

Graphic Design by Leticia Lima



Recipe for Success

– Gender's Role in the Career Expectations of Culinary Students

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Fig. 1 Female Representation

Charlotte Druckman fashioned her essay “Why Are There No Great Women Chefs?”, from the Winter 2010 issue of *Gastronomica*, after an important feminist essay from the 1970’s on women in the fine arts, titled “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” (Druckman; Nochlin) Like its predecessor, the question is both provocative and absurd. Druckman’s attention focuses logically on the ‘great’ in the question. She examines the influence that gender has on concepts of professional success and reveals how women chefs, seeking full and rewarding careers, face a cultural impasse

to greatness. One small descriptor posed in a clever question successfully draws attention to a profession troubled by gender bias. Druckman sees an opportunity to professionally redefine “what the standards are, to make them more inclusive.”

(Druckman 31)

Druckman finds that “female chefs do not attain the same recognition or critical acclaim as their male peers.” (Druckman 24) She finds a culturally accepted gender inequality in the representation of professional success. The media portrait of women as “cooks, not chefs; as pretty faces who do easy meals for families or casual parties” influences public opinion of female chefs. (Druckman 28) The distortion is acute, even caricaturish, for those few high performing women chefs. Barring the way to the executive chefs office in this manner influences the number of women drawn to professional kitchens, creating a self perpetuating system. Insufficient numbers make real change difficult and from this perspective, critical mass becomes a core problem.

Women are absent from the executive chef ranks despite substantial gains made by the profession in general; thanks in large part to the media. These gains have helped to evolve the professions reputation. It has progressed from being a career choice of the working class, to being a highly sexy and celebrated professional option. Academically, that shift has successfully swelled student ranks, meaning more women. Academic growth has moved from traditionally non-academic domination to include post-graduate and second career students. (Garey 126) At *George Brown Chef School*, Canada’s largest culinary educator, female enrollment for fall 2010 averaged 37% in culinary

programs. (George Brown College) Yet overall female representation in industry remains low. Canadian industry statistics from 2005 put female representation overall at 17.3%. (Canadian Restaurant and Food Services Association) No Canadian statistics exist for female executive chefs but U.S. statistics project 10%. (20-first) Something happens for women between the bright-eyed optimism of assuming this career, with all its attendant hopes and dreams for success, and what should be the culmination of a normal career span in attaining an executive chef level position.

On the whole, the professional kitchen lags behind other professions. At the corporate level, female executive representation “tops out at fifteen, sixteen per cent.” (Auletta 7) But interest in women and career progress in all professions is gaining in momentum, perhaps in response to the substantial generational shift the workforce is currently undergoing. In December 2010 the *Globe & Mail* ran a series in the business section called “Women in Power”. (McFarland) The July 11th edition of *The New Yorker* magazine featured a profile of social media wonder woman Sheryl Sandberg called “A Woman’s Place” that addresses some of the thornier issues women face in their rise into the executive ranks. (Auletta)

In the professional kitchen, Charlotte Druckman writes: “our signifiers of greatness, chef-wise, are those attributes considered inherently ‘male’...success...has historically been measured more by business acumen, celebrity, and marketability rather than by what happens at the stove.” (Druckman 26) Under these conditions, women chefs are successful when cast in the traditional role of nurturer. By nature, a role at odds with

business concerns. It's a subtle and effective barrier to 'greatness', familiar and comfortable for institutions, corporations and the media. The detrimental effect of this on female professional chefs is evident; of the 100 candidates from across the U.S., in the 2011 *Food & Wine* magazine "People's Best New Chef" only 9 were women, below the U.S. national average for female executive chefs. (Forbes) Even more disconcerting are the 2011 *James Beard Award* nominees; Druckman also points to the inconsistencies of this venerated institution. Of the 31 candidates in the "Rising Star" award only 2 were women, a paltry 6% female representation. (Glover) An award that acknowledges the achievement of a person on their way up should be drawing from a candidate pool closer in size to that graduating culinary school. The night of this star studded award ceremony; May 9, 2011, the *Beard Foundation* "Twitter" stream was celebrating, the 'illusion' of a women's night because 5 of the top awards were presented to women. (Twitter) This spin obscured the obvious lack of gender diversity among the nominees and, as a result, marks a hollow celebration. Looking through this faulty lens, the attention and accolades are evidence of influential institutions not working very hard, of women not asking for 'too' much and being grateful for 'too' little, and ultimately of an industry complicit in the oversight.

These examples serve as cautionary tales about gender bias for anyone longing for awards based on talent and not gender. Until nominating committee's are assembled that are mindful of gender representation we'll have to settle for those corporate trail blazers that are recognizing the achievement of women chefs. 2011 saw the inauguration of the *San Pellegrino* "World's Best Female Chef" award. (Forbes) And

May 2011 saw *Gourmet* blog release a list of “50 Women Game-Changers” in the culinary world, albeit many of them not from the ranks of professional chefs. (Senyei)

Evidence is mounting of the competitive advantages of executive teams that include more women, particularly out of the European corporate sector. (McKinsey & Company)

Statistics on innovation alone are compelling, particularly in light of the current institutional value placed on this hallmark of excellence. Balanced teams or teams with slightly more females (60%) optimize conditions for innovation, creating an increase in the psychological comfort level of a team, encouraging risk taking and experimentation while maintaining efficiency. (Gratton 6) The persuasiveness of mounting research compelled forward-thinking countries such as Norway to legislate the composition of governing bodies at the corporate and municipal level to effectively integrate gender balance. (Kilday) Ed Clark, CEO of Toronto-Dominion Bank, believes that companies that fail to embrace greater executive diversity will be “dead in the water”, and also champions active “intervention”. (The Globe and Mail) As an industry we need to follow the corporate lead and discover where actions can have the most immediate benefit if we want to retain women through their career lifespan in professional kitchens.

Addressing working realities for women in the professional kitchen is a good starting point. Popular culture provides us with a traditional, albeit populist view, of a professional kitchen in the film *Ratatouille*. In Gustav’s kitchen, there is one lone female chef. (Garofalo) Prior to the last quarter of the twentieth century, women have been systematically excluded from “powerful, prestigious” restaurant kitchens as chefs.

(Garey 125) Traditional kitchens have been gendered work environments and although women are increasing their numbers in contemporary brigades, their historic absence, with its attendant recovery, still results in under-representation. (Harris 27 - 28) This slow demographic shift means that the masculine culture of the traditional working environment remains intact. Just like in the film, chefs work in a “rigid and demanding” environment characterized by “long, non-traditional work hours”. (Harris 37)

The terms and conditions of work in the professional kitchen are often at odds with life outside its confines. The most aggravating inhibitor of women's professional progress lies well outside the kitchen doors, in the issue of maternity. (Garey 132) Tensions arise between the professional kitchens “anytime, anywhere performance model” and family matters. (McKinsey & Company 6) Compounding this is the economic reality of parental leave in an industry built on small and critical margins. Despite legislation, it's almost impossible for a woman to leave the line and expect to return to the same job.

Irrespective of gender, family becomes increasingly important as careers develop. For women the conflict is acute because of the correspondence between periods of high career potential and high fertility. Family may not be “pulling” women back home so much as the structure of the workplace is “pushing” them out. (Harris 38)

The push succeeds in large part because women fail to push back. One of the most compelling findings, at the corporate level resides in “the reticence of many women to advocate for themselves.” (McKinsey & Company 6) For women, career progress suffers as a result of under-developed self promotion skills. Those vital skills influence

the rate at which women progress in a traditional hierarchical work environment. And active promotion is not often at the centre of mentoring relationships among women, even at the executive level.

The current definition of professional success, some of the traditional conditions governing kitchens, and the manner in which promotion is pursued by women needs to shift if the aspirations of young women, beginning their career journeys as chefs, are to be fully realized. Charlotte Druckman and others point the way to creating a broader path to the executive levels of the professional kitchen. Even the smallest move towards equitable practices could have a positive impact on the number of women choosing to remain 'on the line'. It is through an increase in visible mass at the executive level that larger cultural changes will happen.

It's at the outset of the professional journey, at the pre-career stage and within the culinary education institution, that the search begins for discernible gender issues that impose on career development and limit women's reach in professional kitchens. This is the first initiative in a much larger project that might assist in bridging the gap between female enrollment in culinary programs and their lack of representation as executive chefs and industry leaders.

Methodology

Participants

Two hundred and six (206) culinary students at *George Brown Chef School* participated in this study, of which 113 were male and 93 were female. Most participants (63%) ranged in age from 18 to 24, while 22% were between 25 and 30, 5% were between 30 and 35, and 10% were over 35. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and the response rate was approximately 18%.

Participation was limited to students 18 years of age or older, who were enrolled full-time in a culinary-focused program. We chose to focus our study on the culinary students at *GBCS* because it is among this contingent in industry that the lack of female representation exists. As such, students who were enrolled in pastry-focused and pure hospitality (i.e. non-food related) programs were excluded from participating.

Materials

Participants were given a 60-question survey (see Appendix A), consisting of a mix of multiple choice and 5-point likert scaled questions.

At the start of the survey, participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to better understand the career motivations, ambitions and drivers of students at the culinary school. After giving consent and basic demographic information, the participants completed questions relating to motivation, ambition, work/life balance, and

gender. Each section started off with a brief operational definition of the construct being measured.

The questions in the “Gender” section of the survey measured whether students had a preference for a male or female boss and mentor, whether they think women are underrepresented in the industry, whether they believe gender discrimination exists in professional kitchens and why, and their estimation as to what percentage of employees (at the non-executive and executive levels) are female.

These questions were purposefully given at the end of the survey, so as not to create bias or bring to mind any gender stereotypes that could influence how other questions would be answered.

Procedure

The student population was made aware of the survey through e-mail contact, on screen advertisements in the student lounge, and flyers at the entrance of the school. As an incentive, all participants were entered into a raffle for a portable music/video device, and the device was awarded at the end of the survey period. The survey period lasted for two weeks, where participants were able to access the survey online during that time.

Results

This sample well represents the gender make-up of the student population. In the Fall 2010 semester, an average of 37% of students were female, while 44% of survey respondents were female. Similarly an average 62% of students were male, where 56% of survey respondents were male. (George Brown College)

After considering the two populations (males and females) as independent, variables were separated into ordinal and categorical (or nominal) groups. The majority of variables surveyed were ordinal.

Univariate analysis was performed on all variables individually to determine if distributions were normal, and histograms were also analyzed to confirm results. Due to the sample size (<1000), the Shapiro-Wilk (W Statistic) was used to test the null hypothesis that a variable was normally distributed. In all cases, the null hypothesis was rejected and the distributions were determined to not be normally distributed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was also observed and yielded similar results.

In light of this, the Wilcoxon Rank-Sum (also known as the Mann-Whitney U) test was used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the two populations.

This test revealed statistically significant differences in 20 variables from our survey. The results are summarized below.

Motivation and Ambition

Females place less importance on becoming a celebrity chef than males (Mann-Whitney $U=1.9971$, HL Estimator = 0.5, $n_1= 87$, $n_2= 106$, $P<0.05$ two tailed), where 25% of females compared to 33% of males said that it was important (Very or Somewhat Important). Additionally, 21% of females were neutral as compared to 33% of males, and 54% of females deemed celebrity as unimportant (Somewhat Unimportant or Not At All Important) versus 34% of males.

When asked how long they expect it will take them to get to a management position (sous chef or above), females felt it would take longer (median=4.5 years) than men (median=4 years). (Mann-Whitney $U=1.701$, HL Estimator = 0.5, $n_1= 84$, $n_2= 106$, $P<0.05$ two tailed).

The Double Burden

Males are more likely to envision themselves working in professional kitchens for their entire careers than females (Mann-Whitney $U=2.7632$, HL Estimator = 0.5, $n_1= 87$, $n_2= 106$, $P<0.05$ two tailed), where 59% of males said it was likely (Very or Somewhat Likely) they would work in professional kitchens for their entire careers, versus 42% of females.

Further to this, females are much more likely to take time off for parental leave than males (Mann-Whitney $U=-3.6362$, HL Estimator = -0.5, $n_1= 85$, $n_2= 106$, $P<0.05$ two

tailed). Of those surveyed, 87% of females said that it was likely (Very or Somewhat) that they would take time off for parental leave at some point during their careers, as compared to 51% of males.

More females (66%) feel that time off for child rearing would be likely (Very or Somewhat) to affect their career progression than males (54%). (Mann-Whitney $U=1.8836$, HL Estimator = -0.5, $n_1= 85$, $n_2= 106$, $P<0.05$ two tailed).

Fewer males than females think it is likely they will forgo having children because of their career (Mann-Whitney $U=1.9434$, HL Estimator = 0.5, $n_1= 85$, $n_2= 106$, $P<0.05$ two tailed), where 50% of males say that it is unlikely (Very or Somewhat) that they will forgo having children, versus 65% of females.

Mentorship and Leadership

It was found that males and female differed significantly in the importance of parental influence on their career choices (Mann-Whitney $U=1.9776$, HL Estimator = 0.5, n_1 (females)=88, n_2 (males) =107, $P<0.05$ two tailed), where 61% of males said that parental guidance was important (Very or Somewhat Important) versus 48% of females.

It is less important for males to have a mentor of the same gender than for females (Mann-Whitney $U=-1.5023$, $n_1= 84$, $n_2= 105$, $P<0.10$ two tailed), where 20% of males reported it was important (Very or Somewhat), compared to 26% of females. It should be noted, however, that half of the females and 60% of the males indicated that a

mentor of the same gender was unimportant (Somewhat Unimportant or Not At All Important).

The Kitchen Working Environment

Males and females differed in the amount of importance they placed on choosing the profession because “It is an exciting atmosphere” (Mann-Whitney $U=1.4125$, $n_1= 82$, $n_2= 105$, $P<0.10$ two tailed), where slightly more males (89%) said that this was important (Very or Somewhat Important) as compared to 85% of females.

Males are also more likely to continue to work in a “difficult work environment” if it would benefit their careers (Mann-Whitney $U=2.6254$, $n_1= 87$, $n_2= 106$, $P<0.05$ two tailed), where 82% of females were likely (Very or Somewhat Likely) to stay, as compared to 89% of males.

When asked about their ideal workweek, in terms of hours, males prefer slightly more hours than females (Mann-Whitney $U=-1.7233$, HL Estimator = -0.5, $n_1= 83$, $n_2= 101$, $P<0.05$ two tailed). The median hours reported by females was 48.6 hours, while for males it was 51.3 hours.

Similarly, males anticipate they will work more hours their first year on the job (median 50.7 hours) than females (median 46.9 hours) (Mann-Whitney $U=-1.7441$, HL Estimator = -0.5, $n_1= 82$, $n_2= 102$, $P<0.05$ two tailed)

Males are somewhat more comfortable (Very or Somewhat) with long hours on their feet (81%) than females (69%), (Mann-Whitney $U=2.0395$, HL Estimator = 0.5, $n_1= 83$, $n_2= 106$, $P<0.05$ two tailed). They are also more comfortable (Very or Somewhat) with a physically demanding work environment (82%) versus 75% of females (Mann-Whitney $U=2.1954$, HL Estimator = 0.5, $n_1= 83$, $n_2= 106$, $P<0.05$ two tailed).

Gender Perceptions

Females more strongly disagree with the statement that both males and females are promoted at the same rate in professional kitchens (Mann-Whitney $U=2.5595$, $n_1= 84$, $n_2= 105$, $P<0.05$ two tailed). Nearly half (45%) of females disagree that both sexes are promoted at the same rate, while 30% of males disagree.

More females than males agreed when asked if they thought there was gender discrimination in professional kitchens (Mann-Whitney $U=-1.6441$, HL Estimator = -0.5, HL Estimator = 0.5, $n_1= 84$, $n_2= 105$, $P=0.05$ two tailed). Of female respondents, 69% agreed (Strongly or Somewhat), while 58% of males agreed.

Again, more females than males agreed that women are underrepresented in professional kitchens (Mann-Whitney $U= -2.4841$, HL Estimator = -0.5, $n_1= 84$, $n_2= 105$, $P<0.05$ two tailed), with 75% of females agreeing (Strongly or Somewhat) versus 53% of males.

Far more females than males also agree that women are underrepresented because of family demands (Mann-Whitney $U = -3.3088$, HL Estimator = -0.5 , $n_1 = 84$, $n_2 = 105$, $P < 0.05$ two tailed), where 64% of females agreed (Strongly or Somewhat) versus 34% of males. 63% of males are neutral or disagree compared to 36% of females.

More females agree that they are underrepresented because there is less opportunity for advancement (Mann-Whitney $U = -1.9176$, HL Estimator = -0.5 , $n_1 = 84$, $n_2 = 105$, $P < 0.05$ two tailed).

Of those surveyed 48% of females agree, versus 34% of males, while 62% of females and 66% of males are neutral or disagree. Lastly, more females (61%) agree that women are underrepresented because of sexism, versus 45% of males (Mann-Whitney $U = -1.633$, HL Estimator = -0.5 , $n_1 = 84$, $n_2 = 105$, $P = 0.05$ two tailed).

Discussion

In considering the results of the survey as a whole, we discovered that male and female students share similar levels of motivation and ambition and are both equally motivated by monetary and non-monetary factors at their jobs. They also share similar expectations for the work place and their day-to-day activities. However, females had higher expectations and desires for work/life balance while male students seem to be generally less aware of gender biases or potential discrimination in the industry.

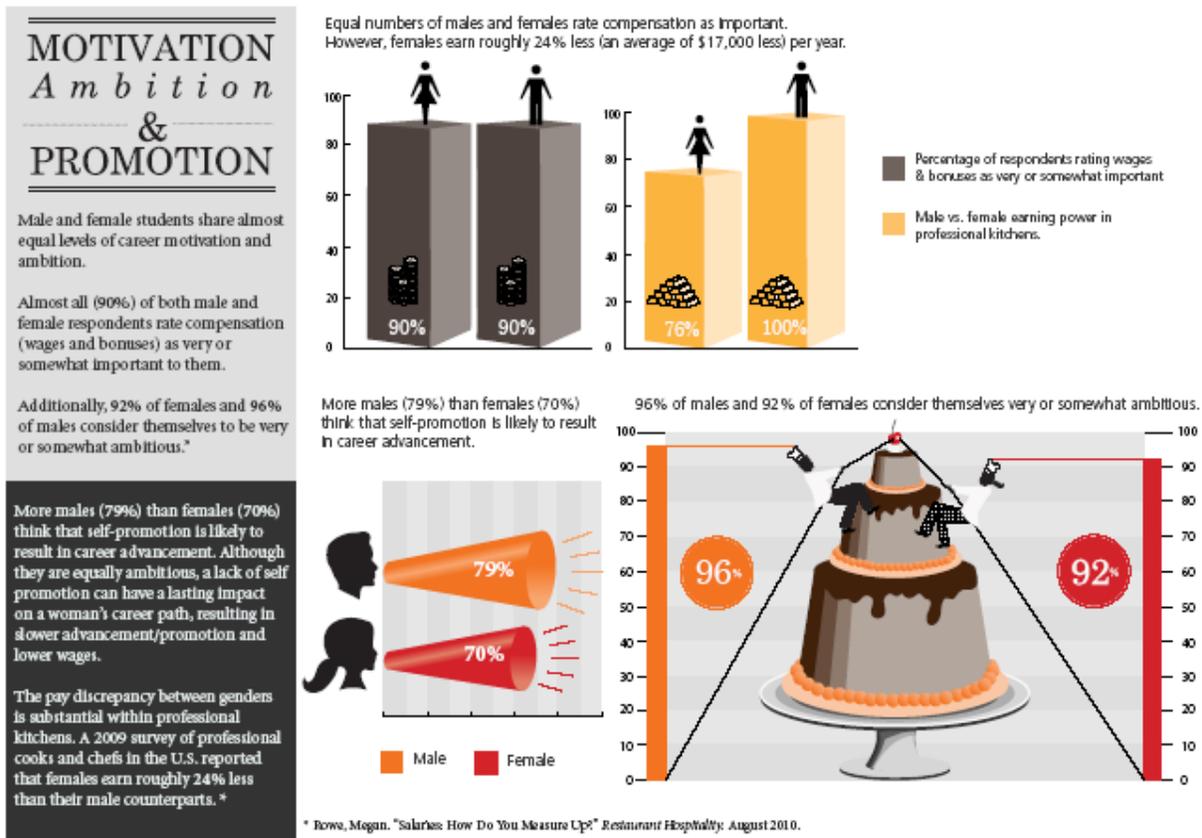


Fig. 2 Motivation, Ambition & Promotion

Motivation, Ambition & Promotion

Prior to entering full-time work in the industry, male and female students share similar levels of career motivation and ambition.

Almost equal numbers from both groups feel that monetary factors such as compensation or health and welfare benefits are important. Nearly all respondents (90% of both males and females), felt that compensation was either Very or Somewhat Important, while 87% of females and 88% of males indicated that health and welfare benefits were either Very or Somewhat Important.

Non-monetary motivators such as staging, dining at other restaurants or attending industry events were also equally important to male and female respondents.

When considering ambition, 53% of both males and females categorize themselves as “Very Ambitious”. Slightly more males (33%) than females (25%) indicated that “becoming a celebrity chef” was Very or Somewhat Important, but both felt that “public and peer recognition” is Very or Somewhat Important (83% of females and 84% of males).

Studies in the corporate sector have yielded similar results. As reported by *The Globe & Mail*, a “Catalyst” study showed that equal proportions of male and female business students in the first years of their careers aspired to become CEOs. Additionally, female students from this study entered the work force in lower positions and with lower pay than the male students. Over the span of their careers, they never caught up to their male counterparts. (McNish)

This disparity exists within professional kitchens. A 2009 survey of professional cooks and chefs in the United States reported that females earn roughly 24% less than their male counterparts (an average of \$17,000 less per year). (Rowe)

Interestingly, 57% of men entering the workforce negotiate their salaries, but only 7% of women do likewise. (Auletta)

The “Catalyst” study also found that women lowered their aspirations as their careers progressed. Like the corporate sector, a visible lack of female leadership and success in the highest ranks of professional kitchens may be creating a similar mindset in female cooks causing them to lower their own aspirations, and it is an area that warrants further research. However, from our survey we do know that before entering industry almost equal numbers of males and females ranked “owning or running their own food business” as Very or Somewhat Important (84% of females and 83% of males).

Another related finding from our survey is in the area of self-promotion. Almost 10% fewer females think that “self promotion is likely to result in career advancement”, where 70% of females and 79% of males think it is Very or Somewhat Likely.

Similarly, a recent study done amongst MBA students showed that 70% of female respondents rated their performance as equivalent to that of their co-workers, while 70% of men rate themselves higher than their co-workers. (McKinsey & Company 8)

This differing mindset with regards to self-promotion and valuing ones own work could point to another important factor delaying or prohibiting women from catching up to males.

On the flipside, women are often penalized for exhibiting more aggressive and traditionally male tendencies like self-promotion. In their recent book *Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership*, authors Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carli report that women are caught in a double bind - while self-promotion can convey confidence and

competence, it is not a traditionally female quality and is socially off-putting to colleagues and superiors. (Eagly) At the same time women continue to face lingering biases about not being as suited to power as men – that they aren't tough enough or bold enough, or ambitious enough. (McNish)

When it comes time for performance evaluations, studies have shown that when women and men work together, the women in the group are given disproportionately less credit for their shared successes. “This occurs because stereotype-based negative expectations about women’s performance in traditionally male domains are tenacious – there is a powerful tendency to support and maintain them. This has obvious implications on an individual female’s career motivation and progression.” (Heilman)

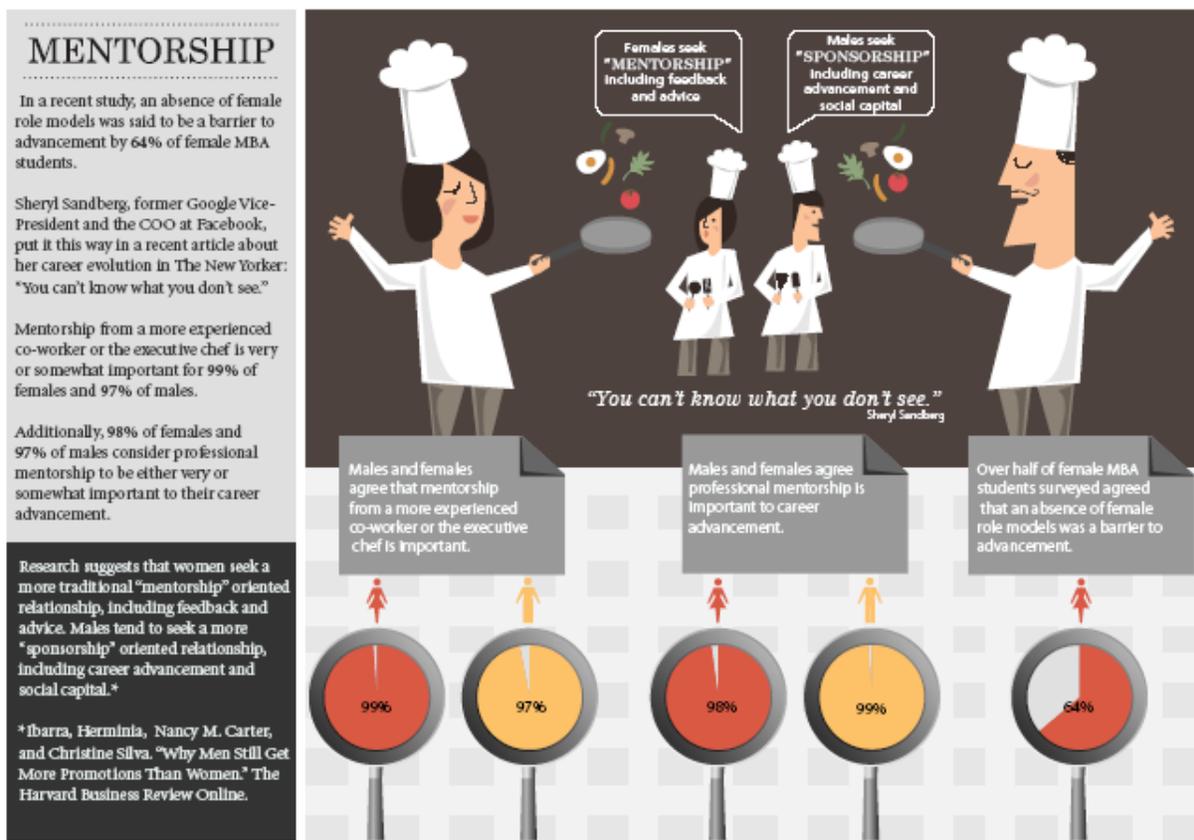


Fig. 3 Mentorship

Mentorship

One of the most interesting areas to emerge from our literature review was that of mentorship. In the *Catalyst* study of female MBA graduates, the absence of female role models was said to be a barrier to advancement by 61% of respondents. (McKinsey & Company 8)

When discussing motivation and ambition, we proposed earlier that a lack of female representation may cause females to lower their own ambitions. Here again, we see a negative relationship between a lack of female representation and career progression.

Sheryl Sandberg, former Google Vice-President and the Chief Operating Officer at *Facebook*, put it this way in a recent article in *The New Yorker* about her career evolution: “You can’t know what you don’t see.” (Auletta)

And while enrollment of males and females in culinary programs at *GBCS* is approaching parity, the fact that 29% of males said that parental guidance was important in choosing to become a professional chef, versus 22% of females, may also suggest that a lack of visible female leaders does not leave the profession top of mind for parents with daughters.

Historically, mentorship and its various forms have been deeply woven into the rich fabric of culinary tradition. Even today, a study done within the industry shows that “the single most important factor that advanced the subjects’ careers was working with a mentor, a classically trained American male chef, preferably found early in their career development.” (Garey 129)

Our study confirms these findings, where virtually all females and males agreed that “mentorship from a more experienced co-worker or the executive chef” is Important (Very or Somewhat): 99% of females and 97% of males. They also think that professional mentorship is either Very or Somewhat Important to career advancement (98% of females and 97% of males).

Interestingly, more female (26%) than male (20%) students surveyed felt that having a mentor of the same gender was important (Very or Somewhat). These results may support the findings of another study showing that males and females use mentorship in very different ways.

In a recent *Harvard Business Review* article, the authors discuss research suggesting that women seek a more traditional “mentorship” oriented relationship, including feedback and advice. Males tend to seek a more “sponsorship” oriented relationship, including career advancement and social capital. The article suggests that women are “over-mentored and under-sponsored” compared to men, putting them at a disadvantage when it comes to promotions. (Ibarra)

In the context of professional kitchens, mentorship has traditionally taken on an informal model. Knowledge and skills are passed down to cooks from their chefs and more experienced co-workers. Chefs have been known to vouch for their former cooks, or even use their professional connections, in helping them find new and better positions. But as the current representation of women in industry (17%) will show, this informal system has not been as beneficial to females.

In fact, in another study done by *Catalyst* only 33% of women surveyed in the corporate sector reported that “it was easy” to find and connect to a mentor. (McKinsey & Company 8)

Could formal mentorship programs like those found in the corporate sphere work in professional kitchens and what would they look like? Is there a great mentorship program in another trade that we could use as a model? These are all areas worthy of further investigation.

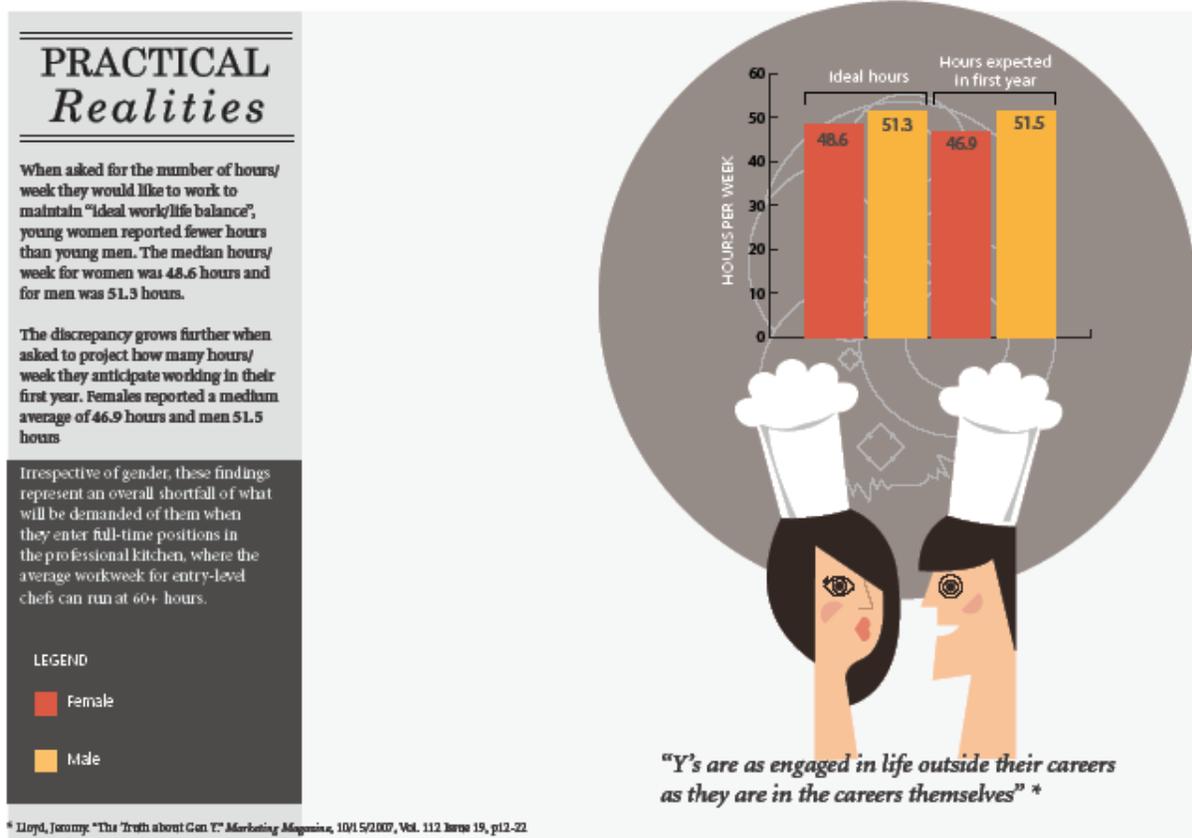


Fig. 4 Practical Realities

Practical Realities of the Workplace

When asked to project the number of hours/week they would like to work to maintain “ideal work/life balance”, young women reported fewer hours than young men. The median average hours/week for women was 48.6 and for men it was 51.3. The gap widens even further when asked to project how many hours/week they anticipate working in their first year. Females reported a median average of 46.9 hours and men 51.5 hours.

Irrespective of gender, these findings represent an overall shortfall of what will be demanded of them when they enter full-time positions, suggesting a naiveté about work demands in the professional kitchen. This is most pronounced in findings related to first year of work, where averages for young, entry-level chefs can run at 60 or more hours per week.

At this pre-career stage, optimism about work commitment corresponds with generational findings that suggest “Y’s are as engaged in life outside their careers as they are in the careers themselves.” (Lloyd) Further to these findings, respondents overwhelmingly reported (females at 94% and males at 87%) non-work life as Very or Somewhat Important.

The gender differences in these responses suggest that either young females place greater value on work-life balance or that there are more external demands on them. It could also be that young women are already projecting to accommodate the biological demands that may lie ahead.

Despite this emphasis on ‘life’ time, both genders agree (73% inclusive) that it is Very to Somewhat Likely that working in a professional kitchen will affect relationships with family and friends. Sara Jenkins, chef owner of *Porchetta* and *Porsena* restaurants in New York City, gives voice to this in a recent piece for *The Atlantic*. She writes, “I’ve looked around the restaurant and felt a loneliness and a longing for the ordinariness of other people’s lives...I wonder what it feels like to have time to leave work and take an

evening class or go to a play or a concert...I want to experience a normal social life.”

(Jenkins)

Given her career span, business demands and age, fatigue with professional impositions on personal time is not unusual. That a female executive chef expresses dissatisfaction with work-life issues lends support to the findings that women are less tolerant of imbalance. But it is the inter-generational alliance against the ideologies that have historically defined the professional kitchen that is remarkable here. It is even more pronounced in light of the fact that young people hold these values at a time in life when external demands are traditionally low.

One of these underpinning ideologies is that it is economically challenging to embrace employees with lives. As a result, kitchens often employ individuals willing to sacrifice, even annihilate, their lives. Statistics from the *Canadian Foodservice and Restaurant Association* identify the professional kitchen population as 82.7% male and 17.3% female. (Canadian Restaurant and FoodServices Association) A high tolerance for work becomes a hallmark of a largely male working environment. That this exists is evident in a recent *Twitter* post by Grant Achatz, chef-owner of *Alinea*, *Next* and *Aviary* restaurants in Chicago. He writes, “Cook fractured ankle. Spends all night in ER. Comes 2 work next day on crutches. Sneaks in, hides them in locker, tries to work. Dedication.” (Achatz) Here is a “subtle message about organizational culture...that ‘high flyer’s’ do not take advantage of policies that reduce their work hours.” (Harris 40)

Working hours, from this perspective, become a pivotal gender issue. The “rigid schedules of many professional kitchens....left...women with few options. Additionally, the options that were available tended to have lower status...fewer opportunities for career mobility.” (Harris 40) As a result, women often migrate away from the professional kitchen to sectors of the culinary industry that support work-life balance. But this move can “mark’ someone as being less committed, as not a ‘real’ chef.” (Harris 40)

This ‘opting out’ is not what young women envisage for themselves at the outset of their careers. They are closely allied to young men in their desire to become an executive chef of a hotel or restaurant kitchen (67% females and 71% males). Unfortunately, choice in the realm of the professional kitchen is reduced to its most primitive form, ‘take it or leave it’. Women wanting more ‘life’ time are not often weighing two good quality options as they relate to career lifespan. With this in mind, more young females expressed interest (23% female and 15% male) in non-kitchen occupations such as research, product development, writing/media, and teaching.

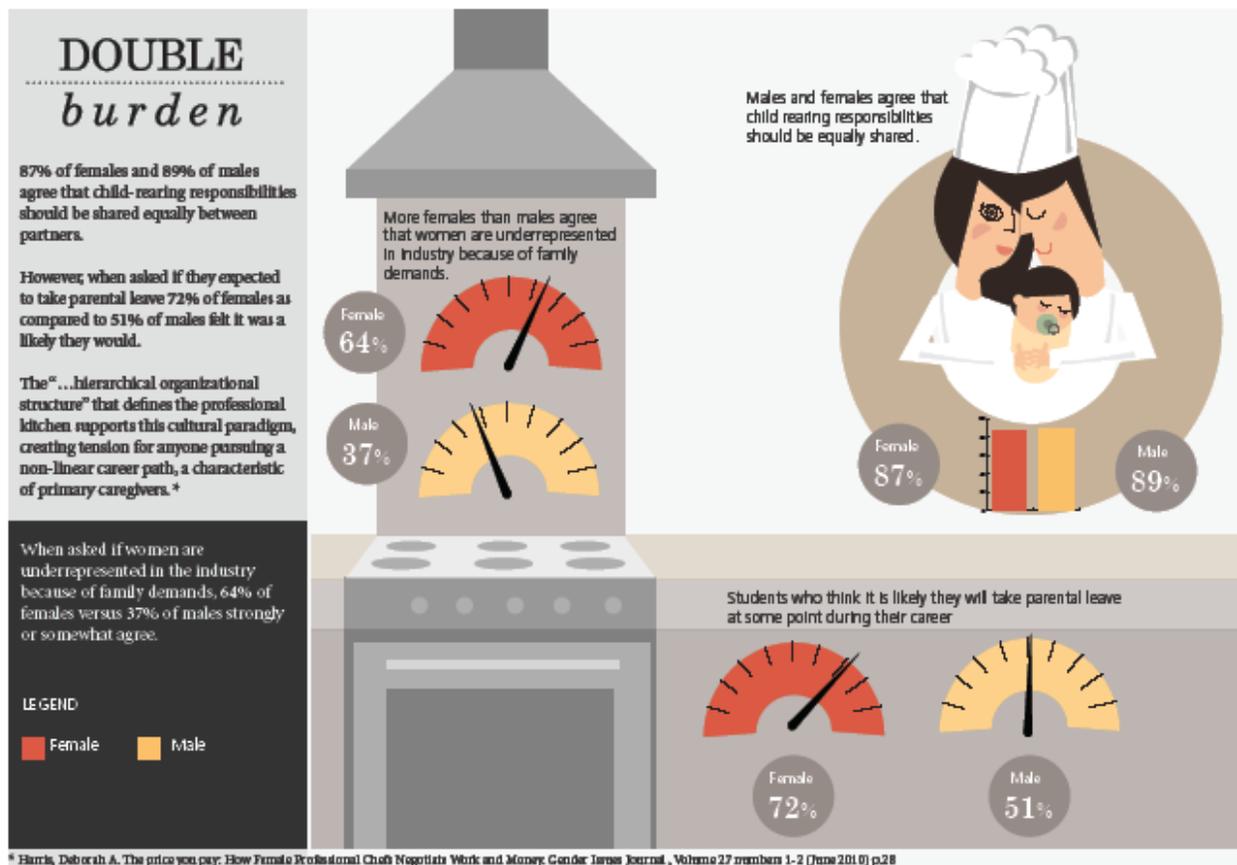


Fig. 5 Double Burden

The Double Burden

It is the biology piece, child bearing and child rearing, that seems to be the insurmountable divide separating men and women in their pursuit of full careers in professional kitchens. Male and female respondents almost equally agree (87% females, 89% males) that child-rearing responsibilities should be shared equally between partners. However, further questioning reveals greater separation and some inconsistencies. When asked if they expected to take maternity/paternity leave, 72% females and 51% males felt it was a likely occurrence. Some of this gap can be

accounted for by the relative newness of paternity leave. With time that gap may narrow as more men partake of this parental opportunity.

Despite gender or participatory desire, the realities of the professional kitchen are such that “many restaurants do not offer...leave opportunities for childbirth and care giving responsibilities” because, in spite of regulation to the contrary, offering it is “cost prohibitive for many small businesses.” (Harris 37, 43) The “hierarchical organizational structure” that defines the professional kitchen supports this cultural paradigm, creating tension for anyone pursuing a non-linear career path, a characteristic of primary caregivers. (Harris 31) By default, women still largely assume this role and although they “may perceive family as ‘pulling’ them back home...it is actually the structure of their workplace that is ‘pushing’ them out.” (Harris 38)

Creating further strain is the nature of the business itself, where “the hours worked by professional chefs meant that there were few traditional daycare options available.” (Harris 42) Unlike many European cultures, we have yet to embrace ‘around-the-clock’ care, a service vital to families whose professional lives hinge on non-traditional working hours.

This industry perspective alongside the demographic inequalities previously outlined creates a situation where family matters are an inconvenience easily ignored. When asked if women are underrepresented in the industry because of family demands, 64% of females and 37% of males Strongly or Somewhat Agree. At this early stage in career

development these statistics could reflect cultural innocence; aspiring chefs equating the parity of the academic environment with industry standard. It could also indicate ripe conditions for maintaining an industry culture at odds with family.

Whether economic or cultural, the industries intolerance of periods of professional absence can wreak havoc on career progress and potential. Even the shortest leave can all but negate any professional advantage up to the point of departure. Since periods of high career potential often correspond to periods of high fertility, women frequently face a difficult choice that limits their reach into executive positions. “Women continue to be the ones who interrupt their careers, take more days off, and work part-time. As a result, they have fewer years of job experience and fewer hours of employment per year, which slows their career progress and reduces their earnings.” (Eagly) By limiting the executive reach of women, we also limit their influence on the culture at large. Although “positions high in the kitchen hierarchy come with more responsibility, they may also include the power to make more family friendly workplace rules.” (Harris 41) It stands to reason that increasing female industry presence, particularly at the executive level, could lead to a culture more tolerant of family matters.

Women bear some responsibility for the change this cultural shift requires. While conventional wisdom suggests that having a family while young is beneficial there are those who advocate for establishing a substantial career first. Essential to achieving the later is equitable promotion from both a job content and economic perspective. In order to achieve this, women need to acquire the self-promotion skills that result in career

advancement on par with male colleagues. Sheryl Sandberg, COO of *Facebook*, in a recent *New Yorker* magazine piece tells women “don’t leave before you leave...when a woman starts thinking of having children, she doesn’t raise her hand anymore...she starts leaning back...if women don’t get the job they want before they take a break to have children, they often don’t come back.” (Auletta)

Women also need to acknowledge some of the thornier realities of contemporary parenting. Despite great advances on all fronts, “few people realize that mothers provide more that they did in earlier generations – despite the fact that fathers are putting in a lot more time than in the past...though husbands have taken on more domestic work, the work/family conflict has not eased for women; the gain has been offset by escalating pressures for intensive parenting and the increasing time demands of most high-level careers.” (Eagly) The French academic and intellect, Elisabeth Badinter, wonders at women’s acceptance of this state of “motherhood fundamentalism”, with its denial of professional fulfillment in favour of a “sandbox life”, worrying that women themselves are sanctioning their own professional limitations. (Kramer 46, 44)

It bodes well that 51% of young men believe that paternity leave will be a likely occurrence in their professional lives. It suggests a growing generational acceptance of familial and parental responsibilities. Men themselves may be waking up to the irony that assuming minimal parental responsibility should not result in their being seen as “more than’ or ‘exceptional’ in their willingness and behavior to assist women in these

responsibilities.” (Harris 43) These are the right conditions for what Sheryl Sandberg suggests will lead to women’s professional progress, namely “make sure your partner is a real partner”. (Auletta) Men, as both caregivers and partners, have a substantial role to play in creating the conditions essential to women’s achieving greater executive representation.

Gender Perceptions

Another interesting area in our findings came from surveying the students about their perception of female representation and discrimination in the industry.

There was a strong trend and marked difference between male and female answers, and our most consistent statistically significant results came from this section of the survey.

When asked if they agree that males and females are promoted at the same rate in professional kitchens, 46% of females disagreed (Somewhat or Strongly) with that statement, as opposed to 31% of males.

When asked if, in their opinion, gender discrimination existed in professional kitchens 69% of females agreed it did (Somewhat or Strongly), as compared to 58% of males.

When asked whether women were underrepresented at the executive level, 75% of females agreed, versus 53% of males.

What is causing these differences? Looking at the results more closely, they may suggest that males are generally aware that discrimination happens, but do not feel as strongly as females that women are underrepresented. Males, as the majority of workers in the industry, may feel indifferent to having greater female representation.

Is it too early to be asking students about their perceptions of the gender make-up of the industry? The fact that over half the male and female respondents agree there is a problem suggests that they have at least some knowledge that an underrepresentation exists.

Many female chefs who participated in an in-depth interview study in 2010 reported being tested to see whether they could handle the pressure of the job, and had to work hard to combat stereotypes that women chefs are not good leaders, are too emotional, and they are not “cut out” for male-dominated work. (Harris 33)

Female chefs in that study have also described subtle forms of gender bias, sexual harassment and overt forms of gender discrimination, including being passed over for jobs or promotions due to their gender. (Harris 33)

A related finding in our study came from asking students if they felt women were underrepresented because of sexism. Only 45% of males agreed (Strongly or Somewhat), as compared to 61% of females. Previous research in the corporate arena shows that “having more females in executive positions drives better financial

performance (as measured by ROE, EBIT, and stock price growth).” (McKinsey & Company 14) Does this hold true in the context of a restaurant’s or hotel’s financial performance?

When there is an imbalanced team, i.e. a gender minority, research suggests that neither men nor women flourish. “Those in a gender minority tend to report lower life satisfaction, more negative moods, and lower commitment to the organization.”

(Gratton)

Conclusion

The purpose of this research project was to take an initial step towards understanding the complex web of social and environmental factors contributing to a marked absence of females in the management ranks of professional kitchens. And to discern what obligation, if any, both industry and educators have when uncomfortable numbers of the work-force population fail to reach their career potential.

Culinary programs are attracting more female students than ever before, and while enrolment levels are not quite at the national average for post-secondary (which is more female than male) there continues to be consistent growth in the number of women seeking to make cheffing their career. (Hango 88; Abraham) And our research has shown that at the outset both male and female culinary students share similar aspirations for greatness.

Like all other professions, the professional kitchen is currently experiencing the cultural metamorphosis associated with the large scale exit of 'Baby Boomers' and their replacement by 'Gen X and Y' who hold completely different values. Our survey research has shown, and supports existing results, that Gen Ys place equal importance on work and play. Our findings also show that Gen Ys think parental responsibilities should be equally shared, and that more than half of the male respondents plan on taking parental leave. The generational transition that is taking place will surely mark a shift in attitudes toward work, gender and family.

The need to encourage women chefs to realize full careers is also crucial in light of projected labour shortages. Shortages in foodservice employees in Canada are projected to begin as early as 2012 and run through 2025. “Competition for foodservice employees will be fierce, and good human resource practices could be the difference between a successful business with a dedicated workforce, and a business struggling to maintain adequate staffing levels just to survive.” (Russell)

Equitable hiring practices, formal mentorship programs, and more family-friendly HR practices have done much in the corporate sector to increase the number of females in management ranks. It stands to follow that tailoring similar practices to the professional kitchen could net the same result.

Practices specific to the professional kitchen could include leadership training that promotes a variety of styles, more industry tolerance for non-linear careers, coaching and rewarding women who actively advocate for promotion, teaching both sexes accurate self-assessment skills, crafting recruitment processes that ensure women chefs a fair share of the kitchen, and engaging industry leaders who are committed to mentoring the next generation of chefs.

Further research should focus on developing a better understanding of the unique culture of professional kitchens and how specifically this culture impacts female participation and career progress. From there practical, robust, and realistic solutions tailored to the industry could be developed in partnership with industry leadership.

Improving female representation in industry and providing women with the opportunity to remain in the kitchen throughout their careers has moved beyond the traditional feminist's work, or even a new-age feminist's work. Females represent a poorly utilized pool of labour, one that can strengthen the industry as a whole, through more efficient, effective and innovative teams, increased profits and a more dedicated workforce.

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