Experiences of women executive chefs:

A life history approach

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Abstract

Evidence shows that the chef profession is gender segregated; men dominate the industry and occupy the prime culinary positions. As a result, prior studies have focused predominately on men in the chef profession. Academic studies on women chefs, especially on the experiences of women executive chefs, remains scant. At the same time, there is a lack of academic studies on women executive chefs' experiences in the professional kitchen environment. Therefore, this research seeks important insights into the life histories of women executive chefs and to understand the meaningful experiences and critical moments in those histories. Critical moments and certain events shape an individual's life, influencing their actions and attitudes, and this impact is not limited by time; it could be in the present or the future (Cole & Knowles, 2001). This impact shapes the choices made in a profession. Through insights into the narratives of women executive chefs in New Zealand, this research highlights their experiences in the form of short vignettes of key moments of their progression in the chef profession.

To meet the research aim, to explore women executive chefs' life histories with a focus on their experiences in the professional kitchen, an interpretivist approach is adopted to capture the life histories of women executive chefs in New Zealand. Interpretivists believe there are multiple and subjective realities and knowledge is shaped by the interpretations of individuals based on their personal contexts and experiences (Myers, 2009). Accordingly, this research uses a qualitative research approach, that is, the topical life history method. This means that instead of exploring the totality of participants' lives, the research focuses on the experiences of becoming and being an executive chef. Participants were recruited using the snow-ball sampling technique and 23 in-depth interviews were conducted with women executive chefs, exploring their life histories. Following previous studies employing the life history method, other supporting data such as published documents, are also included. The collected data were then transcribed, and the narratives analysed to identify key themes.

The research findings reveal the unique and complex life histories of the participants. In general, the participants' professional trajectories were time and effort consuming, while full of challenges, especially in relation to gender stereotyping. During participants' professional trajectories, both vertical and

horizontal movements were identified. Vertical movement represents a trajectory from the bottom of the chef hierarchy to the top. However, to progress upwards, horizontal movement, such as taking different jobs in professional kitchens and/or moving overseas to work, were also required.

Three prominent integrated themes emerged from data on participants' professional trajectories and experiences in professional kitchens; "it's sexism in so many ways," "family influence," and "it's so tough." It was found that the chef profession is still gender segregated, and sexism was an experience shared amongst the participants. Family was found to have a major role in participants' movement and development in their chef profession. Overall, participants agreed that the industry is tough, and one has to be tough to survive in it. In addition, intrinsic factors such as participants' love of food and their profession, were also found to be influential to their professional trajectories. Although the findings confirm the gendered environment of the chef profession, they also identify opportunities for improvement and anticipated changes.

This research provides an original contribution to hospitality scholarship through an understanding of women executive chefs' professional trajectories and experiences in the professional kitchen. The findings confirm that women executive chefs in New Zealand engage in both "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and "undoing gender" (Butler, 2004) during their professional trajectories. Importantly, the intersections of gender and the chef sector were also revealed. The application of the life history method to studying a hospitality profession is a further important contribution of this research.

By revealing women executive chefs' stories, this research provides new insights into the challenges and motives they experienced and encountered during their professional trajectories. This research emphasises the importance of an organisation in supporting the development of an inclusive culture in the professional kitchen. Most importantly, a key point from the life history narratives is that women chefs need to believe in themselves and have the confidence to sustain their success in the chef profession. For them to achieve gender equity and a better working environment, requires commitment from their organisations, the industry, government and most importantly, the women themselves.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Beverly (Shih-Yun) Chen

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Chapter One – Introduction

Amuse-bouche

a bite-sized amusement for the mouth

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There is a lack of women in executive roles in the chef profession (e.g. Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Druckman, 2010; Harris & Giuffre, 2009b; Harris & Giuffre, 2015). Prior studies have also indicated a lack of academic research into the chef profession, especially into the experiences of women chefs and their progression into executive chef roles. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the life histories of women executive chefs and to understand the meaningful experiences and critical moments revealed in those histories. By examining the life histories of women executive chefs, the research prioritises women's voices and privileges their stories. This chapter introduces the purpose of the research, outlines the research questions, and defines the scope of the topic. The chapter also briefly reviews the literature to identify the gaps and the potential contributions of the research, and describes

the methodology and research paradigm. Finally, the chapter outlines the main findings and the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The chef profession in context

The term “chef,” derived from the French “*chef de cuisine*,” means “head of the kitchen,” and is directly related to the cooking process (Druckman, 2010). Today, the title of chef has become a general term for someone with accepted, extensive, and lengthy training, either on the job or through professional education providers (Harris & Giuffre, 2010). Different chefs’ roles were given names in the late 19th century, reflecting their responsibilities. The structure and brigade system was developed by Chef Georges- Auguste Escoffier to manage chefs, based on a knowledge of structure gained from his French army career (Jones, 2014). In a kitchen, a “brigade” is a hierarchical structure consisting of various chef titles, each representing a different authority, responsibility, and function (see section 2.4.2, on the brigade structure). Most restaurants now apply a simplified version of the brigade system, according to the size and the style of operation.

The chef profession has strong trade attributes. The term “chef profession” is used throughout this thesis, consistent with previous studies of the industry (see Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Roosipõld, 2011). Until recently, a chef was considered to be merely a trained cook and tradesperson in charge of food preparation, and the role had low job and social status in society, with commensurate low pay (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Pratten, 2003). It was not until the mid-1970s that the status of chefs slowly transformed from an historically low-skilled labour role to that of a profession (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Lindeman, 2016). Zopiatis and Melanthiou (2019) pointed out that the chef industry has changed substantially in the past 30 years, influenced by the media, celebrity chefs, and the growing interest of customers. To entertain readers and viewers, the media now portrays chefs as creative artists, rather than as people who toil long hours doing dirty work (Madichie, 2013). Chefs also see themselves as craft-based professionals, creating artisanal and high-quality dishes based on culinary knowledge. For example, in their study of head chefs in Ireland, Allen and Mac Con Iomaire (2016a) found that their participants considered

themselves to be professionals experienced in cooking procedures and artisanal creation.

1.1.2 The chef industry in context

The food sector is one of the most competitive and fastest-growing industries globally. In 2014 and 2015, consumer spending in restaurants and cafés was NZ$4.3 billion and NZ$5.6 billion respectively (Hospitality New Zealand, 2016). In 2019, New Zealand's restaurant and café sector recorded the highest sales growth (5.2%) of the entire hospitality industry (Restaurant Association of New Zealand, 2019). However, it is important to note that continued growth has been interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Restaurant Association of New Zealand has estimated by hospitality businesses losses of NZ$6 million a week, due to travel restrictions and lockdowns (Moodie, 2020).

Although the industry is growing, the sector has failed to secure an appropriate labour force to take advantage of its market growth (Hospitality New Zealand, 2016). This lack of labour is similarly experienced elsewhere around the world; at an international conference in Chicago in 2019, attendees from 14 countries estimated the shortage of chefs to be in the millions. This small labour pool is partly due to the high attrition rate in the chef profession. Low pays and low job status also make the industry less attractive (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Jennings, 2016). In addition, many reasons have been found to explain the high attrition rate in the chef sector, including the strenuous physical and psychological demands of the role (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Harris & Giuffre, 2010, 2015; Jennings, 2016; Johnston, et al., 2014).

Women chefs suffer from an even higher attrition rate than do their male counterparts (Hampton, 2017; Robinson et al., 2014). Studies have found that even with the same qualification and abilities, few women attain and sustain positions at executive level in the culinary sector (Blayney & Blotnicky, 2010; Brownell, 1994; Mooney et al., 2007). Druckman (2010) found no difference in women and men chefs' cooking – their skills were equally high, yet, studies still identify the shortage of women chefs and executive chefs in the industry (Harris & Giuffre, 2009; Olbrich, 2016). Druckman (2010) also indicated that with the same number of women and men entering professional kitchens, women are

leaving at up to three times the rate of their male counterparts. This phenomenon contradicts Aeschylus' statement in 467 BC that "a woman's place is in the kitchen," which reflects how historically, cooking has been closely associated with women. Indeed, many restaurant owners believe women make better chefs than do men, as they are generally more organised, pay greater attention to detail, and are able to oversee the entire kitchen by multi-tasking (Edmonds, 2016; Hannaford, 2016; Kitson, 2017).

The chef profession is therefore considered to be gender segregated, with men having dominated, and still dominating, chefs' roles (Gatta, 2016; Woolcock, 2011) in both horizontal and vertical ways (Campos-Soria et al., 2009; Ministry for Women, 2016). This means there is an uneven number of women and men in the chef profession, and a concentration of men in prime positions. As Olbrich (2016) pointed out, around 35% of people working in the culinary industry are women, but they occupy fewer than 10% of the top positions. Statistics from the New South Wales (NSW) state in Australia, have reported the chef profession as one of the most gender-segregated occupations; out of 25,659 chefs, only 4385 (17%) were women (Women NSW, 2012). Likewise, a report in 2016 stated that in the United Kingdom (UK), national statistics showed that only 18.5% of the top chefs were women (Olbrich, 2016). Data from the United States of America's (US) Bureau of Labour Statistics showed only 11% of executive chefs were women in 2005, and only 20% of chefs and head cooks were women in 2013 (Harris & Giuffre, 2015). In New Zealand, the chef profession is similarly horizontally and vertically segregated; there are more men in the kitchen, and they also occupy more executive roles (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

It is generally believed that the difficult physical and stressful working environment of the professional kitchen may contribute to the attrition of women chefs (Druckman, 2010; Harris & Giuffre, 2009; Jennings, 2016; Johnston et al., 2014). After examining physical workplace obstacles, Druckman (2010) pointed out that women have less muscle mass than do men, and are generally more challenged by heat, heavy equipment, and kitchen designs that are user-friendly to men (e.g. high stacking shelves). Apart from these obstacles, it has been suggested that other factors also drive women chefs away from the profession, such as segregation and resistance from their male counterparts (Druckman, 2010; Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Jennings, 2016; Matwick, 2017), sexist treatment

and unconscious bias (Olbrich, 2016; Whitaker, 2015), the stereotypical perception that “women are not good chefs” (Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Johnston et al., 2014; Lindeman, 2016; Matwick, 2017), the glass ceiling in the strict brigade system (Brownell, 1994; Madichie, 2013; Parker & Arrowsmith, 2012), exclusion from networks (Luscombe, 2013; Madichie, 2013), wage disparity (Harris & Giuffre, 2015; Madichie, 2013; Prynn, 2016), and lack of support such as mentoring and/or role models (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Jennings, 2016).

While facing multiple challenges in the industry, studies have also indicated that with social progress and improvement in gender equality, more women are able to join the chef profession and have a sustainable career. It is also evident from a review of the extant literature, that although many women chefs leave the kitchen environment, some do stay and have successfully reached executive roles. It is, therefore, important to understand how women chefs progress in the profession, what their experiences are, and the potential challenges they face in their workplaces. Previous studies have primarily described the working environment of chefs, but have not captured women’s perspectives, their culinary practices, or their progression in the profession (Cameron, 2004; Chivers, 1972; Robinson et al., 2014).

While previous studies have examined factors causing the high turnover in the chef sector, more generally, there remains a dearth of research on women chefs. From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the chef profession has been, and still is, perceived to be a masculine work arena. Unsurprisingly, most studies have been conducted predominantly from men chefs’ perspectives (Harris & Giuffre, 2009). Thus, it is argued that researchers have neglected to study the experiences of women when they enter the male-dominated chef sector (Torre, 2018; Wright, 2014). Despite previous life history studies of women’s experiences in careers, to date, there has been no academic investigation into women chefs’ life histories. This is an important and obvious gap in both academia and the public’s understanding of professional women chefs, their progression in the profession, and their experiences in the kitchen. This research addresses this gap by exploring women chefs’ life histories with a focus on their experiences in the professional kitchen. Empirically, a better understanding of women executive chefs and their sustainable trajectories will benefit others seeking a career in the sector.

1.2 Key concepts

This research focuses on women executive chefs. Therefore, key theoretical concepts such as “gender” and “sex,” and relevant terms such as “male/female,” and “man/woman,” are discussed to lay a clear foundation for the research. A clarification of terms assists in the interpretation and understanding of the thesis, as does a discussion of the background to the study and the research findings.

1.2.1 Gender and sex

In the early 19th century, research on gender and sex was limited to the biological perspective. In the middle of the 20th century, some researchers started to separate gender from sex (Pryzgoda & Chrisler, 2000). The concept of “gender” goes beyond the biological assignment of sex, and instead encompasses what it means to be a man or a woman. In this view, sex is fixed; i.e., humans can be categorised as male or female, depending on the female and male attributes of their bodies.

In 1978, Kessler and McKenna first proposed that gender is constructed through social interaction (Kessler & McKenna, 1978), subverting the traditional science concept that genders and gendered behaviour are controlled by sex hormones. It is argued that *sex* identifies women and men according to their *biological* features (chromosomes, sex organs, hormones, and other physical features), while *gender* denotes women and men according to social factors (social role, position, behaviour, or identity). Some feminists therefore argue against biological determinism, suggesting instead that gender differences result from cultural practices and social expectations (Biever et al., 1998; Haslanger, 2000; Lorber et al., 1991; Risman, 2004). Risman (2004) also considered *gender* to be a social stratification structure with consequences for individual selves, and interactions with others, organisations, and society.

In 1999, feminist Judith Butler proposed the normativity argument to critique the sex/gender distinction feminists had tried to draw (Butler, 1999). Butler pointed out that this distinction unconsciously defines gender unitary notions and limits women (or men) to unspoken normative requirements. This notion of trying to categorise gender into something with a shared experience, conditions, practices, and features, fails to embrace the differences between women and

men, and neglects cultural, social, and political influences on the individual. Thus, Butler (1999) suggested that studies should not focus on identifying the differences between sex and gender, nor define gender; instead, they should explore how power functions, and how culture and society shape understandings of gender.

1.2.2 "Female/male" and "woman/man"

It has been suggested in the literature that distinctions of terms and language are important in contexts of marginalisation and the pursuit of empowerment and social change (e.g., Gillovic et al., 2018). Most dictionaries classify "woman" and "man" as nouns, while "female" and "male" can be used as both nouns and adjectives (e.g., Cambridge online dictionary, n.d; Merriam-Webster online dictionary, n.d.; Oxford dictionary, n.d.). Overall, dictionaries use "woman" or "man" to describe and categorise biological sex differences between female and male human beings, while "female" and "male" are considered to relate to the behavioural characteristics of a person. Pauwels (2003) suggested that "female" and "male" are scientific terms that refer to the sex of species and their reproduction features, while "women" specifically represents human beings. For example, Abdulcadir et al.'s (2015) scientific study had the title "Research gaps in the care of women with female genital mutilation: An analysis."

In life history studies, the terms "male" or "female" and "man' or "woman" are used to indicate a specific individual or group. For example, in her study of professors' life histories in Australia, Ward (2003) used "female" when describing women in the occupation, whereas Rakhit (1999) used the term "women teachers" in her life history study. In addition, both "female chef" (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Harris & Giuffre, 2009, 2010) and "woman chef" (Druckman, 2010; Gatta, 2016; Haddaji et al., 2017a; Harris & Giuffre, 2015) have been commonly applied in studies of the chef sector.

Notwithstanding the foregoing argument, it is more accurate to use the term "female chef." However, based on this discussion, this thesis uses the terms "woman chef" and "women chefs" for following reasons. First, the research makes a contribution to the social sciences, hence the term "woman chef" fits better, as this research aims to study women in terms of their societal roles, whereas

"female" is a more scientific term. Secondly, "women" is generally considered a more inclusive and neutral term (Cralley & Ruscher, 2005; Ministry for Women, 2016). For instance, calling someone a "female pilot" or a "male nurse" implies they are not in their gender appropriate role, as there is no term for a male pilot or a female nurse. Thirdly, scholars have pointed out that not only does the term "female" designate a person's reproductive roles, but it is also associated with gender attributes of inferiority, weakness, simplicity and the like (Murphy, 1998).

1.3 Research design

The research presented in this thesis is framed by an interpretivism paradigm (see section 3.2). Hence, a qualitative life history method was adopted as it allowed an interpretivist approach (see Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008; Hussain & Asad, 2012; Merriam, 2009) to exploring and understanding women executive chefs' life histories and focusing on their experiences in the professional kitchen.

The life history method was selected for two reasons. Firstly, it encourages an in-depth exploration of an individual's life from their own words, and reveals the critical experiences and events of their life histories (Cole & Knowles, 2001), and secondly, it allowed the researcher to interpret the participants' experiences in professional kitchens and how these experiences might have changed over time (see Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Gramling & Carr, 2004). Moreover, it helped to reveal women executive chefs' perspectives and make their experiences visible, in order to contribute to a body of knowledge that is centred on women's interpretations of their lives (see Sosulski et al., 2010; Stearns, 1992).

Ward (2003) considered the life history method unique in social research, as it studies an individual's feelings and actions within a social structure using an historical approach. The life history method emphasises the importance of presenting the individual's subjective evaluation of their life experience and of uncovering information about their social experiences. Examples of relevant previous life history studies include those of women teachers (Munro, 1998), mature students (Jacks-Cobbold, 2018), female physical education teachers (Cazers & Curtner-Smith, 2017a), and dyslexic adults (Gwernan-Jones, 2010). Of three different types of life history research methods available, the topical life

history method was adopted to focus on the chef elements of the participants' life histories (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008; Taber, 2013; Ward, 1999).

To address the aim of the research, in-depth interviews were conducted. Twenty-three participants were recruited through criterion-based purposeful sampling. Apart from interview transcripts, published documents such as resumes and newspaper articles were collected, along with other documents provided by the research participants. Collection of both primary and secondary data is consistent with previous studies employing the life history method (e.g. Douglas et al., 2016; Ward, 2003).

According to Patton (2002), qualitative research often emphasises meaning in the data collection and analysis process, and research findings are "obtained through real-life settings where the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally" (p. 39). Polkinghorne's (1995) analysis of narrative was therefore applied to categorise common elements of narratives provided by participants to make sense of their life histories. Analysis of narrative privileges the participants' interpretations of their life histories and presents an overview of the connections by identifying commonality among the stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). Analysis of narrative is commonly applied to analyse data collected using the life history method, and interpreting participants' life histories (Riessman, 2005; Sosulski et al., 2010). It assists the researcher to interpret the life experiences and thoughts expressed by the participants in a narrative format, and to generate an understanding of the context (Polkinghorne, 1995; Rich, 2002). Following the analysis of narrative process, three common themes were identified across the participants' life histories. These three themes are presented in Chapter Four, illustrated by participants' vignettes. Each vignette captures the participants' experiences using their own detailed dialogues of their life histories as women executive chefs.

Influenced by the interpretivism paradigm, the research was guided by the research aim, the relevant literature, and the priority is to make the women chefs' perspectives prominent. The role of the researcher in a life history study serves as a communicator and attentive listener during data collection and analysis to assist participants recall their life histories and experiences in their professional kitchens and tell their stories in their own voices. Important is the potential bias

that could occur based on the researcher's cultural background, gender, and work experience in the hospitality industry. In consideration of these points, an outsider and an etic perspective was adopted by the researcher. Hence, whilst recognising the existence of different researcher positions, when writing the thesis, the language was carefully chosen, and a third person approach, specifically, use of the term "the researcher", was adopted throughout the thesis rather than the first-person position.

1.4 Research significance

This research contributes to an overlooked aspect of hospitality scholarship and provides a contemporary understanding of women executive chefs' experiences in a chef role, through explorations of their life histories. The research contributes knowledge about the chef sector both empirically and methodologically. Empirically, this research fills the gap in academic studies on chefs and their careers. By capturing the life histories of women executive chefs in New Zealand, the research contributes new insights into women's professional trajectories and their experiences in the professional kitchen. Prioritising the marginalised voices of women executive chefs also contributes to hospitality scholarship by revealing their lived experiences. In addition, the examination of success stories and how some women executive chefs progress benefits the growth of the chef sector. The research may also provide insights into inequality, as few women attain an executive chef's position. From a broader perspective, the research provides more general insights into potential issues as well as gender issues in current workplace structures and interactions (see Evetts, 1996). It achieves this because it allows the public, especially groups who want a career in the chef sector, to gain a better understanding of the sector.

Methodologically, the contribution of the research is the application of a qualitative research approach, in particular the life history method to the hospitality field. Life history method, scaffolded by the life grid, permits an examination of the whole of a career. As a result, the research adds to the qualitative studies of women executive chefs, which, as Harris and Giuffre (2009) stated, are limited. It is the first study applying life history method to explore the chef sector, especially women executive chefs. Hence, the research makes an important methodological contribution, as there are few life history studies of

specific professions, especially of the chef profession. One advantage of life history method is it allows participants the opportunity to talk about their own life in their own words to the researcher, and at the same time they may benefit from the empathy and the unique audience which the life story interaction provides.

1.5 Research scope and limitations

This research focuses on women executive chefs' life histories and explores their experiences in professional kitchens. In terms of scope, the research does have some limitations. Firstly, due to the particular aim and purpose of the research, it does not provide an account of men chefs' experiences, which have been more frequently studied (see, for example, Hollows, 2003; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Pratten, 2003; Zhao et al., 2004). In addition, the research is geographically limited, as the sample was recruited only in New Zealand. As such, the findings cannot be generalised. Nevertheless, although these limitations exist, this research still provides valuable and original in-depth insights into the subjective lived professional journeys and experiences of women executive chefs.

1.6 Thesis structure

This introductory chapter has defined the scope of this study, as well as the overarching research purpose. The background and the significance of the research have also been provided to contextualise the study. Chapter Two reviews literature around the chef profession: what the role entails, the required qualities of a chef, structures in place in the industry, and the vertical and horizontal trajectories in the profession. It also discusses gender stereotypes and segregation situations and how they interplay with women executive chefs' experiences in professional kitchens. Chapter Three outlines the methodological approach adopted for the research. It discusses the purpose of the research and research questions and the research paradigm and design. Ethical implications as well as the researcher's positionality and reflexivity are also discussed, and the trustworthiness and limitations of the findings are presented.

Based on the analysis of narrative (see Polkinghorne, 1995), Chapter Four presents the research findings, that is, the three prominent themes that emerged from the participants' life histories. These data are presented in the form of individual participant vignettes, built around direct quotes, to illustrate the

participants' experiences in their own detailed dialogue. Chapter Five discusses the research findings in the light of the extant literature, and how the findings answer the research questions. Chapter Six summarises the research by outlining its significant contributions, in terms of theory and methodology, as well as its practical implications. The limitations of the research and future research areas are identified at the end of Chapter Six.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

Seafood

a flavourful light protein before the main courses

Image by Pagel (2020), reproduced with permission.

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore women executive chefs' life histories with a focus on their experiences in the professional kitchen. The research seeks to understand meaningful experiences and critical moments women executive chefs have encountered during their progression to the top of the chef hierarchy. This chapter starts by examining the chef profession before turning to the role of a chef, reviewing various definitions of a *chef*, the responsibilities of chefs, and the qualities required for the role. The chapter then explores the different types of chefs subsumed under the general chef's role. As the research is interested in the life histories of women executive chefs, the literature is used to discuss the structure of the profession and the brigade system, and to investigate the trajectories from a beginner's position to the top of the kitchen hierarchy. As the research focuses on women executive chefs, the chapter also examines gender

and the constructed nature of gender. It looks at gender stereotypes and gender segregation and reveals the effects on women's progressions as chefs. The literature review chapter draws critically on scholarship in hospitality management, gender work by both West and Zimmerman (1987) and Butler (2004), gender stereotyping and segregation in occupations, and women's progression in professions.

2.2 The chef profession

As the subject of this thesis is the experiences of women executive chefs, an examination of the chef profession, as it is seen in the academic literature, is warranted. *Chef*, an occupation within the broader hospitality industry, is often classified as a trade profession with physical and psychologically demanding attributes (Pratten, 2003). The professional kitchen has a strictly hierarchical structure, with lower-ranked chefs taking orders from higher-ranked chefs (Pang, 2019). Similarly, Demetry (2013) pointed out that the professional kitchen is organised and disciplined, as all dishes need to be served in a timely fashion and at their best possible quality. Gerk (2018) explained that each kitchen has its own special "vibe" which is created by the chefs who work there and the culture they build. For example, some kitchens honour the traditional belief that hard work and frustration brings success, while others worship creativity and adopt a flat organisational structure. Whatever their culture, most professional kitchens need to maintain a high standard of operation to meet the demand and expectations of their customers, their peers, and the establishment the kitchen is in (Graham, 2015; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007).

Many studies have examined the negative implications brought about by the working environment of a kitchen. As observed by Jennings (2016), working in professional kitchens is physically and psychologically demanding, due to the industry's long and non-standard working hours, intense physical requirements, unsatisfactory work environment, and a general lack of benefits and rewards. Baum (2015) pointed out that working conditions in the hospitality sector are poor, and involve stress and burnout, health hazards, sexual harassment, and discrimination based on gender. Indeed, a review of the extant literature indicates that the working environment of the professional kitchen is physically and psychological demanding.

Physically demanding, and with long working hours, late nights, and weekend shifts – such conditions are the norm in the chef profession (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Harris & Giuffre, 2015; Jennings, 2016; Johnston et al., 2014). Time and workload are constrained and controlled by customers' demands, as dishes need to prepared within a limited time frame (Demetry, 2013). Chefs do not have a set work schedule; instead, they work to the number of orders, meaning there are no set start and finish times, nor scheduled break times, or indeed, much downtime. With such long and inflexible working hours, it is hard for chefs to maintain a good work–life balance (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Jennings, 2016). Cain et al. (2018) agreed, and explained that chefs sometimes suffer from poor work–life balance, as their job is fast-paced, high pressured, and has long and fluctuating hours dependent on external factors.

Working in a kitchen is also considered hazardous and can damage a chef's physical well-being in the long term. Chefs work in a hazardous environment where there are sharp objects, fire, and heat, so burns, scalds, cuts, and other physical misfortunes, are part of a chef's life (Bloisi & Hoel, 2008; Zopiatis et al., 2011). Chefs also experience issues around cramped working spaces, being without fresh, air and working in extremely hot conditions, especially in summer (Pratten, 2003). Gerk (2018) added that professional kitchens are often heated and without effective ventilation. Demetry (2013) explained that as a work environment, a kitchen is unique – there is no individual office or divider to provide personal space, and both front-of-house and back-of-house staff share the kitchen. The long hours standing on one's feet can also affect a chef's general health, causing physical tiredness and muscular pain (Fungai Zengeni et al., 2014; ŞAHİN, 2012). In short, a kitchen is both a hazardous and stressful work environment.

Kitchens can also be psychologically demanding. The strict hierarchical structure of the brigade system requires discipline, while at the same time, the chef must pay attention to detail to provide a consistently high-quality product, and these two demands are psychologically tiring (Graham, 2015; Pack, 2002). In addition, chefs are performance driven to meet the high standards and demands of their customers. As Graham (2015) explained, chefs need every single meal served to be excellent, as they are judged by the meals they serve, and this judgement is ongoing through every shift. In his 2005 biography, Chelminski, a well-known

chef, contributed his successful trajectory and Michelin recognition to his perfectionist personality, and requiring the highest possible standard from himself and his staff (see Chelminski, 2005).

In addition, Mancini and Shields (2014) stated that both physical and psychological abuse are common in the kitchen. Johns and Menzel (1999) claimed that the kitchen is full of psychological abuse such as yelling and swearing, as well as physical violence such as pushing and throwing of kitchen equipment. In their literature review, Bloisi and Hoel (2008) found incidences of harassment and bullying in kitchens, confirming the abusive nature of the professional kitchen.

Because physical and psychological exhaustion is common, chefs often suffer from anxiety (Jung et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2014; Rowley & Purcell, 2001), and emotional burnout (Zopiatis et al., 2011). Murray-Gibbons and Gibbons (2007), in their survey of 40 chefs, found five main stress factors causing chefs to burn out: the repetitive nature of the work, the unmanageable workload, staff shortages, being undervalued, and a lack of feedback on performance. Stressful conditions can impair chefs' physical well-being, psychological health, and work performance (Kang et al., 2010). The lack of work–life balance, the high levels of physical and psychological stress, and other issues such as segregation, staff shortages and a lack of on-the-job training and development, can cause emotional burnout and alcohol and drug abuse among chefs (Cain et al., 2018; Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Pratten & O'Leary, 2007; Zopiatis et al., 2011). Murray-Gibbons and Gibbons (2007) found when dealing with occupational stress, unhealthy approaches such as drinking, drug use, smoking, and eating disorders became evident.

In her study of chefs in Zimbabwe, Mkono (2011) suggested that chefs often experience burnout because they avoid sharing their feelings due to a fear of being perceived as weak. Graham (2015) also mentioned that the historically male-dominated kitchen has led to staff acting or performing in a certain way to meet the expectations of the organisation or society; for instance, by displaying a tough mental attitude. Interestingly, some studies have found that chefs consider that the poor working environment, including the long hours, and the high physical and psychological demands of the job, are a necessary part of their

chef career, and even go so far as to suggest it helps them to develop their skills. Indeed, Mack (2012) defined a chef as someone who had earned their “badge” from challenging experiences and difficult work. Scholars have related the hard work environment to the traditional concept of a professional chef, as one who takes pride in working extra hours, as these mould their character and develop stamina (Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019).

Studies have examined the working environment of chefs from different perspectives. Pratten and O’Leary (2007) related work burnout to a lack of support, and further pointed out that training and professional development in the sector was deficient. Others have attributed the attrition rate in the industry to the nature of the work. For instance, staff shortages, which are directly related to the poor physical and psychological working environment (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Pratten & O’Leary, 2007; Zopiatis et al., 2011) become a vicious cycle. Being short of staff means individual workers need to work longer and harder to fill the gap, which leads to burnout and more attrition (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007). Therefore, some scholars have suggested an immediate review of recruitment criteria, human resources (HR) practices, and progression and development opportunities in the sector are needed (Pratten & O’Leary, 2007; Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019), especially in relation to monetary rewards (Zopiatis et al., 2011).

The rewards and recognition of a chef role are generally poor. Chefs are poorly paid, especially at junior levels (Pratten & O’Leary, 2007). According to information updated 5th July 2020, a junior chef with one to four years of experience earns at or just above the minimum wage of NZ$18.90 per hour (PayScale New Zealand, 2020). A chef’s salary depends on skills and qualifications as well as the nature of the establishment. Overseas studies indicate that chefs’ salaries are also relatively low in the US and other countries such as Australia and the UK (Morse, 1999; Rummell, 2012). In addition to salary, there is a lack of recognition, both from the public and the customers (Bloisi & Hoel, 2008; Pratten & O’Leary, 2007). It is considered that chefs work in the background and people do not often see their contribution. In contrast, Chuang et al. (2009) provided a different perspective, revealing that chefs value intrinsic factors such as creative expression, job variety, challenging and thought-

provoking work, and competition, more than they do external factors such as salary, paid vacation time, and medical leave.

2.3 Important qualities of chefs

Studies have related the required skills of a chef to the dynamic environment of the sector (e.g del Moral, 2020; Graham, 2015; Zopiatis et al., 2011). The hospitality and food sector environment has changed significantly since the 1960s. For instance, del Moral (2020) pointed out that before the 1960s, gastronomic pleasure was mainly linked to the flavour of foods, whereas from the 1960s onward, food has become complex and customers started to focus on the sight, touch, and sound of a meal. Globalisation, the mass media, eating habits trends, sustainability cooking, and social media, all contribute to the development of contemporary Western food (Wan et al., 2017).

Over the years, many studies have examined the required qualities of a chef. Zopiatis et al. (2011) stated that the most important skill of chefs are their cooking techniques and culinary-related skills and knowledge. The Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) defines a *chef* as a person who plans and organises the preparation and cooking of food in a dining or catering establishment (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Druckman (2010) suggested that "chef" is short for *chef de cuisine* in French – in other words, the head of the kitchen – and so the role is directly related to the cooking process. However, the chef's role is much more complex than that of a cook, and beyond just preparing and presenting food.

Apart from the required knowledge of cooking techniques, other skills are also considered critical for a chef. One commonly mentioned attribute associated with the chef's role is that of creativity. As explained by Eckstein and Young (2015), a chef is trained in professional culinary institutions and oversees creative innovation in food preparation, presentation, and menu development. Harris and Giuffre (2015) interviewed 33 chefs and offered a working definition of a *chef* as someone who has "some degree of creative control over the food served at their restaurant" (p. 14). As Zopiatis et al. (2011) stated, a chef is not just an ordinary employee, but "a practitioner, an artist, a fabricator" (p. 125). Suhairom et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study to explore the essential competencies of

culinary experts in Malaysia and found that a chef needs to master both “scientific and artistic innovation” (p. 205), which includes a combination of technical skills, creativity, and time management. Interestingly, studies have shown that chefs’ sense of satisfaction and commitment are related to the innovation aspect of their role rather than to the technical skills (Ko, 2012; Pratten, 2003).

Conversely, other studies have indicated that creativity is not an essential element of a chef’s skill set. Robinson et al.'s (2014) study indicated that a chef’s work is repetitive and boring. Eckstein and Young (2015) explained that to be a chef, a person has to adapt to the hierarchical structure and realise that they are only allowed to cook some dishes, regardless of their expertise or creativity. Wellton et al. (2018) came to a similar conclusion, explaining that a chef’s daily activity involves continuous handling of the same objects.

Time management and communication are also critical skills for chefs. As Sohn and Lee (2018) explained, chefs are in charge of providing food to customers, and this needs to arrive in a timely fashion and be of a consistently high standard. Similarly, Zopiatis and Melanthiou (2019) believed that a chef must be able to work quickly and effectively under time pressure. Allen and Mac Con Iomaire (2016a) concluded that a capable chef is someone who can manage time effectively, so as to complete all tasks to a high standard. Communication is also important, as the role of a chef requires teamwork and cooperation (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016b). Pratten (2003) commented that chefs reinforce their professional status by effectively communicating about meal preparation to produce quality and time-efficient meals. The quality of a chef’s verbal and nonverbal communications affects their performance, especially when the role involves providing and receiving instructions in a busy, noisy, and fast-paced environment (Sohn & Lee, 2018).

Apart from technical skills, the chef profession also requires individuals with specific personalities and characteristics. Wan et al. (2017) pointed out that chefs need to be caring, sociable, encouraging, and open-minded, with a strong drive to sustain hard work. Johnston and Phelan (2016) highlighted characteristics such as diligence, passion, engagement, and stamina, as keys to success in the chef profession. Ko (2012) emphasised characteristics such as dedication and passion, as well as intrinsic characteristics such as determination and the ability

to work hard, as being the necessary competencies of a chef. Being ambitious and willing to take risks and seize opportunities to make progress, is also vital for a chef (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996). Attention to detail has also been mentioned as essential for consistently producing high-quality food (Ko, 2012; Sohn & Lee, 2018). Baraban and Durocher (2010) addressed the importance of chefs being customer oriented, and paying attention to customers' needs and wants. Interestingly, increasing importance is being placed on characteristics such as being outgoing and sociable. Alonso and O'Neill (2010) pointed out that chefs have become performers or exhibitionists since open kitchens became a trend, as customers enjoy having close contact with the chefs.

Having a passionate attitude, especially a passion for food, is considered a must for a chef (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Cain et al., 2018; Hendley, 2017). Scholars associate passion with a sustainable chef career, because when people are passionate about something, they are often more committed, dedicated, and willing to make sacrifices and compromises as needed (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Zopiatis et al., 2011). Similarly, Jones (1999) pointed out that people without passion would not be able to sustain working in the culinary sector, given the long hours, low pay, and stressful working conditions. Conversely, Graham (2015) argued that a chef's passion is constructed during their practice, when they are engaged in and experiencing meaningful moments.

For this research, Zopiatis et al.'s (2011) definition best captures the competencies required in contemporary chefs. The authors, after studying the perspectives of chefs in Cyprus, categorised the competencies required to progress in the profession into six areas:

1. *Technical* – a chef needs to understand kitchen operations, have knowledge of cooking, costing and nutrition, be creative and sensitive to aesthetics, have a good sense of hygiene and safety, and be able to offer cultural and international cuisine.
2. *Non-technical* – a chef should possess emotional, social, and cognitive intelligence, demonstrate ethics and professionalism, and have leadership skills.
3. *Personal qualities* – a chef should be open-minded and conscientious, able to remain emotionally stable, and extroverted.

4. *Self-concept* – a chef needs to have a positive attitude and good values to mitigate the high degree of stress involved in the role
5. *Motive* – a chef needs a good sense of worth, to be motivated, and set goals to achieve, and be able to establish social affiliations.
6. *Physical state* – chefs need to be fit so they can keep up with the fast pace of a kitchen.

Researchers have also associated a chef with someone who has undergone extensive, and lengthy training, either on the job or through professional education providers (Harris & Giuffre, 2010). As James (2006) explained, chefs acquire their knowledge and skills from both formal and informal learning, where *formal learning* is defined as being from an institution and/or provider, and *informal learning* is related more to learning that occurs in a workplace. There has been debate on whether formal education is required to be a chef. Historically, many chefs received informal training; they started as apprentices and learnt the skills through on-the-job training (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016a; Ko, 2012).

The literature outlines the importance of on-the-job experience versus formal education. Most studies report the need for informal practical learning in known restaurants with great chefs (Abecassis-Moedas et al., 2016; James, 2006). Cameron (2004) pointed out that apprenticeship and learning from peers and mentors are considered the most effective forms of education in the chef profession. James (2006) agreed, observing that a chef's advancement in knowledge and skills is constructed from both the direct guidance of senior chefs and the indirect self-learning in the production environments of kitchens. She further explained that chefs construct their knowledge of the organisational and structural framework of the kitchen as well as their skills, as they experience the space, tempo, routines, hierarchy, and workflow of the kitchen during their apprenticeship (see James, 2006). However, informal training is valid only when the knowledge and practical skills are obtained from training over long periods of time in various food and beverage establishments (James, 2006; Johnston & Phelan, 2016).

Other studies consider formal culinary training is essential to be considered as a qualified chef. Such studies suggest that formal education equips a chef with

culinary knowledge, while an apprenticeship increases aptitude and motivation (e.g. Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016a). Hegarty (2011) emphasised the importance of education and explained that chefs' education has moved beyond craft-based vocational education and training into a more cognitive higher-education framework which includes culinary arts, gastronomy, and culinary science and technology. Studies in the US have found that compared with chefs who have been informally trained, chefs with formal education have better employment opportunities, and often receive higher pay and experience better promotion trajectories (Johnston & Phelan, 2016).

Some authors have highlighted a lack of empirical evidence to prove any correlation between culinary education and success in the chef profession (e.g. Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016b; Cameron, 2004; Ko, 2012). Various studies have found that chefs voluntarily engage in formal learning to further develop their techniques and improve their knowledge in operational skills and industry standards, as having these competencies potentially improves their career advancement opportunities (Cameron, 2004; Ko, 2012). Research shows that any form of culinary education enhances success in the chef profession, although whether it improves the salary or helps with progression remains unclear (Floyd, 2011; Hegarty, 2011; Woolcock, 2011).

Today, the title "chef" has become a term generally referring to someone with recognised extensive and lengthy training, either on the job or from professional education providers (Harris & Giuffre, 2010). Allen and Mac Con Iomaire (2016a) summarised this by writing that the length of a chef's working experience is fundamental to achieving a higher position, and academic education seems to play an increasingly important role in career progression. A chef needs to have the above-mentioned skills. However, modern kitchens and the changes in the industry could introduce different competencies. Both Shon and Lee (2018) and Alonso and O'Neill (2015) explored the open kitchen environment and its influence on chefs' competency. Shon and Lee (2018) found that, in an open kitchen, chefs' nonverbal communications strongly affect the service quality. This potentially indicates another required skill for chefs.

2.4 Different professionals in the chef sector

The terms “cook” and “chef” are both used to refer to professionals who prepare and cook food. However, this research focuses on the professional chef, so it is important to distinguish between cooks and chefs, especially given that the two terms are often used interchangeably in academic literature. Furthermore, there are distinct hierarchies within the general “chef” category, depending on the specific role and the workplace, and even within the same hierarchies, there can be several different terms for the same role.

Although both cooks and chefs have cooking techniques and culinary-related skills and knowledge, there is a distinct difference between the two professions. Harris and Giuffre (2015) distinguish between a cook and a chef by referring to the working environment and responsibilities. According to Harris and Giuffre (2015), a cook prepares food in a more casual kitchen environment, while a chef is the chief of a higher-end restaurant kitchen who is expected to manage staff and oversee the development of menus and purchasing processes. While Druckman (2010) suggested a similar classification, she pointed out that a cook performs unskilled tasks, and the role is considered as a more working-class one, whereas a chef represents the company, as its culinary expert.

In addition to responsibilities, Pratten and O’Leary (2007) differentiated between a cook and a chef by the level of training each has received, and commented that a cook requires guidance and instruction from an experienced chef to perform certain types of food preparation. As a result, in the structure of a kitchen, a person in a lower-level role, such as someone responsible for preparing soup or chopping vegetables, would be addressed as the “soup cook” or the “vegetable cook,” while someone working in a higher-level role that involves menu planning and management of cooks would be addressed as a chef; for example, as “chef de partie” or “sous chef." This hierarchy is discussed further in section 2.4.2, The brigade structure.

Cooks are sometimes associated with institutions, where their responsibilities involve preparing and cooking dishes for schools, hospitals, retirement or long-term care homes, childcare centres, correctional facilities and corporates (Leschziner, 2007). Depending on the requirement, these cooks, sometimes

referred to as “institutional cooks,” prepare meals in both small and large quantities using bulk-cooking methods. Furthermore, they follow pre-set menus to prepare foods that meet health and dietary needs, religious needs, ethnic preferences and budgetary requirements (Leschziner, 2007; Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2009). Given these circumstances, cooks need to be able to cook meals using industrial kitchen appliances with instructions from a senior professional, but they do not need to be creative or have management skills (Chivers, 1972; Rowley & Purcell, 2001).

2.4.1 Different types of chefs

This research focuses on commercial chefs who plan and organise the preparation and cooking of food in a dining establishment (see Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The workplaces of commercial chefs include a range of commercial food and beverage establishments such as hotels, restaurants, and cafés. Subsumed under the broad category of “commercial chef,” there are also other terms used to address chefs with different responsibilities or who work in different types of establishments.

Private chefs and personal chefs are roles that have emerged as an alternative to restaurant work for people passionate about cooking. A commercial chef is only allowed to cook items on a menu based on pre-designed recipes, and has to strictly follow the instructions of senior chefs to meet organisational requirements (Zopiatis et al., 2011), whereas private and personal chefs have much more freedom in what they cook. Flexibility and autonomy, higher pay, and better working conditions, lure commercial chefs to become a personal or private chef (Hendley, 2017). Many pursue a career as a personal or private chef because they want to establish their own business and become an entrepreneur; in this case, they can be creative, have more control, and achieve a better work-life balance (Hendley, 2017).

Personal chefs are self-employed entrepreneurs who cater for multiple clients in private or commercial kitchens (Hendley, 2016). Their job involves providing multiple meals based on requests, requirements and occasions; some personal chefs also offer cooking lessons (Wallace & Forte, 2007). Hendley (2017) believed personal chefs offer a new and professionalised form of domestic

cooking for families that have busy schedules and are searching for a healthy diet.

The term “personal chef” is sometimes used interchangeably with the term “private chef.” Both private and personal chefs perform similar jobs, working for various clients or institutions and catering for special dietary requirements and preferences (Ouellette, 2003). However, research has distinguished between private chefs and personal chefs. First, *private chefs* are salaried employees hired by an individual or family, and very often the clients are people with high socio-economic status (Wallace & Forte, 2007). Also, private chefs work on a full-time basis, sometimes even living on-site to cater for all their client’s meals. Specifically, the job of a private chef involves planning and preparing meals in a private environment and catering for functions and parties or other social events for their client (Hendley, 2016). Therefore, private chefs need to specialise in all areas, have in-depth culinary knowledge, and be able to manage a kitchen independently, from the initial deciding of the menu and organisation of ingredients (*mise en place)* through to cooking and cleaning up (Ouellette, 2003).

Celebrity chef is another known term in the sector. There is a growing body of literature focusing on the emergence of celebrity chefs (e.g. Clarke et al., 2016; Henderson, 2017; Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019). *Celebrity chefs* are defined as high-profile mass media personalities whose main duty is to entertain viewers through different media platforms (Clarke et al., 2016). Celebrity chefs’ jobs involve seeking positive publicity and strong media attention, eliciting audience response, and making a distinct contribution to society and culture to maintain their visible and distinctive celebrity status (Eckstein & Young, 2015; Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019). Modern celebrity chefs establish their brands through their charismatic personalities and have found fame and fortune.

The phenomenon of celebrity chefs has elevated the chef profession from that of a trade to a profession connoting knowledge and power (Clarke et al., 2016; Eckstein & Young, 2015). Some consider that celebrity chefs have made the culinary profession visible (Johnston et al., 2014; Villani et al., 2015). Zopiatis and Melanthiou (2019) pointed out that celebrity chefs make the profession and a chef’s job responsibilities known to the public, as traditionally, the chef works “back of house,” usually in the kitchen, and with limited customer interaction.

Johnston et al. (2014) found that the artistry and craftsmanship celebrity chefs showcase through media platforms strengthen the professional aspects of the chef profession. Some studies consider the glamourised portrayal of celebrity chefs by the media has changed the image of a chef from that of a low-pay trade role with low social status, to one of a “cool” and “modern” profession (Johnston et al., 2014; Villani et al., 2015; Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019).

Hoffman (2017) listed fourteen influences of celebrity chefs and they are categorised into economics, marketing, neuroscience, psychology and sociology disciplines. Some studies have suggested that celebrity chefs have created a trend in the food business and further contribute to the growth of culinary schools. The new image of the chef is that of a high-status professional, which attracts people to join the industry (Hendley, 2017). Zopiatis et al. (2014) found a positive association between celebrity chefs and the number of enrolments in culinary programmes. However, Baum (2015) argued that there is a lack evidence of a link between celebrity chefs and popularity of the culinary profession or proliferation of culinary-related education.

Their celebrity status allows celebrity chefs to influence the perceptions of the public. Celebrity chefs influence consumers’ purchasing and viewing habits, leisure time choices, and possibly even health, such as awareness of body mass index (Abbots, 2016; Henderson, 2011). Phillipov and Gale (2018) studied celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, and highlighted his influence in society, especially in relation to his contribution to advancements in cooking, food habits and ethics, consumption practices, and healthy eating. Interestingly, Caraher et al. (2000) found in their study that viewers consider celebrity chefs as entertainers, and are reluctant to use the information shared by them on television cooking programmes or other media platforms. This is because viewers believe that celebrity chefs are not experts capable of providing reliable advice on cooking and health matters (Caraher et al., 2000).

Celebrity chefs have contributed significantly to professional cooking gaining social status, and their names become brands that are valuable for restaurants and commercial products. This branding is closely related to the essential skills of an executive chef as mentioned earlier, such as maintaining relationships with customers, as well as marketing and promoting their business. Henderson (2011)

highlighted the importance of chefs using their reputation and celebrity status to develop and endorse their products and services.

However, some celebrity chefs receive criticism, when they are no longer just a chef – they become entrepreneurs, advocates, endorsers, and social media icons (Caraher et al., 2000; Phillipov & Gale, 2018). Studies have also examined how celebrity chefs use business growth strategies and tactics to turn their fame into a commodity to be produced and consumed (Caraher et al., 2000; Clarke et al., 2016; Rousseau, 2012). In the hospitality literature, research has also explored the entrepreneurial activities of celebrity chefs. Celebrity chefs' commercial endeavours include a vast array of goods and services such as tourist events, food festival appearances, cooking vacations, foodie tours, chef cruises, print publications, television shows, endorsements, cookbooks, branded foods, branded kitchenware, and restaurants (Abbots, 2016; Henderson, 2011; Phillipov & Gale, 2018).

Negative effects caused by celebrity chefs and media have also been identified. Celebrity chefs and their portrayals of the chef role in cooking competitions, culinary adventure television programmes and commercials, have been claimed to have negative effects. As Eckstein and Young (2015) explained, the cooking techniques demonstrated in cooking competitions are beyond the skill of the average person and make cooking appear overly turgid and tedious. Furthermore, commercial shows often encourage consumption of pre-made and pre-packaged foods. In addition, some studies have pointed out the disparity between the chef portrayed by the media, and the chef in reality. Research has found that the media showcase the glamourous aspects of celebrity chefs by focusing on the fame and rewards of a chef's role, while overlooking the poor working conditions and the long and hard trajectories needed to reach the top of the chef hierarchy (Brefere, 2008; Eckstein & Young, 2015). Rousseau (2012) explained that people often enter the industry and find the job is different from what they expected and decide to leave. As noted earlier, some believe that this disparity between expectations and reality creates high staff turnover and long-term damage to the industry (Hendley, 2017; Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019).

In addition, celebrity chefs, and their personality attributes demonstrated publicly, have an influence on public attitudes and behaviour, especially the social and

cultural perspectives of their followers or viewers (Caraher Lang, Dixon, 2000; Lane & Fisher, 2015). Lane and Fisher (2013) explored the positive influence of celebrity chefs on the student population, and found positive impact include helping them to learn different cultures, to learn food preparation skills. However, there remains a lack of published research investigating the potential controversial influences they may have to the public. As such, it remains questionable as to whether or not celebrity chefs make a difference to culinary practice amongst those who might seek advice on cooking, particularly young people (Sellaeg and Chapman, 2008). Despite the paucity of studies, there are some celebrity chefs including David Chang (Chang & Ulla, 2020) and Anthony Warner (Warner, 2017), who have published books to discuss the angry chef phenomenon and its relation to mental health and wellbeing.

2.4.2 The brigade structure

In the commercial chef sector, the brigade system is applied to address chefs at different levels. Different titles were developed according to a hierarchal system that codifies and delegates responsibilities and specialisations (Jones, 2014). In the 19th century, Auguste Escoffier developed the *brigade de cuisine* (kitchen brigade), which is a hierarchical system based on the French Army's system, that classifies different roles and responsibilities of individual positions in a kitchen (Starbuck, 2015). As many early chefs were former military soldiers who had served in the travelling army, the brigade system was based on the military hierarchy (Pack, 2002). Jones (2014) praised the brigade system and pointed out that it allows a kitchen to run with extreme precision based on a strict chain of command.

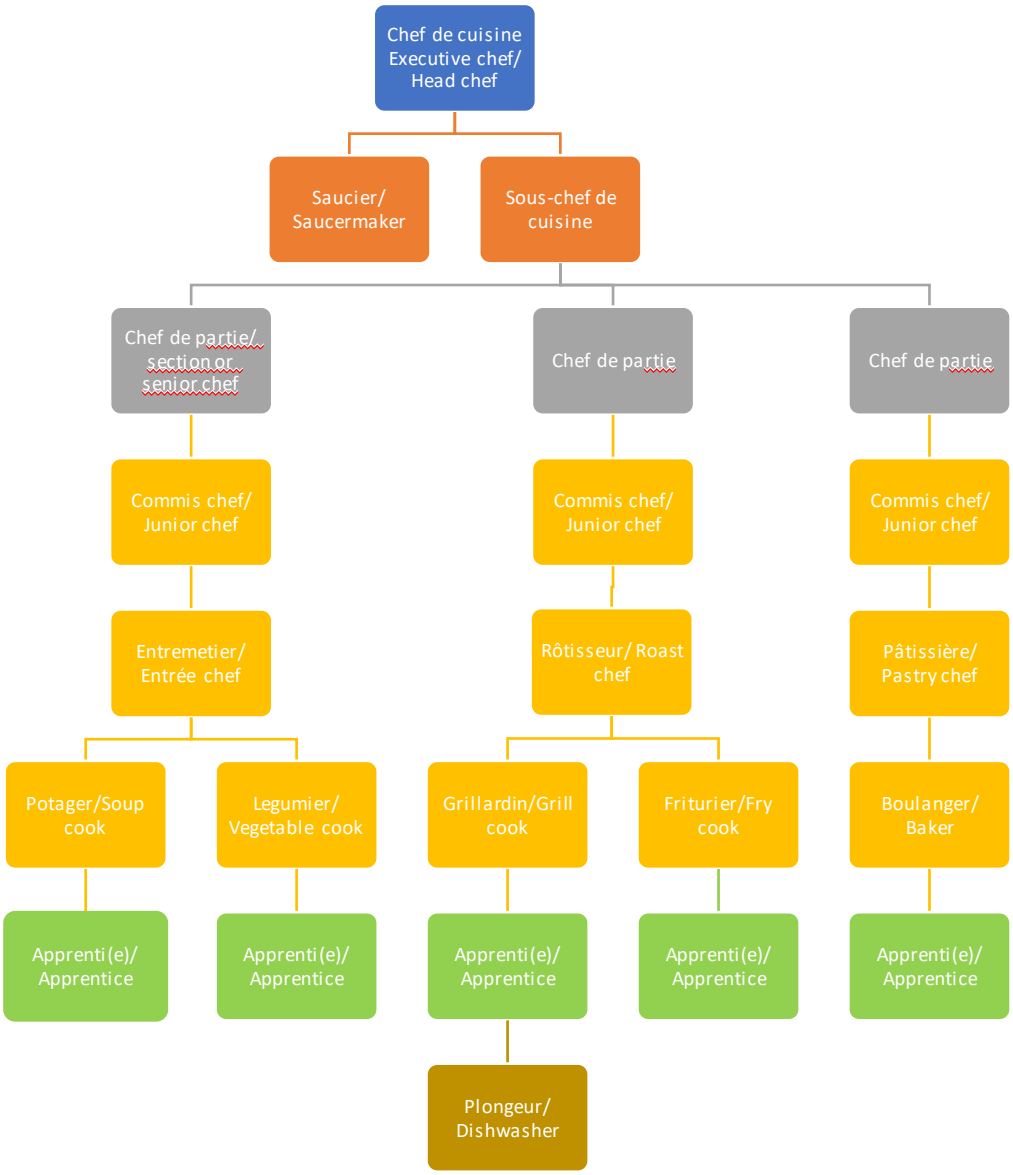
The brigade system has since been modified to suit contemporary restaurant operations. Traditionally, the brigade structure is very hierarchical and comprehensive, with responsibilities delegated to individuals specialising in specific areas in the kitchen (see Figure 2). Usually, a large establishment with an extensive staff would adopt the traditional brigade system. Today, many professional kitchens around the world have simplified the concept of the kitchen brigade, and have only executive chefs or head chefs managing and coordinating the kitchen activities (Bamsey, 2017; Pack, 2002). As Pack (2002) explained, the establishment of smaller commercial kitchens, the availability of processed and

pre-made food, and increasing labour costs, have all contributed to the abridged brigade system.

According to Kamal (2016), the modern kitchen has adapted the brigade system, keeping some of the roles and titles but adding teamwork with empowerment, two-way communication, and information exchange (see Figure 3). As a result, it is now common to see a small crew operating a kitchen and completing tasks in all areas assigned by their superiors. Although the system is now simpler, the structure is flatter, the working crew smaller, and the responsibilities of the chefs have increased (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996). In this structure, the executive chef (or head chef), who is at the top of the brigade, is required to manage and lead all areas of the kitchen.

Figure 1:

The Traditional Kitchen Brigade with Traditional French Terms to Describe Different Roles and Progressions



Note. Adapted from NSS enriching knowledge for the tourism and hospitality studies curriculum series (10): Compulsory part II – introduction to hospitality - food and beverage, by J. Hastings, 2014. Copyright (2014) by Jorge Hastings. Adapted with permission.

Figure 2*:*

The Contemporary Kitchen Structure for Smaller Establishments

Note. Adapted from *The kitchen brigade. The guide to kitchen organization,* by M. Ladiver, 2015. Copyright (2015) by Mark Ladiver. Adapted with permission.

2.4.3 The vertical and horizontal trajectories in chef profession

Both vertical and horizontal trajectories are important in the chef profession. A vertical trajectory represents progression within the organisational hierarchy, while occupational trajectories represent work-related movements across similar-status tiers with comparable responsibilities (Campos-Soria et al., 2011; Cormier-Macburnie et al., 2015). Pratten (2003) emphasised that the trajectory from the bottom to the top of the chef hierarchy is long, full of obstacles, and physically and psychologically hard. Chefs move up the ranks based on their technical skills, work experience, leadership, and management ability (Pack, 2002). Therefore, for chefs to advance in the brigade, they need to master all sections at their current level while learning new skills and knowledge for the next level. Studies have described this advancement in the brigade as a battle in the hierarchical military system (Druckman, 2010; Pratten, 2003).

The length of time needed for progression in the chef profession is thus considerable. According to the International Culinary Studio (n.d.), the vertical trajectory of a chef usually takes around ten years. In contrast, some studies have found that it takes between six and nine years to advance from the bottom to the top of the kitchen hierarchy (Brefere, 2008; Smilow, 2010). Furthermore, the International Culinary Studio (2019) listed the years of experience required for the four main levels of a chef: zero to two years for an apprentice/commis chef; three to four years for a chef de partie; four to eight years for a sous chef; and nine to ten years for an executive chef (see Figure 4). However, Hall (2014) pointed out that the time it takes to advance from apprentice to executive roles varies, depending on a person's performance and the organisational structure. Studies have also found that most head chefs or executive chefs with good status and income, had been working for many years (e.g. Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016b; Zopiatis & Melanthiou, 2019). Cain et al. (2018) associated the requirement for lengthy experience to how the industry and current practitioners still honour the traditional learning trajectories and believe that a chef needs to climb up from the bottom of the kitchen hierarchy.

2.4.3.1 Vertical trajectory of a chef

In terms of the vertical trajectory of a chef, without prior experience, one enters the professional kitchen at the bottom of the hierarchy as an apprentice. *Apprentices* are usually culinary students or trainees who want to receive practical training by working in a kitchen. Apprentices receive training in different sections, such as soup making, vegetable preparation, grilling, frying, and baking (The Culinary Institute of America, 2006). Depending on the requirements of the individual establishment, some apprentices are also responsible for managing stock and cleaning. In support of this view, Floyd (2011) concluded that at the entry level, an individual often engages in repetitive and low-skill tasks. Bamsey (2017) wrote that at the beginning of the chef trajectory, an individual is required to put in extra effort and work long hours to learn a lot of basic skills. In a larger establishment, an apprentice will advance to become a section chef, such as a soup chef or grill chef, before moving into a commis chef role. The *commis chef*, who is still a junior chef, works in a specific station such as entrées, roast, or pastry, while supervising the cooks and apprentices working within that station

(Bamsey, 2017). The commis chef also assists the chef de partie and other chefs with ingredient preparation.

To progress from being a commis chef to a chef de partie, the workers need to acquire more skills and knowledge. A *chef de partie,* also known as a "senior" or "station" chef, oversees a specific area of dish production in the kitchen. The chef de partie usually reports to both the sous chef and executive chef and assists with purchasing and stock management. A chef de partie also needs to manage the commis chefs and supervise their production in the section. Whilst still learning at the chef de partie level, a chef de partie can also contribute to discussions on meal preparation and balance (Garrigos et al., 2019). Over time, a chef de partie accumulates skills and knowledge to oversee the kitchen and preparation of dishes before advancing into a sous chef role.

In the progression from chef de partie to *sous chef*, the workers not only takes orders but also needs to give instructions (Bamsey, 2017). As a sous chef, one needs to support the executive/head chef to maintain the standard of service (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016b). The sous chef is also the port of call in the absence of the executive/head chef, so needs to be highly competent and able to lead a team to produce a large portion of the dishes on the menu (The Culinary Institute of America, 2006). To become a sous chef, a chef must progress through both the "cold" and "hot" kitchen. During this time, a sous chef learns to run the kitchen, plan menus, create rosters, and oversee other parts of service. A sous chef also needs to communicate and interact with the front-of-house staff, including menu education, and confirming customers' requirements. Acquiring the experience to move from sous chef to head chef (or executive chef) marks a significant transformation in a chef's professional trajectory.

2.4.3.1.1 Head/Executive chef

Wan et al. (2017) concluded that there is a clear line between chefs and the executive chef role in terms of skills and competencies, and this distinction prevents many chefs from being promoted to executive chefs. Indeed, the transition from a cooking-centred role to one that is organisation- and management-centred is challenging for many chefs. Many who had aspired to be a head chef leave the position because they do not like the administrative work,

and want to play a greater part in the cooking process (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016b; Brefere, 2008). As such, progressing into the role of executive chef is a notable accolade in the chef profession.

The *executive chef* sits at the top of the brigade system, and is also known as the "chef de cuisine," or "head chef." This person is responsible for the overall management of kitchen. In the head chef or executive chef position, the nature of the job changes; apart from giving instructions, new skills such as developing menus and managing staff as well as administrative work such as purchasing, and dealing with suppliers are required (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016b). The emphasis shifts from culinary and technical skills to management abilities in this role (Chivers, 1972).

It is also considered that when a person reaches the top of the kitchen hierarchy, recognition is received from industry, such as in *Michelin stars or chef hats*. Michelin stars and chef hats are rating systems that evaluate all aspects of a restaurant and are graded on a scale of one (star or hat) to three (Australian Good Food & Travel Guide, n.d.; Michelin Guide, 2018). A review is conducted by a panel of experts in the food and beverage sector who measure the restaurant against the assessment criteria and assign a grade. Chefs, especially executive chefs, play an important role in the grading, as food is one of the major components of the review. Indeed, studies point out that head chefs or executive chefs in some places focus on acquiring stars, rosettes, and other awards, while ensuring the quality of meal as well as designing menus, ordering, budgeting, recruiting, and training (Hendley, 2017; Rummell, 2012).

In their study of 170 head chefs, Allen and Mac Con Iomaire (2016a) categorised the competencies of a successful head chef into five areas: "professionalism, leadership skills, individual characteristics, management skills, and the skill to adapt or react based on the job context or environment" (p. 30). *Professionalism* relates to culinary competency and is an essential asset for becoming an executive chef. As Chivers (1972) pointed out, a recognised head or executive chef should be equipped with the knowledge and skills for cooking and serving, and that signify the sort of craftsmanship that informs professionalism. Professionalism or culinary skills serve as the foundation of a chef's capability, but are also associated with lengthy experience and life-long learning and training

in the restaurant industry (Roosipõld, 2011). In support of this idea, Pratten (2003) explained that professionalism, including knowledge and technical skills, are conveyed from experienced senior chefs to apprentices through a long period of disciplined work in kitchens, under physically and sometimes mentally difficult conditions. Pratten (2003) also stated that for an executive chef, technical culinary-specific competencies are critical, followed by management skills, and team leadership.

In addition to culinary skills, scholars generally agree that executive chefs need to be skilled in management (Bamsey, 2017; Doyle, 2017; Guyette, 1981; Wan et al., 2017). As Pratten (2003) explained, executive chefs are business managers at the same time as being culinary artists. Management skills are vital because, apart from cooking and maintaining the quality of food, an executive chef's role also involves supervising and managing various aspects of the operation, including finances, purchasing, menu design and staffing (Bamsey, 2017; Pack, 2002; Starbuck, 2015). A recent empirical study in Taiwan concluded that a successful executive chef must master hard skills such as revenue management, research ability, and menu design (Wan et al., 2017). Brefere (2008) similarly stressed that an executive chef needs skills in financial management, stock management, and staff management.

Leadership and good communication skills are also considered essential to transitioning from a chef to a head or executive chef. Leadership skills are closely related to supervising staff, staff management such as reducing turnover, and staff professional development. Cameron (2004) pointed out that an executive chef is responsible for the entire kitchen, particularly the professional development and passing on of skills and knowledge to junior staff. Similarly, Allen and Mac Con Iomaire (2016a) stated that the main duties of an executive chef are talent management, mentoring future leaders, reducing staff turnover, and developing the recipes. Interestingly, in their study of internationally known Michelin chefs, found that successful chefs create win-win situations using their leadership skills. That is, chefs build their reputation by providing mentorship, motivating staff and promoting teamwork. In turn, a good chef's reputation attracts like-minded people who share similar goals and objectives to work for them, forming a tight and effective team (O'Brien, 2012; Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2009).

Some individual characteristics have been found to be critical for managing professional kitchens. Chefs who pay attention to detail are said to lead effective and highly performing kitchens. After analysing comments from top chefs, food writers and industry expert, Pratten (2003), concluded that to reach the top of a kitchen hierarchy, a chef needs to have a good taste palate and pay attention to detail. Some scholars relate this attention to detail to being a perfectionist (Pratten, 2003). Wan et al. (2017) found essential soft competencies of an executive chef include emotion control, motivation, and an energetic attitude. Persistence, dedication, and commitment are also vital characteristics (Brefere, 2008; Floyd, 2011; Pratten, 2003; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007).

Ko (2012) pointed out that it is not enough to be equipped only with technical skills; to survive the tough working environment of a kitchen and progress to the top, a chef also needs to be determined and willing to continue learning and accumulate new experiences. The willing-to-sacrifice mindset has also been mentioned. For example, an executive chef must be prepared to advance at the expense of family and personal life (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016a; Bartholomew & Garey, 1996). O'Brien (2012) concluded that a successful head chef is driven by attitude, constancy, and knowledge of the best way to fulfil set objectives, while at the same time, paying attention to every detail.

How a chef adapts and reacts to the job context or environment also matters, especially when the market is competitive and diverse. Wan et al. (2017) emphasised that the role of an executive chef involves both management and the kitchen, which requires vital skills for facing the ever-increasing operational and marketing challenges in the industry. O´Brien (2012) observed that a successful head chef should have intuition, be experimental, have a complete view of the industry, and be focused on execution. Allen and Mac Con Iomaire (2016a) believed a successful executive chef is one who has an international focus and can keep up with trends in the industry. In relation to this, some scholars have stressed the importance of continued learning and professional development (Brefere, 2008; Cameron, 2004; Ko, 2012). For instance, Cain et al. (2018) mentioned that with the growing use of the internet and social media, these have now become an important skill for executive and head chefs. The entertainment aspect of the chef's role has also been discussed, especially as many

contemporary kitchens are open kitchens that allow customers to interact with chefs (Demetry, 2013).

Factors needed to succeed and those involved in becoming a successful head chef include professionalism, leadership skills, individual characteristics, management skills, and how the individual interacts within the job context or environment. Aspirants to higher positions should also be prepared to be patient for success, as the majority of head chefs earning the highest wages have been working for many years (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016b; PayScale New Zealand, n.d.).

2.4.3.2 Horizontal trajectory of a chef

The chef sector is identified as having rapid and regular horizontal occupational trajectories (Ayres, 2006). It has been found that chefs move sideways in their roles, taking jobs of similar status to improve their breadth of skills, experience, and knowledge for progressing vertically in the future (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016a; James, 2006). For example, a chef de partie needs to train in all areas of the kitchen, usually starting in the cold kitchen and progressing into hot sections such as grilling or frying. Some chefs engage in horizontal trajectories by travelling and working in overseas countries. Pratten (2003) stated that it is in the nature of many chefs to move around jobs to accumulate experience. A horizontal trajectory is often taken at the chef de partie level, where chefs tend to search for further training at various establishments (Brefere, 2008). It is considered that accumulated overseas work experiences can also fast track chefs from chef de partie to a sous chef position.

2.5 Understanding gender in the chef profession

Gender differences in hospitality work and employment have become an important consideration in hospitality research (Baum, 2019; S. Mooney et al., 2017). Before considering discussions about women chefs and women executive chefs, it is important to examine the concept of gender itself, and gender roles and their effect, as the literature is replete in this area.

As briefly mentioned in Chapter One, an argument posited in the literature is that gender is considered to be socially constructed. According to Butler (1999),

human beings are not born with a specific gender, but they act, walk, and speak in ways that connote an impression of being either a man or a woman. The term "gender" was appropriated by feminists attempting to distinguish biological differences from social/psychological ones. Feminists argue that many differences between women and men are socially produced, and therefore, changeable. For example, the feminist Rubin (1975) proposed that biological differences are fixed between women and men, whereas gender differences are the results of social interventions. As Haslanger (2000) explained, gender (women and men) and gendered traits (like being nurturing or ambitious) are the products of social practices. Masculinity and femininity are causally constructed (Haslanger, 1995), and social forces either have a causal role in bringing gendered individuals into existence, or shaping the way we are as women and men. The mechanism of construction is social learning. Studies also associate gender differences with cultural rather than biological contexts (e.g. Ali et al., 2011; Risman & Davis, 2013).

Feminists categorise women as females with feminine behavioural traits, and men as males with masculine behavioural traits (Butler, 1999). The words "female" and "femininity" have traditionally been associated with being "passive, emotional, nurturing, dependent, fearful and soft-spoken among other things" (Shaw & Lee, 2014, p. 324). Berkery et al. (2013) stated that females are considered fragile and weak, socially and physically; people often describe females as peaceful, passive, and emotional, whereas males are generally considered more strong, assertive, leading, and brave. According to Butler (2004), gender roles are necessary for gendered individuals, and enable women and men to persist through time as women and men. However, Butler (2004) stated that the gender roles that encode the aforementioned traits are just illusions created by ideas and practices that seek to render gender uniform, through heterosexism, the view that "heterosexuality is natural, and homosexuality is deviant" (Butler, 1999, p. 42).

Considerations of different gender roles have framed how women and men should act and perform, significantly influencing their development in various ways. For example, gender roles about femininity have encouraged women to engage in roles that are undervalued or underpaid, such as social care workers and cleaners (Ali et al., 2011; Berkery et al., 2013; Madichie, 2013). As Ali et al.,

(2011) explained, gender roles portray females as weak and not competitive, limiting their career development, loading inadequate power and resources into the domestic economy, and exacerbating divisions of labour. It has also been suggested that men are more likely to hold senior management positions (e.g., chief executive), and earn more than do females, even in female-dominated professions (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Prior studies have generally emphasised that gendered roles and beliefs about how women and men should behave, generate gender stereotypes and occupational segregation (Harris & Giuffre, 2009; Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

2.5.1 Gender stereotyping and segregation in occupations

According to the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (n.d.), a *gender stereotype* is a generalised view or preconception about attributes, characteristics, or roles, that are, or ought to be, held or performed by women or men, depending on the roles. Gender stereotyping is considered harmful, as it limits women's and men's beliefs in their personal abilities, restricts their choice of professions and their career performance, and interferes with decisions they make about their lives.

Watts (1998) describes *gender segregation* in an occupation, as the uneven distribution of female and male labour in the occupational structure due to gender. Supporting this, Berkery et al. (2013) pointed out that occupation segregation is a result of gender stereotyping. Gender and occupation segregation have been studied in various industries, such as in gaming (e.g., McGurren, 2014; Prescott & Boggs, 2014), information technology (e.g., Kirk, 2009; Kirkup et al., 2010), trades (e.g., Struthers and Strachan, 2019), and aviation (e.g. McCarthy et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2006). Literature from a variety of countries has examined gender segregation in hospitality sectors such as in the hotel industry in Canada (e.g. Blayney & Blotnicky, 2010), the United States (e.g. Brownell, 1994), New Zealand (e.g. Mooney et al., 2017), and in the tourism industry in Brazil (e.g. Ferreira & Silva, 2016).

Soria et al.'s (2016) investigation of gender segregation in the hospitality sector in Andalusia found significant segregation, with horizontal segregation being obvious in the hotel industry, and both horizontal and vertical segregation evident

in the restaurant sector. Confirming these findings, Blayney and Blotnicky (2010) and Mooney (2014) found significantly more men than women in hospitality management positions. Studies have also identified that w general managers in the hotel industry face multiple difficulties and obstacles to their career advancement compared with those of male managers (Brownell, 1994; Mooney et al., 2007). Occupational segregation is categorised into horizontal and vertical (Watts, 1998). The following subsections discuss the literature on these two types of segregation.

2.5.1.1 Horizontal segregation

According to the Ministry for Women (2016), *gendered horizontal segregation* refers to the concentration of a gender in particular professions or economic activities. A literature review revealed that women still bear most of the home care responsibilities and have more extended work hours than do men in all regions of the world when considering unpaid works (Ferrant et al., 2014). Indeed, women in the labour force generally receive less financial reward for the same work, and are less likely than are men to achieve higher ranks, and their unpaid work hours are longer than are men's (Haveman & Beresford, 2011; Lin & Morley, 2014). Moreover, Ortiz-Ospina and Tzvetkova (2017) pointed out that women's global participation in the paid workforce has remained steady in the last two decades, but at much lower levels than those of men (52% versus 77%). In the 2015 New Zealand census, males occupied the majority of manual jobs such as trades and labouring, whereas females were more likely to be in jobs related to sales, nursing, teaching, social work, and some low-skilled jobs such as cleaning (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

There is a lack of women in male-dominated occupations, and vice versa (Internet World Stats, 2019). This uneven representation reflects the gendered belief in Western culture that women are better in jobs that involve service, nurturing, and social interaction, while men are problem solvers equipped with analytical skills (Struthers & Strachan, 2019). Hart's (2007) study of female engineers' employment and wages, before, during and after World War II in Britain, used the phrases "women doing men's work" and "women doing women's work" (p.115). These phrases indicate that based on the dominant gender, jobs are socially categorised as either women's or men's work (Hart, 2007). Men's work includes

industries dominated by men, often skilled, with economic or non-economic rewards, and higher social status (Campos-Soria et al., 2011; Hart, 2007; Watts, 1998). On the contrary, women's historical association with domestic unpaid work and part-time jobs, frames women's work as routine, poorly paid, lacking in rewards, and with little decision-making autonomy (Singh & Pattanaik, 2020; Ross & Wright, 1998;). Blau and Kahn (2016) further pointed out that although women are slowly breaking traditional gender norms and entering male-dominated professions such as law, accounting, and management, progress in the blue-collar occupations and trades is still slow.

Gender horizontal segregation within occupations and its adverse effects, are well documented in the literature. Studies have examined inequality between women and men related to their respective rights, nature of work and incomes (Berkery, et al., 2013; Blayney & Blotnicky, 2010; Chantreuil & Lebon, 2015; Pizarro et al., 2017; Soria et al., 2016; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2010). Gender segregation at work contributes significantly to earning inequality (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Cooper, 1998; Vinkenburg & Weber, 2012). Gender-segregated pay gaps persist around the world (Statistics New Zealand, 2015), including in New Zealand where salaries in female-dominated occupations are less than those in occupations dominated by men (Ministry for Women, 2015).

In fact, much of the current gender segregation literature focuses on the issues of pay equality and equity between women and men (Abendroth et al., 2017; Chi & Li, 2014; Fortin et al., 2017; Fransen et al., 2012; Manning & Saidi, 2010; Lin & Morley, 2014). Studies have identified the relationship between gender segregation and pay gaps in industries such as tourism (Ferreira & Silva, 2016), hospitality (Campos-Soria et al., 2011), and printing (Dawson, 2014). A gender pay gap between women and men chefs has also been revealed (Kiefer, 2002; Orido, 2017). Researchers have noted that salary inequities (or the female-male pay gap) exemplify gender inequality and discrimination, and inhibit women's progression in their professions (Chantreuil & Lebon, 2015; Fortin et al., 2017). Indeed, Walby and Olsen (2002) argued that gender segregation has a significant impact on an individuals' development in their professional pathways.

It is challenging to work in a horizontal gender-segregated occupation. Women who work in male-dominated professions often face challenges such as sexual

harassment, hostile attitudes from male counterparts, and exclusion from social networks (Blum, 1991; Campos-Soria et al., 2009; Karmel & Maclachlan, 1988). Mitchell et al. (2006) found in their study of women pilots, that women in the profession suffer from sexist jokes, derogatory comments, and aggressive and sexist behaviour from their male counterparts and passengers. Men have been found reluctant to share their traditional masculine domains with women, which scholars have attributed to management strategies as well as organisational culture, value, norms and attitudes, all of which are socially constructed (Campuzano, 2019; Hearn & Collinson, 1998).

A review of the literature also highlighted that men struggle in professions dominated by women. Many so-called "women's jobs" have lower pay and lower social status than do jobs dominated by men (Abendroth et al., 2017; Ross & Wright, 1998). Men in women-dominated occupations similarly suffer from stereotypical perceptions (Campuzano, 2019; Struthers & Strachan, 2019). However, studies have found that men in women-dominated roles still have advantages over their female counterparts. Bielby and Williams (1995) and Williamson (2008) reported that men in so-called "women's jobs," receive higher pay, more workplace support, and better promotion opportunities. Since 2011, figures have shown that over a three-month period, men, on average, earn more than NZ$3000 more than do women in the same profession (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

2.5.1.2 Vertical segregation

According to Soria et al. (2016), *vertical segregation* is "the concentration of each gender at different levels of responsibility" (p. 27). Vertical segregation is the consequence of a visible or invisible obstacle for a specific group of workers. Invisible obstacles are sometimes referred to as a *glass ceiling,* a concept developed by Marilyn Loden in 1978 and further defined by the United States Glass Ceiling Commission in 1995 as "the unseen barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievement" (The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995, p. 25). The New Zealand Ministry for Women (2016) indicated that vertical gender segregation results in the clustering of men at the top of occupational hierarchies, and women, at the bottom or middle; that is, with women

disproportionately under-represented at the top. In this sense, it is evident that gender is detrimental to both women and men's professional pathways (Abendroth et al., 2017; Blayney & Blotnicky, 2010; Campos-Soria et al., 2009; Mooney et al., 2017).

Gender stereotypes create unequal standards for women and men in the workplace (Ortega et al., 2015). In other words, even with the same level of education and skills, women's and men's competencies are measured differently (Bierema, 2016). According to Madsen (2017), women are held to a higher confirmatory standard; in other words, they must perform better and work harder than do men, to be perceived as competent and to receive the same rewards (Badura et al., 2018; Bierema, 2016; Fortin et al., 2017). Parker and Arrowsmith (2012) pointed out that gender segregation is also reflected in hiring processes and in opportunities for advancement, as women need to work harder than do men, for the same recognition or promotion. In this circumstance, women may feel that their organisations do not take them seriously, that they do not receive challenging opportunities, and as a consequence, do not receive the pays or positions commensurate with their talents (Debebe, 2019). This phenomenon perpetuates the levels of segregation and further strengthens perceptions about specific women's and men's jobs.

Research has shown that women leaders are often regarded or presented as breaking traditional stereotypes (Bierema, 2016; Gewinner, 2020), yet their differences and challenges to stereotypical assumptions can disadvantage them from advancing in their professions (Campuzano, 2019; Champions for Change, 2019; Klenke, 2018; Misquitta & Ingley, 2016). The stereotypical perception that men are the better managers, disadvantages women. According to Bierema (2016), women are less likely than men to be considered as managers, resulting in men being more likely to be in senior management roles such as general manager, chief executive officer, or managing director, than are women. This is because there is a socialised belief, that unlike men, women lack the required managerial skills and traits (Berkery et al., 2013). In support of this, Misquitta and Ingley (2016) found that women are considered to be incompetent managers because they are unable to lead and make decisions, are less competitive, avoid taking risks, and allow their emotions to affect their work performance. Eagly and Karau (2002) found there is a specific resistance to women managers because

women are likely to have less experience in senior positions. They added that women have problems with leadership style, have more difficulties managing work-life balance, and under-invest in social capital (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

However, this stereotypical perception is changing, and women managers and their characteristics are gradually being recognised. Scholars (e.g. Badura et al., 2018; Debebe, 2019; Madsen, 2017; Misquitta & Ingley, 2016) have identified that the gap between leadership roles and gender is shrinking. Badura et al. (2018) stated that perceptions of leadership have moved from “think manager, think male” to a balance of female and male characteristics. In other words, women are starting to be viewed as having leadership potential. This notion corresponds with Campuzano's (2019) review of leadership, and gender literature evidencing that women are better managers than are men.

Similarly, Ortega et al. (2015) found that women managers bring improved performance and profitability to organisations, initiate better teamwork with innovation and fresh perspectives, and inspire vision among their employees. As such, Powell (2011) argued that women’s feminine attributes and practices are increasingly necessary for leadership in male-dominant workplace cultures, given the current diversified global economy. Interestingly, Kent et al. (2010) found no correlation between gender and management styles and effectiveness. Oher researchers have also pointed out that the evidence currently available has revealed minimal gender differences, although women have been found to be more transformational, collaborative, democratic, encouraging, and relational than are men (Debebe, 2019; Eagly, 2015).

A review of literature therefore shows that gender has a major role in organisational culture and creates biased management and employment strategies that disadvantage women and their professional progressions. Blayney and Blotnicky (2010), Martin and Barnard (2013) and Watkins and Smith (2014) posited that in male-dominated occupations, men have more resources and power to decide organisational practices and policies, thereby constraining women’s participation in making decisions or formulating policy. In addition, women managers have difficulty accessing informal professional social networks (Burton, 2015; Timberlake, 2005), there is a gender bias that limits the organisational areas or teams they lead (Badura et al., 2018), they lack work-life

balance support (Finch, 2014), and face gender wage gaps and delayed promotions (Fortin et al., 2017; Manning & Saidi, 2010). Studies have found that biased evaluation and discrimination in the advancement process, prevent women from attaining managerial roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Misquitta & Ingley, 2016).

Moreover, framed by their organisation's culture, women's self-perceptions may act as barriers to advancement. Campuzano (2019) explained that organisational culture is a product of social learning and can be absorbed unconsciously, and that a stereotypical culture can influence individuals' behaviours and self-esteem. Women who work in places where their male colleagues or organisation undermine their capabilities, or where they are considered less competent than are men, have less efficacy (Gobaw, 2017). Research has identified that men have higher self-esteem, whereas women under-estimate themselves (Beyer, 1990; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014). Ortega et al. (2015) also suggested that women lack confidence in their competence and therefore tend not to search for recognition, title, and awards from competitions. Further, they explained that because of their self-perceptions and the standards they expect themselves to achieve, women are less likely to put themselves forward or promote themselves.

Indeed, Gobaw (2017) listed barriers to women's participation in leadership, including their own lack of self-empowerment, self-belief, and confidence. Ultimately, this self-underrating of women's management skills and abilities constrains them from having managerial positions (Bierema, 2016; Klenke, 2018). That said, different views have also been proposed. Martin and Barnard (2013), for example, observed that women and men have different career drivers; men search for status, power, and social comparison, while women want to do a good job and contribute to organisational performance. Sturges (1999) found that women managers relate their success to intangible and internal criteria such as personal recognition, influence, accomplishment, and achievement, rather than hierarchical progression or financial reward.

2.5.1.3 Women and progression in a gender segregated profession

There has been much scholarly discussion about women and their progressions through their professions (e.g. Bierema, 2016; Champions for Change, 2019;

Debebe, 2019; Klenke, 2018). Studies have generally identified that women deal with gender segregation in their occupations by changing their behaviours. The literature argues that people learn models of behaviour through observational and vicarious experience (Fryling et al., 2011). These models of behaviour may be observed in the immediate social environment. As Bandura (2001) explained, values, styles of thinking and behaviour patterns can all be learned from the environment.

Various behaviours have been adopted by women to deal with gender segregation. Martin and Barnard (2013) observed two alternative coping strategies and resources that women managers apply in male-dominated occupations; either they appreciate their femininity and integrate this into their work identity, or they adopt male characteristics such as masculine language and behaviours, to fit in. Very often, women managers apply the latter strategy, and take on male attributes. Françoise (2002) found that women managers felt the need to appear as qualified as their male counterparts, so they often constrained their feminine characteristics. Similarly, studies have shown that women leaders limit their nurturing and communal attributes to avoid losing credibility as leaders (Kent et al., 2010; Madichie, 2013). Furthermore, many women adapt to masculine cultural norms (Campuzano, 2019; Harris & Giuffre, 2009; Ortega et al., 2015). Despite this, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) pointed out that women leaders who engage in masculine behaviour are often devalued, when compared with male leaders.

When adopting masculine behaviours, many women leaders find themselves trapped in a double bind (Bierema, 2016; Campuzano, 2019); women do not want to be seen as too masculine or too feminine, but strive to become ideal managers by engaging in masculine behaviours and an unwavering commitment to the organisation. Ortega et al. (2015) further explained that women managers face the dilemma of being either likeable, or a competent leader. Socially held stereotypes dictate that women are not supposed to behave like men, so when a woman behaves as a competent leader, which means behaving in a way that is more masculine, the woman is disliked by her colleagues, both women and men. However, if the woman is nurturing and caring – i.e. behaves as society expects a woman to behave – she is considered a less competent leader. Balancing these attributes is challenging, and often at odds with women's identity and conflicts

between life and work. According to Costigan (2018), women are stuck between the need to resist and retain their femininity, and accommodating patriarchal politics by engaging in masculine tactics. Research has also found contradictions in women's behaviours; some women apply femininity, but at the same time adopt male characteristics (Watkins & Smith, 2014; Jeanes, 2007). This behaviour of adapting and/or avoiding certain characteristics has been termed 'doing gender."

In 1987, Candace West and Don Zimmermann, based on the work of Kessler and McKenna, introduced the concept of "doing gender" and distinguished gender in terms of its traits, social roles, and the societal representations that frame and manifest as femininity and masculinity. West and Zimmerman (1987) explained that *doing gender* "involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micro-political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine natures" (p.126). Butler (1999) later pointed out that the reality of gender is the effect of public discourse and the gender logic that rules culture. For example, Cops and Pleysier (2011) in their research on doing gender behaviour, found that in terms of reporting crime and demonstrating fear, men tend to perform doing gender and act more fearlessly than do women.

Butler introduced gender performativity theory in her essay "Performative acts and gender constitution" published in 1988. This performative argument, which was further developed in Butler's (1990) book, *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity, posits* that both sex and gender are performance constructed by social and other power structures. As Butler (1999) defined, *gender performativity* means that gender is something we do, not something we are. To say that gender is performative, means that understandings of gender, and positioning as gendered or sexual beings, are achieved through the repetition and enactment of these activities (Goldberg, 2013). Butler (1999) argued that individuals pretend that their gendered behaviour is authentic and spontaneous and try to perform their femininity/masculinity in a socially correct way to avoid being categorised as abnormal, and isolated by society. In this way, gender is imposed as a compulsory compilation, forcing people to unconsciously meet gender-specific social requirements and standards (Green, 2007).

Deutsch (2007) explained that *doing gend*er involves a complex interplay of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast

particular pursuits as expressions of feminine or masculine natures. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), doing gender is carried out in the virtual or real presence of others presumed to be oriented to its production (p. 126). Butler (2004) asserted that gender is always done collaboratively; no-one does gender alone. As Butler (2004) defined, gender is "practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint" (p.1), that is always within a social context, and never outside ideology. Haslanger (1995) concluded that doing gender is a process of categorising, and therefore, gender is not something ascribed to a person, but is negotiated in interactions with society. Doing gender perpetuates sexism and segregation, as it promotes the perceived value of one gender over another (Shaw & Lee, 2014).

2.5.1.4 Organisation and management level's role in gender segregation

When faced with segregation, many women leave their roles, while some find negotiating strategies and move up. Various studies have examined strategies and methods that organisations or managers can apply to reduce gender bias, and both horizontal and vertical segregation at work. Campuzano (2019) attributed the scarcity of women in managerial roles to gender traits and social stereotypes that construct organisational culture. Organisations' actions have a major influence on gender-segregated occupations, so a lack of support from an organisation in regards to segregation harms staff retention (Campos-Soria et al., 2009; Karmel & Maclachlan, 1988). This occurs because the difficulty of penetrating historically male-dominated occupations makes the environment unattractive to women.

Struthers and Strachan (2019) related the low participation of women in male-dominated jobs to a lack of organisational attention and policy action. Badura et al. (2018) suggested that organisations create awareness of a natural tendency for leadership and provide training programmes to assist women to overcome biases. Bierema (2009) pointed out the need for robust and fair hiring and promotion processes that provide equal opportunities for all applicants. Gobaw (2017) suggested that enhancing policy and service provision would improve women managers' working conditions. However, Klenke (2018) argued that the complexity rests on the context, particularly the role of national and social cultures as influencers on organisational cultures and structures. Therefore, Struthers and

Strachan (2019) recommended that only systematic cooperation across government, industry, unions, the school sector, and career advisors, could sustainably increase female participation in male-dominated industries. Other actions considered beneficial to reducing gender segregation include gender awareness education as well as career interventions and advice to encourage students to pursue occupations regardless of social stereotypes and boundaries (Soria et al., 2016).

Management is a strong influence on workplace and organisational cultures (Campuzano, 2019), which include gender segregation. Research has indicated that commitment from those in management is needed for women to achieve better representation in managerial roles and a narrowing down of the gender pay gap (Badura et al., 2018; Bierema, 2016; Debebe, 2019). Scholars have pointed out the need for women to lead and change the organisational culture as managers. According to Debebe (2019), when women lead from the top, it sends a message about a different power structure and redefines the characteristics of a manager. As Ortega et al. (2015) explained, women managers generate both internal and external changes in a male-dominated organisation, making changes within the organisation and influencing subordinates. This further reconstruction or revision of organisational culture help reduce segregation.

Other studies have identified factors that motivate and sustain women and women managers in a male-dominated environment, including an optimistic expectation of future development, challenging work and work engagement, and recognition and success (Campuzano, 2019; Debebe, 2019). Mentorship is also essential for women leaders in male-dominated environments (Bierema, 2016; Klenke, 2018; Martin & Barnard, 2013; Misquitta & Ingley, 2016; Ortega et al., 2015). The idea of that women can challenge traditional cultural norms and enter gender-atypical roles has often resulted in a lack of social, emotional, and work support from workplaces, colleagues, and sometimes, even family. Accordingly, Debebe (2019) emphasised the importance of having women role models to help women progress in their professions and overcome segregation without the need to fit the image of an ideal manager. Ross and Wright (1998) identified three influences on women's progression in their professions: parents, family or upbringing, and schools and education.

2.6 The situation of women chefs and women executive chefs

As noted earlier, it is difficult to find women chefs occupying prime positions in a kitchen, as they tend to have intermittent trajectories and leave before they reach the top of the hierarchy (Druckman, 2010; Harris & Giuffre, 2009; Orido, 2017). Most scholars associate the intermittent trajectories of women chefs with the multiple challenges they face in professional kitchens. One of the most obvious obstacles for women chefs is gender stereotyping and gender segregation (Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Johnston et al., 2014; Lindeman, 2016; Matwick, 2017). Women chefs are considered to suffer significantly from the effects of gender stereotyping (Harris & Giuffre, 2009; Pratten, 2003). According to Whitaker (2015), women were historically never taken seriously as professional chefs, but worked as bakers or confectioners, who were often not considered to be chefs.

There is a clear line dividing fine-dining restaurants run by men as chefs, and restaurants serving home-style food operated by women (Olbrich, 2016). As Olbrich (2016) reflected, the first female cookery training institute, established in 1867, did not train women to become professional chefs but instead provided them with “housewives’” skills. Consequently, the public considered a woman’s place to be only in the domestic kitchen, and that professional kitchens belonged to males (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Druckman, 2010; Matwick, 2017). Madichie (2013) associated this division as a reproduction of gender roles; professional cooking is considered masculine and men chefs are competent craftsmen, while in the domestic kitchen, cooking is a natural way for women to care for their families.

In addition, Agg (2015) pointed out that there is a perception that women are not physically and emotionally strong enough to work in kitchens, and this perception has becomes a barrier to women progressing in the sector. As noted previously, scholars have cited the challenging conditions of professional kitchens and suggested that women do not have the physical or emotional strength needed to work as chefs (Hannaford, 2016; Olbrich, 2016; Orido, 2017). Even though these views of women chefs are stereotypical, these perceptions have created a glass ceiling that hinders women’s development as chefs (Brownell, 1994; Madichie, 2013; Parker & Arrowsmith, 2012).

Interestingly, some studies have proposed that women chefs themselves are also influenced by stereotypical views (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Edmonds, 2016). Lindeman (2016) indicated that the masculinity of the chef role keeps women away from the profession, as they do not want to do a “man’s job.” Images of burning heat and sweat in the professional kitchen repel some women and make them avoid this profession (Johnston et al., 2014). Furthermore, the structure and hierarchy of professional kitchens disadvantage women chefs. As Orido (2017) explained, the brigade system creates a hierarchical kitchen structure that forms a barrier to women chefs' progression into executive roles. Assigned roles in the professional kitchen tend to be very gender specific, with men usually dominating high-status executive roles, and women working in the lower-level positions of pastry chef or in catering departments (Harris & Giuffre, 2009, 2015; Kitson, 2017).

The brigade, as a quasi-military system, was introduced to value discipline, obedience, and respect for orders, and sometimes to legitimise aggression and violence (Jones, 2014; Pack, 2002). This indicates that professional kitchens arguably remain inherently masculine and have an ideology of male supremacy over women (Pellicer-Ortín & Tofantshuk, 2018). As a result, and as Olbrich (2016) commented, women chefs tend to leave the kitchen or stay in a junior position, such as pastry chef, instead of seeking higher or executive positions. Other studies have found that women chefs need to work harder to prove themselves and accomplish the same career goals as do their male counterparts (Harris & Giuffre, 2015, Jennings, 2016; Kitson, 2017). Interestingly, Harris and Giuffre (2015) found some women chefs consider gender segregation a positive driver, aiding their performance and encouraging them to do better in their roles. Even so, the discriminatory kitchen hierarchy and brigade system is generally concluded to be an obstacle to progression for women chefs.

Human resource policies and procedures are also considered to disadvantage women chefs (Fungai Zengeni et al., 2014; Harris & Giuffre, 2009). Specifically, it has been found that women are measured according to different standards of competence than those used for men. Therefore, compared with their male counterparts, women chefs have less opportunity for employment as well as promotion (Haddaji et al., 2017a). These factors become challenges for women chefs who wish to progress to managerial positions, increase women’s attrition

from the profession, and maintain gender inequity in the sector. For example, statistics in New Zealand and elsewhere reveal the low salaries of women chefs (Baum, 2015; Campos-Soria et al., 2015; Mooney, 2014), and wage disparities (Harris & Giuffre, 2015; Madichie, 2013; Prynn, 2016). Also, it has been identified that design of advancement criteria was based on men's lifestyles, with long hours and being present considered good performance (Cameron, 2001; Gebbels et al., 2020).

Women chefs are often excluded from networks (Luscombe, 2013; Madichie, 2013) and segregation and resistance from men chefs in the kitchen are considered to contribute to the high attrition of women chefs. In fact, it has been suggested that men chefs sometimes deliberately isolate women chefs to protect their own positions in the industry (Druckman, 2010; Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Jennings, 2016; Matwick, 2017). Blayney and Blotnicky (2010) found that men often exert their dominance when confronted with women in what they consider to be male domains, excluding them from networks where vital information is communicated and exchanged. Furthermore, Agg (2015) revealed that when women work in professional kitchens, the men chefs will perform better because they do not want to be outshone by the women chefs. Very often, a kitchen run by a woman is likely to be staffed by women because men dislike taking orders from the opposite sex (Whitaker, 2015).

Segregation can also lead to sexual harassment in a kitchen environment (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Cooper, 1998; Harris & Giuffre, 2010, 2015; Luscombe, 2013; Madichie, 2013). Women chefs are often the victims of sexual harassment, especially when they are young or inexperienced (Mkono, 2010). Sexual harassment occurs in different forms such as sexual jokes, verbal harassment, touching, ogling, and indecent exposure (Taylor et al., 2017).

Societal stereotypical treatment from the general public also disadvantages women chefs (Matwick 2017). Harris and Giuffre (2015) claimed that food writers and critics shape the discourse around chefs and disadvantage women chefs in the industry. Druckman (2010) and Jennings (2016) similarly recognised that women chefs do not attain the same level of recognition or critical acclaim from the media as do their male peers. Agg (2015) argued that the media rarely mention the technical skills of women chefs, but men chefs are often given credit

for the intellectual and technical work on a dish. Conversely, Lindeman (2016) illustrated how the media portray women as warm and caring domestic home cooks, while males are represented as masculine professional chefs. While further research is needed, it appears from a review of the literature that societal challenges are closely related to gender, which is socially constructed.

Notably, some studies have asserted there is no mistreatment in the kitchen, and that the chef role is equally challenging for both women and men (Agg, 2015; Feit, 2000). Studies have also found that many women chefs choose to leave the role voluntarily before they rise to executive positions (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Hannaford, 2016; Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Jennings, 2016). For instance, Garrigos et al. (2019) pointed out that women chefs gain a sense of achievement from establishing their own business rather than being motivated by pay or status, while Bartholomew and Garey (1996) suggested that women leave their professional chefs' roles for domestic caregiving roles.

2.6.1 Other challenges

Apart from the gender-related challenges already discussed, research has identified further challenges faced by women chefs. Mooney et al. (2017) categorised the challenges faced by female hotel workers into societal, organisational and individual levels, with individual challenges especially, being guided by societal and organisational factors.

One major challenge for women chefs and executive chefs is the lack of work-life balance inherent in these senior roles, which is a particular problem for women with family and childcare responsibilities. A woman's dual roles as both the primary caregiver and worker, limit her from entering or progressing into higher status positions. Cerrato and Cifre (2018) emphasised that women still carry the bulk of the household responsibilities; hence, the increased work responsibilities of senior roles do not tax men's family obligations as much as they tax women's. Likewise, Finch's (2014) study revealed that work-family conflict, among other things, was stated by women in Nigeria to be a major inhibitor of progression in executive male-dominated environments. Interestingly, Harris and Giuffre (2010) suggested that work-family conflict is a heavier burden for women than for men in male-dominated occupations, because the male perspective of complete

devotion to work prevails in male-dominated organisational cultures. In this situation, some women have applied approaches that come at great personal cost, such as delaying or even foregoing family plans, especially childbearing, to sustain their work (Harris & Giuffre, 2010). Regardless, the long-term impact on women could be work overload (Harris & Giuffre, 2010), and a lack of work-life balance (Burrow et al., 2015; Cain et al., 2018).

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is challenging for women chefs. As discussed in section 2.4.3, an executive chef's professional journey often involves heavy workloads (Ko, 2012), with many years of hard work and accumulated experiences (Cain et al., 2018). It is hard for women chefs, especially women executive chefs who oversee the entire kitchen and management, to balance their work and personal lives. Women chefs suffer from a higher level of stress and burnout compared to their male counterparts, as they often bear greater family and childcare responsibilities. Harris and Giuffre (2010) found that having children becomes an obstacle preventing women chefs from advancing in their profession, so they are often forced to choose between having children or a career.

Although studies have found that women chefs leave due to personal choice, they also agree there are insufficient resources to support them (Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Jennings, 2016; Robinson et al., 2014; Villani et al., 2015). Gobaw (2017) pointed out that with the increased workload at the higher levels of a chef to women's professional progression. Olbrich (2016) stated that work in a restaurant kitchen is not ideal for a woman with a family, as it does not provide parental leave and related support, and the working hours make work-life balance hard to achieve.

Other organisational challenges for women wanting to become an executive chef include issues such as poor working conditions, the hierarchical male-dominated kitchen structure and glass ceiling, unfair human resources and management policies and procedures, sexual harassment, discrimination based on gender, and networking barriers. The literature reveals that the physically difficult and psychologically stressful working environment in the professional kitchen may contribute to the loss of women chefs (Druckman, 2010; Harris & Giuffre, 2009; Jennings, 2016; Johnston et al., 2014; Kang et al., 2010).

2.6.2 How women chefs progress in the chef hierarchy

Although many women chefs leave their work in professional kitchens, some have stayed and successfully reached executive roles. Bartholomew and Garey (1996) identified three main attributes that successful executive women chefs share: a passion for food, support from a mentor, and a risk-taking/opportunity-seizing spirit. It has been suggested that a passion for food, rather than financial reward, is more likely to retain a chef in a poor working environment (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Jennings, 2016). In their survey of chefs, cooks and culinary students in the US, Spain and France, Garrigos et al. (2019) found that women chefs required more mentoring than did men. Harris and Giuffre (2009) found that women chefs required a delicate mix of characteristics to balance high levels of production with creativity. Common characteristics of successful women chefs include ambition, risk-taking, determination, and self-motivation.

Strategies are developed and employed by women chefs to balance their work and personal lives. For example, a woman chef may delay having children or choose not to have children, or adjust her lifestyle into complex daily schedules, such as taking care of her children during the day, while her partner takes care of them at night when she is at work (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Harris & Giuffre, 2010).

Women chefs engage in different behaviours when working in a male-dominated kitchen (Lindeman, 2016). Some try to enter a male-dominated kitchen without disrupting the team environment; in other words, they try to act like a man. Druckman (2010) found that women chefs sometimes hide their femininity in their quest for acceptance as a chef, by taking on a masculine appearance such as a having a male-like haircut and not wearing make-up. Harris and Giuffre (2009) added that women chefs often try to prove they are as capable as their male co-workers through masculine behaviours, including accepting sexually abusive behaviours and demonstrating emotional strength by avoiding stereotypical feminine emotions (Feit, 2012). Similarly, Matwick (2017) explained that the fear of being stereotyped as weak and emotional, adds to the pressure on women chefs and makes them hide their emotions in the kitchen. It has been suggested that masculine performance is adopted by women chefs to overcome the physical

and psychological challenges and difficulties of working in male-dominated kitchens (Harris & Giuffre, 2009).

This doing gender behaviour (see the work of West and Zimmerman, 1987, in section 2.5.1.3) has been performed by women chefs at the managerial level. Matwick (2017) concluded that women executive chefs' success hinges on their ability to do gender in a kitchen environment, and how well they can cultivate specific forms of femininity that are seen as acceptable by their staff. Kitson (2017) indicated that women executive chefs need to draw on their tough demeanour to deal with challenges to their authority as leaders of the kitchen to advance through the kitchen hierarchy. Apart from masculinity, women chefs also apply femininity. Harris and Giuffre (2015) and Lindeman (2016) identified that some women executive chefs tend to take on a “big sister” or “mother” role and become caregivers in the kitchen.

However, a critical review of the literature also suggests that women executive chefs often struggle with likeability in their kitchens; if they are too nice, they risk losing the respect of others, but if they are too tough, they are considered difficult to deal with. Therefore, Harris and Giuffre (2009) pointed out that rather than doing gender, some women executive chefs engage in *undoing gender* and focus on their personal strengths to carve out a rewarding path in the professional kitchen. Likewise, Matwick (2017) discovered that women celebrity chefs are creating a new trend for all women chefs by undoing gender and showcasing their feminine side by cooking and catering for their families; that is, such women celebrity chefs are undoing gender *and* emphasising their culinary expertise. Regardless of doing or undoing gender, Lindeman (2016) suggested that women chefs and executive chefs are those who feel the need to adjust to the discomfort of invading a so-called “man’s space,” and neither the industry nor their male counterparts will adjust for them.

2.7 Summary

Gender imbalance in the chef profession is unlikely to change soon (Hannaford, 2016; Kitson, 2017). In recent years, the popularity of gastronomic media platforms has drawn public attention to the world of cooking and diversified the field (De Backer & Hudders, 2016). Olbrich (2016) pointed out that technology

and social progress have opened the door for women to enter men-only kitchen brigades. Moreover, a report that studied women's occupations from 1991 to 2013 suggested that gender segregation is slowly changing, especially with an increasing number of women with formal tertiary qualifications joining the workforce and pursuing professional and managerial roles (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Although it is considered that the barriers will slowly decrease as more women reach higher positions in the culinary field, it is generally considered that the profession still needs sustained and consistent efforts to create a better working environment for women as well as for all who work in this sector (Gebbels et al., 2020; Parker & Arrowsmith, 2012).

A common conclusion in the literature appears to be that it is difficult for women to work and advance in the masculine environment of the kitchen. Although studies have examined chefs' competencies (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016a; Pratten, 2003), few have investigated progression trajectories in the profession (Brefere, 2008; Hendley, 2017). In addition, the existing literature has focused on men's perspectives and overlooked women's perspectives. This indicates a lack of understanding about being a chef, the chef role, and progression in the chef's profession from women's perspectives (Harris & Giuffre, 2010, 2015). Gender progressions have been considered for other occupations but not for the chef profession.

Hence, this research posits that new insights can be gained from understanding women executive chefs' life histories, by focussing on their experiences in the professional kitchen, as their perspectives may be profoundly different from those of their male counterparts. For example, men chefs are likely to view and interpret gender segregation in the chef profession differently than do women chefs, as evident from a review of the relevant literature. This research contributes to the literature as well as providing information relevant to the development of the chef profession. Likewise, revealing women's stories could help women who are already chefs, to maintain a sustainable progression in the profession.

Chapter Three – Methodology

First main course

First formal meal that is substantive and complex, usually featuring a white meat, such as chicken, duck, or turkey

Image by Pagel (2020), reproduced with permission.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter starts by exploring the research paradigm applied in this research, and its related ontological and epistemological philosophical standpoints. This is followed by a justification of the research design and the qualitative life history method selected to explore women executive chefs' life histories, focussing on their experiences in the professional kitchen. The chapter also discusses the positionality of the researcher, then critically addresses the trustworthiness of the data, the study's limitations, and ethical issues.

3.2 Research paradigm

A *paradigm* is defined as the beliefs and values that researchers share regarding knowledge and reality, which impacts on how they conduct research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). A researcher's chosen paradigm underpins the research design as it determines the nature of what is to be known, proposes different methods of research, and validation criteria to assess the research's quality (Lather, 2006; Schwandt, 2012). As Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) stated, the choice of paradigm influences the research intent, motivation, and expectations. Based on the research aim, a researcher adopts a suitable paradigm as the conceptual framework to provide an in-depth guideline for conducting the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

A paradigm consists of individual ontological, epistemological, and methodological philosophical standpoints (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). *Ontology* refers to the nature of reality, and the existence of a particular phenomenon. Ontology addresses questions such as "what is reality?" and "what is existence?" and is the perspective of the methodology adopted in research (Patel, 2015). While ontology addresses the existence of reality, *epistemology* refers to how individuals understand the knowledge, how they understand their own thinking processes, and how they think others know.

Epistemology explains the relationship between the researcher and reality, and the process of knowing (Hoffman, 2001). It addresses the question, "how can I know reality?" It explains the acquisition of knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), and aims at discovering the meaning of knowledge (Creswell, 2009; Holden & Lynch, 2004). Crotty (1998) set out three epistemological perspectives: objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism. *Objectivist* researchers have an objective stance to the phenomena they are studying, and believe they do not have any influence on what is being observed (Levers, 2013; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Salma, 2015). In contrast to objectivism, both *constructionism* and *subjectivism* acknowledge the existence of multiple realities, and that there is no single exact answer for a question, but only approximate truths (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

The difference between constructionism and subjectivism lies in the generation of knowledge. In a *constructionist epistemology*, knowledge and reality is "contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42), whereas in a *subjectivist epistemology*, knowledge and reality is created or shaped by the individual mind (Merlo & Pravato, 2020). Some scholars have pointed out that subjectivism can be in either an individualistic or social form (Haslanger, 1995; Merlo & Pravato, 2020), meaning that knowledge can be derived from the experiences of an individual or of a community.

The *methodology* informs the research path, from the formulation of a research aim and questions, to data collection and the presentation of research findings (Arthur et al., 2012; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The methodology underpins the approach taken to the design of the research, whether it is appropriate and able to achieve the set research aims, and whether valuable data can be collected and suitable data analysis techniques applied so that the required information can be extracted.

Based on their ontological, epistemological and methodological standpoints, researchers engage with one of many different paradigms, such as positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory, and several other paradigms that have emerged from these (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002). Each paradigm has its own value and significance in the growth and development of knowledge, and the approach to knowledge varies. *Positivists* believe knowledge is based on natural phenomena and that people's behaviour is framed by society (Vine, 2015). They view the world as an independent object, so believe they are able to study it in a more or less static form (Gall et al., 2003; Patel, 2015). The ontological position of positivism is usually *realism*, which views truth are objective, and not subject to the context or researcher (Merlo & Pravato, 2020; Young, 1996). The epistemological position of positivism is *objectivism*. An objectivist views knowledge as existing regardless of the context, and believes it can be uncovered using precise quantitative methods and statistical and objective data (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

Scholars have posited that the application of scientific methods is appropriate to studies of natural phenomena, but not to studying individuals or social phenomena (Gall et al., 2003; Lewis-Beck et al., 2004; Richards, 2003; Schwandt, 2012). They further emphasise the complexity of human beings and social phenomena and claim that knowledge cannot be directly accessed without being contaminated by researchers' backgrounds, world views, contexts, concepts, etc. (Gall et al., 2003; Lewis-Beck et al., 2004; Schwandt, 2012). Both critical theorists and interpretivists have criticised the idea of external, permanent, unvarying reality. Instead, they posit that individuals interact with other individuals and society, and ascribe meaning and names to different social phenomena (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). For these reasons, positivism does not serve the aim of this research to explore women executive chefs' life histories and their subjective experiences in the professional kitchen.

Unlike positivists and interpretivists, critical theorists do not focus on generating or perpetuating knowledge; instead, they have an emancipatory goal of confronting those in positions of power to expose the oppressive structures that subjugate people and create inequality (Cunliffe, 2004). The critical theory paradigm, also known as the "transformative paradigm," has a focus on improving social justice. Critical theorists are concerned with uneven power relationships and the relevant social oppressions, and address issues such as social justice and human rights (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The aim of a critical theorist is not just to explain or understand a phenomenon, but also, to change it (Patton, 2002).

The ontological position of critical theories is historical realism. More precisely, critical theorists do not believe in the existence of reality, but that "reality" is shaped by cultural, political, ethnic, gender, and religious factors, that interact with each other to create a social system (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Like interpretivists, critical theorists employ a subjective epistemology, as they believe that knowledge cannot be discovered, but instead, is constructed from social and historical contexts. The methodology applied by critical theorists is participatory in nature, and data are collected through a dialogic format that respects the cultural and social backgrounds of the research participants.

The critical theory paradigm was considered less appropriate for this research, as the thesis does not aim to address social issues or confront and seek to

change a particular situation; rather, it explores a phenomenon. As critical theorists approach a study with an assumption, this would potentially prompt a different methodology. Instead, this study sought to uncover participants' narratives. What is revealed is more of an examination of success stories and understandings of how some women executive chefs maintained a sustainable progression in the chef profession, which become beneficial for the growth of the chef sector. As such, interpretivist approach was deemed the most appropriate approach for this thesis.

Interpretivism developed from critiques of positivism in social science studies. Ontologically, interpretivism rejects the positivist's objectivist view that meaning resides within the world independently of consciousness (Collins, 2010). Instead, the interpretivist holds a relativist ontological position and believes that multiple realities are generated through multiple interpretations of individuals and their personal contexts and experiences (Myers, 2009). *Relativism* is considered to cover terms such as "social constructionism," "constructivism," "deconstructionism," and "postmodernism," as well as "epistemological relativism," "subjectivism," "interpretivism," (Baghramian & Carter, 2019). In general, these different schools of ontological positions are the opposite of *absolutism*, which believes that the one absolute reality exists and remains constant, regardless of context.

Relativists hold truth as a relational property, meaning that one reality has different truth values under different circumstances (Baghramian & Carter, 2019; Young, 1996). "Point of view" is a phrase used to describe a relativist ontology (Baghramian & Carter, 2019). Levers (2013) further explained that a relativist ontology is based on the philosophy that reality is constructed within the human mind. Thus, no one true reality exists; instead, reality is relative, dependent on how individuals experience it at any given time and place (Lewis-Beck, 2012). Baghramian and Carter (2019) commented that relativism is the view that truth and falsity, right and wrong, standards of reasoning, and procedures of justification, are products of differing conventions and frameworks of assessment, and that their authority is confined to the context giving rise to them.

Epistemologically, interpretivism accommodates both subjectivist and constructionist perspectives. A subjectivist epistemology implies that subjective

experiences are fundamental to the measurement and generation of knowledge (Gialdino, 2009; Schwandt, 2012). Constructivists aim to understand a world constructed by human experience (Klein & Myers, 1999; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Schwandt, 2012). The term "constructivism" identifies the basic principle that knowledge and reality are constructed within the thoughts and feelings of an individual or community (Andrews, 2012). In both subjectivism and constructionism, reality is subjective and can only be imperfectly grasped through suitable research methods (Myers, 2009).

Constructivists and subjectivists apply different approaches to generating knowledge. A constructivist believes knowledge can be generated by interpreting people's experiences; in other words, from the meaning created from interplay between the individual or community, and an object (Young & Collin, 2004). In contrast, a subjectivist believes reality is negotiated through dialogue, as people impose meaning on an object or interpret an object through symbols or language systems (Merlo & Pravato, 2020). Therefore, knowledge can be obtained through a qualitative approach to reveal how individuals' experiences shape their perceptions of the world, and the meanings they impose on objects (Gialdino, 2009).

As defined by Giddings and Grant (2002), *interpretivism* "focus[es] on different aspects of experience and use[s] different methods to collect data and analyse it" (p. 16). A qualitative approach is commonly applied in interpretivism, as it emphasises the multi-layered nature of human behaviour and believes that behaviour is determined by context and background (Gialdino, 2009; Schwandt, 2012). In addition, an interpretivist prefers to examine an individual's behaviour in their daily life rather than in a controlled scientific environment. Interpretivism prioritises a qualitative approach to a study over a quantitative approach, as a qualitative approach values differences between people (Pernecky, 2017; Schwandt, 2012). Both subjectivists and constructivists value the context of participants and the influence of the context on participants' construction of knowledge. Therefore, research methods such as surveys, closed-ended questionnaires and lists of numbers, are not always suitable, as the social world is complex and complicated (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1994) indicated that interpretivists believe findings and knowledge can be obtained

through an investigative process, which relies heavily on qualitative research methods, such as interviews and observation.

The interpretive paradigm has been criticised for not being able to generate theories that can be generalised to larger populations, and for lacking objectivity (Willis & Jost, 2007). This is because interpretivism aims to explore a social phenomenon. The subjectivist attribute of interpretivism has also been criticised as producing research findings that lack reliability (Nudzor, 2009). This is due to the subjective involvement of the researcher with the research participants. Rehman and Alharthi (2016) disagreed with these criticisms and stated that interpretivism "demands rigour, precision, systematicity, and careful attention to detail" (p. 6), and social phenomena are best investigated using an interpretive paradigm.

There are other paradigms used by researchers, and many are compatible with each other. For instance, interpretivism and critical theory both have a subjectivist epistemological stance. Therefore, paradigms should be adopted as lenses to assist researchers to find the most suitable research method to investigate a particular phenomenon, as one's philosophical standpoints should be more deduced than explicit.

An interpretivist paradigm is considered that most suited to guide the design of this research and support the researcher to explore women executive chefs' life histories by focussing on their experiences in the professional kitchen. A relativist ontology perceives reality as subjective and based on meanings and understandings of the social and experiential levels of individuals (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, this paradigm guided the researcher to generate an in-depth understanding of the research participants' life histories. From this perspective, all life histories are subjectively formed by individual participants, and all are equally valid. Also from this perspective, the researcher respects and honours all voices, interpretations, and stories from different accounts, and believes that they are equally valid (Willis & Jost, 2007).

In the context of this research, the research participants' experiences in the professional kitchen were likely to vary from one person to another. The constructionist and subjectivist epistemological assumptions supported the focus

on women executive chefs' perspectives. All perspectives were subjectively constructed from the participants' backgrounds and contexts. In addition, an interpretivist epistemology served this purpose, as it holds the belief that reality needs to be interpreted to discover any underlying meaning (see Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). An interpretivist looks for "culturally and historically situated interpretations of the social world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67); hence, this researcher was able to contextualise participants' life histories and their experiences in the professional kitchen. Consequently, the methodology chosen consisted of a qualitative approach with a life history research design and in-depth interviews. This is discussed further in the methodology section (section 3.2.3).

Interpretivism was adopted for other similar life history studies. Gwernan-Jones (2010) adopted an interpretivist paradigm to examine the life histories of dyslexic adults, focussing on individual participants' development of positive self-perceptions. Similarly, Rich (2002) applied an interpretivist paradigm to explore the life histories of ten female student teachers of physical education, focussing on how they drew upon their experiences and how those experiences changed over time according to the context. Jacks-Cobbold's (2018) life history study of undergraduate mature students was also framed by an interpretivist paradigm, as it explored how the individual participants perceived their educational experiences, and the impacts on them from returning to full-time study.

3.2.3 Methodology

A qualitative research approach was adopted to explore women executive chefs' life histories. Qualitative research is specifically focused on rich descriptions that will help clarify or extend knowledge of the subject of study (Creswell, 2009; Myers, 2009). Moreover, McKay (2000) pointed out that through the rich description and information obtained from an individual's life, this approach can help suggest areas for further development or justification in both practical and theory domains. A qualitative approach provides the opportunity to "explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4).

Scholar firstly advise that research methods should focus on acquiring knowledge and reality that is socially constructed, and that there are multiple interpretations

of an experience (Merriam, 2009). Secondly, the primary data should be collected through human interaction with participants to reveal their multiple constructed realities (Sutton & Austin, 2015), and thirdly, the participants should be approached in a "natural setting" (for example, the context related to the study) as their reality cannot be separated from their context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Fourthly, the researcher needs to be the primary data collector to enable a better understanding, response, and description of the complexity of the participants' experience (Baghramian & Carter, 2019). Lastly, the researcher should emphasise the contexts of participants' points of view, which are multiple, and vary according to their contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, a qualitative research methodology was designed to take account of all these considerations.

A qualitative approach to data collection and analysis focuses on different aspects of the participants' experiences (Giddings & Grant, 2002). According to Patton (2002), qualitative research emphasises words instead of numbers in the data collection and analysis process, and research findings are obtained through real-life settings where the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally (p. 39). In-depth interviews are a naturalistic data collection approach for qualitative research. Therefore, a qualitative life history research design with in-depth interviews was employed for this research.

There are advantages and disadvantages of a qualitative research approach. The key advantages of this approach are that qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration and understanding of the study area (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), and the data collected are usually primary, from participants, which may enhance the validity of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Conversely, the subjective nature of qualitative research can cause bias from the researcher (Creswell, 2009), and because the data are gathered from participants based on their perspectives and experience, the research findings lack generalisability (Myers, 2009).

3.3 Life history method

The life history method was applied in this research to explore the life histories of women executive chefs with a focus on their experiences in the professional kitchen. This method was chosen because of its focus on personal lived

experiences (Munro, 1998; Sosulski et al., 2010). Originating in the qualitative ethnographic field in anthropology, the life history method assists with the disclosure of participants' life histories and makes those experiences visible, to contribute to a body of knowledge centred on their interpretations of their lives (Sosulski et al., 2010; Stearns, 1992). The life history research method permits a detailed description of personal life experiences that might otherwise remain hidden (Merriam, 2009). Indeed, Chapter Two highlighted that considerations of the chef profession in hospitality studies have previously neglected the experiences of women chefs. Studying women chefs may reveal critical episodes and events that shaped their perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, expertise, and meaning. Cole and Knowles (2001) explained that the life history method endeavours to understand how past events and behaviours have shaped participants' experiences, and their sense of resiliency. This approach was therefore considered appropriate to a study of the experiences of women executive chefs and their progression trajectories within the chef profession.

The life history method also considers the multiple contexts within which participants may be represented and interpreted. Participants' perspectives may change according to time and context, so knowledge is continuously developing from new experiences and accumulated understandings to generate and reflect different meanings (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008). Thus, the life history method was adopted in this research, to explore how the participants' experiences had changed over time, and how they had developed their thinking from their perspectives based on these changing contexts (see Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Gramling & Carr, 2004).

Ward (2003) considered the life history method unique in social research, as it reveals an individual's feelings, actions and talk as they happen within the confines of the social structure specific to the historical period of the study. The life history method emphasises the importance of presenting an individual's subjective evaluation of their life experience and of giving information about their social experiences; for instance, in the life histories of women teachers (Munro, 1998). It is considered that when telling stories, participants not only share their stories to the researcher, but also to themselves; they are involved in deciding which aspects of their lives they can share to create meaning (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Goodson & Sikes, 2001).

According to Goodson and Sikes (2001), the life history method was first pioneered by Western anthropologists in the 1920s: In the book *The Polish peasant in Europe*, William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki interpreted and analysed a life story written by a Polish immigrant (see Thomas & Znaniecki, 1996). This was the first systematically collected sociological life history. However, quantitative methodologies subsequently increased in popularity, and the life history method was only revived in the 1970s by sociologists Paul Thompson and Daniel Bertaux, who conducted life history research with bakers and fisherpeople (Gramling & Carr, 2004). The aim of the life history approach is to explore a phenomenon by listening to participants' views and stories. A *life history* is essentially the telling or recounting of a string of events.

According to Allport (1942), there are three different types of life history research methods: the complete, the topical and the edited. The common features across all three types are the participants' life stories, the social and cultural environment surrounding the participants and researchers, and the major life events encountered by the participants. A traditional life history study is usually conducted using the *complete life history* method, which collects a full-length story spanning several years, to capture a comprehensive picture of the participant (Cole & Knowles, 2001) For instance, in their article "Robin's life history," Cazers and Curtner-Smith (2017) conducted multiple interviews with Robin to explore her life in detail. An *edited life history* involves researchers' voices, as they tend to speak and edit the collected information according to their own accounts (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). For example, Potts (2003) explored and presented edited life histories of a group of women academics from one of Australia's oldest academics, spanning the years 1965 to 1985, and focussing on how gender influences academic life.

A *topical life history* does not aim to grasp the totality of participants' lives, but rather, examines a highly focused area of their life through their experiences in a social or cultural context (Abu Bakar & Abdullah et al., 2008; Taber, 2013; Ward, 1999). Relevant examples of life history studies are those by Douglas et al. (2016) and Gwernan-Jones (2010). Douglas et al. (2016) explored the life histories of two basketball coaches, one disabled and one able-bodied, to identify the meaning of expert coaching, and Gwernan-Jones (2010) examined the life histories of people with dyslexia to identify coping skills. The current research

adopted the topical life history method as this was considered consistent with its aim to explore women executive chefs' life histories with a focus on their experiences in the professional kitchen.

Life history methods typically involve a variety of data such as public archival records (e.g., reports, actuarial records, and media releases) and private records (e.g., autobiographies, interview transcripts, personal diaries, photographs, and films) (Ward, 2003). In this research, both private and public records were collected. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with women executive chefs in New Zealand, and published documents such as resumes, newspaper articles, and other documents provided by the research participants were also collected. Collection of both primary and secondary data is consistent with previous studies employing the life history method (e.g., Douglas et al., 2016; Ward, 2003).

The life history method is reported to have advantages at three levels: subjective, contextual and evaluative (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). At the *subjective* level, the life history method seeks to understand an individual's subjective reality because it emphasises people's interpretations of their everyday experiences as explanations of behaviour (Betts, 2014). The findings of a life history method are a subjective document revealing participants' individual experiences (Watson, 1976). In addition, subjective individual experiences are based on the context of participants. Gramling and Carr (2004) considered that the participants' life histories help researchers to ground the participants' lives in both the context of the participants' personal experiences and in the broader social and economic system in which they live. The evaluative advantage of a life history approach lies in how the method recognises and values the individual's life experiences and its complexities, as the method does not seek generalisability (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008). The life history method allows participants to interpret their lives, both their past and present experiences, and the changes they have encountered (Gwernan-Jones, 2010; Hagemaster, 1992). During the interpretation process, participants evaluate their experiences or memorable events based on the relevant context before they re-narrate and share their experiences with the researcher.

Valuing multiple truths and focusing on how and what is told by participants (Goodson & Sikes, 2001), the life history method has received some criticism. First, it is criticised from an epistemological viewpoint because the method challenges the objectivity of knowledge and the existence of universal truths (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008). Instead, knowledge is subjectively constructed from the perspectives of the participants; it is their truth. Thus, there is a lack of generalised truths or realities. The life history method is also highly reliant on the participants, and as a result, their contexts, their interpretations, and their sharing skills are all crucial to a successful study (Lewis, 2008). The life history method is also considered to lack representativity and verifiability as it mostly used to study only a small group of participants (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008). Finally, the method is time-consuming as the research process usually involves in-depth interviews and collecting and analysing narrative data (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008). Because the life history method aims to explore a phenomenon through individual participants instead of making generalisations about a larger population of interest, the method often requires in-depth interviews and sometimes several interviews with individual participants, which can be time consuming.

The life history method has previously been applied to study individuals and groups' life histories in a profession, and how they negotiate their role within changing contexts. Examples of life history research include studies of artists and producers (e.g. Goh et al., 2016) and of women teachers (Smith, 2007). Others have examined women of different ethnicities in the teaching profession (e.g. Cazers & Curtner-Smith, 2017b; Munro, 1998; Rich, 2002; Wilson, 2014). The life history method has also been used to examine people with particular medical conditions such as alcohol addiction (Fenton, 2018), dyslexia (Gwernan-Jones, 2010), and mental illness (McKay, 2000; Sosulski et al., 2010). These studies involve considerations of multiple elements that may influence a life history, such as gender, race, and occupation.

The life history method has also been applied to explore exceptional people's life histories and experiences to view their social patterns, thoughts, and behaviour. The purposes of these studies are many and varied. A major reason for exploring exceptional people's life histories is to identify success factors. Gass et al. (1989), for example, interviewed a very good secondary language learner to explore his life history, including aspects such as his general background, family history, and

school performance. The findings presented psychological and social factors related to successful language learning experiences. Other life history studies have functioned as a therapeutic intervention technique because of their reminiscence function (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984). For example, in his study "Young man Luther," Erikson (1993) interpreted Martin Luther's life from both psychological and historical perspectives, to explore the identity crisis Luther encountered and review the different paths he could have pursued for greater success and wealth. Caulfield's (2012) study of women prisoners served a similar therapeutic intervention purpose. The study reviewed the crimes the prisoners were charged with, and the reason or the context of their offending, as well as focussing on the participants' experiences in prison, the effectiveness of any interventions, and the implications of imprisonment.

Another attribute of the life history method is that it emphasises marginality (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008; Sosulski et al., 2010; Taber, 2013). This can be traced back to the origins of oral history when radical historians retrieved marginalised or subordinate histories through storytelling (Given, 2008). Oral storytelling is often conducted through interviews as a way to recover the voices of those who have been overlooked or undervalued by the public. As explained, the life history approach highlights the importance of "listening to the voices of the subject being studied, especially subjects who belong to marginal groups" (p. 4). The life history method has been employed to explore groups who have been marginalised, based on, for example, their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or race, along with the relevant contexts of their marginalisation. Examples of such studies include research into gay lives (Baker & Stanley, 2003), Taiwanese female teachers (Cheng, 2012), transgendered lesbian male teachers (Francis, 2014) and Asian female teachers (Rakhit, 1999).

As discussed in Chapter Two, women chefs and executive chefs experience both vertical and horizontal segregation in the chef profession; however, they are under-represented in hospitality literature. In addition, women executive chefs' own understandings and interpretations of their experiences have not been revealed. The life history method, therefore, is an encompassing way to understand and record the lives of women executive chefs who are currently a marginalised group in the chef profession, notably, as executive chefs. In this

research, this method was used to examine their life histories with a focus on their experiences in the professional kitchen.

3.3.1 Sample and sample size

The aim of this research was to explore women executive chefs' life histories with a focus on their experiences in the professional kitchen. Sutton and Austin (2015) emphasised that an authentic and precise understanding of a subject can only be obtained through the participants' own voices and specific experiences. Collins (2010) explained that only knowledge constructed through studying and examining women's life experiences can accurately reflect and represent women. Therefore, only stories and experiences shared from women executive chefs' perspectives are a fair representation of women executive chefs, so the sample in this research consists of women executive chefs in New Zealand.

Participants were recruited through criterion-based purposeful sampling. Criterion-based purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was applied because it allows the researcher to approach participants who "meet the predetermined criterion of importance" (Patton, 2002, p. 238). Criterion-based purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for identifying and selecting information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995; Suri, 2011). Criterion-based purposeful sampling has been applied in other life history studies (e.g. Auger, 2017; Goh, 2017; Rich, 2002). Sampling in the life history method can be done through work, community, and personal contacts (De Chesnay, 2014; Gwernan-Jones, 2010); for example, in Munro's (1998) life history studies of women teachers, the participants were the researcher's colleagues.

There are both advantages and disadvantages with a criterion-based purposeful sampling strategy. Criterion-based purposeful sampling assists researchers, especially social scientists, to reach a marginalised population that is difficult to locate or identify. As there is no list of executive chefs in New Zealand, criterion-based purposeful sampling helped accessing this population. Also, as mentioned in Chapter Three, women chefs are a marginalised group and women executive chefs are rare in professional kitchens. Criterion-based purposeful sampling is also criticised for not achieving generalisability (Dworkin, 2012). This is because

criterion-based purposeful sampling is not based on random selection, as are the probability sampling techniques that are frequently applied in quantitative studies.

Participants were selected to help the study achieve its research aim. In this case, all the participants shared common demographic grounds, such as position at work and work experiences. The participants were women executive chefs in New Zealand responsible for managing a commercial kitchen and whose management responsibilities included financial control, menu design, food production, and leading a team of kitchen staff. In addition, the participants needed to be, or had been, at the head of the kitchen hierarchy. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the kitchen hierarchy clarifies roles and skills, and the person at the top is usually in charge of the entire operation (Jones, 2014). Due to the different kitchen structures established in different dining establishments, the job title of the participants could be “Executive Chef,” “Head Chef,” or “Chef Manager.” Moreover, as discussed in section 2.4.3, participants needed to have had one to three years of training and at least seven or eight years working in the professional kitchen in a management role. This training and work experience criterion was based on the job description of an executive chef on the PayScale New Zealand and Career New Zealand websites (Careers.govt.nz, n.d.; PayScale New Zealand, n.d.).

All 23 participants fulfilled the selection criteria and had a wealth of experience in the industry and in executive/management positions. Demographic information collected (see **Table 1**) included years of in an executive position, time in the culinary industry, training they had received, their current role, and the establishment they currently worked in. Their age and location information were excluded to protect their privacy. Thirteen participants were 35 years old or older, while the other ten were aged 25-34 years. The majority were located in Auckland and Wellington, with only two from other cities in New Zealand.

Table 1

Profile of the Participants

Pseudonym	Years in executive position	Years in professional kitchen	Training / highest qualification	Current Establishment	Current role	Ownership
Angela	10	35	Polytechnic diploma	Institution	Lecturer	
Aubrey	3	30	Polytechnic diploma	Café/food company	Chef	Owner
Amelia	2	8	Self-trained	Restaurant group	Chef	
Bella	10	25	Polytechnic	Café	Chef	Owner
Camila	2	5	Self-trained	Restaurant group	Chef	
Finley	15	28	Bachelor's degree	Hotel	Chef	
Hazel	7	18	Bachelor's degree	Food company & restaurant	Chef	Owner
Hailey	4	15	Bachelor' degree	Food company & consultancy firm	Chef	Owner
Helena	10	26	Postgraduate diploma	Institution	Lecturer	
Josephine	4	13	Bachelor's degree	Café	Chef	Owner
Jayleen	12	20	Honours degree	Culinary institution	Operations manager	
Julia	13	27	Diploma	Restaurant group	Chef	
Jessica	23	42	Diploma	Restaurant	Chef	Owner
Kinsley	5	16	Apprenticeship	Restaurant	Chef	
Layla	16	35	3 months course	Restaurant	Chef	Owner
Lillian	7	17	Bachelor's degree	Restaurant	Chef	Owner
Mila	3	7	Bachelor's degree	Café	Chef	Owner
Molly	4	9	Diploma	Café	Chef / lecturer	Owner
Madelyn	4	18	Polytechnic	Restaurant	Chef	Owner
Nora	12	25	Polytechnic	Hotel	Chef	
Penelope	6	36	Polytechnic	Food company	Chef	Owner
Paisley	4	11	Apprenticeship	Restaurant	Chef	Owner
Sophia	20	26	Apprenticeship	Catering	Chef	

A list of participants was derived by word of mouth. As a first step, the researcher contacted the New Zealand Chef Association and the Department of Culinary Arts in the School of Hospitality and Tourism at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). Both entities held current information about the chef and restaurant industry and helped to connect the researcher with women executive chefs. An email invitation was then sent out (see Appendix B.d) and participant information sheet (Appendix B.b) to contacts at both the New Zealand Chef Association and the Department of Culinary Arts in the School of Hospitality & Tourism, asking them to distribute the pack to potential participants. Next, the researcher contacted the first two participants to respond. After being interviewed, they were asked to distribute information about the research to other potential participants who fit the selection criteria and might be willing to participate.

The final sample comprised 23 participants. Although repeated information and commonalities started showing after participant 16, sampling continued until there was no response from the referred potential participants. The research did not aim to achieve generalisation (see Dworkin, 2012). Studies using the life history method usually have relatively small sample sizes as they seek to instead emphasise the richness of the data (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008; Hagemaster, 1992; McKay, 2000b). Mason's (2010) comparison of 61 life history studies found sample sizes of one to 62 participants, with a standard deviation in sample size of 16 participants. Indeed, the literature has many life histories studies of small sample sizes, ranging from one to 19 (Douglas et al., 2016; Goh et al., 2016; McKay, 2000b, 2000b; Sosulski et al., 2010; Taber, 2013).

It was difficult to recruit participants, which may relate to the small population of women chefs. Moreover, the time constraints and commitment required from the participants were also obstacles. Contacting participants and scheduling an interview was problematic due to their demanding work schedules and other responsibilities, such as childcare. Apart from the initial email invitation (see Appendix B.d), telephone calls, text messages, and social media messages were used to communicate with participants. An interesting finding was that social media, especially Instagram and Facebook, worked well for initial contact with participants. Another interesting finding was the lack of network among the women chefs in Auckland, as the referrals from participants in Auckland were

very limited. Participants would mention names of potential participants but said they did not have any connection with that person. As a result, the initial contacts (New Zealand Chef Association and Culinary Arts Department in AUT) were contacted repeatedly to ask for referrals. In contrast, the women chefs in Wellington were found to have an established network. There is also a community group, Wellington Hospitality Wahine, formed by people who work in the industry. Therefore, from two initial contacts, the researcher was put in touch with five more participants from Wellington in three days.

3.4 Research design

The research design is a plan that ensures the research purpose is met; it sets the framework for data collection and analysis. The life history method documents people's lives, or significant parts of their lives, in a narrative format (Hagemaster, 1992) as it focuses on "the presentations of ideas, identities and narrative configurations" (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008, p. 4). Although the personal narrative is considered the most efficient method to gain an understanding of, and perspective on, the experience of people, other data sources such as public reports, autobiographies, personal diaries, and files, are also used in the life history method (Ward, 2003). Even so, most researchers agree that the life history method is based mainly on interviews and conversations that become recorded and transcribed oral accounts of a life (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008; McKay, 2000b).

Data collection in the life history method varies, depending on the research aim and research questions. Some studies involve multiple interviews with each participant, whereas others require only one interview. If the life history is highly focused, fewer interviews are needed, whereas if it is more like a biography, data collection can extend over several years (Adriansen, 2012; Ward, 1999). The purpose of the topical life history method is to document significant parts of participants' lives and to answer specific research questions, rather than presenting an ethnography. This research had a topical life history focus, namely, the participants' experiences in the professional kitchen.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews were a logical choice of tool because they enable participants to tell their story and recount their life experiences, and

the data collected are usually detailed and rich (see Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008; Cole & Knowles, De Chesnay &, 2014). In-depth interviews were applied to encourage the participants to reflect on their life histories and discuss their past experiences in the professional kitchen. This application of in-depth interviews was also consistent with previous studies employing the life history method (e.g. Douglas et al., 2016; Ward, 2003). This semi-structed interviewing style enabled the women executive chefs to be empowered, as it treated them as the experts in their knowledge (Anderson & Jack, 2006).

Beyond the interviews, other secondary data were gathered such as the participants' public profiles published online, and in documents provided by the participants. Information about the participants, such as their resumes from the LinkedIn website, newspaper articles about them, and organisational structures and responsibilities charts allowed the researcher to confirm the details provided by the participants and secure the accuracy and credibility of the data (see Hagemaster, 1992; Ward, 1999). Documents provided by participants such as their professional development plans, cookbooks they had published, photographs on their mobile phones, and project proposals they were working on had similar functions, but most importantly, they enhanced understandings of the participants' experiences (see Gwernan-Jones, 2010). It is common for researchers using life history methods to collect data from various sources, either primary (interviews) or secondary, to deepen or assist their understanding of participants (Hagemaster, 1992; McKay, 2000b).

3.4.1 Data collection

3.4.1.1 Interview schedule

The semi-structured in-depth interview schedule (included in Appendix B.a) was designed around the aim of the research. Two research questions guided the interview design:

- What are the life histories of women executive chefs in New Zealand?
- What are women executive chefs' experiences in the professional kitchen?

To uncover the women executive chefs' life histories, with a focus on their experiences in the professional kitchen, the interview included open-ended starter questions such as "tell me about your journey." This starter question was designed to be broad, to allow participants to begin with their preferred experiences or most memorable events (De Chesnay, 2014; Hagemaster, 1992). As supported by previous life history method studies (Douglas et al., 2016; Gwernan-Jones, 2010; Taber, 2013), open-ended broad questions were adopted in the interviews to encourage participants to openly talk about their life experiences in an in-depth and narrative way (see Taber, 2013). Probing questions were asked to gain a deeper understanding or to clarify information the participant had given (Anderson & Jack, 2006), in order to gain an in-depth understanding of these critical episodes. The participants were asked about, for example, the duration of a particular experience, and reasons for starting or leaving a particular job. This in-depth exploration helped capture the texture of the participants' experiences and underline the differences in how individual participants interpreted their stories (see Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008; De Chesnay, 2014; Hagemaster, 1992).

In addition, a life grid was designed to assist the researcher to probe for detailed experiences from different stages of the participants' lives. According to Osborn (2015), a life grid helps individuals to recall and reflect on their past events, and reduces recall bias. A *life grid* is a tool in a grid or table structure which allows the construction of a visual temporal framework (Richardson et al., 2009). The different stages of the life grid were drawn up during the pilot study based on the context of the chef profession. The life grid helps to explore participants' narratives in a chronological way (Richardson et al., 2009; Wilson, 2014) and provides a relevant context for situating and interpreting participants' meaning making. For example, when inquiring about participants' horizontal movement at the beginning stage of their career progression, the life grid helped the researcher probe for information about years, locations, job titles, and experiences in their roles.

Table 2

Life Grid Applied in the Interviews

Stage	Years	Where	Role/ job title	Experiences
Childhood				
Adolescence				
Study and training (early adulthood)				
Beginning				
Transition				
Current				

The second interview question, was “recalling back, could you share some meaningful experiences, or moments, or a significant event?” This question was used to probe into details of participants’ experiences as women executive chefs in their professional kitchen. This was followed by some probing questions such as “please tell me all the details of the shared experiences/ moments/ significant events.” This question was designed to help participants recall memorable experiences they had encountered and how these critical episodes and events had shaped their perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, expertise and meaning (see Cole & Knowles, 2011; McKay, 2000).

3.4.1.2 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted to refine the interview questions and test whether the collection process was robust before the actual data collection proceed. Staff from the Department of Culinary Arts in the School of Hospitality and Tourism at AUT were involved in the pilot study to help avoid misunderstandings and errors during the main interview process. Based on feedback from those who participated in the pilot interviews and from the researcher’s supervisors, some refinements were made to the interview process and questions.

One major adjustment was the number of interviews with each participant. Initially, the plan was to conduct two interviews with each participant. Quite often, multiple interviews are conducted with individual participants to gain an in-depth

understanding of the participants' histories. However, it became apparent that it would be impractical to ask participants to engage in multiple interviews due to their work schedules and availability. Therefore, only one in-depth interview was conducted with each participant. Fenton (2018) pointed out that flexibility, improvisation, and compromise, are keys to a successful qualitative study. The interview questions were also refined. Also, it was suggested that the participants be addressed as "chef" during the interviews to show respect.

3.4.1.3 Data collection

Twenty-three interviews were conducted between May and November 2019. The AUT Ethics Committee approved the application for research (see Appendix A) on 25th February 2019, before data collection commenced. Ethics approvals from educational institutions assist in assuring the confidentiality of participants (Hagemaster, 1992). A detailed discussion of the ethical implications of this research is presented in section 4.7. The data collection was conducted between May and November 2019 because food and beverage establishments are usually less busy during the winter season in New Zealand. Interviews were conducted primarily at the participants' workplaces, in both Wellington and Auckland, apart from one interview that was conducted in a café. A life history interview is usually conducted at a place convenient for the participant, to reduce their travel time (Hagemaster, 1992). To accommodate accessibility and the availability of a small group of the participants, four long-distance interviews were conducted over the telephone using Skype (an online communication tool). These long-distance interviews were conducted with participants in Christchurch, Wellington, and Marlborough. Each interview, both face-to-face and long-distance, took around 90 to 120 minutes to complete.

The researcher met and greeted each participant, and started the interview with questions such as "how is your day?," "how are you today?" or "how is work today?" to establish a rapport with the interviewee. This small talk strategy has been shown to successfully create a relaxed atmosphere and reduce feelings of anxiety when participants are being interviewed about potentially sensitive topics (Elmir et al., 2011). Before the formal part of the interview began, the researcher explained the purpose of the interview and obtained the participant's written

consent. Two audio-recorders: a recording device and the researcher's mobile phone as a back-up in case of technological problems with the first recorder.

The first interview question was then asked, and the participants encouraged to start talking. The participants were given time to elaborate on their experiences and probing questions were only posed when necessary, to reduce interrupting and interfering with their narratives (see De Chesnay, 2014; Hagemaster, 1992). The researcher expected and was comfortable with periods of silence, as participants needed time to decide what to share, how to share, and how deeply they want to share their thoughts. Bengtsson and Fynbo (2018) emphasised the power of silence in qualitative interviews and considered it an expression of a power relationship between researchers and participants. They also explained that allowing silence during the interview, especially silence from participants, leads to valuable data (Bengtsson & Fynbo, 2018). In addition, interpretivists tend to study participants in their natural settings and aim at gathering information from their perspectives without influencing the outcome (Schwandt, 2012).

At the end of the interviews, the participants were thanked and asked if there were any other matters that had not been discussed, or anything further they wished to comment on. Interestingly, many of the participants showed gratitude at the end of the interview and expressed that they were happy that they had participated in the research because the process had provided them with a chance to recall their life in detail and helped them realise how much they had achieved. This reflects the aim of life history studies, which is for participants to reconstruct their life histories by evaluating their lives contextually and subjectively (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008; Gwernan-Jones, 2010). The participants' positive feedback about the interview process corresponds with the subjective, contextual and evaluative advantage of the life history method (see Goodson & Sikes, 2001).

Data transcription took place directly after each interview, as transcription is the first opportunity to learn from the collected data. Josselson (2006) emphasised that narrative research is continuously interpretive, from conceptualisation of the research, to data collection, to writing up the research text. In this research, the shortest transcript was 12 pages (4,212 words) while the longest one was 28 pages (12,193 words). Altogether, the researcher transcribed 171,923 words

from the 23 interviews. After the interviews had been transcribed, each participant was sent a copy of the transcription for checking and validation.

3.4.2 Data analysis

Data analysis and presentation in life history research is not well discussed in the extant literature (Hagemaster, 1992; Sosulski et al., 2010), and varies depending on the purpose of the research. However, data analysis for life history studies is often in the form of narrative analysis (Meng, 2014; Munro, 1998; Rich, 2002; Riessman, 2005; Sosulski et al., 2010; Taber, 2013), which was similarly used in this research. Narrative analysis helps a researcher understand the connectedness and interrelatedness of human experience within complex social systems in a holistic way (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Webster and Mertova, 2007).

Narrative analysis is a way of examining personal narratives (Riessman, 2005; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The narrative is used to refer to the data form of field notes or original interview data and the written transcriptions (Riessman, 2005). A *storied narrative* is a linguistic form that preserves the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings, and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The narratives in this research refer to the participants' reported past and present experiences, and their perspectives and interests relating to their meaningful experiences and critical moments as women executive chefs.

Narrative analysis is a qualitative analysis approach whereby life histories people have created are collected and analysed (Hagemaster, 1992; Meng, 2014). Smith and Sparkes (2008) explained that "lives are storied, and identity is narratively constructed" (p. 5). Narrative analysis was therefore applied to record "human experience through the construction and reconstruction of personal stories" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.16). A narrative analysis aims to understand the individual, their spontaneity, responsibility, and how they behave in the social world (Riessman, 2005). Therefore, narrative analysis helps develop an understanding of the life experiences and thoughts expressed by participants in a narrative format and generate an understanding of the context (Polkinghorne, 1995; Rich, 2002).

Polkinghorne (1995) and Riessman (2005) both pointed out that there are two different types of narrative analysis, which Polkinghorne (1995) named “analysis of narratives” and “narrative analysis” (p.12). *Analysis of narratives* collects stories as data, analyses them within the paradigmatic process, and produces a description of common elements that hold across the stories and settings (Polkinghorne, 1995). In contrast, in *narrative analysis*, the researcher collects descriptions of events and experiences and synthesis or configures them into stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). Specifically, Polkinghorne’s “analysis of narrative” was applied in this research (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12).

An important highlight of combining the life history method with analysis of narrative was that it provided an approach to reflect the women executive chefs’ experiences, but did not lead to particular findings or predetermined outcomes based on the researcher’s frame of reference (see Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 2005). A combined approach suits the fact that life history studies often focus on marginalised groups (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008), and fulfils the interpretivist’s philosophical standpoint of valuing subjective perspectives (Segre, 2016). As indicated by Duplessis (1988), analysis of narrative not only offers a more in-depth understanding of women’s lives, but also offers the possibility of going beyond exploring women's life experiences to examine how and why women come to understand and narrate those experiences in particular ways.

The analysis of narratives was carried out to identify patterns and commonalities among the participants to make sense of their experiences and life histories, while narrative analysis was used to re-present participants and their lives by synthesising important aspects and events informed by the participants to make meaning of their life histories. Both Sosulski et al. (2010) and Rich (2002) combined the life history approach with analysis of narrative in their studies; the former disclosed the life experiences of black women with severe mental illness, while the latter emphasised the prominent narratives of ten female teachers working in physical education and their contradictory social positions. Jacks-Cobbold (2018) adopted the same approach and combined analysis of narratives to explore the life histories of undergraduate mature students studying for a degree. By using analysis of narratives, the current research privileged the participants’ interpretations of their life histories and presents an overview of the

connections by identifying commonality among the stories and how the context contributed to their experiences.

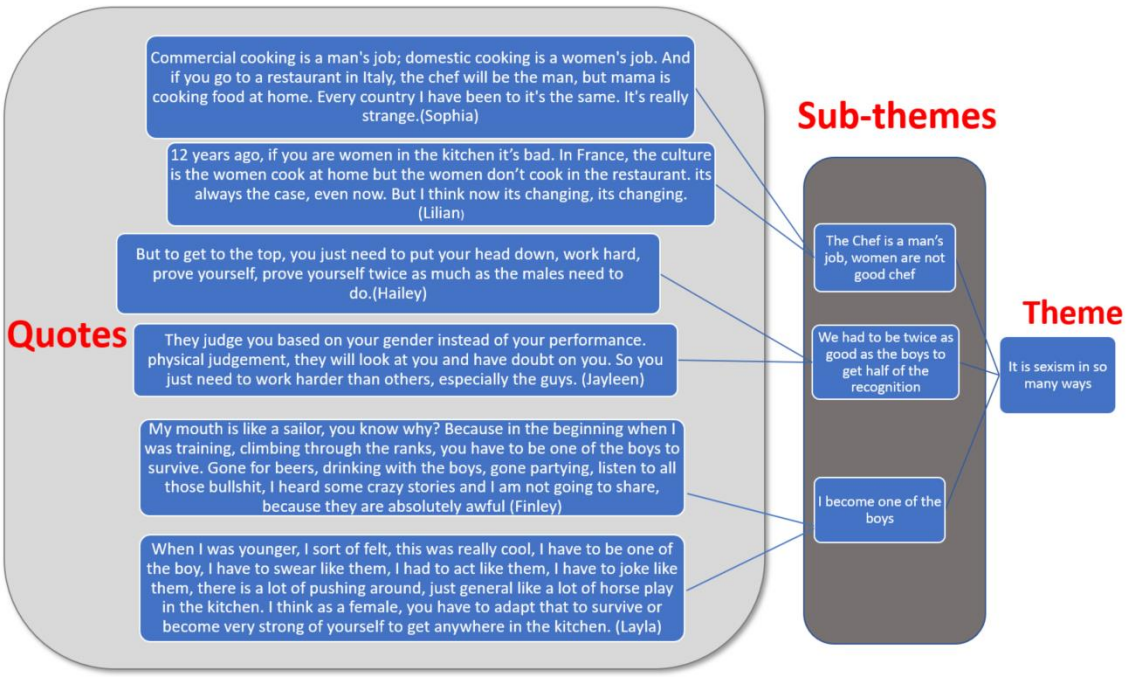
3.4.3.1 Analysis of narratives

The analysis of narratives helped identify common elements among the women executive chefs' life histories. The analysis of narratives started by identifying themes that were common in the data (see Kim, 2015; Webster & Mertova, 2007). A *theme* is a type of conceptual scheme in which a contextual meaning of individual events can be represented (Polkinghorne, 1995). Once a theme forms, the events and happenings that are crucial to the narratives become apparent, which informs the researcher about what information in the data should be included in the final storied account (Polkinghorne, 1995).

In the analysis of narratives, the researcher examined and compared transcripts holistically and inductively, allowing common and contrasting narratives between participants to emerge (see Kim, 2015). These common narratives were then categorised into sub-themes which, in turn, constructed the main themes presented in the findings (see Figure 3). The data and identified themes were then compared across transcripts to determine trends and variations, as they provide the participants' perspectives and other dimensions of their life experiences (see Sutton & Austin, 2015; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2005). This process was applied to the transcripts of all 23 participants.

Figure 3:

Formation of a Theme



The narratives were cross examined to identify meaningful patterns, and these patterns then grouped and labelled as three core themes: “it’s sexism in so many ways,” “family influence,” and “it’s so tough.” The three main themes and associated sub-themes are summarised in Table 3. In addition, Table 4 shows the thematic spread across the participants’ narratives, highlighting the fact that most narratives were common to the themes.

Table 3

Main Themes and Sub-Themes

Main theme	**It's sexism in so many ways**	**Family influence**	**It's so tough**
Sub-themes	It's a man's job, Women are not good chefs We had to be twice as good as the boys to get half of the recognition They are a wolfpack Women and men cook for different purposes I become one of the boys	The support from my family My parents think that being a chef is not a real job My mother is a good cook I grew up surrounded by food Work family or my own family	Yes, Chef. You have to make it work Stick it out I have done the hard yards Speak up and stick up

Table 4

Thematic Spread across Participants

Participants/ Main themes	**It's sexism in so many ways**	**Family influence**	**It's so tough**
Angela	✔	✔	✔
Aubrey	✔	✔	✔
Amelia	✔		✔
Bella	✔	✔	✔
Camila	✔	✔	✔
Finley	✔	✔	✔
Hazel	✔	✔	✔
Hailey	✔	✔	✔
Helena	✔	✔	✔
Josephine	✔	✔	✔
Jayleen	✔	✔	✔
Julia	✔	✔	✔
Jessica	✔	✔	✔
Kinsley	✔	✔	✔
Layla	✔		✔
Lillian	✔	✔	✔
Mila	✔	✔	✔
Molly	✔	✔	✔
Madelyn	✔		✔
Nora	✔	✔	✔
Penelope	✔	✔	✔
Paisley		✔	✔
Sophia	✔	✔	✔

From the analysis of narratives, an in-depth understanding of the women executive chefs' life histories was obtained, as well as how the chefs interpreted their life histories and experiences in the professional kitchens.

3.5 Ethical implications

As mentioned earlier, the AUTEC process guided the data collection process and ensured the research was carried out ethically. Informed written consent (see Appendix B.d) was obtained from the participants before their interview. The researcher also ensured the participants had a good understanding of the interview and analysis process and how the information they provided would be used in the research and thesis. To achieve this, an information sheet (see Appendix B.b) was provided to all participants prior to their interview. They were advised of their right to refuse to participate and/or to withdraw from the research at any time before the completion of data analysis; these rights were explained before recording began.

The participants had the opportunity to review their transcripts and receive a copy of the final thesis if desired. The data, including the interview audio recordings, transcribed data and research findings, are stored securely in an AUT office and will be securely disposed of six years after research completion. To keep the participants' identities confidential, pseudonyms were used on all documents; only the researcher and supervisors had access to these confidential documents. It was particularly important, given the small population of women executive chefs in New Zealand, to keep their identities confidential. Participation was voluntary and informed.

Characteristic of the life history method (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008), the interviews sometimes included personal questions, such as asking about the allocation of caregiving responsibilities and family structure; participants were also asked to discuss personal experiences. When sharing personal stories, it is possible for participants to feel some discomfort. As a precaution and ethical consideration, participants were informed of their right to refuse any question, as well as the right to cancel, postpone, or pause the interview at any time. Moreover, to mitigate against any risk to participants if their interview raised memories of a trauma or tragedy, a list of psychologists and support contacts that could be accessed by telephone or in person was prepared. This list was obtained from the researcher's university counselling centre. The list was not used, as the interviews went well, and no participants showed any need for psychological

support. On the contrary, participants expressed how much they enjoyed and benefited from the process.

Ethical issues are also present when a researcher interprets data and represents participants. That is, a researcher holds authority over the participants' narratives in terms of how they (the researchers) re-narrate and re-tell the participants' experiences. Researchers therefore have a major role as they and their subjective attitudes influence the research process and analysis (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). As Cole and Knowles (2001) emphasised, the researcher is responsible for maintaining trustworthiness and credibility in the relationships between themselves, the participants, and in the generated text. Therefore, the researcher must be vigilant to ensure they are telling the participants' stories, and not their own (Gwernan-Jones, 2010). The researcher's emic stance assisted her understanding and selection of data in regard to constructing the final account. Moreover, direct quotes from the collected data were used during the analysis and presentation of the results. Direct quotes can better illustrate participants' perspectives in their own voices, and also enhance readability and readers' understanding of participants (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006).

3.6 Researcher positionality

Qualitative research is inevitably subjective and a researcher's interests, values, experiences, and beliefs, are prone to influencing the data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Dodgson, 2019). As pointed out by Kim (2015), narrative data analysis involves deep interpretation, in which the researcher engages in arbitrary subjectivity. Consequently, the researcher's context or personal experiences may affect the data analysis, for example, in the choice of representations of the participants' life histories. It has therefore been suggested that researchers clearly identify their position in the research and practise reflexivity to ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of the study (Berger, 2015; Dodgson, 2019; Palaganas et al., 2017; Probst, 2015).

Positionality acknowledged the various roles and positions that both the researcher and participants bring to the research process (Berger, 2015; Fenge et al., 2019). According to Sánchez (2010), *positionality* is the notion that personal values, views, and location in time and space, influence one's understanding of

the world. Positionality can also relate to emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspectives linked to the researcher's relationship with a specific topic or community (Sánchez, 2010). However, some scholars argue that one's position in a research cannot be identified exclusively as either emic or etic, as one's position is dynamic and changeable according to the context (Berger, 2015; Sánchez, 2010). Even so, it is important for researchers to identify their position in their study and acknowledge the potential influence of their position (Berger, 2015; Palaganas et al., 2017).

This researcher had more of an etic perspective than an emic stance. The researcher works in the hospitality sector but not as a chef. Hence, the researcher was an outsider when she approached and examined the participants as an academic, and the research design was guided by the research aim and the relevant literature. As Abu Bakar & Abdullah (2008) explained, the role of the researcher in a life history study is that of a communicator who asks open-ended preliminary questions and then asks further questions that probe the participants about their feelings, experiences, attitudes, and underlying values. During data collection, the researcher took the position of an attentive listener. She helped participants recall their life histories and experiences in their professional kitchens and tell their stories in their own voices (Auger, 2017).

The researcher was also a mediator during the data analysis process, accurately transcribing the data and providing the transcripts to participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the interview record. Direct quotes were used to present the findings, and literature and theories were used to articulate the discussion. Some emic aspects of the researcher included having an academic background and work experience in the hospitality industry. At the same time, the researcher was actively connected with industry experts and professionals, including chefs, at the time of the research. These emic positions provided a solid understanding of the chef profession and broader hospitality industry, which enabled the crafting of probing questions for the interviews.

Positionality is a way to promote trust, equity, integrity, and respect, for those being studied, as well as a way to guard against the self-deception and further inequity that can result when the researcher's positionality is not acknowledged (Berger, 2015; Sánchez, 2010). The researcher's positionality and self, which is

shaped by her context, plays a major role during the actual research process as well as in the final findings (Probst, 2015).

3.7 Trustworthiness

Rather than discussing validity and reliability, interpretivists focus on *trustworthiness* which encompasses the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study (Guba &Lincoln, 1994; Shenton, 2004). This is because for the interpretivist, knowledge constructions are about understanding from inside the meanings of participants; unlike the positivist, the interpretivist seeks no single truth. Therefore, no two researchers will elicit the same life story from a participant. Similarly, participants in different times and locations will narrate their life histories differently. The telling of a life story is dependent on memory, and memory is shaped by context. As a researcher conducting a life history study, the aim was to explore the subjective life experiences of the participants, their interpretations, and the meaning of key events. It is the subjective reality of the story at the time of the telling that is the truth (Shenton, 2004). Although there are no set criteria to measure the trustworthiness of qualitative study, this section presents a few points to confirm the trustworthiness of the applied research design.

The reliability of the life history method is often criticised as a mere memory, and recall of memory is neither accurate nor precise, and the ability to recall and retell memories also varies. These attributes challenge the objectivity of the data collected. Anderson and Jack (2006), however, emphasised the importance of placing the interview at the centre of the investigation. This means that the researcher should focus on the nature of the narratives and the context of the participants to reveal the broad lines of how certain experiences have been organised, rather than focussing on the facts. Considering this context, the trustworthiness of the study depends on the credibility of the participants and the researcher. The participants in this study were no doubt the experts on the chef sector, while the researcher, at the same time, applied strategies to ensure trustworthiness; for example, the whole research process was guided by three experienced and highly qualified research supervisors (see Shenton, 2004).

An exploratory pilot study was conducted (see section 3.4.1.2), and confirming questions such as “you just told me …., is that correct?” and “according to what you just said, this is what happened…., am I right in my understanding?” were asked regularly during the interviews to ensure accurate interpretation. The researcher was also disciplined by the data, accurately transcribing the interviews and providing the transcripts to the participants for confirmation. When analysing each interview transcript, the researcher strove to re-represent each participant’s life history accurately by using direct quotes. The use of analysis of narratives provided a holistic lens through which to view the individual narratives, while at the same time looking across the cohort of the participants’ contexts. All three strategies helped to secure the confirmability of research.

3.8 Limitations

There are limitations to this research. First, the construction of life history is varied based on contexts. In other words, the women executive chefs’ life histories presented in this research could be vastly different from those of women executive chefs in other cultural, social, political, or economic contexts. As argued by Zhang and Wildemuth (2005), analysis of narrative usually lacks the applicability of the results to another context. Moreover, although each participant was treated as the expert in the knowledge, participants also had different narrative abilities, and this affected the knowledge they reconstructed (see Adriansen, 2012; Hagemaster, 1992). However, interpretivism focuses on the experiences the participants share rather than the facts. Therefore, the researcher has a responsibility to help them construct the narratives and make sense of their experiences based on the context of the study.

Second, the interview time was limited and most of the participants’ stories cannot be considered to be complete, although interviewees usually reveal the most memorable events and experiences. Adriansen (2012) pointed out that it is normal for participants to invest more time on their memorable events, and therefore a life history can be topical and only focus on specific aspects of participants’ lives.

Third, the sampling method and participants’ availability also limited the research. As explained earlier, the criterion-based purposeful sampling technique is not

representative and recruits only a small and geographically limited sample of participants (Dworkin, 2012). In addition, the small number of women executive chefs in New Zealand, and the lack of a professional connection network in the sector in particular, made the sampling difficult. Furthermore, the participants often had busy schedules and were engaged in a variety of activities, so the two interviews originally planned for each participant had to be compressed into one single interview. When participants were available for only a short amount of time, such as the participant who was available for just one hour, the depth of understanding that can be generated is limited. This limitation was mitigated to some extent by expanding the sample size from 16 to 23 participants and identifying thematic spread across the participants' narratives.

Finally, potential bias can occur in the data analysis and interpretation stages. When analysing and retelling the participants' narratives, the researcher has the authority to decide what goes in and what needs to be taken out of the account, and this sometimes affects the validity of the narratives (Lewis, 2008).

3.9 Presentation of findings

Life histories can be reported in many ways, ranging from an autobiographical account with little interpretation from the researcher through to sophisticated theorised life histories (Hagemaster, 1992; Sosulski et al., 2010). In this research, the experiences of women executive chefs' topical life histories were the focus, and as such, an approach consistent with this type of life history method was used to present the research findings in Chapter Four. Specifically, instead of reporting full life histories for each participant, short individual vignettes of their meaningful experiences and critical moments as executive chefs, supported by participants' own words as quotes, are presented under the three prominent emergent themes. This method was used by Jacks-Cobbold (2018) when she interpreted the experiences of mature undergraduate students studying for a degree in a college of further education. Individual vignettes that illustrate participants' experiences using their own detailed dialogue are an accepted approach to reveal the life histories of participants and highlight significant narratives (Jacks-Cobbold, 2018).

Chapter Four – Findings

Second main course

The pinnacle of the meal features a red meat, such as premium beef, lamb, or venison

Image by Pagel (2020), reproduced with permission.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the life histories of women executive chefs in New Zealand and provides insights into their experiences in the professional kitchen. The chapter starts with an overview of the research sample of 23 women executive chefs in New Zealand. Information such as their ages, experiences in the industry, the training they had received, and their current roles is presented. Three prominent themes emerged from participants' narratives: "it's sexism in so many ways," "family influence," and "it's so tough." Short individual vignettes are used to illustrate each theme, incorporating direct quotes obtained during the in-depth interviews with each participant. To ensure participants' words are recognised as such, they are presented in italics.

4.2 Getting to know the participants

Table 1 in the methodology, presents participants' basic demographic information. The research participants were 23 women executive chefs who fulfilled the selection criteria defined in Chapter Three, such as the positions held, their responsibilities, and the extent of their work experiences as executive chefs. Most of the participants were located in two of New Zealand's largest cities, Auckland and Wellington, with one from Christchurch and another from Marlborough. Although all the participants were residing in New Zealand at the time of the research, some had been born, raised, and trained in other countries: France, India, Ireland, Switzerland, the UK, and the US. Their time in the industry ranged from seven to more than 40 years, and their time in executive positions ranged from two to 12 years. Sixteen had received formal training and had culinary qualifications, five had trained in apprenticeships, and two were self-trained. All but two had overseas working experience. Twelve of the participants were executive or head chefs of their own establishments, comprising a range of fine dining, casual dining, catering, and café businesses. Six participants were employees of hotel groups, restaurant groups, or fine-dining restaurants. Three had since moved on to other paths in the industry, such as teaching culinary skills, owning a pastry business, and owning a food store.

4.3 Theme one: It's sexism in so many ways

This section presents the short vignettes of seven participants – Finley, Hailey, Jayleen, Jessica, Layla, Lillian, and Sophia. The vignettes are presented to illustrate the participants' experiences in relation to the first of the prominent emergent themes; that is, the theme: "it's sexism in so many ways." This theme relates to participants' reports of experiences of sexism during interactions with their male counterparts and customers whilst in their executive chef role. All the participants talked about various gender-natured experiences; for example, the belief that the chef profession is gender segregated because of the perception that it is "*a man's job*." Also, they found organisational policy and procedures, as well as criteria for reward and advancement, biased against women. The stereotypical belief that "*women are not good chefs*" was also narrated. As the profession is highly segregated, the participants believed that women chefs "*have to be twice as good as the boys to get half of the recognition*" (Finley). In addition,

the narratives revealed that it was common for them to experience harassment, inappropriate language and jokes, and unpleasant treatment in professional kitchens. When facing sexism, some participants mentioned the strategy of "*becoming one of the boys*" or "*joining the wolfpack.*" ("Wolfpack" was a term that participants applied to describe a group of men bonded together in a kitchen). Furthermore, some of the participants talked about how "*women and men search for different purposes*" in the chef profession.

4.3.1 Hailey

The interview with Hailey was conducted through Skype as she was overseas at the time. In her 30s, Hailey was the co-director of a food business and counselling company. She was a New Zealander from a large Catholic family with a lot of aunties and uncles. She said everyone in her family "*sort of cooks*," so she was exposed to cooking at a very young age. Hailey said she was a hungry child – she played a lot of sports and ate a lot, and it got to a point where her mother asked her to cook for herself. Although a high achieving student, Hailey found she was not interested in any subject but cooking. As a result, at 14, Hailey decided to be a chef, because she wanted to feed people good food and make them happy. Hailey started her chef career in New Zealand and then trained in London with a scholarship when she was 19. After finishing her training, she worked in different establishments in various countries, such as the US, New Zealand and Canada, as well as working on a yacht. Ten years later, Hailey had moved up to executive positions in an internationally branded five-star hotel, as well as a Michelin starred food chain in England. When recalling her life history, and her professional trajectory, Hailey explained that "*it's sexism in so many ways*."

From Hailey's observations, the kitchen was segregated as "*a man's place.*" She criticised how the main kitchen and pastry kitchen were divided on gender:

> *The hot kitchen belongs to men. There is a massive gender division [of labour] within the kitchen. Most kitchens are very male – they still are – [while] the pastry kitchen has more females, and that separates the kitchen and the pastry. Typically, Chef will say things like, "you are a woman, you are for pastry, pastry is for women." When you are a male and if you work in the pastry, you are gay; there is always stereotyping like this. It's such a ridiculous lie. It doesn't matter if I am a man or woman, I can choose to*

> *work in any kitchen I want; my gender shouldn't matter. But I always found people making this type of stereotyped comments, especially men.*

In addition, Hailey had experienced sexist treatment from her male counterparts and managers, and within the organisations she had worked for:

> *I have a male counterpart who was equal to me in the kitchen, and he openly told me "you are the worst chef I have ever seen; your food is shit." Continuously put me down. But it's not just in the kitchen, it's the superiors, it's the management, the whole organisation. It's very bizarre sometimes. For example, when I was in a board meeting with other sous chefs, the executive team was there, all the heads of the departments and managers, and the GM openly said to me, "what would you know about P&L [Profit and Loss]? You are just a woman chef." Organisation as well. When you are at the executive level, normally you get a special set of chef whites, the uniform that [is] tailored to you. But I was told, "you are woman chef, let's get you a pink uniform" [and] "you are a female, let's do something pink." Eventually, I had to compromise and had my name embroidered in green because I am a woman, and I also got a green apron. If that is not the most extreme sexism thing, I don't know what is. I don't know whose idea it was, the HR or the management; they obviously believed it's a great idea.*

Looking back, Hailey admitted that she did not think about how difficult being a chef could be, especially for women. Hailey believed she had to "*work harder than the men to achieve*:"

> *Double the effort for females. I definitely had a number of setbacks on my way. It is a male-dominated environment; I can tell you a million stories about sexism that I experienced on the way. But to get to the top, you just need to put your head down, work hard, prove yourself, prove yourself twice as much as the males need to do.*

Hailey also criticised the pay gap and the unequal criteria for advancement based on gender. Hailey said she felt the lack of recognition had demotivated her:

> *On various occasions I found out that men chefs who had a similar position, similar role or title, were getting a far higher pay than me. In my career, I was never promoted, never; where I see men promoted and men receiving pay rises. I have never been given a pay rise. And I have to fight for it... I fought and fought, and nothing changed in the end. What is the point working 80 hours a week for a company that doesn't respect you, doesn't appreciate what you are doing?*

Like Finley, Hailey put her "*male hat*" on to fit in and survive, especially at the beginning of her career. She explained that she wanted to be a man because of the stereotypical belief that a "*man is [a] better cook than women*:"

> *A lot of kitchens are male dominated, and there is a traditional thinking that a man is a better cook, a man is stronger, men should dominate. To be*

> *honest, even the language that we talked about before, it was very male, the jokes in the kitchen are very male, going out at night, the activities are very male, just a male-dominated environment. As a female, you have to sort of put your male hat on, toughen up and be one of the boys when you come into work. You have to adapt to get anywhere in the kitchen.*

However, once Hailey had gained experience and become more mature, she started to doubt her behaviour of "*being one of the boys*:"

> *When I was younger, I sort of felt, this was really cool, I have to be one of the boys. I have to swear like them, I have to act like them, I have to joke like them, there is a lot of pushing around, just general, like a lot of horse play in the kitchen. When you are in your 40s, you start to think, well why should I have to be like that, how about I just be myself, and surely that should be enough to get me to the top.*

Hailey used to believe that the sexism and segregation would improve when she had reached the top position. Unlike other participants however, Hailey was disappointed, as even when she reached the top of the kitchen hierarchy, she still had numerous encounters with sexism, which made her angry about being a woman:

> *As soon as I got to the top, I realised that even as an executive chef, I can tell you a million stories that I was told that I am not good enough because of my gender…When you get to the top, you thought you were in charge, but no, nothing changes. Very often, I found out a decision, adjustment, new strategies about my kitchen, and I have no say in it… It's just things like this that make you so angry about the fact that you are a female. Because you thought that at some point in my career, someone will respect me for what I have done and what I achieved, or my experience. And I just found that was not the case.*

After years in this high-pressure industry, Hailey had felt burned out, so she became a private chef on super yachts that were rented out to millionaires. She travelled around the world, working as a chef and pastry chef. Hailey found that she had to constantly prove to others that she was a chef, which she attributed to the stereotypical image of a chef:

> *If I think about my career, I think of how hard I have to work and the sacrifices I have made to get to where I am today, I am still not taken seriously. And to be fair, people don't think I am a chef. I don't know whether that's to do with the way I dress or my appearance. When people know I am a chef, they look at me with a sense of disbelief, they ask, "how could you be a chef?" Whether I should be flattered by that, or angry by that, I am not sure, but I get angry because I thought why do I have to keep proving myself as a chef, why do I have to keep showing people my Instagram for them to finally believe me, but also be like "oh, you are a chef" with that special tone of voice. It's like the society has a picture of what a chef should be like, and I don't fit the criteria.*

Hailey recalled an encounter with an exchange chef from China. Hailey felt insulted by the chef's behaviour, while her colleagues and superior seemed to consider the situation a joke. For Hailey, this situation was an insult to her hard work and a denial of her achievement:

> *When I was at my previous workplace, a global chained hotel, different chefs would visit different branches to do promotions. We worked with one of the hotels in China and they sent one of their chefs over to work with us. When he came to the hotel, he was introduced to everyone. Straight away he came to me, and said, "you cannot be a chef, you are too pretty to be a chef. I will take you home with me as my wife." It was in front of my team, in front of the executives… everyone just kind of laughed, and I was thinking, why does no-one stand up for me? The executive level, and the food and beverage management, walked off, and they used this as a joke months after. Probably they didn't think about how inappropriate it is, but for someone who needs to fight so hard to reach the top of the brigade, this was just a slap in my face.*

Hailey also expressed her disappointment with the gendered portrayals of women and men chefs on the media:

> *Media reporting makes me so angry. Reporting in media, a man chef is called a "chef" but a woman will be called "woman chef." A chef is a chef, why do women always get their gender put before their job title? We have the same qualification, we do the job equally well, but the sexism is everywhere in our daily life.*

Hailey considered that the sexism in the chef profession had started to improve. In addition, she believed that the industry would be more attractive to women when more women attain executive or management roles. In her brigade, 80% of the staff were women. Hailey was certain that a better gender balance could be achieved with more women joining the industry.

4.3.2 Finley

Finley was born, raised, and trained as a chef in Europe. In her 40s, Finley worked as the executive chef for a hotel group and was overseeing most of the food outlets in the group, including having responsibility for 150 staff. Finley attributed her initial choice of the chef profession to pure laziness, as an easy way out. However, she soon discovered her culinary talent. After graduating from her three-year culinary course, Finley climbed up the ranks by working in different kitchens across the globe. After six years, she had reached a head chef's role in Australia. She then took a year's break to travel before she was offered an executive chef position in the United States. She spent 15 years in the United

States and England before she came to New Zealand. At the start of the interview, when recalling her life history and chef experiences, Finley, first commented on the gender segregation in the chef sector; she believed that the kitchen was still very male-dominated. Finley pointed out the unequal selection process, and how women had to be better than men to compete for the same working opportunities:

> *If you have 10 people attending a job interview, the role cannot go to the woman, unless the woman fights harder, cooks better, smashes the interview. Most of the time, jobs go to men. So, everything you do, you [have] got to get one level up than men.*

Finley pointed out that in her current workplace, all the senior roles were occupied by men. Also, in her brigade, the hot kitchen was staffed by men, while the cold larder kitchen was dominated by women. Finely used her experience to explain how this segregation happens:

> *All the senior roles are occupied by men…. In the kitchens as well, hot kitchen, all men. Only three women in my hot production kitchen, one of them just joined last month. … But larder is normally female. Because the situation is, if the executive chef is a man, then it's harder for the women chefs to go up, or to get to the position they want. As part of my course, my first job was at a busy restaurant. And all I did, was what they called the "female things." You go and wash lettuce, go whip cream, or decorate a cake. They don't move me around and I don't get to learn new skills. I ended up having a conversation with the executive chef and told him I would not survive six months washing lettuce.*

During her professional trajectory, Finley had multiple encounters with sexism. Finley said her executive position now protected her from any sort of discrimination or sexist treatment. However, she said the situation was different earlier in her career. Finley talked about several sexist incidents she had encountered, and repeatedly used the term "w*olfpack*" when discussing the men chefs she used to work with. Finley narrated the story of a memorable event she experienced when she was work in a stadium:

> *Me and my friend, two women, were put into management positions to run kitchens that were full of men chefs who knew each other. It was hard, it was so rough. We were undermined, we had everything stuck against us. We gave them a list of what needs to be done, and we walked away, and it's been done in a completely different way. They said, "what do you know? You are only women." Massive attitude, because they are men, and they think they are better. Bullying and harassing mentality in the kitchen. They are a wolfpack, they get together, behave like pure animals, make your life hell, deliberately set you up to fail.*

Finley said sexism was common in large hospitality organisations. However, this could change depending on the structure and scale of the establishment:

> *In a smaller restaurant, or if you are the owner, you have a little bit more freedom, you don't have the pressure, you choose who you work with. Unfortunately, in the corporate environment, to reach senior roles, you do have to be a tough cookie to survive.*

Finely said that sexist treatment made her stronger, and tougher than the boys. Finley said she fought back and refused to give in, as she did not want to be called "*a cry baby*:"

> *I still remember I got told to "suck it up, Buttercup." Can you imagine if this happens today? Sometimes it bothers me, but I've got a big mouth, I fought back. I just did not give up for it, I pushed through, they didn't like it, but too bad, I just kept going. I also make sure I don't let them get to me. I do not want to be called a cry baby.*

Finley said women need to behave differently in the kitchen; in particular, they need to be tough or the "*situation will destroy you*." She acknowledged the existence of different approaches and rationalised why she chose to "*be one of the boys*" to survive:

> *My mouth is like [that of] a sailor, you know why? Because at the beginning when I was training, climbing through the ranks, I had to be one of the boys to survive. Going for beers, drinking with the boys, going partying, listen to all nonsense, I heard some fucking crazy stories. I am sure there is another way, maybe it's just my preference. But there is this whole macho, bravado, man's way. If you were a sensitive woman in that situation, the negatives would have swallowed you up.*

Although Finley chose to be one of the boys to survive, she said she had seen some women use their femininity to get what they wanted:

> *Some women's behaviour in the kitchen drives me nuts. It's the really pretty female that comes in and ruins something. When they can't do something, or make some mistakes, they just use their pretty face. Women who use their sexuality to get what they want or those who sleep their way to the top… this actually happens in the industry and this makes me sick. For me, that gives the rest of us a bad name.*

During the interview, Finley mentioned that compared with that in other countries, sexism is not a major issue in New Zealand's chef sector. With support from her current workplace, she believed that she had mellowed. She did not feel the need to be "*one of the boys"* anymore, but instead, could be herself:

> *I think I feel the most change I [have] had has been here in New Zealand. I think the support and the development provided in here has been massive for me; I found it extremely beneficial. I feel I've been given opportunity here I wasn't provided when I was in other countries. I think I [have] mellowed slightly – I used to be a terrorist (sic). Now I feel it's in my blood, it's just purely me, because I am given the freedom that it's okay to be a girl in the kitchen, it's fine, it's fine if you cry, there is nothing wrong. You are not going to get a finger pointed at you like you would have before.*

Finley pointed out that women and men chefs have different approaches when managing a kitchen. According to her, women chefs are compassionate and care about their staff:

> *Compassionate, nurturing and caring. I took care of my staff. I probably go way beyond what I should do compared to a lot of people. Because somebody has to be in their corner, somebody, so I have to be, or I won't be able to live with myself... [tears in eyes] … I do that, I lead by example. I am compassionate, I care; I do, I care. I care about the food, but I care more about the people.*

Finley worked with her human resources department to initiate a support group for women chefs, which met once per month. She explained the aim of the group, which was to provide professional development and a networking opportunity to assist and support women chefs to progress in their career. She provided some minutes from meetings as well as other relevant documents. As someone who had been through the chef ranks, Finley believed she could help other women chefs overcome hurdles and challenges in their professional trajectories:

> *Because it was hard for me – I just did it, no one helped. I sometimes wonder how I would be if I was them and I had me [as an executive chef]. But I believe in mentorship and that's why I started the programme here to support them to climb up, to push them. I am more about "come on girls." Also, you need a female who understands you, someone you relate to, or just someone you can trust. I want to be that person for my team.*

4.3.3 Jayleen

After years in an executive chef role, Jayleen was in senior management roles in both a teaching institution and a culinary industry association. She was also active in domestic and international culinary competitions, not just participating, but also hosting. In her current project, Jayleen worked with chefs in New Zealand to promote the culinary industry and the chef profession.

In her 30s at the time of the interview, Jayleen was born and raised in Asia. At first, Jayleen planned to become an information technology (IT) engineer. She

had enrolled in a programme but withdrew at the last minute to study to be a chef because her father told her to do something she enjoys. During her study, she was an award-winning student. After graduation, Jayleen went to the United States for further study in hospitality management. She then worked in five-star hotels across the US, starting from the bottom and progressing upwards to an executive chef position before she had turned 24. Jayleen attributed her achievement in such a short period to hard work, such as working 10 hours a day and three months without a day off. After years working in the US, Jayleen migrated to New Zealand. Having a wealth of experience in hotel groups, her life history as a woman chef had similarities to that of Hailey. Like Hailey, Jayleen thought the chef sector was gender segregated:

> *Most men, not enough women; to get women chefs is very difficult. They all leave before they reach the position. I reached it because I was young, I was blessed, and I took the opportunity to have the big jump. I could because I don't have a boyfriend or partner, and my parents were supportive, and I worked three times harder.*

Jayleen had worked in chain hotels of different star levels. One of her previous roles was as a corporate chef who visited different hotels and provided culinary related training. She explained that as a woman chef, she was judged by people. She said she always felt that when she started a new job, people looked at her gender rather than at her ability, particularly because she was a petite woman:

> *They judge you based on your gender instead of your performance. When I reach every hotel, the GM [general manager] will expect the chef to be six foot four tall and a big guy, and when they see me, I can see the disappointment in their eyes, and I see their doubt. I got those looks, and they also questioned my ability to fix their hotels and train their chefs, as their chefs are usually a group of older guys, which they think, as a woman, I would not be able to handle.*

Jayleen considered being a woman chef was very difficult, and there was a different standard used to judge women chefs:

> *Being a woman chef is really difficult, everything you do is being judged: your facial expression, your skill, how you dress. They will look at you and have doubts about you. Females can be more emotionally sensitive; they could use words like "you are very emotional" against you… When I am in the kitchen, I would have a less smiley and more serious game face on. If I don't smile, people think I am very snobby. That's another problem, but I am not. But have you ever heard people call a man chef a snob?*

Jayleen pointed out that the judgement she had received had influenced how she dressed in the kitchen. Jayleen considered her confidence had been negatively impacted because she was constantly worrying about what others were thinking of her:

> *When I am in the kitchen, I will purposely wear loose pants and a loose jacket. I wouldn't wear make-up, I would never let my hair down, it was always in a bun. I was told that when I was 24, I look older than I am now… because in the kitchen people were always commenting, especially men, so you don't want to look nice because you don't want to have their eyes on you… The judgement we received from others, from the men in the kitchen, from the management, from the customers, has negatively impacted my self-confidence.*

Jayleen added that these judgements affected her life beyond her immediate role in the kitchen. For instance, Jayleen found herself dressing down outside work, attempting to mould herself into a set criterion to be recognised as a chef. She felt the moulding was an unconscious process:

> *I was at a party recently. I dressed up, and people refused to believe I am a chef. If you ever notice, chef always appear messy in what they wear, they wear dirty clothes, and they think it's okay, and they build the perception that chefs cannot dress up. Even at a chef gathering, if you dress up really well, others will be like "oh, you clean up very well;" this is a term that a chef used. It's the perception of people, because they have their expectations of what a chef should look like. So, you have to mould yourself to that… made me sad as well, all of us who have done it as women, when we go somewhere we tried to dress down to fit into their expectation, because this is the only way people will take us seriously as chefs. If we go with heels, make-up, and nice dresses, then people will not take us seriously. From a self-conscious, personal perspective, it's quite sad, the environment changed me, without me recognising it, and I took it on board, and thought that is me. I started when I was so young when I started working in the kitchen, the kitchen shaped me as a person, my personality, how I dress, how I behave.*

Like Finley and Hailey, Jayleen emphasised the need for women to work harder than men. Yet, she also mentioned that sometimes this sexism could be culturally related:

> *Being female in this industry, you need to work twice as hard than the men, especially if you are petite, like me. You have to be three times stronger than a guy, in every possible way, because they will try to cut you off in every possible way. Sometimes that's related to culture as well, how the Asian culture treats women differently than men.*

Interestingly, Jayleen offered a different idea, by suggesting that women chefs have higher levels of emotional intelligence than do men, and are emotionally

more sensitive. As a result, women chefs are able to notice if something is wrong with their staff. Hence, Jayleen believed that having more women in the kitchen would improve the long-standing mental health issues in the sector:

> *We work very differently, man and women. We are more empathic, and compassionate. There is so much depression and mental health issues. I think if there are more females, it won't have so many issues. The fact is men need more nourishing than women. In a male-dominated situation, men are not allowed to express themselves. And when they express themselves the soft way, they will be considered weak; the hard way, they hurt others and themselves through yelling and swearing. I think women have more emotional IQ, which is more important than IQ, the people skill, because we can often identify if something is going wrong.*

At the end of the interview, Jayleen agreed that the industry was changing and becoming less gendered. However, she said that sexism was still prevalent, using one of her recent meetings in the industry association she was leading as an example. Shortly after her appointment to the director's role, one of her male counterparts approached her and said to her "*you should become a model*." Jayleen expressed her disappointment that this sort of behaviour and sexism still existed in the industry. She also pointed out that people judged others on their age and race, as well as gender, and these areas required attention too.

4.3.4 Jessica

In her 50s, Jessica was overseeing two restaurants and a bakery business with her husband. Jessica came from a farming background; her grandfather was a farmer and used to have a large garden where he grew a lot of produce. Thus, Jessica grew up surrounded by fresh produce and understood the seasons and crops. In addition, she had learned about the cycles of life from observing the sheep, cows, and ducks on the farm, and was familiar with the killing of sheep and ducks for food. At 14, Jessica had started working part time as a waitress. The owner of the restaurant taught her some basic cooking skills and stimulated her interest in the culinary field. Having studied politics at university, Jessica decided to change her course and become a chef, because this would be better suited to her travel plans. She travelled overseas and worked as a chef in different restaurants and cafés, then realised that she wanted to do a culinary course. She returned to New Zealand for two years to complete her culinary diploma before leaving for England to finish another culinary course. In between study periods, she worked in several places in Europe. After five years in England, Jessica

returned to New Zealand and opened her own business, where she became the executive chef and oversaw the kitchen operation. She has since managed several kitchens that she and her husband have owned.

Jessica believed the chef industry is male dominated, although, during the interview, Jessica surprisingly realised that her kitchen was actually female dominated. Jessica also believed that more women in the industry and leading in kitchens would attract more women to the profession, and this would bring a positive change to the industry:

> *Often, I was the only woman… But not in my kitchen in this period of time. But it has been male dominated in the past. We've had times where there's only been one or two females in the entire kitchen. I was at two relatively new places the other day. One was all males and, in the other one, there were three men chefs and one woman chef. So, it's still the case. Maybe because the head chefs were both male. From my observation, woman chefs gravitate toward their female leader and then they advance and grow better compared to a male-led environment. If there are more women chefs leading the kitchen, maybe slowly a different culture or females' status in the kitchen will change.*

Like Jayleen, Jessica said women chefs in the male-dominated environment of the professional kitchen often face stereotypical judgements. Jessica provided an example of how her women chefs had received judgement from customers:

> *The judgement is huge. The attitude towards what you could do, what you couldn't do, what you knew, what you didn't know. In this place, often you can hear people comment when they see the open kitchen and they will be surprised that "oh, you have got all girls on tonight." But they will never say anything if there are a group of boys in the kitchen. And that is quite interesting.*

Reflecting on her life history, Jessica said that sexual harassment was common in kitchens and she used to ignore inappropriate behaviours at the beginning of her professional trajectory. However, she suggested this situation may have changed:

> *There used to be quite a lot of what we call "sexual tension" within a kitchen. The touching thing, someone grabs your bum or grabs your breast. Early in my career, I didn't really know how to deal with that. I just ignored it to start with. But the older I got, I wouldn't accept that. But now it's changed, and it's not acceptable in the kitchen. Also, most women that have gotten there would say "no" to stop inappropriate behaviour.*

Like Finley, Hailey, and Jayleen, Jessica said that when facing segregation, discrimination, and judgement, women chefs needed to "*behave like a man*" in

the kitchen, especially in their formative years. Likewise, Jessica also experienced a change of mindset when she got older and had more confidence, realising that she did not want to behave like men. Jessica also added that the changing culture had eliminated the need to be something or someone else to be accepted:

> *You have to be like a man, you have to behave like a man. You had to have similar humour, you had to swear, you had to join the wolfpack. When you were younger, you needed to do that to be accepted. But when we get older and have a bit more confidence and are more mature, I realised that I don't have to behave like men, I don't actually want to talk like that. Like I used to think if I don't go out with the boys to drink, I am not one of them, but in fact, I am not one of them. I couldn't care about rude jokes. But this could be hard, especially in your formative years. But nowadays it's quite different, the culture has changed, you don't need to be something or someone to be accepted.*

Jessica and her husband had opened many establishments - restaurants, a café, and a bakery. Jessica was often in charge of the kitchen, and had noticed the different behaviours of the women and men chefs:

> *Women tend to stand back and not [be] money driven. And I notice that the guys will always be asking for pay increases. They are more aggressive. And across the board, I see all the women working across the kitchen; it's always guys asking for more, not the women. I think until women can believe in themselves and believe in their value and their worth, and they would say they don't see it. They have very high standards of themselves and they will consider themselves not quite as good as their male counterparts. But hello, you are.*

Overall, Jessica believed that sexism was disappearing from the industry. She said it was very sexist before, but things had changed enormously in terms of attitude and acceptance of women chefs. However, as she added, "*there is [a] long way to go."*

4.3.5 Layla

Layla wanted to be an actress, but her parents convinced her to be a chef because there was a high incidence of unemployment among actors. She had enjoyed cooking since she was young and considered cooking to be a talent passed down through the family. As Layla explained, her great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother, were all very good cooks. Therefore, she happily accepted her parents' suggestion to cook, and took a three-month culinary course when she was 18 years old. After the course, Layla started cheffing by hosting

dinner parties and private catering functions. This was the start of Layla's professional trajectory, and as she said, "it wasn't an easy start."

> *I did dinner parties, and I did catering, just on my own. I wasn't very good at it, I have to say. And I always felt very under pressure, usually screwed up quite a bit. Believe me, it wasn't an easy start. A few times I thought maybe this is not for me. I don't know what I'm going to do, maybe I should go waitressing instead.*

Layla then worked in restaurants and at some other jobs in the industry before she was offered the head chef's role in a well-known food and beverage establishment in London. She worked there for 12 years, accumulating experiences and becoming a confident chef. Five years before participating in this study, Layla decided to move to New Zealand with her partner, a New Zealander. They started their own restaurant, and Layla looks after the kitchen while her partner takes care of the front-of-house. For Layla, the chef profession is not only physically and psychologically hard, but also gendered.

Layla pointed out that it was really hard to be herself because of the group mentality in a male-dominated profession. Consequently, she became "*one of the boys*." However, in this role, Layla still found herself affected by gender stereotypes:

> *I got quite a loud voice, I always say "do this, do that," being demanding, and a lot of men don't like it. While if it's a man with a loud voice and demanding, people won't have a problem with it. But because I am a woman, they will call me bossy, old.*

Just like Hailey and Jessica, Layla realised that she could just be herself in the later stages of her professional trajectory. Still, she considered this transformation a "*work in progress*:"

> *I used to be sort of one of the lads; I think a lot of females feel the need to be one of the boys. It is a group mentality, be part of the boys. When you were 18, starting your first job and you're petrified, you will just join the majority, which is the boys, then you survive; it's kill or be killed. It is about survival, and if that means you have to be a dude or being the someone else or whatever, you do that. Now I am in my 50s, I know I can be myself; I know how to behave in the kitchen. But it's a work in progress. It is very hard to be yourself sometimes. I am still working on it. It is really tough.*

Layla also commented on the work–family conflicts faced by women chefs.

> *I don't have children; I don't know how they did it. The fact is I am sure it is always going to be the challenge, to balance both family and work. My*

> *partner and I are in the same business, our timetable is the same, we have the same days off. If I had someone who just worked nine to five, we won't get to see each other.*

Layla associated gender segregation and sexist behaviours in the kitchen with the gendered media portrayals of chefs. However, she kept circling back to the concept of a group mentality, saying that if women dominated the kitchen, sexism would not survive:

> *I think a lot of men need to change. You have got to stop idolising the bullies on television. What other profession admires a man shouting at someone […] But because of this unrealistic image of chefs on TV and in public, people got excited, and they thought, "oh, you get to shout." I think that is the public's perception of what a chef is. I think chefs are still on TV promoting these behaviours because people are loving it. If this gender portrayal continues, then the young, macho men chefs would be attracted to the profession, and thinking "great, I can just treat the others in a bad way." In this equation, it disadvantages women, because she's in the minority. I'm sure if a chef had 10 women around him, he wouldn't be able to do anything like that.*

Layla pointed out that to improve gender equality, men should assist as well:

> *But I think as I said, men are the ones who need to change, not women. Because we could all do with changing a bit. Trying to improve ourselves in some way. But it's very tricky. And everyone's different they have their own paths. And things change as well as you get older and more mature.*

Like Jayleen, Layla remarked that segregation is "*not just about gender; it could be the age, the race, the education, the culture*." At the end of the interview, Layla showed produced a cookbook she had published with her previous workplace in London. She was very enthusiastic when describing the concept of the book and the recipes she had designed. Layla explained that she loved food and serving people, and after years of experience in the chef role, she still got "*a kick from someone saying this is wonderful*." A compliment from a customer filled Layla with joy.

4.3.6 Lillian

In her 30s at the time of the interview, Lillian and her husband had owned a fine-dining restaurant for five years; she managed the kitchen while her husband took care of the front of house. Lillian had returned to take charge of the kitchen not long before the interview, after taking a two-year break to give birth and raise her

son. During her two years on parental leave, she was still involved in menu and recipe development, but not full-time cooking. As she said, "*I really miss my job*."

Growing up in Europe, Lillian had always wanted to be a chef, and with the encouragement of a friend, had enrolled at a catering school when she was 15 years old. Before that, Lillian had not realised that being a chef was a profession, as no-one in her family worked in the hospitality industry. Lillian completed a six-year university degree in hospitality management, which comprised general management, cooking, and hotel and restaurant management, as well as a lot of work experience. After her study, Lillian worked a year in her home country before travelling to Australia where she worked as a pastry chef for a year. She then moved to New Zealand, where she worked in three different restaurants and attained an executive role before establishing her own business.

Recalling the time when she had just started working as a chef in her home country, Lillian said the industry was segregated and she was treated badly. She related the sexism she had encountered to the stereotypical view that "*women cook at home and men cook in restaurants;*" this was a cultural norm in her country:

> *In my country, the culture is the women cook at home, not in the restaurant. So, the kitchen is full of men, and you always work with men, lots of men, it's part of the culture, and you grow up like that. When I was at school, you were in the kitchen with 30 men. They speak to you badly, they treat you badly. Yes, I cried but it made me strong, because I wanted to prove them wrong, I wanted to out beat them; this drive pushes me hard to achieve the best out of me.*

Lillian also commented that it is hard for women to work in a male-dominated kitchen because the environment is intimidating. Furthermore, she said that women need to be physically and mentally strong as well as work harder than men to work in the kitchen:

> *When I was young, like 18, in the kitchen, with 30 guys and there's only two girls, it's hard, it is intimidating. Men can be stupid, the language, the jokes, how they treat people Therefore, you need to be physically and mentally strong; you cannot be fragile if you work in the kitchen. If you are a sensitive person, then chef is probably not the job for you. Also, you do need to prove 10 times more that you are better than men.*

As a woman chef, Lillian found it particularly challenging to manage people who were older than her, and giving orders to men, as they resist taking orders from a woman:

> *You have older people than you, and that's sometimes a problem. You are in charge of the team, and some chefs are older than me. For me, I don't care, but for them, men in particular, they don't like it. Especially if it's a woman, they don't like it. You can tell from the way they act.*

Like Finley, who was also European, Lillian found New Zealand to be less sexist than was her home country. She felt New Zealand had a better culture and provided a better environment for women chefs:

> *In New Zealand, when I worked in different restaurants, I never felt there is anything different working in the kitchen as a woman. I think it's the culture, how people treat me. The country I am from was much worse.*

Lillian also mentioned the differences between women and men as chefs, the most obvious distinction being what she referred to as "*the male ego*," and men's need for recognition:

> *No male ego will be good. Men always want to cook to be famous, cook for some purpose, and women really don't care about it. I don't do my job to be famous or to be someone. I don't mind cooking in the line or working somewhere low key, but men always want more. I think men need recognition, and women don't. At least I don't. I won in a well-known competition, but I don't really talk about it; I just did it to prove to myself that I can do it. It's more personal, it was me, myself. I didn't do it to be famous. But a man is going to do it to prove himself to the people, and to be recognised. It's nice to have recognition, but recognition for me is people coming to my restaurant to eat and they are happy, and this is what makes me happy.*

Like Hailey, Jayleen, and Jessica, Lillian believed that the industry was getting better, and becoming less gendered as more women became chefs. At the same time, she also hoped that fewer women would leave their roles because of their gender.

4.3.7 Sophia

Now in her 50s, Sophia had worked as a chef for more than 30 years. Sophia was managing a catering business and taking short-term chef roles in restaurants. Sophia initially studied science and had wanted to be a journalist. However, at 18 years old, when she was waitressing in a restaurant, and the chef failed to arrive at work, she offered to step in and help. She remembered thinking,

"*I am pretty sure I can do that because I watched him doing it*," The next day, Sophia was offered the chef's role, as the owner thought she was better than the chef. This event changed her life and started her on her culinary trajectory.

Sophia worked in the kitchen and rose to the head chef position by the age of 20. She then travelled overseas for her apprenticeship. She had travelled and worked in different countries, including Australia, Japan, France, the United States and England, to name a few. She had worked in different positions and practised different styles of cooking in hotels, cafés, bars, restaurants and catering companies. After years of experience as a chef, Sophia still considered the profession segregated in terms of gender and age. As she explained, "*it is a man's job,*" especially one for older men:

> *Commercial cooking is a man's job; domestic cooking is a women's job. If you go to a restaurant in Italy, the chef will be the man, but mama is cooking food at home. Every country I have been to it's the same. It's really strange. When I started cooking, there were no girls doing it, there was only guys, and it wasn't a young person's job, so a lot of older men. Also, within the sector, pastry chef aligns with women, as they get to be pretty and nice, while the men work in the hot sections.*

Sophia shared some unpleasant experiences that she encountered, and which she considered confronting:

> *[The chef industry] wasn't as attractive as it is now, there was no TV show, it was not a respectable job, and it was violent, sexist, a lot of alcohol issues…so [I have been through] things like getting locked in the chiller, getting left out, and the jokes they made, the way they talked, gross jokes. If I was a young woman and I was nervous and innocent or had just came into the industry, it would be confronting.*

Sophia also revealed the strategy she applied to manage the kitchen as the executive chef: "*you need to be one of the boys*." This strategy is consistent with the strategies described by other participants. Sophia also said she was mean and aggressive when running the kitchen, because she needed to be on top of her staff:

> *When you were 20, a girl, and you need to manage a team where everyone is much older than you, you have to have bigger balls than the guys, you have to be really mean and aggressive. My staff used to say I am scary, that's the thing when I am in the kitchen, I have to be scary. It is like the army; you've got to prove to people that you've got it. You need to get 50 orders at 6:30 p.m. so you have to know everyone's section is set up, and they will listen and do what they are told to do. You have to be able to be on top of them… I am also one of the boys, I was wearing big*

> *boots, and go out with the boys after work. The girls are not invited but I was always there because I was one of the boys, I used to do boy stuff with them. I got used to being filthy, greasy, smelly and hot; disgusting. If you want to keep the job you have to put up with a lot of stuff. There are gross jokes and sexual language anywhere you go, and the bullying. I have to be as mean as them, or meaner maybe. I used to be so horrible to my staff.*

Like Finley, Sophia considered "*being one of the boys*" the only solution, because at the time she believed a feminine approach would not work:

> *There is no room for softness. If you play the girly card in the commercial kitchen, God no, it is not going to work, especially in senior roles. That would never work in a million years. You run a team of boys, who are stupid, hungover, they don't care, they don't have skills, they don't want to be a chef. You've got a dishwasher who is only 14 years old. And you know it's hot, and it's stinky, and it's heavy. And you have your 150 orders up all at once. I mean I see TV shows with lovely women in the kitchen and it's peaceful, and silent but I never worked at one.*

However, along her trajectory, the way Sophia interacted with staff had changed. She said she became a mother role at the age of 30, and now often plays "*the old lady card*:"

> *I started my catering business when I was around 30. I am everyone's mum. Nowadays I work really short shifts in friends' places. I play the old lady card, and I will sit at the back. I physically can't do it, so I use the old lady card to ask for their respect.*

Sophia also observed how women and men treated the chef profession differently. From her point of view, the chef profession was both physically and psychologically demanding. Therefore, she believed most women entered the industry because of their passion, whereas men entered the industry because it was convenient:

> *The chef, it's an apprenticeship, I think it's a boys' thing to do. It probably is not now, but it was before. I think because of its nature, its history, it's more of a boys' job. It's really disrespectable, it's night-time, it's badly paid, it's physically horrible. This is very sexist, but I can't imagine girls going into this industry unless they absolutely love and care about food. Whereas there are guys who came into this industry but have no fundamental interest in food. But I can't see girls wanting to enter this industry just because it's a job.*

Sophia said she would like to think that everything was changing, and that the new generation of chefs had made the kitchen a better place and women were being valued more. However, as she reflected on her recent experience of

helping a friend manage a kitchen, she realised that the industry was still gender segregated and sexist:

> *There are still no girls; I am still the only girl. It is still all dirty jokes and going out drinking after work. And it is all hard, and rough, and drugs, loud music. It's still totally dudes. I don't know where the girls are. End of the day, in the fine-dining restaurant I know in Auckland, I hardly see women in there, and you know it still going to be very masculine.*

4.4 Theme two: Family influence

The short vignettes of eight participants, Helena, Kinsley, Aubrey, Molly, Nora, Penelope, Hazel, and Paisley, are presented to describe the second prominent theme, "Family influence." The family influence theme consists of two aspects: one refers to influences from the participant's family of origin, the unit they grew up in, and the other refers to influences from their family of procreation - their children, partner, and husband. Both were found to have strong influences on the participants' professional trajectories.

The participants' experiences as women executive chefs were strongly influenced by their family members. Many pointed out that their family had played a vital part in their becoming a chef. Participants particularly valued "*support from family*" along their journey to the top of the chef hierarchy. This support could be support for their career choice or for their development in their professional trajectory, or both. It was clear that parents' opinions about the chef profession had influenced some participants' decisions to choose a career as a chef. Being a chef is demanding, and the participants considered support from families had assisted them to develop in their chosen profession.

Some believed that their passion for the industry had stemmed from their family context; mostly, they "*grew up surrounded by food*." In addition, many said that their memories of cooking with their parents and grandparents had deeply influenced their career choice; for example, many explained that "*my mother is a good cook.*" In addition, family-related life circumstances, particularly in the family of procreation, by having children, for example, had also altered the participants' professional trajectories. Furthermore, many participants expressed concerns about work-family conflict, saying they were forced to choose between their "*work family or their own family*." Women's heavy involvement in domestic care and

duties, also meant they required support from their family. Family influences were significant, and evident in many participants' narratives.

4.4.1 Helena

Aged in her 40s, Helena worked as a culinary lecturer and freelanced by teaching culinary courses for communities. Originally from Asia, Helena attributed her success in the chef profession to the support of her family. She emphasised the low status of women in her country, especially for women in the chef profession. Therefore, without her family support, Helena believed that she would not have been able to progress so well in her professional trajectory. Her narrative about how she joined the chef industry is an interesting story. Helena and a group of friends attended the entrance exam for a hotel school just for fun. Out of six of them, only Helena, who put her application in at the last minute, was accepted. She completed the course at the hotel school, then worked in a hotel in her home country, where she progressed to an executive role. Although she joined the industry by accident, she did admit that her interest was already there because of her family:

> *My family used to cater for family members, parties, in a takeaway format. Also, our family had a food-related business back then, so I was always involved in the preparation process. My dad still does that now. He is 85, he is still running the business. So that interest was there.*

After the hotel course, Helena pursued postgraduate study with her family's support; she completed her internship in France, unlike most, who do it in their home country. Helena said she developed as a chef during those six months:

> *I finished three years of hotel school and then I did the postgraduate programme for one and a half years; one year's study and six months' internship. A few of us were selected to go to France. However, most students did their internship in our country, but my parents encouraged me to go to France. You have to know that for our culture, for a girl, not even a woman, to study overseas is a big thing. Not many families would support their daughters to do so.*

After completing her internship, Helena returned home to work in hotels. Recalling those times, she pointed out that the three-shift rotation (i.e. a rotating roster that covers three shifts each day) common in hotels was a huge obstacle, as many families in her country preferred their daughters to work day shifts.

Hence, Helena really appreciated the support from her family that allowed her to continue her professional trajectory:

> *Shifting is another challenge. Three shifts per day, non-stop rotation basis, and you don't get your weekend, so it's hard for females. Compared to a café that closes at 5 p.m., the hotel finishes in the morning. In my country, a lot of people wouldn't want their daughter to work in places like that. I got a lot of support from my family. I did all the shifts, I used to reach home at one or two in the morning. There are a lot of girls that I have known, family wouldn't let them work shifts, and there is no culture of moving out.*

Although her family support helped her throughout her professional trajectory, Helena believed having a family is the main reason so many women chefs leave the industry. After she started her own family, all of Helena's career decisions were based on the requirements of her family. As she explained, "*they are more important than my career, and there must be a sacrifice*." After several years in an executive role, she left her organisation and started her own business to provide flexibility for more family time. Helena believed that if she had not left her role, she would have been promoted to a higher position:

> *I agreed with the statement that lots of women chefs leave the kitchen before they reach a higher position. I agreed with this because it comes down to responsibility. You have much more time away from home if you stay in the industry. Two commis chefs who started around the same time with me, left after a few months to get married. I also left because I got married and had my daughter. It was my decision… we started the family, I started my business, it gave me the flexibility for my family. When I left, I was the kitchen executive, the head of the department. If I didn't leave for family, I would have gotten a higher position. But I decided to leave to start the family.*

In 2002, when Helena and her family moved to New Zealand, she was again searching for a job that provided her with some work-family balance. The job search was not a smooth process, and she stayed a home for a while, without paid work. When asked about her perspective on this, Helena responded that "s*omeone needs to sacrifice, and I don't regret doing so*." However, she also commented that the situation would have been different if she had had support with childcare and other family-related responsibilities:

> *I didn't get a job initially when we arrived in New Zealand; it was a year later that I got the role. Back then I was trying to get a job that would give me time. My husband got a job first so that is fine, but then when it comes to me finding a job, I need a job that allows me to take care of my family, because there is nobody else. So I stayed home for a while, until I got a job that fits my hours and allowed me to pick my daughter up after school or be there when my family needed me. When you have moved to a new*

> *country, that itself, it's a big upsetting part of your life... you have to sacrifice somewhere and that's me, but that is fine. When we came to New Zealand, three of us came by ourselves… If I knew that I would be able to leave my daughter with somebody I am comfortable with, it would be different.*

Helen mentioned at the end of the interview that now her daughter was older, she had more time to do the things she liked, such as learning new culinary techniques and skills from YouTube and trying to make new dishes at home. To Helena, chefs needed to continue to develop themselves. She believed she had inherited this spirit from her father, as she said, "*my dad still does that; he is 85, and he is still doing classes*."

4.4.2 Kinsley

Originally from Europe, Kinsley started working in a kitchen at 16 years old. She had worked in several countries in Europe, in both pastry and hot kitchens. After working in Europe, Kinsley moved to Australia to work and travel before coming to New Zealand. Aged in her 30s, Kinsley was now an executive chef for a well-known fine-dining restaurant, where she had worked for the previous five years. Family had influenced Kinsley's professional trajectory; she said the seed of interest in culinary work was planted by her family. Kinsley's grandfather was a hunter; she used to hunt with him and learned to clean trout when she was four. She also cooked with her mother at home. When Kinsley was eight, her parents separated so she started to cook for herself and for her brother:

> *We had a house in the mountains, which we'd go to every time we had school holidays with my grandparents. My grandpa was a hunter, and he was fishing as well. So, I started to clean up trout when I was maybe four years old… And we always made a loaf of bread and cookies and tarts. I made them with my mum at home. And then I just keep cooking. My parents got divorced. And then during summer-time, I was cooking for myself and my brother. I was eight and I was teaching the babysitter how to keep food clean; for example, the salad, you need to wash the leaves.*

Kinsley went to high school but discovered that sitting down for eight hours a day did not interest her. During an Easter break, when she was 16 years old, her mother found her a part-time job in a seafood restaurant. This working in the professional kitchen prompted her to leave school. Kinsley's teachers tried to persuade her to stay, but with her mother's support, she started her chef apprenticeship:

> *I was like, I am quitting school and starting in the kitchen. And all my teachers in high school were calling my mum and told her, "she can't quit, she's clever." And my mum was like, "So what? You think that they don't need clever people in the kitchen? She can do whatever she wants." I really had the support from my mum. My dad, it took him longer to come around because he wanted me to study and become a psychologist.*

Kinsley emphasised the importance of support from one's family, especially for young chefs who have just started. She said the work is hard, and it would be heart-breaking if one's family did not understand or support them:

> *Support from a family is so important for me, and especially as a young chef. If you do not know what your kids do, it is heart-breaking. Because the kid falls in love with this job, they cannot just walk away from it, they need the support, and people around them to understand.*

After Kinsley completed her apprenticeship, she worked in various countries in Europe. She then moved to Australia before moving to New Zealand. She admitted that the industry was exhausting, and family support was essential for her:

> *There are no weekends, there is not much free time, and it is so demanding. I can go to my mum, she would listen to me and helped me. It is something spiritual, sort of mental support.*

Valuing the importance of support from family, Kinsley had incorporated the concept of family into her management philosophy: to treat her staff as her family:

> *In here, they are like my kids, that is my family … For me, we are human, it is important to understand each other, how my mother understands me when I was 16 literally keeps me going as a chef. So, my door is always open, even when people have got issues at home, I really want them to talk to me. And not just work and come in with a happy face when they're not happy. So I really care about how they feel even outside of work. Especially because that affects your work and long-term development as well.*

After working in her current workplace as an executive chef for five years, Kinsley talked about her plan to return to home in the near future to start her own family. She commented on the difficulty of having a child without support:

> *I don't have kids now. I mean, how can you do that? Yes, there are some amazing women chefs out there, they have kids and still working. But I worry that I will not be able to be there for my family because of my work. This will be so difficult. But that's why when I go back to my country, I'm going to have more support from my family, and this is what I really miss.*

However, she also questioned why women bear most of the family responsibilities, a factor she said, influences their professional trajectories. She believed that domestic responsibilities should be shared equally between women and men, and women should not be afraid to ask help:

> *Many women have left cooking because they believe that they are supposed to take care of the kids. But responsibilities at the end of the day should be the same for both partners. Why do we females put everything on our shoulders? I want to have kids, I have always wanted to have kids and I want to make it work, I don't want to leave the kitchen. My partner said he is happy to stay home with the kid. I am like, "I am sure you're good." Staying at home with a kid is boring, it's hard. Asking support from family or having the nanny doesn't mean that this baby is going to have less love… this kind of mother, they are working so hard to do what they love.*

At the end of her interview, Kinsley reiterated that she was planning to return to her country in 2020. Kinsley really missed her family and the mountains in her country where she could hike and forage.

4.4.3 Aubrey

Aubrey completed her study in the form of a day release programme, and had since worked in many restaurants, mainly fine-dining outlets. After graduating, she served in some establishments in New Zealand before moving to Australia, where she worked for two years. In these two years, she enhanced her skills as a chef. She then returned to New Zealand and worked in a food establishment where she met her husband. Shortly after, she was appointed to the position of executive chef in a well-known fine-dining establishment, where she led the team to win multiple awards and medals. However, Aubrey decided to leave the restaurant for her family, especially her two children, who have since left home and are working in different cities in New Zealand. For the past 20 years, Aubrey has been overseeing the kitchen operation of a family food business. Now in her 50s, she has just finished chemotherapy treatment for breast cancer, and said she was enjoying her "*second life*." Aubrey's professional trajectory and her experience as a woman executive chef was strongly influenced by her family.

Aubrey came from a farming family and believed this background helped with her chef trajectory. She described how her background had made her suitable for the chef profession:

> *I think it's from [having] a country background. I was quite happy to roll up my sleeves and work. I knew what hard work was. I was very lucky that I was very strong, that I could easily fit in. I can lift the pot and deal with bloody scenes. I've done boning at home, killing sheep. I could easily compete against others for the jobs. It was not an easy job.*

Aubrey was first enrolled into a culinary course by her mother. After she left high school, and not knowing what to do next, she had a gap year (i.e. a year after leaving school, without formal work or study). However, as her parents were opposed to unemployment, and worried about her employability, the following year, they put her in the chef profession:

> *I asked to take a year off and my parents agreed. I just had a lovely time in another town nearby, working and partying. Then, roll on to the next year, my parents started to worry, and they said, "you need to do something. You can't just run around and ride horses or go skiing or party. You need to do something." My mother rang up a polytechnic. Four days later, I started my culinary course.*

To have a family-friendly schedule, Aubrey left the restaurant she managed and opened her own food establishment with her husband. As she explained, owning and operating a family food business allowed her to still cook but at the same time take care of her family and achieve a good family and work balance:

> *I just didn't want to work in the evenings all the time. I wanted something that is family friendly and I could still do sort of cooking and training.*

According to Aubrey, it is possible for women to work as an executive chef and raise children at the same time. However, she believed it would be stressful and require a lot of support:

> *It is do-able, [but] you need a good support team, grandparents, or something like that who can help. But I would not, because I have seen the stress and strain of children of other women chefs not coping and who ended up divorced or separated. So that is why I made the decision with my husband that we weren't going to be working evenings.*

However, the transition from fine dining to less-skilled cooking was hard for Aubrey, and it took her a while to get used to a different style of cooking:

> *Probably took me a few years to sort of settle down in the shop …to go from fine dining, down to quite mundane things. I think it probably took me a few years. I think my vision was still sort of stuck in Australia.*

When describing her role in the business, it was clear that her first priority was the family, and then the business:

> *I am the head chef, but I am not totally 100% solid here. It's always between doing children and things. I've had to do a lot of after school things and weekend things for children.*

Aubrey also mentioned that there had been an opportunity for the family business to extend and move to another region where the hospitality industry was well developed. Again, because of their family and children, Aubrey and her husband chose to stay:

> *We should have probably packed up then and moved … But I just felt, maybe my family pull down here was stronger and I felt there's more opportunity for children to do horse riding and skiing and everything, so we stayed.*

Having experienced all the ups and downs of the industry, Aubrey said she would not encourage her children to work in the hospitality industry, and especially, not in the chef profession.

> *With my own children, I would tell them not to go for the industry. And I am anti towards my children getting into hospitality if I am honest with you... I would sit down and go through the reality; it is a very stressful industry. I would remind them that what they see on television is absolutely nothing like the real industry.*

At the end of her interview, Aubrey mentioned that she now had a lot of time for herself because her children had left home and had good careers. She said having cancer was a blessing as well as a wake-up call. Aubrey explained how she was always the last on the list; she always put her family and business first:

> *This is probably something I picked up from my breast cancer, that I was always last on the list. I think women are very different from men. We give always 110%, we push ourselves for perfection, whatever we do, we try and excel. As a chef, as a mother, we care, and when we care, we work hard in all aspects. However, it is not necessarily the best thing.*

The interview with Aubrey was conducted by telephone. Aubrey expressed her concerns at the beginning of the interview, that she had taken a less travelled path, so she was not sure whether she would be able to provide information typical of a female executive chef. However, by the end of her interview, Aubrey expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to reflect on things in her life she had not "*thought about for years*." Aubrey said the interview reminded her of how much she had done and how far she had gone.

4.4.4 Molly

Aged in her 20s, Molly was the owner-operator for her own establishment. Born, raised, and trained in New Zealand, Molly had worked in other countries, such as France and England. After some years in Europe, Molly returned to New Zealand and established her own business, where she managed the kitchen. Molly's establishment started as a café, but over the previous year, she had transformed it into a teaching institution, so she could "*have some work life balance*." Molly now teaches culinary courses and collaborates with other chefs in the area for pop-up food events. When talking about her achievements, Molly said that everything was "*thanks to my mother"'*. In fact, Molly had not always wanted to be a chef, but to be a fashion designer. It was her parents who persuaded her to be a chef:

> *I actually wanted to be a fashion designer for ages, but my parents didn't want me to do that, and they didn't tell me. Because they didn't think I'd make any money. But I also I cook at home all the time… from the basic cupcakes to something more skilled. My mother could tell that I am talented and I really enjoyed doing it. I was 16, and one weekend for my mum's birthday, I made her crème brûlée. I actually undercooked it. But every day after that, on our way to school, my mum would keep repeating, "you should become a chef. You should really think about becoming a chef," in a way brainwashing me. And in the end, I was like, "if you just shut up, I'll become a chef. But just shut up."*

Molly's parents, who were both in the hospitality industry, used their industry connections to find Molly's first job in the kitchen, which was also the stepping-stone into her chef trajectory:

> *I used to work in my parents' shop after school all the time… one day, this chef from the high-end restaurant in the town came in and my dad was like, "hey, my daughter wants to be a chef." And the chef said he is happy for me to go and do a trial. My mum called him the next day, and I went in. I worked there for years, from part time to full time.*

After completing her chef's training, Molly then enrolled on another culinary course in Paris, "*again, thanks to my mother*:"

> *A friend of mine had mentioned about a course in Paris... I then mentioned that to my mum. And my mum was like, "well, why aren't you do it? You've got all this money saved. Just go." So I did some Googling and I found the school that I did go to. And then I put in my application form. And I got it. And then again, thanks to my mum.*

After completing her course in Paris, Molly briefly returned to New Zealand before going to England to work. After two years of exhaustion and overwhelming overseas experiences, Molly came back to New Zealand. With some money in hand, she decided to open her own establishment. Once more, her parents guided her and provided the support that she needed:

> *My parents helped me find the location of this place [her establishment]. And then my dad came with me to the bank meeting. The manager we met was his bank manager for their business. So that helped as well. They signed to be my financial supporter, so if I did not repay the bank, they would take my parents' house. The thing is I didn't know how to get a mortgage or dealing with the requirement for opening up a food place. Without my parents, I would not be able to have this business.*

Molly considered herself lucky, as she had great support from her family as well as from her boyfriend.

4.4.5 Nora

Nora said she did not do well in school, which is why she initially started working in a kitchen. After finding found her interest in cooking, she took numerous culinary courses over many years while working in the industry. Nora mainly worked in hotels, but had also worked in restaurant and catering establishments. Nora had spent more than 20 years of her professional trajectory in hotels; it took her five years to progress from junior chef to executive sous chef, and another five to attain an executive chef position. By her late 50s, Nora had been an executive chef in hotels for almost ten years, and was working as an executive chef for an international hotel at the time of her interview. Growing up in New Zealand, Nora said her interest in cooking was inspired by her father. Also, her family enjoyed cooking:

> *My dad has made a big influence on my cooking – mum never cooks, dad does the cooking. Growing up in that environment, me and my brother were very competitive when it comes to cooking. We used to have cooking competitions at home. Although we would turn the kitchen upside down, it would be a mess but we loved it. Even now we still kind of have that competition going on; even though he is in a totally different industry, he still wants to pick a fight with me, and he can cook, don't get me wrong. My kids go over on holidays to stay with him. They will come back and say that "Uncle makes better macaroni cheese," but macaroni cheese is my signature dish, my kids love it, our extended family love it when I made it. That is the moment I started to wonder how good it was.*

Children also played a key part in Nora's professional trajectory. She gave up an opportunity to study in a polytechnic institute that she had tried hard to get into, because she was pregnant with her first child:

> *I was pregnant, and I worked hard to get into this polytechnic. I got in, still have my acceptance letter, I was proud of myself... two weeks after I turned 18, I became a mum. I had already enrolled in the course at that time, but I didn't go in the end because I didn't have day care for my kid. Things would have been so different right now if I had had that education then.*

After Nora's first child, she quickly had a second child, and while pregnant with her third child, she realised she needed to do something with her life. To accommodate her children and domestic responsibilities, Nora enrolled on a one-year culinary course. After completing the course, Nora worked as a chef for three years, while raising three children. She then had another two children after she started cheffing in the hotels. For Nora, having children and being a woman chef had been very difficult. Nora talked about her last pregnancy, explaining how she returned to work a month after the baby was born, and the guilt she felt as a result:

> *When I got pregnant with my fifth child, I worked all the way up to eight and a half months pregnant, still cooking on grill section. I enjoyed it, and I didn't want to give it up; financially I couldn't give it up. I had swollen ankles, sore feet at the end of the day but I enjoyed it. When I gave birth to my fifth child, I went back to work after a month as the work was short of staff. My husband agreed, so I went back, from one shift per week to basically full time in three months. Back then, I was still breastfeeding. My breasts were full, full of milk and heavy; by the end of the shift my breasts were rock hard. But when I got home, my husband had already put the baby to sleep, I couldn't wake the baby up to release my milk, so I was in the shower trying to press it to release my milk. I think because I was going to work so often, I didn't produce as much milk, and this was the only sad thing I felt. I wanted to breastfeed longer, but baby didn't want to breastfeed anymore because he got used to a bottle. I always have the idea that bottle feeding is lazy. The culture that I was brought up with is that you have to breastfeed, unless you absolutely couldn't due to a medical reason. I feel guilty that I didn't. I wasn't able to breastfeed as long as I could. But I gave it my best.*

Work and family balance was also challenging for Nora. Due to her demanding work, Nora said she seemed to always be the last one to know anything in the family, and she felt sad about that.

> *It was hard. One of the things I must say I am sad about is that everyone in my family knows that they cannot rely on me because I am just not the person that will be there for the important occasion because of my work,*

> *my schedule. I wasn't the first person they will call on about things when they needed help, and this upset me because I often find out about things later and they would say things like. "oh well, you probably will not be able to come anyway." But for me, just to know about these things would be nice. Family gatherings were the worst part I think, just trying to get to a family function or be there for my children's things, taking them to netball on Saturday. It was definitely hard, and I know I missed a lot of things, but I tried my best to make it work.*

Nora said the hardest time was when her children were teenagers. She said she was unable to be with her children when they needed her because the industry was really demanding, and she was at her career peak. When she recalled those times, she acknowledged that when things got hard at home, she consumed herself in her work:

> *I think one of the hardest times I had with my children being in this industry was in their teenager period. Because I was so engaged in work and I was in the middle of my career peak, I was becoming sous chef, head chef; some key things were happening for me at work. I put a lot of work first. Because this industry is so demanding, they don't have a time out, you can't have a time out, you can't say I need this time to look after my kids. You get one day off, but when you want to try to fix something, you need a lot more time than that. So, there were things with my daughter that I wasn't paying attention to, and it was getting out of control. My husband although he was there physically, but I don't think emotionally he was there, especially for the girls. The girls are getting older, they have their own issues. And it also caused arguments between him and me. He would say, "then you bloody stay home and look after the kids. You always have bloody work, don't tell me what to do with the kids." It was challenging. In the end, my daughter was sent to stay with my brother and his wife. Their family environment would help; their work hours are perfect, somebody would always be home, my parents were living with them, so they were there 24/7 for her. Yet, I am still consuming myself in work. But looking back, this is probably the way I deal with things. When things got hard at home, I took on more at work.*

Nora concluded that support is very important, and for her, the support from her husband and her family was the main reason she was able to progress so much in her profession:

> *We have five kids, we have a mortgage, so financially I had to work. I was working in the holidays, I was working night shifts, and my husband adjusted his schedule to accommodate me… I need to give absolute gratitude to my husband, who took on a lot of childcare responsibility through my career. Without him and my family, I wouldn't be here. I don't know how I did that, I have an awesome husband, my parents, my siblings, they all play a huge role in my life.*

Reflecting on her experiences, Nora believed there was a lack of support for people, especially women with families and children. Therefore, she made sure

she provided support to her staff, especially women chefs with childcare responsibilities:

> *No-one ever offered me an extra day off when I was coming up in my path. I've got five kids, but I didn't get any extra support, and I always lacked time for family related issues. So, I want to support my team. For example, one of my staff, she got pregnant, became a mother for the first time; for me, this is a celebration itself. She is a single mother, had twins, and she has doubts about coming back to work. I told her, "it's up to you. Just because you have children doesn't mean that you cannot come to work; don't let that become your life. Make your children proud, let them see that you are a working mum but still giving time to them." She came from a culture that once you become a mum, you stay at home with your kid until they are 15. I even spoke to her parents and negotiated that her parents helped to look after the kids during the week, and the girl to stay at home during the weekend for her parents to go to church. I will make it work.*

Like Kingsley, Nora said she has always wanted to run her team as a family, and related this to her being a mother of five children:

> *If there is anything in regards to how I want to run my team, it's family. I am spending 70% of my time here at work, I want it to be a family environment, so you are not feeling anxious, you feel safe and supported when you come to work. That is a huge thing for me, that is showing care and attention to things I think that is important as a mum. I am a mother of five, I am a grandmother as well. I have such a caring nature, that's how I feel I am able to structure my teams in a way that is mindful and pays attention to what is happening in their life. A lot of kitchens you go into, you just come in for a job and you go home, there is no connection. And knowing the name of my staff's partner, children, parents, their life.*

For Nora, being a mother and a woman executive chef at the same time was not an easy task, and she admitted that she often needed to choose between her "*work family or her own family*."

4.4.6 Penelope

From a family of eight children, Penelope started cooking for her family at a young age; not having to do the dishes if she cooked was her main motivation. When she left school at the age of 16, Penelope did not know what to do, so her mother suggested she become a chef. Penelope accepted her mother's suggestion as she enjoyed cooking, so started working in a café. Since the café job, Penelope had worked in bakeries, restaurants, and catering companies. When she was 22, she received her formal culinary training. During the second year of her study, Penelope's father bought her an establishment, where she worked as a chef owner for almost seven years. Looking back, Penelope said she was working 100

hours a week and could sleep standing up. Therefore, when she turned 30 years old, Penelope sold the bakery and went to work in the US. After a year there, she returned to New Zealand and worked as a chef at different establishments, eventually advancing to an executive chef role. One thing that completely changed her professional trajectory was her family; in fact, she almost left the chef industry for her family:

> *I turned 42 and I got pregnant and that was when I decided to leave. After my son and then a couple of years later I had my daughter and pretty much left the chef role then. I opened my own establishment, doing some catering and this and that. Probably three years ago, I went back cheffing as a head chef for a bistro. I did not stay long there, because I realised that I don't want to work weekends and nights because of my family.*

Penelope was able to rationalise her decision to leave her chef role for her family, and wondered how other women chefs found a work-life balance, as for her, it was hard, especially as her children got older:

> *I feel that I need to sacrifice something, and I picked my career. Because I don't want to be there. Also, what you have gone through at work, you can really see it play out in the family. I saw so many chefs get divorced or have a terrible relationship with their children. So, I want to spend some time with my family, especially my kids while they still want to spend time with me. I don't know how women do both. I don't know how they work full time and raise a family. Family drive you absolutely crazy; you are really occupied. Especially when they're a bit older, it's a bit harder, they kind of need you more. I think it's extremely difficult for women to have both; to have a career and a family is quite difficult.*

In addition to work-family conflict, Penelope said it was hard for women chefs to have a long-term romantic relationship that would allow them to eventually have a family:

> *It's really hard to meet people in the industry. I think a lot of women genuinely want to settle down and have a family. But it's really hard. The industry is not encouraging women to have a relationship and family. You just do not have time because you are always working, and your work schedule is so different from others; you are working when everyone is off. There are a lot of clever women doing really well in their 30s, but just didn't meet anyone. I am just lucky that I met someone. I always wanted to have a family. I just hadn't met anyone. But I've got friends now in their mid-50s, they don't have a husband and never had children. And now it's too late to have children. Although they are high achieving in their career, but in real life, they are alone, living in a flat. I found that is a bit sad.*

For Penelope, cooking was something that was important in a family. Penelope inherited her cooking talents from her mother, and passed on her skills to her

children. She viewed cooking as "*something mothers pass on*." Both her daughter and son were good at cooking and had won awards in competitions.

4.4.7 Hazel

Now in her 30s, Hazel had wanted to be a chef since she was 10 years old. Hazel had studied on various culinary courses and worked in different cities in her native country and around the world. She started working in the kitchen at the age of 16, progressed to a sous chef role within seven years, and then became an executive chef at 29. Hazel moved to New Zealand in 2014, and the six years she had lived here were the longest she had stayed in one place since leaving home when she was 18. Hazel and her husband were running two food and beverage companies together, and planning to start a restaurant establishment that featured the products they sold through their companies.

Unlike Aubrey's parents, Hazel's parents did not consider being a chef as a good profession. Indeed, they were so against the idea of her becoming a chef that they gave her no financial support. Looking back, Hazel said it was very hard without her parents' support, especially in the early stages, and her becoming a chef was "*definitely a journey*:"

> *I've wanted to be a chef since I was 10... When I was 12, I decided the school I wanted to attend. And then I got my first job in the kitchen and I was 15, just started at the bottom doing dishes and peeling carrots and just listening and watching. My parents were not keen on the idea, they didn't consider chef a real job… They always believed that I would grow out of it and I would get a real job. Especially as I was a high achieving student in school, so they always expected me to be a doctor or a lawyer but not a chef. At 18, I suddenly told my parents that I am moving to another city because I got accepted to this school, the school that I decided when I was 12. They were like, "no, you're not." But I was like, "well, I am. I'm going, this is what I'm doing, this is what I want to do with my life." And they disowned me for a year, completely cut off all financial support. They hoped that by doing that, that I would come to my senses. Which didn't happen. After a year, they were like, "we miss you; that was not very nice of us." It was hard at that time, the industry was hard, especially without their support.*

This was just the beginning of a series of arguments between Hazel and her parents. After Hazel graduated from University with a degree in Culinary, she started working in different restaurants around her country to accumulate experience and skills. After Hazel had worked in most cities in her country, she

then started to move in between countries. Hazel remembered when her father was very angry she decided to work in Antarctica for two years:

> *I worked in different cities. I went to England, I was in Australia, I am now in New Zealand. But I still remember their reaction when I told them I am going to work in Antarctica. I only told my mum and I asked her to tell my dad, because I know he will not be happy. So she told him, and his reaction was, "that is it! That is it! She has gone too far. This is crazy, this is crazy now. She needs to come home." He was very angry.*

Years later, Hazel was now close to her parents, and valued her family's support. Hazel considered support necessary, otherwise, as she explained, one would just burn out. Hazel explained that it was good to know "*they got you,*" meaning that her parents eventually understood her.

> *Now I am really close with my parents, like very good friends … I think it's really important to have the support from my family, even though they are not in New Zealand, they're still like super supportive. And anything we post on Facebook and, they are always like, "oh, my gosh, we are just so proud." They share about what they are eating and drinking with me, and how they met a farmer and they talked about me. It's just really cool to know that they got you, and when things are tough, we can always call them and be like, "I am having just a bad day" and they were there to support.*

Hazel's husband also played a key role in her professional trajectory. For instance, he encouraged and assisted her to start her own food business:

> *He tried my product, and he was like, "your products are so good, you should start a business." And I didn't want to because having a business is a nightmare. But he kept encouraging me... He started a company, he's the one that encouraged me to start a company. So, I started meeting farmers and source ingredients for my products. Eventually I had more than we could eat, more than our friends could eat, and I ended up taking some to other chefs and asked them if my product is something they would purchase. This was the start of my food business.*

Hazel said it is lucky that she and her husband "*never had bad days on the same day*," which allowed them to support each other, and cheer each other up. Hazel described the time her husband insisted she have a night off from her busy schedule:

> *He just insisted, and then we get there. He asked me, "do you know why we're at the movies?" I replied, "because you want to see this movie?" He said, "no, because if we weren't at the movies, you were just going to work. And I need you to have a break." And I agreed. To me, it's just so important to have the support of my husband. It's important to have people that are looking out for you and supporting you and telling you when you need to take a break.*

In addition to her husband's support, another reason Hazel established her food business was have better work-family balance:

> *My business gives me better hours, starts early morning and finishes mid-afternoon. It's great for family because you can still have a life. From a lot of talking with my friends, I know that they have left the industry because the hours aren't working socially, like you don't get to see your other half if you're married. You're never free in the evening or weekends for your family.*

Before the end of interview, Hazel shared more details about her upcoming project, a new restaurant. Describing the progress, she said, "*It's really awesome, and I can't imagine doing it without him.*" Hazel and her husband were to be the management executives. Hazel planned a major role managing the kitchen and designing and testing the menu, while her husband would oversee the overall operation.

4.4.8 Paisley

Paisley's mother owned a café, so Paisley started cooking at a very young age. Paisley said she loved cooking "*straight away*," and recalled how she would "*use those little stools to reach the kitchen bench*." She explained that she was not good at school, so instead of going to school, she stayed home and cooked. Paisley graduated with a diploma in graphic design but realised that was not going to lead to the job she wanted. Therefore, she came back to cooking, and had not left the kitchen since. Building on her previous experience, Paisley started as a chef de partie in a café, and within five years had moved into a head chef position. After a year and a half in the head chef role, Paisley left the café and started her own pop-up restaurant. At the time of her interview, Paisley was preparing to make her pop-up restaurant permanent.

Family, particularly her mother and her grandmother, had a significant influence on Paisley's choice of profession and professional trajectory.

> *I grew up in the kitchen with my mother; she brought me into this culinary world. When I was in the kitchen with my mother, I was always like, "can I try? I want to try." My grandma's food as well. Like they always stuck with me, the memory, like how good food can be.*

Paisley also attributed her success in the chef profession to the support from her family:

> *I think my family is really good. They're really supportive. They helped me with everything, although they thought I was crazy for wanting to be a chef as it's exhausting and it's hard work. But they still provided the support.*

The interview was conducted in Paisley's new restaurant during its renovation stage, when all the doors and windows were covered with newspaper. At the end of the interview, Paisley explained the concept of her restaurant, and proudly pointed out that most of the interior decoration was done by her brother. Paisley really appreciated the support from her family.

4.5 Theme three: It's so tough

Eight vignettes taken from the life history narratives of Josephine, Angela, Bella, Camila, Julia, Mila, Amelia, and Madlyn are presented in this section to support the theme "it's so tough." Almost all the participants considered that the chef industry was tough and demanding, both physically and psychologically, and some specifically stated that the first few years of the chef trajectory were the hardest. Some discussed the traditional "y*es Chef*" attitude in a kitchen, where people tended to put their "*heads down*" and do what they were told. Indeed, with so many responsibilities, several participants pointed out that executive chefs have to "*make it work*" regardless of the situation. They explained that it did not matter what was happening in the kitchen, high-quality food still had to be served. However, the ongoing expectation of high standards became a non-stop psychological stress, not only for chefs in general but for pressured executive chefs in particular.

Many of the participants attributed their success in the profession to their being "*tough,*" "*persistent,*" "r*esilient,*" and "*sticking it out*." However, some participants believed that hard work also made a better chef. As Angela explained, one "*just gets on with it, works hard, and eventually you will achieve as you have done the hard yards.*" In contrast, others said that it was best to find a suitable workplace. In addition, some participants identified the importance of voicing an opinion and refusing to be treated badly; in other words, "*speak up and stick up*."

Although participants were critical of the environments chefs work in, they continued to work in those environments. Their narratives revealed the key factor that kept them in their chosen career: love. Some said they loved food and enjoyed creating dishes; others loved feeding people and considered it

rewarding, and others loved the industry because of its tough and fast pace, which they found addictive.

4.5.1 Josephine

Aged in her 30s, Josephine was managing her own cafe as the chef-owner. Josephine's grandmother was a well-known chef, but Josephine described herself as an "*accidental chef*." Growing up seeing her grandmother suffering hard times in the industry, Josephine did not want to follow in her footsteps. However, as she explained, "*I loved food and I couldn't get away from food. Every single time I tried to get away from food, I'd come back to food."* After graduating with an arts degree from university, Josephine worked as a freelance food writer before she decided to train as a chef. Josephine's father strongly wished for her to become a lawyer or accountant, but she was determined, and in her mid-20s, started culinary training. She was the oldest and only person of colour in her class. Josephine then worked in hotels and for small food businesses, and was elevated to an executive role in the second Michelin-starred restaurant she worked in. On recalling her first job, she said, it was "*unlike anything that I had expected*" and that she toughened up during the job:

> *I cried constantly for six months when I started my first job because it was just so unlike anything that I had expected. The pressure was so high, and I thought I was so terrible that I was going to get fired every single day. So much stuff happened. You saw the executive chef literally rip the phone off the wall throughout service, because the phone was ringing too much. I always ran away and hid to cry. I would go to the bathroom and/or locker room. Then I would wash my face and go back. Or I would cry after work or before work. In that environment, you learn to become a really hard person because you cannot live your life crying every single day. And I got to a point that I stopped crying… You do have to be pretty tough in order to survive.*

Josephine said most kitchens still have an old-fashioned, harden-up attitude. She provided an example of how, due to the peer pressure, a chef always needs to come to work, even if not well:

> *I think it's still very much the old fashioned, harden-up environment. If someone hurts themself, you can't call in sick in a kitchen; you just don't do it unless you're dying. Even if you've got a cold, or you feel really terrible, you just don't call in sick. I've been really sick and just gone to work anyway. It's the pressure from the team, you don't want to let them down. There are jobs to be done and they're going to have to stay at work for an extra few hours if you're not there.*

When facing a difficult situation in the kitchen, Josephine found it best to just "*get on with it*." She considered that chefs were made strong by enduring difficult situations. Her self-belief was strong - the belief that she could "*do it*," and so she worked as hard as possible:

> *I think I can do it, I am a "yes" person, I am a doer, I push myself, I drive my staff. And you kind of see it as your initiation, like you have to go through these terrible things to come out the other end. And then you come out the other end and you've got all the technique, and you've got all the skills, and you've got all of the contacts and, you know all the best ingredients. So basically, you just get on with it and you work. Just work as hard as possible, like do as much to learn as possible and be a sponge and take all the good stuff and the bad stuff and just filter through it.*

Although Josephine chose the hard way and found it tough in the kitchen, she also pointed out that there were two ways to survive the hard environment of the kitchen, and that one did not have to put up with the harsh environment:

> *There are two sides of it. Either you keep your head down, you do the thing, you follow it, and then, you know, you break away eventually. That's what a lot of people do. Or you say, "no, that's not what I'm going to do." And then you get out, find somewhere else.*

Josephine moved from Europe to New Zealand with her husband and started her own food and beverage establishment. She said running her own business was also hard, and she still had to be tough:

> *I think it is really hard. Working in a kitchen is really hard, but running a business is also really hard. Every life is hard. For a while, I didn't have a single day off; our place opens from Wednesday to Sunday. Monday is shopping day, Tuesday is the prep day. But the thing is, it's like you can either go, "oh, this is terrible" or you go, "this is what I'm doing. This is my life. This is what I've chosen."*

Josephine said she had learnt from her trajectory the need to "*speak up*." However, she also said speaking up is a skill developed over time. Josephine talked about her transformation, how she grew from having a just "*get on with it and work*" attitude, to someone who would speak up:

> *At the very beginning, I cried. Later, I toughened up. And as I progressed, I became outspoken. I speak up when I need to. This is because I learned things and I started to know how to deal with things. And when I moved into my second workplace, that's when I started to speak out about things. And I was the person who spoke back when I shouldn't because I could not deal with seeing chefs mistreating staff and men harassing women. I remembered my chef said to me, "you have to remember, he is your sous*

> *chef." And I said, "I don't care what he is, he should stop treating people this way."*

Josephine pointed out some side effects of the "*you need to toughen up*" attitude in the chef sector. She explained that due to this attitude, many staff suffered from mental health issues or drug or alcohol addiction. However, she also believed that the situation was changing, as people and the industry itself had started to focus on the issue:

> *I think the mental health conversation started to happen after how many high-profile chefs died because of suicide in recent years. This dialogue started to happen, people questioning, chefs started coming out and talking about mental health and all these issues, which was a conversation that never used to happen. Definitely, when I started cheffing, it was just "take it, take it like a man, toughen up. Why are you crying? Why are you sissy like? What's wrong?" It's a very macho environment, and it leaves the individual owner to deal with it. But now it's changing. There's probably not enough happening, but it at least has started to happen. So even [though] it is slow, it is changing. People are more willing to talk about it; chefs are more willing to talk about it.*

Before concluding the interview, Josephine related her life history to her rebellious personality, reflecting that she "*rebelled against having a traditional job because that's what my father wanted*." Josephine said she was not someone who was naturally obedient or subservient and who followed the orders of others. She did not like being told what to do, and preferred to make her own decisions. Josephine considered that her rebellious nature was the main driver of her professional trajectory in a tough job.

4.5.2 Angela

Having started at the age of 16, Angela had worked in the chef sector for more than 35 years. She had served as a chef in various establishments, including a chain restaurant, fine-dining restaurant, government department, catering companies, and hotels. At the age of 31, Angela was promoted to an executive role in a catering company where she worked for five years. Angela had more than 10 years' experience in executive roles, including roles as an operations manager and a corporate manager. Now in her 50s, Angela was a culinary lecturer. She said how she became a chef was an interesting story. When Angela decided to be a chef, her father suggested she seek advice from a friend of his. Angela was told not be a chef by this man, but she was stubborn, and said once she aimed for something, she would "*stick it out*:"

> *I had a conversation when I was 15 with my father's friend. This gentleman is an interesting entrepreneur; he has a strip club, Chinese restaurants, and takeaways… he is an expert in hospitality. I said to him, "I would like to become a chef, Uncle." As an Asian, Uncle believed that lawyers and doctors are the only good occupations, so he said, "even if you cook for the Queen, you are still just a cook." All I took out from the conversation was "to cook for the Queen" and the thing is, later I cooked for the Queen. This is how I got to where I am today. To me, I had a strong goal in mind, and I worked for it, you know, stuck it out. Set goals, try to achieve them and don't give up too easy. Do it because you want to do it, you believe in it.*

Agreeing the kitchen environment is physically tough, Angela described in detailed how she was "*tough*" and continuously "*pushes hard*" to achieve her goals:

> *I am always prepared to do more to work on my craft and skills. I worked for free in different departments to learn new knowledge. If you want to be a chef, you need to push through your first couple of years; they are going to be the hardest. You need to learn a lot of things and get used to the kitchen culture and environment. The kitchen is physically tough, really long hours and you are always on your feet. You also got a lot to think about so not just physical, it's mental as well. And you are under pressure, and the pressure is non-stop. This breaks you down, it can make you depressed and can make you very tired. But you just have to be tough, keep pushing yourself through the things that you can do and learn. So, push yourself, push hard, drive, motivate yourself, be your own motivator.*

Angela also commented on the enormous amount of work involved, and how she just needed to "*get the job done*:"

> *Every day you get up, there is an enormous number of new things to do and to learn. You need to get your job done; it doesn't matter how long it takes, you just need to get your job done.*

Angela described an incident that happened in one of her prior workplaces, when the kitchen had no electricity 25 minutes before service, and how she just had to "*make it work*:"

> *It's an old building, there was no power, and two days ago there was no hot water. You make it work, you know. You come up with solutions, you find a different way or change your menu. You just have to manage your deadline, and it's okay.*

Angela attributed the inappropriate behaviour of chefs to the physical and psychologically demanding environment of the kitchen:

> *Physically, you are tired; mentally, you are stressed. An unhealthy work environment like this influences employees' emotion and make them*

> *angry, depressed, and causes inappropriate behaviour such as verbal abuse or physical bullying in the workplace, and this just becomes a cycle.*

Angela had encountered countless difficulties in her life, as well as throughout her professional trajectory, and she said "*get on with it*" was her motto. Angela related her capability to manage the chaos and the tough environment of the kitchen to her background. Her father passed away suddenly when she had just started her culinary training, which meant she had to study two days a week at the same time as working four days a week to look after the family business and raise her younger brother:

> *If you are stuck at 16 years old, career in front of me, my father just died, I had a brother and a business to run. It's about, get out from the bed and just face it, get on with it or wallow in self-pity and cry all day. "Get on with it" is my motto of my life. It is your decision. I have all these hats, just because it is my circumstance more than anything else, so I have always accepted responsibility early, and I think that is what allowed me to grow my career as quickly. I sort out challenges. It's also determination and resilience. Because of my personal difficulties and challenges, I never back away from anything.*

Angela believed that the industry had changed a lot, from the "y*es, Chef; put your head down, just do it*" culture to one in which people could seek support:

> *It was very much the head chef and the "yes, Chef culture;" you put your head down and work. Basically, you peel potatoes for three months until you've got it right. Before, it was very cut-throat, you needed to be tough and fight to survive.*

Angela related her success to how she had done the "*hard yards*," so she was able to work in some high-profile restaurants overseas and later reach an executive position:

> *I just feel that all the hard work paid off. I used to work six days, long hours, I was always in the kitchen, hands on working, so I did all the hard work. That is how I became the executive chef at the age of 31 at this famous place.*

Acknowledging the downside of the chef profession, Angela said she loved the job but "*can't imagine girls going into this industry unless they absolutely love and care about food*:"

> *I love the chef industry, the food... Cooking is my favourite thing, but I love the whole industry. It is really addictive. I love the challenges of the role. Yes, the job is essentially a boring factory job, it smells bad, it's heavy, it's dirty, nothing is great. I can't imagine girls going into this industry unless they absolutely love and care about food. Women in my opinion are driven*

> *differently than men. We are not driven by the money, we don't see ourselves as much value wise based on financial circumstance or salary. So I never chase the dollar but chase the interesting job that fulfils me. It's the job that motivates me and keeps me going rather than the money.*

Angela also related the toughness of the work environment to the high level of burnout among chefs. She thought that the physical demands, the pressure, the expectations from customers and employers, and the "*you need to get your job done*" culture all caused chefs to burn out.

4.5.3 Bella

As Bella and her husband lived in a rural area of New Zealand, her interview was conducted by telephone. Bella was a self-taught chef, who went into the industry because her boyfriend at the time was a chef. Twenty-five years ago, Bella was working in the front-of-house and went into the kitchen to help her boyfriend. It was there that she found her interest in cooking and discovered her talent, and she had worked in the kitchen as a chef ever since. Over seven years, Bella accumulated experience in various restaurants before moving into an executive role. Bella was also the executive chef for two restaurants that she owned with her sisters. Now in her 50s, she was excited to explain that she and her husband were planning a new food and beverage establishment in their local area. This was to be her latest adventure. As she said, "*I never stop thinking about food*."

Bella described the tough working environment in the hospitality sector and how chefs just tended to accept it:

> *When you compare it to other industries, hospitality does not treat their staff well, the pay, the incentives, training, perks, or other bonuses. You don't eat well, sometimes you don't even get a cup of coffee when you are working in the kitchen, and in some places, you even have to pay for your meal. Your hours are insane; you don't have a life or social life. You started at ten o'clock and sometimes we wouldn't finish until one in the morning. And no matter what, you need to finish your section, clean up. Everyone was treated really badly, and there is no support. But it's more interesting that people just do accept it and get on with the flow. People tend to just accept it because everyone is suffering, not just me.*

After years in the industry, Bella was burnt out as a head chef because the responsibilities she had were onerous and she "*cannot say 'no'*." Bella described how, as a head chef, she had to "*make it work*" every time:

> *The thing with head chef is, the money's not that great but your responsibilities seem to be vast, you have to do all the menu development, recipe writing, food costing, and the staff training. And then if one of your staff is sick you get called in. So, if you have worked five nights, you will just have to work another one or two nights. You cannot say no. Every service, you need to be very focused; you make sure all meals coming out from the kitchen are 100%, it's all your responsibility. This is my life. You have to make it work because other staff are depending on you. This is the mindset you need to have in the chef industry; you are serving somebody else. Customers don't know what is happening in the kitchen, but they know that they will have dinner at 6 p.m. I got burnt out doing that.*

However, Bella had a different perspective on the "*yes, Chef*" attitude, saying sometimes one had to make a choice, and should be able to speak up as there were many ways to "*make it work*:"

> *In the environment, you are just told to turn up, shut up and get on with the job. The whole chef culture is "yes, Chef" and no questions, no room for negotiation. But then it is your choice, you can say no. Also, I will say, one shouldn't be afraid to speak up and have their voice. Have an opinion. It could be a very junior opinion, but it's your opinion and no one can take it away.*

Bella expressed her disapproval in some chefs' belief that the hard environment makes better chefs. Instead, she said, people should do some research on a restaurant before they accept the job:

> *Some people work in those kitchens to try to make themselves. They believe that once you've been through those environments, you grow a lot. It's like a lot of people go to work in England or overseas to get that really grilling, gnarly, hard-core experience of huge hours and bad treatment. The belief that, after that, everything seems a bit easier. Some mean chefs, they actually believe that they are doing people a favour, like making them into better chefs, by training and treating them really bad. But they basically just pass on the bad traditions in the chef industry. I am different. I made sure I never worked for those kitchens and stayed away from the chefs that don't behave appropriately. I will also do my research before I start working somewhere: you ask around, you ask the waitress or waiter, go for a trial, talk to the chef. Or even go and eat there to find out their turnover and you will have more information before you decide.*

Although Bella commented negatively on the chef sector and criticised how accepting and continuing to work in the tough kitchen environment seemed to perpetuate the problem, she was still in the industry. Explaining this contradiction, Bella said she was obsessed with food: "*Really into food. Like totally love it. Love it like I am obsessed*." Her obsession explains why she stayed in this tough industry.

4.5.4 Camila

Camila failed at university and then discovered her interest in the culinary field. After two years working in different food and beverage establishments, she secured a junior role in the restaurant group where she was still working. Aged in her 20s, Camila now had 21 staff in her brigade; she was promoted to this executive role about two years prior. Camila started in a junior position in one of the outlets in the restaurant group and moved to different outlets to reach her current position. Camila admitted that her current role was tough and she just "*gets on with it and tries to find a way out*:"

> *A chef has a great responsibility: you feed people, deliver food, make sure the quality is there to satisfy customers. My role is just improvising, so I have to fit myself in, whether it's cooking or cover the sick shifts, holiday shifts and things like that. And then I try and split my time between the sections I look after. It's tough… but you get on with it and try to find a way out.*

One of Camila's main roles was to prepare the weekly special dish for the establishment. She explained, "*you have to have something*" ready each week. Every week, by Tuesday or Wednesday at the latest, Camila had to have the special dish ready, under any circumstance:

> *I need to get a special ready for a photograph. So that will include the product, what ingredients are in it, the province the food comes from, what is special about it, how much it's going to cost, and what it's called. And then that will also include a tasting for front of house, the chefs who are going to make it on Friday and a couple for the team that are photographing the dish. Marketing then need to promote the dish. So, you have to have something, no matter what.*

Camila agreed that the chef industry is hard and chefs have many responsibilities. However, Camila also believed there were many ways to achieve goals and "*make it work*:"

> *It is hard. I think the long hours and the long days you should expect. There is no scheduled break or finish time; we finish when we finish. You need to organise yourself and you can do it. You just need to know how to do it. It is what it is... It's about management, organisation... You can make it work, there are plenty of ways.*

Camila said she used to be reluctant to put her ideas forward or provide an opinion, but later she had no problem expressing her thoughts:

> *I used to just accept it, put my head down and work. But now, if someone says something that I don't agree with, I'll say something. I think it's a good thing. I speak up and I try to push it quite hard, and I can be quite hard.*

But Camila loved her job, and the satisfaction she received from the job motivated her. A strategy she applied to survive the "*bad parts of her day*" was to focus on the "*amazing things*:"

> *If I didn't love my job, I wouldn't turn up. So, I think you genuinely have to love it, otherwise you're not going to survive. You're going to have bad parts of your day... But you've just got to remember the amazing things, how you created a new dish, how your creation was sold out, how customers compliment your food…You can treat the job as just a job or you can enjoy the job and do the work.*

Ultimately, Camila believed that "*you just need to be persistent*" and "*stick it out*," because the industry "*is really stressful, and really hard*."

4.5.5 Julia

Julia provided an organisational chart at the beginning of the interview when explaining her role and position. Julia had been the group executive chef for a restaurant group for the last 12 years. She was currently overseeing 13 outlets within the group, with the assistance from each outlet's head chef. Julia said she grew up surrounded by fresh produce, as her parents were market gardeners. From a very young age, Julia had enjoyed baking, making jam, and preserving fruit with her mother and grandparents. She thought it was natural for her to become a chef. Julia started washing dishes in a restaurant kitchen when she was 15 years old and was promoted to commis chef after four months. When she left high school, she decided to study hospitality management. After graduating, she worked briefly in New Zealand before travelling and working in Europe. Julia later returned to New Zealand and worked as the head chef for one of the restaurants in her restaurant group. Recalling the days when she was climbing up the ranks, Julia said it was "*brutal"* but she just had to "*get on with it*:"

> *There was a lot of brutality, a lot of bullying and a lot of macho behaviour, a lot of attitude. And I think particularly in England, a lot of the kitchens you work ridiculous hours, like you could work 80 hours a week. And you just had to do it. You just did it. Basically, you just did it. You just basically get on with it or you sink, and I like to just get on with it.*

Julia described her roles and responsibilities as the group executive chef, and how she "*makes it work*:"

> *I kind of go through stages depending on what we need. There was suddenly a time that we needed a lot of strength in baking, and I was the only person outside the bakery team who could go and help. So, on top of my role, I helped the bakery team for four months. Also, there was a time that we were short of staff, so I ended up in the hot section… So, depending on what happens, I jump in when I need to. Every day is different; there is no structured schedule. I have so many meetings in one day, and at the end of the day I often still have a list of things I haven't done. It's definitely challenging, but you make it work, you don't stress out about it. So I think, I don't know, it's two views: I get frustrated, I have grumpy days for sure, but it's not hard, and you just work harder if you need to.*

Julia said she was a "*yes*" person, and this was her attitude when facing challenges or difficulties. However, Julia also said that working in a kitchen is a commitment:

> *In this industry, you have to work hard but not work too hard and harm your health; work hard and be flexible. Most importantly, be a "yes" person. We say "yes" a lot here, to each other, to customers, and people recognise that and they appreciate that. And don't be scared to do things. I think people often think to themselves, "oh, it's too hard, I can't do this, It's too much for me." If you want to be in the kitchen, you know the expectation; the work is hard, and it's hot, and there is heavy lifting, so be physically prepared, because it's the job. Don't complain about it, don't ask other people to do your work, do your work yourself. It's actually a commitment.*

Although Julia agreed that being a "*yes person*" was a great attitude to have, she also pointed out that the importance of finding "*the right fit*:"

> *Find the business you want to work in, the right fit, the right culture where they care about people and look after their staff. The overall environment, the style of food, the people that you work with, it's really important to find the right fit. You work in places that you feel comfortable with, don't always change yourself. Try to find a place to take you in as you, as a place can change you, and then over the years, when you look back, you might not be able to recognise yourself. You might be working in one of the top kitchens but not being yourself.*

Julia associated her success with being persistent and resilient:

> *Be persistent. Don't let yourself down. If they tell you you're not ready to work in this position, just don't give up. If you're willing to do something, no matter how many people think that you're shit, you will do it anyway. There are so many chefs, so many examples. They've been told that they are not good enough, but now they are earning Michelin stars. Also, be resilient, not just work, especially when you make a mistake, it's not being defeated, it's being humble and it's owning it, to look for a solution or improvement. It's having the drive to be better.*

Julia was at the top of the hierarchy and still loved cooking. She agreed that being a chef was hard and tough and "*you have to love it*." Julia was motivated to continue learning about food because she loved her job:

> *I still love cooking, it's such a binding thing, it's the most intimate thing you could do for somebody, to cook the person a meal. One of the greatest joys for me is seeing somebody at my home or at a restaurant, eat something I prepared and smile, or really enjoy it. …I love my role, it's a great job, it's a great industry. It's hard, has been challenging, but at the same time, I don't think it's hard because I love it, if you love something that much, you make it work. Also, I came with the passion for food, I am self-driven leaning about food. You need to be passionate, resilient, eager to learn, because it's always changing.*

In the end, Julia believed that the chef role was not tough if people just worked harder when they needed to. Julia said she found the profession both hard and not hard because she loved the job, and if "*you love something that much, you make it work*."

4.5.6 Mila

Aged in her 20s, Mila was the youngest person to participate in this research. Mila ran a food and beverage establishment and its side business with her husband; she managed the kitchen team as well as the marketing, and her husband operated the front-of-house. Originally from Asia, Mila had always wanted to be a chef. Mila said she knew from when she was eight years old that she wanted to be in the kitchen, and she did everything she could to reach this goal. She said she was determined, and she "*set her goal and achieved it."* Mila believed one needed to be "*prepared to go through hard times*" to pursue the chef career because it is "*tough*:"

> *I think if you really want a career in this industry, you really need to be sure this is what you want. You need to know clearly what you will get yourself into, you need to be prepared to do the hard work, long hours, be on your feet all day, be prepared for that. It's physically and mentally demanding. It's tough, not easy. So, if you are just interested in cooking and baking, this will not keep you going.*

When reflecting on her progression through the ranks, Mila emphasised the importance of being "*persistent"* to stay in the industry:

> *You need the persistence to stay in the industry. You need to believe "I am going to do it, no matter what you said about me." Don't be worried about people telling you can't have it. Just go do it, go get it. Because there*

> *are always going to be people saying things against you. It's how you incorporate your words and what you tell yourself, what you believe in, and what vibe you are sending to yourself. It also depends on what kind of person you want to be; if you think of yourself as weak, and not able to achieve, then you are not going to achieve anything. But then if you tell yourself you can achieve, then you can achieve. I'll say I am very persisten. I set my goal, and just try to achieve it, doesn't matter what you say, I am going to do it anyway.*

Mila admitted she had broken down a few times due to the pressure of high expectations in the kitchen. She believed that the demanding aspect of the kitchen caused burnout and staff turnover:

> *I've broken down a few times before. I hit a point where I felt I don't enjoy work, I don't really enjoy the dishes I am making and the thing I do anymore. It is physically and mentally demanding. But that was not because I didn't like the job; it was the people, how people treated me, the expectation... I think this is also the reason why a lot of people have left the industry, because it is just too hard.*

Although she considered the industry a difficult place to work in, Mila said she still loved it. Moreover, her love of feeding people had kept her in the chef profession:

> *I love feeding people; like I just I love it. It's so, it's so rewarding. People talk about having a love of language and for me being able to feed people is how I show them that I care about them. I love hospitality, I love looking after people, I love making people feel special.*

Mila and her husband had both worked in kitchens before and knew about the pressure, unfair treatment, and inappropriate management style of some chefs. Knowing the toughness of the chef profession, Mila and her husband wanted to create a good work environment for their staff.

4.5.7 Amelia

Amelia was working in the front-of-house, but her mentor, a senior woman chef managing the kitchen at the time, persuaded her to join the kitchen team. Starting from the bottom, Amelia was then promoted to chef de partie, before she moved to another outlet and became the sous chef there. Working at this new outlet was tough, and after almost two years in the role, Amelia was burnt out and left cooking to work as a furniture designer. After a break of almost a year, Amelia returned to the kitchen, but it was not a good experience, and she lasted in that restaurant just one month. Amelia then made contact with the mentor she had met in her first job, and was offered a sous chef role in an outlet within a restaurant

group. After just two years, Amelia was promoted to the head chef role and was now overseeing 42 staff in the brigade. She said she initially had doubts about whether she wanted to be a chef, but she was now very certain about the goals she wanted to achieve in her professional career. Amelia attributed this transition to her mentor, who supported her and guided her to develop as a chef. Amelia was not formally trained as a chef, but considered this an advantage, as she thought it allowed her to think laterally and be creative.

Like all the other participants, Amelia said being a chef is tough. She talked about her second chef job which led her to burn out because she always had to "*cook her way out*:"

> *It's hard, it's tricky, it always has only two chefs there. Usually it's fine, until it starts raining and it became packed, and then you ran out of food. Because you had no idea it will get so busy, so that was a huge learning curve for me. Before that I thought cooking is just sort of fun, I knew it's hard but I didn't realise how hard it was, that very often you will be put into a position that you will think, "oh, I don't know how I am going to get out of here." But you've just got to cook your way out.*

Amelia was now a head chef and still considered her current role hard:

> *It's still hard, it is very tiring, emotionally at the end of the shift. And my body will be sore as well because of the heavy lifting. There were times that I was in the chiller and I cried. It's not the treatment I received from others, it's just me being tired and overwhelmed by my work.*

Amelia experienced bullying in the job where she lasted for just one month. This was the first time she had experienced this treatment as previously she had worked for her mentor. Amelia considered that a woman leader had a positive influence on a working environment:

> *The head chef there was horrible. He would deliberately walk in my line if he saw me carrying something heavy, so I would have to walk around him. And I was pressured to tell him things about my life otherwise he would think that I don't like him, and then I wouldn't be given the role that I was looking for. That's why I only lasted a month, awful. He was really horrible to me, but to all the others as well. But that was the first time I experienced that kind of treatment in the kitchen*

Recognising the working environment was tough and hard, Amelia pointed out that there was a lack of training in how to handle stress as well as training in communication and management skills:

> *The kitchen is a high-pressure environment, but when you train to become a chef, they teach you about cookery, they don't teach you how to deal with stress, anxiety. That's why this industry has a really high suicide rate, because we don't know how to talk about it, it's so hard. I know so many chefs who get only four or five hours' sleep, and work 12 hours in the kitchen, and have a bad life, and they think that's normal! That's acceptable? And that's just what happens when I am a chef?*

Amelia also criticised the lack of support from industry, and urged the industry and industry associations to support people in the industry and provide assistance to businesses to support their staff:

> *There are still not enough support networks out there for chefs. It could be a lot more supportive, but something like this will take some time. It would be great if the industry associations set up something to support people in the industry. Or a course on leadership, or how to have a hard conversation, how to deal with anxiety and depression, and assist the restaurant to support their employees. It would be nice to have more support.*

Amelia acknowledged the toughness of the industry, but also expressed her love of the industry and how she enjoyed the challenging aspects of her job:

> *This industry, I love it, it's physically demanding but it's creative. Although it's hard, but I really like it. I love hard, you get a buzz when something is hard, and you succeed. Maybe it's my personality, I love the challenge, the heavy lifting, the hard jobs.*

Amelia briefly talked about her future goal: to assist the restaurant group to open a new restaurant and run the kitchen. Amelia enjoyed new things; she wanted to learn and try new skills and cuisine. She was excited about this new project and commented, "*I did think that I will be able to offer a lot in the new place.*"

4.5.8 Madlyn

Growing up in the countryside, Madlyn found her interest in cooking at the age of eight. When she was 16, she started to work part time at a café. Later, she dropped out of school to study a culinary course, while at the same time, working full time in a kitchen. After several years of experience in New Zealand, Madlyn had reached a chef de partie role, and then went abroad to work to accumulate more experience. She spent eight years in the United States, working in many Michelin-starred restaurants, and gradually moving into a sous chef role. In that environment, Madlyn eventually broke down, so she took a break and returned

to New Zealand to work as a private chef. After feeling recharged, Madlyn opened her own establishment, and was now overseeing the operation of the kitchen.

Madlyn considered the chef industry tough, commenting: "*I guess the kitchen is the most uncomfortable working environment you will get*." Madlyn described the kitchen as a *"*crazy" place, with many things happening at the same time. When working in an environment like that, as she explained, you just have to "*get it done*:"

> *It's a mental game really. You know all these things are going to happen and you can just freak out and not do anything. Or you can go, "what do I need to do? Let's get it done," to make sure that things go well.*

When describing her trajectory, Madlyn said the first couple of years were hard. However, it was important to "*put your head down, work hard*:"

> *You are going to be bad at your job for the first couple of years. This is normal. No-one comes out of cooking school and is immediately earning Michelin star. You have got to put the hours in if you want to improve. I have worked in the kitchen for almost 20 years and I am still learning. Just put your head down, work hard, and understand that good things take time.*

Commenting on the lack of support from government and the industry, Madlyn said she survived the tough environment of the kitchen because she is tough. Even so, the poor working environment made her depressed and anxious:

> *I didn't survive those years without some serious mental toughness. However, I also abused alcohol, even drugs. I wasn't able to sleep at night; I have had anxiety attacks. There was a time when I felt like I am losing my patience.*

Madlyn associated the psychologically demanding attributes of the chef role to the suicidal behaviour of executive chefs. As she explained, cooking is like a show; "*the curtain goes up, your food should always be the same, or even better. It is about the consistency and maintaining a high standard*:"

> *The pressure of the industry has resulted in a number of high-profile chef suicides. The pressures of maintaining Michelin stars, the pressure to maintain a high standard. Many chefs are perfectionists. A lot of establishments are relying on the executive chefs. Customers expect to see the chef; they demand the highest quality of the meal. So, a lot of pressure.*

Operating her own restaurant, Madlyn is still working 12-hour shifts, sometimes seven days a week. She said the motivation to do this was her passion about what she was doing. Madlyn considered herself addicted to the chef role:

> *I am passionate about what I am doing, I have put my heart and soul and everything into my food and my restaurant. A lifelong passion for food is what keeps me going… And the kitchen is a very exciting place; it's like a drug. When you design a new menu, it's like a performance. You feel really good about it. That's what kept me going.*

At the end of interview, Madlyn emphasised the importance of self-care, and how she always spared time for herself to do something she enjoyed or visit family. Madlyn acknowledged that the industry is improving, and there are discussions about anxiety and depression in the chef profession. According to Madlyn, such discussions are essential, as the best way to prevent breakdowns is to address burn-out.

Chapter Five – Discussion

Cheese platter

A variety of cheese to add companion textures and flavours, with a selection of breads and crackers

Image by Pagel (2020), reproduced with permission.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the key research findings to address the research aim of exploring women executive chefs' life histories with a focus on their experiences in the professional kitchen. The chapter starts with a wider discussion of the participants' life histories, and then explores the three prominent themes identified in Chapter Four: "it's sexism in so many ways," "family influence," and "it's so tough." Illustrated with individuals' short vignettes, these three themes emerged from the participants' narratives, drawing together the factors that influenced both their professional trajectories and their experiences in the professional kitchen.

5.2 Participants' life histories

In exploring the life histories of women executive chefs in New Zealand, the research findings showed varying pathways to becoming an executive chef. The 23 participants began their professional trajectories at different times and for different reasons. Three of the participants – Hazel, Mila, and Madlyn – were determined to be a chef at a very young age, while others realised their interest in becoming a chef while at high school. Bella, Jessica, and Sophia joined the chef profession for other reasons and considered themselves "*accidental*" chefs. However, each of them also developed an interest in cooking and in chef roles in their later trajectories. Almost all the participants were interested in food. Interestingly, in Haddaji et al.'s (2017a) study, successful women chefs showed an early passion for food, which drove their progress in the profession and supported their success.

Most of the participants' career choices were closely associated with their family. Indeed, many started their career as a chef because they were encouraged by their family. This finding confirms the significance of family influences on career choice (see Lustig & Xu, 2018; Whiston & Keller, 2004). The context of family also contributed to many of the participants' interest in cooking and further motivated them to become a chef. Parents were the most influential of all family members, and in their narratives, the participants revealed that their mothers had had more influence on their professional trajectories than did their fathers. This finding is consistent with those in the wider literature; for example, McCabe and Barnett (2004) found mothers had a greater role than fathers in their children's professional development.

The participants reached different stages of their trajectories at different ages. For example, those who were certain they wanted to be a chef, often started training after leaving school, while others studied other subjects before they realised they wanted to be a chef. Most participants started cheffing at a young age, which is consistent with the findings of Raybould and Wilkins' (2005) study, that found most chefs in Australia started cheffing at the age of 18.

Most of the participants received formal training. The extent of the training was varied however, from a three-month certificate course to honours and bachelor's

courses that took three years or longer to complete. Some participants did an apprenticeship or were self-taught. A common trajectory was that participants studied in one country (usually the country they grew up in), and then went overseas for other courses; for example, as Hailey, Jessica, and Molly did. Thus, the professional trajectories of these women were quite varied, depending on when they had started, and what their training and duration of the training had been. Even so, it is clear that with or without formal education, these participants, with their lengthy working experience, all achieved executive roles. This contradicts a claim found in the literature that chefs must obtain formal training (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016b; Hegarty, 2011), instead, providing evidence for Sherlock & Williamson's (2014) statement that chefs can equip themselves with knowledge and skills through informal training.

The participants all began their professional trajectories at the bottom of the chef hierarchy. They then moved around different sections to learn different techniques before advancing to the next level of the hierarchy. This finding resonates with Pack's (2002) explanation that a chef's career advancement is based on skills and experiences. The participants needed to equip themselves with skills and knowledge at one level to be able to move up to the next. This finding also confirms statements in the literature explaining that to reach executive roles, horizontal and vertical trajectories are involved (see Cain et al., 2018; Hall, 2014). The narratives also show that the participants had worked various jobs at the same level in both New Zealand and overseas. To move up a level, many participants emphasised the importance of learning as much as they could at the beginning stage of their professional trajectory, with some even working without wages to gain new skills and knowledge. This strategy is consistent with Haddaji et al.'s (2017b) finding, which showed that women chefs apply themselves to prove their abilities and gain a presence in the chef industry.

Some participants mentioned that the first few years of their professional trajectories were harder and required more effort. This finding also indicated that most chefs felt unsatisfied in the first five years of their professional trajectories (see Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016a). At the start of a career, when the environment is unfamiliar, it is difficult to move forward, whereas later, when experience, skills and a reputation have been accumulated, it is often easier to progress (Okurame & Fabunmi, 2014). In addition, participants associated the

first few years with early attrition in the chef sector; as Finley commented, "*the first three years decided whether you are going to stay or not*." The participants' comments confirm findings in the literature that many chefs exit at the beginning of their career, as the acquisition of skills and advancement is time consuming and requires hard work and commitment (see Robinson & Barron, 2007). This interesting finding also resonates with the work of Altman and Brother (1995), whose quantitative study of career longevity of hospitality students, found that the lack of progress at the beginning of a career is detrimental to one's career longevity.

The transition point was different for each participant. For example, Hailey's, Madlyn's, Mila's, and Molly's transitions, were associated with the exhaustion they experienced from working in demanding kitchens overseas. Hailey left her job to work on a superyacht, Madlyn took a break and became a private chef for three years, Mila left the hotel she worked in and opened her own café with her husband, and Molly returned to New Zealand and opened her own establishment. Some transitions were related to a change in family circumstance; for instance, Aubrey and Sophia left their jobs in professional kitchens for their children. Sometimes, moving from one country to another became a transition point. For example, both Helena and Jayleen reached a transition point when they moved to New Zealand; Helena stayed at home to take care of her daughter for a while before she found a chef's job, while Jayleen became a culinary lecturer for a time. At such transition points, the participants, either willingly or under pressure, made vertical or horizontal changes in their career paths.

Another transition point which more than half of the participants mentioned, was the transformation from sous chef to executive chef, an advancement that involves significant skillset transition. Both Jessica and Paisley suggested that the skills needed, depend on the chef's position in a kitchen. Lower levels in the brigade hierarchy require commis chefs to learn cooking skills, but as they advance to higher levels, and especially at the top of the hierarchy leading the kitchen, they need to understand finance and human resourcing, how to communicate and guide staff, how to professionally present information to the employer and how to maintain relationships with stakeholders such as suppliers and customers. Madlyn explained that at the top level, the job requires knowledge of more than food – the executive chef manages the entire kitchen, and

sometimes, the business as well. As Angela explained, apart from having culinary skills, an executive chef needs to be creative, know to manage a team, be able to control budgets and produce financial reports, understand the market niche and be able to develop marketing strategies. These narratives reflect Wan et al.'s (2017) finding that the skills and competencies needed by an executive chef are vastly different from those required of chefs lower down the hierarchy. This finding also echoes Haddaji et al.'s (2017a) finding that women chefs focus on gaining technical skills at the beginning of their career and later shift their focus to management and leadership skills when moving into senior or executive roles.

At the time of the interviews, most of the participants were working at management levels in professional kitchens and were very happy with their current roles; as some of them stated, they have "*done the hard yards*." Allen and Mac Con Iomaire's (2016a) study confirmed that those who can overcome the perceived difficulties will thrive in such an environment at the top of the chef hierarchy. They further added that, despite all the negative publicity about jobs in kitchens, those who succeed and progress to the top are satisfied in their work.

Of the 23 participants, 12 were chef owners of their own food and beverage establishments. Bella, Jayleen, and Kinsley mentioned that their goal was to own their own business. Bella specifically explained that "*in the end you probably want to have your own business; it's the natural way, the way to go, especially for talented chefs*." This finding is consistent with a statement by Brefere (2008), that the ultimate goal for chefs is to own their own restaurant. Similarly, Haddaji et al. (2018) found that women receive more job satisfaction from self-employment than from being employed. Of the remaining 11 participants, three were teaching culinary skills, as they wanted to share their knowledge. Regardless of their current roles, all the participants were still cooking, which is what they loved to do.

Depending on the age of the participant, the length of working experience ranged from five to 36 years at the time of the research, and the length of time they had held an executive position ranged from two to 23 years. On average, it had taken participants 10 years to advance from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy, although some had taken less, and others, a little longer. Progression to the top of the chef hierarchy takes time and effort. Allen and Mac Con Iomaire (2016a)

indicated that most chefs who reach a head or executive role have been working in the industry for more than 10 years. Similarly, a study conducted in Taiwan by Wang et al. (2011), found that it took on average 11 years for a chef to progress to a managerial level.

In her study of hospitality careers, Mooney et al. (2016) found that entry into a hospitality profession is easy, because it is often convenient, easily available, and requires few skills. Haddaji et al. (2017b) similarly found that the women chefs in their study had chosen a chef's career because they enjoyed its vocational aspect, and they did not have specific professional expectations. However, in a later study, Haddaji et al. (2018) claimed that the women chose the cheffing profession as they wanted to achieve as a chef and eventually establish their own restaurant. Some of the participants in this research, however, gave different reasons; for example, Penelope admitted she started cheffing for an income, while Sophia said she became a chef as it was a portable skill, and therefore useful for travel. However, most were already equipped with skills and interest when they entered the chef profession. Many were determined to become a chef and were certain that they wanted this was their career, which somewhat contradicts Haddaji et al's. (2017b) and Mooney et al.'s (2016) findings. Therefore, it can be assumed that a participant's interest in the chef profession could potentially build a solid foundation for their professional trajectories.

After entering the profession, a chef needs to progress both vertically and horizontally in the hierarchical structure (section 2.4.3). Mooney et al. (2016) identified four key factors that can assist development in the hospitality industry: possessing or gaining qualifications; undergoing training and development; receiving backing from influential mentors; and demonstrating flexibility. Two of these factors emerged in the findings of this research: training and development, and having an influential mentor. In terms of training and development opportunities, Finley considered professional development to be motivating and beneficial to her progression as a chef. Other participants, however, identified there was a lack of training and development at key transition points, which was problematic when they experienced difficulty transferring from junior to senior chef roles, as their responsibilities expanded from just cooking, to including management. This may explain the burnout described by many of the participants, and their leaving their jobs at key transition points. This finding is

somewhat predictable given that prior studies have identified a lack of on-the-job training and development as a key reason for the high attrition of chefs from the industry (e.g. Cain et al., 2018; Harris & Giuffre, 2010).

For the participants in this research, there was a turning point when they became certain about the future of their trajectory and committed to the chef profession. This turning point often occurred between the transition from a senior chef's position to their current role. Mooney et al. (2016) proposed a similar view, explaining that at this turning point, employees are confident in their choice of profession and decide to stay in the industry. Three elements were identified as contributing to this turning point: the achievement of professional respect and autonomy, the perceptions of variety and task complexity in their jobs, and strong workplace social connectivity (Mooney, 2014; Mooney et al., 2016). All three elements were experienced and discussed by the participants. The participants identified that respect from their colleagues, especially from their male counterparts, was influential on their professional trajectories. For example, Camila, who was treated with respect by her senior chef and colleagues, said she "*felt comfortable working with them and learning from them*." In contrast, Hailey's male counterpart and manager insulted and underestimated her, which demotivated her and was a strong factor in her resignation from her executive role.

The variety and complexity of being a chef were referred to by participants as challenging aspects in their role, but also ones that gave them satisfaction when they had overcome challenges. As indicated in Chapter Four, some participants said they are addicted to their job because it was challenging. Hailey commented:

> *Hospitality is just like that, it's your job, make it happen. It's a love-hate relationship; you love the challenge, the excitement. I know so many chefs, myself included, we cannot handle nine to five jobs, our brains are not wired for it. At the same time, it's probably more like addiction, we don't like the job but because your body is used to it every day, your body becomes addicted to it, and you need that crazy environment to get you going. It's like a drug, isn't it.*

Strong workplace social connectivity was represented as teamwork in participants' narratives; they repeatedly emphasised the importance of having a good team in the kitchen. This finding is consistent with those in studies that

suggest teamwork is essential for chefs (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016a; O´Brien, 2010).

5.3 Three prominent themes

When exploring the participants' life histories with a particular focus on their experiences as an executive chef, three prominent themes emerged as influential to the participants' professional trajectories. These three main themes were "It is sexism in so many ways," "family influence," and "it's so tough," and were presented and discussed in Chapter Four. To summarise, the theme "It is sexism in so many ways" captures narratives relating to gender, such as sexism, gender segregation, and discrimination. "Family influence" illustrated the narratives of expectation and needs of family, context of family, and changes in family circumstances, and "it's so tough" revealed the working environment as tough and one in which women chefs have to be tough to survive. Each of these themes is now discussed in more detail in the following three subsections.

5.3.1 It is sexism in so many ways

"It is sexism in so many ways" is a prominent theme that emerged from the participants' narratives. Participants talked about the male-dominated environment of professional kitchens, where there were generally few women, especially in prime positions, such as that of executive chef. The participants' narratives revealed unpleasant sexual harassment they had encountered. In addition, they explained that different measurements of competence were applied to women working in chef roles compared to those for men, which exacerbated the gender gap, and caused a lack of recognition. The participants described how they had been judged by stakeholders, including their superiors, peers and customers, because of the stereotypical belief that a "*man is a better chef*." All these experiences reflect participants' exposure to sexism in their professional trajectories.

Before the discussion, a clarification of the term "sexism" will assist in interpreting the participants' narratives. *Sexism* is closely related to prejudices, customs, traditions and other practices based on the assumed inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men (Gréboval, 2017). According to Warren et al. (2020), sexism in the workplace can be categorised into hostile and

benevolent forms. *Hostile sexism* takes place when women are considered in a blatantly disparaging manner, while *benevolent sexism* refers to the equity support structures that reward women who comply with traditional gender roles (Warren et al., 2020). Sexism's negative implications are well documented, with correlations found between sexism and women's employability, as women's competence is devalued (Fleming et al., 2020). Cassidy and Krendl (2019) found that sexism affects measures of competence, and negatively affects women seeking prime management roles in the workplace.

5.3.1.1 Sexism in the chef profession

The findings suggest that the participants' professional trajectories were influenced by stereotypical gender roles. Shrestha (2016) reviewed the literature and concluded that most barriers to women's advancement in the hospitality industry are related to gender and gender roles. Gender roles, which stem from cultural values and stereotypes rooted in patriarchal traditions and promoting male privilege, constitute the most fundamental barrier to women's career advancement (Berkery et al., 2013; Okurame & Fabunmi, 2014; Shrestha, 2016). According to Conrad and von Scheve (2016), gender stereotypes are caused by expectations or descriptions of gender roles by individuals and groups. As they moved up the chef hierarchy, the participants faced stereotypical gender treatment from the organisations they worked for, from stakeholders, customers, and their male colleagues.

Gender roles cause gender segregation in an organisation (Berkery et al., 2013; Ziman, 2013). Rivera-Torres et al. (2013) commented that segregated organisational practices generate stress and turnover, as women perceive that they have to make greater efforts than do men, to prove their worth. Prior studies have associated the high turnover of women chefs to the segregation they encounter in the industry (Bird, 2016; Druckman, 2010; Harris & Giuffre, 2015).

The participants reported that the chef profession is still gender segregated; that there is a lack of women in the industry, and especially in prime positions. This finding confirms the claim that the chef profession is gender segregated, both horizontally and vertically (e.g. Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Bird, 2016; Druckman, 2010; Gatta, 2016; Harris & Giuffre, 2009; Prynn, 2016). Horizontally, the participants observed: (1) a lack of women in the chef profession, and (2) that

most women in the profession work in pastry kitchens or the cold larder, while men manage the hot and grill sections.

The participants reported that women have fewer employment opportunities than do men, even when they are equally qualified. For instance, Finley said that men had most of the job opportunities in the chef sector, and Hailey experienced the gender gap and unfair criteria for advancement. The participants related this to the gender roles of chefs and the entrenched belief that "*men are better chefs*." The participants' narratives also identified horizontal segregation between the main and pastry kitchens, with the main kitchen being dominated by men and the pastry kitchen by women. This finding is consistent with Campos-Soria et al.'s (2009) study, which found horizontal segregation in areas of operation and jobs in professional kitchens, with women usually occupying the jobs that require lower levels of skills. Interestingly, Szmodis's (2018) study found that the feminine work of pastry attracts and assists women to find their place in professional kitchens. In addition, the pastry department also provides benefits such as more opportunities for women to advance, flexibilities of schedules, and therefore, better work-family balance.

Vertically, although all the participants were in executive roles at the time of their interview, they noted that men still occupied most of the prime positions in the industry, and women chefs generally remained at lower levels. These findings are consistent with Bird's (2016) claim that women are often situated at the bottom of the chef hierarchy or in the pastry kitchen, but not in prime positions. This segregation is closely associated with the traditional gendered belief that a woman's role is to support her male counterparts and that women are not suited for leadership roles, a construct that limited the participants' performances. One example was noted in how Hailey was often excluded from discussions with other managers even though she was an executive chef, being told: "*you are just a woman chef, what do you know*."

As Ziman (2013) pointed out, gender-related organisational segregation is the main reason women tend to stay at their current level or move to another establishment. Indeed, studies have found that gender plays a major role in organisational culture and creates biased management and employment strategies that disadvantage women and their professional progression (Martin &

Barnard, 2013; Prynn, 2016). Druckman (2010) further argued that gender stereotypes are framed by workplace and industry culture and cause the high turnover of women chefs. This occurs because the continuous barrier of the glass ceiling demotivates women, encouraging them to take a different path (The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995; Lin & Morley, 2014).

Notably, many of the participants disagreed with the gender stereotype that men are better chefs, saying that women manage kitchens in a different and better way than do their male counterparts. For example, Finley said she was more compassionate than were men executive chefs, and was better able to relate to her staff and provide assistance when needed. Jayleen said women chefs are more emotionally intelligent than were their male counterparts, which helped them to understand emotion-based issues. Their comments echo those in studies that found women to be the better chefs, as they are generally more organised, pay greater attention to detail, and can oversee the entire kitchen by multitasking (Edmonds, 2016; Hannaford, 2016; Kitson, 2017).

Likewise, Eagly and Karau's (2002) review of the leadership and gender literature, found that women are better managers than are men, because they are more transformational, collaborative, and relational than are men. Women have also been found to be more participative and democratic (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001), as well as inspiring and able to build a team environment (Ortega et al., 2015). The feminine qualities of women make their leadership style unique and successful, as they include being more considerate, caring, and encouraging (Vinkenburg & Weber's, 2012). Indeed, Powell (2011) argued that women's feminine attributes and practices are increasingly necessary for leadership in male-dominant workplace cultures in a diversified global economy.

Gender roles and their negative implications for women's career development are well researched (e.g. Ali et al., 2011; Berkery et al., 2013). The participants' experiences confirmed the existence of biased hiring processes, advancement opportunities and recognition. Their narratives validate claims that different criteria are applied to measure women and men chefs' competence (Manning & Saidi, 2010; Ortega et al., 2015), which causes biased hiring criteria, pay gaps, and unequal job and advancement opportunities (Abendroth et al., 2017;

Anderson et al., 2017; Hutchinson et al., 2017). Studies have found that biased evaluation and discrimination in the advancement process is a barrier preventing women from attaining managerial roles (Bierema, 2016; Shrestha, 2016). Other studies have identified that advancement criteria are gender sensitive (Haddaji et al., 2017b; Harris & Giuffre, 2015; Shrestha, 2016). Furthermore, the participants' claim that women "*need to work harder to receive half the recognition*" corresponds to Biernat and Fuegen's (2002) finding that women have to put in more effort to be considered as competent and to receive the same reward as their male counterparts. Women's professional progression may thus be more of a negotiation between bias and gender role rather than of competence (Haddaji et al., 2017a).

While criticising the gender-sensitive advancement criteria, the participants also pointed out that women chefs often search for a different purpose in the profession than their male-counterparts'. For instance, some mentioned that they were competitive with themselves, they had less ego, and were not seeking fame or wealth. In contrast, they described men chefs as being full of ego, and pursuing titles and rewards in the chef profession. Indeed, some studies have indicated that women are not motivated by salary when considering a job, that the salary is not the priority, and women seldom ask for higher wages or negotiate wages (Anderson et al., 2010; Leslie et al., 2017). Martin and Barnard (2013) observed different career drives between women and men; men search for status, power, and social comparison, whereas women want to do a good job and contribute to organisational performance.

It has also been found that women have more life goals than do men, and they place less importance on power-related goals (Gino et al., 2015). To explain further, women have a greater diversity of preferences for what they would like to accomplish in life, such as relationship goals, family goals, and professional goals. As a result, women perceive power as less important, so they do not compete for professional advancement with the same urgency of their male counterparts. However, it is worth noting that goals are likely based on sociocultural factors such as perceptions of a profession, family values, societal norms and expectations that stem from context (Vong et al., 2019).

Gino et al. (2015) found that women often feel more negatively about promotion. This is because competition for professional advancement is commonly associated with conflict, which reduces their desire. Furthermore, women often expect promotions to lead to negative outcomes. Artz et al. (2018) surveyed 4600 employees in 800 workplaces in Australia and found that men feel more confident en route to an executive position whereas women perceive a steeper climb to the top. This could also be the case for the participants in this study, as many agreed that advancement opportunities favoured men, which reduced their own desire to compete.

When climbing the ranks, women were also excluded by gender roles from formal and informal networks. The participants pointed out that compared with their male counterparts, they had less authority over decisions, even in the areas they were overseeing. For instance, Hailey was often not excluded from decision-making discussions about adjustments and new strategies for the kitchen she was managing. This exclusion of women chefs may be associated with gender bias, as women tend to encounter barriers to the organisational areas or teams they lead (Orido, 2017). Indeed, Blayney and Blotnicky (2010) believed that gendered culture constrains women's participation in making decisions or deciding policy within organisations. It has also been identified that women managers have difficulty accessing informal professional networks (Burton, 2015; Timberlake, 2005; Ziman, 2013).

Some participants had experienced sexual harassment, both verbal and physical, from their male counterparts, whom they described as the "*wolfpack*." Multiple studies have discussed and criticised this type of gendered issue in the hospitality and culinary industry (see Harris & Giuffre, 2010, 2015). Participants described the challenges they faced when working in the gender-segregated environment of professional kitchens, such as sexual harassment and hostile attitudes from their male counterparts, as well as sexist jokes, derogatory comments, aggressive and other sexist behaviour. These behaviours are similarly found in the literature (e.g., Blum, 1991; Butler et al., 2012 ; Campos-Soria et al., 2009; Karmel & Maclachlan, 1988). Participants also suffered setbacks from the attitudes and behaviours of their male counterparts. This is consistent with Gobaw's (2017) research, which found that women have less efficacy when their male colleagues or organisation undermine their capabilities or consider them to

be less competent than men. The finding also suggests that some men refuse to relinquish their masculine culture and incorporate women (Martin & Barnard, 2013). The same sexist attitudes and behaviours are also experienced by women in other male-dominated professions, such as aeroplane pilots (Davey & Davidson, 2000), golf players (McGinnis et al., 2005), and athletes (Taylor et al., 2017).

The participants also experienced sexism from stakeholders such as customers, industry associations, and the hospitality industry, and mentioned the sexist portrayals of women chefs in the media. They commented that customers disregard the professionalism of women chefs due to the stereotypical belief that "*women belong in the domestic kitchen*." Jessica's example of customers expressing surprise and commenting on a kitchen staffed by women illustrates the perceptions of some customers towards women as chefs. Hailey's experience, however, was from her superior who asked, "w*hat would you know about P&L [Profit and Loss]? You are just a woman chef*." Such attitudes suggest that women chefs and executive chefs, break the traditional stereotype that a woman's place is in the domestic kitchen (Bierema, 2016; Mavin et al., 2016; Olbrich, 2016). The division between cooking at home and in a commercial reproduces and perpetuates gender roles (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Druckman, 2010; Matwick, 2017). In addition, participants complained of the media's gendered portrayals of women and men chefs, which exacerbates sexism in the industry. The portrayal of women chefs by the media has been commented on in prior studies, which observed strongly gendered representations of women (Chen et al., 2020; Johnston et al., 2014; Matwick, 2017).

Self-perception influences decisions about professional development. According to the participants, how they perceived themselves was sometimes a barrier to their advancement. This is because gender stereotypes about women's roles and capabilities can constrain a woman's performance, affect her self-confidence, and influence her career-related decisions. A similar concept was discussed in Gobow's (2017) study, which listed barriers that hinder women's participation in leadership, and included lack of self-empowerment, lack of self-belief and lack of confidence. Ortega et al. (2015) also found that women lack confidence in their own competence and therefore tend not to seek recognition, title, and awards

from competitions. In Beyer's (1990) study, men, especially in fields where they dominate, showed higher self-esteem than did women, who underestimated themselves. Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2014) explained that women are less likely to promote themselves because of their lower self-perception and the higher standard they expect of themselves, while Ortega et al. (2015) found that women's undervaluing of their management skills and abilities restricted women chefs from managerial positions.

The findings also highlight the likely intersection between culture, gender roles and the working environment. Some of the participants compared their experiences in New Zealand kitchens with those overseas, and explicitly connected the gender-segregation phenomenon in the chef profession to the culture of a country. Helena, Lillian, and Mila observed that culture influenced their work environment, and pointed out that New Zealand provided a better and less-sexist environment than that of other countries. In particular, Helena, who was from Asia, and Lillian, from Europe, noted how their countries endorsed the stereotypical belief that "*women belong in the home kitchen; men belong in the professional kitchen*," which further worsened sexism in the kitchen. Helena added that in her country, women had a lower social status than did men, which made it even harder for a woman to pursue a career as a chef. This result resonates with Ali et al.'s (2011) statement that gender inequality is closely connected to the perceptions of societies, so some of the reasons for gender inequality will differ between cultures and countries. In addition, Ali et al. (2011) explained that some cultures consider women to be subordinate to men, a belief that overtly perpetuates gender discrimination.

Furthermore, although it was found that gender roles shape organisational culture and determines how women were treated at work, the organisation and its culture can also influence gender inequality. For example, Finley's, Julia's, Amelia's, Camila's, and Nora's workplaces, all developed strategies to promote gender equality internally. Many studies have emphasised the importance of creating an inclusive culture (e.g. Haddaji et al., 2018), and a diversity-supportive organisational culture (e.g. Gebbels et al., 2020). Gebbels et al. (2020) further urged organisations to create and maintain a culture of open dialogue, as this will lead to an inclusive and equal organisational culture.

5.3.1.2 Coping strategies – doing and undoing gender

From analysing the participants' life histories, it was apparent that they significantly adapted their behaviour in the professional kitchen as a result of their experiences of sexism. The participants applied a range of different coping strategies to enable them to continue to progress in their professional trajectories within the sexist environment of professional kitchens. As Jayleen indicated, one moulds oneself according to the environment, and that includes chefs. Most human behaviour is learned through the observation of behaviour modelled by others; in other words, it is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). People observe events, and use personal agency and social input to form ideas of how new behaviours should be performed. The literature argues that people learn modes of behaviour through observational learning and vicarious experience (Fryling et al., 2011). As Bandura (2001) explained, values, styles of thinking and behaviour patterns are all learned from the environment.

A major strategy applied by many of the participants was to "*become one of the boys*," and engaging in behaviours such as hiding their femininity, swearing, and drinking with their male colleagues. The participants also considered themselves to be "*bossy*" and "*strict*" in the kitchen. It is found that when women chefs "*do gender*" and adhere to a masculine style, they tend to be authoritarian and demonstrate aggression and strong personalities, which helps them impose respect and order on their subordinates (Haddaji et al., 2018). Similarly, Kitson (2017) explained that women executive chefs need to draw on their tough demeanour to deal with challenges to their authority as leaders of the kitchen, if they are to advance through the kitchen hierarchy. Other studies have provided a different explanation of doing gender - that women feel the need to enter the kitchen without interrupting the environment, and therefore integrate themselves by demonstrating their capability is the same as that of their male counterparts (Harris & Giuffre, 2015).

It is interesting to note that most participants in this research adopted only male attributes, and did not engage in any feminine behaviours like those described by Martin and Barnard (2013) and Madichie (2013). In fact, there was a common feeling among the participants that integrating femininity into their work identity would not provide a sustainable career in the chef profession. A few participants, such as Nora and Sophia, did mention that they took on a "*mother*" role or played

an "*old lady card*" in the latter stage of their trajectory. However, both related this change in their professional behaviour to their being a mother.

The participants' managing behaviours can be considered as doing gender, a term introduced by West and Zimmermann in 1987, as they performed certain masculine behaviours to fulfil the expectations of the chef role. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), *doing gender* is an ongoing activity embedded in daily interactions by both women and men to fulfil the expectations of society. The participants' narratives also showed the behaviours of gender performativity (Butler, 2015), as they performed in particular ways to fit into the professional kitchen.

Engaged in doing gender, the participants found themselves trapped in a gender double bind of conflicting roles. As Angela explained:

> *I think that there's an enormous double standard around this. If I raise my voice and criticise someone, if I was a man, that will be accepted; if I am a woman, then it's not. Men who are angry, yelling, and have no smile, are a hard boss, but women - we are called a "snob." I was a firm boss, who asked a high standard, but people said I was difficult. This would not have happened to men.*

Camila also said that as a woman chef, "*you could be emotional as a female and get criticised for it or be harsh and blunt and bossy and get criticised for it*." It was evident that the participants felt trapped between gender roles. This phenomenon corresponds to Costigan's (2018) claim that women are stuck in between the need to resist and accommodate patriarchal politics by retaining their femininity, and engaging in masculine tactics. Ortega et al. (2015) explained that women managers face the dilemma of being either a likeable or a competent leader. Because women are not supposed to behave like men, based on socially believed stereotypes, when a woman behaves as a competent leader, which would be considered normal for a man, she is disliked by her colleagues, both women and men. However, if a woman is nurturing and caring, as is the social expectation of a woman, then she is considered less competent. Constraint of gender and experiences of the gender double bind have been reported in other studies (e.g. Bierema, 2016; Campuzano, 2019). Authors have explained that women want to succeed by behaving in masculine ways but at the same time they worry about being judged or disliked as they are not in harmony with the

behaviours of their female gender roles, such as nurturing (Costigan, 2018; Harris & Giuffre, 2015); this is the double bind they experience.

Although many of the participants engaged in doing gender at the beginning of their professional trajectories, the situation changed significantly for some when they moved into the transition phases of their careers. After years in the industry, the participants had accumulated experiences in the profession or advanced into more senior roles. Some started to notice the negative implications of doing gender. Jayleen, for example, engaged in doing gender behaviours such as wearing loose pants, a loose jacket, and no make-up, to fit into the chef role, but found that the long-time effect of these behaviours was that she lost self-confidence and constantly worried about her appearance and behaviour in the kitchen. Her story resonates with Butler's (2004) warning that doing gender may limit an individual's social status and restrain the quality and condition of being a person. Butler (1999) was also critical of the negative influences of power structures, society, and cultures, on doing gender. Butler (1999) explained that forces (for example, society) categorise individuals who exhibit incoherent gender sequences (such as do lesbians and transgender people), as doing their gender "wrong." Moreover, these influences often actively discourage incoherent sequencing of behaviours and traits through homophobic and other discriminatory behaviours.

Recognising that they were doing gender, some participants started to re-evaluate or question the need for the behaviour. Hazel, for example, realised that she did not want to be one of the boys; instead, she wanted to "*just be myself*." This perspective is similar to Butler's (1999) position, who distinguished between the productive and performative elements of gender, and pointed out that gender is not something one *is*, but something one *does*; i.e. it is a sequence of acts, a doing, rather than a being. In short, the participants transformed from doing gender early in their careers to undoing gender and starting to remove the gendered characteristics. *Undoing gender* was proposed by Butler (2004), and focuses on removing the restrictions of the normative conceptions of gender. Undoing gender aims to remove restrictive norms of gender, including socially prescribed gender characteristics.

Although all were in senior roles, some of the participants claimed that they still experienced sexism, although others said they were no longer affected as they were now at the top of the hierarchy. Finley and Sophia, for example, said they did not encounter sexism anymore, as they were at the top of the hierarchy, but both Hailey and Jayleen talked about sexist treatment that had recently encountered. Shrestha (2016) suggested that unless the gendered natures of organisations are disestablished, women will always have difficulty advancing in a male-dominated industry. This appears to be the current situation in the chef profession.

5.3.2 Family influence

The analysis of the narrative data revealed a second theme around family influence and its influence on the participants' professional trajectories and their experiences in professional kitchens. The second major finding from the exploration of the participants' life histories was the importance of family to the participants' professional trajectories. Although the term "family influence" is used as the theme to represent participants' narratives, participants mentioned different family members. Mostly, they described the influence of immediate or extended family members, such as parents, grandparents, siblings, and other close relatives, when recalling the beginning of their professional trajectories. These family members can be categorised into two groups: family of origin and family of procreation. *Family of origin* refers to those who regardless of biological connection, cared for the participants when they were children (see Lustig & Xu, 2018). In the participants' later professional trajectories, the family who emerged as influential were their *family of procreation*, such as husbands and children. Four family factors were identified as influential to the participants' professional trajectories: their family of origin, family expectation and needs, support from family, and changes in family circumstance. These are discussed in the following subsections.

5.3.2.1 Family of origin

The contextual factors mentioned by participants in relation to the family of origin, include: "*I come from a farming background*," "*my mother or my grandmother is a good cook*," "*my father catered for family and his work colleagues*," "*my mother hosted dinner parties,"* "*we have big family gatherings often which involves*

preparing and cooking food," and "*my grandfather is a hunter*," to cite just a few. Scholars have suggested that the family of origin shapes one's aspirations, interests, values, feelings of support, self-efficacy, and choice, which further affect career choice (e.g. Lustig & Xu, 2018; Whiston & Keller, 2004). Indeed, the findings of this research suggest that the influence of one's family of origin goes beyond childhood, extending to various aspects of one's future, included career-related performance.

Family of origin's expectations and needs were found to be the major influence on participants' professional trajectories. The narratives illustrate that family expectations and needs can influence career orientation, as noted in the literature (e.g. Lustig & Xu, 2018; Paloş & Drobot, 2010). Research in Australia and the United States has concluded that factors such as cultural and socio-economic backgrounds influence parents' expectations of their children. Indeed, Aubrey, Layla, Molly, and Penelope, all started their professional trajectories because their family wanted them to be a chef. However, parents wanted their daughters to be chefs for different reasons: Aubrey's and Penelope's parents considered that being a chef would provide their daughters with a stable income, whereas Layla's and Molly's parents worked in the food and beverage industry, and disliked Layla and Molly's original choices, believing that being a chef and working in hospitality was a more sensible choice. These examples support the finding that parental expectations can influence initial career choice.

Parental expectations can also influence career direction and career-related decisions as well as later occupational attainment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Jayleen, for example, had won several awards in international competitions when her father suggested that she start enjoying being a chef and stop competing. Jayleen accepted her father's suggestion and eventually became the operational manager of a teaching institute. This illustrates how parental expectation can influence an adolescent's career choice and direction. Furthermore, Soresi et al. (2014) pointed out that parental expectations can contribute to their children's fear of failure as well as their desire to succeed in a profession. Madlyn exemplified this, as she related her success to her fear of letting her family down.

It is worth noting that a family's involvement can be a motivator or a constraint. Some participants wanted to work in other fields but became a chef due to meet

their family's expectations. For example, Molly wanted to be a fashion designer and said her decision to become a chef was to stop her mother's persistent nagging: "*If you just shut up, I'll become a chef. But just shut up*." Biddulph et al. (2003) emphasised that sometimes family expectations and needs may override internal desires, which may have been the case for Molly. In contrast, Hazel's parents expected her to be a doctor or lawyer, and withdrew their financial support of Hazel, hoping she would change her mind. Their action did not change Hazel's determination to become a chef, but it did make her professional trajectory a harder one. Hazel's story is an example of how parents' expectations of their children's careers can cause distress.

Previous studies have found that in some cultures, parents may already have a career path planned for their children, such as taking over the family business, and may inflict shame and guilt if the chosen career path is not followed (Middleton & Loughead, 1993; Paloş & Drobot, 2010). For example, Josephine, who was from Asia, said her family members all have "*great*" jobs, such as a doctor and a lawyer, and therefore her family expected her to be an accountant or doctor. This family value became a hindrance to her chef trajectory, but she continued with her belief that she was "*rebelling*" against her family's expectations, by being a chef. Prior studies have also shown that a family's financial needs can be a major factor influencing career choice and development (Duffy & Dik, 2009). However, only a few participants mentioned this aspect. Layla wanted to be an actor, which was considered a financially insecure profession, so her family encouraged her to become a chef. Similarly, Angela wanted to become an artist like her father, but her father suggested she become a chef due to his financial concerns.

Participants' narratives highlighted the social as well as familial connection aspects of food; i.e., how food brings people together and connects people on various levels such as social status, identity, and culture, and provides a sense of belonging (Abbots, 2016; Neuman, 2019). Some participants, such as Hailey and Mila, considered their experiences of cooking, serving, and eating with family, to have been a strong influence on their becoming a chef. Studies have also found that food and the activity of sharing food, facilitates social bonding (Dunbar, 2017; Neuman, 2019), shares culture, and passes on values (Neuman, 2019). Therefore, it is not surprising that the participants associated their experiences

around food, including family gatherings and cooking with parents or grandparents, with their professional trajectories.

Some of the participants explained that the values and skills they absorbed unconsciously from their family, assisted their development as a chef. Parents' attitudes and expectations about careers, the example they set for their children, and the values they showed their family, friends and society, all unconsciously influence children (Ginevra et al., 2015). For example, Aubrey's parents were farmers, which taught her the importance of working hard: "*I knew what hard work was, I was quite happy to roll up my sleeves and work*." Likewise, Julia grew up in a farming family and believed that this environment made her a "*doer,*" as she would just "*take it and make it work*" when things became difficult. This reflects Whiston and Keller's (2004) and Lustig & Xu's (2018) findings that the family of origin shape career beliefs and expectations.

The participants noted that the skills they inherited from their family of origin had benefited their career development. Jessica, whose family were farmers, explained, "*I was given a half cow in my first job. They didn't know I came from a farm, so I am used to seeing the scene and I can butcher it without a fuss*." Julia said that she grew up knowing about fresh produce, the seasons, harvest time, and preserving techniques. These examples illustrate how parents and the family environment can foster the vocational development of children, which assists their career development as adults. The participants' career developments illustrated in this section are the result of skill acquisition from their parents and family (see Ginevra et al., 2015); contextual factors such as parents' occupations and skills were previously been found to influence the career development of their children (Biddulph et al., 2003; Lustig & Xu, 2018). This influence also occurs when parents provide their children with information about certain occupations (Whiston & Keller, 2004).

5.3.2.2 Family support

The influence of family of origin was particularly strong in the participants' childhood, adolescence, and during the study and training stages of their careers. Their families' expectations and needs were a major influence on participants' career choice in the early years, a finding that is reflected in the literature (e.g. Lustig & Xu, 2018). Families have been found to have a strong influence on

values, which further shapes expectation of career. Families can influence career choice and development as well as behaviours at work (Paloş & Drobot, 2010; Whiston & Keller, 2004). The context of family was a strong influence on participants' job preferences; in particular, the immediate context of the participants' childhoods, such as growing up in a farming family, often initiated their interest in the chef profession. It is worth noting that the context of family includes the values that the participants' parents held, and that the attitudes or spirit that the participants' families demonstrated were also absorbed by the participants (see Whiston & Keller, 2004), and had a prolonged effect on their professional lives.

The participants noted that support from their family of origin was beneficial, especially in the early stages of their careers. Angela, Helena, Jayleen, Kinsley, Mila, and Molly, for example, all attributed their decision to become a chef to their family's support. As Ginevra et al. (2015) observed, family, especially parents, are the primary sources of social support and influence young people's career-related self-efficacy and outcome expectations, as well as the development of their career interests, intentions, and goals. Other studies have suggested that the degree to which parent believe in their children's career decision-making abilities, strongly influence career self-efficacy and career choice (Whiston & Keller, 2004; Zhang et al., 2019)

Mila's mother, for example, noticed Mila's talent in cooking and supported her to explore the culinary field by buying her cookbooks and cooking equipment. Mila believed that it was because of her mother's support that she was able to confidently decide to be a chef at the age of eight, work towards the goal, and attain an executive position at a young age. Mila's case shows that when children and adolescents feel supported by their parents, they will be more confident in choosing their career (see Safta, 2015). Support can both directly and indirectly affect career choice, as mediated by feelings of self-efficacy (Zhang et al., 2019). In Mila's case, both direct and indirect effects were observed.

The participants also mentioned the importance of family support to their professional development, as their industry was very demanding. For example, Camila, Helena, Jayleen, Kinsley, Madelyn, and Molly, all noted the important role family support played in their professional development. Studies have found

a positive correlation between parental support and children's career development (e.g. Ginevra et al., 2015; Gushue & Whitson, 2006; Marcionetti & Rossier, 2017). Camila and Kinsley both said they turned to their parents for suggestions when they encountered difficulties at work. This finding confirms Clutter's (2010) statement that even after children have progressed into adolescence and developed independence from their parents, they continue to rely heavily on their parents in their career development. Studies have also found parents to have a positive and important influence on decisions relating to their children's vocational development (e.g. Watson & McMahon, 2005). For instance, Helena, Jayleen, and Molly, were encouraged by their parents to seek further education or training in the culinary field.

The participants described different supports provided by their families and parents. Ginevra et al. (2015) categorised parental support of their children's career self-efficacy and career choice into resources and emotional support. Other studies have listed different forms of support, such as financial and emotional support, networking, and social resources (e.g. Pearson & Bieschke, 2001; Śliwa & Taylor, 2011; Young et al., 2001). Mila's and Angela's parents purchased cookbooks for them; Kinsley's and Molly's parents provided networking and social resources support, using their industry connections to find Kinsley and Molly their first cooking jobs, helping them to acquire basic culinary knowledge; and Jayleen's father provided emotional support and encouraged her to become a chef as she enjoyed cooking. Prior studies have suggested that emotional support could include encouraging children to explore options and make decisions independently (Lim & You, 2019), and supporting children to find an interest in a profession or job that suits their ability (Garcia et al., 2012).

Participants said that emotional support from their parents helped their progression in their professional trajectories. This finding confirms Paloş and Drobot's (2010) conclusion that parents' support is more psychosocial than career-oriented during their children's professional lives. For example, Hazel's parents were very encouraging and often told her they were proud of her, while Kinsley turned to her mother for mental health support, and to talk about the ups and downs of her day-to-day work. Oliveira et al. (2017) indicated that the emotional support offered by parents assists their children's emotional expression and management, and enhances their understandings of positive and

negative emotions. This allows children to be efficient in emotional self-regulation and assists them as adults to build a sustainable career (Oliveira et al., 2017).

It was interesting to observe that when discussing support from family, most participants mentioned their mothers. For example, Kinsley, Molly, and Mila, attributed their profession trajectories and achievement to their mothers. This finding only partially supports the work of Ginevra et al. (2015), who found that both mothers and fathers supported their children's career choice and development. However, it is consistent with McCabe and Barnett's (2004) finding that mothers play the greater role in children's career development. Leaper et al. (1998) explained that mothers tend to use more supportive language than do fathers, and also communicate more with their children.

The participants' parents also shared their knowledge about their work and/or different occupations, their working attitudes and values, and the motivation they had to succeed. Molly received support from her family, who also worked in the hospitality industry, in her career transition stage; when she returned to New Zealand, her parents helped Molly settle down and encouraged her to find a new goal – to open her own establishment. Molly accepted her parents' suggestion, and her parents helped her to open her own establishment. Scholars have observed that adolescents speak most frequently about career-related issues with their parents, and consider their parents the key influencers during career transitions (Bedson, 2006; Fischer et al., 2019; Lewis & Perkins, 2006; Otto, 2000). Metheny and Mcwhirter (2013) confirmed families' strong contributions to children's career development and future plan-based career-specific support.

5.3.2.3 Changes in family circumstances

As the participants progressed in their professional trajectories, the influence of their family of procreation increased as they married, formed partnerships, and/or settled down to have a family. This finding confirms that changes in family circumstances affect career progression (Duffy & Dik, 2009). Most of the time, these circumstances are situations and events that occur in the context of family. For example, the effect of having children, having to make career decisions that affect both oneself and one's partner, the need to care for older family members, family relocation, and juggling economic pressures, are just several of the many factors that can significantly undermine career choice volition (Finch, 2014;

Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). These types of events have significant detrimental effects on work volition (Duffy & Dik, 2009). For participants in this research, the change in life circumstance most mentioned was that of having children. The participants believed that having children was the cause of women leaving the chef profession. As Julia explained, having children changes a woman chef's priority in life and makes a professional career a less desirable goal:

> *I think a lot of it [women chefs' high turnover] has to do with having children and with family. You change when you have children. Suddenly you are responsible for these two human beings. And it changes your brain, it changes how you think. There's something in your mind. It's like another layer of responsibility. So before that, your primary level has been your career, your success and your ability to do the job. Suddenly this thing sits higher.*

Analysis of the participants' narratives also revealed work-family conflict. This finding is consistent with the work of scholars who found that women chefs, especially those with a family and children, tend to suffer work-family conflict (e.g. Bird, 2016; Harris & Giuffre, 2015). *Work-family conflict* is conflict between work and home roles due to certain behaviour expectations, high levels of stress, and constraints on time (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). Many participants commented that it was difficult for them to have good work-family balance. Nora, for example, pointed out that she felt she needed to choose between her "*work family or my family*." Prior studies have identified that women suffer more work-family conflict in male-dominated professions (Koutroumanis & Alexakis, 2009). This also relates to the discussion around the sexism theme, in which it was explained that participants felt the need to work harder and perform better than their male counterparts for job or advancement opportunities. Therefore, in the same role, women tended to put in more effort and time than did men.

On top of the long hours and demanding work environment, it was found that these participants were also the primary caregivers in their families and carried the main share of household responsibilities. Cerrato and Cifre (2018) explained that the demanding workload, long working hours, and the physical and psychological pressure of professional kitchens, tested women chefs' involvement in their families. It is not surprising, then, that the participants in this research commented on how they struggled with their work and household responsibilities, especially with childcare. As Lilian commented, "*you cannot have a holiday or weekend; it keeps rolling to spend the time with your family*." The

participants' narratives showed that they were the main caregivers for their children, even though they worked full time. As Jessica said, "*the minute you come in the door, you are the mother, [and responsible for] the dishes, the washing, the cooking, the cleaning.*" As Cerrato and Cifre (2018) further commented, work and family balance is hard to achieve if the family also expects women to be involved in household responsibilities. Participants such as Camila and Kinsley commented on the different roles women and men played in families and their uneven involvement in domestic responsibilities. Indeed, many studies have found that balancing work and family is a major challenge for women chefs (e.g. Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016b; Haddaji et al., 2017b, 2018; Harris & Giuffre, 2015; Shrestha, 2016). Shrestha (2016) also emphasised the possibility that both work and family demands are detrimental for working women. Such conflicting demands negatively influence women chefs' professional trajectories and constrain their roles in the workforce, especially in a profession that is traditionally masculine (Haddaji et al., 2018; Mac Con Iomaire, 2008).

Many studies have associated the uneven distribution of household responsibilities with gender roles (e.g. Ali et al., 2011; Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Finch, 2014; Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Ziman, 2013). Haddaji et al. (2017b) identified two major challenges faced by women chefs: gender, and family conciliation and motherhood. Some studies have pointed out that work-family balance is not only a barrier to women's successful professional trajectories, but also gender discrimination (Ainsworth et al., 2010; Reid & Wilson, 2011). The traditional gender roles suggest it is more common for women to stay home and attend to household duties while men work to provide for their family (Ziman, 2013). When becoming a father, men tend to strengthen their economic provision to their family, for example, by increasing their working hours, while women take leave from employment to care for the infant, and quite often either stay at home, or switch to part-time work until the infant starts at day care (Poduval & Poduval, 2009). These gender roles of women and men also determine the assignment of household duties, with chores such as cooking, washing dishes and clothes, and cleaning, all considered feminine. Most unpaid work is not a matter of choice for women; rather, it is a constraint by society and patriarchal norms that women are expected to carry the responsibility for work in the home (Goldberg, 2013). The perception of partner involvement in family

duties also varies between women and men, with women having a lower expectation of their partner's involvement in household duties (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). These traditional gender roles affect the way women and men interact with work and family: women devote more time to the household while men do not feel the same obligation to household responsibilities, perceiving it more as a free choice.

However, some studies have pointed out that the division of labour in the home is a matter of personal choice (e.g. Kurowska, 2020; Vlassoff, 2007), while others suggest there are differences in the innate abilities of women and men to do household work and work outside the home (Kuo et al., 2018). Interestingly, Aubrey, who had two children, offered a different view, saying that women and men have different perspectives in terms of childcare; women give 100% to everything, while men are happy with 80%, or even 50%, which makes women suffer from work-family conflict. Similarly, scholars have found that the work domain is more important for men than for women, whereas women value the home domain more (Finch, 2014; Vong et al., 2019). However, it was noticed that participants such as Nora and Julia, who had chosen work over family, felt a sense of guilt over their lack of participation in childcare. Their guilt was associated with their gender role, and how, as a mother, they should provide childcare.

In contrast, the findings also indicated potential changes in perceptions of gender roles, especially in the younger participants. Camila said she demanded an equal share of household duties in her family plan, as both she and her partner were very good at their jobs, so it would be unfair to expect her to leave her job for their family. Gender roles are also changing, with an increasing number of women providing for their families, and men becoming more involved in family responsibilities, especially in childcare (Oláh et al., 2018). This was evident in Kinsley's narrative; she supported her partner, who was willing to responsibility for childcare, so Kinsley could continue working as the economic provider for their family. Kinsley's partner provides an example of how younger fathers have started to embrace the concept of active parenting (see Kuo et al., 2018; Oláh et al., 2018).

Although gender roles determined participants' roles in the home, family also influenced how they perceived gender roles. For example, Angela grew up with only her father, who taught her how to cook, sew, and do all the housework, which led her to believe that there was no difference between women and men. Based on this belief, Angela commented that "*chef is gender neutral, I am a practitioner, not a woman chef*." Gender neutrality was mentioned in Harris and Giuffre's (2015) study, although they said that the women chefs in their study used gender neutrality, as it helped them to handle sexism in the professional kitchen, while at the same time it confirmed their achievement, attributing this to their skills, hard work, and other personal attributes.

Different strategies were applied by the participants to resolve work-family conflicts. Cerrato and Cifre (2018) suggested that women carefully select what to be involved in, and if their career were important, some realised that they would not be able to juggle both a career and a family. Examples of these from the current study were found in Helena, who choose a chef role that allowed her to perform her household duties, instead of something that would further develop her as a chef, as well as Aubrey, who left her restaurant job to establish a food business that provided her with stable hours so she could meet her domestic responsibilities. Some of the participants sought help from family or professional childcare services; some had left their jobs to work in other establishments in the hospitality industry or opened their own establishments to have more flexible work schedules; and some took a break from the kitchen to focus on childcare and domestic responsibilities. Nora continued working, but hardly had any free time, an experience that is consistent with Haddaji et al.'s (2018) finding, that when facing work-family conflict, women chefs change their professional orientation or sacrifice their social life.

Harris and Giuffe (2010) found three strategies women chefs used to resolve work-family conflict: leave the kitchen for another job in the culinary field, adapt either work or family life to accommodate one another, or delay or forgo childbearing and develop their chef career. In this research, some of the participants with children had opted for the first two strategies: they had left their current role to work in other establishments or to open their own establishment, or they had found a way to make it work. These strategies, especially the entrepreneurial path, assisted women chefs to achieve work-family balance (see

Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Haddaji et al., 2017b, 2018). However, the participants in this research had not engaged in the third strategy proposed by Harris and Giuffe (2010), with none saying they had delayed or forgone childbearing for their career. Although 15 of the 23 participants did not have children, they all said this was their personal choice. Also, many of the participants indicated their intention to have children in the future. This group of participants acknowledged the difficulty of having work-family balance but considered it achievable. The finding that some participants had left their chef role for their family, confirms Harris and Giuffe's (2010) statement that work-family conflict is an important and gendered mechanism, underlying women's under-representation in the chef profession. Overall, the participants' narratives support Shrestha's (2016) statement that it requires hard work, sacrifice, determination, and confidence, to manage their profession if women chefs are to find a balance between work and family.

Family support played an important role in the participants' work-family balance. For example, Nora's husband took on most of the childcare responsibilities and allowed Nora to progress as a chef, whereas Sophia had no partner to help with household responsibilities, so she left the restaurant to work in other industries while raising her children. Unlike prior studies that identified a lack of family support (Haddaji et al., 2017b; Olbrich, 2016), most of the participants in this research received sufficient support from their family, which may explain why these women chefs were able to reach executive positions. For example, Bella and Jessica received childcare support from their family, while Molly's parents owned a food business and so could guide her to open her own business and provide financial support. According to Shrestha (2016), support, including motivation and inspiration from family, helps women juggle the demands of work and family. Haddaji et al.'s (2017a) case study of six Michelin-starred women chefs also found family support was a vital factor in their success.

It was interesting to find that the strategies applied by participants when resolving work-family conflict, were also strongly influenced by their family. For instance, Helena sacrificed her career for her family without hesitation, because she and her family believed that women should treat their family as their priority. Conversely, Molly's mother was a successful manager and contributed to the

family, so it was not surprising that Molly considered her mother as a role model, and refused to give up her own career for children.

Similarly, the findings indicate that work and family interactions are embedded in the broader cultural, institutional, and economic context in which individuals reside (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Shockley et al., 2017). Nora provided an example of this when she said that one of her women chefs was considering leaving her job because her culture strongly believed a mother's role was to care for her children. Some argue that women are more involved in household chores and are reluctant to share them because of their cultural belief that housework is central to their gender identity and power source in the family, whereas husbands, whose gender identity is more closely associated with paid work, are comfortable with having few or no household chores (Goldberg, 2013).

Some studies have suggested that women experience more pressure than do men when reconciling their work and family lives, which could cause a higher rate of burnout among women (Ali et al., 2011; Ziman, 2013). Aubrey considered being a woman executive chef and a mother manageable, but decided not to go undertake both simultaneously, cognisant of the negative impacts of work-life conflict from observing other women chefs. Instead, Aubrey and her husband opened their own establishment, which provided them with flexible hours. Having children results in greater responsibilities, which, when combined with full-time paid employment, can cause tension and conflict (Kemmer, 2016). As a result, when facing work-life conflict, it has been found that women experience tensions within themselves, and couples experience conflict in their relationships (Gani & Ara, 2010; Ma, 2008; Ren, 2010). In relation to this, Jessica recalled the time when her first child arrived at the same time as she was establishing a new business; she wasn't getting enough sleep, which affected her cooking, and made her argue with her husband, who was taking care of the front-of-house aspects of their operation. Jessica said situations like this harmed not only her career but also her relationship with her family, and made her regret the decision to start a business. Jessica's story confirms a previous finding, that women chefs tend to overwork, which causes burnout and retention issues (see Harris & Giuffre, 2010).

In the participants' current stage, the influence of both their family of origin and family of procreation had decreased. However, the level of decreased influence was highly dependent on family circumstances. For example, Aubrey, Bella, and Jessica, talked of their "*empty nest*," as their children had grown up and left the family home, allowing them to focus on their job. However, the situation was different for Lillian, who has a two-year-old boy; she worried about not being around as her child grew up, as both she and her husband needed to work in the weekends. Lillian's family circumstances were still influencing her professional trajectories, and for her to remain in her senior role, she needed family support for childcare and household responsibilities.

5.3.3 It's so tough

"It's so tough" is the third theme emerging from the participants' narratives. This theme signifies the tough environment of the professional kitchen, and how chefs need to be tough to survive it. The participants' narratives confirmed the general understanding and wider conclusions that the chef profession is physically and psychologically demanding (e.g. Bloisi & Hoel, 2008; Burrow et al., 2015; Cain et al., 2018; Robinson & Beesley, 2010). Physically, the participants commented that their work involved long hours, standing on their feet, and heavy lifting. As Sophia commented, she became accustomed to the "filthy, greasy, smelly, and hot disgusting environment." However, some participants, such as Finley, Hailey, Jayleen, Julia, Jessica, and Sophia, had become less involved in the kitchen, especially cooking, once they reached executive-level roles. This is because their responsibilities had expanded beyond cooking to include managerial responsibilities, such as financial and human resource management.

Many participants reported that being a chef was stressful, and they were constantly under pressure. As Angela explained, "*you are under pressure, and the pressure is non-stop*." According to the participants, the pressure increased when they took executive roles, because executive chefs have more responsibilities. Bella said that "*as an executive chef, the responsibility is vast. You need to control the quality of meals, ensure a smooth service, and staff are depending on you*." This "vast responsibility" factor can be added to the five categories of stress factors for chefs identified by Murray-Gibbons and Gibbons (2007), discussed in Chapter Two.

Many of the participants had experienced verbal abuse and/or physical bullying, especially from senior men chefs (see Bloisi & Hoel, 2008). Bullying, according to Angela, includes both "*verbal abuse or physical bullying*," which she attributed to the unhealthy work environment that generates negative emotions, causing inappropriate behaviours. Bullying has been observed in prior studies (e.g. Murphy, 2009; Rodriguez-Santiago et al., 2020), with many researchers associating bullying and physical or mental abuse to male expressions of power and social dominance (Rodriguez-Santiago et al., 2020), factors that can be associated with the gender segregation and sexism of the chef industry, as discussed in section 5.3.1.

The participants pointed out the strict hierarchical social structure in the professional kitchen, and how in the brigade, the lower levels of chefs have to follow the instructions of those on the upper levels; in the participants' words, the "*yes, Chef*" mentality. The literature has confirmed the hierarchical structure of the professional kitchen and the "yes, Chef" mentality wherein chefs at lower levels respond to commands given by their seniors in the professional kitchen (Allen and Mac Con Iomaire 2016a; Burrow et al., 2015; Pack, 2002; Pang, 2019). The structure of the brigade system has led to a culture of obedience; that as a chef, one should just "*put your head down, just get things done*," as reflected by Angela, Bella, Camila, and Josephine. Burrow et al.'s (2015) portrayal of a chef's experience working in a high-end kitchen considered the "*yes, Chef*" mentality an example of an extreme culture of commitment. This is consistent with Julia's comment that working in a kitchen is a "*commitment*."

Although the "*yes, Chef*" pressure is not necessarily applicable for those at the top of kitchen brigade, the women chefs who participated in this research said they faced a different pressure: the expectation to "*make it work*." This pressure is also a form of commitment and can be explained as the requirement for executive chefs to ensure smooth service under any circumstance. As Bella said, "*you just make it work…you are serving somebody else. Customers don't know what is happening in the kitchen, but they know that they will have dinner at 6 p.m.*" Camila's "*improvising*" behaviour and the way Julia relieved in different sections in the restaurant group she was overseeing to ensure smooth service, are both examples of making things work. Julia and Josephine both said they made it work by being a "*yes person;*" i.e., a person with a can-do attitude, who

is willing to work hard and take up challenges, and is self-motived and self-driven. The "*make it work*" and "*yes person*" mindsets both cause pressure for executive chefs, who are leading and responsible for the entire kitchen.

The participants also emphasised a "*stick to the job*" mentality. Both Josephine and Molly described how they went to work even when they were sick, as they believed it was their "*responsibility*" to be there. Josephine said that "*you can't call in sick in a kitchen; you just don't do it unless you're dying. You don't call in sick, you just don't do it*." Molly explained that she worked even when she was sick because if she did not fulfil her responsibility, her team members would need to do more work. This supports Lashley's (2016) idea that employees may have turned the ethics of hospitality, such as the duty to care and serve, into personal obligations. Equally, a "*just accept it, because everyone is suffering*" mentality was common among the participants. They pointed out that they accepted the poor working environment because "*everyone is suffering*." Helena, who was mistreated by her male subordinate, insisted that "*you have to work through it; it happens everywhere, it's not specific just for me. It's common in the industry in general. In the kitchen, it's hard*." This illustrates how the working environment shaped the participants' mindsets, attitudes, and behaviours. For instance, they noticed that everyone else was suffering, so they accepted difficult situations and persisted.

When facing the tough environment of the professional kitchen, the participants emphasised the importance of "*being tough*." Indeed, women are fond of demonstrating their physical and psychological strength by conforming to a male work culture, as is the professional kitchen (Haddaji et al., 2017b; Harris & Giuffre, 2015). Haddaji et al. (2017b) pointed out that women chefs try to be tough and diplomatic to progress into management roles. However, the behaviour of "*being tough*" can also be related to gender roles, as being tough is a doing gender strategy that women chefs apply to allow them to enter the kitchen without disrupting its masculine culture (Harris & Giuffre, 2015). Haddaji et al. (2017b) suggested that demonstrating tough behaviour is a way women chefs can challenge the gender stereotypes placed on them and prove that they are good chefs and good leaders.

While there was universal agreement that the poor working environment in the professional kitchen can be associated with the high staff turnover in the industry, the participants talked about "*sticking it out.*" Finley, Josephine, Mila, and Sophia pointed out that the first few years of a chef's professional trajectories were the hardest, and one needs to "*stick it out*" to succeed. A similar concept emerged in Haddaji et al.'s (2017b) work, that found women chefs overcome career obstacles through persistence, learning technical and management skills, and proving their competence. Camila and Mila both used the word "persistent" to express this idea. In other words, many of the participants believed they had to accept and endure the poor working environment. Indeed, Finley, Jayleen, Angela, and Kinsley, all considered that the bad environments they worked in early in their careers helped with their development later on.

The participants' narratives have therefore described common mindsets found in the professional kitchen: "*yes, Chef*," "*make it work*," "*stick to the job*," "*just accept it, because everyone is suffering*" and "*stick it out*." These mentalities are said to be shaped by the culture of the profession. Robinson et al. (2014), who applied a life/work history to study chefs, identified an "occupational ethos," which they observed to include a set of attitudes, attributes, or qualities, integral to the occupational culture of chefs and which influence how chefs make career-related decisions, as well as influencing their professional trajectories (p. 23). The traditional working culture the participants were working in, or had worked in, had strongly influenced their values and led to them having the mindsets described in section 5.3.1.1. Unlike Robinson et al. (2014), others have associated these mentalities and the way chefs embrace the notion of commitment to their work, to the "trades" occupational self-image of the chef (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Lee, 2014). These mentalities need to be questioned however. For example, Bella emphasised that one does not have to accept everything in a work environment and questioned why chefs tend to just accept bad working environments. She was critical of those who engaged in or endorsed this environment, saying their compliance meant negative traditions persisted in the chef industry. Amelia, Julia, and Penelope, expressed a similar perspective, saying that instead of being persistent and suffering, people needed to find the "*right fit*."

Although some participants believed it was possible to benefit from the hard working environment of the professional kitchen, and persistence would eventually bring success, others pointed out that a common negative consequence of the poor working environment was burnout. Bella, Camila, Hailey, Mila, Molly, and Madelyn all experienced burnout. For many of the participants, this was their transition point, and they took a break before resuming work. Hailey worked on superyacht for two years, for example, and Madlyn became a private chef for two years. These participants' experiences also correspond with Haddaji et al.'s (2017b) finding, that in order to gain better flexibility and opportunities for professional growth, some women chefs work in other niches of the industry or open their own establishments.

The situation changed when participants had accumulated enough experience and skills to move up the hierarchy. At this transition point, they were more prepared to speak up when needed. Bella, Camila, Kinsley, Finley, Nora, Josephine, and Madlyn all emphasised the importance of speaking up during their professional trajectories. Josephine and Molly noted that being able to speak up is a skill that requires learning and experience, with Josephine adding that it is a skill developed over time. Josephine had chosen to suffer and cry in the early years of her career and only started to speak up when she was more mature and had accumulated experience in the industry. Finley suffered from sexist treatment, but instead of enduring it, she decided to speak up and resolve the issue. Finley's actions were contrary to Robinson et al.'s (2010) finding that being able to cope with pressure is the most desired skill of a chef. However, speaking up appears to be the solution to many pervasive workplace issues in professional kitchen.

Although the participants were critical of the working environment of the professional kitchen, some attributed their success to the challenging environment they had suffered. In describing their current stage, Angela and Jayleen used the phrase "*done the hard yard*s," and believed that although they worked really hard at the beginning, they also reaped benefits from their efforts. As Josephine explained, one becomes a robust chef with the required skills and techniques after working in a hard environment. Finley, too, said that "*hard is not necessary a bad thing because it makes you a better chef*."

Many of the participants, including Bella, Finley, Hailey, Helena, Jessica, and Layla, mentioned the industry's low pay and lack of reward, adding that the reason they chose to be a chef was clearly not the financial rewards. Indeed, women chefs have been found to be less driven by public recognition and rewards (Haddaji et al., 2017b). Finley indicated that "*if you are a chef, you are in this for money, you are in the wrong game*," while Layla pointed out that as an executive chef owner, "*you don't earn money […] it's enough to live on*." The participants' narratives echo Robinson's (2013) comment that the hospitality industry is neither an attractive nor financially rewarding industry.

The findings of this research describe the disadvantages of the chef profession and are aligned with existing literature (e.g. Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016a; Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Bird, 2016; Bloisi & Hoel, 2008; Brefere, 2008). Robinson (2013), however, proposed an alternative view: chefs tend to depict themselves in pathos, immersing themselves in self-deprecation and negatively commenting on their working conditions in a bid for recognition and empathy. However, the participants' narratives show no begging for empathy. Layla, for example, mentioned the low pay and how she was unable to eat properly due to her role, but insisted, "*I am not pleading poverty or anything like that*." Instead, she was simply pointing out the reality of the job, which is quite different from what is perhaps portrayed elsewhere.

5.3.3.1 Motivation in a tough environment

It was interesting to observe that the research participants had remained in their roles and continue to work as chefs, despite the working environment being so tough. As they explained, the factor that attracted and sustained them was their love of creating dishes, serving others, and overcoming the tough environment. This is similar to Haddaji et al.'s (2017a) conclusion, that successful women chefs have a passion for food, and focus on acquiring skills and gaining technical competencies. As Angela stated, "*I can't imagine girls going into this industry unless they absolutely love and care about food*." Haddaji et al. (2017a) expressed the same idea, pointing out that women chefs do not enter the culinary profession for fame or financial reward, as the role has attributes such as long working hours, low pay and stressful responsibilities. Rather, passion for the role, for food, and for gastronomy, are the motivating forces that drive women chefs'

professional development and sustain them in the profession to advance to a top position.

Because the participants loved the chef role, they remained working long-term in the industry, despite its poor working environment, sexism, and work-family conflicts. Love is an intrinsic factor, a drive within (Robinson, 2013). Poulston (2015) associated the attraction to join the chef profession with the intrinsic motivation of the individual, while Kim and Jogaratnam (2010) pointed out that intrinsic motives influence one's intention to stay in a profession. An individual's intrinsic values stem from the culture in which they are immersed (Lee-Ross, 1999; Robinson et al., 2014), and the participants' intrinsic values shaped how they made career-related decisions and affected their professional trajectories. This can also be construed as chefs having a *protean career* attitude (Okurame & Fabunmi, 2014); in other words, the way they manage their professional trajectories is driven by their personal values. Workers with a protean career attitude gain a higher level of satisfaction from their profession (Briscoe et al., 2006; Okurame & Fabunmi, 2014).

Finley, Hailey, Jessica, Josephine, and Sophia particularly expressed their love of food- ingredients, cooking, preparing, and creating dishes. Jayleen explained that "*I love cooking, it is always my passion, so that's how I decided to become a chef*." Kinsley was also excited by what she loved in her job: "*the sounds and the smell… without the music, you can close your eyes, and you know what's going on in the kitchen, this is boiling, this is roasting, the whisk is touching the mixing bowl. I just love it*." In particular, Mila, Kinsley, Madelyn, and Molly emphasised that their love for creating dishes was one of the main forces that attracted and sustained them in their professional trajectories. Jessica described the process of creation, and the satisfaction of being able to create a dish:

> *I love the creativity that comes around food, dreaming up new ideas, trying them out. Sometimes it works really well; sometimes it's a total disaster. I enjoyed those moments that I almost got it right, it's around 80% but it still needs something, then I explore and found the matching formula. It's the creativity that I like.*

Within the participants' narratives, two similar but distinctly different meanings for "create" were identified: the first represents *creativity*, creating new dishes, exploring new ingredients and adopting a different cooking method, whereas the

second is *creation*, the process of producing, and transforming raw ingredients into appealing dishes for customers. These two underlining meanings of "create" were also identified in Robinson and Beesley's (2010) study. Some authors have argued that culinary creation is a form of art (e.g. Hsia et al., 2020; Robinson & Beesley, 2010). Indeed, some of the participants, such as Angela and Jessica, used the words "craft" or "craftsmanship" when talking about their dishes and skills. Scholars have pointed out that creativity and dimensions of artistry are strong intrinsic motivators for chefs' initial occupational selection (Hsia et al., 2020; Zopiatis et al., 2011), which was the case for Amelia, Jessica, and Paisley.

Providing food for others became a purpose in the participants' lives and validated their labour, which is a form of hospitality (McPhail et al., 2015; Poulston, 2015; Schoffstall, 2013). As Amelia explained, "*one of the greatest joys for me is seeing somebody at my home or at a restaurant, eat something I prepared and smile, or really enjoy it*." Poulston (2015) observed that the pleasure of making people happy is the primary motivation attracting people to work and stay in the hospitality industry. As Julia said, cooking a meal for someone is "*such a binding thing, it's the most intimate thing you could do for somebody*."

Participants also emphasised the interactions between themselves, as providers, and their customers, as receivers (see Causevic & Lynch, 2009; Poulston, 2015). Like most chefs, Aubrey, Kinsley, and Layla, enjoyed serving customers food, and so it was not surprising to find they became upset if they received negative feedback on customer review websites. Aubrey's, Kinsley's, and Layla's comments demonstrate how the participants' sense of satisfaction was associated with recognition and a sense of achievement, and in hospitality and other service industries, recognition is sought more from customers than from managers or employers (Causevic & Lynch, 2009; Chuang et al., 2009).

Poulston (2015) connected addiction to hospitality to the sacrificial nature of hospitality work. As she explained, hospitality workers are fully aware of the potential negative impacts of their working environment, but their desire to provide hospitality is so strong, they would do it even at their personal cost, because it brings them happiness and satisfaction. Poulston (2015) also suggested that hospitality work is addictive, perhaps because it provides challenges and emotional rewards. Pritchard and Morgan (2006) considered that

hospitality's unique nature (irregular working hours, low pay, and busy environment) can seduce some people away from a normal life. Addiction to a work role can be associated with the way *expressive labour* (i.e. labour that is a form of self-expression) can blur the boundaries between personal and professional lives, and between work and pleasure (Burrow et al., 2015; Poulston, 2015). This blurring was evident in some of the participants' narratives. For example, Amelia was aware of her poor work-life balance, but remained in the profession because of her addiction to the industry:

> *I don't have a work-life balance, but it's not work's fault. I just love my job, I spent a lot of time in cooking, and when I am off, I read a lot of cookbooks, often thinking about work or about cooking. Sometimes it is good, but sometimes it causes stress. Most of the time I am quite happy with this situation. But it would be nice to have start time and finish time, and nobody calling me at the weekend, and don't need to worry if anyone is ill and needs a fill in. But then again, it could be really boring working that type of job… what can I do?*

Bella and Madlyn mentioned how their love of their job motivated them to keep developing as a chef because they wanted to learn more and keep up with industry trends. Ongoing professional development would also assist with their progress in their professional trajectories. Layla and Amelia said they were always thinking about food, researching and reading to learn different techniques and cooking methods. Likewise, Kinsley was learning and developing her skills all the time because "*you are doing what you love, cooking the food you love, you need to be willing to learn… and caring [about] the food*."

Loving the chef profession and their jobs, the participants were also enacting changes in the chef sector. Kinsley and Nora, for example, mentioned that they were building a positive working culture in their kitchen, ensuring there was no discrimination or sexism; Julia aimed to provide a better work-life balance and work-family balance for her staff, and Finley emphasised her role as a mentor, aiming to encourage and support other women chefs' professional progressions. The narratives also showed that the participants had the potential to influence their staff's professional development and trajectories, a finding that echoes Gerk's (2018) assertion that a kitchen's culture is created by the chefs who work there. The participants, now at the top of the brigade, had shown initiative to change and create a better work culture in their establishments. Indeed, some scholars have emphasised the importance of a top-down approach, where the

top-level management shows commitment to change the culture and encourages their subordinates to follow (Cameron, 2001; Campuzano, 2019).

5.4 Summary

This chapter discussed the main findings of the life histories of the 23 participants in relation to their experiences and progression to becoming executive chefs. The narratives confirmed that gender is a key factor shaping women chef's professional trajectories (see Blayney & Blotnicky, 2010; Garrigos et al., 2019) and that the chef role is closely associated with gender stereotypes (see Berkery et al., 2013; Watts, 1998). Most of the participants agreed that changes in the macro environment, society, culture, and political attitudes, have started to encourage more women to enter the workforce, but that there still exists a leadership bias favouring men (see Vong et al., 2019). The narratives also confirmed that family has a strong influence on professional trajectories (see Paloş & Drobot, 2010; Whiston & Keller, 2004) and interest in becoming a chef. Change in family circumstances, especially having children, was identified as the main obstacle in women chefs' professional trajectories.

In addition, the narratives clearly showed that the chef profession is tough. Mindsets captured in phrases such as "*yes, Chef*," "*make it work*," "*stick to the job*," "*just accept it, because everyone is suffering*" and "stick it out," are shaped by extrinsic and intrinsic values. It was also interesting to learn that despite the drawbacks of the chef profession (e.g., poor working conditions, unfair workloads, discrimination, sexual harassment, and lack of recognition), participants stayed in their chosen profession and were still progressing up their professional trajectories. These findings suggest that, although professional trajectories are influenced by extrinsic factors, intrinsic factors may have a strong countereffect. In other words, individual perspectives or tendencies influence professional development and progress on a professional trajectory.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

Dessert

The finale of the formal meal and its exclamation point

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6.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to explore women executive chefs' life histories with a focus on their experiences in the professional kitchen. The research applied the life history method and illustrated the findings of the 23 participants' life history narratives with short individual vignettes under the three prominent themes that emerged as common to the narratives. This concluding chapter starts with a discussion of the significance of the key findings. The chapter then outlines the theoretical and methodological contributions of the research, and sheds light on significant implications for practice in the chef sector and the broader hospitality industry. The future research directions are then discussed, and some concluding thoughts offered.

6.2 Discussion and significance of key findings

6.2.1 Women executive chefs' life histories

The life history method generated narratives of the experiences of women executive chefs in New Zealand - voices previously neglected in the literature. As an executive or head chef, the participants were responsible for the overall operation of their kitchens as well as other managerial work such as administrative duties, marketing, and financial and human resource management. However, unlike a prior study that described executive chefs as managers whose main duty was not cooking (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016b), most participants in this study were still highly engaged in the preparation of dishes. The participants also claimed that in their opinion, their feminine attributes of being compassionate, nurturing, and caring, benefited their staff.

Whilst this research focused solely on women's experiences, the findings did suggest some marked distinctions between women and men in the executive chef role. Notably, the women executive chefs' professional trajectories are similar to chef trajectories previously identified in the literature (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016b; Brefere, 2008), but with more challenges and hindrances. The participants moved both vertically and horizontally within the industry as they worked to make progress in their chosen career; vertically, climbing from the bottom to the top of the chef brigade, and horizontally, across sections and in different restaurants to accumulate experiences and skills that enabled them to move to the next level of the hierarchy. In addition, many of the participants had worked abroad. Starting at different ages, the length and path of each individual's professional trajectory varied. It would be interesting for future research to closely examine potential differences in the professional trajectories and life histories of men as well as women executive chefs, and account for any differences.

The findings also revealed evidence to support the claim that women executive chefs' professional trajectories are largely shaped by their social-cultural contexts, specifically, their family. The influence of family to professional trajectory has been acknowledged in the literature (Lustig & Xu, 2018; Paloş & Drobot, 2010), but not in the chef profession. The findings highlight the importance of family origin and the context of family in initiating the participants' interest in the chef

profession. Family of origin played an important role in the participants' childhoods and adolescence, and during the training and study stages of their professional trajectory. This was not an unexpected finding, as previous studies have highlighted the influence of family on children's personal and career development (Ginevra et al., 2015). Support from family was found to be vital to the participants' progression as chefs, particularly psychological support, given the physical and psychological demands of the chef role (Ginevra et al., 2015). Apart from psychological support, other forms of support, such as financial and professional guidance, were also identified as important.

The findings also showed some commonalities in the participants' progression stages. Once they had started out as chefs, they changed jobs many times, both within New Zealand and overseas. Working in overseas kitchens helped the participants to quickly develop their skills and fast-track their career progression. Many participants had moved into a sous chef or executive chef role after their overseas work experience. This finding supports the idea that working in overseas kitchens increases a chef's professional reputation and expands their career opportunities (see Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016a). An interesting finding was that the participants considered the first few years of their professional trajectories harder than the later years, and chefs often leave during this early period. Attrition during the early stages of the chef's professional trajectory would be an interesting area for future research.

From analysis of the narratives, transition points were also identified. Many of the participants had worked in tough kitchen environments, become exhausted and reached burn-out point, both physically and psychologically. An important finding was that the apparently negative state of burn-out can actually be a turning point that consolidates a career, as many of the participants realised their career goals at this point. Many identified another transition point, when they started to settle down and have families and were forced to choose between their job and family, or struggled to meet the demands from both these spheres of their life and find a satisfactory work-family balance. As a result, many participants made career changes and altered their professional trajectories at this stage.

At the time of the interviews, most of the participants were still working in the chef industry, managing various sizes of kitchens that ranged from multiple kitchens

in hotel or restaurant groups, to smaller individually owned kitchens in restaurants and cafes. Many owned and operated their own establishments, which was considered by participants the ultimate goal for a chef's professional trajectory. In addition, opening their own establishments gave the women chefs flexibility to manage their time, and gain satisfaction from their work (Haddaji et al., 2017a). The participants expressed a sense of satisfaction with their current status, with some commenting that they were reaping the rewards from the hard work and effort they invested earlier in their professional trajectories. Most importantly, in many participants' current roles, they were agents of change for a less gendered work environment, establishing inclusive work cultures, providing flexible work schedules, and leading with a supportive and caring leadership style.

6.2.2 Women executive chefs' experiences in the professional kitchen

As the research explored the women's life histories, the data analysis revealed three integrated and prominent themes: "it's sexism in so many ways," "family influence," and "it's so tough."

"It's sexism in so many ways" was a common finding in the narratives that reveals the sexism encountered by women executive chefs throughout their professional trajectories. Sexism is often associated with gender roles and gender stereotypes. The findings confirm the existence of sexism in the chef profession, which is both vertically and horizontally gender segregated. The segregation is caused by biased hiring processes, advancement opportunities, and recognition. Sexual harassment and hostile attitudes from male counterparts were commonly experienced by participants, as well as sexism from customers, industry associations and the hospitality sector generally. One significant finding within this theme is in the way women perceive that gender roles and gender stereotypes restrains their progression through their professional trajectory.

"Family influence" was the second prominent theme, and encompasses the influence of both family of origin and family of procreation on the participants' career choices and progressions in their professional trajectories. The findings suggest that family of origin has a prolonged influence on women chefs' choice of profession, their professional performance, and development. Change in family circumstance could also alter women chefs' professional trajectories. Support

from family is considered a significant need for the demanding attributes of being a chef and assisting women executive chefs to build a sustainable professional trajectory.

“It’s so tough” was the third prominent theme and refers to the physical environment of the job, the policy and procedures, the hierarchical structure of the professional kitchen, and the organisational culture common to the industry. Overall, the findings confirmed the physically and psychologically demanding attributes (Pratten, 2003) of the professional kitchen. Physically, a chef’s role is hard, with long working hours and heavy lifting, in a dirty, heated, and hazardous environment. Psychologically, various stress sources were identified in the participants’ narratives. The research findings thus validated the existence of the strict social structure of the kitchen environment (Pang, 2019), and particularly, that lower-level chefs take commands from those higher up the hierarchy without question. Indeed, this respect for seniority stems from the cultural and historical background of the chef’s profession (Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts, 2016; Jones, 2010). In addition, it was found that the commitment to maintain a high standard and ensure the smooth operation of the kitchen stresses executive chefs. Furthermore, the participants commented on the lack of recognition, both monetary and non-monetary, that they received in their chef role.

These three common themes were found to be influential to women executive chefs’ progressions in their professional trajectories. The findings suggest the three themes intersect. For example, work-life conflict, which was a major challenge for the participants, represents the intersection between gender, family and working environment, i.e. between all three themes.

The participants’ dedication to their jobs had a counter-effect on their involvement in their families. It was found that due to gender roles and stereotypes, a woman chef needs to work harder to prove her capabilities to her male counterparts, whereas as mothers, women are nearly always the main caregivers, and suffer from the unequal distribution of household responsibilities. As Haddaji et al. (2017a) indicated, although women’s performance at work aligns with that of their male counterparts’, women still suffer from unequal distribution of household responsibilities between women and men, which can be attributed to traditional work and home gender roles. To ensure they can make a quality contribution to

their family and satisfy the expectations of traditional gender roles, some of the participants chose to sacrifice their careers for their family, or conversely, vice versa. Strategies applied to resolve work-family conflicts included changing career paths, taking a break from their profession, and seeking help from family or childcare services to resolve the conflict. Contrary to prior studies that found that women withhold or forgo their family plans (Harris & Giuffre, 2010, 2015), some participants in this study had a strong interest in having children and believed that the dual role would be manageable with assistance from family and childcare services.

In their narratives, and many of the participants revealed their long professional trajectory in the chef profession, and commented that the industry had changed over time. They commented that the tough working environment is gradually softening, it is becoming less gendered, policy and related regulations are fairer and well established, and the working environment is improving with more support and training now being provided. For example, sexual harassment used to be very common but is not tolerated in contemporary kitchens. Indeed, the literature similarly indicates that the industry is changing by welcoming more women to enter the chef sector (Gatta, 2016; Harris & Giuffre, 2015). Olbrich (2016) pointed out that technology and social progress have improved the working environment of a kitchen. Even so, this study still found women leaving the chef profession because of family influences or/and gender segregation.

Individuals' perceptions were found to have an important role in their professional development and progress in their trajectories. How the participants perceived their roles and the level of achievement and pleasure they gained from their job was vital to their progression through their trajectories. Their love of cooking for others was the key intrinsic factor that motivated the participants to remain in the chef sector, while their love for food and gastronomy was one of the main drivers of their progression as a chef. Cooking is considered a craft as well as an artistic profession that requires skills, and most importantly, dedication (Balazs, 2001). Haddaji et al. (2018) found one of the motives for women to be a chef is the reward and satisfaction they gain from being creative in their jobs. Some of the participants reflected on definitions of hospitality and on the satisfaction they felt when serving food to others. When undertaking expressive labour (Poulston, 2015), the participants received intrinsic rewards and pleasure when they were

acknowledged by customers. Another common thread in the participants' narratives was that they thrived on challenges and gained a sense of achievement and satisfaction from overcoming challenges.

Women's lack of self-belief was an influential factor in their professional development, and participants commented that women need to believe in themselves to progress. Haddaji et al. (2017b) concluded that the success of a professional trajectory as a chef is related to attitudes, including passion for the profession, competitiveness, patience, dedication, perseverance, sacrifice, willingness to learn, hard work, discipline, confidence, sensitivity, affection, physical and mental resistance to hard working conditions, and force of character. Most of these attributes were demonstrated by the research participants. Bartholomew and Garey (1996) identified some characteristics that assist elite women chefs to achieve success in their profession: being focused, committed, ambitious, dedicated, passionate about food, willing to sacrifice, a risk taker, and wiling to seize opportunities. Participants in this study showed many of these characteristics, but did not mention risk taking or seizing opportunities.

The findings provide evidence that despite being critical of many aspects of the chef profession, the participants enjoyed their jobs and were accustomed to the nature of the role. All shared experiences that illustrated the pain, pleasure, and engagement they derived from their chef careers. Overall, it was evident that chefs need to be hard working and love their job to sustain their role in the industry. However, future research is needed to substantiate this finding.

6.3 Contributions

This research provides original insights into women executive chefs' life histories, and factors influencing progression in their professional trajectories. The research constitutes the first life history study of women chefs, and the findings have practical implications for professional chefs, particularly women chefs, and the chef profession generally.

6.3.1 Theoretical contribution

This research makes several theoretical contributions to the current literature. First, it has provided a deeper insight into the role of women executive chefs. It

provides a detailed understanding of women executive chefs' professional trajectories, and how they move both horizontally and vertically to reach their current roles. In addition, it also reveals the meaningful experiences and critical moments of women executive chefs, exploring the motives and hindrances encountered on their professional trajectories. In a masculine and male dominated environment, women executive chefs engage in both doing and undoing gender. Doing gender, such as "become one of the boys," is most common at the beginning of a professional trajectory. This finding corresponds with those in the extant literature (e.g., Haddaji et al., 2018; Harris & Giuffre, 2015). However, this research found that once women chefs have accumulated experiences and advanced into senior roles, they start to recognise the negative implication of doing gender. Further, some women chefs start to engage in undoing gender, and try to resist the constraining norms of gender. This is an important theoretical contribution of this research that requires further attention in future studies.

Through the life history method, the research contributes new knowledge by revealing the otherwise marginalised voices of women executive chefs in New Zealand, and of course, their dialogue - how they talk about their lives. As Lynch et al. (2011) argued, most publications in the hospitality research domain have emerged from a managerial and business perspective. Women's narratives, however, become a medium for understanding not only the complexity of women's lives, but also of women's experiences. In addition, the exploration of women executive chefs' experiences in the professional kitchen makes a significant contribution by responding to Allen and Mac Con Iomaire's (2016a) call for more qualitative studies in chefs' trajectories, as most prior studies have focused on turnover. The participants' narratives shed light on their life histories and drew attention to key areas of research that have previously lacked attention, such as the intrinsic motives that influence intentions to stay in the chef profession.

The research also enriches the extant literature by illustrating how women chefs can achieve high recognition in the male-dominated field of the professional kitchen and be rewarded with exclusive "masculine" accolades. The analysis of the participants' narratives was really an examination of success stories and understandings of how some women executive chefs maintained a sustainable progression in the chef profession will also benefit the growth of the chef sector

in New Zealand. Furthermore, the study highlights factors that have underpinned movements in the participants' trajectories in the chef profession. These findings fill the gap in the literature around the challenges faced by woman chefs during their professional trajectories (Harris & Giuffre, 2010, 2015).

This research also contributes to the understanding of the intersection between gender and the chef sector, thus contributing to hospitality scholarship, as Risman and Davis (2013) noted the lack of research on gender in the hospitality field. The way participants altered their professional trajectories to accommodate household responsibilities highlighted the existence of traditional gender roles. Socio-cultural and historical background as well as gender, potentially determine life histories. Furthermore, stakeholders, organisations, and industry all play important roles in the development of a career. These factors interplay and have changed though time to affect women's progression in life as well as in their career. From a broader perspective, focusing in depth on the chef profession, the research findings have provided insights into possible gender issues in workplace structures and interactions (Evetts, 1996), and particularly into inequality, as so few women achieve an executive chef position.

6.3.2 Methodological contribution

The methodological contribution of the research lies in its utilisation of the life history method. First, the research adds to the qualitative studies of women executive chefs, which, as Harris and Giuffre (2009) stated, are lacking. Prior studies have explored factors influencing professional trajectories from a quantitative approach, but this research helps to fill the gap in qualitative studies.

Second, the life history method adopted extends knowledge on the practice of life history research. This research is the first comprehensive investigation of women executive chefs' life histories. Thus, it answers calls to study a critical issue in hospitality studies through critical paths of enquiry (McIntosh & Harris, 2012). There have been few life history studies on specific professions, and none on the chef profession. From an interpretivist perspective, life history and experience are highly subjective and based on an individual's interpretation. Life history as a research method provides an opportunity to gain insights into what can often be

an unspoken and therefore unknown aspect of an individual's life. This method can provide a rich description of a life and offer detailed explanations of that life.

Third, the life history method provided participants with an opportunity to interpret their lives, their experiences, and the changes they have encountered (see Gwernan-Jones, 2010; Hagemaster, 1992). For instance, Aubrey said she appreciated being interviewed because she was able to look back on her life, think about the bad and good experiences she had had, and realise how much she had achieved. The participants were empowered to decide what was significant in their lives, and furthermore, to locate themselves within the experiences they shared. As Gwernan-Jones (2010) explained, one of the advantage of the life history method is that it allows people to recollect the past, and record changes.

In addition, this study did not aim to test any theory or propose any model. Instead, it has produced unique and detailed histories, illustrated with short individual vignettes, which can be used for the furthering of research in both practical and theoretical domains.

6.3.3 Practical implications

It has been suggested that only by revealing and eradicating the disincentives to work in male-dominated occupations, will it be possible to reduce gender inequalities in the labour market (Campuzano, 2019).The research findings of this study indicate that the kitchens led by the participants had more women chefs and a more gender-equal culture. It is believed that having women in prime positions is key to achieving gender equality (Anderson et al., 2017; Vong et al., 2019). In addition, women initiate changes such as the provision of fair work schedules and supportive and caring leadership. The research findings can be related to Debebe's (2019) finding that women managers are more transformational than are men, and more able to provide support and encouragement to their staff. Therefore, if the industry is to improve its work culture, it needs an ongoing commitment to reduce turnover and retain its women chefs. However, to achieve this goal, wider cooperation is needed between organisations, industry, and government, and the attitudes and expectations of women chefs themselves also need to change.

At the organisational level, there is a need to review and create fairer and more gender-equal selection criteria for advancement and reward. Scholars have urged organisations to review their human resource practices, such as recruitment and progression standards as well as rewards and benefits in the chef sector (Graham, 2015; Ko, 2012; Pratten, 2003). Shrestha (2016) observed the need for organisations to assist and develop career plans that promote equal opportunities in career progression. Campuzano (2019) argued that although women's qualities of nurturing and caring are needed for effective management, these qualities do not meet the criteria for professional advancement. Haddaji et al. (2018) confirmed that women chefs adopt a leadership style in which they nurture and care about their subordinates. This indicates a need for organisations to develop criteria for advancement that value women's qualities.

If organisations wish to retain their women chefs, they also need to provide fair and suitable rewards and professional development. Organisations that offer transparency in pay and benefit packages and advancement systems, are preferred by women (Chicha, 2006). As discussed in previous chapters, women chefs are less interested in monetary reward and public recognition than are men chefs. In addition, studies have identified that unlike men, women rely more on feedback on their competence to develop confidence and encourage them to stay in their profession (Biernat & Fuegen, 2002; Dworkin et al., 2012). Thus, organisations need to develop fairer competence assessments and provide sufficient feedback to women.

The research urges food and beverage establishments to consider building gender-equal cultures to ensure the voices of both women and men are heard. Hearn and Collinson (1998) claimed that organisational culture is a product of social learning and can be absorbed unsystematically, and that stereotypical cultures influence behaviour and self-esteem. Therefore, an organisational culture that values women's capabilities and abilities and believes in their professionalism is essential (Vong et al., 2019). Similarly, Gebbels et al. (2020) stressed the need for organisations to create and maintain a culture of open dialogue in which employees can share, listen, enquire, voice their opinions, and be heard. Such open dialogue will lead to inclusivity and promote diversity.

A positive organisational culture requires commitment from the senior management and the lower-levels of staff. Specifically, senior male managers are the key factor in improving women's status in an organisation (Campuzano, 2019; Gebbels et al., 2020; Hearn & Collinson, 1998). A systematic approach, particularly at the institution level, is required to help men support women in their career progression (Campuzano, 2019). Gebbels et al. (2020) addressed the importance of individual businesses taking the initiative to build an inclusive culture, as this would further influence the broader hospitality industry and stakeholders. Apart from developing a more inclusive working culture, Haddaji et al. (2018) listed other areas organisations need to work on, such as psychological support, professional development opportunities, and flexible work time.

Organisations need to focus on supporting women chefs, by (for example) providing professional development and emotional support. This research identified a disappointing lack of support from organisations to women chefs facing so multiple challenges, to enable them to make fair progress in their professional trajectories. Lack of support for women chefs is a long-standing issue in the chef sector Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Jennings, 2016; Robinson et al., 2014). The research findings also indicated the need to assist women chefs to develop professionally so they can progress in their trajectories. Prior studies have emphasised the importance of developing a plan to assist women chefs' professional development (Allen & Mac Con Iomaire, 2016a; Gebbels et al., 2020). Findings suggest a higher level of emotional support could be provided to women chefs, especially if they want to progress to executive role. As mentioned, women tend to suffer from stress, as they still carry a large share of household responsibilities alongside those of their full-time job. Innstrand et al. (2011) found that women in general were more emotionally fatigued and suffered more from physical exhaustion than did men across eight different occupational groups.

The chef sector needs to encourage women chefs to network with their peers, as the research findings indicate that the participants benefited from industry network groups. Professional networks provide women chefs support through opportunities to share experiences and seek advice for colleagues. This finding suggests a need for a women's support system, either formal or informal. Other studies have addressed the importance of having a support system for women (Coyle et al., 2015); support significantly lowers job-related stress among women.

Furthermore, the findings suggest changes need to be made to culinary education. The participants talked about how the skillset required at each level of the kitchen hierarchy changed as they moved up through the chef's professional trajectory, especially when promoted from sous chef to an executive role. This indicates a need for culinary courses to also include management training, as in a lengthy career, a chef could eventually advance to managerial positions where they will need to know about costing, training, and other management responsibilities. Knowledge of entrepreneurship is also essential, as according to participants, the ultimate goal of many chefs is to establish their own business. Another interesting suggestion was advice on how to address the management of negative emotions, as the industry is psychologically demanding. As well as the time pressures and stress of continuously producing dishes to the highest possible standard, the hierarchical culture and obedience mentality in the professional kitchen discourages chefs from raising their voice. Education in the management of anxiety and depression would assist women's progression in the chef profession.

In wider society, there is a need to focus on how to alter the stereotypical image of a chef, as the current construction is that chefs are male, which fails to recognise women chefs' talents. In previous chapters, the participants' narratives showed how stereotypical images of what a chef should look and behave like constrained the women chefs' development and limited their professional trajectories. Such a change, however, requires commitment and collaboration among different stakeholders and across different social structures.

6.3.3.1 Work-life balance

This research found that women executive chefs struggle with work-family conflict and identified their need for support to manage their work and family responsibilities. Within organisations, policies and procedures aimed at supporting women's involvement in both work and family life could be developed. Organisations should be encouraged to provide a family-friendly environment with flexible timetables, so women do not have to choose between their career and family. Women favour jobs that provide flexible work arrangements that can accommodate work-life balance and allow them to grow in their career (Artz et al., 2018; Blayney & Blotnicky, 2010; Duffy & Dik, 2009). Gebbels et al. (2020) suggested organisations should stop rewarding long hours, and implement codes

of conduct or policies such as opportunities for shared parental leave. Gebbels et al. (2020) explained that changes at the organisational level can lead to changes at the national and regional macro level, while changes at the governmental level may help eradicate societal beliefs about gender stereotypes. Oláh et al. (2018) pointed out that a redefinition of women's roles in both family and work spheres would impose changes on the gendered economic provision for a family and organisation of family life, which could further strengthen women's position in the labour market and reduce wage gaps and unequal advancement opportunities (Oláh et al., 2018).

Apart from changes at organisational level, government involvement is also essential. Following the example of Nordic countries, the New Zealand Government could support the establishment of laws or regulations that support women to stay in the labour market on marriage or motherhood, and remain employed until retirement age (Abendroth et al., 2017; Barsh & Yee, 2011). This would assist all chefs, but particularly women, to have a sustainable and smooth career trajectory and achieve their final goal.

6.3.3.2 Mentorship

Organisations and industry should help women chefs find a mentor. The participants' narratives highlighted the importance of mentorship, a finding that has also been emphasised in the literature (Dworkin et al., 2012; Okurame & Fabunmi, 2014). Mentors and role models, as indicated in Mooney et al.'s (2016) study, are crucial for development and advancement in a profession. Indeed, the research found that mentors supported some participants' progression and guided them through a smooth transition in their professional trajectory. This finding correlates with prior studies' findings that mentoring and support from upper management provide opportunities to women and assists them to build their networks, smoothing their career progression (Barsh & Yee, 2011; Haddaji et al., 2017b; Harris & Giuffre, 2015). In addition, a mentor could help when a woman is excluded from an informal network, or act as a bridge to connect their mentee to other business professionals and assist them to build their own network of important people. Mac Con Iomaire (2008) considered mentoring an important tool for helping women chefs to learn. Martin and Bernard (2013) found that mentors assist women to adapt in the masculine working environment of the professional kitchen. Studies have found that a woman role model at a higher

level can provide significant assistance to their women subordinates, helping them to progress in their career (Dworkin et al., 2012; Okurame & Fabunmi, 2014). Haddaji et al. (2017a) emphasised that mentorship encourages women chefs to push themselves to reach their limits. Mentors can also help improve the working environment, for example, by monitoring bullying and violence in the kitchen, thereby helping reduce attrition (Mac Con Iomaire, 2008). Overall, a good mentor can help a woman believe in her capabilities, lead her to more professional opportunities, introduce contacts, and help her to build formal and informal networks. Apart from actual support in her career, a mentor can also provide encouragement, support, feedback, insight, suggestions, and even constructive criticism. Having a mentor or role model enhances employee morale, productivity, and job satisfaction, which decreases staff turnover (Dworkin et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2015; Mac Con Iomaire, 2008).

However, studies continue to show that women chefs have difficulty finding a mentor, especially a woman mentor (Haddaji et al., 2017a; Kurtuluş et al., 2018). Also, some studies have questioned the effectiveness of a mentor for women, as very often mentors have weaker organisational influence than their mentees, and receive less promotion (Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016; Loughlin, 1999). Therefore, although they are involved in mentoring activities, their assistance to subordinates' professional development and progression can be somewhat limited (Ibarra et al., 2010), so men will continue to be promoted to higher and more senior roles. This is something organisations need to take into consideration.

Most importantly, this research has implications for women who want a career in the chef profession. The findings suggest that the most important thing to do, is for a woman to start believing in herself and have confidence, a conclusion also found by Haddaji et al.'s (2017b), who emphasised that in order to succeed, women chefs ought to believe in themselves, be self-confident, and gain others' confidence. Research has shown that women tend to under-estimate themselves in masculine tasks (Beyer, 1990; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Haddaji et al. (2017b) commented that when a woman is a chef, she has to manage her roles and gender, and juggle between her personal and occupational identities. This research suggests that women are more confident in executive roles when they are equipped with both professional and management skills. In this regard,

mentor and mentorship plays a significant role in developing skills that in turn build confidence in women's roles.

6.4 Future research directions

The research has identified some areas for further research. The first few years of the participants' professional trajectories were the hardest, and when the most attrition occurred. This issue requires further investigation, to identify the challenges and obstacles in these early years as well as potential solutions. It was also observed that participants felt they required different support at different stages of their professional trajectories. For instance, at the beginning of their professional trajectories, participants benefited from family support, while during the professional progression period, organisational support was vital. Future research into the benefits of different support at different stages of a chef's professional trajectory could assist in reducing the high turnover in the chef sector and benefit the hospitality industry.

The research identified the intrinsic factor of love as a key driver of the participants' professional trajectories. This indicates a need to further investigate the intrinsic factors that shape chefs' professional development and trajectories. Furthermore, as in prior studies (e.g., Mooney, 2014; Poulston, 2012, 2015), the research found that hospitality workers gain a significant sense of achievement and pleasure through their jobs. Yet, as stated by Mooney (2014), little attention has been paid to this area. This finding identified a need to explore what gives chefs pleasure and satisfaction, and most importantly, how the organisations they work for could assist in the generation of such intrinsic rewards.

The purpose of the research was to prioritise the voices of women executive chefs, so the sample was limited. Future studies could either increase the sample size or extend the sample to cover other demographic groups working in the professional kitchen. Future studies should take other marginalised voices into account. This is important, because as the participants noted, segregation is not only based on gender but also on race and age. Scholars have emphasised that life histories occur in historical, cultural, and social contexts (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008; Betts, 2014). Therefore, this is an area worth further investigation,

and future research could focus on life histories of chefs from a particular cultural context to further knowledge beyond the conclusions made here.

Methodologically, this life history study of women executive chefs can be repeated in other countries and with other occupations. Repeating the same life history study in other countries would enable the findings from this research to be compared and contrasted. At the same time, a longitudinal and critical study to investigate women executive chefs' life histories and experiences in detail would be a fruitful area for future work. It would also be interesting to apply the life history method to other professions. In particular, future research could examine men's professional trajectories and experiences working in female-dominated fields; it would be interesting indeed to examine the experiences of men chefs working in female-dominated kitchens. It would also be interesting to compare the findings found in this research with those in other gendered professions, for example, childcare.

6.5 Concluding thoughts

It is apparent that the chef industry has improved in recent years, although perhaps not fast enough. The research presented in this thesis found that women chefs still face multiple challenges along their professional trajectories. However, it is also encouraging to realise that it is the individual woman who decides her career choice and career progression. Despite the recognised high turnover of staff in the professional kitchen, the women who participated in this research overcame enormous challenges to reach executive roles. Women chefs in kitchen brigades are performing well and advancing. Equally, some of the participants were employing women to lead their own kitchens. This researcher hopes to see more women joining the chef profession and progressing into executive roles, and most importantly, making progress in the chef profession. Finding the right fit for the love of the job, and a suitable working environment, could be the answer. This thesis concludes with Hazel's advice to women who want a career as a chef:

> *Just be yourself. Just be comfortable with who you are. Be proud of who you are. Don't underestimate yourself. Don't think that because you're a woman, you can't do certain things. Just do them and do*

them in the way that you find best. Don't do them how the guys do them. Don't do them how you are told you should do them by society or your male counterparts. And people will respect you for it, you'll grow from that. You need to find the place that works for you and inspires you to grow.

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Glossary & Colloquial Language

The following terms and colloquial language were used by participants.

Amuse bouche - a smaller, more intensely flavoured course, usually just one or two bites. Represents the artistry and showmanship of the chef and offered free of charge to all present at the table (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Appetiser - a drink or food served before the main course to stimulate the appetite (Merriam-Webster.com, n.d.).

Apprentice - a programme or training involving working in a kitchen and cooking, to prepare cooks to be a professional chef (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Back of house (BOH) - part of the food and beverage establishment that diners do not usually see, such as the kitchen, storage area, offices, and the staff who works there, such as chefs, dishwashers, and line cooks (Culinarylore, 2015).

Cheffing - to chef or to cook (*Urban Dictionary*, n.d.).

Chef brigade/ Brigade de cuisine - a structured hierarchical system established in hotels and restaurants to delegate responsibilities to individual workers (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Chef de partie (CDP) - also known as a "station chef" or "line cook," is the person responsible for a particular area (or section) of production (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Commis – a junior chef undergoing training and learning about responsibilities and operations. Works in a specific station reporting to the chef de partie (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Cover - a diner who eats or is served a meal (Gartenstein, 2018).

Dessert - a course that concludes a meal, usually consisting of sweet foods or beverages, such as cakes, pastries, fruit, dessert liqueur, or dessert wine (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Entrée – in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand the word entrée refers to a dish served before the main course, or the first dish, or a course served between soup and another small dishes.

Executive chef/ Head chef/ Chef de cuisine – leads the kitchen brigade, and in charge of all activities related to the kitchen (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Front of house (FOH) - the visible staff and operations in a hotel or hospitality enterprise, such as waiters, hosts, bar staff, and managers (Culinarylore, 2015).

Hot section - where raw materials are prepared and cooked.

Kitchen hand - assists line cooks with food preparation but not usually involved with cooking. (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Larder (cold section) - where storage and preparation of cold/ preserved foods occurs, such as hams, cheese, bacon (Hospitality Management Study Resources, 2016).

Main/ Main course - the primary dish in a meal, in between entrée and dessert

Mise en place (Mise)- means putting in place in French, refers to preparation including arranging and organising ingredients before cooking in kitchens.

Michelin star- a symbol of distinction awarded by the Michelin travel guides to a restaurant in recognition of the high quality of its cooking (Dictionary.com).

Pastry chef/ pâtissier- pastry station chef, skilled in pastries, desserts, backed goods (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Sous chef/ Sous-chef de cuisine- second in command in the kitchen, assist the head or executive chef with management. Responsible when the head/ executive chef is absent (Wikipedia, n.d.).

The pass- an area where dishes are plated for wait staff usually run by management level of chefs (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Appendices

Appendix A Ethics approval

25 February 2019
Alison McIntosh
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Alison

Ethics Application: 19/44 **Female executive chefs and their experiences in the professional kitchen: A study of their topical life histories**

I wish to advise you that a subcommittee of the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) has **approved** your ethics application.

This approval is for three years, expiring 22 February 2022.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation, then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to

ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: fwx2521@autuni.ac.nz; beverly761112@hotmail.com; Candice Harris; warren.goodsir@aut.ac.nz

Appendix B Research tools

Appendix B.a Interview guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. Please be reassured that all collected information of this interview will be kept confidential. If you do experience any discomfort during the interview, you have the right to cancel, postpone or pause the interview at any time. You also have the right to skip any question if you feel uncomfortable answering it.

This interview starts with some initial questions to get to know about you and your restaurant, café or kitchen and your team

- Explain the type of your restaurant, café or kitchen, and the menu and service provided.
- What is your position, and your responsibilities?
- Please share the kitchen structure with me: the number of staff you have, and their roles; the number of men and women staff in the kitchen? Is there any man or woman domination? Do you participate in the HR recruiting process? Are you happy with the current structure? If yes, why? If not, why, and what will you change?
- How many years have you been working in an executive role? Both in your previous and current positions.
- What is your formal or informal culinary art training? Was the training in New Zealand or overseas?

Table 5

Interview Guide

Research questions	Interview questions – **Probing questions**
What are the life histories of women executive chefs in New Zealand?	**Tell me about your journey. Please share your journey with me.** I would like to know more. Please tell me more. What do you think? What was your feeling? *(Use life grid to probe participants' experiences in the professional kitchen)*
What are your experiences as women executive chefs in the professional kitchen?	**Recalling back, could you share some meaningful experiences/moments/significant events?** Please tell me all the details of the shared experiences/ moments/ significant events. Could you share the reason for your action? When did this experience happened? What was your feeling? What was your thought about it? **What are your thoughts on ways and methods to navigate through the kitchen hierarchy?** ways? methods? **From a women chef's perspective, please share your thoughts about the overall kitchen environment, both physically and psychologically.** **What do you do to continue to develop yourself as a women executive chef? Do you engage in any professional development?** Yes/no: probe **Describe your typical day when leading/managing the kitchen team.** Probe **What do you do in your down time? Do you think you achieve a work- life balance?**

Research questions	Interview questions – **Probing questions**
	Probe on family structure, dependants, time management, parental responsibility, etc. **Could you share your thoughts on support, either from your family, the industry, the peers, the workplace.** Probe if there is any support. If yes, given by who? If no, what support is needed? **What characteristics do you consider important to your professional career?** Probe where do these come from? Why? **What is your experience working with women and men chefs?** **Studies indicate that many women leave the culinary industry before they reach a higher position. What made you stay?** Probe **Studies indicate that the kitchen has previously been a male-dominated environment. Do you agree with this statement?** Probe: If yes, why? – the scenario, example, solution, strategies If no, why? – example, scenario. **Based on what you mentioned above, can you provide an example or scenario that you were involved in, witnessed or heard?**

Wrap up the interview

- What advice might you give to other women chefs who want to develop a career in the professional kitchen?

Thank you for your time. Please be reassured that all collected information of this interview will be kept confidential.

Appendix B.b Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

11/02/2019

Project Title

Women executive chefs and their experience in the professional kitchen: A study of their topical life histories.

An invitation

Kia ora, my name is Beverly (Shih-Yun), a Ph.D. student at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). I would like to invite you to participate in this in-depth interview study, which is concerned with your life histories and your experiences in the professional kitchen. This study is a part of my thesis to complete the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and confidential and you may withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences. The interview will take around 90 to 120 minutes of your time. You have the right to skip any question if you feel uncomfortable answering it. A koha or gift card will be provided to contribute towards your travel expenses or time.

What is the purpose of this research?

This study seeks to examine women executive chefs' experiences to understand the significant factors that shape their paths in the culinary profession. The information you share will contribute to the wider body of knowledge of hospitality scholarship, especially the sphere of women chefs. The results of the research will lead to my doctoral thesis and possible publications and presentations in academic journals.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified as an executive chef via New Zealand Chefs Association and the Department of Culinary Arts in the School of Hospitality & Tourism at Auckland University of Technology. These two organisations were sent an email invitation with this Participant Information Sheet attached. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and confidential, and there will be no identifiable personal information collected in this research.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you would like to participate and contribute to this study, please email beverly761112@hotmail.com, and I will promptly get in touch with you to provide details about this study.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the

choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, the removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

Once you agree to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to schedule the time and location for the in-depth interview(s). A consent form will be provided before the conduction of the interview. You will need to indicate your willingness to participate in the study by signing the form before the interview. During the interviews, you will be asked to share your life histories as a woman executive chef.

What are the discomforts and risks?

In this research, you may experience a certain level of discomfort or embarrassment as this research aims to explore your professional life history, and the shared information might contain personal information.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If you do experience any discomfort during the interview(s), you have the right to cancel, postpone or pause the interview at any time. You also have the right to skip any question if you feel uncomfortable answering it. The researcher will make sure your privacy is well protected.

What are the benefits?

Your participation in this research will help the completion of my doctoral degree and allow me to gain an understanding of the research project and the qualitative life history research methods. As a participant, this research is a chance for you to review and share your life history. This process will contribute to your understanding of your life history and how gender may have influenced your experience. I anticipate this research will benefit the wider community as the information you share will contribute to the body of knowledge of hospitality scholarship, especially the women chefs' domain. Your answers are highly acknowledged as a contribution to the co-creation and development of knowledge.

How will my privacy be protected?

This study is entirely confidential, and your name will not be mentioned in the reported results. You may be asked to provide an alias or pseudonym to protect your identity in the research. Your contact details and personal information will be held securely by the primary researcher and her supervisors and will not be shared with any third party. Your response to the questions in the interviews will be used for academic research only.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

This study conducts in-depth interviews that will last 90 to 120 minutes with each participant.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Fourteen working days. A reminder email will be sent to the participant after a week. The recruitment will be closed when sufficient participants have been recruited.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

The recorded interviews will be transcribed into data, and this data will be sent to you for validation, additions or deletions. Moreover, important findings or research summary will be provided to participants, if requested, upon the completion of the thesis.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the project supervisor, Professor Alison McIntosh, *alison.mcintosh@aut.ac.nz*, Tel: 921 9999 ext 6983.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz*, Tel: 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details

Beverly (Shih-Yun) Chen, fwx2521@autuni.ac.nz; beverly761112@hotmail.com

Project Supervisors Contact Details

Prof. Alison McIntosh, alison.mcintosh@aut.ac.nz

Prof. Candice Harris, candice.harris@aut.ac.nz

Dr Warren Goodsir, warren.goodsir@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 25th February 2019, AUTEC Reference number 19/44.

Appendix B.c Consent form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title:	***Women executive chefs and their experiences in the professional kitchen: A study of their topical life histories***
Project Supervisor:	***Professor Alison McIntosh***
Researcher:	***Beverly (Shih-Yun) Chen***

- ○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 11 February 2019.
- ○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study, then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, the removal of my data may not be possible.
- ○ I agree to take part in this research.
- ○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one):

Yes○ No○

Participant's signature

.....

Participant's name:

.....

Participant's contact details (if appropriate):

……..

……..

……..

……..

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 25th February 2019, AUTEC Reference number 19/44.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Appendix B.d Email invitation

Dear Participant (insert individual participant's name),

As a Ph.D. student at the Auckland University of Technology, I would like to invite you to participate in my research examining the life histories of women executive chefs. This research seeks to explore women executive chefs' life histories with a focus on their experiences in the professional kitchen. The information you share will contribute to the body of knowledge of hospitality scholarship, especially the women chefs' journey in this profession. Participation in this research would involve being interviewed at a location and time that is convenient for you. The interview will take around 90 to 120 minutes of your time. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and the information you shared will be kept confidential, but it would make a valuable contribution to the research of my doctoral degree entitled:

"Women executive chefs and their experience in the professional kitchen: A study of their topical life histories."

I have attached an information sheet outlining the purpose of my study. If you do not want to participate, please ignore this email. If you would like to participate and contribute to this study, please email beverly761112@hotmail.com, and I will promptly get in touch with you. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I would truly appreciate your time and participation.

Yours sincerely,

Beverly (Shih-Yun) Chen
Ph.D. Student / School of Hospitality and Tourism
Auckland University of Technology

Professor Alison McIntosh
Primary Supervisor / School of Hospitality and Tourism
Auckland University of Technology