cooking, even though they still called it home economics. […] It was cooking […] but not on a competition level or anything, but it definitely […] [was] quick breads and why they worked; […] it [included] the science side of cooking. It wasn’t so much about you need to learn these recipes, so that you could cook for a husband, it was definitely more, […] professional.

Chef Jenn also talked about the make-up of the classes. At this point there were no girls in the auto repair class, but there were a few boys that attended the home economics class. In response to a question about how many girls took the automotive classes, she responded,

Chef Jenn: Na, not many. […] I don’t even; to tell you the truth, don’t even remember one girl being in the car repair class or even in the wood shop classes. […] I don’t remember any girls taking them, no. I continued on into high school, […] anybody could take home ec at this point and there were quite a few guys that would take home ec, but it was just a big joke. For them, […] they were just coming in just to sit there […] and joke around with the girls cuz a lot of the girls took it…A lot of the guys just wanted to sit around and eat cookies, yeah and when they realized they actually had to do the dishes […], they didn’t want to do the dishes, and they just wanted to sit there in the chairs.

She continued: “It was more work than the guys thought it would be.” When asked how she makes sense of that, she replied:
Chef Jenn: Just that it was a blow-off class, easy A, you know sit around and bake some cookies. They just wanted to get fed. I mean literally, I remember being very [...] annoyed with the guys in the class. They didn’t clean, they didn’t want to set up, [...] the girls were doing all the work. They got it done.

Boys took home economics because they thought it would be an easy A, and also it was perceived as a way to socialize with girls. When the boys saw that baking and pastry was hard work, they did not sign up for subsequent baking and pastry classes.

As previously mentioned, girls were expected to marry into wealth, and boys were expected to land high-paying jobs. Chef Jenn did not ascribe to this traditional model; she wanted to become a chef,

Chef Jenn: I don’t know I just never, I thought [...] they were ridiculous and I thought that was really ridiculous. [...] I loved to work [...] like working at the chocolate shop was good and that I [...] wanted to become a chef.

Chef Jenn had cooked not only at home but also had a job making candy in a candy shop in high school, which she loved, even though cooking was not looked upon as a viable, acceptable career. When Chef Jenn articulated that she wanted to pursue a culinary career, she was met with much surprise and condescension from the people in her community,

Chef Jenn: It was just [...], why would you do that, like you’re going to cook in a kitchen; [...] it was so very much viewed as being a servant. [...] I didn’t have that view at all, [...] I felt like I wanted to go to culinary school because [...], look what I’m doing with candy. [...] I got the impression that I was becoming a servant from the people around me and [...] in this big town that I grew up in, the kids that I was around you, when I would tell my friend’s parents that I wanted to go to culinary school, there were like oh…really?

Though all chefs in the study learned how to cook in the home, taught by their family member(s), Chef Jenn attended public schools where home economics classes were offered. Chefs Stella, Chris and Dee went to private schools and/or college preparatory schools where home economics was not offered. The other three chefs dealt with other expectations, particularly set forth by their parents.
Chef Chris loved to cook since she was a child. For her, the decision to pursue a professional culinary career was altered a bit by the expectations of her parents. Though her parents wanted her to get married and have children, they also had strong ideas about her education.

Chef Chris: I don’t really think of my parents as prejudiced people, but I think that they think that a lot of the people that you work with in the restaurant industry are kind of bottom of the barrel for some reason.

Chef Chris’ parents had reservations about a career in the restaurant industry because of their perceptions of who works in the industry. They, instead, were supportive of her getting a degree and working in some type of food research facility.

Chef Chris: [Sigh], […] not educated, maybe you know some of them, I mean you can have a record and still work in this industry, […] you can have […] a felony and still be working with you, next to somebody who does, […] but I never really looked at that as a bad way. […] I think they always looked at it that it was people who weren’t motivated […] that stayed. […] They always wanted more from me and pretty much they were always hesitant of me wanting to make it a career actually, stay in it as long as I did.

According to Chef Chris, her parents always encouraged her to do things regardless of her gender. Chef Chris relates:

Chef Chris: I guess in one standpoint even though my parents discouraged me from […] pursuing a career in the restaurant industry, […] they always made sure, […] ever since I can remember, that it didn’t matter that we were women; we could do anything that we wanted. […] We always were instilled with this self-confidence that we were as good […] if my dad had daughters it was quite all right with him. It wasn’t a big deal that he didn’t have a son. […] I think that obviously coming from a secure background like that definitely made me a little more sure-footed and definitely a little bit more self-confident in that aspect.

Though Chef Chris’ parents instilled confidence in her to succeed, they wanted her to go to school first and major in something that would lend itself to a number of career choices.

Chef Chris: I remember that […] I contacted one down in Texas, one in Kentucky, […] but they had all […] discouraged me since I was so young […] they said that [I] might not fit in, […] with the average age of the students. […] It was 1993-94 […] so you’re
looking at […] culinary schools that […] haven’t quite changed [as] they have right now, […] so it was definitely discouraged. […] My mom was a little more supportive than my dad. […] My mom was at least you know supporting […] the fact OK, if you want to go and look at this, fine, […] but when once it […] came back that […] you are going to be too young to go, they said, […] plus my parents have both had a pow-wow off to themselves, and said that if you choose to actually go to culinary school, we need to make sure that you get a college degree first so that you’re more well trained and you’re not just pigeon- holed for training for just one career. […] Education was always stressed with my parents. So they told me college degree first […] and then if you still want to go to culinary school, but they never even said […] that it was going to be paid for.

There was a point where Chef Chris’ parents thought an education might lead to a less strenuous, more family-friendly job.

Chef Chris: So I went back to obviously use those credits […] and eventually get a degree, so […] I think that my parents definitely, you know, while I was back there living in, in another [city/town in a western state], […] they said, you know, why don’t you know, just live with us? Since they kind of lived in a suburb of another [city/town] that was closest to [farm country], so it was kind of easy to do that, but they definitely […] hoped that I would get out of the business. [They] definitely thought I spent too much time […] working; that I worked too hard.

Stephanie: What did they want you to do instead of work?

Chef Chris: Mom always thought that, “Oh well with your culinary background, you could teach, you could, you know, run the hot lunch program at schools.” I could work at a corporate food science company, because I think that’s what they felt was a more appropriate job for me. […] My sister […] she works in a lab right now, […] she’s a med tech […] and I think, that they think that […] is a good job for her. You know, she doesn’t work too hard, […] and she can spend time with her kids. […] That was definitely one of those things where my parents were like, “Well, like how are you going to meet somebody in this field? You’re never going to get married, you’re never going to have a relationship, you’re never going to have kids.” […] I think that they never really looked at the fact of, “OK what is it that you really want to do?”

Chef Stella had a similar experience in that her parents also wanted her to earn a business degree, and then if she chose to, she could go on to culinary school.

Chef Stella: I actually wanted to be a baker; I liked baking and […] making cookies and cakes; […] that is […] the field that I wanted to go into as a kid and then after high school, I did […] as well, so I went and researched schools […] all over, in a [large city in the Midwest], east coast, west coast […] to look for […] a culinary school but into the baking field I wanted to go. My dad said, “No,” he said, “That’s not what you want to
do.” He said I needed to go to school two years […] before I decided if I did what to go into the field, [or] something else whether it be business […] because I did grow up in the business. I grew up in a retail business, my father owned a department store so I learned from the bottom to the top of retail, so I knew retail like the back of my hand. So I said, “OK, I’ll do it.” I went 2 years, […] accounting/computer is what I majored in. […] I went to a small Catholic college in a near-by state. After the end of the two years I knew I didn’t what to pursue that field so I […] researched with my mom […] culinary schools and one of them I liked was a [culinary school in the Midwest].

Though Chefs Jenn, Chris and Stella talked about parental expectations, Chef Dee talked more about her own goals of earning a degree in archaeology. After graduation, her parents told her that she was now on her own, so she went to work in a restaurant.

Chef Dee: I never thought it would be a vocation, I always thought it would be a hobby. It never occurred to me to cook. I was an academic, I was always going to be, I was well, I was, I went to school to be an archeologist. I was always going to be an archeologist and um but first I was going to try to stay in school as long as I could, just to learn […] and I was very surprised after my […] four years of college when my parents said, well you’re on your own now.

Though Chef Dee considered herself to be an academic and sought to pursue a career as an archaeologist, that changed when upon college graduation, her parents told her she was on her own. She went to work at a restaurant to support herself:

Chef Dee: [Both laughing] You know, […] any other schooling is at your expense and that kind of took the pleasure out of it. [Both laughing] and so […] I got a job at a restaurant, because I was going to take the proverbial year off from school and earn money to go back to graduate school. […] I met my [husband/partner] in high school […] so we were already dating and […] we were married shortly […] after college. […] So we were lucky enough that his parents were nice enough to send us to a culinary school in a [large eastern city], which is just a six-month program. […] We were […] dumb enough at age 24 to say that we could open our own place and so we did. […] It was successful; […] we worked at it, we worked as hard as possible. […] You said something about church and family and stuff like that; I […] our family is, was very close. […] Dining was, as I said, very, very important.

Chef Dee had the support of her immediate family and in-laws to build a career in the restaurant industry with her husband.
Gendered norms contribute to the choices that people make when contemplating their life courses. It is clear that in the case of Chef Jenn that social expectations position men to be the bread winners in a family, in this case having high status and high-paying jobs, while women are responsible for domestic duties, particularly being “good wives” and taking care of their families. How women have navigated life in both the home and workplace will be discussed in a later section. Gendered norms also influence work. In the following section, how the women chefs experienced what constitutes work will be discussed.

What Constitutes Work

Whenever talking about work, it is helpful to understand what is considered to be work and who is expected to carry out the tasks involved in particular types of work. Traditionally the jobs done by men are perceived as harder than those done by women. According to Chef Chris, there is a perception that cooking at home is easier than professional cooking:

Chef Chris: You know, cooking at home is sissy but […] cooking in the field is roar, a man’s job and [they’ve] earned a fair wage; I’ve never understood that and I guess that’s why I lasted as long (chuckle) in the industry as I did. […] I think honestly, because traditionally if we look at society, […] the men always had the back breaking work, the very labor intensive jobs of […] going to the factories, going to the steel mills, […] working out in the fields. […] So when we look at […] very hard strenuous jobs, […] that was always considered man’s work, […] if we look at society norms. So I think, what we look at in the kitchen is […] if you’ve got […] a 40-pound box of bones that you need to make stock with well you’re not going to carry […] two pounds at a time up those stairs, you’re going to carry the whole fuckin’ box up and it doesn’t [matter] whether you’re a man or a woman the stock needs to get made. […] You’re lifting […] a lot of heavy, heavy things. […] It dumbfounds a lot of my friends even to this day about my upper body strength. The fact that […] when I move I’m literally like one of the guys. I’ll pick up heavy boxes, but I guess in this industry […] you’re moving heavy stockpots, you’re moving heavy boxes, you’re moving inventory, your beer kegs around. It doesn’t depend on gender, at all, but I think […] that historically why people think it’s a man’s job is because number one, it’s very hard work and maybe […] a lot of women don’t have the strength for it but a lot of men don’t either. […] I think what you look at is that it’s backbreaking work, it’s hot, […] you sweat a lot. […] You’re definitely not coming off of […] the shift looking like a petite flower; like you just worked a shift at Victoria’s
In culinary school, there was a sense of what constituted work and who did the work. For the most part, men did the heavy lifting.

Chef Jenn: Yeah, [...] if it was just tables or chairs or we needed to wheel the tables, the girls [...] would help out, sure. But [...] if it came up to something heavy, like lugging 50 pounds of fish filets [...], they’d have the guys do it for sure. All the heavy lifting the guys did, yeah, not too many, I don’t remember jumpin’ in (laughter). Yeah, [...] most of the time the girls, [...] I remember hauling bags, you know, 50 pound bags of flour and sugar and all that kind of stuff but [...] like if there was anything heavy duty, the guys would do it.

Chef Jenn elaborates on the body type that is most associated with restaurant work:

Chef Jenn: There definitely is a type, a body type, and I’m not just saying because you’re fat you’re strong, cuz that’s not true either. [...] No, the guys that were strong, strong guys in shape they had the stamina, you know to be working in a kitchen for 12 hours and actually getting work out at the same time, by moving the fish, and the ice and the potatoes and helping unload a truck for the delivery coming in [...], the delivery guy is blocking the alley, you know. We got to get the food out, off the truck, really quick. [...] In the industry, there is a notion that men work harder than women because of the type of work that they do, the rhythm of the line, the periodicity (slow vs. busy times) of work and the hot, sweaty conditions associated with kitchen work.

Chef Chris: I think it’s the preconceived notions that [...], they feel that automatically a man works harder than a woman, you know, it’s always the traditional roles of [...] “a man always does the rrrrr, the behemoth work, the dirty jobs” and [...] the women just really can’t, do the job [...] sometimes that a man can do; that was very much [...] the attitude [...] that I’ve always [got]. Alex would [...] tease me being in the back of the line, “Like are you sure you can handle it being a girl back there on the line?”

Dirty, heavy-lifting jobs are perceived as being more masculine in nature and are considered to be hard work, the type of work not associated with women.

In another interview, Chef Stella relates an experience working in a family-owned restaurant where the line was mostly women; however, the line was not a cooking line, it was an
assembly and reheating line (microwave). The night crew, all older men, came in and cooked all the food.

Chef Stella: I started off […] at the bottom of the line, which was working their microwaves. […] Well, you do prep work and stuff but it was, […] I remember veggie plates covered in plastic wrap, thrown in the microwave. I remember the spaghetti, when you worked the spaghetti, you just dropped the spaghetti and the linguine and then you put the sauce on it, but it was just no brainer stuff, is what it was. But it was something that was in the culinary world and […] for me to just start at something like that it was actually probably pretty good, not having to do anything.

Stephanie: Were you the only girl on the line?

Chef Stella: Actually no, […] there [were] two other girls on the line, while sporadically there was […] one woman manager, so there [were] people in the kitchen who […] were women, which is good. I […] got along with them too, so it was really good. […] They were at the top of the line so it was just a matter of working your way […] up the line. […] I learned really fast and obviously I worked my way up through the line and I did well. I mean […] I moved up and it only took a year, […] where you get some people who don’t move or strive […] to keep going.

Stephanie: Did you guys make things from scratch or was it more…

Chef Stella: Where I worked […] they had a team of people that came in at night and did all the cooking and everything at night like […] the pastas, the sauces, […] all that. […] The only thing we did were like making the burgers and the sandwiches and stuff like that…[…] [night cooking crew] older men, all men, it was all men, […] I don’t think I’d seen any women coming.

In this situation, a staff of older men came in at night to make the food from scratch and the women who worked on the line made burgers, sandwiches, heated food up in the microwave and assembled plates of pasta. The work of the night shift assumed a higher level of cooking skill than that of the “line.” The “line” was mainly concerned with flipping burgers, making sandwiches and heating up food.

Even in the capacity as an executive chef of a corporate company that catered to the home cook, the position of executive chef was not seen as professional. Chef Jenn talks about an
experience she had with a male classmate after she returned to culinary school after years in the industry as an executive chef.

Chef Jenn: Yeah, […] I went back to culinary school. Well, we started out with […] eight people and the one guy his name was Dan, […] he was just, […] I knew he wasn’t going to make it in the industry. He had a horrible arrogant attitude; he definitely didn’t think women should be there. He was dismissive. […] The way he carried himself, […] our interaction, I mean, I was way older than him; I was 33 he was probably 21, 22. […] I’d already been in the industry as an executive chef and I’m coming across this punk kid and I’m […] telling him, “Dude, you got to get over there and clean.” […] I definitely had become a leader in my industry and now I was back in school, I wasn’t trying to […] overpower the chef instructor by any means but the chef instructor, Maestro wasn’t doing anything. […] I stepped in […], “Get over there and start, hop to it.” Across the board, […] this guy […] his attitude […] was bad; […] he didn’t think women should be there. […] He laughed when I was […] the executive chef for Cooking, it’s a huge company, Fortune 500 company and so […] he thought it […] was like Suzy Homemaker, […] just a big joke. […] I hate that attitude.

When Chef Jenn got back to the city, this attitude towards women in the industry scared her; she thought it would hold her back from trying to get an executive chef position.

Chef Jenn: Even though I [had been] an executive chef, […] trying to get an executive chef job as a woman, I don’t know, I think that a lot of chefs in the city would look at me and say, “OK you worked for Corporate Cooks, the home cook, like for home makers” and even though […] I had been a real chef, executive responsibilities, I just didn’t feel like anyone would take it […] seriously. […] I know that […] the executive chefs, not just in the city but anywhere […] would just think that it’s Suzy Homemaker and that’s it, […] they wouldn’t take it seriously.

In addition to the gendered norms above, it is important to understand how the term chef is received and generally understood as it relates to gender. When the term chef is used, the chef is assumed to be male.

Chef Dee: I mean, you know, I never knew any chef that was a star and sexy, […] but it really […] is interesting that people refer to me as a woman chef. I mean it’s not just a chef. […] I never really noticed it particularly. I never really noticed it until somebody pointed it out to me or read about it in a magazine or something like that. It’s like yeah, they never say the male chef or the man chef over there, you know, they never talk about Rick Bayless as being the man chef or Giuseppe Tentori you know.
The term chef (translated from French, chief) is usually associated with males. When a man is a chef he is called chef, but when a woman is a chef, she is usually singled out as a female or woman chef. Chef Dee and her husband/occupational partner have witnessed this first hand.

Chef Dee: Actually […] I remember hearing him on the phone […] because being in the front of the house he answers the phone most of the time. This was […] probably eight years ago […] there was a nut company that wanted our business and […] I don’t know if I hadn’t returned his calls, or something like that, cuz I wasn’t interested, but […] I remember my [husband/partner] saying, “Well the chef here is a woman and I guess if you’d done your research you would have known that” (laughing) and hung up on him. […] I guess he said, “I’ve been trying to get your chef and he won’t answer my calls,” or something like that. […] You’d know the chef here is a woman if you’d done your research, you would have known that. […] So he would […] certainly stick up for me but I wouldn’t ask my [husband/partner] to deal with something […] that would be saying, “I can’t deal with this on my own.” I mean if it’s something I can’t lift or something if I need help just thinking through […] that’s when I’ll ask him for his help, but I’m not going to go ask him to beat up the bully for me, […] I’ll figure out how to deal with the bully.

Understanding that professional kitchens are typically male-dominated arenas, the next section discusses what types of work are usually associated with the very few women who cook in professional culinary kitchens.

Types of Work in the Restaurant Industry

There are stereotypical notions about what constitutes the type of work that men and women carry out in the restaurant industry. Women are typically hired in garde manger (pantry: salads) and/or pastries. Chef Stella met her husband, a fellow chef, in culinary school. She relays the story of how after graduation she got her first job in a country club kitchen. In a country club setting, women usually work as waitresses in the front of the house, but Chef Stella was applying to be a cook.

Chef Stella: After graduation he [her husband] had a job at a major hotel in [downtown in a large city in the Midwest] and I set up internship over there […] and I went out looking for a job. […] I ended up finding a job at a country club, […] looking in the paper and seeing a position for a cook. So I said, “Oh, that’s interesting I think I could do that […]
Both laughing] as [...] a woman. I grew up in the country club system, my parents were members, [...] we were members and I hated going. [...] I wasn’t a kid that loved to go [...] there because I didn’t like the people that were there. [...] We went on Sundays [...] for brunch. [...] Growing up, as a kid, we went and we went swimming and you did whatever; I played golf, I think that’s the only thing that I really did enjoy, was golf. But anyways, so I said, “Yeah I think I’m going to go for a job in the country club,” and my dad goes, “That’s a good idea”, he goes, “Now you know what it’s like in the front, now you’ll know what it’s like to be a worker there.” I go, “Well yeah.” [...] I said, “I really didn’t like the people [...] in the front (laughing)” [...] and he understood. [...] I remember going [...] to the front desk and I asked [...] the lady sitting at the front desk, “I’d like to apply for the job.” [...] She looked at me and she goes, “We’re not hiring waitresses at this time.” [...] I said, “Oh, but I’m not here for the waitress job I’m here for the cook’s job.” [...] She turned and looked at me and then she looked into the office and the next thing you know a gentleman comes out of the office, introduces himself to me as the general manager saying, “You’re interested in the cook’s job [emphasis surprise]? I said, “Yes, I am.” [...] Then he asked [about] my background; he asked me everything. He took me around the whole place, showed me right away [...] and made me talk to the chef and pretty much hired me on the spot. So he was very open to having a woman in his kitchen whether it be on the line or anything.

Stephanie: But was he surprised?

Chef Stella: Yes, well I know [...] I surprised the lady at the front desk, that’s for sure. She’s like the kitchen (laughter). [...] Then when I was in the kitchen [...] in the beginning there was another lady, but she was in the pantry, she wasn’t on the line, [...] she was doing salads and desserts and stuff like that. [...] So that was her job and she was the only other woman in the kitchen and she was older she was had to be 60s, older, 60s, 70s maybe.

In restaurants, it is common to find women working in the front of the house (waitresses, hostesses). If women are working in the back of the house (kitchen), they are often working in the pantry (making salads) or in pastry/baking making desserts. In culinary school, Chef Chris noticed that women and men students gravitated towards particular stations.

Chef Chris: I think that, [...] if that topic came up, [...] I didn’t have any issues as far as speaking up. I think that a lot of my classmates did have issues. [...] Number 1, a lot of them had never worked in the industry; a lot of them didn’t have any idea. I think [...] even back when I went to school late 90s, they still had kind of a romanticized view as far as what working in a restaurant and a kitchen really is. [...] It’s long, hard, hot [...], the hours [...] can be gruesome. [...] I definitely saw [...] fellow women in the class [...] shy away [...] and disappear into the back, maybe do a lot of the things [...] “that the women would do.” [...] I would see them gravitate towards making a soup, or the salad. [...] The guys would want to handle the protein and they’d want to cook the protein and I
guess that never settled with me. I was like, “Why do I have to make the salad, you know, why do I have to make the desserts?” […] So for me […], I would say, […] “Guess what guys I’m here, I’m doing this, this is what I want to do,” and pretty much I didn’t take any shit off of anybody.

Without being directed to make salads and soups, women students seem to fade into the background and make the salads and soups, whereas the men students stuck with proteins (fish, meats) which is usually the entrée, the main part of the meal. When Chef Chris worked in the industry, she was often the only woman on the line; however, at one of a chain of corporate restaurants, a French Restaurant, she encountered two women whose jobs were to make salads.

Chef Chris: When I worked at the company’s French Restaurant, two women that always worked on garde manger and that was because the chef partner of the [large restaurant Corporation, CP1,] said that women really belong in garde manger because they have such delicate hands that can make salads look so much prettier than men can. Long silence.

According to her chef, the justification for hiring women to make salads is that somehow they are better at it because they have delicate hands.

When applying for a job as a sous chef, Chef Dee also experienced a stereotypical response at a job interview with a French chef who assumed she was interviewing to be a salad girl.

Chef Dee: After restaurant school I did go back and […] try to get a job in the kitchen. I actually successfully got a job in a kitchen, it was a terrible, terrible place to work and I quit after two weeks. […] Naturally since I was fresh out of restaurant school, […] I thought I would go to the best restaurant in town and ask the French male chef […] for a job as a sous chef; […] I went to school, so I must be able to do it. [Both laughing] Yeah, yeah, no management experience, I’m ready to be a sous chef [Sarcastic laughing] […] He did interview me and he said, “I don’t need a salad girl.”

[Long silence]

Chef Dee: I thought, “OK” […] I didn’t say anything. I just said, “Thank you very much.” I think […] he had all men in his kitchen, except I think there’s probably a salad girl or something like that but I mean it was pretty obvious, he had he had a very regimented, very European-style kitchen. […] It was pretty obvious that I was not going to well, I didn’t get the job there, he didn’t have any openings for the salad girl. So, […] I
applied at another restaurant […] where the chef […] was male and interviewed me and […] offered me a job, which I turned down.

In addition to women making salads, women are also accepted into the baking and pastry department of restaurants.

Chef Chris: I laugh because it seems like it’s more accepted to have women to be pastry chefs in this industry rather than savory chefs. It’s just the overall attitude that we get […] it’s just always like, “Oh, are you here for pastries?”

Stephanie: Even though baking, which is, and you know this, um baking is science.

Chef Chris: Absolutely.

Stephanie: Culinary is art and

Chef Chris: it’s more by the seat of your pants, I would say. Yeah, […] when you’re looking at the […] the bake shop, if you screw something in the beginning it’s, probably not going to turn out in the end, […] that was why I didn’t like it; […] plus […] it didn’t seem as action packed […] as what was going on like on the line.

Stephanie: It’s a different rhythm?

Chef Chris: Yeah, […] I would definitely say I’m an adrenaline junkie; […] I would honestly live and breathe for that dinner rush where you have […] have tickets coming off of the printer and actually touching the floor, […] I lived for that stuff.

Baking and pastry are much more science oriented and precise. In culinary school, Chef Jenn experienced pastry classes with both women and men students and found a division in skill along gender lines.

Chef Jenn: We had a male chef instructor, there were two male chef instructors, and the guys, their cakes man, […] they had the attitude of, “I’m never gonna do this. Why do I have to do this?” and so, the males, their cakes would just turn out horrible but they would still […] get As. Then the girls even though we were culinary students, […] we were more artists. I don’t know, more artists, we cared about it. […] It was fun to make cakes and I saw the value in it. […] You are gonna have to do this at some point, the pastry chef is not going to show up someday and you’re gonna have to be able to frost that cake or make a genoise or something. […] I think with the girls we took more time or care and wanted to make it pretty; we wanted to make it perfect. […] The guys just kind of shloped it along and I did feel a big division there.

Stephanie: And you got the same grades?
Chef Jenn: Yeah. [...] I also felt the girls all huddled together in baking and pastry. We didn’t want the guys in our group because they were sloppy, they didn’t care, [...] they were kind of messy. [...] They were so sloppy; [...] flour all over the place, sugar all over the place [...].

Stephanie: Would they clean up?

Chef Jenn: No, [...] it’s like back in high school when the guys are just sitting there on the stools; [...] the girls, we did all the work; we wanted our stuff to turn out nice. [...] I remember we did not let the guys in my group because then they’re going to screw up my cake; [...] We’re all working together we still made individual cakes but we still had to work on teams on some things. You [...] had to work clean in the bake shop and things had to be weighed and you can’t have mistakes; they [the boys] didn’t care if they screwed up.

Stephanie: What about in the culinary classes, were they cleaning up then or what was the expectation?

Chef Jenn: Yeah…they were because [...] it just seemed like the guys were into it then, they definitely cleaned up, especially [...] in our fish class. Now we get all the fish its all it’s all cleaned and scaled and beautiful. When we had fish class at the [culinary school in the Midwest], they came in whole and we had to gut them and we had to scale ‘em; it made a mess and [...] not all of the girls were into gutting the fish. The guys were into it, they were, [...] it was great and [...] they did clean up (surprised).

Stephanie: Would you say that cleaning up after fish was more a labor intensive, like labor intensive what would you say?

Chef Jenn: It’s more because you have the scales all over the place, [...] the floor following the sink. Then you have [...] to [...] screen the guts out of the sink and throw [them] away.

Stephanie: The girls really didn’t want to do that?

Chef Jenn: Yeah, they helped. [...] Some of the guys really like gutting the fish, we would let them gut all the fish and then we would work with the filets; [...] make the racks.

Stephanie: What would girls do when they were cleaning the fish?

Chef Jenn: We would watch; [...] we would stand around, we were interested. The girls would be like, “Oow, ew” which it’s not good sometimes in the kitchen because again the guys they feel all macho and it gives them the impression that a girl can’t handle that.
Baking and pastry are more precise than culinary arts, women seem to gravitate towards pastry, men culinary. Chef Dee also sees advertising media as a place where women are associated with pastries.

Stephanie: Do you ever come across anything that’s woman chef oriented in pop culture?
Chef Dee: Pastries, pastry chefs
Stephanie: Except the top 10 pastry chefs are all men.
Chef Dee: Yeah, […] well that’s true. I think when people think of they do. You see that TV ad or I don’t know if it’s […] some ad […] where the woman’s got the little pastry shop; […] it’s just better that way, cuter that way, it seems more friendly […] I actually I see a lot of female culinary students and I still don’t see a lot of people [women] in kitchens.

Women it would seem are associated with pastries more than they are culinary, and further, Chef Jenn experienced firsthand how pastry is perceived as being easier than culinary. Women are often relegated to the pastry/baking station.

Chef Jenn: Well, it’s the girly thing like the executive chefs would always think it’s just what the women do. […] The women can’t handle the grill or the sauté you know God forbid, that a woman grill a piece of meat.
Stephanie: What is it about grilling a piece of meat that women can’t do? (Both laughing)
Chef Jenn: I don’t know. […] It’s just like me manly go back to caveman times, […] Neanderthal. (Both laughing) Arrrrrrr [Flexing muscle]

This particular notion of pastry was demonstrated in the workplace. Chef Jenn, after graduation with her first degree from culinary school in the 90s, worked with fellow graduates in the industry. Though she felt women were welcome and treated equally in culinary school, once out in the industry, former classmates treated the women in stereotypical ways by relegating them to the “easier” side of the kitchen, pastries.

Chef Jenn: It was great and the chef and the sous chef were graduates from the [culinary school in the Midwest] so we all thought we’d be on the same page. […] We are all from the culinary school […], so it’s going to be no problem and it wasn’t really a problem
except that the chef was a screamer and I never paid attention to him. […] I knew that I was doing a good job and he […] did put me and [Another girl 1], the other girl from the [culinary school in the Midwest] on pastries. […] We never got out of pastries for two seasons.

Stephanie: What were you guys making pastries and what else, what were the other stations?

Chef Jenn: Well, we were doing pastries and there was sauté, grill, garde manger, prep. The whole line was all guys, […] these are guys I went to school with, […] we were all at the same level but […] Peter […] was the chef. Peter put [another girl1] and I on pastries because I guess in a [major city in mountain country] there are barely any women, […] there’s really no women in the kitchen. […] I think it was two fold, he was a jerk and thought that women should only be over there in pastries. […] The second thing is that these guys don’t care about pastries and they never looked good and he knew that we would do well, and so we did them.

Stephanie: You said at a culinary school in the [Midwest] it was mostly men in pastry.

Chef Jenn: Yes, our pastry chefs were males. […] I definitely felt, […] we were there because we would do a better job with the pastries than the men, […] the chef put us there. […] He yelled at me one night [while] we were waiting for the Snow Cat to come pick us up. […] We couldn’t get down […] so I was mad because I just got hit, hit, hit with orders and I couldn’t plate them up fast enough and you would think that some of the guys off the line would come help me, no.

Stephanie: These were the pastries you were plating?

Chef Jenn: Yep, and the pastry station’s right next to the line and these guys can see me going down, I’m going down in flames, cuz, I can’t […] get the food out fast enough and people are complaining; the waitstaff’s complaining. They [male line cooks] were cleaning, they wanted to get out of there, they wanted to go smoke cigarettes outside and it’s just pastries…I remember one guy saying to me, “It’s just pastries. What, you just put it on a plate. So, you don’t have to cook anything because it’s already prepared.” You know, but plating it is difficult because you have sauce, the pastry, the garnish.

Stephanie: This was a composite dessert?

Chef Jenn: Yeah, and we had five or six of them and some of them had to be heated. Oh God and I’m one person trying to get all the pastries out. […] No one helped me and it was a disaster.

Stephanie: Did you ever help them if they needed help or didn’t they need help?

Chef Jenn: I helped them with prep. […] If my pastries were done I would help them prep, they had a lot to prep. […] I’d also run their dishes; the sauté guy was right next to
me and he would have a stack of sauté pans, dirty sauté pans and they would make me mad cuz they were on the floor. That’s gross! [...] We didn’t have a run so I would take his sauté pans; so yeah, I helped. [...] They were all friends from the culinary school [in the Midwest] and they all lived together. I didn’t live with them; all the guys and one of the girls lived together. I didn’t because I knew that [it] was going to be a problem; [...] so I didn’t do that. [...] It was definitely an insult, he yelled at me and told me I wasn’t working fast enough, and what was my problem. [...] I told him, “Well my problem is that nobody helped me and you guys think it’s so easy but, you know if the sauté guy was going down in flames you’d help him out.” So that’s one of the only times I ever like talked back to a chef. [...] The result [...] was it was in the winter season and then there is always a break, the mud season, while the snow’s melting; [...] then we reopen for the summer. [...] There is no guarantee that you’ll get hired for the summer. [...] He didn’t hire me for the summer.

Stephanie: Did you apply?

Chef Jenn: Oh yes, yeah.

Stephanie: What about the rest of the people?

Chef Jenn: All hired.

Stephanie: Except you?

Chef Jenn: Yep.

Stephanie: And what do you make of that?

Chef Jenn: Oh, he didn’t like that I talked back to him and that he thought my job was easy; [...] I wasn’t fast enough or efficient enough.

Though plating pastries can be quite labor intensive, the chef and line cooks thought they were easy to make and plate. Based on this assumption, the line cooks did not help the pastry chefs when they needed it, during service. The head chef also thought the pastry job was easy, and when Chef Jenn voiced her frustration that she received no help when it was needed, despite the fact that she applied for a job for the next season, she was the only one not hired back. Underlying this example is a theme of authority/decision-making. The next section will discuss gendered norms that contribute to particular notions of authority and decision-making amongst men and women chefs in the culinary kitchen.
Authority/Decision-Making

Chef Jenn’s experiences in the back of the kitchen were the result of her male boss’s decisions on where to have her work as well as exercising his authority to not rehire her for the next season. This scenario is common with bosses—they make decisions; however, when women chefs are in positions of authority, they are not always viewed as being the boss and are sometimes perceived by others as not having authority. Several times, though Chef Chris was the sous chef, she didn’t have the support of her executive chef, and some of the employees almost treated her as if she worked for them.

Chef Chris: I think James was probably trying to pull the shit on him […] plus, I mean, he was trying to reinvent the wheel, which it wasn’t going to happen at that restaurant. They were so entrenched in their ways that it just wasn’t going to happen. […] You had people that have worked there 10 years in the kitchen and […] if you don’t have [the] support of your executive chef behind you, there’s only so much that you can do. James never wanted to be the ram-rodder, be the hard ass, and have to make the tough decisions, or say, “No, this is the way we’re going to do it.” Case in point, our day time […] supervisor I called him Sugar Man, because he would add sugar to our French onion soup and […] and he would take a small mixing bowl and just add sugar to it. […] Our bordelaise, had sugar finished at the end. […] I was just like we can’t have the sauces made like this, this isn’t correct, this isn’t right. […] I tried [to] talk to James about it, I talked to Sak, who would make it. Sak told me, “Well this is the way I’ve always made it, this is the way I’m going to keep making it until somebody tells me differently.” Even though, technically, I was Sak’s boss; Oh, it didn’t matter. He looked at me as almost as if I worked for him, because he had been there for so long. […] Again, James […] which was always kind of interesting […]; I remember one time he actually pulled me in to the back room with Sak because he thought I was causing friction in the kitchen with Sak. [I said,] “It’s like no, I just want Sak to do things properly and do things right.” “You know, and if I order something, don’t fucking send it back, because I ordered it. […] Who cares if he’s there first and he’s checking in the orders. If I order a case of tortillas so the guys can have comida, you know my God, it’s $14.00, don’t fucking send it back if it keeps them happy.” […] If that’s what they want to eat rather than the other shit […], that they’re not going to have and they’re not going to be happy with and they’re not going to eat. […] What is $14 for a case of tortillas going to do? Or if I want to order you know a few bunches of cilantro, […] he would send it back.

The dynamics in this kitchen show how Chef Chris, though she was a sous chef, didn’t always have authority. Her executive chef did not support her when doing her job.
Chef Dee owns a restaurant with her husband, she is back of the house manager, and he is the front of the house manager. She experienced some difficulty in initially establishing authority in her own restaurant. Deliverymen challenged both her ability to make decisions as well as her authority.

Chef Dee: I remember one time he came in and he said [...] I was actually in the middle of service, I was expediting, I was trying to get stuff out and [...] he came in and the space where he usually put the order [...], had something else in it and he goes, “Where the hell am I supposed to put this now.” [...] I turned around and I kind of went, “Um, um, um,” he goes, “God damn-it, you’re, you know just like a woman you can’t decide anything!” [Long silence] [...] I thought, I’m not going to cry which was my first reaction because I was just frustrated and when I get frustrated I have a tendency to get kind of teary. [...] He would, he would completely ignore me and lie and ask one of the male cooks for his signature and stuff. I had to turn around and say, “Excuse me, I’ll sign that.” [...] If I ever had a complaint he would he would grumble and stamp and you know. I loved sending stuff back with him because I just thought, this is this would just piss him off. [Both laughing]

The deliveryman makes a broad stereotypical statement about the indecisiveness of women; he also uses his opinion in a pejorative way to put Dee down. Chef Dee decided to report the deliveryman’s behavior and have him removed from the route. Chef Dee decided to report the deliveryman’s behavior and have him removed from the route.

Chef Dee: Actually I had a male sales rep and I bypassed him completely, I didn’t even call him, I called the head of sales who was a woman, [...] I don’t know if I called, I don’t think I called her because she was a woman, but I knew she would understand what I was talking about. [...] I guess I did call her because she was a woman. [...] I just said, I can’t remember her name, [...] I said, “You got to get this guy out of here, this is what’s happening.” [...] I figured that going to her [...] something would get done. If I just went to Mike, my sales person, it might not carry the weight. You know I can’t deal with this anymore, he’s got to go, I figured that she would understand what I was saying because, she’s a woman and also because she had more power, because she was the head of sales.

Not only was the head of sales a woman, Chef Dee thought that as a woman the boss may understand her situation from a woman’s perspective.

In contradiction to the idea that women are indecisive, Chef Stella found that she enjoys leadership roles in the restaurant industry. She liked being a leader in her culinary classes.
Chef Stella: Yeah, I did, I did. I didn’t like a lot of […], don’t know, I liked telling people what to do I guess. I was very strong but […] I didn’t like it when things didn’t go my way. Obviously, that was the way it worked. [Laughter]

After working in the industry in a variety of capacities, Chef Stella now owns and runs her own café.

Connected to gendered norms of authority and decision-making is the idea of emotions and the role(s) they play in perceptions of who works in the professional culinary kitchen. Typically, women are seen as emotional, whereas men are seen as straightforward and non-emotional. The next section will cover findings related to the emotionality of men and women in the workplace.

**Emotions**

Restaurant work as discussed in previous chapters consists of long hours, heavy lifting and urgency. The goal is to get food out to the customers. It is important to be focused and work as a team. In culinary school, there seemed to be an overall acceptance of women in the industry; however, once students worked outside of school kitchens, in the industry they noticed a change in attitude of their male counterparts. In school Chef Jenn and her classmates participated in catering events in major hotels in a large city in the Midwest. She recalls the difference between her experiences in school as opposed to being out in the field:

Chef Jenn: In school, I never felt that because I was a girl I didn’t belong here. […] I definitely felt like I was a minority and I definitely felt like when we would go out to do those catering things I’d keep my mouth shut […] and do the best I can to keep up with the guys. […] With the guys it’s all business, it’s not emotional […].

After she graduated from culinary school and went into the field with classmates she saw a difference in how men viewed women in the kitchen.

Chef Jenn: The chef instructors, […] it was a fantastic relationship, we learned a lot from everybody, but we were pretty restricted, […] nobody really stepped out of line. […] In
class, out of class, when we were [...] going to the bar and stuff (laughing), that was different. [...] When we actually got into the industry [...] it changed, [...] the professionalism dropped in some places that I worked; [...] the guys were horrible, talked about girls, “Girls don’t belong here,” and all that kind of stuff.

Working in professional kitchens, Chefs Jenn, Stella and Chris experienced the urgency of kitchen work. Chefs Jenn and Chris also acknowledged the gender divide involving responses to kitchen situations.

Chef Jenn: I realized that, yeah the girls, especially when I graduated from the culinary school [of the Midwest] and got my first job working out on the [West coast], um it was busy, it was very busy and [...] in the [Wine country], [...] we’d have these wine groups come in and oh my God we would get hit; a hundred orders, 100 people descend on us all at once. [...] Oh gosh, and the chef was a really nice guy, I know he’s a nice guy but when you got a hundred orders coming, you better have those salads ready (laughter). [...] If they’re not ready, he’s going get up upset, [...] he’ll say, “Where are those salads, where are those salads,” and not be so nice about it. I realize really [...] he’s not yelling at you because you’re a bad person, it’s not personal; he just needs you to get the food out. [...] Granted it’s not effective to I think yell at people, but it’s a tense situation and guys and girls in the kitchen deal with it differently. Men take it and move on and at the end of the shift everything’s fine…some times, because with the guys it’s all business, it’s not emotional [...]. Like [...] if a chef, male chef barked an order like, “Clean up that plate,” like, “This plate’s not clean enough, wipe that edge.” you [...] go, “OK”, and do. [...] If you say that to a girl sometimes [...] she would say, “OK, I’m sorry.” [Whining] [...] I definitely realized you cannot show any kind of weakness like that.

Stephanie: So showing emotion like that is a weakness.

Chef Jenn: Yes, because the guys, they can’t have that in the kitchen, it’s too disruptive. [...] If you start crying, especially for guys, I mean we’re and I’m kind of getting away from school and it’s kind of getting out of.

Women tend to respond in emotional ways to the work environment, whereas men tend to treat work like a business. Chef Jenn characterizes behaviors she experienced in the back of the house as being “girly.”

Chef Jenn: I would say it was even harder for the girls because they wanted to keep up with the guys; [...] they wanted the respect of the chef instructors and the guys in the class.

Stephanie: How did [...] you perceive you had to act to [...] get their approval or to be accepted?
Chef Jenn: Not to be a girly in any way. Like I said, [...] we got to know each other right.

Stephanie: Which means what? What does girly mean?

Chef Jenn: Not real emotional, you can’t come in and start talking about guys and like, “Oh he’s so cute.”

Stephanie: Did they ever talk about girls?

Chef Jenn: Ah, I gotta say, in class, not so much.

The “girly” way of talking also includes drama, drama about life events.

Chef Jenn: Because the way that like the girly way of talking about things, the drama is what I mean. [...] The guys don’t want to hear any drama from the girls and “Yeah, oh we didn’t think you would call me, you know, um I really like him, should I text him?,” they don’t want to hear that.

There also seemed to be a difference between how men and women chefs talked. Women seemed to participate in more gossip, particularly behind other workers’ backs, while men were less gossipy but more confrontational.

Chef Jenn: We worked together as a team to get [...] whatever needed to be done. [...] It was gossipy, like with the guys there’s not so much gossip, the guys just call each other out on stuff, where the girls go behind each other’s back; you never really know [...] who’s your friend and who’s not. The guys, they would be a little more honest. [...] There’s no gossip, well I can’t say there’s no gossip but it’s not nearly as catty. No, they don’t really talk about each other behind each other’s back, it’s more confrontive, [...] they confront each other, where the women don’t.

Women chefs were more gossipy and took criticism to heart, while men chefs let criticism roll off their backs and were more confrontational. In the professional culinary kitchen, urgency dictates that you focus on the task at hand, getting the food out above all else.

Emotionality and gossip are viewed as hindrances in getting the food out on time and in an acceptable manner. Emotionality is seen as weakness and is specifically seen as feminine.

Masculine norms include being confrontational; at times confrontation included sexual conduct.
in the back and front of the house. The next section will cover sexual conduct as it plays out in
the professional culinary world.

**Bad Boy Behavior: Sexual Conduct**

Finally rounding out this section on gendered norms, data collected through the
interviewing process on sexual conduct of chefs is important and relevant to our discussion of
the gendered dimensions of the professional culinary kitchen. All of the female chefs in this
study experienced sexual conduct of their male counterparts either directly in that they were the
targets of sexual advances or, at the very least, observed sexual advances made on other women.
The following examples show the variety of ways in which sexual behavior happens in the
workplace and is/is not tolerated.

While Chef Stella was in culinary school, she noticed that some of the chef instructors
were donned as a “bunch of horny old men.”

Chef Stella: Well, I tell you, I learned a lot about chickens first and all, because that’s all
they had you do is debone chickens and you’re actually standing in the meat cooler and
it’s freezing. […] You don’t really realize [Both laughing] that […] cold it’s going to be,
but all day those guys standing there and do that. They would demo [Demonstrate], […]
they would demo the big animals, the lambs, the cows, and stuff like that. […] They were
a bunch of horny old men is what they were. [Laughter] But you know when […] they
[…] showed you body parts […] on the animal, […] he really would be obscene [and] got
everybody laughing, he was a fun guy, but he was just, he was just a horny guy. I laughed
because it didn’t bother me […]. They’re still there for a long time so obviously they
didn’t get in trouble. [Laughter] He was a butcher by trade. […] He worked in […] the
local […] butchering but he was he was quite a character.

When Chef Stella worked in the kitchen of a country club, there was also sexual language
between the back of the house and the front of the house waitresses.

Chef Stella: You know the waitresses with the big breasts coming in or […] the tight
skirts […], you’d hear all, they’re just pigs. [Laughter] They are.
Chef Dee, though she is married to her business partner and felt protected from sexual advances of others, she witnessed sexual aggressiveness towards women around her.

Chef Dee: I think there’s a lot of competition. I think that there’s some insecurity, […] that’s the way I would take [it]. None of these guys was […] a particularly, one of them […] was really well known. […] He is really well-known […] and his food’s good; is he a great manager a great chef, probably not, […] he’s having sex in the bathroom with the hostess […] [Laughing] so […] I’m not sure what it is. You know it’s funny, […] somehow I feel like that I’m kind of out of the loop since I’m married to my partner. […] I’ve always had that kind of, I don’t want to say back up, but support. […] There are two of us […] together, […] I never had to worry about […] being taken advantage of in front of the house. I’ve never had to worry about […] things not going the way I would like them to go, even though I’m behind the kitchen door. […] So that gives me a lot of security I think […] and whether that is reflected in the way I treat people or in the way […] I work, […] it can’t help but be reflected. […] I think […] everything that happens gets reflected in what I do. […] Frankly, I have never worked in a kitchen, […] well, that’s not true, […] the cook’s at the local [sit-down chain restaurant], […] there was a kitchen manager, he wasn’t a chef. […] There was a lot of bad boy kind of behavior; […] comments to waiters and waitresses and things like that, […] like […], “Hey honey […], do you want to meet me in the bathroom?” and that kind of thing (both laughing). Or […] comments on […] things that might be considered a compliment, like, “Wow you look real pretty today.” […] That might be a compliment if it wasn’t so slimy, […] (laugh) or creepy, so […].

When I asked about whether the girls took this as a compliment and how the men intended it to be taken, Chef Dee responded:

Chef Dee: I think the men are giving it as an open-ended compliment. […] I think, […] it’s funny […], it was always the girls with the big boobs that got that compliment […].

Chef Chris had a more direct experience of sexual harassment when a male chef in a walk-in freezer confronted her sexually:

Chef Chris: Well, I had complained once, he tried to make sexual advances on me in […] the freezer. The freezer was actually one of those where […] the freezer door was inside the actual walk-in cooler. […] I was going in there […] to pull crab legs or something out. […] He’d like tried to […] pat me on the ass and […] try to […] put the moves on me. […] I turned around and I […] jumped back. […] I just remember his nasty ass coffee breath. […] He was in his thirties, […] he was married and had kids. […] I think I was 26 by then, 25, 26 […] and […] I wasn’t taking shit from anybody. […] In the process of […] turning around, I elbowed him rather hardly, hard in the ribs […] and told him I wasn’t going to take that shit from him. Told him, “It is unwelcome and if you do it again I’m going to kick you right in the dick where you’re not going to be able to pick
you yourself up off the floor.” […] He’s like, “Oh I wasn’t, didn’t mean for you take it like that” and I said, “You shouldn’t be touching people period.” So I had made a complaint and a couple others [had also] but anyway, […] he was eventually fired because he was sleeping with one of the host staff, […] he was just a puke in general. Etienne [executive chef] ended up firing him just because […] fraternizing with the staff was a no-no as far as […] any type of relationship. […] Sue [general manager] had asked me if I wanted to […] take my complaint further and I said, “No, […] I don’t want to take it any further.” I said, “I’m just telling you what happened to put it out there.” She was the general manager. […] But, he had done enough shit in the front of the house that he was fired because of his front of the house antics.

This male chef was eventually fired for sexual harassment after multiple people complained about his advances. This type of scenario doesn’t always yield these results. Chef Jenn experienced another kind of sexual conduct that ended quite differently, in fact the complicity of the women in the situation helped protect the male.

Chef Jenn: He would put me down […] and he would do intimidation a lot. […] One time Kris was a real low life, like […] he was sleeping with one of our adjunct instructors. No, I’m not kidding and […] he was hitting on a female coworker. […] The female coworker told me about it and […] I couldn’t believe it, [it was] so disappointing. […] I said something to our sous chef, I had a great relationship with the sous chef and I said, “Gosh you know Kris is hitting on the receptionist, God I could hit a wall. What is wrong with him, you know?” So anyways, one of the sous chefs had told Kris. The sous chefs were female. So one of the sous chefs who, one of the female sous chefs told Kris that I knew about this situation and that I told them, so Kris very, very condescending said, “You know Chef Jenn, I would like to see in the office, but not now, in in like two hours.” So he’s trying to and trying to make me sweat it, […] make me real nervous for the next two hours about […] what it was, what did I do wrong?

Stephanie: Why did the sous chef tell him, was she telling him like, watch out we don’t like this, was it authoritative?

Chef Jenn: Yes, see […] he worked closely with this sous chef […] she liked him like, again he could be very charming and […] she was really naïve and […] tell him everything.

Stephanie: So this was like giving him a heads up?

Chef Jenn: Yeah like, Chef Jenn talking about you behind your back.

Stephanie: So she didn’t go and say because I had thought that she was saying Look we’re not going to tolerate this, it wasn’t that kind of thing? […]
Chef Jenn: No! It was Chef Jenn talking behind your back, and so he got all upset [and] he said he wanted to talk to me in two hours. […] We go into the conference room and sit down. I’m just looking at him like he’s the biggest jerk. […] He started, “A little birdie told me that you were you know, were starting rumors behind my back.” A little birdie told me. […] I just looked at him I said, “Is it true, I mean you’re hitting on the receptionist? I mean you’re sleeping with one of our chef instructors?” […] There’s another intern that he was sleeping with. […] So I said, “You know what, this is all going to come and bite you in the butt.”

Stephanie: Your jobs were on the same level?

Chef Jenn: Aha, but he was so like I said, intimidating and condescending. He was making sure that I knew that […] he was still above me and that he was in cahoots with the big guy, you know with Nick. Aha so, I just felt like I couldn’t do anything, I mean the way that he had it set up, I just couldn’t do anything; […] my hands were tied with him. […] I was right […] the intern that he was sleeping with turned around and claimed sexual harassment against him and the thing that sucked about the whole thing is that when HR came to interview all of us to find out if there was actually […] a real claim, […] a real incidence of sexual harassment. He like I say he’s so manipulative, he is five steps ahead of everybody. […] He knew that, he knew that I would have to defend him because the intern was not being sexually harassed; she was a willing partner. They were all willing partners. They were all willing partners, so I had to defend him and then the intern got let go for filing a claim.

Stephanie: So the intern who was having consensual relations got let go.

Chef Jenn: Yep. Willing, yeah, it wasn’t sexual harassment.

Stephanie: Was not sexual [harassment] even though the concept here was perhaps inappropriate.

Chef Jenn: Absolutely, but did he get in trouble for that, no. And he used sex as a weapon of control with all these girls. […] It just really, it was so unprofessional and so I just […] I couldn’t believe dealing with these two people, two men. Yeah, […] OK with the one chef instructor adjunct, […] it was control. […] If he said, “I want you to work for me, like I need you to work for me on Tuesday and Wednesday night,” she would do it in a heart beat. If he didn’t want to do prep like his own prep or just any kind of task, she would come in and do it. […] Same with the intern, oh yeah, […] he would give her a whole list of things to do and she would do them. […] It’s like here […] she was in love with him. She loves him and so does the adjunct, loves him. […] The receptionist was smart enough not to get involved, but it was really being so inappropriate I couldn’t believe it.

Out of all the chefs interviewed, only one talks about a sexually aggressive female who tries to be “one of the boys.”
Chef Jenn: I just didn’t say anything and it was gross I mean like some of the stunts she was pulling in the kitchen […] to impress the guys. […] She would grab one of the waiters and they would go downstairs into the wine room, which was right underneath the kitchen where we kept all the wine; […] they would have sex down there. They would bring a candle and condoms (making a carrying gesture with both hands). OK […] (laughter) and that was like 15 minutes before, before service starts at 5:30.

In the experience of the women chefs, men, in the kitchen, initiate the vast majority of sexual advances; in fact, gendered norms position and help explain sexual behavior of men: “boys will be boys,” a group that women are excluded from.

Gendered norms have contributed to both the structuring of the professional culinary world and also how four women chefs have and continue to experience life within this career genre. From the early stages of childhood, when gendered expectations were supported by community, parents and formal educational systems, the four women chefs took this knowledge and navigated their way to becoming sous-chefs, executive chefs and/or chef owners. Though cooking at home was acceptable and in fact something every woman should know how to do, cooking in a professional kitchen is not, in many circles, generally thought of as a career suitable for a woman. Some of this is due to how we as a society define “work.” Traditionally, we think that men work harder than women, particularly in terms of men doing heavy lifting and strenuous physical work. According to the women chefs in this study, they worked hard and often did much more than the men chefs but were not recognized for it with title, promotion and/or equal pay.

First noticed in high school programs, girls seemed to be more precise regarding measurements, end product and cleanliness than their male counterparts. It is thought that this precision leads them to become pastry chefs, which requires much more accuracy than culinary primarily because it is science based. This being the case, it is surprising that pastry is not considered a “difficult” job and further that there is an undercurrent that anyone can do it. If
women are not working as pastry cooks/chefs, they are most often found in *garde manger* (the cold pantry) making salads, the assumption being they have delicate hands more suitable for the work. Stereotypes such as this are often not accurate; nonetheless the practice of hiring women for pastry or salads has become widespread.

If a woman rises to a top position, such as a sous chef, interim executive chef, executive chef or chef-owner, it does not necessarily follow that she will be perceived as having positional leadership. Women are not viewed as being decisive. Many times, employees will surpass decisions made by a woman executive chef. This is often a difficult situation, especially when her boss or chef equivalent doesn’t support her decisions.

Other chefs and restaurant workers often see women as being more emotional than their male counterparts. In the professional culinary kitchen, this is evidenced by women taking criticism personally, perhaps having hurt feelings, as opposed to men, who seemingly let criticism roll off their backs and get the job done. Emotionality is also displayed when women talk about situations in their private lives at work. Often the hiring of women in the back of the house is seen as the reason for “bad boy” behavior.

Sexual conduct, or “bad boy” behavior is seen in professional kitchens and has been either observed or directly experienced by the four women chefs interviewed. Though bad boy behavior may include drugs and alcohol, the behavior referred to here is sexual conduct. Sexual conduct includes both inappropriate remarks and/or actual physical contact. Several of the men chefs working with the interviewees were fired because of sexual harassment.

Behavior in the kitchen, whether domestic or professional, is based on gendered norms, typically favoring a patriarchal hierarchy. When men in the professional kitchen ascribe to a particular set of beliefs and norms, it can be difficult for women to navigate the environment.
Conclusion

Gender norms influence our experiences in all areas of life. Gender norms, including life expectations, what constitutes work, gender-specific opportunities, emotions and sexual conduct, all contribute to the level of (or limitations to) success women enjoy as chefs.

Gendered social norms are learned at home and in school. Families wanted more for their children and encouraged the four women chefs to earn college degrees before going to culinary school to expand their options for work. The four woman chefs interviewed attended culinary school starting in the late ‘80s and as late as the mid 2000s. Though they felt both men and women chefs were treated equally in culinary school, they were met with inequitable treatment in the industry. This raises questions about why culinary school (career preparation) treats students equitably but the workplace does not. In the workplace, women have to struggle with emotions, authority, what constitutes work, what work is appropriate for women (pastry, salads) and sexual conduct of men chefs. In the industry, women tempt men by their very existence; men aren’t responsible for their responses/reactions. The next chapter will address how the four women chefs experienced gender in culinary schools, including the topics of culinary education, competition, work ethic and culinary vs. pastries.
CHAPTER 6: GENDER IN CULINARY SCHOOL

Over the last couple decades, the number of culinary schools has increased dramatically due in large part to the televised Food Network. The four women chefs interviewed attended culinary school during the late 1980s through the 2000s, majoring in culinary arts (not baking and pastry). The four chefs recall that the vast majority of chef instructors were men, and 25-30% of the student body was made up of women students. The following chapter will include the educational process of culinary school (Culinary School: Teach Me to Cook), a typical day in culinary school, competition, work ethic and the division of labor between culinary and baking/pastry (Culinary vs. Pastries: OK, you can work in culinary if you’re a woman, but only in garde manger, making salads).

Culinary School: Teach Me to Cook

In the last several decades, culinary education has enjoyed tremendous growth. Chef Dee commented on how she felt the media, particularly the Food Network, romanticizes the work of a chef and influences students to pursue a culinary education.

Chef Dee: I think culinary school has become [...] again, and this is what my [husband/partner] and I found, in [my culinary school in a large eastern city] it was a place were people did kind of hide for a while. [...] When you told your parents you were going to culinary school, it’s like, “Well, that’s a waste of money, why in the world would you do that?” Now it’s like, “Oh great, [because] maybe you’ll be on the Food Network or you’re going to be on Iron Chef or something like that.” [...] So now [...] it’s a very trendy thing to do. Yeah, surprise, yeah I always tell people that [...] the one thing that I think they should [...] and culinary schools will not do this because it would kill them, but, [...], if you’re going to go to school, if you’ve got the money to go to school, that’s great but do you realize that [...] in two years when you have accured all that debt, you’re going to be vying for the same $10 an hour job [...] that this guy who just came in off the street and said, “Chef, I really have a passion for food and I’ll start as a dishwasher right now.” My sister’s son actually [...] came up came to [a big city in the Midwest] to go to a culinary school [...] and ended up dropping out because all he wanted to do was cook and he’s not a very good student. He said, “I didn’t realize I’d
have to go to college.” I said, “Well, yeah.” I said, “Just stop, then don’t waste your mother’s money, go […] get a job,” and, you know, he went to Haus, […] he’s working at, Haus.

The Food Network has helped to glamourize restaurant work, and its contrived appeal has influenced many people to attend culinary school in hopes of making it big in the industry like those portrayed on television.

Even though the Food Network has played a big part in the growth of culinary schools, according to Chef Dee there seems to be differences in career aspirations among women and men students. In her recollection, the women students were serious about making culinary a career, whereas some of the men seemed to attend culinary school because they were uncertain of which career to pursue.

Chef Dee: In fact, if anything, […] and this is testing my memory here, […] the girls were a lot more interested in cooking than the boys were. […] I think some of the boys […] were there because they didn’t know what else they were going to do and […] I think for the most part as I remember, the girls were a lot more serious about a career.

All four chef participants went to culinary school in the mid-1980s through the mid-2000s. The student population was mostly male with approximately 25-30% females at each of the four culinary schools attended. The vast majority of chef instructors were men. Both Chef Jenn and Chef Chris had a woman instructor who taught the final bistro\(^9\) class. Chef Stella remembers two women teaching assistants, but only one woman instructor, a mixologist (bartending instructor). Chef Dee reported that her culinary school employed one woman chef instructor, who taught production. Though each chef had one woman chef instructor, the majority of instructors for both culinary as well as pastry were men.

\(^9\) Bistro class typically is taken as a last class in the course of study. It is usually a school run restaurant and incorporates all skills learned throughout the course.
Despite the fact that most of the instructors were men, for the most part, the four chefs interviewed felt comfortable in culinary school. Chef Jenn felt that women and men were treated the same largely because the chef instructors expected students to be professional. Though school treated everyone the same, according to Chef Jenn, the industry itself is competitive.

Chef Jenn: No, […] I felt that we were very much treated the same, the men and the girls. The guys and the girls [were] both treated the same. In school it was still pretty professional. The chef instructor I think kept it pretty tight, because the chef instructors there […] had an expectation to be professional. Yeah, […], where I was at school, […] as I mentioned before, we got along; I felt like everyone was equal. […] I felt like I could do a good job and get recognized for it, […] get straight As and everything’s great. […] I learned when I was getting out of school it’s not really like that. […] Like I said, it’s mostly men […] and it’s competitive.

Chef Jenn attributes equality amongst students with the professionalism enforced by chef instructors.

Chef Dee says that much of the work done in culinary school was done in groups. When asked how these groups were formed, she said:

Chef Dee: I don’t know, I think just whomever you were sitting with. […] Let’s see, there [was] some hostility towards us because we were from [out of state, a Midwestern state]. […] We were Rubes, you know, […] and we were married. […] Maybe we thought we knew stuff or […] maybe we rubbed people the wrong way but […] there were a few people who were […] openly hostile to us. […] “…” Everyone was really young.

Chef Dee’s experience in the classroom was related to being a married non-resident.

Chef Stella recalls that the group she worked with in culinary school was comprised of both men and women who worked well together.

Chef Stella: I think how it related for me was I […] gravitated towards older students, […] I don’t know if it was because I was older. […] I think we were more into doing it the right way and figuring out things rather than just […] throwing things together. I don’t know it’s just that’s the table of people I can remember, […] there were two guys and about three of us girls that always kind of stuck together, so […] it worked out well. We worked as a good group together so.
Chef Stella felt that the group she was part of, made up of both men and women students, worked well together.

Chef Chris’ experience in culinary school in the Northwest had a different demographic than those of the other chefs. Though women comprised about 20-25% of the culinary student population at her school, many of the women students had previous work experience in a male-dominated field, commercial fishing. In addition, the lone woman culinary instructor was a former sheriff, a vocation usually associated with men.

Chef Chris: Of them [...] maybe around 25, 20-25% [were] women. [...] But the big thing [...], when I had just moved out there, [the state on Northwest coast] had changed a lot of their fishing laws. [...] The fact that you could no longer do dragnet fishing, all [...] the fishing off the coast, they had to do line-caught fish. So they were paying for a lot of retraining of [...] fisherman, the state on [the Northwest coast] was. [...]. There was one lady in her forties, I can’t remember her name but she was one of those I think that she [...] thought, and I did, I had a mouth on me when I went to culinary school. Yeah, I mean there were definitely some that had more clear cut boundaries but those were the women that were formerly fishermen or fisherwomen. So they definitely you know, [...] they’re not going to [take] crap off of anybody either. [...] There again I think that they were working in a male-dominated field as well, so they were coming into it with, I think, the same type of mentality that they’re not going to take any crap [...] off of anybody. [...] One of my chef instructors, [...] Chef Glitter. [...] was my a la carte teacher. [...] She was five foot if she was lucky with her Dansko clogs on, but [...] she was very quick to [...] put people in their place. [She] kept a very tight ship but there again, before [becoming] a chef she was [...] a sheriff. [Chuckle]

Women who had experience working in male-dominated fields (fishing and sheriff) knew how to create boundaries that helped them navigate the professional kitchen.

Chef Chris felt that she got along with most of the students, both women and men. She feels that both her physical stature as well as her prior years of experience in professional kitchens helped her navigate the culture of the kitchen.

Chef Chris: I think that my stature definitely has a lot to do with it as well; [...] being 5’10” [...] I’m not a petite flower. So [...] I think that right then and there the fact that [...] I can match up to men [...] size wise, and I can be taller than [them] therefore, I think it kind of flips the script on them a little bit too. I’m not saying [...] that’s always [...] the mentality but I felt that when you come in with [...] a confident stance and
stature, […] I think that people just take notice and they know that you’re not going to be a push over.

Chef Chris thinks that being above average in stature for a woman worked to her advantage in the kitchen. She feels that people associate confidence with stature.

In addition to larger stature, mostly associated with men, her prior experience in the restaurant industry helped her navigate culinary school. She had already been in the industry; she already knew what it was like to work in a male-dominated field.

Chef Chris: I think […] if that topic came up, I definitely […] didn’t have any issues as far as speaking up. I think that a lot of my classmates did have issues. […] Number one, a lot of them had never worked in the industry. A lot of them didn’t have any idea […] even back when I went to school late ‘90s, they still had kind of a romanticized view as far as what working in a restaurant and a kitchen really is; […] it’s long, hard, hot you know. The hours […] can be gruesome […] so I definitely see people […] fellow women in the class […] shy away um, also kind of disappear into the back.

Women who had a romanticized view of restaurant work had no prior experience working in a professional kitchen. They often fell into gendered norms of doing work that was perceived as being less strenuous and suited for women such as making salads, soups and desserts assuming that was what was expected of them.

Chef Chris: Maybe do a lot of the things […] “that the women would do.” […] I would see them gravitate towards making a soup, or the salad […] and the guys would want to handle the protein and they’d want to cook the protein and I guess that never settled with me. I was like why do I have to make the salad, you know, why do I have to make the desserts? […] For me […] it was definitely more of, “Guess what guys I’m here I’m doing this, this is what I want to do” and pretty much I didn’t take any shit off of anybody.

Chef Chris understood what she wanted to learn from her experience and one of her goals was to be an equal partner in her classes.
In addition to being an equal partner in the kitchen, Chef Chris also felt that she was respected outside of the kitchen. For example, she relates how she was accepted as “one of the boys” outside of class.

Chef Chris: I was definitely, when I would walk [...] right outside the *ala carte* kitchen, this is when I used to smoke cigarettes, [...] it was always like, “Hey Chris come on over here, [...] let’s smoke a cigarette before we go into class. [...] Come hang out over here.” [...] Where I was again, I was in the boys club and it was just kind of just a natural thing for me. I think [...] what anybody saw in that kitchen, what I hoped [...] [they] would have seen, is that I was a hard worker, [that] I had a good work ethic. [...] I always made sure that my job was done before any type of screwing off was done. [When] anybody else needed help that was always what I’d done, first. So I think first and foremost, they always saw that I had good work ethic and I was willing to help people out.

Chef Chris felt like she was “one of the boys” by the way she was treated; men students didn’t change their behavior when she was around.

Chef Chris: Obviously if we’re talking about certain things, [...] you can obviously, definitely, tell that [...], hey there is a woman in the bunch. [...] I think when I talk about [...], part of the boys club [...] there wasn’t anything of where I would come up to the group and [...] the conversation would change or the guys would act differently; [...] they really did kind of look at me as an equal and I think they really did see the fact that I had talent.

Chef Chris felt that she gained acceptance with men students because she was a serious student and had a solid work ethic. She also recognizes that she came in with a significant amount of industry experience, which set her apart from the rest of the students.

Chef Chris: I had a fair amount of experience coming in, I was able to out maneuver, out cook, out sauté, out fabricate, out cut a lot of the students that were there. Not saying that I was the best, cuz I definitely [...], wasn’t the best, but I would [...] say that I was definitely one of [...] the top students within my class; [...] I was coming in with this real life experience. [...] They respected me first as an individual and as a cook and as an aspiring chef rather than as a woman first, and “OK let’s see what she can do.” [...] What I’ve always seen in any type [...] of kitchen, even when I’ve walked into [...], the male-dominated staff, I feel like, [...] “OK, there’s this woman in the kitchen, how is she going to behave, how is she going to act and is she going to be as affective as [...] her male counterpart.” I always feel that there’s a little bit of a testing ground when you come into this kitchen, that once you pass all their tests, and [...] they see that, “OK, yes, she can be just as hard a worker, yes she can cook, [...] like you [...] maybe a man would be able to
work to withstand the conditions.” I think then and only then are you actually treated as one of the staff or “one of the boys.”

The men students seemed to respect her talent as a chef and her aspirations to be a chef more than the fact that she was a woman. For the most part, the chefs felt that both men and women students were treated equally in culinary school.

Those who chose to pursue a career in culinary arts were required to take a set of particular classes. Though they had certain expectations, as portrayed on the Food Network, actually attending culinary school offered a particular curriculum. The curriculum in culinary includes both lecture and lab (kitchen) classes. The next section outlines a typical day in culinary school.

A Typical Day in Culinary School

A typical day in culinary school provided students opportunities to hone basic skills and learn to work within the culture of the restaurant industry.

Chef Jenn: We’d get to school, classes started at seven, they were five hours long, just like they are now, but we would get in there […] we’d be in our uniforms, the chef would come in, the food was always there, it just like magically appeared. […] I guess I never really thought about where that food came from; it just was there. […] We would go through the recipes and the chef would [Demonstrate] anything that was new or any technique, something that we wanted us to for sure pick up on and […] we would start production and that’s pretty much how it rolled. In 2005 the same idea, but now that I had been in the industry, I understood how much work actually goes into the class, like […] the chef has to order the food, get the recipes, make sure everything is set, make sure the equipment is there, like I appreciated what the chef was doing so much more, cuz now I understood what he was doing or she. [Laughter] […] So anyways, we would […] just go through the recipes, make our products. […] We would have plate up, just like we do now, we would have to plate up all our food, clear off our tables, […] and then everyone would go around and taste […] each other’s food. […] It wasn’t just the chef critiquing, everyone critiqued everybody else’s dishes. […] It was pretty good, people were pretty fair, I mean only one or two people would be real obnoxious, but for the most part, we we’re honest, like, “Oh this is under seasoned or this is burnt.” […] The reason why we did this, […] I realize it now as a chef instructor, is because we learn from each other and each other’s dishes and then talking about what happened and why; the chef would […]
be guiding us through the conversation about [...] how we could have fixed that dish, for sure.

Stephanie: What about when you were preparing the food, what were the dynamics at the table, what was the set up? [...] How did the people know what they were in charge of, how did they navigate making that food in a group?

Chef Jenn: Right.

Stephanie: You didn’t make, do it individually.

Chef Jenn: No, the savory classes no; baking and pastries, everything was individual, but [...] in the Mediterranean cuisine or Asian cuisine [classes] we worked in [...] groups of two, three, maybe four, but usually two or three and [...] we were never assigned groups. The groups just naturally formed and it’s always pretty much the guys always went with the guys and the girls were always with the girls. [...] There were very few girls in my class [...] and it just seemed even with the women, just one person [...], whoever was a natural leader, would [...] get in there and start dividing up the recipes. Um yeah, I guess like we were talking over the last couple of interviews, even though we like the guys in our class and we all got along, um, they weren’t cleaning up after themselves, or if they were working really [...] sloppy or you know, messy, [...] we just didn’t want to deal with it at all. It was easy, especially in 2005 when I went back, [...] I just wanted to work really clean, really fast, organized.

Stephanie: So you navigated, you made an assumption that if it was all girls, it would be cleaner?

Chef Jenn: Yes

Stephanie: You navigated out of being the women that cleaned up after the men?

Chef Jenn: Yeah, yeah absolutely. “...” But [...] thinking back to my group, not just the girls I was working with, but the guys in my class, they also stuck together because they like to. It was competition for them; [...] I don’t even think they really realized or even took the girls seriously as far as cooking. [...] I felt like they were definitely competing against each other; they wanted to see who can make the best dish [...], who was the better cook, who could crack the funniest joke and they just didn’t take the girls into that competition. [...] It sounds real simple, but I think because these guys, [...] they look at the industry, they think it’s you know male chef macho and they’ve gotta start rising to the top, they have to start proving that they’re better.

Chef Jenn noticed that women students stuck together because of their standard of precision, to ensure their products turn out perfect. Whereas men students stuck together to compete with one another, women seemed to be left out of this competition.
Chef Chris experienced both individual and group work in culinary school. Baking and pastry was usually done individually as was the culinary butchering class, whereas in other classes, students worked in groups.

Chef Chris: It just depended […] if we were am or pm, if we were advanced or non-advanced. […] If we were […] [in] bakeshop, we had to be there at 5:00 because we were in charge of putting out snacks for the school. We would have croissants, donuts, bagels that had to be out at 9:30, […] which would be the same place where the cafeteria was at […] so the back shop, I was in charge of that. If we were plating desserts, […] we would make desserts and then two people would go over to the restaurant […] for […] the ala carte kitchen […] and then they would have to you […] make the desserts and plate all those up. […] We made everything individually from beginning to end. […] If we’re talking about the bake shop […] cuz obviously you’re not really going to learn how to bake a cake if you’re watching somebody making a cake. […] If you’re folding in the egg whites and you have somebody that’s stirring [then] in with a wire whisk it’s […] not going to work that well.

At Chef Chris’ school, baking and pastry was done individually and not in groups, since the many steps and precision in baking are learned best by making products individually first.

Culinary may be a little different, depending on the class.

Chef Chris: Culinary […] there were some […] group aspects but even like with […] butcher shop […], everybody would have a tenderloin to break down, […] but again, […] we had successful restaurants so the food that we were […] fabricating was going into use, I mean it was fulfilling orders. OK we need this salmon cut and fabricated and we need it over to the ala carte kitchen by 10:00.

As discussed earlier, Chef Stella tended to associate and work with students who were older.

Chef Stella: Yes, […] I was 21. The people I was with […] were also about 20, ah no maybe a couple of years older than me even. […] I think there was one girl who was only 19, […] she was my roommate so we just kind of clicked together but most of us […] were pretty […] determined and […] the same people are with you usually in the same classes for the trimester too. […] It was […] nice, […] you’d all stick together […] for the trimester and then it gets split up again and switched around but […] by hanging with the same kind of people you usually found somebody you knew, so it actually worked out. “…” I don’t know if it was work ethic or party ethic (laughing). It was college and we don’t really have to go there. […] Yeah it’s a kind of group you could hang around with. […] I was 21 so I could actually go to the bar […] so that’s probably the people that
I hung with because of that rather than the younger [...] kids, not that they weren’t
determined but it’s just the way it happened.

Stephanie: When you were in your group […] I’m assuming your chef instructor demoed
and told you what to do?

Chef Stella: Yeah, […] you’d go through […] the list of what was going on for the day.
[...] [The chef instructor] would pick out [...] a chef [...] and a sous chef of the day. [...] Your tables were divided into, from what I can remember, [...] what you had to clean and
stations and stuff like that. [...] I was usually picked as a chef [...] or [...] sous chef of
the day, I don’t know why, probably because my name was first in line, [...] teacher’s
will pick like the first two, you’re this one, you’re that one, and I was a B so I was always
up there. [...] It didn’t both me, I wasn’t afraid to do anything; I think it [...] actually
strengthened me to realize and to figure out when things at the end, everyone’s working
hard, but when people fell back, I knew who I could pick [and] count on to, [...] help
pick the person up. [...] You [...] learn who’s strong and who’s not strong. [...] I think
that did help me realize that I liked doing that. [Laughter] “…” I liked telling people what
to do. [...] I was very strong but [...] I didn’t like it when things didn’t go my way,
obviously, that was the way it worked. [Laughter]

Chef Stella further elaborates on her leadership skills as they were practiced in culinary
school:

I can remember a situation being in the dorms working in breakfast, I happened to be
chef of the day that day and [...] the kids come [...] at 5:00 and breakfast needs to be
ready whether it be potatoes and stuff. I mean you had to peel the potatoes; you had to do
all that [...] just getting people to work with each other and if they weren’t you found the
right people to do it. [...] There were people that you knew could do things better than
others so you just let them do what they could do. [...] As much as it was a learning
experience and you wanted other people to learn, the new stuff too, [...] you were put in
a situation where you had to get it done, so you put the right person in the position. [...] I
guess I did that right. I got an A for the day. I remember that day. (Both laughing) I do
it’s just like a day you remember, I’m like I got an A for that day! I got I got everybody
out ten minutes early, they were all happy with me, you know, I think they got sick of my
voice after a while. I’m like, [how] did I do, was it too much yelling was I supposed to
yell, cuz I didn’t know you know, I just thought I did what I thought I was supposed to
do.

Stephanie: So you thought then, even when you were in charge, you thought that
everybody pretty much worked together, there was no…

Chef Stella: I think so [...] I’d like to believe it [...] although there be might have been
one or two [who] didn’t want to do what you wanted them but that’s going to happen
[...].
Chef Stella worked well with other students. She also realized in culinary school that she liked to be a leader, particularly when things were going smoothly.

Chef Dee describes her experience in culinary school as being unorganized, something that was very frustrating for her.

Chef Dee: Lecture classes, […] then lunch and then whatever lab we were doing in the afternoon; it was incredibly unorganized. […] A lot of times the printer didn’t work, the mimeograph machine, whatever they’re using didn’t work and the first 20 or 30 minutes of class writing down the recipes that the chef instructor dictated and then we’d start. Things weren’t labeled so I remembered one class that […] half the class, […] we were dredging lamb shanks in flour […] in order to sauté them or sear them. […] Half the class, their lamb shanks were just burning and the chef, which was a woman chef [said] […]. “I don’t understand what’s going on.” […] There was a bin of flour right next to a bin of powdered sugar and neither one was labeled. […] Some of the people just said, “Oh this must be flour too or this is flour” and dredged everything in powdered sugar. So […] if I had to look back on my culinary experience, it’s probably not what happens at the two for-profit culinary schools here or [Laughing] maybe I’m wrong. [Both laughing]

Chef Dee was frustrated with the disorganization of the school. Equipment was not always in working order, and ingredients were not labeled, making the experience seem disorganized. She does comment on the fact that they did work in groups. Usually groups were formed by choosing people who sat near you; however, the fact that she and her husband were married, and they were not residents of the city, they had added problems.

Chef Dee: We worked in groups […], I don’t know, I think just whomever you were sitting by. […] Let’s see, there was some hostility towards us because we were from [out of state, Midwestern state] […] we were Rubes, you know. We were Rubes. Rubes and we were married. […] Maybe we thought we knew stuff or something or maybe we rubbed people the wrong way but […] there were a few people who were […] openly hostile to us. […] Everyone was really young. […] Yeah, we worked in groups […] and I had a lot more cooking knowledge than most people there and I think I probably said a few too many things [Both laughing] and some things [were] negative. […] That might have been part of the hostility. […] I really enjoyed it and […] I really enjoyed proving to myself that I could really cook. […] I think for me, […] it was more of a validation that I could that I could really do this. Yeah, it wasn’t a diploma, it was a certificate, and […] I don’t think we actually got to know each other that well. There was one […] teacher that nobody could stand and […] we all kind of bonded, […] in our hatred of Chef Stinky, [Both laughing] but that was pretty much it. […] He was a chef instructor […] he wasn’t unfair at all, no […] he didn’t bathe very often. He was kinda stinky, he smoked
constantly so he was stinky and smelled of cigarettes and [...] he was very pompous; he kind of looked down his nose at everybody.

In culinary school, the chefs in this research took both lecture classes and lab classes in the kitchen. Though each school was set up a little differently, they all gave students an opportunity to work in real-life situations. Chef Jenn’s school not only had a school restaurant where students were expected to work before they graduated, but groups of students also went out to major hotels to work, garnering real-life industry experience.

Chef Jenn: Right before you graduate you have to work in the school restaurant.

The culinary students also had an opportunity to go out and participate in catering gigs held at large major hotels.

Chef Jenn: Culinary school offered a lot of working opportunities. [...] [A big hotel] would call up and they’d have the big banquets for 500 people so they would call the culinary school and say, “Can you send students?” We would be the first group down there. [...] We would work a banquet and then we’d all go out. [...] It was OK with my parents, most of these people, like I said were older; [...] they had apartments in the city so I would spend the entire weekend in the city. It was fun [...] and we were all getting straight As. We loved the chef instructors, [...] again it was such a small school [...] There were just 6 students and we would [...] just meet there you know we would just go. They really sent us off on our own a lot. OK so that is interesting because the reason why we liked going out so much was because it was exciting and [...] you got that sense of oh we don’t have all day to sit around and cut carrots, do you know what I mean? It was quick [snapping fingers] and you didn’t have time to [...] ponder [...] [your] next move. [...] You just had to know and if you didn’t know we were so afraid of looking like we didn’t, like a bunch of idiots, like we didn’t know what we were doing. That [...] we would just go, you’re just running, running, running, running and [...] it was exciting [...] It was a huge rush [to] actually to see the plates set up and then see them gong out and seeing what you produced and then actually see it go out was really cool. At school, it was obviously a much slower pace. [...] At school it was also like we were studying the sauces and how to be creative, and it was tasting; [...] it was really an education, [...] of training your palate and why we do things the way we do. There was a lot of discussion, [...] it was a lot of hands-on of course, but also the chefs really talked to us about why it’s important.

At Chef Chris’ school, they offered experiences in a wide variety of venues.

Chef Chris: What I really like about my school was that [...] we actually had an *ala carte* kitchen or a bistro that was busy, I mean it was busy, *busy*. [...] We had [...] course
lunches, course dinners and everything that was school [student/customer] bought. It was […] our butcher shop and charcuterie class; we had orders that we had to fulfill for the kitchens so we weren’t just cutting […] cut one side of salmon it was no we need 40 orders of salmon, 20 are going to be six ounces or five ounces and then you know for dinner it’s going to be seven ounces and we need those cut on the bias. So we were always fulfilling orders. Also at my school we ran an international bistro […], we ran a diner, that we [served] breakfast and lunch and we also ran a deli. […] Yeah, so we learned all different facets of every class […] to help fulfill orders of what was needed in the actual functioning businesses […] so all these classes supported […] the restaurant, the deli, the international bistro and the diner, everything. […] I can carry this to the curriculum that I teach now and I wish it was more in depth. I mean, even so when we look at what are we do with leftovers you know at our school now. Well, we had a class that was what would be similar to our American Regional class, but […] was to be […] food for 50, so that the students would learn how to cook large amount of recipes and then we actually had a cafeteria that was open for the students, lunch […] and a dinner, where we supported […] how to cook food for 50, 100, 150, whatever was in the classes at that point in time. We would cook the food […] for that and then obviously have that up by like 10:45, 11:00 and you know then the students would be let out. […] Our classes met differently, they were […] for the first [term] you be intro students you were um 3-week long classes and they were 8 hour a day. […] For one class and then you would move on to the next one so you really got in depth and then once you were um and they were all morning students. The advanced students were all pm students.

At her culinary school, Chef Stella had opportunities to work with both student customers as well as the public.

Chef Stella: One of the classes was called banquet class but you’d go to the other properties; […] it was a college, a whole college for business and everything, you’d work in the dorms so you’d cook, you’d cook the dorm food […] for all the kids that are coming to eat breakfast. You’d have to wake up at 4:00 to get there, […] then you’d be done by, it was, but it was a class you had to take so you learned you know how to do food like that. And you learned how to just keep prepping […] for massive amounts of people. […] Then they had […] classes like Mother’s Day. I chose not to do an internship, I chose to stay and do my internship at the school. […] You would work the hotel and stuff that was there but Mother’s Day we did 1200 people, I never oh my God, on my life walked so much and just did so much, it just, I was just like, I know, I know I don’t want to be in the front. I’d rather be in the back on a Mother’s Day like that, cuz I was hostessing in the front that day, they’re like, you’re hostess. I’m like no, but we learned that (laughing) we learned how to do all that so from dining room to and I’m glad but […] I think that if you went only in the kitchen and you didn’t experience part of service and serving the people then you wouldn’t understand why the waitresses are yelling at you in the back you know so. [Both laughing] Absolutely, it was all school run; it was all chef and chef instructors, school run.
Chef Dee’s culinary education was divided into business classes in the morning and lab classes, which was actually working in the school’s restaurant.

Chef Dee: Well in the morning we had business classes and in the afternoons we had lab. […] Then in the evenings we actually worked in the restaurant, I mean there was a working restaurant on in the school that people actually paid money to come and eat at and […] the food was pretty good. […] There was one mélange of vegetables with everything but […] there were like five appetizers and five entrees and a few desserts and um I was pretty proud of what we put out, it really was.

Culinary school was a place where students could earn diplomas, certificates, associate’s degrees, and/or bachelor’s degrees in culinary arts. There were both pros and cons to going to culinary school as suggested by two of the chefs.

Chef Jenn: So I learned on very early how to cook but it wasn’t until I went to actual culinary school that I could actually connect […] the skills, the real skills and their names and the information to whatever it is I cooked. But I gotta say, the one thing that culinary school does give you, that you don’t get in the industry, [is] a good solid foundation on where we came from, why cultures eat certain things how did we get here in the United States. It gives you more of a background and it does give you […] a quick education, like in the certificate program or even in the associate’s program on basic kitchen functions, […] equipment, product ID [Identification], it is a quick education but granted you can still get all that in the industry, it might just take a little bit longer.

Whereas Chef Jenn sees a culinary education as beneficial from a cultural standpoint, Chef Dee points out that culinary school may give students a false sense of how the restaurant industry is run.

Chef Dee: I think […] that I think school gives people […] or gave me kinda a false sense of security […] and also an unwillingness to accept new ideas, it’s like no this is what […] I’ve been taught. This is what I’ve learned and so this must be right even though you all are doing it this way, […] I still think I’m right. […] It took me a long time to just say, “Oh, OK, well, yeah, this is a lot easier you know. I was taught to um bone out chicken breasts from the inside, you know, cutting, cutting out the keel bone and all this kind of stuff, well, I just slice it down the back I mean I’m done in two minutes [Laughing] and it was a lot easier.”

The experiences of each chef in culinary school entailed much more than cooking; students were exposed to the culture of the kitchen. The next three sections will talk about
kitchen culture (the back of the house) in terms of competition, work ethic and culinary vs. pastry (and salads).

**Competition**

Competition in the back of the house was evident in culinary school. Some of the competition went hand-in-hand with masculine gendered norms.

Chef Jenn: Not just the girls I was working with, but the guys in my class. They also stuck together because they like to, it was competition for them, like I don’t even think they really realized or even took the girls seriously as far as cooking and […] I felt like they were definitely competing against each other, they wanted to see who can make the best dish you know, who was the better cook, who could crack the funniest joke and they just didn’t take the girls into that competition. […] I just, it sounds real simple, but I think because these guys, they, they look at the industry, they think it’s you know male chef macho and they’ve gotta start rising to the top, they have to start proving that they’re better.

In culinary school, men students stuck together and yet were in competition with each other to prove who was the best man. Also, woven into the kitchen culture was a notion of work ethic and the perception of what students were responsible for in the kitchen.

**Work Ethic**

According to the chefs, age may have been a factor related to work ethic as well. Chef Jenn had gone to school for her culinary associate’s degree in the ‘90s, at which time she was one of the youngest students, She returned to get her bachelor’s degree in the early 2000s, and things had changed.

Stephanie: By 2005 you had now been in the industry. Now you were working on a bachelor’s degree and it seemed that it was a different dynamic.

Chef Jenn: Yes.

Stephanie: What do you attribute the difference in dynamics to?

Chef Jenn: Right.
Stephanie: I think that this is really, really important to make this distinction.

Chef Jenn: Yeah, I think so too. [...] I was pretty shocked, I thought when I went back to get that bachelor’s it was going to be like the [my old culinary school in the Midwest], I thought it was going to be [...] fulfilling and wonderful and like I said cohesive, we were all going to work together and it’s going to be great. [...] It wasn’t that way at all. [...] It’s a combination of reasons. Number one, the culinary school in the Midwest physically had moved it used to be in a suburb and now it’s in a large city in the Midwest. A brand new facility state of the art, and it was a different ah feel, it was a different, god everything in the old culinary school in the Midwest was kind of taped together you know it was just kind of thrown together. We made the best of it and it was fine. Now it was like surgical kitchen [...] and then you had the era of aura of professionalism. [...] If you’re coming here you’re going to be great and that actually attracted me cuz I know you need that to be successful. In this industry you need [...] like I said, that behavior that the old culinary school in the Midwest had, it’s still there at the new culinary school in the Midwest but now on steroids. [...] Not only that but if you’re going to be a student here, look around do you know what I mean cuz everyone’s in pressed whites, neckerchief, what, I mean it is professional. [...] Again that attracted me to it because [...] I wanted to be in line with other people who wanted to be successful in this industry. OK but then I realized that the reason while I thought that now the dynamics of the students are, the make up of the student population, much younger. Like I said, it was 20, 21. When I ended in up in culinary school, these kids are 18 straight out of high school. [...] Not only that, I felt that they were incredibly immature. [...] I had worked for two years in the candy shop, and that was a great experience cuz I learned about cleaning, responsibility, working with people, responsibility to order and deadlines and things like that, that needed to get done. Sanitation, like things that you just do it because, yeah, it’s part of your job. “…” I brought that experience with me and then in culinary school I acted like I was a professional. [...] Like sweeping, mopping, cleaning my station, doing the dishes, working together. [...] I found that the new group of people I was with, cuz it’s still a cohort, did not have that background; they didn’t have any experience.

Stephanie: When you went back what was the composition of your cohort this time?

Chef Jenn: This time, OK once we got rid of Goofy, Dan it was um four guys, and two girls and the four guys were young, they were, they were the ones straight out of high school. And then [...] I was a 33-year-old female with experience and then the other girl was [also] 33.

Stephanie: Hmm Did you get the impression that these guys had a rich cooking experience like you did from home?

Chef Jenn: No! Not at all, [...] it’s like again, [...] their high school counselor told them, “Oh maybe you’d be good at culinary school.” [...] I started to think [...] well maybe they’d be good in culinary school because they don’t fit in anywhere else and I see that today. But even back then I saw it in 2005, I was like, “Oh my gosh” “…” like I know
[…] in my gut that these some of these guys are not going to make it; […] they didn’t have the work ethic that is required. […] I’m talking they can’t [in] culinary school […] keep their dishes clean and their stations clean and pay attention to sanitation; complaining about how much their feet hurt, the dirty uniforms drove me crazy. No, there are no dirty uniforms. You have an unshaven face, […] it was like bad, from what they see on TV or what they read in the magazines, or whatever they think that the industry is that it is laid back and we’re just cooking, we always cook food, that’s cool. No it’s not because it’s incredibly competitive and if you don’t have your act together in every way you are going to get stomped over.

Even the chef instructors were younger in the 2000s as opposed to the ‘90s.

Chef Jenn: They were much younger, like the chef instructors that we had at the original culinary school in the Midwest were older. I mean 50s, 60s you know what I mean these guys are getting ready to retire. And they enjoyed teaching and sharing their experiences, now the chef instructors were younger you know, they’re 20s and 30s and um more lax, more loosey goosey. And also the culinary school in the Midwest had exploded, I mean the student population is now through the roof thousands not thousands.

Chef Stella noticed a difference in chef instructors treated older students and younger students differently.

Chef Stella: Mostly male, […] although I had two roommates three of us, […] one of my roommates was actually in my class so it actually was pretty good for the two of us. […] The other one wasn’t but […] being […] my third year in college, the kids were younger so they were mostly immature I guess maybe is the word you might say and not knowing what was going on. “…” My second year I went to class on the weekends with older people and […] it was very different! The teacher treated you different; it was just a whole, which I kinda wish I would have done that to begin with, but I didn’t know. I had never, I had never worked in a restaurant, I never, I just thought it was, I never was in a kitchen, never asked to go see a kitchen, never asked so I was really coming in cold. […] I […] ended up […] getting a job in a kitchen out there, […] after my freshman year in culinary because I wanted to stay out there, I didn’t want to come back home. […] I thought the best thing to do is to find a job in the industry and let’s see how it worked and I did get a job and I loved it, it was fun, I had a great time and it was just.

The student population, by and large, was younger, in some cases right out of high school. Differences in maturity levels may have led some instructors to treat younger and older students differently in the classroom and lab kitchens. In addition to age differences, there seemed to be gendered differences in work expectations. These gendered differences contributed to a division between culinary and pastries.
Culinary vs. Baking/Pastries

All four chefs interviewed are culinary chefs. This is not to say that they don’t have baking and pastry skills, it simply means that they earned degrees in culinary arts, not baking/pastry arts. The culinary arts programs require students to take at least one course in baking and pastry; it is in the pastry classes that there were marked differences between women and men culinary students.

Chef Jenn: In my culinary classes it was OK, I don’t think any of us, I didn’t see anything, where I did see a big difference was in baking and pastry. […] We had a male chef instructor, there were two male chef instructors, and the guys their cakes man, they I mean cuz they had the attitude of I’m never gonna do this. Why do I have to do this and so, the male their cakes would just turn out horrible but they would still like get As. […] The girls even though we were culinary students; […] we were more artists […] we cared about it. […] It was fun to make cakes and I saw the value in it. […] You are gonna have to do this; at some point the pastry chef is not going to show up someday and you’re gonna have to be able to frost that cake […] or make a genoise or something. […] I think with the girls we took more time or care and wanted to make it pretty; we wanted to make it perfect, and the guys just kind of shlopped it along. […] I did feel a big division there.

Stephanie: And you got the same grades?

Chef Jenn: Yeah and like I also felt the girls all huddled together in baking and pastry. We didn’t want the guys in our group because they were sloppy, they didn’t care; they were kind of messy. […] They were so sloppy; […] flour all over the place, sugar all over the place […]. No, I mean […] it’s like back in high school when the guys are just sitting there on the stools; […] the girls, we did all the work, […] we wanted our stuff to turn out nice. […] I remember we did not let the guys in my group because then they’re going to screw up my cake. […] We’re all working together, we still made individual cakes but we still had to work in teams on some things. You got had to work clean in the bake shop and things had to be weighed and you can’t have mistakes and they didn’t care if they screwed up.

When asked if the boys cleaned up in culinary classes, Chef Jenn replied,

Chef Jenn: Yeah “…” they were because […] cuz they were more into the, it just seemed like the guys were into it, then they definitely cleaned up, […] especially like in our fish class. Now in with fish class, […] we get all the fish, […] it’s all cleaned and scaled and beautiful. When we had fish class at the [culinary school in the Midwest] they came in whole and we had to gut them and we had to scale ‘em; […] it made a mess and […] the girls, not all of the girls were into gutting the fish, […] but the guys were into it, they were like it was great and […] they did clean up (surprised). It’s more because you have
the scales all over the place, [...] then you have the guts you have to like screen the guts out of the sink and throw it away.

Stephanie: The girls really didn’t want to do that?

Chef Jenn: Yeah they helped. [...] Some of the guys really liked gutting the fish, we would let them gut all the fish and then we would work with the filets, [...] make the racks. We would watch, [...] we were interested [...]. The girls would be like, “Oh, ew.” Which it’s not good some times in the kitchen because again the guys, they feel all macho and it gives them the impression that a girl can’t handle that. [...] But again, [...] the girls were older; I was the youngest one there. 20, like 22, 23, they had just graduated from their bachelors and then came right from there so they were 22 years old, 23, 24 by the time you get out. [...] The guys thought it was a joke you know, like this girl can’t handle it so we’ll just gut them all. [...] Then like I said it switched to baking and pastries and they didn’t care about baking and pastry and we did.

Stephanie: What do you think about baking and pastry that the girls liked better?

Chef Jenn: It was really pretty style of desserts, detailed. Hmm, girls are [...] good at measuring, like I said measuring and cleaning and making sure it’s all-perfect; that it turns out. [...] I think it’s just really gratifying at the end of the day to have this beautiful color and texture, flavor and to go towards the sweets and the chocolates. [...] Like you said, “Culinary is artistry,” I agree with you and you can end up with a great savory plate just as beautiful as a dessert.

Stephanie: And you don’t have to measure so precisely it’s not and that’s why, the guys, you said that’s why the guys stay in culinary because it’s not an exact science.

Chef Jenn: Yeah, yeah. Exactly.

The precision of baking and pastry seemed to be more appealing to women students, whereas the men students seem to gravitate towards the messy jobs of culinary, which are not rooted in precision.

Though there was a division between culinary and pastry, there was also a preconceived notion of particular stations where women should work within the culinary side. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are different stations in a professional kitchen that are meant to divide the labor into discrete categories. Briefly, there is garde manger (salsas, soups, terrines), the line (cooking) and pastries. Besides being placed in pastries, women were also hired for the pantry to become
“the salad girl.” Chef Chris also commented on women students who were never told to move to the pantry (soups/salads) or baking/pastry, but they chose to go to these particular stations.

Chef Chris: They were never told to move to the back, or to the back, or move to […] the salads and the soups and everything. I think they just kind of maybe weren’t used to working with a bunch of guys so that was kind of intimidating […] and they just […] pulled themselves out of the mix, which I never understood. […] It was like, “OK I pay the same money as these people, my money works just as well as them I can be up here in the mix making proteins and you know what I’m not going to take any crap off of them as well.” […] I think that my stature definitely has a lot to do with it as well, you know, being 5’10” you know, I’m, not a petite flower.

Though this seemed to be the case in Chef Chris’ experience, she did comment on the notion that it is more acceptable for women to be in baking/pastry. She commented on this split while we were talking about two women teaching assistants who were assigned to the bakeshop.

Chef Dee: The other two women chefs were […] teaching assistants, and they were in the bakeshop. […] I laugh because it seems like it’s more accepted to have women to be pastry chefs in this industry rather than savory chefs. It’s just the overall attitude that we get, […] it’s just always like, “Oh are you here for pastries.” (Culinary) it’s more by the seat of your pants, I would say. Yeah, […] the bakeshop, if you screw something in the beginning it’s, probably not going to turn out in the end, […] that was why I didn’t like it. […] Plus […] it […] didn’t seem as action packed as […] what was going on like on the line.

Stephanie: It’s a different rhythm?

Chef Chris: Yeah, […] I would definitely say I’m an adrenaline junkie with the fact that I would honestly live and breathe for that dinner rush where you have you know you have tickets coming off of the print and actually touching the floor, um I lived for that stuff.

Pastry is more precise, culinary more by the seat of your pants. Culinary is fast paced and has a different rhythm to it.

Conclusion

In today’s society, a career in the culinary arts, particularly becoming a chef, has enjoyed renewed interest due to the televised cooking shows on the Food Network. Though these shows can be informative, they serve as entertainment for their viewers; in other words, they tend to
give an unrealistic account of restaurant work. Once working out in the field, particularly in major hotels, the reality of the kitchen changed into a fast-paced, demanding, stressful working environment.

The four women chefs interviewed in this research found their passion for cooking early on, based on the rich and positive experiences they had with food in their homes growing up. All of them went to college, but along the way, they decided that culinary school would give them the skills to be successful professional chefs.

As previously mentioned, the four women chefs attended culinary school in the late 1980s to mid-2000s. Regional/local particularities shape the ways that gender is infused in culinary school (in the city in the Northwest example, fisherwomen were moving into culinary, and one chef instructor was a former sheriff.) Women who go into culinary bring their histories with them; when they come from men’s worlds, they bring different assumptions and ways of dealing with sexism (clear boundaries, confidence) than others who do not share in the experience of working in male-dominated fields.

All study participants reported that they experienced equal treatment by chef instructors. Though this was the case, many women culinary students faded into the background (not being directed to do so by instructors), making soups, salads and pastries, while the men students worked on breaking down carcasses and working the line. This practice of fading into “women’s jobs” helped to maintain a division of labor between men and women students. Sometimes women let the men do the culinary processes that they didn’t want to do, like breaking down large fish. This is an example of how women are complicit in perpetuating the division of labor.

In culinary school, men stuck together and so did women. Men worked together at what is perceived as the “hard” jobs of butchering and cooking on the line, whereas women students
stuck together because they were more precise and valued higher standards in baking and pastry than the men. In culinary school, everyone, whether they were culinary majors or baking and pastry majors, had to take at least an introduction to baking course. Generally speaking, women liked the precision of baking, whereas men students took the course only because it was required. Both women and men students received A’s for their work regardless of quality. Grading is partly a reflection of how an instructor values (or devalues) particular areas with the field, for example, men getting A’s for inferior work.

Also, as part of the curriculum the students worked in school-run delis and restaurants; however, to bridge the gap with the real-life industry, one chef worked in large hotel restaurants and at catering events. It was one dynamic in the school setting (equality); another when the students were sent out to hotels as part of the educational experience. Gendered dynamics became more visible, but they were not discussed. This workplace environment was vastly male dominated (Latino), and the women students felt like they always had to follow the male norm of work to prove themselves in it. Culinary school did not prepare students for the gendered dynamics in the professional culinary kitchen; rather, the transition to work seems to bring norms from childhood (feminine/masculine binary), not from school, into the workplace. Instructors didn’t explicitly talk with students about the things that are seen as “feminine” (emotions, division of labor, sexual conduct, management) and how these feminine constructs are situated (or not) in the professional culinary kitchen. Not addressing issues of feminine/masculine stereotypes as they relate to the professional culinary kitchen put women at a disadvantage to challenge the status quo, and therefore, they become complicit in maintaining and reproducing male norms in the kitchen.
Culinary school then is a place where both cooking skill and kitchen culture (outside experiences in hotels) come together to introduce students to the professional culinary world. When the women chefs graduated from culinary school, it was time for them to enter the professional culinary industry. The next section, Gender in the Workplace, will address how the four women chefs experienced restaurant work, management styles, promotion, ethnicity and gender and public perception, as well as the media as it relates to the workplace.
CHAPTER 7: GENDER IN THE WORKPLACE

The data collected from the interviews of the four women chefs suggests that the professional culinary world is gendered. Whereas the four women chefs felt they were treated equitably in culinary school, that changed once they got out into the industry. Several themes emerged from the data that help the reader understand how gender in the workplace is perceived and navigated. The following chapter will talk about gender in the workplace, including the following sections: restaurant work, long days, hard work, low pay, who chooses to become a chef, competition, ethnicity and gender, management styles, corporate verses independently owned restaurants and promotion: It’s not what you know it’s who you know.

Restaurant Work: Cooking Behind Closed Doors

When discussing food preparation in the professional world, the term chef is generally understood as referring to a man. If a chef is a woman, she is referred to as a woman chef.

Chef Dee: I never knew any chef that was a star and sexy, […] but it really is […] interesting that people refer to me as a woman chef; I mean it’s not just a chef. […] I never really noticed it until somebody pointed it out to me or read about it in a magazine or something like that. It’s like yeah, they never say, […] “The man chef over there;” […] they never talk about Rick Bayless as being the man chef or Giuseppe Tentori, you know.

Chef Dee further relates how people assume a chef is male unless stated otherwise by using the following example of how her husband/partner dealt with a person on the phone who assumed the chef was a man:

Chef Dee: I remember hearing him on the phone […] because being in the front of the house he answers the phone most of the time. This was […] probably eight years ago, […] there was a nut company that wanted our business and […] I don’t know if I hadn’t returned his calls, or something like that, cuz I wasn’t interested. […] I remember my [husband/partner] saying, “Well the chef here is a woman and I guess if you’d done your research you would have know that” (laughing) and hung up on him. […] I guess he said,
“I’ve been trying to get your chef and […] he won’t answer my calls,” or something like that. “Ah, you’d know the chef here is a woman if you’d done your research you would have known that.” […] So he would […] certainly stick up for me but I wouldn’t want [my husband/partner] to deal with something, I mean […] that would be saying, “I can’t deal with this on my own.” If […] it’s something I can’t lift or […] if I need help just thinking [something] through, […] that’s when I’ll ask him for his help, but I’m not going to go ask him to beat up the bully for me; I’ll figure out how to deal with the bully.

The term chef usually conjures up the image of a man chef. When asked why that is, with very few exceptions, it is because most of the kitchens were staffed predominantly with men chefs.

Chef Chris: I was the only woman […] and I think I’m probably still the only woman that has worked [in] management in the kitchen […] for Otto’s on the Lake. There, definitely, I was […] one of the only, […] same thing at Good’s when I was manager there, our kitchen manager […] and R and D (Research and Development), I was the only woman in that kitchen as well. I think towards the end they hired somebody else but, […] she wasn’t really that strong so she never really was on the line. […] At Otto’s I was definitely the only woman the whole time I was there.

Chef Chris was the only woman chef at the corporate restaurant she worked at.

Chef Chris: I have been the first and the only woman chef in that establishment. There has never been a woman sous chef nor an executive chef, I was a sous chef there as a first, […] and there’s no woman chef there on staff now and hasn’t been since I left there. [It’s] very much of a male dominated […] kitchen. Very few, I mean, there were sometimes […] maybe one or two […] women working in the kitchen. One ended up leaving; […] she was sexually harassed by the executive chef who they ended up getting rid of in the process. […] He was actually the chef at [Four Star] before, […] yeah, the executive chef. He was fired from [The Spanish Restaurant] for sexual harassment.

In addition to often being the only woman in the kitchen, in one of the corporate restaurants, Chef Chris was one of only two whites in the kitchen.

Chef Chris: So I was the only white woman, there was only one other white person working in the kitchen at that time that was the other sous chef.

During Chef Chris’ career in the restaurant business, she was most often the only woman on the line or in management. She recalls her feelings being the only woman in the kitchen amongst a majority of men.
Chef Chris: I definitely think that [...] when you’re walking into a kitchen and it’s a kitchen full of men, it can be a very intimidating [...] circumstance. [...] It’s still, [...] is intimidating; [...] where you walk in and it’s [...] like, “OK game face goes on and show time!” I had [...] learned early on [...] being the only woman can be a lonely place in the kitchen because a lot of people may not talk to you. Work’s not a popularity contest, I’m there to do a job and earn a living, do what I love to do. [...] I knew very quickly, early on that I’m not going to make people happy, but [...] I can’t loose sleep about that either [...] so that’s why [...] with the guys, [...] I think that they also knew [...] I do care for my employees, that [I] would bust my ass to get them a Saturday night off in the summer time, which is unheard of.

Often being the only woman in the kitchen could be quite challenging. It was important for Chef Chris to understand her job and try and accommodate some of the wishes of her staff.

Chefs Stella and Dee both worked with other woman in restaurants. Chef Stella worked in a family restaurant where the line was only a simple cooking line (burgers, sandwiches, sauces were made at night) most of the line work was assembly.

Chef Stella: Actually no, [...] there were two other girls on the line. [...] Sporadically there was [...] one, woman manager, [...] so there [were] people in the kitchen who [...] were women, which was good. [...] I [...] got along with them too, so it was really good. [...] They were at the top of the line so it was just a matter of working your way [...] up the line. [...] I learned really fast and obviously I worked my way up through the line and I did well. I mean [...] I moved, and it only took a year, [...] where you get some people who don’t move or strive or what to keep going.

Chef Dee worked in a café that was owned by a woman, and the whole staff was made up of women except for a man dishwasher. She had a less than positive experience working at this establishment.

Chef Dee: [He] offered me a job which I turned down to work in a little French bistro that was within walking distance of my house. They wanted a pastry chef [...] or a pastry cook and the woman who was the manager at that time, I had worked with at a [local sit down chain]. [...] I thought well, this will be fun [...], work in the morning, I’ll get up early and I’ll work in the morning and then my [husband/partner] and I were bowling a lot at that time and I said, “Then we should bowl in the afternoons, that’ll be great.” [...] I was about 23 at this point. Yeah, and [...] it was awful; [...] there were all women in that kitchen, the only man was [...] a dishwasher; all white women. [...] The owner of the restaurant, a woman, [...] smoked in the kitchen, which [...] just drove me nuts. [Laughing] [...] My friend, the manager, who had hired me didn’t really clear my hiring with the owner and had fired someone who had been with them for [...] 20 years, or
something like that. [...] I didn’t [...] even know the menu. [...] I walked in thinking I was going to make my own dessert and it took me all morning to make one opera cake [laugh], which was not on the menu. [...] I hadn’t done any of the other stuff that was on the menu and I was terrified. [Chuckle] It was just [...] it was um pastries, sandwiches, soups; the food actually was pretty bad. [They made] custard pies, like they had banana cream pie, [...] lemon meringue pie, [...] chocolate cream pie. [...] The idea was I was supposed to take these preformed frozen tart shells, pie shells and make the custard and put it in there. [...] Then make the meringue [...] and that was it; that was supposed to be my job. [...] I couldn’t get the custard to set cuz I was trying too hard. [...] I completely ignored everything they did in the kitchen to bring [...] my learning from school into it and it just it didn’t work at all. [...] I think they were happy for me to give my notice as I was giving my notice. [Laughing] [...] So after that I decided, enough of this; we’re gonna open our own place. [Both laughing]

Since leaving the all-woman French café, Chef Dee and her husband/partner have opened several eating establishments. She now owns a very well respected, award-winning restaurant in a large city in the Midwest. She is surprised at how difficult it is for her to hire a woman chef for her kitchen.

Chef Dee: [...] Like I said earlier, I think women [...] want to be the warrior, that’s what [...] my [husband/partner] and I call [...] the young Turks; [...] the young cooks who are 25, [...] are proud of their scars (showing scars on forearms) and [...] they say, “Yeah, you know, I worked 70 hours last week and you know chef was really a Dick” and all this kind of stuff [...] and they’re proud of it. I mean that [...] was like fun, they want to be Anthony Bourdain [...] they want to do drugs and stay up all night and burn themselves out and fall. [...] They [...] want that, in a very difficult situation. [...] I haven’t really asked them about that. [...] I was beginning to get a little bit [...] of an inferiority complex. [...] I said [to my] [husband/partner], “Why can’t I get a woman to work in the kitchen with me, this is kind of crazy.” He said, “Because you’re, we’re not hip enough” and he said, “The women who really want to work the line want to work in a really hip kitchen.”

I was curious about where potential chefs get their ideas about the industry as being glamorous. Several chefs responded with opinions on how television and the Food Network have influenced today’s industry.

Chef Jenn: I just felt like these guys didn’t know what they were getting into. [...] Now they’re watching Top Chef and now there are culinary programs all over the place. [...] Back in the ‘90s it wasn’t nearly as bad; [...] we all got along [...] that group was great [...] but in 2005 when I went back, [...] there was a major attitude shift and it’s because they’re watching the Food Network, they’re reading magazines and all they’re seeing are
Bobby Flay, and Guy Fiere and Todd English; I’m going to be that chef. […] In control, […] it is all white males. I think a lot of their perception of the industry comes from what the media is feeding them.

As previously mentioned, Chef Dee and her husband own and run a very successful restaurant in a large city in the Midwest. Many of their employees have worked with them for 10 plus years. As she mentioned before, it’s difficult to find women to hire, even ones that have interned at her restaurant. She attributes that in large part to the Food Network and how they portray the life of a chef.

Chef Dee: *Sure*, and people don’t want to hear about somebody who’s comfortable, they want to hear about people who […] are working exhausting hours and have scars and […] got […] berated by the chefs.

Stephanie: Who sets that standard? Why do people like it? […] These women in particular who want to show their scars, who sets that standard?

Chef Dee: Well, I guess the easiest […] and most current response would be, the media. […] If you look at the most popular shows on the Food Network, they’re the challenges, they’re the competitions, they’re the, “I’m better than you are” kind of thing, where there is a *winner*. […] Nobody […] wants to watch a Food Network show about [Arrow] and everybody […] humming along together, […] that’s not interesting, there’s no glamour there, there’s no tension there, […] there’s no win or lose. [Long pause]

Nobody wants to know how […] happy I am, […] it’s not sexy, it’s not, it’s not dangerous, it’s not.

The Food Network with its competitive landscape has made being a chef more of a proving ground; a place where overcoming the hardships of restaurant work is a badge of success.

The pervasive influence of the media has dictated that being a cook is stylish.

Chef Dee: Can’t imagine why, but it is; […] the media has told us it’s really cool to be a cook, but it’s still not cool to be a waiter, in fact it’s kind of second-class to be a waiter; […] you’re the person that gets dumped on. If you have a bad day at work, you know, you go out to eat and you dump on your waiter because, he’s just a waiter, you know.
The status of a chef is based on the perception of what it means to be a chef. Servers and other workers in the front of the house typically make more money than back of the house. Chef Dee, when she worked as a cook in a restaurant, witnessed this firsthand. She again revisits the same compensation situation as a restaurant owner,

Chef Dee: So, I’m not sure about that, but […] I realized that the waiters were making a lot more money I asked to be transferred to the front of the house, because I thought if I am going back to school, […] I need to make as much money as possible. The waiters are making probably between 50 and 80 thousand dollars a year. Long pause. Working about 24 hours.

Understanding the high status that chefs enjoy today as a result of the Food Network leads one to ask, what is restaurant work like and who aspires to work in this particular environment as a chef?

**Long Day, Hard Work, Low Pay**

Working in a restaurant kitchen means long hours doing strenuous work, and it is not like it’s portrayed on the Food Network.

Chef Chris: You know even back when I went to school late ‘90s, they still had kind of a romanticized view as far as what working in a restaurant and a kitchen really is; […] that it’s long, hard, hot. […] The hours are can be gruesome […] so I definitely see people, […] fellow women in the class […] shy away.

Chef Jenn: And also, it is a lot of hard work […] if you’re working in a hotel.

The scheduled hours that chefs work are both long and laborious. According to the chefs, this is the case because of the nature of the business and also finances. The long hours are a result of the nature of the business, particularly, periodity (unpredictable ebb and flow of customer business). Chef Chris talks about why the shifts are long instead of split shifts.

Chef Chris: So, I think if you’re expecting somebody to come in who’s already commuting and only doing six-hour shifts on a habitual basis it’s not worth their time, nor the money. […] [This is] especially true if you’re a restaurant open for two dinner services or three, four dinner services. […] If you do breakfast, lunch, dinner, I think it’s
[...] hard to come in [...] cuz if you’re looking at six hours of service well, how early are those people coming to prep for the line, maybe two, three hours before. [...] What if you have a long service time and then all of a sudden, “OK I’m done I’m leaving.” [...] You don’t stock up, [...] you [...] don’t replenish the stuff on your line; [...] there is no assimilation process for the next person coming in. [...] I was able to get this done, I prepped this back up, this is ready, this is what we need to do. I think if you cut it down to six hours I think that [...] you’re probably squeaking by with a little bit of prep and just enough to get you through service and then you’re done. So I think that if you’re going to have more or a fluid style of service, I think that’s that.

The flow or periodicity of restaurant service is certainly hard to determine ahead of time, and establishments have to take business as it comes. Chef Chris mentions long enough shifts that it makes it financially worthwhile for staff to come to work. This brings up the subject of worker’s compensation. There are several ways to pay chefs (cooks), shift pay, hourly or salary.

Chef Jenn comments on shift pay, which is not hourly, but rather workers are paid by the shift.

Chef Jenn: Yeah, I do. I think a couple of things. First of all, [...] these restaurants don’t have that much money and they’re watching the bottom line very closely. They don’t, I don’t know, ah they what to say here, we’re going to give you 60 dollars to work this shift and you know, I think it’s against the law isn’t it. Didn’t they bring that in and say that you can’t do that anymore? I know it still goes on. I find that it happens in the nicer finer dining restaurants because the chefs or the owner, who’s ever in charge of the schedule, they know that because this cook has this job and it’s now on his resume, that cook now is going to be able to move on and get another job somewhere else.

During Chef Chris’ time in the industry, people were generally paid an hourly wage. The hourly wage and the length of travel time (primarily on public transportation) also influence the length of shifts.

Chef Chris: I think where I worked [...] it was [...] always [on] an hourly basis; we didn’t have a lot of shift pay. [...] I think the [...] thinking [...] is that [...] if we have hourly employees and we’re breaking it up as six-hour shifts here, six-hours shifts there, if they commute an hour each way, what’s their incentive to stay? [...] They would have to work, maybe five, six, seven shifts to actually get full-time hours.

Another influence on pay and length of shifts is money.

Chef Chris: A lot of times [...] the sad thing is that it comes down to money. When I graduated from culinary school, I would love to say that now there’s a huge cost of living but we’re looking at [...] 15 plus years that since I graduated from culinary school. [...] I
really don’t think what people are earning has really changed that much, maybe a dollar or two, which is shameful. […] I think if you try and put it where, […] I’m going to pay you an honest, starting wage, a lot of times it is 10, 12 bucks an hour and it was the same thing […] when I graduated culinary school, it really hasn’t gone up. That’s good pay […] if you’re getting 14-15 dollars an hour […] and benefits, […] that’s unheard of […]. So, I think if you’re expecting somebody to come in who’s already commuting and only doing six-hour shifts on a habitual basis it’s not worth their time; nor the money.

Longer shifts also help accommodate the work styles of individual employees. They also make the workday more fluid and help retain desired employees.

Chef Chris: Maybe you like your tongs over here, maybe you like your plates set here, maybe when you’re putting your components together and you’d have the top of your cooler, […] we have certain prepped ingredients up front, up on top maybe that works for you. […] Maybe I like to have all my ingredients […] in a certain order that I can just grab [them]. Maybe again on your reach-ins on the line, maybe there’s certain things that you like up front that I don’t like up front; […] it’s all how we set up our station. […] I think that if you have somebody who’s a solid person on the line you want to make sure that number one, you put your aces in your places, which is what I was always told; you make sure that everything’s up and ready and is functioning […] for them to have the best shift of success. […] I think that’s why you have longer hours and I think a lot of them you know a lot of them go into the tail end or the longer nights because again you can’t control business. I mean, […] we’d love to say, “OK you’re schedule is 5-10. At 10:00 you’re done.” Well, I’m sorry what if it happened to be a beautiful night and people and there’s a lot of foot traffic around and people are in a celebratory mood, and you get another pop at 9:15, 9:00 and you know you can’t really just shoot yourself in the foot and say, “Oh yeah, we’ll let you go at 10:00”, there’s still you know, that station that needs to get cleaned up, maybe prepped up a little bit for the next day. […] Also you have clean up too.

Long hours are the standard for most restaurants; however, in the country club and family restaurant setting, Chef Stella experienced working shorter, consistent hours.

Chef Stella: I guess the country club they did […] have […] a morning crew. I was [in] the 3-to-close crew; […] the waitstaff would do split shifts, but that was their choice. […] They really were work horses, they wanted to be there, they wanted to […] do it. […] Backo’s was a lunch and a dinner establishment, they wasn’t breakfast, so that was just the shift, I mean that was the shift; you were […] there early at nine in the morning till four, three or four for lunch for the lunch rush and then the dinner rush, […] I think I went in at two till close or two to whenever.

Chef Stella contrasts her working shorter and consistent hours at both a country club and family restaurant with the long hours she puts in as an owner of her own café.
Stephanie: So no one worked 16-hour days?

Chef Stella: No, no [Laughing] not like here! But it’s my own place so it’s I can’t complain.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah, so like today when you say like here, today you’re off.

Chef Stella: We’re closed. We do answer phones. Today I got here at 8:30 and I’ll be here until […] the work gets done. […] I got […] dinners going out tomorrow; we got 21, 24 dinners going out for a special occasion and then I’ve got a function that needs to be out by 10:00 in the morning. […] I’m just doing some prep work for that, for tomorrow for when I come in probably, at 6:30 am till close. […] It all depends on what’s going on. Last week, I can honestly say I worked about almost 12 hours every day. […] I came in on Sunday cuz I had […] something going out. […] It just depends on what I have and what’s going on. This week should be a little slower, […] I say that now but who knows. […] People will call today for catering for Saturday, so it’s just a matter of […] you just […] keep working until it’s done. I work until it’s done or until I feel comfortable that I can get everything done the next day with two of us back in the kitchen. Yeah, there’s always two of us usually, in the kitchen and then two work the front. […] I get pulled out to the front during the lunch hour if we get busy and then if not, I’ll go right to the back […] to work, so I’m constantly working. I should […] relax more, I don’t sit down cuz if I sit down I get too tired, [Laughing] that’s why I just keep on going, I don’t know. Yeah, I sit at the computer; I gotta do computer work and that’s the worst part because I got to get up and I got to motivate myself to keep on going […] [Laughing] I don’t know, […] no I love what I do I really do. I […] like to see the production and I like to see it go out. […] I like to see positive feedback all the time, […] negative I don’t like. […] I don’t get very often, if I do […] it’s nothing major but I’ve been pretty lucky, I’ve been pretty good.

Restaurant work is strenuous and chefs put in long hours, it takes a certain type of person to take on this challenging work environment; who chooses to become a chef will be discussed in the next section.

Who Chooses to Become a Chef: The Culture Behind the Scenes

Previously in Chapter two, we discussed characteristics of people who work in professional kitchens. During their interviews, the women chefs expressed their experiences with the culture of the back of the house and the people who work there. The subject of who chooses a career in the professional culinary came up during the interviews with the women chefs.
Chef Jenn: This industry attracts people that [...] have a lot of energy, they want to be on their feet, they want to be social; [...] the job itself is very stressful, especially in [...] fine dining. [...] It’s incredibly stressful and so [...] to keep the momentum going, to keep yourself awake and be able to actually perform [...] all the duties that you need to perform, [...], it’s the cocaine, heroin that’s around not only during the job, but once you get off you’re so riled up it’s 2:30 in the morning but you’re not going to go home. [...] You’re gonna go to the 4:00 bar or you go to someone’s apartment [...] and you party until 6, 7, 8:00 in the morning [...] and then get up, or go to bed and then get up and do it all over again. See you get into this weird cycle, it’s like you’re a zombie, cuz you’re awake all night and you sleep all day and then the partying comes in because you got all these people [Laughter] who, it’s one long party and it so it’s easy to fall into it’s really easy to fall into there’s, I don’t know too many restaurants that don’t have that, that culture, that partying culture. [...] Yes, I think that’s true, I think that’s a huge important part, that [...] adrenaline rush is really hard to shut off, [...] especially if you’re an active person [...] who does this, it doesn’t fit these people into family life.

The adrenaline rush during service seems to be a common experience of the chefs, and it is something that they liked and attracted them to the business.

Chef Chris: Yeah, [...] I would definitely say I’m an adrenaline junkie; [...] in fact, I would honestly live and breathe for that dinner rush where you [...] have tickets coming off of the printer [...] actually touching the floor. [...] I lived for that stuff; [...] it was one of those things that I totally looked forward to when I was in the kitchen. [...] I loved being busy. [...] I tried fine dining when I worked out in the [city on the North West Coast] [...] [The City on the North West Coast Grill]. I was out there, [...] did staging in fine dining, it’s on top of the skyscraper in the city they call the [Big One]; [...] I hated it. [...] It was so boring. [...] If you were there on a Monday night and you only [...] [are] maybe doing three tables, I mean you stand there and you can only clean your station so much.

Chef Stella: You know, [...] it was fun. [...] I just got in the kitchen, the tickets started coming up, my heart was pumping, it was just like adrenaline. [...] This is a lot of fun. Oh my God, I’m putting food out. Oh my God, [...] I mean you get yelled at and all that but then you work just like everybody else, nobody gives you a break for not lifting mats and doing all that which was fine with me.

During the long work day, chefs work hard and are up against the time constraints of service. The adrenaline rush of a fast-paced environment is something that chefs embrace and thrive in.
In addition to the mechanics of the kitchen, there is also a culture that is present amongst the workers in the back of the house. Chef Chris’ parents had hesitations about their daughter becoming a chef; they didn’t think she would fit in.

Chef Chris: [Sigh], [...] not educated maybe [...] some of them. [...] You can have a record and still work in this industry. [...] You can have [...] a felony and still be working. [...] I never really looked at that as bad. [...] I think they always looked at it that it was people who weren’t motivated [...] that stayed.

Once she got into the industry, Chef Chris comments on her experiences with co-workers in the kitchen.

Chef Chris: Yeah, one, the divorce [rate], [...] you definitely see [...] the seedier side of alcoholism, [...] a lot of drug abuse that I’d seen [...] within that aspect of the hospitality industry that I think people like to sweep under the rug. [...] At the same time [...] I knew [...] that this was were I felt the most at home. [Laughing]

Out in the Northwest, Chef Chris worked with a crew that participated in drug usage.

Chef Chris: So a lot of them I would say were [...] mid to late 20s, early 30s that were working in the kitchen. [...] Single usually, part of the Hippie lifestyle. [...] One of the things we always had to listen to on public radio on Wednesday night would be radio Gumbo and then the Grateful Dead Hour would come on after (both laughter). [...] Just to give you an idea [...] of what type of crew, [...] they were, I don’t know if I should be saying this, but they were known to go out in the alley and have a “cigarette” break which was obviously not just cigarettes, it was illegal substances that they would be smoking in the back.

Chef Dee also talks about some of the males she worked with in the back of the house and their behavior both on the job and after work:

Chef Dee: There was a lot of pot smoking and [...] they were all kind of good old boys. Yeah [...] and [...] there was drinking at work, [...] I mean not on the job, but you could stay and have shifts drink after work and you could actually change out of your clothes and you can sit there and drink all night.

During the long hours spent working in the back of the house, teasing was often a way to pass the time.

Chef Chris: I don’t know, [...] when you work with somebody for long periods of time you can kind of tease and [...] pick on people. [...] If they react, it’s [...] like a scab you
want to keep picking at [...]. [...] I was probably guilty of that too, but I was an equal opportunity offender, I made sure that I made fun of the guys and the girls. [...] That’s just [...] the nature of the business. [...] When you’re stuck in a kitchen with no windows and you’re there 10, 12 hours a day doing the same work, day in, day out, you know you start to, “OK well, what are we going to talk about next?” Ah let’s talk about so and so, they’re hung over today or let’s talk about somebody’s hair, or somebody’s uniform. I don’t know it’s [...] something I think to get [...] the time to pass. You know in school we were talking about [...] that whole aspect.

On the subject of teasing in the kitchen, Chef Chris offers the following advice,

Chef Chris: You cannot have a thin skin even for a quiet introvert that’s a man, I think maybe you might have some issues at times cuz again you have to have a strong backbone to work in kitchens.

There was quite a bit of teasing that went on between the men and the women, particularly between the kitchen staff and the front of the house staff. Chef Dee witnessed male cooks “complimenting” waitresses.

Chef Dee: Frankly I have never worked in a kitchen, [...] well, that’s not true the [...] cooks at [the local sit-down chain restaurant], [...] there was a kitchen manager, he wasn’t a chef [...] and there was a lot of bad boy kind of behavior; [...] comments to waiters and waitresses and things like that. Like [...] “Hey honey you know, do you want to meet me in the bathroom?” and that kind of thing (both laughing). [...] Comments on [...] things that might be considered a compliment, like, “Wow, you look real pretty today” [...] that might be a compliment if it wasn’t so slimy [...] [laugh] or creepy.

Stephanie: So do you think the girls take that as a compliment? How do you think the men are giving it?

Chef Dee: I think the men are giving it as an open-ended compliment. I think [...] it’s funny [...] it was always the girls with the big boobs that got that compliment, [...] so maybe they’re just trying to, I don’t know, maybe they’re just trying to [...] get a little attention.

Stephanie: And the girls took that as a compliment?

Chef Dee: Yeah, I think so because this was ‘79 or ‘78.

Chef Stella also comments on teasing in the kitchen:

Chef Stella: Oh yeah, they spoke English; [...] they spoke it choppy. [...] When they [talked] they would [...] pretend like they’re having a conversation about something and I’d know exactly what they would be talking about. [...] A couple [of] times they shut up
and they learned to talk softer. [Laughing] You know that’s [...] who they are, they’re going to do it no matter if I’m in the kitchen or not. [...] I didn’t like it but I wasn’t a part of it. I’m like, “You guys just cool it.” [...] You know the waitresses with the big breasts coming in or you know the tight skirts [...], you’d hear it all, they’re just pigs. [Laughter] They are.

Sometimes the sexual “kidding” went beyond talking. Several chefs during Chef Chris’ career were fired because of sexual harassment of women chefs.

Chef Chris: He was eventually fired because he was sleeping with one of the host staff; [...] he was just a puke in general. [Etienne] ended up firing him just because, you know, obviously fraternizing with the staff was a no-no as far as you know, any type of relationship.

Part of the restaurant culture is made up of consensual sex and sexual harassment. There was also talk amongst the male workers about their sexual conquests.

Chef Jenn: The guys like to talk about like their sexual conquests, [...] what they did last night and who they’re going to do next week, look at the waitress and she would be right there.

Chef Dee: He is well-known but [...] and his food’s good is he a great manager a great chef, probably not, [...] he’s having sex in the bathroom with the hostess.

Working in a professional kitchen is both long and hard work. To pass the time during down times of service, people joke and sometimes the joking gets rough, so workers need to not take it personally but as part of the job. Another part of back of the house culture, especially amongst men, is competition between workers. The next section will elaborate on the experience women chefs talk about as they relate to competition in the restaurant world.

**Competition: I’m Better than You Are**

Chef Dee further elaborates on how working in a kitchen as an only woman in a group of men chefs can be different than working with a group of all women. She illustrates this point by telling the story of her experience working benefit dinners, The Dinner, and another fundraiser for the neighborhood group.
Chef Dee: No, [...] I think [...] I have something [...] that puts the differences between women chefs and men chefs pretty succinctly. Every year we do the [Dinner] and it’s me and four and sometimes five other women chefs and no men are allowed in the kitchen at all, the men wash the dishes, but no men in the kitchen; [...] we have a great time. [...] We all help plate each other’s food and we giggle and we produce these great plates. [...] I did another fundraiser for the neighborhood group, and it was the Chefs of the Area; [...] it was me and four men from the surrounding [...] restaurants. It was miserable; they were competing with each other so much. [...] It’s like, “No, no you can’t, no you can’t do it like that, no, no.”; there was so much testosterone that [...] I couldn’t even believe it. I was just shocked. Even my [husband/partner] noticed it and he walked in the kitchen and said, “What the heck’s going on?” I said, “You know [...] it’s just a totally different experience.” I think there’s a lot of competition. I think that there’s some insecurity [...] that’s the way I would take [it]. One of them [...] was really well-known um he is really well-known but [...] and his food’s good is a great manager a great chef, probably not, he’s, he’s having sex in the bathroom with the hostess, you know so (laughing) so I you know [...] I’m not sure what it is, you know it’s funny I some how I feel like that I’m kind of out of the loop since I’m married to my partner.

Competition amongst chefs is an important part of the back of the house culture. Chef Jenn experienced a competitive atmosphere with Hispanic men in the kitchen.

Chef Jenn: What is interesting about the Hispanic guys, though, like I said, with just men in general in the kitchen, it’s all about competition; who’s the best cook, who’s the funniest, who’s the best leader, who’s the best whatever. [...] You find that with the Hispanic men too, [...] just because they’re smaller, they’re still [...] gonna get out there [...] and try [...] to move those potatoes, move the fish, do whatever they need to do because they’re competing amongst themselves.

Most all of the competition was between men chefs; however, in one case, Chef Jenn experienced a female line cook trying to fit into the competition with her male line cooks. Chef Jenn never understood the dynamic of attempting to be one of the guys. She relates:

Chef Jenn: I don’t know, I worked with a woman, [...] she was a line cook and very strong, kept up with the guys, big drinker. [...] If we’d go out after work and the guys were doing shots, she was doing shots. [...] She wanted the respect of the guys so she thought if she acted like a guy then they would respect her. [...] I just took a big step back from that because the joking, the harassment, [...] The guys liked to talk about [...] their sexual conquests, [...] what they did last night and who they’re going to do next week, look at that waitress, you know and she would be right in there [...] saying what she did trying to make it [...] sound like she is one of the guys. [...] I’ll say this, really fake, I thought she was being fake.
Stephanie: But yet when some of the women are for lack of a better term, being “girly” and talking about guys and talking about [how] cute guys are, how come they are not accepted into that?

Chef Jenn: Because the way that like the girly way of talking about things, the drama is [...] what I mean. [...] The guys don’t want to hear any drama from the girls. [...] “Yeah, oh we didn’t think you would call me. [...] I really like him, should I text him?” they don’t want to hear that. The way this girl came in was [...] she [...] had a mouth of [Laughter] [...] a trucker or a sailor [...] and tried to be very masculine with the way that she cooked, with the way that she carried herself; it was very masculine. [...] The way she talked about sex was the way they were talking about sex, conquests, [...] “I did him, I did this.” They [...] listened to her and they would engage in this conversation but I always felt it was still a competition, like the guys were still trying to out do her, she was constantly trying to outdo them. [...] I like to joke around and have fun, but not like that. Yes, I’m sure she’s still a line cook, I’m sure of it. She did good in culinary school. [...] I think for all her shortcomings she tried to make up for it for being macho. [...] It just made me really uncomfortable, like [...], she’s trying to play a man’s game and I don’t think she’s going to win that game.

Stephanie: So even though even though she could obviously cook, [...] she could obviously grill; [...] I’m assuming pretty well.

Chef Jenn: Yes, oh Yes.

Stephanie: She was very, very good so those expectations of the male chef were they want somebody to go fast, all that.

Chef Jenn: Aha

Stephanie: But still she kind of remained at her level, and she decided to become one of the guys.

Chef Jenn: Yes! Yes! And but then, again it was [...] for me watching all this go down I [...] was nervous that it wasn’t going to work out for her. She’s not one of the guys. [...] They could cut her down; God knows what she really felt behind closed doors. How can you keep [...] that up? [...] It would be draining.

Stephanie: Why did they think she wasn’t one of the guys, other than the obvious reasons that she was female.

Chef Jenn: Because she is female and these guys stick together; [...] on the line it’s a team you have to rely on each other, [...] and she did a good job cooking but [...] beyond the cooking [...] she wanted to fit in with them on their level. [...] I don’t know it’s just not, it doesn’t, for me [...] just looking at it, I felt like [...] she was headed for a big fall; they were going to knock her down.
Stephanie: And how did he deal with her […]?

Chef Jenn: He didn’t, he just pretended like nothing was going on. He just didn’t say anything and it was gross. […] Some of the stunts she was pulling in the kitchen […] to impress the guys like […] she would grab one of the waiters and they would go downstairs into the wine room, which was right underneath the kitchen where we kept all the wine and they would have sex down there. They would bring a candle and condoms (making a carrying gesture with both hands). OK […] (laughter) and that was […] 15 minutes before, before service starts at 5:30.

Stephanie: Did they rest of the guys do things like this….

Chef Jenn: No, No, not No! She was doing it to impress the other guys and the chef knew about it and he didn’t do anything. I don’t know why. […] I guess he didn’t because maybe he felt if he said something to her, how would she react […]? […] Why is he coming down on her? If they are having sex in the basement, […] I don’t know about the rest of the guys, I don’t think they were. [Laughter] But we had guys who were drinking on the job and the chef didn’t do anything about that. Yeah and there was no direction and that was a big reason why I left that restaurant because it was just too much for me; I couldn’t stand the dynamic.

Though there was competition in the back of the house, there was also a sense that the men stuck together and supported each other, not because they recognized each other’s skills but because they were men. At this point, since all the chefs interviewed worked in restaurants in the Midwest, near a major city, it is important to recognize the ethnic make up of the typical restaurant in the Midwest and how it may or may not contribute to the gender dynamic of professional culinary kitchens.

**Ethnicity and Gender**

This research is primarily about gender dynamics in the professional culinary kitchen, however, there may be an ethnic intersection that is worth briefly considering. A vast majority of restaurant workers in large cities in the Midwest are Latinos.

Chef Jenn: Not even just men, I remember, that was the first time I remember looking around thinking it was all minorities, it was all Hispanic men and they were just, I couldn’t believe how fast these people were moving. […] I thought wow […] this is what I’m going to have to do. Like this is what, this is what I’m getting into; and it’s exactly
what I got into. […] Yeah, it was a lot, it was in the hotels in the city, it’s all Hispanic men moving incredibly quick.

Similarly, Chef Chris experienced a large Latino population working in the kitchens of corporate restaurants.

Chef Chris: Yes, it was, […] all Latin and James was […] [Asian], so I was the only […] white person in the kitchen. […] I mean, I’ve never really looked at it as […], “Oh My God I’m white, they’re Latin oh my God I’m white, they’re black.” […] So as far as that whole race issue, […] it was just more, I think, a lot of […] the cultural beliefs that I […] had the issue with. […] The fact is like, “OK, why can’t I do it, I’m a woman.”

Working in a country club setting, Chef Stella also worked with Latinos.

Chef Stella: He was on the line as well. He was about two years older than me but he also […] was on the broiler at that time. […] I got moved over to sauté and I did that very well. […] Then they hired […] a Mexican guy [who] came from the family hotel chain. [He] took over the sauté and then they pushed me to the middle of the line; reading the tickets and doing all the middle work, bringing all the plates together and all that. […] I could do it […] and they worked me to the front of the line. […] Then sous cheffing; […] being a sous chef there and making […] the stocks and the soups and all that. […] It was mostly Latin […] dishwashers, […] yep it was. The […] chef was American like me I guess white American […] but everybody else was foreign.

As a restaurant owner, Chef Dee relates that her kitchen is entirely Latino:

Chef Dee: I don’t know where they go, […] I cannot get a woman to work for me (long silence)… I can’t and […] I don’t know what it is except that, well actually, I haven’t had to hire anybody (chuckle) in like 10 years, […] or eight years. […] My entire kitchen is Hispanic, they’re all Hispanic men; […] one’s from Guatemala the rest of them are Mexican. […] They are older; […] they are […] 30s and 40s. […] I’ve got one, our lead prep guy, I think he’s my age, […] a couple of really young dishwashers, […] everybody else is […] married, families, owns their own home. […] It’s funny that […] all the Mexican guys, everybody in the kitchen is married, has a family owns a home and none of the waiters can actually put two cents together at the end of the week. [Laughing] […] They spend all their money, and the waiters are making probably between 50 and 80 thousand dollars a year. Long pause. Working about 24 hours. [Long pause]

In more remote areas of the United States, Latinos feel the need to assimilate into the culture, learning the language. In big cities, according to Chef Chris, the need to do so is not as strong.
Chef Chris: I think […] you look at that’s different in a [large city in the Midwest] is that there’s a very strong Latin American community here where […] you don’t have to really try to assimilate to the American way of life […]. […] I think it’s a little bit different, […] in a city/town in [a Western state] where I was […] sous chef […] in a few restaurants […] again, predominately a Latin American staff. […] I think that they worked a little bit harder to assimilate themselves into […] knowing more English, [the] American way of life or whatever you we want to say […] is that they worked a lot harder for it.

Regarding language, Latinos speak predominantly Spanish in the workplace; this is true even when they know English, as it is both easier and allows them to speak more privately in front of non-speakers. Non-Spanish speakers learn some workplace Spanish in order to communicate better. Chef Dee takes it one step further; she hired a Spanish tutor for herself. Her rationale:

Chef Dee: It is interesting that […] everybody is very respectful and very friendly with me, very friendly. […] I speak Spanish so it makes it very easy for us to joke […] and talk. […] It’s important for me to speak Spanish, they all speak English, so we kind of go back and forth. […] I actually have a Spanish tutor because I want to make sure that I’m as fluent as I possibly can be […] because I want to be able to understand my staff. […] If I can’t speak in conditional terms or use the subjective in Spanish then I can’t actually […] say, if you’d been here[…] if I can only say, “Go wash the dishes,” that doesn’t really give me any chance to teach them anything or to mold them into the kind of people that I want them, the kind of workers or kinda cooks that I want them to be. But if I can say things like, […] “If you’d made the sauce the way I told you to make it, we wouldn’t be having this problem right now.” (Laughing) […] That’s […] a difficult concept, sentence construct; you have to know a couple of different tenses for that. […] Instead I’d have to say, “Well you didn’t make it this way and now we have a problem.” […] I can be [gentler] with criticism if I have better command of the language. Yeah, […] instead of sounding angry, I can sound like I’m teaching, which is important to me.

In the restaurant industry, Latinos show a strong work ethic as is evidenced in several ways. First, they work long and hard hours for little pay and often augment income by working more than one job. Chef Dee writes their schedule to help facilitate them working a second job.

Chef Dee: Yeah, […] though white men have not for the most part, all the Mexicans and the black guys that I had […] at Winnie’s all had second jobs.
In regards to both Mexicans and black working together in the kitchen, she relates tensions that arise between the two ethnic groups.

Chef Dee: No, just a just a couple. [...] There’s a challenge with having Mexicans and blacks in the kitchen together. [...] There’s a real, [...] in very stereotypical terms, ways and in very big generalities Mexicans think black people are lazy and black people think that Mexican are here to take their jobs. (Long pause) So, I’m glad that’s on tape (sarcastic, laughing). It’s true; I mean [...] that’s what I have experienced. [...] It takes um a very careful mix of people to make sure the team is solid and that’s the most important thing to me.

For the most part, all four chefs view Latinos as being hard workers with a strong work ethic.

Chef Chris: Saw again, good work ethic, [...] one thing [...] I think that Latin Americans overall are kind of pooh-poohed in this industry; [...] I don’t know where people get that mentality from. [...] I think that they’re some of the hardest working people. [...] They saw my work ethic, matched their work ethic as well, [...] and that I did actually care about [...] about the business, I cared about them, I cared about our shift, about how well it ran, where I think Frank’s more or less [thought], I’m here from 7-3, I’m out, I don’t care.

Chef Dee concurs with the opinion that Mexicans have a strong work ethic,

Chef Dee: I have never met [...] a lazy Mexican [chuckle] ever. Yeah; [...] they have a great work ethic. [...] They want a better life, they want money, [...] that’s the most important thing, they want money. [...] They know [...] for the most part, this is generality [...] they know that the way to get money is hard work.

Worth noting is that when Latinos were going to be absent or planned on leaving their job, it was common practice to find their own replacements, usually a good friend or family member.

Chef Chris: Like you said two of [...] either that or they they’re family was good friends with this family; so it was [...] lot of times like, “I’m quitting, here’s my replacement.”

Chef Dee relays a similar experience:

Chef Dee: No, not any more (both laughing). [...] I did at one point, [I] had three brothers (Mexican) (both laughing)

Stephanie: ‘Cuz then usually it’s that when one leaves
Chef Dee: Yeah

Stephanie: a brother comes and takes their place?

Chef Dee: Aha and that’s exactly what happened with another one. Yes, […] I hired first one, […] guy and he went back to Mexico, he said, “But my brother can work this station and he’s a better cook than I am and I want you to meet him, he’s standing outside (both laughing), and he has his knives with him and he can come, he can start today.” […] I love that. […] I think consistency is very, very important in the kitchen and I have frickin’ consistency in my kitchen.

Latinos bring their culture to the work place. Chef Chris has experienced gender-specific expectations of Latinos that dictate how they work with others in the kitchen. Roles for men and women are different.

Chef Chris: I think a lot of it, and I could be wrong, because I’m obviously not Latin American, but I think a lot of it goes back to […] where women stand within that culture. […] I don’t think that they’re thought of as equals (chuckle). […] Again, I don’t know that cuz obviously I’m not Latin American but we’re talking about people that […], were not born in the United States, they’re coming from […] Mexico, Central America. […] I think […] [Maya] was from Bolivia, […] but I think he actually (laughing) […] had more of the forward thinking. I think, maybe, that was the […] South American influence, maybe a little more cross culture of people that live there. […] It just seemed they [women] were always treated like they were helpless little babies, like, “Oh let me get that for you oh, mamasita, oh you can’t get that.” […] I’d even talk about that, “Don’t you have an issues with being called mamasita or mama or whatever?” […] They were well like, “No it’s fine.” So, what do you do? […] You know you try and curb them but if it’s acceptable behavior with them and they’re OK with being treated like that and talked to like that…

Stephanie: You didn’t put up with that and you’re a white woman.

Chef Chris: Oh hell no, hell no!

Stephanie: They seemed to get on board.

Chef Chris: Yes, “…” pretty much. […] [Sigh] […] Again, it was one of those things where it was […] a proving […] aspect. […] One of our line cooks […] was really, really sick, he had like a head cold, just looked like death had smacked him with a Mac truck. […] I ended up working on the line that night […] and again it was probably […] close after I’d started working there. […] It was kind of funny for the guys, […] they were kind of like, “Oh God, what is she going to be able to do back here?” […] It was a funny thing cuz I was more organized than the guys back there; I’d worked cleaner than a lot of the
guys back there. [...] It was kind of funny, when I got done with my shift that night, James my executive chef was like, “Wow you really did a good job back there, you really know your line mechanics.” [...] I [...] thought to myself, “OK, well, how do you think I got to this this position it wasn’t you know by giving blow jobs by any standpoint. [...] I got here because I earned my way every step of the way.” [...] I was happy in one way that I got the compliment and that I [...] proved to him like, “Yes I can do it”, but in another way, again I was kind of pissed off from the standpoint of, “Yeah I have good line mechanics, yes I know how to stay organized back there, just because I haven’t worked here that long I know how to sauté fish, I know how to make a good sauce, [...] it’s the same thing that I’ve been doing you know for almost 20 years, I mean [...] it’s not rocket science, you know?”

Chef Chris worked with two Latin women in the kitchen, who were responsible for making salads. Their interaction with the Latin male line cooks illustrates their understanding of gendered differences in the kitchen.

Chef Chris: There were two [...] Latin American women that worked on [...] the cold line. [...] It was very much [...], they were very subservient to the men in the kitchen; they were even scared, cuz they had to make croutons and make the lardons, the bacon lardons. [...] They were scared to actually go on to the line and they would ask in Spanish permission if they could go onto the line.

Stephanie: To the men?

Chef Chris: Yes, to the normal line workers [...] you’re talking hot line to cold line they would actually ask permission because they were so intimidated [by] the guys in the kitchen.

In her interactions with her kitchen staff, Chef Dee explains the differences of how the Hispanic staff treats both her and her husband. The relationship with her husband and the staff and Dee and the staff are different.

Chef Dee: Everybody’s very friendly with me and very respectful, everybody is very respectful of my [husband/partner], they call him Señor; they [...] rarely look at look him in the eye. [...] They will not talk to [...] him for the most part other than, “hello” or “How are you.” I mean [...] everybody’s cordial but [...] they wouldn’t go up and start a conversation with him because he is El Patrón, [...] he’s the man, he’s the guy.

Stephanie: Do they call you Prima?

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10 Lardons-Thin strips of fat/lard cut from the belly of a pig and usually fried.
Chef Dee: No, they don’t, they call me […] [Dee] [nickname], for the most part (laughing) (Both laughing) they call me [Dee], they call me Senora. […] I had […] one dishwasher call […] me Doña Dee, which I thought was kinda cute. No, mostly they call me Señora or they call me [Dee]. Nobody calls me chef, that’s I’ve never asked anybody to call me Chef. The students all do and it’s so funny though, yes Chef.

As previously mentioned, the term chef means chief in French. The chef is in charge of the kitchen. The following section will talk about the different management styles typically associated with professional chefs.

Management Styles

**Competitive vs. Collaborative**

Men chefs tend to bring with them a competitive spirit, which can affect the work environment. Women, on the other hand, seem to have a better sense of collaboration when managing.

Stephanie: All right, you had said that you had a job in an all woman’s kitchen, a French bistro, which you said

Chef Dee: Aha

Stephanie: was horrific

Chef Dee: Aha

Stephanie: You it was just horrible and yet you said […] that when you did the [The Dinner] here it’s all women and it was absolutely fabulous.

Chef Dee: Sure

Stephanie: What was the difference there, what makes [The Dinner] different than working with them, because I want to stay away from saying all women is better than all men, this type of discrete.

Chef Dee: Well, I think the dynamic as far as I’m concerned, the restaurant business or any business that’s a small office, if you’ve got a small office, basically this is an office, the kitchen is an office, no different than an office. […] Personalities have to mesh. The team has to work together […] and in the [French bistro], there was no team. […] I said
[...] the owner smoked in the kitchen, there was no [...] passion, it she had a little French bistro because she could [...]. She had no passion for what was going on. She hired people who had no passion for what was going on. There was no [...] cohesiveness; there was no teamwork, that’s why it was awful. It would have been awful if [...] they were all men. [...] Just because it was a splintered group, [...] there was just nothing there. There was no support [...] there was constant [...] belittlement [...] it was [...] just a lousy group of people.

Chef Dee characterizes all women (except for the dishwasher) staff she worked with at the French bistro as not passionate about their work and also they did not function as a cohesive team. In the following excerpt she talks about [The Dinner] she chairs. She herself chooses all women chefs to cook at the dinner. She relates:

Chef Dee: The reason the [The Dinner] works is because everybody is passionate about the same thing; we’re all here for the same thing. [...] At the [French bistro], [...] the kitchen manager was there because she needed the job, because she had a baby to support, [...] and this is what she could do. [...] The cooks were there because they could cook, [...] but nobody was there because they loved being at the owner’s [Bistro]. [...] Here, yeah, [...] I create an environment [...] by hand picking people I want to work with by creating an event before it. I mean I ask, I invite people to be part of the event six months out, so you know [...] by December I will have my crew for next year. [...] I send emails outlining the event; I give everybody a specific place in the event so everybody feels a part of it. They feel like they’re important to us. There is no feeling of importance for anybody [...] at her Bistro. [...] You can make any situation work if you create the situation but you can’t just throw a bunch of people together and expect it to work. [...] You have to pick your crew, that’s why you know, I’m still careful about who I bring on because if they don’t fit in, I don’t care how good of cook you are or whether you’re a man or a woman if you don’t fit into my team, it’s never going to work and it could ruin the team. I’m very protective about that.

Stephanie: So, no grand standing, no arrogance.

Chef Dee: Hmmm No! No! No! [...] and [...] we, what my [husband/partner] and I pound this home with [...] the front of the house and the back of house every single chip [...] we talk about the team, we talk [...] about the guests. They’re guests, they’re not customers, they’re guests. [...] You know there’s no back of the house, front of the house challenge. [...] We did have a little bit of a personality conflict between one guy in the back of the house and one waiter. [...] It started out as a big joke, joke, joke and then all of a sudden it got a little worse. [...] We sat them both down and said, “This isn’t [...] happening or one of you has gotta go, [...] because the fabric is [...] too fragile you know.
Men chefs often belittle and scream at employees thinking it will produce desired results.

Chef Jenn thinks this is because chefs are under an extreme amount of stress.

Chef Jenn: Yeah, for now it’s over cuz we have to serve the food and it can get pretty stressful, especially if things start going wrong. […] If we’re running late or someone drops the sauce on the floor, whatever, eh, if there’s any kind of hiccup and things start going crazy […] It was always horrible to get that horrible sinking feeling, like, “Oh, oh here we go.” […] I’ve worked with only one, two female chefs and then the guys, the male chefs seem to yell and they scream. They scream, [...] Get the food out! [...] What is wrong with you? [Laughing] Get the food out! I don’t think so, not in, in it’s just me and my experience, every time the chef would start screaming I would literally look at them, you know and be like, “Really? Really, how can you think that yelling at the staff is doing anything?” It [...] doesn’t. It, like I said, it just bounces off the guys.

Stephanie: Why do you think they do it? Why do you think they yell?

Chef Jenn: Because I think that the chefs are so frustrated they know, [...] they feel the pressure, [...] we all feel the pressure but the chef is the one who is going to take the hit, [...] if the customer’s upset. [...] If there’s something going wrong, the chef is going to be ultimately responsible. [...] So not only is, he trying to cover his own butt [...] ; it’s out of pure frustration, just trying to get the food out.

Stephanie: When he’s covering his own butt, is it like he wants [...] to be in charge and have a like a power base.

Chef Jenn: Yes

Stephanie: He doesn’t want to be yelling.

Chef Jenn: Sure, because [...] you could be replaced at any moment; [...] there’s a lot of chefs out there and [...] you’re as, what do they say, [...] , “You’re only as good as your last plate. “ [...] If those plates are late then you gotta a problem. So, [...] there’s a lot of pressure [...] to stay at the top and be at the top. [...] I think a lot of guys and I’m sure there are some women chefs out there, that yell and scream [...] I don’t but, I know it doesn’t work. [...] Again, they’re trying to keep the customer happy but also cover their butts and not show any weakness, [...] that they have everything under control back here.

Whereas Chef Jenn saw yelling in the kitchen as a sign of the man chef’s frustrations,

Chef Chris’ experience in the kitchen included “old school” chefs who would belittle staff not only verbally but also physically.

Chef Chris: During all of my experiences, because I think I was [...] coming up in the business where we still have “old school chef” that was the tyrant, that would yell,
belittle, didn’t care how they talked to you […] in front of your peers, […] in front of other guests. […] I’ve been yelled at in an open kitchen, […] I’ve had plates thrown at me; I’ve had lemons thrown at me. […] I think that I […] came up in the business where that was starting to change, but I still […] had […] the ending of it.

This approach is an example of top-down management instead of teamwork. The following section will discuss both top-down management as well as collaborative efforts.

_I Am the Boss of You vs. We Are a Team_

As there are differences between people, there are also different management styles. The management style of leaders contributes to the workplace culture. Chef Chris relays a story during which her managing chef was not supportive during a time of confusion and despair in the kitchen.

Chef Chris: We had a small flat top that we would do some things with. We had sliders too […]; we would cook the sliders on the flat top. […] But we really as far as cooking, there wasn’t a ton in that position but I remember the first night, […] the first busy night that I was doing that and it was a Friday night. […] I remember all of a sudden I just kind of had a fog of, “I don’t know what the hell I’m doing.” My ticket times were starting to go long, we always had an expediter […], we had a 14 minutes ticket time to get the hot entrees out. […] I think I was staring to creep up like in the 16, 17, 18 range where he was really starting to yell. […] I remember looking at him, he goes, “[Chef Chris], do you know what the fuck you’re doing?” I said, “I’m kinda lost [Alex].” He’s like, “Well figure it out.” I said, “I need some help.” “If you need some fuckin’ help,” he goes, “It’s going to be the last time you get fuckin’ help because you’re never going to be on this station again.” He goes, “Dig yourself out, think about how you’re going to get out of this shit.” […] I’ve never again heard him talk to anybody else like that. […] I remembered I wanted to cry right there […] but of course I wasn’t gonna let him see me cry because I thought this guy was a real prick. […] I sucked it up, I did the best I could, and I made sure I never had a night like that again.

Stephanie: Why do you think he talked to you like that?

Chef Chris: I think because number one I was a woman and my age and I wasn’t as sure of myself maybe. […] But also, I think there was no one around to say he couldn’t. […] The other line crew wasn’t sticking up for me that was for damn sure; […] there wasn’t anyone to say, “Hey [Alex] […], lay off!”

Stephanie: Do they stick up for other people?
Chef Chris: No, Yeah, because the whole aspect of that he was trying to tear me down to build me back up.

Not only did Chef Chris think she was treated unfairly, but she felt like she was treated differently because she was a woman.

When Chef Chris became a sous chef and interim executive chef she would manage in a very different way.

Chef Chris: I always made a mental note of, “I’m not going to treat my staff that way when I [am] in charge of a kitchen. I’m not going to brow beat my staff for making a mistake cuz mistakes will happen.” I would never belittle them and make them feel bad for what they have done or they didn’t do. […] I guess that it was always a mental of what not to do and how not to treat my staff. […] I think if nothing else, it would be like all right, fuck you then, let me show you what I really can do. […] I think it gave me more resolve to succeed and work that much harder.

One particular time when Chef Chris was a sous chef in charge of the kitchen crew, she speaks about how she handled an incident where a woman line cook was bombarded with orders and none of the men helped her.

Chef Chris: Where […] you’re in a busy rush, her station was getting slammed and all of a sudden nobody can help, not even the grill cook that was standing right next to [her]? […] This person maybe hasn’t been doing it as long as everybody else or they know that they’re running low on a prepped item, they don’t tell anybody, this person is obviously trying to get the new station down, has a lot of things going on and not even helping with that.

Stephanie: What was your position during that time?

Chef Chris: I was sous chef

Stephanie: Sous chef, […] the cooking chef. so then it’s up to you to say, “Look you guys, knock it off, let’s get in there?” […] How does that dynamic go?

Chef Chris: Well, pretty much, when you’re in the thick of things in a rush like that and that, […] was a Friday night and [Joan] was on the fish station during Lent. So we can only imagine what’s happening, getting bombarded with […] fish dish after fish dish […]. Pretty much the only thing you can do is […] get through the rush try and put out the mini flames and then have a Come to Jesus meeting with the guys on the line afterwards, individually, not collectively, because, then they’re going to have the mentality, […] that I’m attacking them, […] as a group. […] So what I would always do
is pull them […] out back, talk to them and say, “You know, […] this behavior is not going to happen and if it does happen, you can find another job.” […] I was never held hostage by any of my cooks, if they threatened to quit, “OK quit. OK everybody’s replaceable, even me.” […] They would always try, well, “I’ll just quit then.” “OK”

Chef Chris was never held hostage by anyone on her staff. If they threatened to quit, she supported their decision, she did not ask them to stay.

Stephanie: And did they quit?

Chef Chris: No, I called their bluff. I mean, cuz what you’re looking at is ultimately they were with a crew that they liked working with, they knew the place, they knew the the menu, they knew the restaurant, they already had their route, how long it took to get down there, cuz a lot of them used public transportation, so it’s you know what, it’s putting you money where your mouth is, if you’re really going to quit, quit, but I can’t have your, this attitude cuz ultimately what we have to look at is that we’re there to make the guests happy and put food out. And in a timely manner and have it taste as good as possible.

Stephanie: So, when took all of those guys, how many guys were on the line at that timeish, about?

Chef Chris: There [were] usually four on that line and then […] Joan was on there so there’d a been five. […] Then there was always, when I worked at the [company’s French Restaurant], two women that always worked on *garde manger* and that was because the chef partner of the large restaurant [Corporation, CP1], said that women really belong in *garde manger* because they have such delicate hands that can make salads look so much prettier than men can. [Long silence]

Stephanie: Yes. OK, so when you talked to them individually did you get the sense that they collectively said, “Hey chef talked to me, we better knock it off.” or did they just grab, technically “a hold of their own nose” and just act differently? How did that trickle down, how did that cascade from you, not, because obviously they wouldn’t have to say anything just act different, I’m just wondering if that ego protection went on so they didn’t talk about it after you talked to them each individual.

Chef Chris: They probably might have talked about it collectively themselves when nobody else was around. “…” They definitely didn’t talk about it you know in a group setting where I was present or other people were present.

Instead of yelling and belittling her cooks, talking to each worker individually about teamwork seemed to be more productive than talking to the whole group collectively.
Teamwork is very important to Chef Dee; she carefully calculates who she wants to work on her team. Teamwork is essential in her restaurant.

Chef Dee: One guy had a really bad attitude; he was [...] arrogant and [...], a good cook, his plates were beautiful; [...] not a team player. I mean [...] that’s really a big thing for me, you gotta be a team player and this guy was not a team player. If somebody else was in the weeds, he didn’t help and [...] then he told me that he wasn’t making enough money. If he didn’t have a raise in two weeks, he’s going to quit, and I said, “You don’t even need to stay the two weeks, you can just quit right now you know. [...]"

At one point in our interview I was surprised that Chef Dee didn’t use the word “family”, when she spoke of her workers, instead she used the word “team.” This distinction clarified her position on how she views her staff.

Chef Dee: Yeah. We talk about [...] a family atmosphere and things like that but at the same time we draw really strict boundaries; [...] we don’t get involved in our employees personal lives at all. [...] I don’t want to know if you got a new girlfriend, [...] , I don’t want to know if your boyfriend dumped you. [...] [...] I expect you to work and be here to work [...]. We had a real challenge when [...] a front of the house employee got very, very sick. [...] It was like, “Do we rush over with soup every day [...] or do we assume that this guy is a grown man and he’s got his own network of friends, we’re his employers you know.” [...] It was kind of interesting trying to figure out where that boundary was. [...] We focus really on [being] a professional team. [...] I like the word, “family” but I don’t think it’s [...] as appropriate [...] as the word, “team.” Yeah, yeah. We don’t have a Christmas party, [...] we never drink with our staff. We don’t [...] go out with them, we don’t go out to dinner or [...] we don’t go to parties with them. [...] I think actually for us that that creates that boundary but I think it also creates a great deal of respect [...] on both sides. You know we respect you, [...] and we expect you to respect us as well.

Stephanie: OK, so in some of the restaurants as we talked about, they don’t do that, some restaurants, once you take your stuff off you can just belly up to the bar.

Chef Dee: Right. Well, any time you open up [...] a bottle of beer or a bottle of wine (laughing) [...] , something’s going to change, dynamics are going to change and I think alcohol in this business [...] is something that is abused [...] by both sides of the kitchen wall. [...] I think that keeping that completely out of the equation [...] is something that works really well for us. [...] But you know, [...] that happens [...] in every, every business.

Hiring workers on as team players and maintaining professional boundaries helps Chef Dee and her husband/partner run their business in the way they want to, fair and respectful.
Both Chef Dee and Chef Chris spoke about respecting the private lives of their employees. To both of them this is very important to keep workers happy and also balance their work and private lives.

Chef Dee: It’s never occurred to me to ask someone to work 16 hours [...] I say, “You know I want a 110% from you when you’re here and when you’re gone I don’t want you to think about work, you know.”

Stephanie: Right, yeah. What about the women that have worked for you, have they had second jobs also?

Chef Dee: (No), No

Stephanie: The men have.

Chef Dee: Yeah, [...] though white men have not for the most part, all the Mexicans and the black guys that I had [...] at [Winnie’s] all had second jobs.

As both a business move as well as an accommodation to employees, Chef Dee sets up the work schedule of her employees to allow them to work another job if they so choose.

Stephanie: Are they working like 19 hours a day?

Chef Dee: No, [...] well no, because I don’t like paying over time. [...] [Both laughing] It’s a very practical thing I don’t like paying over time. [...] The chef comes in or [...] the sous chef [...] comes in at 1:00, he’s got keys, he’s got alarm code. He [...] can come and go as he pleases; [...] he is the only salaried person in the kitchen, everybody else is hourly. [...] We have two dishwashers who come in [...] at 1:30; [...] one cleans the front hourly. [...] We have two dishwashers who come in [...] at 1:30; [...] one cleans the front of the house, the other one cleans back of the house. We do a minimal amount of cleaning at night, I mean we sweep and mop the floors, we wipe down all the equipment, all that kind of stuff but as I said these are my most expensive people, I want the cooks out of there, I don’t want them staying to clean the hoods or [...] empty the fryer when they’re exhausted. [...] It’s hot, everything, I mean the equipment’s really hot. I prefer to just let it go until the next day and then the dishwasher comes in and cleans the fryer, cleans the canopy, [...] takes all the burners out of the stove and cleans, does a real thorough cleaning of the stove, cleans the oven, that kind of stuff. That all happens, we have a dishwasher that does the front of the house and a dishwasher that does the back of the house. The cooks come in around 2:30 [...] there are also one or two people that come in at 1:30. [...] They’ll start in on everything, one’s kind of a baking prep kind of person, cleans lettuce, [...] peels potatoes, that kind of stuff. [He] does [...] some of the simple recipes and then we have another one who does most of the pastry work, [...] who put stocks on, [...] soups. Anyhow, [...] it’s really neat that we’ll get the stocks prepped
the night before. The [ingredients are] all in […] stockpots in the fridge; then all we have to do is drag them upstairs and fill them with water and […] get them on. So that’s the first thing we do and then get the pot roast in the oven, get the duck confit in the oven, whatever we need to do because we don’t have that much time. […] We don’t have very much space at all so the cooks come in about 2:30 and start prepping their stations, they do […] all the sauces and garnishes and all that kind of stuff that they need to do […] and that’s it. […] Service starts at 5; […] we seat until 10; we rarely have reservations after 9:30. […] We’re out the kitchen […] like 10:30 at the latest. […] The line shuts down at 10:30 at the latest, usually, sometimes 11 on the weekends. […] Then as I said they do […] a cleaning of their stations. […] It’s not like we leave the place dirty. […] Cutting boards […] are scrubbed down and sanitized and […] then the cooks […] pull the mats, get them over in the corner and then they’ll leave. […] Then the dishwashers will come up, one of the dishwashers will come up and sweep and mop the kitchen. […] So we’re usually out by on the weekdays we’re […] by 11:00-11:15; weekends probably more like midnight.

Stephanie: That’s not […] the typical story of 19 hours.

Chef Dee: No, no, no, no […] our cooks work […] 40-41 hours a week, 42 maybe. [The] sous chef might work 50, […] the dish washers, I, this was brilliant if I do say so myself. We couldn’t figure out how […] ; […] there was too much work to be done and we didn’t want two shifts, so the dishwashers actually come in at 1:30 and work until close which is usually 11, 11:30 but they […] work […] four, 10-hour days.

Stephanie: Oh, you are brilliant!! [Both laughing] But see that makes sense though.

Chef Dee: Yeah, yeah, […] I can’t have […] all these part-time people, it’s just crazy but we need somebody to clean the front, we need somebody in early and we have to have people to close. […] I thought well, we’ll just give them four, 10 hour days and most of these guys have another job anyway so that gives them and we try to do it in blocks of two so they actually have, they work two days, then they’re off two days or something like that. Yeah, work two days, off two days and then they work two days and then they’re off, one day seven and so they actually could have another part-time job before they work two days; […] they could work all the time if they wanted to. But you know […] I worked plenty of 15, 16 hour days and […] if it’s your own business I think that’s fine, you can work as much as you want, but these guys all have families, […] they got kids, […] and […] you just burn people out too quickly. […] I have more respect for people than that, I just can’t, […] I don’t want somebody to work me that way. […] I did it and […] I don’t want to do that to my staff, it’s just not fair; […] that’s not a pretty part of our business […] I don’t think at all.

Chef Chris also respected the private time and lifestyle of the workers she managed as a sous chef and interim executive chef for a corporate restaurant.
Chef Chris: They also knew because I do care for my employees, that I would bust my ass to get them a Saturday night off in the summer time, which was unheard of. You know, even if that meant that I was pulling a shift, I would do that. […] If they wanted to go to a concert, or if they actually wanted to take a couple of days off, I would make sure that I was doing that. So just because I was hard on them about other things, I was also very quick that maybe if I couldn’t give them money up front that I was always trying to make sure that to know that the staff was appreciated for what they did.

Chef Chris also understood that going that extra mile for your workers brought about good morale and hard work.

Chef Chris: But the thing […] was that even […] like on Sundays, cuz that’s always a shift that nobody ever wanted to work. Everybody in […] the restaurant industry hates working Sundays because you’ve probably worked Friday or Friday night, you probably worked Saturday and you’re coming back and especially for those nights you’ve been getting your ass kicked and you’re coming back on Sunday you’re probably tired. You can’t really sleep cuz you’re you know going back […] to work. So for me, my way to give back to the staff was I would always make […] a really kick ass comida […] even to the […] point where the general manager would even joke […] “Hey I should start working Sundays so I could have some of your comida.” […] I would come in a little bit earlier […] some times. There was this little […] market, […] that if you go there on Sundays and you get there before 10:00 there used to be this little abuelita, this little Latin American grandmother that used to drop off tamales. […] They were so damn good […] that […] the guys would even say, “These remind me of my mother’s tamales.” […] So if I was going I would pick up tamales for them, they had their own butcher counter, they would make their own chorizo, so I would bring in some chorizo for the guys. […] We always had […] a nice […] comida on Sundays. But again even during the week I was always […] making, when I worked there, […] a good comida. […] I don’t know if James felt threatened that everybody started talking about my comida, but then he started bringing in all these Asian ingredients and pad thai ingredients. […] He’s like, “Oh you’ve never had my pad thai” and I’m thinking, “Wow his pad thai must be really good.” […] I looked at him and he’s got a fuckin’ pad thai sauce, he’s not even making this shit from scratch.

Treating workers with respect, working together as a team and showing appreciation can contribute to a positive work environment. It also seems that the two management styles generally stated as dictatorial vs. collaborative also relate to different amounts of forethought and problem solving. Competition seems to be more reactionary, while collaboration seems to be more proactive: thought out ahead of time. An example of problem solving can be seen in Chefs Chris and Dee’s style. An example of Chef Dee and her husband/partner’s way to gain control of
their restaurant is to divide the work of the front of the house and back of the house between
them. This division of labor, Chef Dee in the back, her husband/partner in the front help them
access how well their restaurant is running both financially as well as interpersonally.

Chef Dee relates a time when both she and her husband were working in the kitchen of
their restaurant, and they hired someone else to run the front of the house; this arrangement did
not yield a workable situation.

Chef Dee: The reason we stopped cooking together was first of all, my [husband/partner]
is not […] a good cook. I mean, he likes to cook but he’s not a cook, […] I’m a cook.
[…] My [husband/partner] […] is a businessman, he loves numbers, he loves math, he
loves formulas, he loves figuring stuff out. […] He’s also, […] a real wine geek. […] We’ve cooked together cuz we […] really thought we both needed to cook the food […] and get it out. What we didn’t realized that the manager that was host, […] we couldn’t
see outside the kitchen door…and we couldn’t see what was going on in the dining room.
[…] We realized that what was going on in the dining room was not the way we wa
anted the restaurant to be run. People were not being greeted the way we wanted them to be
greeted. The waiters, we needed to have eyes on both sides. So that was the real reason.
Yeah, it was a lot easier to hire a grill cook than hire somebody we could trust in the
front. […] It wasn’t really even a matter of money or […] being concerned that
somebody was stealing from us because frankly, we controlled all that; I mean […] it was
the fact that the guy that we hired to be the manager turned out to be a dick! (Both
laughing) […] Then […] after we had a waiter come to our house crying [Laughing] we
decided we better have somebody in the front of the house; and actually that worked
really, really, really well.

This type of labor division allows Chef Dee and her husband/partner to observe and
monitor what is going on daily in their restaurants and helps them locate where they can make
appropriate changes if need be. Adding to the understanding of management styles, it is
important to look at how the women chefs in the study have experienced corporate and
independently owned restaurants. The next section will address the chefs’ thoughts on both
corporate and independent restaurant environments as they relate to management styles.
Corporate vs. Independently Owned Restaurants

Both Chef Jenn and Chef Chris expressed their thoughts on corporate vs. independently owned culinary establishments. Chef Jenn thought that corporately owned establishments have a place in a person’s career trajectory.

Chef Jenn: OK, so the corporate kitchen and I’ll even throw in the big hotels, major hotels, all the big hotels and a large restaurant corporation; those guys have it down to a system, absolutely. […] Not only is it a system, they train their chefs within that system […] to run their kitchen. […] Not only that, they have corporate trainers, that go out and train […] not just the chefs, but train the staff on all of the procedures, how it’s to be done. So what’s nice about it is, even the menus […] are like formulas. […] So […] it’s clear, in theory, it’s supposed to run very smooth; and it does. I have a friend who is a corporate chef for a [large restaurant corporation] and opens up the [company’s French bistros] all over the place; […] he loves his job. […] It’s not stress free but it’s not. […] like being the chef over here at ah [one of three restaurants], […] privately owned, little, not like that, that’s crazy. […] They’ve got it down, to a system. […] Then, […] it’s funny, like at the [for profit culinary school in a city in the Midwest] systems model. [Laughter] […] Granted there’s a lot of problems with the system model but there’s also a lot of pros; especially in this industry because then it’s clear what people’s jobs are, what they’re expected to do, how they do it, what the expectation is and how it all functions. […] That’s why the large restaurant corporation is extremely […] successful.

Stephanie: My next question is then what would you say in the whole hierarchy, men and women, what’s a more prestigious job, working at a fine dining um let’s say French upper-end restaurant or working for a corporate.

Chef Jenn: OK, That’s a good question because I think it changes […] for people over time. At the beginning when they first get out of school, they always want to be fine dining, privately owned. […] That’s great and you’re getting great experience working with a chef owner, let’s say they have complete control. But you’re not going to be paid very much, you’re not going to make much money because the restaurant’s probably not making that much money and the chef is like, “Screw it, I’m not going to pay you because, you’re […] going to have my name on your resume. […] So, in […] the beginning, it’s fine because […] you can be broke and poor and it’s not a big deal; however, as people move on in life and they want to get married and have kids now all of a sudden we need money. […] This is were a lot of the women drop out of the industry all together; to have kids and this is where the men now transfer from privately owned chef/owner place, […] and now they take the corporate jobs, because that’s where the money is, that’s where the benefits are, that’s where the paid vacation is.

Stephanie: So, they have no creative control but they are putting out food, they are cooking,
Chef Jenn: Yeah and they might have some control, [...] at the large hotels or even [...] if they get higher up in a large restaurant corporation they might be on [...] the recipe and menu development, but, it’s definitely different.

Chef Jenn also experienced that a corporate job as an executive chef could yield more money than an independent smaller business. She relates about leaving a smaller business run by a lesbian chef who only hired women. Her management style, according to Chef Jenn, was top-down management.

Chef Jenn: I liked it; it was all women at the store. [Chef Mary’s] a lesbian and I quickly found out that [...] she doesn’t hire men. (Laughter, I don’t know if I can say that, laughing). [...] There was a very strange dynamic; [...] her managing style is one of “she’s the boss, it’s her business.” Yes, [...] she really does, in my opinion only hire women and only hired women that she liked. [...] Not that I felt like I was being sexually harassed no, but she just wanted to make sure that you were representing her and her company the way she wanted and if you said anything or did anything that she didn’t like she was going to let you know.

Chef Jenn had worked for Chef Mary for a year and then one day was approached by one of her former chef instructors and offered a job to work for a company, Corporate Cooks. She accepted the job and her decision to leave HomeCooks and Chef Mary was not accepted very well.

Chef Jenn: So, here’s the job and I took it and Chef Mary went through the roof. I mean she felt like how dare I; [...] she literally threw me [...] out of the shop and I always thought that was a little much. [...] I was good at what I did and I gave her the opportunity, I said, “Chef Mary, if you would like to match the salary you’re more than welcome to.” I mean she was paying me $12/hour to teach. Corporate Cooks was paying me 60 grand a year, so a yeah, it’s full benefits, I mean it was a corporate job.

Chef Jenn thinks that corporate restaurants may give people better working conditions, and they also offer more pay; however, Chef Chris has a differing opinion based on her personal philosophy of food service. She claims she would not work for a corporate restaurant chain again.
Chef Chris: A large restaurant corporation was the first and only […] I guess corporate restaurant company I ever worked for. (Laughing) 2005-2008 and honestly unless I absolutely have to, I would never work for another corporate restaurant company again.

Stephanie: I hear certain things pluses and minuses of both, but […] what didn’t you like?

Chef Chris: *Heavy sigh* Well, […] [the large restaurant corporation] I think is different in the fact where they like to think of themselves as the non-corporate, corporate restaurant company (emphasis) because they look at themselves as having many different restaurants. […] They have many different concepts that flow, so it’s not going to be like fifty-nine thousand family chains that are going to be out and about. Oh, I could recite history, I could tell you all about […] the guy who died in a helicopter crash in 1981 who was the original owner’s first partner at [Burg’s]. […] Basically when you become part of the management team there […] it was […] probably one of the most rigorous and bullshit interview processes I’ve ever gone through. […] It was pretty much, I turned in my resume […] through a friend who’s also moving to a [large city in the Midwest from another city/town]. I knew that I didn’t want to stay in [another city/town in a Western state] pretty much, there’s not a lot happening in its restaurant scene. It’s a lot of chains, and I knew that I did not want to work in chains [family-style restaurant chain] […] no [family-style restaurant chains.] Ah you know, family-style restaurant chains I mean you know pretty much [Steako’s] and that’s supposed to be their nice steak house. […] So everything was very chain-based in [another city/town] it was always […] independent restaurants but pretty much I mean I could count on my two hands […] all the decent independent restaurants that were there in [another city/town]. […] Basically what I was looking at by getting into a large restaurant corporation if I could get hired on with them, I could use them for a free move and eventually quit the company (chuckle). So I was kind of using them probably the way they were going to use me. […] They definitely did use me, […] but I knew that number one, if I could get them on my resume it was a way to open doors in a [large city in the Midwest], because they do have obviously some power in its dining scene and restaurant scene. […] I knew that number one, I could get a free move to the city, I knew that number two they pay […] pretty decently and number three, it would hopefully open doors and catapult me into something else. […] If that didn’t work, I was still going to go to the city and I was going to go full-time to get my master’s degree at a local university in tourism and hospitality management; […] I had a back-up plan regardless.

Stephanie: I just have to ask you one question, the people in the other city/town in a Western state, how did they accept corporate restaurant like that?

Chef Chris: Oh God, they love ‘em. They love ‘em and […] still to this day. My parents now have retired and they had moved from another [city/town in a Western state] to be […] in [city on the Northwest coast] where my sister and her husband and her two kids live. […] The [city on the Northwest coast] has a phenomenal dining scene, that is so cool, lot of really good restaurants. […] You have a famous chef out there who really put Northwest cuisine on the map and they’re still content on going to chain restaurants because that’s what’s familiar with them.
Chef Chris commented on the interview process of the corporate restaurant chain. She maintains that there are gender-specific questions asked of potential women that are not asked of men interviewees.

Chef Chris: I remember […] again in […] one of my interviews, which is totally if I wanted to I could have brought them up on this, I don’t think it’s very legal, were asking me if I intended to have kids […] I don’t think that’s legal.

Stephanie: The large restaurant corporation asked you if you wanted to have kids?

Chef Chris: Have kids, yeah that’s not funny. […] I think that they were obviously thinking […], “If she has kids is she gonna want to take time off?”

Stephanie: Do you have any sense are they asking men that?

Chef Chris: Oh of course, not! […] If they’re not going to miss time […] on the line they’re not going to miss […] time […] in the kitchen. […] Legitimately so, I think that what you look at is that […] if you’re a mom and you want to have spend time with your child after it’s born, absolutely that should be a right that everybody should have. It shouldn’t be a fault that a woman has […] and I think […] that was definitely […] the whole mentality of it is that […] legally they’re obligated […] to give you […] maternity leave. […] I don’t think it was one of those things that, “God we’re sure happy that you’ve made this decision and we’re really excited that you’re gonna have a new baby.” […] It was never I think that type of that mentality that would have happened at least at a large restaurant corporation with how they asked me. […] It [got] very quiet and then they just kind of wrote something down, so I have no idea what that meant.

Depending on the philosophy and needs of workers, corporate and independent restaurants both have their places. Primarily, corporate restaurants have a budget that can support higher wages and benefits for employees. There are also more opportunities for promotion in a corporate setting. How do women chefs fit into the structure of securing promotions? The following section will consider the journeys women chefs go through to secure promotions—or not.

**Promotion: It’s Not What You Know, It’s Who You Know**

Women chefs worked hard, in most cases, having to work harder than men to prove themselves.
Chef Chris: I think it’s the preconceived notion, […] they feel that automatically a man works harder than a woman. It’s always the traditional roles of “a man always does the rrrrrr, the behemoth work, the dirty jobs” and […] the women just really can’t […] do the job […] that a man can do. […] Alex would kinda […] tease me being in the back of the line, […] like, “Are you sure you can handle it being a girl back there on the line?” […] I was young […] I […] had a little bit of a mouth but I didn’t want to screw up my chance either so I just […] took it. […] Knowing what I know now […] I would have complained […] and been a little more vocal about it. […] I think you know again when you’re in that […] male dominated culture and you’re trying to prove yourself you really don’t want to make waves; you don’t want to be seen as the pot stirrer or the shit starter, so to speak. So you just […] did what you had to do? […] He was he was just a notorious asshole. […]

Stephanie: Would he do that to men, would he say do you think you can handle it?

Chef Chris: No, not really. […] I had lemons pelted at me from him […] that I needed to go faster, so he would take lemons and he […] would chuck them at me.

Stephanie: Did he do that to anyone else?

Chef Chris: I think I’d only seen it […] when he was horsing around; it was horseplay with the other guys. But this was actually […] during […] service when he would do that to me to try to get me to perform better or faster. […] When I had basically done well at that station, […] I always thought my food always looked […] better than everybody else’s; […] but I always felt like I had something to prove; […] I felt that I had to work […] 150% harder than my male counterpart on that station. […] I remember moving beyond that station to the next station, […] they had said that. That was the assemble station where we were putting all the plates together […] corresponding them with all of the other ones. […] You’re basically communicating to everybody else as far as, “OK I need […] your rack of ribs over here, I need […] the side of rice, I need…”

As mentioned in the above section, it was important for Chef Chris to lay low and prove herself. During one of the interviews, Chef Chris expounds about a time when she tried to not bring attention to herself after a kitchen accident and continued to work. A man chef also had an accident involving a hot pepper, and the reaction of the executive chefs clearly revealed a double standard of situational evaluation. According to Chef Chris:

Chef Chris: I cut myself the first day; […] I cut myself pretty badly, I cut the tip off my finger. […] I didn’t […] ask […] to go to the […] emergency room or anything but when […] the chef had seen me, […] he made a big deal that I cut myself. He’s like, “Jesus Fuckin’ Christ.” He goes, “You fuckin’ cut the tip of your finger off?” He goes, “That’s why we can’t have women in this fuckin’ kitchen.” He goes, “You all […] just don’t
know what the hell you’re doing.” So, […] he made me feel like crap for cutting myself which […] it was probably a lot of nerves, again there I was only the woman in that kitchen.

Stephanie: How many men in there?

Chef Chris: Probably about 10 again it was a smaller establishment.

Stephanie: Did anybody ever cut themselves before?

Chef Chris: Well, that was the same time when […] the guy who trained me, Dick, thought he was a real bad ass and he didn’t need to wear gloves when we were cleaning 25 pounds of roasted poblanos. Dick […] went to the bathroom and then we heard a blood-curdling scream because he had capsaicin burns on his penis, but you know nothing was said about Dick’s capsaicin burns, so he had to go to the emergency room for that. But […] it was a bigger deal that I cut the tip off […] my finger and I wasn’t even wanting to go to the emergency room, I had stopped the bleeding myself. “…” I definitely […] felt very small when he had said that and definitely […] embarrassed. […] The one thing that I always told myself is they’re never going to see me cry, they’re never gonna get the best of me and break me down. […] I had always thought to myself you’re a prick, you’re an asshole I can’t believe that this is actually how you treat your staff. […] I always made a mental note that you know that whenever I would run a kitchen I would never treat my staff this way.

So even when Chef Chris tried not to call attention to the mishap of cutting off the tip of her finger, the man executive chef called her out and humiliated her, making her feeling stupid and insignificant. On the other hand, when her male counterpart failed to follow commonsense procedure and wear gloves while roasting peppers, then proceeded to use the washroom, resulting in burns on his penis, he was not scolded but rather was sent to the emergency room. This double standard favored the man over the woman chef in spite of the fact that bravery and strength are seen as male strengths.

Chef Chris worked in a corporate restaurant where she was not accepted as one of the only women on the staff until she proved herself in the absence of a man, a Hispanic who demanded respect because he had been at the restaurant a long time was older.

Chef Chris: The guys never really liked me per se until [Frank] went on vacation and then I had to step in and do his job. […] I think that when they saw me coming in […] at 7:00
in the morning and doing all this prep work and doing a lot of his work better. I mean just for the simple fact of doing a proper braise, and having the braised lamb rather than coming out tough and dry, [...] be nice and tender and melt in your mouth. [...] The short ribs the same thing, [...] giving the short ribs some love. [...] He had worked with that company for God, I don’t know, for 20 plus years so he was one of the original diehards. [...] He got quite a significant vacation, so I think he was gone for six weeks; [...] I definitely stepped in [his] role. [...] The thing with Frank was that because he was older, he could only work ‘til 3:00 and they kind of worked with his schedule, so he worked 7-3. [...] I was able to take ‘em into the early rush into 5, 6:00 and eventually I think I [...] proved myself [to] Rico, the saucier [...] [sauceay]. [...] He would make a lot of like our tomato sherry sauce [...] which we used in a lot of different dishes. [He made] the stocks for us, he would do just a lot of arduous prep work. [...] He and I were on the same side of the line because we both had to have access to the stove. It was [...] like (chuckle) each person in the kitchen had their own corner where they were supposed to work. [...] Well, [...] I was using Frank’s corner at the time (both laughing) only when he was gone.

Stephanie: Did people have designated corners or was it first come-first serve?

Chef Chris: No, people had (laughing) designated corners.

Stephanie: Who designated them?

Chef Chris: I think they did cuz it was pretty much [Rico] always had the same corner, [Adolpho] always had the same corner, [Frank] had the same corner, [Juan] the pastry guy [...] also had the same area where he would always work.

When asked if she thought the other cooks were nervous when they found out she was substituting for frank, Chef Chris replied,

Chef Chris: They [...] really didn’t know what to expect, but I think that they were kind of just like, “Ah we’ll see what she can do.” [...] I think it was kind of like the training wheels were off so to speak. [...] I had started in mid-August and then I had worked with him [Frank] through the holidays. Training was done. [...] [I was starting] to do a lot of the mid-shifts [...] but it really wasn’t where I was quite opening or I was quite closing yet. So then when they saw me [...] opening these shifts and being able to do this, [...] when Frank came back, I had Rico and Adolpho calling me “Prima” [...] which means cousin. [...] I definitely [...] knew that I made it then because Sophia one of the other front of the house managers at [The Spanish Restaurant], she’s like, “That’s actually a sign of respect that they’re calling you prima,” she goes, “that means that they’re, you know, taking you in as one of their own.” So it was definitely I think having to prove myself [...] within that kitchen with how I executed everything, with how I carried myself. I never let ‘em show that they had the best of me, [...] like I said, always poker face and my game face was on. [...] I didn’t shy away from any hard work either so I think that they [...] saw again, good work ethic. [...]

During her tenure as a sous chef at a high-volume corporate restaurant, the executive chef had been fired for sexual harassment, and Chef Chris was “promoted” to a position called interim executive chef. She knew how to run the restaurant and got very favorable evaluations; however, she was overlooked for the executive position and actually ended up training the new executive chef.

Chef Chris: There has never been a woman sous chef nor an executive chef, I was a sous chef there as a first. […] There’s no woman chef there on staff now and hasn’t been since I left there; […] very much of a male-dominated […] kitchen. Very few, I mean there were sometimes […] maybe one or two […] women working in the kitchen, one ended up leaving because she was sexually harassed by the executive chef who they ended up getting rid of in the process, he was actually […] a chef at [Four Star] before that; yeah, the executive chef. He was fired from [the Spanish restaurant] for sexual harassment. So, that was when I became interim executive chef. Yes, I was never given the official title; I could only have the interim executive chef […] until they figured out […] who they were going to bring on as their executive chef. […] We hired […] a young […] intern, she […] first started off in the garde manger which is the cold kitchen, […] putting out […] some of the salads, […] getting the desserts; she was mainly […] prep personal. […] With this particular position and with […] the way […] the line was structured, […] there were three people that were on the line, then we had a back kitchen where the majority of the prep happened […] so she was more in the open air kitchen. […] She was […] left by herself to work; […] I was not there but apparently our executive chef of the [The Spanish Restaurant], who also, […] I would say was little bit of the “boys club”, […] was Latin American as well, so […] he never rolled out the red carpet for myself either. […] I guess he made some questionable […] sexual comments to […] I think her name was Roo, I can’t remember what her name was, but she felt uncomfortable about it. […] She eventually approached me as far as what to do, how she should handle it. […] Eventually, the [large restaurant corporation], to their credit, they […] launched an investigation. They moved her to a different restaurant so she was out of the hostile environment.

The corporate restaurant where Chef Chris worked hired a young female intern. She was eventually moved to another location because of sexual harassment by the executive chef. He made inappropriate comments and was fired.

Stephanie: What were the nature of those, were they comments or were they like hitting on her or physically cornered her?

Chef Chris: I think some comments that were made when […] he was […] looking at her work from what she had said; I think a little too close to the personal life […] and it made her feel uncomfortable. […] Obviously zero tolerance; if she feels uncomfortable you
have to protect her. [...] Eventually what ended up happening [...] the executive chef of [The Spanish Restaurant] [...] started letting a lot of things slide and I think this was pretty much kind of the icing on the cake. [...] They ended up letting [...] the executive chef of the [Spanish restaurant] go. [...] In the meantime, this was during the summertime, [...] this was probably the beginning of June, [...] I was [...] told that I would be the interim executive chef [...] and I would head up the kitchen, come up with all the specials for [The Spanish Restaurant] which is a very busy restaurant. [...] I was definitely very excited when I was [...] told this; I thought this was going to lead to something more. [...] I was [...] making the schedules, [...] in on the manager’s calls, so I definitely thought that I was getting somewhere with this company and definitely very excited, only to find out even though I had good feedback, [...] I had had my review and the whole process, [...] I’d got [...] the highest percentage that I could, [...] I got a five percent raise, which normally they only give between you know two and three but I got a five percent raise which I was very excited about. [...] I thought, “Hey [...] I’m going to make it, (chuckle) I’m going to be somebody.

With the firing of the executive chef for sexual harassment of an employee, Chef Chris was very excited when she was asked to take his place as interim executive chef. She received rave reviews and evaluations, which was a real source of encouragement for her. She assumed she was headed up the corporate ladder, and then the bottom fell out of her world of success:

Chef Chris: The beginning of August I was told that they were bringing in the sous chef from Five Star, [...] Mike who’s actually their chef now. [...] I would be training Mike, the next executive chef. [...] I was [...] told that matter of factly, like, “Oh the weather’s 82° and it’s sunny outside.” [...] It was actually as I had just gotten to work and [...] got called in to the GMs office and he [...] just told me in less than five minutes that, “Hey, this is what’s going on.” [...] It was a Friday [...] so we had orders that I had to do when I got there. [...] It was kind of funny cuz he approached me [...] in one of the back hallways, my GM a little bit later. [...] I remember, I was counting the cases of potatoes cuz we had an astronomical amount that we usually go through, so I was making sure we had the right par, ordered enough. [...] He’s like, “Chef Chris”, he’s like, “I just want you, [...] it’s no reflection on your work, as far as what you’ve been doing, you’ve really stepped up and you’ve done a good job for the restaurant but [...] what we’re looking at now [...] is you know, it was just Mike's time, no offense to you or your work ethic or the fact that you’re not a good employee,” he goes, “It’s just not your time right now.” [...] That was pretty much, I guess it was supposed to make me feel better but I guess it was just, [...] “OK this restaurant earns you know seven to eight million dollars a year, I get a good review, I’m told I’m doing a good job, you place me as interim executive chef I train your executive chef and that was pretty much it.” [...] Three months later [...] I think it was right after we got through the holiday season, I was approached [and] asked if I wanted to go to [...] another restaurant and that I would be on the fast track to be an executive chef. I would finally get my opportunity and really be able to prove myself which again [...] I was left thinking, Huh? because [...] I had had a favorable review, I’d
had the raise, I was told I was doing a good job, my specials were selling I got good feedback […] from the guests, so I thought, “You know what, I’ll play ball a little bit longer […] and they gave me the opportunities to, “Hey you can go to the company’s French Restaurant, the situation is that the executive ah chef is going to be leaving and going to out west to work at another ah restaurant. We’re going to promote the sous chef there to be the executive chef and […] you’re going to go over there and be sous chef’ because frankly we can’t put another person that we have in mind over there because we have disciplinary issues with Bill, so we’re going to keep him over at The Spanish Restaurant and be watched.”

Stunned by the announcement that despite the great job she was doing and her raises, Chef Chris was being demoted. As the interim executive chef, she actually trained her replacement. She was confused; she had a decision to make regarding her employment and chance for advancement to executive chef.

Chef Chris: They basically said, “[…] “You have a choice, […] you can either stay at The Spanish Restaurant, which is fine or you can go to the company’s French Restaurant […] and be on the fast track to being an executive chef. […] I felt like pretty much they were dangling the carrot in front of my face and […] I think I looked at it as, “How hard can we get her to work you know for this position and not give her the title.” […] I was putting in hellacious hours […] when I was there as executive chef at The Spanish restaurant I was working six days a week. […] The thing at The Spanish Restaurant is that […] when you sign on with them, the [large restaurant corporation], you have to work a minimum of 50 hours as a manager. Each shift that you work is a minimum of 10 hours, so I was working at least 60-70 hours a week. […] I was getting kind of bummed out by working with this company. […] There weren’t a lot […] of women in the kitchens. […] Definitely the attitude towards women wasn’t that fantastic. Looking at it and I really started to kind of question […] “Is this the right restaurant company for me cuz it seemed like you know I’m doing a good job, I’m doing what I need to be doing, but yet I’m just not good enough. […] That’s really kind of how I felt, because again, I’d never had any indication as far as bad performance or I didn’t deserve it. […] So I moved over to the company’s French Restaurant but the messed up thing of it is […] that I worked six days a week, four days at The Spanish Restaurant, […] and like two days at the company’s French Restaurant so I could kind of get trained, because they didn’t want to let me go. […] They pretty much tried to (chuckle) hold on to me as long as they could until finally it was almost a pissing contest between the two general managers [at] the company’s French Restaurant and The Spanish Restaurant […] as far as, “OK we need her over here full-time, well we still need her to help to make sure we’re covered, if she leaves make sure that we have a good person up and running before she leaves The Spanish Restaurant.” […] It’s a beast of a restaurant to work in, definitely very busy.
After giving it some thought, Chef Chris decided to take the job at the company’s French Restaurant. Shortly after she took the job she knew it was not a good fit for her.

Chef Chris: Finally I […] started working at the company’s French Restaurant […] and clearly I, within […] two weeks of it, I knew that I had made the wrong decision. […] They had said, “Oh it’s going to be so much easier you know, you’re not open as long, as The Spanish Restaurant you know, we actually close an hour earlier on Sundays at 9:00 so you wouldn’t even have to worry about that. You know you’ll be out having a drink at The Spanish Restaurant […] when you’re done.” (Sigh) Which wasn’t true; […] I quickly found out that James the executive chef there […] after talking to him, I had found out that he had worked at a few too many restaurants in the [large city in the Mid west] restaurant business. […] He would work there for two, three years and get fired, two, three years and get fired. […] He had landed at the company’s French Restaurant […] he was a sous chef I think […] for seven or eight months […] and then was promoted to the executive chef position. […] He was one of those where he definitely thought if he spent more time at the restaurant, […] it looked good on paper. […] He definitely was one of those that would work harder not smarter […] type of thing. […] [When] I was up and trained […] it became very clear to me why he was fired.

Soon after her training period was over, Chef Chris knew what type of manager her boss was and why in fact he had so many jobs on his resume.

Chef Chris: He was an office chef, […] he wasn’t around in the kitchen. […] To give you an idea […] Thursday nights was Dover Sole night, which was a hellacious night. […] We used to have specials every night […] that would come up in addition to our specials for that week. […] Every Thursday night we would have Dover Sole. Dover Sole, which is a pain to filet, we actually did that […] in the kitchen cuz we just didn’t have enough room […] it’s a very tight bistro seating […] so we […] couldn’t filet it table side. […] I would be able to call tickets, coordinate trays, get the runners going and still be able to filet and send out Dover Sole to […] the tables without any issues. […] That was pretty much within you know a month, a month and a half.

When James, her boss, saw Chef Chris was a capable sous chef, he let her take on more and more of his responsibility. Since she was moved over to the company’s French Restaurant as a sous chef, not an executive chef, she was no longer included in the manager’s call anymore; however, she was doing most of the work that her boss, the executive chef, was hired to do.

Chef Chris: Since I moved over to the company’s French Restaurant […] I would execute what I thought that that the specials should look like, how they should cook ‘em and pretty much after James saw that he definitely was like, “OK she can do this” and wasn’t there. […] I would pretty much come in on a Thursday, find out what […] the specials
were, what prep that had to be done; James would supposedly be doing the orders. [He] would be non-existent as far as helping to roll out the menu items to the line personal. […] Mind you, I’ve seen them maybe two, three hours before the staff. […] I wasn’t allowed on the manager’s call any more. James was down in the office or doing the orders or I don’t know what the hell he was doing. […] So I would get that ready, get the plates up and ready and then James would be like, “Oh, […] where’s the special, come on, I need it now, I need it now (pounding on table).” You know he would always bang on the window, off that stainless steel, “Where’s, […] the specials at, come on I’ve got to do line up for the staff.” Acting as if he actually helped make sure that everything was prepped, everything was ready, […] and then say, “Well that’s not how I wanted it to look.” Well, if your ass was here in the kitchen we’d have it exactly the way you wanted it to look. […] That was […] the sentiment and the feeling […] of the staff. Pretty much he would put the […] the specials out for that week, for that Thursday […], would say he’s going to finish up some work, but pretty much he’d leave […] and would be non-existent […] for the rest of the two hours that he was maybe there. I never understood it. He would come in at 10 and he would leave like maybe 5:00, 6:00, it was a pretty easy shift for him, […] especially when we’re supposed be working 10-hour shifts.

In addition to all the extra work she was doing, the terms under which she was hired were not honored.

Chef Chris: Same thing would happen on the weekends. […] Originally when I agreed to the position […] I was supposed to be able to, […] no, I wouldn’t have to close every shift, I could at least get off like at 9:00, 10:00. […] He made me close every shift so I didn’t have my early Saturday night off and it wasn’t that early; I mean you’re still working 10 hours, you’re coming in at 12 and maybe leaving at 10, 10:30. […] It wasn’t till I actually spoke up and said something, “Hey you know, […] I’m out of training I can run the kitchen I thought I should at least be able to get one night off early.” So you know I’m still coming into work Sunday and Monday, […] to get my ass kicked while your ass is off, […] He wouldn’t do it, so finally I had to go to the general manager for me to get that Saturday night off early, and mind you, it’s maybe two hours early. That […] it wasn’t like to get off at 8:00 during the dinner rush. […] So he was just kind of […] a prick […], so to speak. […] When I would come in, I would basically, if I was a closing shift […] on the weekends for Fridays and Saturdays I would come in at 3:00, or excuse me 2:00. […] I would find out what prep needed to be done, I would make comida, I would set our line up, set our garnishing line up, […] basically get everything ready for service and then James […] would swoop in at 6:30 or 7:00 at night to help, put out that rush, cuz he was such an affective chef. [Sarcasm]

Soon the executive chef had delegated all his responsibilities to her, at times using the excuse that he had a family.

11 Comida-Family meal; typically the biggest meal of the day (Hispanic culture).
Chef Chris: Pretty much what started happening is that he just starting delegating all these responsibilities [...] on to me. [...] Pretty soon, I was the one that was doing the scheduling, [...] the hiring, [...] the firing. [...] I was [...] one that was doing inventory and was expected to come in and help do inventory on my days off, when I wouldn’t see his ass in on days off at all. [...] God forbid if it’s a Sunday and a Monday and you know it was always one of those things that there was definitely, [...] “Well, oh James works so hard and you know he married and he’s got a kid.” Again, his personal choice to have a family and to get married, but it was always like I was penalized for the fact that I was a single woman. That [...] I just felt that I got all [...] the crap jobs that he should have been doing.

At a later time, in addition to her extra work, the general managers started giving Chef Chris even more work.

Chef Chris: I did, all of the orderings when I was there (sigh), [...] during the week, [...] and it even like started happening where the general managers just started delegating his shit to me. [...] I was the one that started coding all the invoices; I would track them in the purchase journal and this stuff used to have to be done before I could even go home on Monday […] so I could enjoy my two days off. [...] Then it was to the point where he would call me [on] my days off and get pissed off if I wasn’t answering my cell phone […] asking if I did this, if I did that. [...] The fact that I now needed to start writing him an email to brief him about things that are going on, […] which he never did the […] same common professional courtesy to me. […] It was definitely […] a position where I felt like I was doing all of the work of the executive chef. […] I used to even have […] the staff come up to me and ask […] if they could get vacation days; if I would approve it. [...] I was the one that would have to go and ask the general manager if they completely usurped James, but yet he was the one that was very quick to [say], “I’m going to do the wine dinner” or “Oh, I’m, going to do this” […] and take all of […] the accolades of the public. […] He was never a team player, he never really helped out […] in the kitchen.

Stephanie: Just for clarification sake, could you […] briefly outline the difference between and executive chef at the large restaurant corporation at your restaurant and sous chef? What really is the difference there?

Chef Chris: The executive chef should be the one who is doing the hiring, the firing, the scheduling. Yes, the sous chef can do some ordering, […] so it’s […] a job that can be shared, but I mean when I’m doing the inventory and also figuring out food cost percentage, I don’t know if he could understand a profit and lost sheet or a P and L sheet, I don’t know, but that usually another thing that the executive chef will do […] and also what you’re looking at is that there to supervise and run the kitchen with the help of their sous chefs. […] They need to be part of that kitchen; they need to know what’s going on, […] that they are technically in charge of even the sous chefs. […] They should be doing the tracking of the invoices, executing the coding and the tracking of the purchase journals so there was just a lot of work that is usually was the executive chef’s job. […]
Yes you do know that the executive chef is going to have some office work to be done but that doesn’t mean that you never see him in the kitchen, which was […] the case. […] When I had done […] my job I was pretty much in the kitchen all the time but I also had to do this work on top of it after I got done in the kitchen. […] My hours were pretty, pretty lengthy.

At this point in the interview, I was curious as to the pay differential between James, the executive chef, and Chef Chris, the sous chef.

Chef Chris: I think when James was executive chef […] he was dumb in the fact that he kept all of his stuff in a desk drawer that was unlocked and I looked at his paycheck and he was probably getting about at I think $15,000/year more than me but he wasn’t doing anything.

James was getting paid more than Chef Chris, and she was doing the bulk of the work. Even after doing most of his work, James was still not willing to give Chef Chris time off to attend her best friend’s graduation from college.

Chef Chris: I remember it was […] my best friend Jim’s […] graduation […] from college and I wanted to go to his graduation. […] I’m not from the [large city in the Midwest], either is Jim. […] we moved here together. […] So Jim, I’ve known him for 14 years so he’s pretty much family to me. […] It was practically an act of God to try and get a Sunday off so I could actually […] have dinner with his family that flew in for the graduation […] and to actually be part of the ceremony. […] He just thought that that was probably one of […] the worst things I could ever do because he would have to give up his Sunday […], which he thought […] was his time to spend as he saw fit and it wasn’t helping out his sous chef […] really do anything.

Stephanie: What was the make-up of the kitchen at that time? You were still the only woman?

Chef Chris: There were two […] Latin American women that worked on […] the cold line.

After proving herself as an interim executive chef, Chef Chris was demoted under the guise that it was another man chef’s time to advance and be promoted to executive. After taking a job at the company’s French Restaurant, the fast track to executive chef, while she did all the work of an executive chef, she was not promoted.
Chef Stella also had similar experiences in both the back and front of the house. After working in the back of the house as a sous chef of a country club, when the executive chef left, she applied for the executive chef position; they hired a man chef from the outside instead.

Stephanie: Did they ever ask you to be the executive chef?

Chef Stella: I was put in a position where […] the chef, let’s see how this went. The chef was leaving and I interviewed for the job, I didn’t get it and neither did the other sous chef in the morning […]. They hired from outside but I did interview for the job. […] I didn’t have enough experience and […] I can […] truly believe that in a little bit of way because I didn’t. I mean I knew what I wanted, I knew the goal I wanted to, you know get to but in all reality.

Stephanie: You had been a sous chef for a while.

Chef Stella: I know but in all reality I truly didn’t have anything to bring to the table of new and exciting and different things and not that they weren’t looking for it because they did the same thing all the time. […] I really don’t think that I had the experience that they wanted to […] really to do that yet, […] this guy did. He came in and […] I liked him, he was a good guy. In fact […] he knew my husband, John; he ended up knowing him and […] he was a good guy, […] the new executive chef. He could cook but the problem with that was […] the members didn’t want change; they didn’t want new fufuy kind of stuff. […] I worked a south side country club, they were meat and potatoes, lamb chops, wall-eyed pike, Dover sole, they wanted the same old, same old…California blend (laughter) the frozen vegetables. They wanted that, they didn’t want change.

After they hired the new executive chef, the manager of the country club approached Chef Stella and asked her if she wanted to leave the back of the house and come work the front of the house in the capacity of event planner.

Chef Stella: I was approached by the manager. […] The assistant manager […] was leaving at the time and he said, “What do I think about coming to the front of the house?” I go, “I don’t know I really I like the back, the back is where I like to be.” He goes, “Just try it, give it a little time.” […] I had to think about it and I’m like, “What does it hurt to try, I could always go back in the kitchen, it’s no big deal and it’s something different. I wasn’t learning anything; I wasn’t doing anything so I said, “All right, I’ll do that.” […] I did […] and I started out in the catering aspect of it […] which I catered all the parties, I knew the food, I could sell the food; it was very easy for me.
Stephanie: event planning?

Chef Stella: Event planning, yes exactly and being a people person, it was easy for me, I guess, [...] cuz I knew the type of people that they were.

Chef Stella worked in event planning for a while and she was promoted to assistant manager.

Chef Stella: He was teaching me so I don’t know why, I just think it was just time to let him go and that’s what they do in the country clubs, they just let you go without even telling you why. So he was gone and I [had] no direction and I was [...] like, “People were looking at me and I’m like I don’t know you know they ended up bringing somebody on from, hired from [the outside], outsourced more or less. [...] He promoted me to assistant manager and I learned a lot about [...] papers and budgets and stuff like that from him which was good; [...] it was interesting, [...] I liked it. [...] The chef was learning or doing new stuff so that was [...] good in the kitchen too; although, I really did miss the kitchen.

Chef Stella missed kitchen work, but she continued to work in the front of the house. Her manager was fired for stealing, and Chef Stella was promoted to interim manager.

Chef Stella: Then, [...] this manager, [Chuck] they ended up firing him because he was stealing. [...] It was a big, a big fiasco. [...] In the meantime, I was [...] interim manager; at the time is what they were calling me. [...] They offered me the job, well, [...] the members, offered me an interview to be the manager at the club along with the sous chef who was in the back who was now the executive chef, they he interviewed for the manager position as well. [...] Two other people that were [...] in the club as staff just because they wanted [...] to, bartender and a head waitress or something they were all interviewing for the job. [...] I of course, did not get the job, which was fine. [...] I was kind of getting bent out of shape too. They hired [...] a guy from I don’t know, a major university in a [nearby state], [...] he was from another club, he was an assistant manager at another club; I kinda knew him.

Though Chef Stella had been the interim manager, she interviewed for the job of manager but did not get the job; they instead once again hired someone from the outside.

Chef Stella: They asked me, “If [we] hire somebody else would you be offended; how would I feel?” and all that. [...] You know, you tell them, what you tell them. Needless to say, I didn’t get the job but I worked with him. [...] I taught him I showed him; [...] I knew everything there so [...] I did what I was supposed to do.

Stephanie: You didn’t [tell] them you’re totally offended?
Chef Stella: Well, I told them that of course I’d be offended but […] I’m going to be teaching him everything that I know so, […] what’s he going to bring here that, exactly, what’s he is going to bring here? […] So I don’t know, it was kind of half a dozen. I stuck it out though for another year with him. He was a good guy; we had fun. […] He was my age so […] we got along OK. […] I wasn’t bitter but then again. I wasn’t I wasn’t bitter but I really didn’t really want to be out in the front any more either.

Stephanie: Did you feel like this was kind of a pattern now that you were getting more experience but then never got to the next step?

Chef Stella: Yeah I did, I actually interviewed for another country club […] management position, […] the new manager was like, “Yeah go for it.” […] He wanted me to, he wanted me to go out but that’s what you do, […] you’re assistant manager and you want to look for a new club. […] So I figured with the aspect in the kitchen and the business and all my whole background and what I knew, I thought I was able […] to do it. […] I want to say was it [Another Country Club] that I applied, I can’t remember but […] I didn’t get that job. […] I just got to the point where, “OK, I’ve been married seven, eight years now am I going to have kids, what am I going to do?” You know, it was just one of those [things] so I decided to start a family. I married a chef and he was […] making money doing well, we could live on one salary, you know you talk about all that stuff. I’ve gone as far as I can go here, without going somewhere else and I was ready, either I was going somewhere else and going back into the kitchen or doing something or going to start a family. I chose to start a family.

Though both chefs were able to secure jobs in male-dominated kitchens, they were not able to attain the highest position of executive chef or manager (front of the house). The chefs were not demoted because of poor performance; on the contrary, they had rave reviews but were demoted to make way for male chefs/managers to secure the positions of executive chef and front house manager.

Conclusion

In the workplace, the division of labor is more extreme than in culinary school. The cooking shows on the Food Network reinforce this division. The images of the professional culinary world portrayed on these shows attract women but when the rules of the game are changed (Chef Dee, emphasis on teamwork, not competition) the jobs don’t seem as attractive. The flashy competition portrayed on the Food Network attracts both men and women. Young
women chefs often choose jobs in restaurants that support the male hierarchy and are competitive and stressful environments to work in. These women chefs compare “battle scars” if you will, relaying their success at working in such places as victory. This helps maintain and reproduce male standards in the kitchen.

Early on in their careers, men tend to vie for jobs in well-known restaurants for little money in exchange for the name of the executive chef on their resume. These men are typically single, young and ascribe to a lifestyle of drugs, sex, alcohol and what is known as “vampire” hours. The structure of culinary precludes a regular life. If these men stay in the culinary profession as they age, they typically seek jobs in corporate restaurants (corporately owned restaurants, hotels) that afford them consistent hours, higher pay as well as health benefits.

The nature of restaurant work is stressful. Periodity (flow of business), low pay, long hours and the strenuous nature of the job makes being a chef a stress-filled job. There is an expectation that men can take the pressure better than women, but these women chefs are “adrenaline junkies”, so the stereotypes are not accurate. In addition, when women are finished with their work, they will often help men in culinary; however, men chefs won’t return the favor and help women in pastry because they view pastry as “easy.” Women chefs also need to do more work to prove themselves; they are asked to do extraneous work (invoicing, ordering) without a pay increase or positional title (promotion). In addition, it is often thought that women are indecisive, which makes it easy for subordinates to either question and/or ignore a woman’s authority. The women chefs in the study have shown their ability to make decisions with authority and execute the necessary follow through to grow and maintain viable restaurant businesses.

The structure and culture of the workplace of the typical restaurant is not family friendly.
Women chefs also deal with the culture of drugs, alcohol and sex found in the typical professional kitchen. This culture, along with long hours, makes work/life balance very difficult. The long hours and lifestyle are not family friendly. The next chapter, Gendered Family Life in Culinary Home, will talk about the decisions women chefs are faced with when deciding how to negotiate both work as a chef and marriage/having a family.
CHAPTER 8: GENDERED FAMILY LIFE IN A CULINARY HOME

By now, the reader has a sense of the long, hard and demanding realities of a career in the professional culinary kitchen. In addition to making many sacrifices, such as time off to spend with friends and family, the four women chefs in the study were faced with several questions about balancing their work lives with their personal lives. The following chapter will discuss culinary work as not being family friendly and how the four women chefs made decisions to balance both work and family life, including decisions to marry and/or have a family.

Culinary Work is not Family Friendly

In general, restaurant work is not family friendly. As stated earlier, typically younger males and very few females work long hours for little pay. The younger workers trade higher wages (which is often a daily wage, set dollar amount for a shift) and no benefits for the restaurant’s name on their resumes. For younger workers, there is little if any work and family balance. If chefs decide to stay in the business, they often migrate towards corporate restaurant jobs that offer higher pay, benefits and set hours. When asked what the life balance of a restaurant chef looked like, Chef Jenn responded:

Chef Jenn: Well see, that’s interesting and that kind of goes back to what I was saying, when you look into these kitchens, what do you see? You see all young males […] because they are not married, they don’t have kids, and so […] it’s just them, cooking and partying and doing whatever. […] I even to this day don’t know many line cooks, or people who are working in the kitchen that are married and a lot of people that are married, the divorce rate is through the roof. A lot of times […] cooks will marry other cooks or marry front of the house […] so they see each other at work, they meet at work and they work together, which is a disaster [Laughter], most of the time, cuz people […] bring their problems into work and then they’re fighting all the time; […] a lot of broken homes, […] there are a lot of broken marriages.
Not only does restaurant work affect your immediate family life (partner/children), it also affects your life as it relates to extended family. Chef Chris talks about fears her parents had about her decision to become a chef. They felt that being a chef would limit the time they would get to see her particularly around holidays.

Chef Chris: My parents and I still weren’t communicating that much […] because they were very unhappy with the fact that I was in the kitchen. […] They […] saw how demanding it is; in time […] would see less and less of me around the holidays; […] you know at Christmas maybe one or two days. Thanksgiving I wouldn’t even go back for cuz it was pointless. So they were very against it. […] We weren’t really getting along at all.

Being a chef can limit the time you spend with your family. Holiday times, which are typically family days, are often spent cooking for customers’ holiday celebrations at the expense of not being able to spend time celebrating with your own family.

Illustrating how demanding a family/friends-unfriendly restaurant work can be, Chef Chris describes her time working in restaurants and what a lifestyle it can turn into.

Chef Chris: Yeah and I have to say that […] I actually like being on the other end (chuckle). […] It was kind of weird, […] the first time I wasn’t working […] on a Saturday […] it was […] just really weird. […] I felt that, “Oh my God people actually do go out and they have fun; they actually have a life and they’re enjoying themselves.” […] It’s not like OK let’s hurry up and get our whole night of enjoyment from 1:00 in the morning to 3:00 in the morning before I have to go to bed. […] It’s nice not being a vampire, that’s what I always used to call myself because it was almost 20 years […] of working nights, exclusively. […] It’s definitely kind of a change to actually be a creature of the day, […] where you may see the light when you’re getting up and going to work. […] You’re definitely not seeing it, cuz you’re in the kitchen until it’s dark, when you get done. […] So yeah, […] as far as [the] next step, […] right now, […] I like teaching but it’s not where I’m going to end up. I don’t really think that […] for-profit education […] is going to be around forever. […] I think that this pony ride will definitely come to an end. […] So what I’m looking at is […] hoping to […] branch off, […] my love of food, […] not really, I would say my love of nutrition. […] I think […] what I’ve really become involved in with the help of my partner who’s a social worker, is definitely […] becoming more empathetic to […] maybe different walks of life or different types of people that I really, not that I didn’t care but I just didn’t acknowledge.
The long hours, strenuous work and partying culture make it tough for chefs to live a balanced life. Chef Jenn, as previously mentioned, thinks that even though the restaurant industry attracts people who are high energy, the hours and strenuous nature of the business lend themselves to a schedule that is outside the norm. Chefs can easily get into a rhythm that is counter to mainstream culture. They get into a cycle of working late, partying and sleeping during the day. This schedule makes it difficult to build and maintain family life.

A common misconception is that owning a restaurant is more family-friendly than working in a restaurant owned by someone else. Some people think that ownership affords you the freedom to make up your own schedule and take days off whenever you want to. Chefs Stella and Dee disagree with this view and have actually experienced the opposite.

Chef Stella: I don’t know, [...] I think not being an owner, [...] if I was at the country club and I had the kids, I’d have a set schedule. [...] I [...] would be more complacent; [...] I know I could be there, I know I could take a day off; I know I could do this; with owning a business, you just plan a day off but it doesn’t happen. [...] I plan, [...] like Wednesdays, I plan on leaving early on Wednesdays now because I can, I finally have the right person in the position where I can use them. [...] But it doesn’t always happen because parties, I need stuff for tomorrow, I need this, I need that, I’m not just going to bail. But you know I’m not going to bail, [...] I’ve worked too hard I guess, am I going around still.

Chef Stella waited until her children were older to buy the café she now currently owns, which she worked at part-time when her children were young.

Chef Dee feels that when you are a restaurant owner, your work is never done.

Stephanie: But I always hear, I’m going to get around this, I’m not going to work in a kitchen I’m going to own my own place because then my hours are my own. Respond to that.

Chef Dee: [Both laughing] I knew you were going to say that, that’s like people say, “Oh wow it must be great to [...] have your own business, you can take time off whenever you want.” That’s the one I love; [...] actually, it’s the other way around. [...] I take it home with me too. When you have your own business [...] you lie awake and think about [...] the rent coming due or the fact that [...] you have no business for the weekend, or something like that. [...] I would say that if somebody doesn’t want to work 16 hours
away, a day, [...] then the last thing they should do is open their own place. [...] The restaurant or the culinary field is wide open, there are so many things you can do without working 16 hours a day, without opening your own place, without working in a restaurant. [...] If you like to cook, you can [...] be a culinary researcher, [...] a culinary scientist. You [...] can cater, [...] which to me would just like be hell, that’s my idea of hell, catering. [...] I don’t even like taking a covered dish to like a friend’s house. [Chuckles] I don’t like to move food. Yeah.

Understanding that restaurant work is not typically family friendly, chefs need to find strategies to help balance home and work. The next section will discuss such strategies, including the decision to marry and/or whether or not to have children.

**Strategies to Balance Home and Work**

**Decision to Marry**

All four women chefs have considered marriage. Two of them, Chef Dee and Chef Stella, have married, Chef Chris has a life partner, and Chef Jenn is open to marriage, but up until now, has always put her career first. Chef Dee married her high school sweetheart.

Chef Dee: I met my [husband/partner] in high school [...] so we were already dating and [...] we were married shortly [...] after college. [...] I went to public high school for two years and then I transferred to a private high school and met my [husband/partner].

Chef Dee and her husband were already married when they went to culinary school. Whereas Chef Dee met her husband in high school, Chef Stella met her husband in culinary school. Though she was not actively looking for a husband, once she met John they dated and later married.

Chef Stella: John, my husband who I met at culinary school, yes I did and we’re still together 24 years later. Yeah, we’re both in the kitchen, both ah stubborn.

Stephanie: So when you were going to school [...] were you planning on getting married?

Chef Stella: That was really the farthest thing from my mind. I really went to school thinking I’m going to go to school; I’m going to get through it. [...] As I was going through school [...] opportunities came, me doing a lot of apprentice stuff. [...] Some of the instructors had asked me to do stuff, so I would help out and I’d go do stuff, actually
we got paid for it too, so it was kind of nice; [...] it wasn’t just a voluntary thing. [...] I really was planning on going overseas and maybe looking to do something overseas in France or [...] just keep going on with learning about culinary and doing stuff like that, but that didn’t happen. [...] I ah met John. [...] I met him the end of my freshman year [...] and we just clicked and I think that’s why I didn’t do an internship away, I stayed at the school cuz he was there, cuz I was stupid. I keep telling myself I was stupid I should have went away, I should have did all that but [...] I’m glad I didn’t [...] Well, he always said too, “Yeah I was going to go you know overseas I was going.” [I said], “Then what the hell’s a matter with, what’s the matter with us, you know why didn’t we do it? Why didn’t we go?” But [...] it’s just something we never talked about. In fact, I never even expected, [...] when he proposed to me at [...] school that that was even going to be happening. [...] It was my junior, no my senior year, so my fourth year [...] when we got engaged and [...] he asked me what I was doing after I graduated and I said I was going home even though I wasn’t (both laughing), I was going back home, he’s like, “Really?” So [...] it all ended up that he ended up [...] finding a job [...] in a [large city in the Midwest] and it brought him back here so I thusly came back home. Even though I loved it out there and I really would have loved to stay, it didn’t matter where we went we were just going to go… stupid in love you know, I was in love and that was it.

Though Chef Stella and her husband John had plans to finish school and work in restaurants overseas, they got married instead, never realizing their dreams of overseas work.

Chef Chris is gay and has a life partner at this point in her life. She talks about her partner’s influence on her future plans in the food industry.

Chef Chris: I’m [...] hoping to really [...] branch off [...] [of] my love of food [...] not really, I would say my love of nutrition. [...] I think [...] what I’ve really become involved in with the help of partner who’s a social worker, is definitely [...] becoming more empathetic to [...] different walks of life or different types of people [...].

Though Chef Jenn has dated, she as of this writing is not married.

Chef Jenn: When I was in my twenties, working, [...] I was not concerned at all about trying to get married even though all my friends from high school were getting married and having kids. [...] It crossed my mind but I figured, in the future, [...] I need to work; I need to figure out what I’m doing, especially now that I was back in [the big city in the Midwest]. [...] My career was my priority; I had to figure it out cuz I didn’t want to end up in the basement [...]. So, I wasn’t too concerned about [...] getting married or having a family. [...] One conscious decision I did make though is I would not date anyone in the industry. [...] I’ve stuck to that. [...] I only have dated [...] one guy that was a chef. Yeah and he was much better than me, a much better cook. “...” We went to school together and then we worked together in [Mountain Country]. He was a line cook and then he became a sous chef, but he’s not in the industry anymore; [...] he got married and
had two kids. Yeah, […] in five years I dated two different guys […] but still not concerned about getting married or having kids. […] I […] still thought that that was years down the road and fine with it, […] even though all my friends were married, having kids. Now my friends are getting divorced [Laughter] and remarried. […] It just was not on my mind, I still just felt like I had to work and make money and that I was doing well financially and professionally.

Chef Jenn got to a point in her career that she thought it was time to get married and have children, but she and her boyfriend broke up, putting her plans of marriage and family on hold for now.

Chef Jenn: This guy that I grew up with had heard that I was back in town and he called me up and we started dating, so we dated for two and half years. […] When we started dating, that’s when I thought, “Oh now I should probably get married and have kids,” but then we broke up [Chuckles]. […] We just broke up and so, well we didn’t just break up, we broke up […] last year. We were still in contact up until January of this year. […] It broke my heart because I really did think, “Well now I can get married and have kids and I can work full-time as a chef instructor and like every all pieces now have fallen into place and everything’s going to be fine. …I mean it’s going to be great, like all my hard work has finally paid off and now I can have a family.”

Circumstances and decisions concerning whether or not to marry are varied amongst chefs. The decision to marry or be partnered also brings with it a consideration of whether or not to have children and raise a family. The next section will discuss decisions and influences on decisions about having children as experienced by the four women chefs.

**Decisions and Influences on Decisions about Having Children**

Of the four women chefs interviewed, only one has children: Chef Stella has two. Her decision to have children came at a point in her career after she was overlooked for a promotion; at that time, she decided it was time to have a family.

Chef Stella: No, I don’t think it was [Rich Country Club], I think it was another for some reason, but any way […] I didn’t get that job and then I just got to the point where, “OK I’ve been married seven, eight years now am I going to have kids, what am I going to do?” […] I married a chef and he was […] making money, doing well, we could live on one salary, […] you talk about all that stuff. I’ve gone as far as I can go here, without going somewhere else. […] I was ready, either I was […] going back into the kitchen […] or going to start a family; I chose to start a family. Yeah, […] I waited long enough.
John was always ready [...] to have kids, when are you going to have kids, when, *when I’m ready*. I mean I didn’t go to school and do all that and learn all that to have a family and not do something with myself.

Chef Stella waited seven or eight years after she married to have children. Since her husband was a well-paid chef, she thought it was time to have a family. Though her husband helped with some domestic chores, she did the bulk of the housework and child rearing.

Stephanie: Your husband then, […] what was his role in childcare? Did you guys split a lot of things or was it pretty much you?

Chef Stella: Well, […] he was at the country club at the time which […] the country club is like a seven day a week thing for him. It was mostly me […], which I was fine with that, […] but when he could be home, he was home. […] He had of course wanted to spend every minute he could with the kids. […] He tried, […] but it was me, it was mostly me in the beginning. “…” But when you find that time, or when he had the time, you took well advantage of it. […] He’s like, “What are you doing today?” I’m like, “We’re going to the pumpkin farm,” we’re doing this; we’re doing that […] He missed out on a lot, but […] he also had a lot more than other fathers do too, so.

While her husband John worked full-time as a chef and Chef Stella worked in the home, as the children got a little older, Chef Stella did small catering jobs.

Chef Stella: Working out of my house on the weekends, maybe just going to work a party or something […], just [to] stick with it so […] that’s how I kept myself bearable. Well, in the beginning it was just […] family and friends and then friends of friends and yeah […] I ended up doing OK, […] just keeping myself busy […] with the kids and then doing stuff on the side. John was home […], so it worked out pretty good. […] Then the kids got older, we moved […], they were in school and I was at home. […] I was bored so (laughing) […] I’m like, “OK (both laughing) I can’t fix my house and paint the walls and do everything any more, it’s all done, what do I do?” I’m like, “OK I get a job, just part-time, I’ll get a mother’s job you know looking for something to do.” […] I looked for a while […] and then this place here came up in the paper; […] mother’s hours, you know just […] what was it 9-2.

Stephanie: Is that how they said [it], “mother’s hours?”

Chef Stella: I’m trying to remember, no, it was mother’s hours to me. […] I don’t think so; I think […] it was part-time, part-time cook hours, (chuckle) not mother’s hours, part-time cook hours. […] I came here […] and I met her and I liked her. I loved this place; […] it was just cute, it’s like this is the place I could work in. […] I laid on the line, this is my situation, I’ve got kids, […] I don’t want to work full-time, I only want a couple of days. […] I told her what I wanted and that’s really exactly what she wanted anyway.
She liked my background she liked that I went to school, she liked all the stuff about it because she didn’t have anybody here that was so well educated.

As we see, when the children were older and in school, Chef Stella found a job in a little café close to home. Her part-time job worked around the times her children were in school. She needed to be home by the time they got off the bus to come home.

Stephanie: What were John’s hours? He was still at the major hotel? What were his hours, did he have set hours?

Chef Stella: No, John, […] he had gone off the hotel and he […] and he was off the French restaurant. I think he was at a country club […] when I had my daughter. He did have more set hours, yeah. […] All I knew is I had to be home when the kids were getting off the bus, because that’s what I wanted to be, I wanted to be there for them, I didn’t want them coming home to an empty house. Yeah, so it worked out […], they’re third and fifth grade when we moved here and then I think I got a job the next year. Yeah, so, and now I own this place. […] I remember one of the cooks or one of the people who she hired always said to me, “Oh you’re going to own this place” and I’d be like, “No I’m not.” I’m not cuz I really […] wasn’t thinking […] I just wanted a part-time job. I wanted to keep busy and I wanted wherever it went, it went. […] I mean I cared about this place, I cared […], I don’t know, I guess that’s the good Polish in me, you know like I’m a hard worker.

When the children were older, Chef Stella bought the café. It was an established business.

Stephanie: What do you like about this [café]?

Chef Stella: […] I like it’s small, […] we serve comfort food here. […] I like that and I like, I don’t know, I like dealing with the people and their expressions and good satisfied customers; […] it makes me feel really good to have a good product to put out there I guess you could say. […] It was a good established business, which helped a lot, which was an easy transition for me. […] But you know what, I don’t mind putting in the hours […] because the outcome is just [worth it].

When asked if she could have handled being an owner of the café when the children were small, she replied:

Chef Stella: Um, I…no. No, […] I didn’t want to, she wanted me to; she wanted to sell me the restaurant […] years prior cuz I think I was here four years before I actually bought the place. […] After my second year she was itching already to sell and she was looking for people and she’s like, “Come on Chef Stella why don’t you”…I’m like, “No, no my kids are too young.” […] I don’t want to, I just wasn’t ready I probably could’ve but I just I didn’t I didn’t want to slight my kids.
Stephanie: You prioritized, right?

Chef Stella: I really did, […] I’m glad I did, […] even now, I mean my kids are 16 and 17 but my daughter even will say, “Mom when are you coming home?” […] This is where I am all the time, […] I mean you know where to find me.

Now that her children are older, late teens, they work in the café.

Chef Stella: Yeah, they do, […] my daughter works the front and my son works the back. So, it actually works out pretty good. I want to get my son into working the front as well, like to know the whole thing. In fact, I was telling him the other day and he’s like, “No, I don’t want to do it, no.” […] He’s not a people person, he’s just his own. […] I said, “It’s not that I want you to go out there and make and talk to the people, you don’t have to.” I said, “You just have to know what goes on out there, know how to weigh things, know how the register works, know how if there’s a problem, to solve it. It’s, you don’t have to go out and talk to the people (chuckle).” […] He’s like, “Mom, I don’t want to talk to the people” but he’s young, he doesn’t know better. You know, it’ll come, it’ll come, but I said, “That’s all I want you to know, just to know how to get out of the problem.” [He said], “Well your daughter’s there.” I’m like, “No my daughter can do that, but no, it’s just that way. If I don’t have to be here, I don’t want to be here; you can be here you can solve that problem. You can so we’ll see.” Hopefully, eventually someday, it’ll get to that (chuckle), but I do have someone else here who can do that. […] I have another gentleman who […] works in the back, who’s good, [who] I can trust and […] he can close up and he can open and so I do have someone if need be. I don’t think John [husband] could even do it. [Both laughing]

Now that Chef Stella is an owner, she not only has her children working in the café, but she also has a man who works there, giving her additional freedom if the need arises.

In addition to Chef Stella navigating the balance between family and work, Chef Dee, though she does not have children, weighs in on types of restaurants that are more family friendly.

Chef Dee: I would, if I were going to open something that would be family friendly. Like I would open breakfast place, or a breakfast and lunch or something like that. […] I think […] you could do a food truck and […] you could do a pop-up restaurant […] the whole family can get in on.

Chef Stella considered the work schedule of her husband, school schedule of her children, day care and affordability of her being able to be a stay-at-home mom. As a new
mother, her catering events conformed to the family schedules, and as her children grew older, she was able to take on more responsibility in her job and eventually bought the café, where her children have part-time jobs and help her.

Chef Dee married her high school sweetheart, and they attended culinary school together. Soon after culinary school, with limited exposure to the restaurant industry, Chef Dee and her husband/partner opened their first café. Subsequently they opened several more restaurants. Working hard to build their businesses, Chef Dee admits that they never really focused on having children except once after the death of a dear friend.

Stephanie: All right and this is on a personal note, when you were considering owning these restaurants, did you have […] to make some family decisions?

Chef Dee: You know [Sigh], […] No, […] it’s a question I get all the time. […] Well, […] I think […] children were never a priority for us. […] I don’t know why, I mean […] I always thought about getting married but it never occurred to me, I never thought about being the mom. […] I guess if someone had asked me point blank […] “Do you think you’re going to have children?” I probably would have said, “Yes,” because, most women do, […] but […] once we got to be about 30 and […] got a little bit of money and stuff, […] my [husband/partner] said, “You know, the time to of have, had kids was when we were 24 and young and stupid and we didn’t know any better.” […] It’s like wow now I’m 30 you know, we’re, it’s like I don’t want to have a baby because I wanna go to New Orleans, I want to go to Montreal next summer, […] we don’t want to have a do either/or (laughing) I don’t want anything, I like to lock the door and know that nothing is there. […] [Laughing] So, it was never that we made a conscious choice it just never happened.

Chef Dee and her husband/partner were busy doing other things, building a business, traveling and having freedom to do what they wanted to do. They didn’t consciously make a decision not to have children; they simply were too busy. There was, however, a moment after the tragic accidental death of a close friend that they reconsidered having a baby.

Chef Dee: I think that’s it, we never made it a conscious decision. It was in […] oh what year must that of been, ‘91, I would say, in ‘91 […] a friend of ours died tragically in a car accident and we happened to be on the highway at the same time and saw it happen. It’s just some sort of fluke, he they were both coming back from a [big city in the Midwest] and […] after our friend died I said, “We have to have a baby, we have to have
a baby, we have to do something. All we’ve done is work, you know, all we’ve done is work and if we die tomorrow all we would have done is work.” And so I said, “We have to have a baby, and my [husband/partner] says, “Fine.” […] So we did try a little bit but […] nothing happened and then, […] it just didn’t but […] that was that. That was probably the wrong decision to make because it was a decision made out of out of grief more than anything else. Yeah, but […], I don’t, […] I don’t feel like I’ve missed anything; I don’t feel, […] I mean gosh, if we would have had kids when we were 24, they’d all be adults now, I would be a grandmother. My younger sister’s a grandmother. [Laughing]

Chef Dee anticipated getting married but did not make having children a priority. Instead, she directed her energies in building several businesses. In contrast, Chef Chris made a conscious decision not to have children. Early on, her parents had the expectation that she would have children, but she had different ideas.

Chef Chris: They wanted me to, mom always thought that, “Oh well with your culinary background you could teach, you could you know run the hot lunch program at schools, I could work at a corporate food science company”, because I think that’s what they felt was a more appropriate job for me. […] My sister […] works in a lab right now, […] she’s a med tech; […] I think that they think that that is a good job for her. […] She doesn’t work too hard […] and she can spend time with her kids. […] That was definitely one of those things where my parents were like, “Well, like how are you going to meet somebody in this field? You’re never going to get married, you’re never going to have a relationship, you’re never going to have kids.” […] I think that they never really looked at the fact of, OK what is it that you really want to do […]. I mean the fact that […] I’m gay, so I was not really looking forward to […] getting married, the fact that kids were never a big priority to me. […] I guess if you do what you do what you love, that’s all that should matter and I guess that’s always what I had a problem with, with my parents.

Chef Chris expands her opinions on having children, as expressed in the following excerpt.

Chef Chris: Fuck no; I rather would have been in a kitchen and work than have a newborn baby! Oh my God, when I was in culinary school, I was living with my sister and her husband. […] Two weeks after I’d moved there, my sister gave birth to her first child and good God there were so many times where I was able to pull the card, “not my kid…” and I was so glad! Well, it’s not, I mean especially like with […] Mora, she was born […] a little bit over a month premature, so she was kind of, not really a cranky baby but just kind of fussy, she would have a hard time you know latching on to the breast. I guess, which right there, I was like, “Oh God, I don’t even want to know, I don’t even want to see it. Whatever!” […] She would obviously be so hungry but wouldn’t be able to […] figure it out for herself. My sister would be trying […] to help and it’s […] like,
no. It’s […] I just think that honestly, […] I never would have had kids instead of being in the kitchen, I knew it just wasn’t for me.

Chef Chris knew she was not going to get married (same sex marriage is not legal in the state where she lives, but she does have a partner), and she and her partner made the conscious decision not to have children.

Finally, Chef Jenn, as previously stated, wants to get married and have a family; however, she has recently broke off a long-term relationship with her boyfriend, so at this time, she is still single.

Conclusion

Working in the restaurant industry as a chef requires some decision-making and prioritizing to achieve and maintain a work-life balance. The typical independent restaurant kitchen worker is young, male and unmarried. This is particularly true when chefs are first starting out. As previously mentioned, when they get older, the men chefs exchange a name on their resume (e.g., Charlie Trotter’s) for a higher wage, benefits and more family-friendly hours. The traditional American family structure challenges the career of a chef, particularly for women. Gendered expectations related to types of work and family structure, particularly the division of paid work and domestic labor, is still challenging and does not make for an easy transition of women into the work force. Though it is often thought that being a restaurant owner affords chefs more flexibility, the chefs interviewed posit the opposite: when you’re an owner, your work is never done, and in fact, you take it home with you. As an owner, you never “leave” (mentally) work. Decisions on whether to marry and/or have children are important issues to consider when becoming a chef. Long hours, including weekend and holiday hours, make it difficult to maintain a family/work balance. When women chefs put careers first, it is often
difficult to find relationships that may lead to marriage and having a family. Once married, decisions need to be made as to who will care for the children. Oftentimes a main consideration is the earning potential of each parent. Women often feel that there is a forced choice between family/marriage and work.

Though women often feel they have to choose between marriage/family and work, there is a space for women to make decisions about raising children; they have more of a space than men do. Careers are compromised for women, but it is more acceptable for women to make these choices than for men to make the same choices. The women chefs in the study made choices that helped them realize success in their careers and, in two cases, raise a family.

Trying to analyze the issues women face in a gendered society is difficult and messy. The following chapter will discuss and analyze the gendered dimensions of the culinary kitchen using a feminist post-structural framework. Concepts to be considered in the framework include language, discourse, power, knowledge and difference.
CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION

The concept of work and who does it continues to be a pivotal part of our social landscape. As history has shown us, work is defined and engaged in according to our sense of gender norms. These gendered norms can be maintained, reproduced or contested. As my research has shown, women chefs are in a particularly interesting space. Seen as the keeper and caretaker of the domestic domain, cooking is a major task for women in traditionally based domestic roles. This is often true whether or not they work outside the home. Understanding that cooking is seen as a feminine activity in the home, it is baffling why more women are not employed in the restaurant industry, particularly in executive chef positions. On the surface, this question would seem to be simple to answer; however, this study reveals that it is quite complicated. Using a feminist post-structural framework, we will engage elements of discourse, language, knowledge, power and difference in order to examine the complex and gendered nature of the culinary world, specifically, the back of the house, as became evident in the previous chapters.

Essentialist and commonsense thinking (normalized notions of gender) reproduce ideas and practices in social groups and institutions such as families, workplaces, schools and society at large. Feminist post-structuralism seeks to understand the gendered power dynamics that differentiate the accepted and unaccepted status of women (Davies and Gannon, 2005). Particular to this research is the notion of the double standard and how it influenced the four women chefs’ rise to the top while maintaining patriarchal structures.

Gender is visible and explicit in the culinary world but typically not recognized. Gendered stereotypes regarding women’s place in the professional culinary kitchen often make it
difficult to navigate the workplace and secure promotion. Even when women chefs work harder and are successful in proving themselves, they are often only promoted so far, thus hitting the glass ceiling.

Deeper structures help to perpetuate these patterns, among them binary thinking. There is a need to challenge the binary of men/women, feminine/masculine, for women to be able to create and manage an equitable life/career balance. Feminist post-structuralism seeks to challenge and replace binary ways of analysis by acknowledging pluralities and diversities and articulating new conceptual ways of thinking based on acknowledging difference (Scott, 2003).

The data collected from the interviews recognizes the binary, particularly in terms of a double standard. Binaries offer two choices: if you aren’t one, you’re the other. The four women chefs navigated a binary system in which the standards often shifted to privilege men. This was evident in hiring practices and in the culture of the kitchen, as well as patterns of experience and promotion.

**Feminist Post-Structuralism in the Professional Culinary World**

To further the analysis, I have considered the five concepts found in feminist post-structural thought as they relate to this study—language and discourse, knowledge, power and difference. While some would say that in feminist post-structural research one could/should focus on one or some of the dimensions, I concentrated on all five dimensions because I understand that all five dimensions work together to enable a fuller understanding of how gender shapes our worlds. As previously stated, binary thought locks the researcher into an either/or situation. By using the five chosen concepts, it enabled me to look at the data and understand the experience of the women chefs in the professional culinary world in a more complicated way, which included a clearer look at the role of binaries.
Because language and discourse are talked about together, they are integrally related. It is important to see how language plays a part in structuring discourse. The discussion of feminist post-structural concepts is followed by a conclusion focusing on patriarchal discourse and how it permeates domestic, professional and educational domains.

**Discourse and Language**

As mentioned earlier, Gee (2011) makes a distinction between discourse with a small “d” and Discourse with a capital “D.” Discourse with a small “d” refers to the ways language is used to communicate thoughts. Discourse with a capital “D” refers to a characteristic (Gee, 2011, emphasis in original), a way of saying, doing and being; Discourse projects ideologies. According to Gee (2011), Discourse with a capital “D” requires,

… that we act, think, value, and interact in ways that together with language, render who we are and what we are doing recognizable to others (and ourselves). In fact, to be a particular who and to pull off a particular what requires that we act, value, interact, and use language in sync with or in coordination with other people and with various objects (“props”) in appropriate locations and at appropriate times. (p. 31, emphasis in the original.)

Also stated previously, the experiences of people are represented through language; language in turn helps to structure and name multiple discourses. In language that values a gender hierarchy and binary, men are strong and women are emotional, women are defined as secondary to men; men are the norm to which women are compared. These norms reproduce and maintain discourses that favor men over women and reinforce patriarchy. In the following section, I will discuss how the four women chefs experienced gendered discourse in family life, school and work.

**Gender in Family Life**

The culture of food and cooking started for all four chefs at home. Most cooking was done by women, with the exception of outside barbequing done by the men of the house. Meal
times were important, not only from a survival perspective but also as a time to connect with family members.

Both families and communities imparted gendered ideologies—discourses—to their children about education, marriage and raising children. Both women and men were encouraged to attend college and earn degrees that would hopefully lead to employment; however, career trajectories were different for men and women. Typically men were expected to have high status, well-paying jobs and the women, despite their degrees, were to stay at home and be “good wives.” Women were encouraged to expand their work outside the house, if at all, when the children grew older and became more independent. Even when women work outside of the home, they are still expected to take care of the household duties (Hochschild, 2003).

The four women chefs navigated family and career differently. Though all four chefs graduated from college and culinary school, their decisions about marriage and family varied. Two of the chefs chose marriage, one couldn’t marry because same-sex marriage was not legal, and one was hoping to marry after her career took off (she is still single today). Amongst the women chefs, having children seemed to influence their career trajectories the most. Only one of the chefs was married with children. Before she married she had a successful career, which she put on hold until her children were older and she could devote time to resuming her career. Structures of work in culinary make it difficult to balance family and career.

*Gender in Culinary School*

During their formal culinary educations, all four women chefs felt that men and women culinary students were treated equally; however, there seemed to be a gender divide between baking/pastry and culinary that continued in the workplace. The division of labor between baking/pastry and culinary is a somewhat confusing one. Typically, though more and more
women are going into scientific fields (medicine, engineering) and the sciences have traditionally been categorized as male dominated fields, in the professional culinary world, it seems to be the opposite. Products made in baking and pastry are a result of pure science: chemical reactions that require precise measurement of ingredients as well as heat control. On the other hand, products made in the culinary kitchen such as stews, roasts and salads are based more on taste, and as Chef Chris put it, “more by the seat of your pants.” A saying in the professional culinary world mentioned by the chefs in the interviews categorizes it perfectly: “the science of baking and the art of culinary.” A common gendered belief relies on the assumption that women tend to do better with precision in the baking kitchen; men typically find baking tedious and time consuming. In addition, pastries tend to be “pretty,” as in a highly decorated wedding cake; pretty tends to be seen as feminine. Precision is valued in the science domain; however, in the professional culinary world, men label baking/pastry as being easy, even though one of the reasons they don’t like it is because it’s so precise. A science discourse with its higher status is not evoked. This double standard favors men over women for executive chef jobs (pastry chef is lower than an executive chef). Discourses around culinary and pastry/baking have been gendered in ways that situate men in the main part of a meal, where precision is not necessary, and women in the peripheral parts of the meal (bread/desserts) that are pretty and yet optional to the whole meal. Although they require knowledge of science and a high standard of precision, this is not valued.

Gender and the Workplace

The restaurant, as a culinary workplace, is a space that was heavily gendered as manifested in long hours, a high ratio of men to women chefs and management styles. The workplace structure of long hours and strenuous work discursively labels restaurant work as
men’s work. Young men work long hours for little pay in exchange for having well-respected restaurant names on their resumes. As men chefs age, according to the study, many of them go to corporate restaurants that have more consistent schedules, higher pay and benefits. Men can work long hours because wives would be home to raise the family. In reality, according to the data, long hours often contribute to high divorce rates among chefs; this weakens possibilities for combining family and work lives in ways that are different for men and for women. Although beyond the scope of the data in this study, it is likely that many of the gendered ideologies are active in the professional culinary work world, where more lucrative jobs are disproportionately given to men because they are believed to need them to support families. Furthermore, discourses about parenthood affect women and men differently.

The vast majority of restaurant chefs, according to the four women chef participants, are male; being the only woman chef in the kitchen is difficult. If you are a sous chef or interim chef, oftentimes men don’t accept your authority and proceed by doing things as they see fit. They might not take suggestions on how to improve food preparation, or they might send items back to the purveyor (food source) they deem unnecessary without your permission. Men were typically characterized as screamers, belittling workers. As bosses, they also did not have a good sense of life-work balance, making it nearly impossible for women to get a day off even in a medical emergency. Women chefs, on the other hand, were seen as nurturing a collaborative environment, or they were respected and they strived to help workers maintain a life-work balance. Three of the chefs who were treated badly by men chefs vowed to use a more collaborative and fair style of management if they ever were promoted to executive chef, thus challenging the status quo. Whereas the women chefs vowed to challenge the way they were managed, according to the data there is no evidence that men did the same, hence they
maintained and reproduced the patriarchal discourse favoring men. Clearly, different gendered discourses of authority and leadership were at work.

Management styles between men and women chefs are different, and so is the way they react to criticism. When told that they did something wrong, women chefs tend to take it personally and get emotional, while their male counterparts let the comments roll off their backs and focus on the job at hand. Taking criticism personally is considered feminine and not an acceptable response in an environment defined discursively as male. The women chefs tried hard not to react emotionally in the kitchen because they thought they would be accepted as equals with their male counterparts; however, this strategy did not always work. In fact, not reacting emotionally further maintained and reproduced the masculine standard of no emotion in the kitchen.

*Patriarchal Discourse*

Discourses are messy and unstable since they are always in a state of change. A patriarchal discourse is the overarching discourse that permeates domestic, educational and professional work domains. Patriarchy refers to social, structural and cultural meaning systems that assume male norms and tend to disadvantage women. A discourse that is patriarchal reproduces these norms. An activity such as nurturing (emanating from emotion) is valued in the home (reflecting motherhood roles) but not necessarily in the workplace, where traditionally competition and a direct transactional management style, typically considered male, are used and valued. In educational settings (i.e., culinary schools attended by the four women chefs), patriarchal discourse is more muted; the educational environment is perceived to be more egalitarian and as such is not contested but rather reproduced. As culinary graduates move into the workplace (in restaurants), the gender egalitarian environment of school is actively redefined.
to favor men. In the workplace, a patriarchal discourse sets many of the standards, which are deemed part of and necessary in the professional culinary kitchen. For example, men’s work is valued as being more important (they are usually culinary chefs) than women (who work in garde manger and baking/pastry). Also, women’s authority is valued differently than that of men; this valuing of authority is tied into the notion that men and women have different management styles. A masculine management style (which is transactional) is valued over the (transformational) management style of women, hence feeding into the notion that women’s authority can be bypassed. Emotions undermine authority in a masculine discursive space where emotions and women are devalued. If women decide not to show emotion, they are not challenging the status quo, but in fact are maintaining and helping to reproduce it. Juggling and navigating multiple domains is difficult for women because different discursive meanings for gender and women are not in sync. Patriarchy sets the standards, which change when it favors men. These standards often are not consistent and may change between domains. One such example of standards shifting depending on the domain is women’s cooking experiences in the home and professional kitchen.

At home, cooking is a woman’s job, but in the professional culinary world, women are typically in garde manger or baking/pastry. For the women in the study, cooking inside the home was not only done by them, it was an expectation to learn the skills necessary to be a good wife and mother. For the boys in their family, it was an elective that most of them didn’t choose to participate in. In junior high, culinary arts, including “how to become a woman,” was a required course for girls, while boys were taking woodshop. In high school, there was more choice, but cooking also changed to a more science, professionally based experience. A few boys took it, but mostly for an easy A or to meet girls and to be waited on, thereby perpetuating an inequitable
gendered discourse. Chef Chris relayed that at that point, there was only one boy that she knows from the cooking class who actually became a professional culinary chef. In professional culinary school, though girls went on to become culinary chefs, they were found to be meticulous pastry chefs. At that point, there was a divide, and boys instinctively took over the “masculine” jobs of cleaning and gutting fish, while girls made perfect pastries. Even in the midst of the initial stages of the culinary pastry divide, the women culinary students still felt they were treated equally. Upon graduation, there was a shift into the workplace domain, which was very different from both the domestic discourse and the culinary education discourse. The workplace domain is a very gendered discourse, mostly based on stereotypical ideas of what it means to be feminine or masculine. These ideas, though we may think they are cultivated in both our homes as well as school environments, take on another meaning when experienced in the professional culinary kitchen. The woman who was cooking at home and at school is now blocked out of the professional culinary realm by a discourse of double standards that favors men. For example, in the domestic realm, being feminine includes being emotional and nurturing, while in the professional realm, there is no room for being “girly” (emotional). This, of course, is different when a man decides to be emotional, as we saw in the example of Chef Chris cutting the tip off her finger and getting yelled at while a man chef cuts hot peppers up without the use of gloves and gets capsicum burns on his penis and is taken to the emergency room. What makes the situation more stressful and frustrating is that rules may change suddenly, without warning. Women may not even realize how they change and may continue to try and play by a “set of rules.”
**Shifts in Discourse**

Women chefs may or may not be aware of sudden changes in discourse in specific domains. In the above example, Chef Chris did not act in an emotional, “girly” way; instead she acted in a way that she thought was consistent with expectations in a male-dominated environment. At a later time, when a male chef got hurt (not as badly as she was), he was responded to with a trip to the emergency room; furthermore, the executive chef didn’t criticize him for his complicity in the accident. It is difficult to know how to act because the rules change without warning or explanation. They remain, however, structured as a binary.

Within the experiences of women, it is possible to see these shifts and how they help construct and maintain the status quo. These shifts affect career promotion. For example, the women chefs perceived the way to move up the career ladder was to work harder than the men chefs. They worked hard and long hours, some of the time doing the work of their superiors without additional pay, in hopes they would someday be promoted to executive chef positions. Unfortunately working hard and longer did not give them the promotions they were working towards. Chef Chris, after working hard and being promoted to interim executive chef, was essentially demoted and actually trained the next executive chef, a man chef. She had a very difficult time understanding why she didn’t get promoted based on having received very high evaluations and pay raises. She did everything she thought she needed to do, yet she didn’t get the executive chef job at The Spanish Restaurant. The rules changed, and they changed after she worked so hard to advance. By continuing to play by a different set of rules, women find it difficult, if not impossible to advance. Playing by the rules doesn’t pay off: rules change, perhaps to avoid rewarding women for following the rules. In other words, they can only be promoted so
far, regardless of whether they had the necessary skills or not. Men then are able to maintain and uphold a binary system that shifts in ways that favors them and their promotions.

All four of the women chefs navigated multiple domains within a patriarchal discourse. Women are disadvantaged by systems that position them, not men, to opt out in favor of family rearing, since a balance is usually not possible. Though Chef Stella and her husband graduated from cooking school and were both chefs, Chef Stella is the one who made the decision to stop working and raise a family. Her reasoning was that she did not get a new job that she applied for and her husband was making good money, so she decided to put her career on hold until her children were raised. While she was at home raising children, her husband continued to work and build his career as a chef, hence reinforcing a woman’s place in the home and a man’s place in the work domain.

In conclusion, patriarchal discourse shapes how we navigate within society. Family and community domains, as well as others, pass expectations of behavior onto its members, in this case, women who are expected to be educated but also marry well and care for the family, whereas men are to be educated and pursue high paying jobs to provide for their families. This expectation may change as the children grow up, at which time the woman may pursue a career, perpetuating a traditional gender discourse in which work is secondary to family life. Chefs felt they were treated equitably in culinary school; however, gender equitable professional discourse of equal treatment did not extend for the most part into the workplace, where men’s behavior was the accepted standard and women were held to a double standard—often where hard work didn’t lead to the expected or promised promotion.

Balancing family and work domains was difficult. Each of the four chefs navigated it differently, within an inequitable discursive space. Understanding the strenuous nature and long
hours of restaurant work, the four chefs all prioritized and understood what they had to do to navigate the patriarchal spaces within the culinary world. Part of how the chefs navigated their journey through the professional culinary world has to do with their knowledge of self as well as what they have learned along the way. The next section covers the gendered nature of knowledge.

**Knowledge**

“Knowledge is always constructed, not discovered; contextual, not foundational; is always singular, localized and from a particular perspective rather than totalizing or universal…” (Baxter, 2003, p. 22). Understanding that knowledge is socially constructed and is in a constant state of change, feminist post-structuralism helps to analyze how knowledge is situated in discourse and how it constructs gendered identities. Given that knowledge is socially constructed, I would assert that this construction is not typically bound in discrete categories. Experiences contribute to the knowledge of the construction process, but it does not take the same form or substance for everyone.

Restaurant work—working as a chef—is a difficult job that requires particular knowledge and skills. In addition to the ability to carry out cooking tasks leading to the completion of a final product, women chefs need several types of knowledge that may help them navigate the professional culinary world. The particular types of knowledge include knowledge of self, knowledge of others (particularly men and masculinity), knowledge of gendered inequality and relations (including double standards). Chefs work long hours that are physically strenuous as well as stressful. Though it is thought that women can’t handle the pressure, the four women chefs expressed how they “lived” for the adrenaline rush of service. For them, the faster the tickets came in, the more they thrived. They much preferred that to slow spurts; in fact, they
chose to be a chef because they enjoy the challenge. Whereas adrenaline rushes and high energy are not typically associated with femininity, in reality there are women who embrace fast-paced, strenuous work. Their self-knowledge of what constitutes an appropriate career for them is not necessarily upheld by stereotypes of what women can and want to do. The women chefs’ self-knowledge helped them choose and succeed in professional culinary careers.

Early on in their careers, the women chefs, during preparation and service times, learned to keep their mouths shut. They did not want to “stir the pot,” as they say. They wanted to blend in and keep up with the men chefs; they perceived complaining as a weakness. They didn’t want the men to think they were women who couldn’t do the job and, therefore, did not belong in the kitchen. This was also true when it came to showing emotion. The women chefs would fight back the tears in stressful situations and never let the men chefs see them cry. Again, they didn’t want the men to think they were weak and couldn’t handle the stress. The men didn’t cry, so the women didn’t cry, thus supporting and reproducing male norms related to emotions and expression of them. This navigation requires women chefs to have knowledge of male norms and know how to situate themselves within them.

When the four women chefs worked in the kitchen, they felt like they were viewed in a different light than their male counterparts. In order to prove themselves worthy of working in a professional kitchen, the women chefs felt they had to work harder than the males. This was a clear double standard. Understanding male norms is not enough: we must understand the double standards also. Chefs Jenn, Chris and Stella were victims of a double standard. Chef Chris in particular is a glaring example of a double standard at work. Chef Chris worked as a sous chef, during which time she did the bulk of the executive chef position without title or pay increase. When the executive chef was fired for sexual harassment, she took over as the interim executive
chef and received rave reviews and a pay raise. Three months later, instead of being promoted to executive chef, she trained the new executive chef and was transferred to what she was told was the fast track to becoming an executive chef at a different restaurant. She was confused and disappointed that she was essentially demoted when she proved herself as an able and talented executive chef. She did not have enough knowledge (understanding) of the double standard to make it work to her advantage. She did not, as it was clear in her attempt to get promoted, but instead trained the new executive chef.

Employers have stereotypical assumptions about women chefs. Misinformation held by men (knowledge) in the form of stereotypes and gender bias has a negative impact on women chefs. This misinformation is often based on a masculine hierarchy of valued work. Working the line is perceived as having higher value than working in garde manger or the pastry station. When women are deprived of access to certain jobs (cooking on the line) and are relegated to garde manger or dessert stations, this limits their access to learn the mechanics of the line, something that is essential in becoming an executive chef.

Management styles are informed by knowledge about social relations generally and gender relations specifically. This study revealed an astute ability to observe and learn how not to manage. All except Chef Stella experienced management styles they vowed not to repeat when they were promoted to sous and/or executive chef positions. These included yelling, screaming, belittling employees, embarrassing employees, throwing objects and not respecting the work/life balance. This seems to relay that even though the women chefs were treated poorly, they vowed that when they reached the top place of executive chef they would not oppress their staff, but rather would use their executive position to treat staff fairly. Chef Jenn treated staff with respect and encouraged collaboration. Chef Chris, who was screamed at, swore at,
physically pelted with lemons and harassed for being hospitalized, ran her kitchen in a way that was different from how she herself was treated. When there were problems, she talked to each worker individually, she encouraged collaboration, and she never physically threw anything at an employee. In addition, she gave workers time off when needed, even if it was during a busy season and she had to work the shift herself. Chef Dee exhibits detail-oriented knowledge; she is a self-proclaimed planner and proactive manager who sets up systems that help build a team that works well together. Since her whole staff is Spanish-speaking, she hired a Spanish tutor to increase her ability to communicate and talk with her staff. She recognized her need to gather knowledge (not expecting others to accommodate her). Chef Dee also has a keen knowledge of life beyond the workplace. She constructed a schedule that allows people to work a second job if they so choose. When hired, she presents the prospective employee with a handbook of expectations. She does not socialize with staff, instead there are strict boundaries, and there is no alcohol consumption by employees in the restaurant. The executive chef works approximately 40 hours per week. Self-knowledge and knowledge of how people work best allows these chefs to challenge the typical restaurant management scheme and come up with a style that benefits both them and their employees. Knowledge of alternative management styles (not typical in the industry) works for both the chef and her staff.

The structural base of restaurant work is shaped by a patriarchal discourse, and a knowledge system that privileges men. In the restaurant world, it is taken for granted by chefs, both men and women, that men set the standard of work and women must live up to that standard. Though the women chefs were frustrated by gendered dynamics in the professional culinary kitchen, their level of feminist awareness varies. Chefs Jenn and Chris have knowledge of gender inequality and masculine privilege but have difficulty navigating them. Chef Jenn lost
her job because she stood up to the man chef about the lack of teamwork amongst men and women cooks. Chef Chris felt she was “one of the guys,” but that got her only so far; in the final analysis, she was not one of the guys and was demoted (despite rave reviews and a pay raise), training her male executive chef replacement. Chef Stella seemed unaware of the gendered value and pattern of work. When overlooked for promotions, she made up excuses, concluding that it was all right she didn’t get the job, the man who got it instead was a “nice” guy. When she was overlooked again for a job, she decided to quit and start a family. Chef Dee has a keen “knowledge” of the gendered dimensions of the professional culinary kitchen, and out of all the four chefs, seems to be the most proactive: she owns her own restaurant and runs it in a way that values a more gender-equitable style of teamwork.

First, Chef Dee decided very early on that she could run her own place better, so she and her husband have opened several very successful catering and dining-in restaurants. Chef Dee is confident in her knowledge to run a successful business. Second, she has clear boundaries as to what she will accept in terms of appropriate interactions between both staff and purveyors. Finally, she is proactive, has a clear sense of her goals, and takes great satisfaction in meeting them. Along the way, she understands how gendered stereotypes may invite inappropriate interaction with men but deals with them directly and effectively. In sum, knowledge of both culinary skills and business sense help make Chef Dee a successful and accomplished restaurant owner/chef.

In conclusion, some of the assumptions based on gender that are held by male chefs, such as women can’t handle stress, women can’t handle difficult jobs and only belong in garde manger, when examined in a work environment, are contested by the women chefs: they rely on a different knowledge base. The data from the interviews in this study, instead, supports that
women are, indeed, able to handle the stresses of the professional kitchen. Women chefs can handle the stress and in fact seek it out. Their jobs are difficult, and sometimes they need help, but they certainly find successful ways to run kitchens using a collaborative management style.

In the next section, I will address the issue of patriarchal power and how it maintains and reproduces itself.

**Power**

“Power is understood in terms of a line of force and is not the property of one gender” (Davies and Gannon, 2005, p. 258). The mechanisms of power produce different types of knowledge. According to Foucault (1980):

> The exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power. … Knowledge and power are integrated with one another, and there is no point in dreaming of a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power… (p. 52)

Power is relevant to the study of gender because it provides a framework within which to analyze the construction of gender and gender relations. Competition, support amongst workers, language, double standards, promotion, career trajectories and sexual behavior are connected to power dynamics in the home, school and workplace.

First, a masculinist version of competition is prevalent in the professional culinary world. Television shows on the Food Network show the professional culinary industry as glamorous and hide the complexities (e.g., knowledge) of what it takes to be a chef. This type of competitive behavior is decidedly masculine whether the competitors are men or women. Though the Food Network is entertainment, the competitive component is a mainstay in professional culinary kitchens. This masculine version of competition was not present in Chef Dee’s kitchen. Chef Dee has experienced the collaborative work efforts of an all-women chef culinary team, producing meals for an annual benefit dinner, The Dinner. The women chefs had
fun and pleasant camaraderie with one another while cooking their dishes. On the other hand, when she worked as the only woman on a men’s culinary team, she commented that it was terrible; all they did was try to outdo one another. The men touted their sexual prowess with stories of conquest. She thought it was disgusting. The norms about social relations of the two groups were different. Also, Chef Dee, as the organizer of The Dinner, has the final say (power) over how she wants it to run, but she used her power differently than the men did. She values teamwork and camaraderie, whereas when she was a member of the men’s team, she was not afforded this more egalitarian form of relations and was powerless to change the dynamic. The men’s team supported norms of competition and not teamwork, representing a structure where those with more power won and the others gain little.

Though the professional culinary kitchen is competitive, the men also stick together and support one another. When working in the industry, Chef Jenn experienced men executive chefs siding with men chefs when there was a disagreement in the kitchen. She believes that one chef kept men and women cooks separate—men on the line, women in pastry—to cut down on conflict, which the men executive chefs thought was the women’s fault. This strategy situates men in a more valued position, exerting power for the benefit of some over others, thereby, advancing men.

As stated earlier, there is competition amongst men in the professional culinary kitchen. Typically, men compete with men and often leave women chefs out of the competition by perpetuating the existing double standards (as previously discussed) and making it difficult if not impossible for women to gain the expertise (knowledge) necessary for promotion. These double standards help reproduce inequitable traditional gendered dynamics in the kitchen.
There is evidence of double standards in the professional culinary kitchen starting well before a chef is hired. The double standard was evident early in the interview process for a sous chef position in a corporate restaurant. While interviewing for a sous chef’s position in a corporate restaurant, Chef Chris was asked if she was planning on having children, which is illegal to ask. Her sense was that they wanted to find out if they would have to give her maternity leave and pay for a substitute chef to take her place while on maternity leave. She was sure that they didn’t ask any of the men applicants if they were planning on having children. This practice of asking inappropriate questions, or not asking but assuming that women will bring perceived liabilities and extra expense to the business, undoubtedly leads to possible discrimination in hiring.

Career trajectories change with time. As men chefs get older, they gravitate to corporate restaurants that afford them higher pay, better benefits and more consistent hours. As previously mentioned, young, single men work for low wages when they are starting out. Often, the name of a good restaurant is perceived as payment and a necessity for career growth. Typically, as these males become older, their life situations change; their priorities shift from wanting a specific restaurant name on their resume to needing higher pay, benefits and more steady hours to provide for their families. Women chefs are typically left out of this network and opportunity. This may be because men are traditionally seen as providers, whereas traditionally women are seen as caregivers in the home. Though many women today work outside the home and in many cases are sole wage earners in the family, the patriarchal structures of the workplace make it difficult for women in the culinary field to get the same jobs and promotions that are open to their male counterparts.
Men also use sexual behavior as a vehicle to exercise their power. According to the women chefs, the underlying premise of sexual conduct is twofold: masculinity is reinforced by overt sexual prowess, and some of the women are assumed to like it, and they may think it’s a compliment. Chef Jenn had a situation where a man chef used sexual conduct as a way of controlling women chefs he worked with. He made sexual advances that resulted in women doing anything he wanted, including set up a cooking demonstration, bringing him coffee and even conveying to him office gossip that he might be interested in. In other cases, sexually harassing behavior involving a male executive chef and interns in front of the house employees resulted in the women being moved to another restaurant in the chain (removal from a hostile environment) and later, the man executive chef being fired. The woman intern was moved, not the male perpetrator, making the perpetrator in this scenario a winner, until some time later when he was fired. It is worth mentioning that sexual harassment can be difficult to prove. Sexual prowess can be valued as an essential masculine characteristic, that is, part of being male. Women may be in a bind when trying to prove they are victims of sexual harassment.

In summary, competition, support among male workers, double standards and sexual behavior contribute to a gendered power dynamic that favors men.

**Difference**

Difference is important to consider because it enables us to more clearly see the binaries that structure our knowledge, power relations, language and discursive understandings. How participants make meaning of difference in the professional culinary world is important. It is one thing to acknowledge binary differences such as man/woman, tall/short, fat/thin, but it is most important to understand how difference is valued. How we see and value difference affects the way we navigate society, in this case, the professional culinary kitchen.
Difference as it relates to gender is an important element when considering language, discourse, knowledge and power. The gendered binary system, which divides people into feminine/masculine categories, is by no means discrete. Arguments that support gender-specific behaviors as commonsense and essential do not take into account the realities of everyday life and how people interact on a daily basis. This certainly is the case in the professional culinary kitchen.

Difference functions in these spaces as two distinct sets of expectations and norms based on gender. When women try to adhere to male norms, however, they are viewed as odd because by definition they are not male. Either way, women’s options are constricted, so they can’t measure up. Binaries perpetuate these patterns by defining only two choices that are oppositional in nature and positioning women on what is seen as the weaker side of the binary. If women try to live up to the stronger side of the binary, they are not considered feminine enough (because they are female, not male), and if they live up to the feminine side, they are valued less and perceived as unable to do the job as well as the men can.

Conclusion

Using the framework of feminist post-structuralism, specifically the five concepts of discourse, language, power, knowledge and difference, is a way to get at how binaries perpetuate gendered arrangements that benefit men and disadvantage women. Binary thinking is related to the double standards that permeate the culinary world (and society in general) and to how difference is structured. In many instances in this research, binaries continue to structure gendered relations and social norms. In order for binaries to be dislodged, knowledge and understandings of power and ideologies (discourses) would need to change, so that actions (including use of language in particular ways) can shift to more deliberately challenge the binary
thinking that socially reproduces the gendered status quo. Understanding gendered structures and addressing them at home, school and workplace may be a place to start.

At this point, I find myself reflecting on the initial impetus for my study. If cooking has traditionally been considered women’s work carried out in the domestic realm, why are women underrepresented in the professional culinary kitchen? In the beginning, I was consumed with the fact that cooking is considered women’s work, so why were women locked out of the professional culinary kitchen? At first it didn’t seem to make sense, but now I see it is so much more complicated. After interviewing four women chefs who have been executive chefs, and therefore have moved up through the system, experiencing all levels, I have come to an eye-opening and enlightening conclusion. It’s not so much about discrete categories of what is feminine and masculine; rather, it’s more about others upholding the patriarchal hierarchy through the application of a particular inequitable notion of gender, one that favors men.
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

In this final concluding chapter I will first return to the literature and situate my study in relation to it. Generally this discussion about the broader body of research would be interwoven through the analysis, but since there is so little research on the topics addressed in this study, I situate it here as a separate section. I then revisit (and answer) the research questions, and end with implications for further research and for practice.

All this Research… How does it Speak to the Literature?

Existing scholarship on the gendering of the professional culinary kitchen focuses on the front of the house (Bird and Sokolofski, 2005; Iacobucci and Ostrom, 1993; Erickson, 2004; Hall, 1993; Tibbals, 2007; LaPointe, 1992; Cobble, 1991), not the back of the house. Therefore, this study begins to fill a huge gap in its contributions to understanding the gendering of the back of the house. Similarly, there is little if any research on gender and culinary education, so this study also addresses that gap in our knowledge. First, the professional culinary kitchen is gendered in a way that favors men chefs: the gendered discourse is clearly patriarchal. Often women chefs who demonstrate skill, as evidenced by favorable evaluations as well as pay raises, are only promoted only go so far and then hit a glass ceiling. A double standard disadvantages women. Secondly, culinary education, though intended to prepare students for a culinary career, may teach cooking skills but fall short of preparing students for the gendered dynamics in the industry. Equal treatment of men and women students does not translate to gender equality in the typical professional culinary kitchen. What’s more, even if there is at least partial awareness of stereotypical gender dynamics, these dynamics are not talked about. Gendered social relations are not explicitly addressed, let alone analyzed and made more equitable.
Despite the lack of previous research on gender and the back of the house, there is a rich body of scholarship on gender and work, more broadly, on the glass ceiling (Cotter, Hermanson, Ovadia and Vanneman, 2001; Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995; Hymowitz and Schellhardt, 1986; Redwood, 1995; Taylor and Waggoner, 2008). As the data suggests, there are many similarities between the gendered discourse of corporate America and the professional culinary world, particularly to the positions of sous chef and executive chef. One similarity is both corporations and restaurants are fast–paced environments. The typical chef is one who thrives in a fast-paced environment and is often non-traditional in terms of personal and career characteristics (Bourdain, 2000). Restaurant work and its periodicity (Fine, 1996) meet the needs of people who seek a challenge and adrenaline rush. The women in the study felt that women who chose the profession of chef are often seen as not being able to handle the pressure; however, this study shows that women also thrive in a fast-paced environment and can work harder than men doing so.

Gender stereotypes affect women in the professional culinary world as they do in the corporate world. These stereotypical characteristics relate to physical appearance, attitudes, interests, psychological traits, social relations and occupations. Women in the culinary world are evaluated by both descriptive (what characteristics they possess) and prescriptive (what characteristics they should possess) stereotypes (Gaur, 2006), as we saw in the study herein. Often women chefs, like, their corporate counterparts, are caught in a “double-bind” (Warren, 2009), where they may be perceived as being too feminine or not feminine enough; there is often no middle ground. This research has shown that this double bind makes it very difficult if not impossible to navigate towards promotion.
Leadership styles revealed in this study resonate with studies of gender and leadership in the corporate world, where women are seen as transformational leaders and less effective, while their male counterparts are seen as transactional leaders, whose actions are direct and outcome producing and more effective (Aguinis and Adams, 1998). The data herein relating to leadership also speaks to the different styles of leadership amongst men and women chefs; women exhibit characteristics of transformational leadership (collaboration, caring about the needs of others while managing) and men typically exhibit transactional management styles (direct, authoritative). Women chefs who were subject to physical pelting with fruit, being screamed at and being belittled in front of coworkers vowed to never manage like that when they became sous chefs or executive chefs. It might be asserted that through their on-the-job training in restaurants they engaged in what Mezirow calls “transformational learning,” when learners are able to think in a new way, challenge old ways and practice a new way of thinking (Mezirow, 1997, 2000). All four chefs kept their promise to be fair, humane and respectful of their employees. According to the life experiences of the four chefs, their transformational style of leadership is preferred, and as a result, they have enjoyed positive outcomes with their employees, thus challenging the “good old boys” style of management. This study supports the literature that women have a preference for a transformational leadership style (Aguinis and Adams, 1998), but it yields data that disagrees that transformational style is “less effective.”

When deciding one’s career path, women chefs, like corporate women, need to make decisions regarding career and family. All four chefs were faced with decisions on how to go about balancing work and family life. The situation of Chef Stella regarding work/life balance is interesting in that both she and her husband are chefs, graduates of the same culinary school, yet her primary responsibility was to be a stay-at-home mom, and if she wanted to, to work on the
side, catering out of their house. As the children got older, she worked both inside the house and outside until they reached their teens, when she bought a café. Now the family helps Chef Stella run the place. Her husband worked six days a week outside of the home and participated in family life when he could, going on family outings. For all practical purposes, according to Chef Stella, family had taken precedence over work in her life until her children were older. In addition, when doing both, she has worked a second shift (Hochschild, 2003) for much of her adult life, while her husband didn’t have to choose between family and work.

Mentoring and networking did come up in two of the interviews, those of Chef Jenn and Chef Chris. Chefs Jenn’s mentor was a woman chef instructor who she networked with to become a chef instructor at a corporately owned business that taught clients to become better home cooks. Chef Chris had a male mentor, an older restaurant owner who recognized her talent and encouraged her to go to culinary school. This style of cross-gender mentorship, an older man who mentors a younger women chef early in her career, is consistent with results of a study done by Burke and McKeen (1996) on mentorship relationships. Even though Burke and McKeen are speaking to managers in the corporate world, mentoring in the culinary world is also important. Cross-gender and cross-age mentorship is significant because it gives the women chefs not only the benefits of the mentor’s experience but also encourages them to pursue a career in a male-dominated field.

Finally, despite the lack of previous research on gender and the back of the house, there is a rich body of scholarship on gender and work, more broadly, including the glass ceiling (Cotter, Hermanson, Ovadia and Vanneman, 2001; Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995; Hymowitz and Schellardt, 1986; Redwood, 1995; Taylor and Waggoner, 2008). The data suggests that the four women experienced the glass ceiling (Hymowitz and Schellardt, 1986). Chris Jenn had been
executive chef of a company for home cooks (domestic, at-home cooks). The company had an all-woman staff, and when they hired a man chef, the company split the job in between Chef Jenn and the new chef. Instead of having one executive chef, they divided the job into chef of operations and chef of culinary management. The chef of operations (Chef Jenn) was responsible for writing handbooks and procedures and training people at their new facility. The chef of culinary management (the new hire) oversaw food quality, received shipments, wrote recipes and did anything else an executive chef would. Even though both jobs were technically lateral, she found out later that the male chef was making $10,000 more than her, and Chef Jenn felt that she was given all the work the man chef didn’t want to do. Probably the most glaring example, after taking on extra duties while holding the position of sous chef in a corporately owned restaurant, Chef Chris was promoted to interim executive chef for a short three months and then required to train her replacement, who happened to be male. She was told it was “his time” for promotion. Chef Stella also went as far as sous chef, then was transferred to assistant front manager, but later was not hired as front manger. Following the understood rules of promotion, proving one’s self did not seem to be enough for these chefs to secure the top job of executive chef. Chefs Stella and Dee navigated the glass ceiling by owning their own food establishments.

In conclusion, this research with the four women chefs contributes needed detail and nuance to our understanding of how the culinary world is gendered, informed by a patriarchal discourse. It relies on gender stereotyping and double standards and dynamics related to a glass ceiling and to pushing women out of the industry. A space has been created (socially constructed) within which the traditionally female tasks of cooking have been redefined as skilled and valued, as with many lines of work (e.g., teaching, janitor positions). When the job is redefined and elevated in social status, it becomes predominantly male. Masculinity, in this
study, takes the focus of competition (misogynist) maintaining an environment that is not
genre-friendly and can serve to discourage or deter women from participating. Part of that
dynamic is to maintain a work space that is not family friendly, thereby requiring women to
work a “second shift” (Hochschild, 2003) and choose between family and work.

Returning to the Research Questions

*How does gender present itself in the culinary world?*

Gender in the culinary world is presented similarly as it is in all other parts of the work
world. The notions of a binary system (feminine/masculine) are embedded in the professional
culinary world. The binary system is evident in the professional culinary world in the assumption
related to the term *chef*. Use of the term *chef* denotes a chef who is assumed to be male unless
otherwise stated. Male chefs are referred to as simply chefs, whereas it is common to refer to
women chefs as “female chefs.” Even when asking to speak to a chef on the phone, the pronoun
“he” is used, assuming the chef is a man. The assumption that a chef is a man unless otherwise
stated points to a gendering of the professional culinary world.

The four women chefs said they experienced equality in the culinary classroom; however,
there was no explicit acknowledgement or discussion in school about the gendered nature of the
culinary world. It is worth noting that gendered norms adhered to outside of the classroom (in
family, communities, education) contributed to some behaviors of men and women students in
class. Women shying away from cooking on the line and going directly to pastry, soup and salad
production is something that the women themselves did that is reflective of their perceived place
in the gendered structure of society. Comments made by men students about women in the
kitchen were attitudes that were part of the histories they brought into the culinary classroom,
thus supporting the gendered hierarchy in the kitchen. For the most part, the four women chefs
agreed that the chef instructors kept everyone in line and treated everyone in an equal, professional way. This, however, was not the case once the students graduated and moved into the workplace. Culinary education did not prepare the students for the gendered dimensions of the professional culinary kitchen.

The culture of the professional culinary kitchen is a culture that supports to a great degree men and their privileged social position. The majority of people working in restaurants are men who have not followed traditional routes of educational achievement; they are often the non-traditional “fringe” as Chef Scott Bryan puts it (cited in Bourdain, 2000, p. 62). According to the data, the kitchen environment is a place where men compete (women are left out of competition), men support each other (it’s not what you know but who you know) and the rules of engagement are typically no “girly” emotion, but instead hard, long hours of strenuous work. Sexual aggression on the part of men chefs is pervasive. This may be men trying to prove their masculinity, since “cooking” societally is a woman’s job. Recently, there has been an effort made, at least by corporate restaurant chains, to address the issue of sexual harassment. Men chefs who engage in sexual harassment are often fired and/or women chefs are moved from the “hostile” work (bad boy behavior) environment to another restaurant because men misbehave.

In both culinary school and the workplace, according to the four women chefs, there is data supporting a division of labor between baking/pastry and culinary arts. Women students are believed to be more precise in measurement and particular with their finished products, two skills that are critical to baking and pastry. The women worked together because they care about their products and have common standards of excellence. This meant leaving the men students out of the group because they didn’t care about what kind of job they did; they were messy and not detail-oriented. Once in the industry, women chefs were routinely relegated to the
pastry/baking or *garde manger* stations because these stations were considered easier and less skillful than the culinary line, basically more lady-like.

Authority, decision-making and management styles of men and women in the professional culinary kitchen tend to be different. Many times when a woman chef reaches a place of authority as a decision maker in the kitchen, some men employees don’t respect that authority and, instead, do what they think should be done. According to the four women chefs interviewed, the typical male way of management—top down, yelling, screaming, humiliating and no respect for family/work balance—is the way of the restaurant world. It should be noted that in this day and age, Chef Dee finds it difficult to hire a woman chef. She says many women say they want to work in a non-stressful environment, but yet they choose to work in very competitive, stressful situations that when navigated give them another notch on their culinary belts.

Finally, the work/life balance is still difficult to maintain in the professional culinary world. The data showed several ways of navigating the family/life balance. For two women chefs, they didn’t have children but both have partners, and they both kept focused on their careers. One chef worked in the industry, then had a family and slowly got back into the industry, finally buying a café. As we saw in the case of Chef Stella, though her husband was also a chef, she is the one who they agreed would stay home to raise their children. Logically we could conclude that they both had the same credentials, but her career and family took a different path than his did.
How does chef education challenge or contribute to the normative gendered patterns in the culinary world, especially to the back of the house?

Chef education contributes to gendered patterns in the professional culinary kitchen but not in the way we may think. In culinary school, Chef Jenn experienced women students as being precise and upholding high professional standards in their work. They did not like the sloppy work of the men students, so they excluded them from their group. The women students took control of the situation and fashioned their groups according to skill and work ethic, which happened to be along gender lines. It may look like they contributed to their pigeonholing; however, upon closer scrutiny, that may be comparing two different norm references. The women students were concerned about quality; however, the men students didn’t like baking and didn’t even want to take the required course. Women valued quality, men valued avoidance of something they weren’t interested in. Once in the industry, women were put at pastry/baking and garde manger stations not because their work was precise but because the men chefs thought these were easier stations for women to work in. This division of labor was decided by the men chefs and was not always a result of the women chefs’ choices.

The four women chefs experienced equal treatment between women and men students in culinary school. Though this might be true, chef instructors did not address gender issues, and culinary school did not actively challenge the status quo. The culinary schools were passively instead of actively engaging in discussion about gender dynamics of the professional culinary kitchen. This passivity contributes to the maintenance and reproduction of gendered discourse in the professional culinary workplace. When the women chefs entered the industry, they were faced with a workplace that is full of binaries that they had to learn to navigate on their own.
**How do the experiences of women chefs perpetuate or contest gender binaries?**

It is difficult to categorize experiences into concepts of perpetuation or contestation (a binary) mainly because the categories are influenced by multiple realities of individuals. Adding to the difficulty is that the rules of engagement change in favor of patriarchy, thus creating a double standard. It has been stated several times that women are emotional, and there is no place for emotionality, according to men, in the professional culinary kitchen, unless the emotions are displayed by men. Binaries make it impossible for women to win no matter how they behave.

Women chefs held to the belief that if they worked hard, extra hard, they would be rewarded with promotion. In several experiences of the chefs, this did not happen. By leaving the industry as a result of being overlooked for jobs and/or promotions, several of the chefs opted to become culinary chef instructors in post-secondary culinary programs. This move might be viewed as helping to perpetuate the gendered norms in the restaurant industry. Though change of careers was an option and provided chefs with an opportunity to model and teach culinary skills and informed feminist attitudes, it also may perpetuate the gender ideation of teaching as being nurturing, a gendered trait.

**Implications for Future Research**

As with most research, though it is engaging, purposeful and helps us generate new knowledge, it also can raise new and exciting questions. I suggest five possible avenues to pursue.

1. When hearing what the four women had to say in response to my questions, I often found myself wondering if they realized where they stood in the gender binary. How aware they are of the gendered discourse of the professional culinary world? Further research is needed to explore each chef’s perception of where they are and want to be within the
professional culinary world. Feminism seeks to give voice to the experience of women, as gender binaries tend to subjugate women to men.

2. How do men chefs see the gendered nature of culinary? How do they feel about the gender binaries? Do masculine/feminine binaries limit their humanization process? As men historically think they know what women want (but often don’t, data), is the story the same for men? How do they fit into the professional culinary world? We need to hear how they perceive their own experiences in the professional culinary kitchen. Duplicating this study using men executive chefs may be useful to this end.

3. A full examination of the gendered nature of the culinary world would require observations of the day-to-day life in a restaurant. An ethnographic study would reveal what happens (observations) and how chefs make sense of it (interviews).

4. A study of chefs in all job categories (line cook, etc.) would enable us to see how gendered social practices change throughout the structure of culinary. This would enable an analysis of race/ethnicity. It is evident in many restaurants that many of the lower-level jobs, but few if any of the higher level jobs, are held by Latinos, African-Americans and other minorities. Where is their glass ceiling? How do gender and ethnicity/race intersect in the structures in culinary?

5. School “is” more equitable but doesn’t actively engage in discussions of the gendered culinary world, so students don’t consciously construct a commitment to gender equity. Their passive experiences in school don’t reproduce that dynamic in the workplace. Following students, both men and women from school settings, into the workplace to see
what happens may give insight into how culinary school can bring awareness of the
gendering of the workplace and how to deal with it.

In conclusion, the data suggests more research in the culinary world that engages gender
directly is needed to bring awareness to the industry, education institutions and the public.

**Implications for Practice**

After analyzing the data and reflecting on the findings, there are two implications for
practice that may be used to bring awareness to students and industry professionals alike and
possibly affect positive change for people pursuing careers in the professional culinary world.

1. More feminist-minded instructors who can engage issues of gender equity in school
   settings and in apprenticeships. This may also include a sociology class that talks about
gender and food cultures, studying both men and women chefs alike. Also, instructors
   actively engaged in supervising apprenticeships can help students address the gendered
dynamics in the professional culinary kitchen.

2. Culinary schools can work with women chef professional organizations to gain strength
   in numbers to pressure the restaurant industry to be more gender conscious and equitable.

**Conclusion**

This study has contributed to the body of knowledge in that it shows that the professional
culinary world is a gendered place. Through the experiences of four women chefs, often it is the
double standard helps to keep women from climbing to the top of the career ladder. Despite these
obstacles, Chefs Jenn, Chris, Stella and Dee have navigated tough terrain to realize their dreams
of becoming executive chefs. They have all found voice in their experiences and have shared
their journeys with enthusiasm and passion. Through their stories, they have shared their
experiences to deepen the understanding of women in the professional culinary world. Hopefully this study will bring awareness to the gendered dimensions of the professional culinary world and help dismantle binaries that hold women chefs back. As a result of this and future research, it is my hope that Dinah will find her way back into the kitchen, this time into the professional culinary kitchen.
Appendix A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW ONE

1. Tell me about yourself starting from childhood up until you became a chef:
   a. School
   b. Church
   c. Family: Immediate and extended
   d. Family: Philosophy and values

2. Describe your food history
   a. Describe the role of food in your childhood home.
      i. Describe meal times, customs around the table, who did the cooking, how chores around cooking were divided up, who set the daily menu?
   b. What part of food preparation and consumption did you play in the family? Siblings?

3. How did life experiences lead you to your present career?
   a. How did you organize your life to include a career in culinary?
   b. What expectations did you have concerning a life as a chef?
   c. Why did you choose the “training/educational” path that you did to realize your goal of becoming a chef?

INTERVIEW TWO

1. How and where did you learn to cook in preparation for employment in the professional culinary kitchen?
   a. Describe the environment and culture where you learned to cook.
   b. What did you need to learn to enter the field?
   c. How did you learn what you needed to know to enter the field?
   d. Describe how you and those who gave you the skills you needed to reach your culinary goals related to each other.

2. Describe your first job in light of what your level of preparedness was. What part did your educational trajectory contribute or take away from the realities you faced in the professional kitchen?

3. Talk a little bit about your experiences of cooking at home and cooking in the professional culinary kitchen.
a. Who set expectations of performance, behavior?
b. How did you know what was expected, skills, behavior?
c. Similarities? Differences?

4. Describe your job history from your first job in culinary to your position as executive chef (sous chef, line cook).
   a. How did you navigate from an entry level position up the ladder?
      i. Pitfalls, how did you become aware and deal with pitfalls.
      ii. Successes, how did your experiences lead to successes?
   b. Who set the “tone” of the kitchen? What were the spoken and unspoken expectations of behavior? How did you know what was expected of you?
   c. How where the expectations of behavior relayed between workers, including supervisors, in the back of the house hierarchy?
   d. How did following an established set of behaviors benefit you in terms of power and access to knowledge? How did they not benefit you?
   e. What happened if you didn’t “follow” a particular expectation, skills, cultural behavior?
   f. How did the rules of engagement add/detract from your particular knowledge of the work environment?

5. How did your engagement in the workplace structure your career trajectory?

INTERVIEW THREE

Discussion of the first two interviews
Review and highlights for clarification

1. Given how you perceived being a chef, now that you have reached the level of executive chef, what does the professional culinary world mean to you now, specifically the title, executive chef?
2. How does this play out in how you navigated the workplace now as opposed to when you first started your career?
3. What does this understanding mean for your future?
4. How do you see “gender” in the culinary world?
Appendix B: IRB Approval

DePaul University

Office of Research Protections
Institutional Review Board
1 East Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60604-2201
312-362-7593
Fax: 312-362-7574

Research Involving Human Subjects

NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

To: Stephanie Konkol, Graduate Student, College of Education
    Karen Monkman, Ph.D., Faculty Sponsor, College of Education

Date: February 14, 2012

Re: Research Protocol #SK122011EDU
    “Someone’s in the Kitchen Where’s Dinah? Gendered Dimensions of the Professional Culinary World”

Please review the following important information about the review of your proposed research activity.

Review Details
☑ Original Review
☐ Amendment
☐ Unanticipated Problem Report

☑ Exempt Review, under 45 CFR 46.101

Your research project meets the criteria for an exemption under the following category:

Category of Review: 2

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
(ii) any disclosure of the subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Approval Details
☑ Approved ☐ Approved (Previous contingencies have been resolved.)

Approval Date: February 14, 2012

Number of approved participants: 12
Funding Agency: Personal funds

Reminders
* Under DePaul’s current institutional policy governing human research, research projects that meet the criteria for an exemption determination receive administrative review. Once projects are determined to be exempt, the researcher is free to begin the work and is not required to submit an annual update (continuing review). As your project has been determined to be exempt, your primary obligation moving forward is to resubmit your research materials for review and classification/approval, before they are implemented in the research, if you propose substantive changes to the project. Substantive changes would include changes in the design or focus of the research project, revisions to the consent/information sheet for participants, addition of new measures or
instruments, and any change to the research that might alter the exemption status (either add additional exemption categories or make the research no longer eligible for an exemption determination).

* Once the project is complete, you should submit a closure report to the IRB.

The Office of Research Protections would like to thank you for your efforts and cooperation and wishes you the best of luck on your research. If you have any questions, please contact me by telephone at (312) 362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu.

For the Board,

Susan Loess-Perez, MS, CIP, CCRC
Director, Office of Research Protections
Academic Affairs, DePaul University
1 East Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604

Office Location: 14 E. Jackson Blvd., Suite 1030
Appendix C: Methodological Reflections

When considering the topic and subjects of my research, I struggled at first with the importance of my endeavor to look at the gendered dimensions of the professional culinary kitchen. In my mind, the gender dimensions of both the domestic and professional realms were glaringly obvious, but I wasn’t sure I had asked a question that was strong enough to elicit information that was different from what I already “knew.” As I look back at the research process, I realize that the study provided both the women chefs and me a platform to explore the gendered dynamics of the professional culinary kitchen. The data collected from the interviews using a life history approach (Personal Narratives Group, 1989) with four women executive chefs gave evidence to how complex gender dimensions of the professional culinary kitchen are. Following are several observations of this approach.

A life history approach was an appropriate methodology to use in my study. It allowed four women chef participants to tell stories of their experiences in the professional culinary world. They had a platform from which to speak how they made meaning of their careers in the professional culinary kitchen. This was their opportunity to bring their histories into focus, think about their journeys and relay stories that perhaps they did not have the chance to express in the same way.

Before each interview I was excited to hear the stories of the chefs, but honestly, in the back of my mind I already anticipated what I thought they would say. Nevertheless, I was careful to lead with the questions on my interview guide and follow up with probing questions for detail and clarification. In retrospect I did a good job in allowing the chefs to talk, and I did not lead them into saying what I thought they would say or that I wanted them to say…. I simply let them
talk. There were several things that I noticed about how the four chefs talked about their experiences during the interviews.

First, each chef kept the conversation going, and I really used minimal probing questions. Though some of the content of the story telling matched my expectations, what surprised me the most was that the chefs seemed excited to tell their side of life in the culinary profession. Their enthusiasm was consistent with someone who had many feelings on the subject but seldom if ever had the opportunity to voice opinions and be heard—like no one else had ever asked them these particular questions. In addition, when telling stories that were particularly filled with gender specificity they finished with the question, do you know what I mean? This was true especially when they talked about the double standards, when rules shifted from “what you know to who you know.” Though I was the researcher, they also saw me as an industry professional who probably shared some of the same experiences being a woman.

Secondly, it was difficult to ascertain each chef’s level of gender awareness. Some of the answers to the questions were not what I had anticipated they would be. Everyone had their particular way of telling stories about their experiences reflective of their histories, including family, community, education and work. It is not always clear what their level of awareness is since it often changes to fit the circumstances they are in. When overwhelmed with gendered dimensions of the professional kitchen, all the chefs learned to pick their battles, to prioritize and decide for themselves which battles were worth fighting. The subject of gender awareness is definitely worth further study.

Finally, I noticed as they talked and I listened, several times they talked about things that they admittedly had never realized until they heard themselves respond to a question. I can’t help but think that as their awareness grew, it is possible that subsequent answers to questions
reflected this growth of awareness. This growth punctuates the situated context of our experiences and gives credit to life as being an ever-changing journey. While I cannot say for sure that their thinking and gendered relations changed as a result of their participation in this study with me, their comments about how they never realized things until they heard themselves respond suggests that there was some influence on their thinking. In subsequent informal conversations after the conclusion of the study, it is clearly evident that they are still thinking about the issues.
References


