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WOMEN ON THE LINE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF
WORK IN THE BEEF INDUSTRY

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Sociology
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the experiences of women who work in the meat industry. Drawing from symbolic interaction and standpoint theory frameworks, this research focuses on how gender, race, and nationality influence work experiences and family life for women in comparison to men in the meat industry. This study is based on 15 in-depth interviews with men and women who work in management positions and in the processing rooms of meat companies where non-human animals are disassembled in the production of food. Data collection and analysis were performed using grounded theory methods of inquiry. Participants' stories highlight women's experience in adapting to the organizational culture of the meat industry, strategies of survival in everyday life in the organization, and the conflict between work and family. While women in management positions discuss the process of fitting into the male-dominated organizational culture, women in the processing room experience gender segregation and inequality that prevents moving into the men's world of processing management, a separation that is built into the structure of the facility. This study contributes to the literature on work in the meat industry as well as the sociological research on gender and work, race and ethnicity studies and research on the family.

To my wonderful husband and partner in life, Peter, thank you for supporting me in this and everything that I do. Each day I spend with you makes my world brighter.

To my parents, Michael and Debra Altif, thank you for always allowing me to be who I am and for encouraging me to pursue every endeavor I undertook. You set a good example to follow.

Finally, this work is also dedicated to the men and women who work in the beef industry, especially those who work in the processing rooms. Your work is often invisible; my hope is that this research can shine a little light into this world.

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I owe a great deal of thanks to my dissertation advisor, Liz Grauerholz, who exhibited the patience of Job as I struggled to take my years of quantitative methods training and make the transition to qualitative research. You supported me from the beginning of this project in your Qualitative Research Methods seminar and continued to offer me the encouragement and guidance I needed to finish the dissertation. I am eternally grateful for all of the support you have shown me throughout my doctoral studies. I would also like to thank my dissertation committee: Shannon Carter, Fernando Rivera, and Patricia Yancey Martin for your support and guidance. Your comments and suggestions helped to make this a better research project. Thank you also to Jana Jasinski for the professional opportunities you gave me and for always having your door open. You have helped me in so many ways.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The work of the slaughterhouse and meat processing rooms has been documented for centuries, most vividly by Upton Sinclair (1988) in his book, *The Jungle*. The location of animal slaughter for food production has changed since that book was published as has the employee demographic in these facilities. Animal slaughter and processing facilities have moved from urban enclaves to rural communities where the work in these facilities can be kept hidden from public view. At the same time, more women have now entered positions within these facilities that were once reserved solely for men; the majority of these women are members of minority groups in the United States (Artz 2012). Census data from 2010 show that more than one-third of workers in this industry are foreign born; however, this statistic underestimates the actual number as it has been estimated that close to twenty-five percent of meatpacking and processing workers are undocumented immigrants (Artz 2012). This trend in the changing demographic of meat production offers a setting to study the movement of women into traditionally male-oriented work roles. Women in the meat industry have traditionally held subordinate roles in packing and processing. Women of color have held jobs at the lowest rung on the job ladder. In what Saucedo (2006) refers to as brown-collar work, Latina women often hold the lowest paid and lowest prestige positions in non-human animal processing facilities.

This research study aims to explore women's experience of work in traditionally male-dominated jobs within the meat industry. The beef industry, specifically, is the setting for this research study. Using a grounded theory approach, I explore what it means to work not only in a male-dominated industry, but in an environment where non-human animals are disassembled for food production. Through this research, the vast literature on gender and work is applied to the

meat industry in an exploration of women's roles in the industry and a comparative study of women's experiences in managing interactions with male colleagues, fitting into a male-constructed work culture, and managing family life while working in management positions as well as in the processing rooms. Since this research explores the role of women in meat processing, this setting also presents an opportunity to apply intersectional research and explore the interlocking nature of gender, race, class, and nationality in segregation and subordination within the workplace. Finally, this present study seeks to explore the lived experience of women who work in meat processing facilities, exploring how women experience the work of processing non-human animals for food and how this work impacts their family life outside of the organization.

Significance of the Research

This qualitative study is important and needed for several reasons. First, this study seeks to add to the sociological research on gender and work, specifically by contributing to the literature on the role of gender in "blue-collar" work settings. Most of the case studies on gender and work have focused on white women working in the corporate world in traditionally "white-collar" jobs. While the findings that these studies have produced are important for understanding the effects of gender on wage equality and job valuation, more research on factory jobs and especially "brown-collar" work is needed.

Second, this study seeks to add to intersectional research by studying women who move into traditionally male-dominated organizations and take on masculine type jobs. An important distinction to make is between the sex composition and gender typing of particular occupations (Britton 1999). Sex composition refers to the representation of men and women in a particular

occupation, either male-dominated or female-dominated. Gender typing is the “process through which occupations come to be seen as appropriate for workers with masculine or feminine characteristics” (Britton 1999:424). For this particular study, I will set out to understand the lived experience of women who work in meat processing companies and how they negotiate gender typing in this setting. For years, women have worked in meat processing facilities and animal slaughterhouses, but their roles have been mainly relegated to the jobs that require the lowest skill set or the jobs that are in places where “men will not work” (Horowitz 1997:187). Over the past decade, however, more women have started to work in the masculine-typed jobs of meat-cutter and meat-grinder. Therefore, I seek to understand and describe the lived experience of these women, their circumstances, and the nature of their social life within the home and their organizational life within the plant.

While several ethnographic studies have explored the working conditions of the slaughterhouse (Broadway and Stull 2006, Pachirat 2011, Striffler 2005, Stull and Broadway 2004), so far no one has specifically examined the role of women’s work in the slaughterhouses and packing plants using a qualitative method of inquiry. Therefore, the third goal of this study is to shed light on the working conditions within the slaughterhouse, specifically the work that women perform within the meat-processing hierarchy. Traditionally, women’s roles have been devalued in this setting. They often perform tasks that promote long-term physical disability for a lower wage than their male counterparts. The intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender in this work will also serve to expand the literature on the multiple forms of domination that are experienced in the industrial meat processing setting.

The dissertation is structured to first present a review of the literature on gender and work and the structural changes that have occurred over time in the meat industry. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks and methods used to conduct this research on women in the meat industry. An overview of the constructivist grounded theory approach to my research is presented as well as the data collection techniques used in this study. Chapter 4 presents the findings on the organizational culture of the meat industry and the differences in strategies and coping mechanisms used to adapt to the demands of the industry. Chapter 5 digs deeper into women's experiences of work in the meat industry at both the executive level and processing room level of the organizational hierarchy. Chapter 5 explores strategies of survival in the industry and the women's experience of pain in the processing room.

Chapter 6 shifts direction a little bit from work to home. This chapter explores the spillover effects of working in the meat industry into domestic life. This chapter provides an analysis of how men and women manage family life along with the subthemes of missing time with children, maintaining relationships, and feeling separated from family. The occupational demands of the meat industry often mean that men and women are absent from family life with their loved ones. The majority of women in the processing rooms are women who have immigrated to the U.S. from the Global South. For these women, missing time with their children is compounded by the fact that they also endure a separation from their native culture and true "home" life. Part of this research aims to shed light on this experience and to gain an understanding of how non-native women negotiate this separation in their life.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Production to Processing: The Changing Structure of the Beef Industry

The beef industry in the United States moved through three major phases during the twentieth century which changed the structure of production. This change in the structure and location of production served to alter the demographics of labor in this industry and contributed to an organizational culture that rewards efficiency, often at the cost of human and non-human animal welfare. In order to understand the current machinations of the beef industry, one has to understand the important structural transitions that occurred to get to this moment. The body of research on the consequences of industrial beef production comes from anthropology, sociology, and geography; all emphasize the importance of technological development and movement from urban to rural locations in the description and analysis of labor conditions and the cultural impacts of beef production in rural communities (Broadway 1990, Broadway and Stull 2006, Broadway, Griffith and Stull 1995, Fink 1998, Pachirat 2011, Stull and Broadway 2004, Warren 2007).

Over the past century, power in the beef industry has transitioned from merchant wholesalers to transnational corporations. Through this evolution, there has been a shift in power from producers to processors as the new industrial beef production substitutes capital for labor in its emphasis on mechanization and food manufacturing (Stull and Broadway 2004). Beef production in the United States had originally centered in the Ohio River Valley in the late 19th century. Farmers drove their cattle to nearby cities where slaughter facilities were located. Beef production was a seasonal industry, producing different types of meat during different times of the year. Labor followed this seasonal pattern. Packing employment became available in the fall

and winter months; those who labored in the agricultural fields in the summer would move to packing jobs in the winter. In 1840, “forty-eight Cincinnati packers...employed an average of twenty-five workers” (Warren 2007:8). The small scale of production also meant a wide variety in the quality of beef produced. The rise of the railroad as a mode of transportation ushered in a new era of beef production that shifted production to cities with better rail connections. Warren (2007) refers to this time period as the terminal marketing era in beef production.

Terminal Marketing

The terminal marketing era in beef production lasted from 1865-1950 (Warren 2007). The rise of railroad transportation proved to be one of the largest contributors to the establishment of major meatpacking plants in the livestock markets of Chicago and other Midwestern cities like St. Louis, Kansas City, and Indianapolis. Chicago is the most well-known example of this type of market, largely from the work of Upton Sinclair (1988) and others who have written about the markets and the Back of the Yards neighborhood behind Union Stockyards. Just between 1848 and 1860, there was significant growth in the number of cattle that arrived in these terminal markets for slaughter; “in 1848, 26,000 animals arrived in Chicago on hoof. Twelve years later, in 1860, 450,000 arrived there by rail, delivered to the city’s six stockyards” (Warren 2007:10).

Along with the development of the railroad system, the terminal marketing era also included the development of refrigerated rail cars and the shipment of what became known as dressed beef. This served to reduce the price of beef and created a competitive structure to the beef industry where the Big Four beef packers of the time (Armour, Swift, Cudahy, and Morris) could obtain an advantage over retail butchers (Kujovich 1970, Warren 2007). Dressed beef

refers to the steer carcass after its head, hide, tail, legs and other inedible (or less desirable) parts have been removed (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2014). Since the dressed weight is generally around fifty percent lighter than the weight of a live steer, the development of shipping dressed beef drastically reduced the cost of shipping to Eastern cities during the terminal market era; “the cost of shipping live steer was almost twice that of shipping one refrigerated carcass” (Warren 2007: 13).

During this phase of the beef industry’s history, more commodities were developed from the byproducts of the cattle slaughtered for beef production. Due to this shift in the product development, employment in beef packing plants became steadier and substantial community development occurred as a result of more stable employment. Many immigrants from Eastern Europe moved into these communities and worked in the packing plants. More women were also employed during this time as advances in technology allowed for more piecework jobs to become available involving weighing, packing and labeling meat. The substitution of capital for labor during this period would only increase in the next phase that the industry underwent in the middle of the twentieth century (Stull and Broadway 2004). This shift towards investment in capital at the expense of labor further increased the division of labor in the processing facilities as the knife skills required in the past became obsolete. The de-skilling of work in the beef industry created piecemeal work where each task in breaking down the animal for food production was assigned to a different person. This made the jobs easy to learn but also increased the turnover rate in these facilities and further degraded the work environment.

Direct Buying

The current phase of production in the beef industry is often referred to as the direct buying phase (Warren 2007). The ethnographic works of Stull and Broadway (2006, 2004) and Pachirat (2011) document the changes in working conditions and the changes in labor force demographics during this phase of the beef industry. The direct buying phase of the beef industry was ushered in as large corporate packing plants made the move to relocate their facilities closer to the animals they processed. Starting in the 1920s and moving through the 1950s, the development of highway systems and investment in infrastructure shifted the power of beef production from the railroad terminal cities like Chicago to rural communities in the Midwest (Fitzgerald 2010, Stull and Broadway 2004, Warren 2007). Packing firms began to seek locations closer to the cattle and hogs they processed and make purchases directly from the farmers or dealers instead of competing for the best price at the terminal markets. Stull and Broadway (2004) refer to this period as the third agricultural revolution where mechanization and efficiency become the dominant characteristics of food production. Industrialization is characterized by “mechanization, chemical farming, and food manufacturing...it aims to sell crops and livestock at the lowest possible cost by creating scale economies”(Stull and Broadway 2004:10). Vertical integration became the mantra of food production. In the beef industry, feeding the cattle, supplying the hormones and antibiotics needed to keep cattle healthy and promote growth, and slaughtering the animals all became housed under the same corporation: “The more control a company can gain over this network, the greater its ability to control costs and profits”(Stull and Broadway 2004:11). While the concept of vertical integration originated in the poultry industry, it was not long before this concept was adopted by beef industry executives. As beef processing facilities moved out of the urban terminal market cities into rural areas, they

expanded in size. This allowed beef manufacturers to employ a vertical integration strategy and provide material for each component of the beef production process, thereby maximizing profits. The expansion in size of the facility also led to the expansion in the number of cattle slaughtered. Meatpacking profits run on small margins; “profits run between 1 and 2 percent of sales, while more than 90 percent of sales are eaten up in direct production costs” (Stull and Broadway 2004:35). In order to survive, companies must minimize costs and maximize productivity. The cost of slaughter is significantly reduced at a plant that slaughters 400 head per hour compared to one that slaughters 40 head per hour. Advances in technology allow for an increased pace of production which benefits the overall profit margin.

These advances in mechanization increased productivity, increased investment in capital at the expense of labor, and led to out-migration from rural areas. The out-migration from rural areas in the Midwest reduced the population of eligible candidates to work in the beef slaughterhouses and processing facilities once the large corporations made the move to more rural areas. The lack of a workforce population would lead to the recruitment of immigrant labor from the Southwest, California, and Mexico. Jobs in the slaughterhouses and processing facilities required less skill, making it easier to train individuals with no background in the butcher trade while at the same time driving down wages and making employees expendable.

Modern Direct Buying

Up until the 1950s, packing facilities had been multi-species operations, slaughtering and processing cattle, sheep, and hogs in the same facility. With the creation of Iowa Beef Packers (IBP) in 1960, multi-species production effectively came to a close and the single-species plant was born. The opening of IBP in Denison, Iowa, in 1960 represented a major shift in the direct

buying era and ushered in a new oligopoly in the beef industry (Gouveia and Juska 2002). Four companies began to dominate the production of beef in the United States: IBP (sold to Tyson in 2001), ConAgra (now JBS)¹, Excel (a subsidiary of Cargill), and National Beef Packing Company. This new “Big Four” of the beef industry impacted the beef industry in three different ways: 1) further vertical integration of the buying and packing process; 2) elimination of skilled work through the use of advanced technology; and 3) consolidation of the slaughter and processing operations and the marketing of boxed beef. The new leaders in beef production began signing contracts with farmers and dictating the terms of how the cattle would be raised through modern intensive input practices. The packing plants offer a guaranteed customer for these farmers to sell their cattle and provide some measure of stability in a volatile market.

The new industry leaders reduced labor costs by eliminating all of the skilled knife positions that used to dominate the slaughter and processing facilities. While technological advancements had paved the way for less-skilled workers to enter meatpacking after World War II, it was not until IBP began its operations in 1960 that these advancements were integrated into every component part of the operation. Mechanical stunners, power-driven overhead chains, forklifts, and automated packaging machines that had been developed after World War II were now joined by circular electric knives (known as whizards) which eliminated the need for butcher skills in separating cuts of meat from the bone, the last truly skilled job in the meatpacking plant (Stull 1994, Warren 2007).

¹ ConAgra sold the majority share of its beef operations to Swift & Co. in 2002. JBS, a Brazilian beef producer and now the largest beef producer worldwide, acquired Swift & Co. in 2007.



Figure 1: Whizard Trimmer and Airshirz Scissors
(Bettcher Industries 2010)

The whizard trimmer (as seen in Figure 1) is a circular knife that allows any worker to trim the fat from the large cuts of beef without having the skills or training of a butcher. The development of this type of mechanized knife allowed companies to invest in technology and capital instead of worker training and allowed for the payout of lower wages, thereby reducing overall costs. These technological advancements also served to increase the productivity of each plant and increase the supply of beef on the market, driving down prices for consumers and narrowing the margins of profit for the producers, thereby driving the treadmill of production even faster. Stull's (1994) research in Garden City, Kansas, shows how proud the IBP executives are of their "Cadillac of all packing plants" and how efficient this facility is at moving animals through the system:

We kill about 32,000 head of cattle a week. Since many feedyards in this area have a capacity of about 40,000 head, we empty the equivalent of about one feedyard per week. Every day we receive 101 trucks of live cattle and load out

one truck of boxed beef every twenty-two minutes of every day, seven days a week. From hoof to box, the longest a cow will stay in this plant is six days; the prime time is two to three days (Stull 1994:45)

The third way that IBP and its contemporaries changed beef production was in the development of shipping boxed beef instead of whole sides of the steer carcass. Modern meatpacking plants will have hundreds of people operating machines, bandsaws, whizard knives, and other electric knives along a conveyer belt to make specific cuts of meat that are ready for retail packaging. No longer do retail stores need to employ butchers to cut the carcasses to the specifics of the customer; the meatpacking plants determine what cuts the customer wants to purchase. The shift towards investment in technology at the expense of skilled labor and the movement of packing plants to rural areas outside of the terminal market cities of the Midwest have impacted not only the growth in production of beef in the U.S., but also the lives of the people working in these facilities. The working environment of a facility that runs through thousands of head of cattle every week is one that is fast-paced, dangerous, and physically straining.

As the beef industry has developed and changed over time, so has the demographic characteristics of the workforce it employs. The reduction of skill in these slaughter and processing facilities has opened the door for companies to hire more vulnerable populations. At the same time, beef companies have moved out of union strongholds into right-to-work states where union representation is not a requirement, thereby reducing the amount of oversight of the working conditions that was so important in the terminal market era.

The Organizational Culture of the Beef Industry

The culture of the beef industry can be viewed through its specialized language, core values, and beliefs. More than one culture can exist in a corporation and take shape where employees share common experiences over time. Stull and Broadway (2004) found in their research at Running Iron Beef that corporate culture and work culture often reflected different values. Corporate culture is documented in mission statements, manuals, signs in the facilities, and handbooks. It is reinforced through interactions with supervisors, colleagues, and employee workshops. Work culture “might be dominated by a particular occupation, or [it] might be grounded in the collective experience of men and women who work day in and day out at a certain job” (Stull and Broadway 2004:87). The work culture of an organization is defined by what actually happens on the floor; the same corporate culture themes are present in the work culture of a company, but the difference between the corporate culture themes and the reality of the work itself is often quite different. Kanter’s (1977) work shows this same pattern of formal and informal culture of a corporation in her study of Industrial Supply Corporation. She states that there was both a “formal and informal company culture, reflected in language, rituals and styles of communication” (Kanter 1977:40). The beef industry reflects its own unique company culture in a variety of ways. The work culture of the beef industry is also “intertwined with the national cultures of a multicultural and multilingual workforce” (Stull and Broadway 2004:115) which can come in to conflict with the corporate culture values and goals.

The beef industry itself is a male-dominated industry which is reflected in the culture of the industry. The language of the beef industry is very economic and strives to disassociate the non-human animal from the meat product it becomes. People who eat meat are often ambivalent

about their decision to consume non-human animals, associating the consumption of meat with negative characteristics (Berndsen and van der Pligt 2004). Consuming meat can be morally taxing because it violates our concerns for non-human animals, creating a cognitive dissonance where what we believe in the ideal world and what we practice in reality are in conflict (Loughnan, Haslam and Bastian 2010). By disassociating the means from the end, the dissonance is alleviated. Loughnan, et al. (2010) argue that people can resolve this tension by decreasing the moral status of non-human animals. If non-human animals fail to have moral status, “then killing them is not a moral issue, and eating meat is not morally problematic” (Loughnan, Haslam and Bastian 2010:157). The removal of suffering allows for an ambivalent attitude towards consuming meat. The language of the beef industry, where non-human animals become “products,” where heifers become hamburgers in fabrication rooms (Pachirat 2011), further alleviates the cognitive dissonance between how we view non-human animals and the food choices we make.

The four main beef producers in the U.S. (Cargill, JBS, Tyson, and National Beef) all maintain this type of language as part of their company culture. Along with the constant use of the word “product” in the company literature, all four of these companies also maintain a concern for animal welfare as part of their company values. There is a dissonance created here between the industrial production of animals that these four companies pursue at magnificent rates and the value of concern for animal welfare. One of Tyson Foods’ core values is to serve as “stewards of the animals, land, and environment entrusted to us” (Tyson Foods 2013). This theme of stewardship over the animals and land is pervasive in the language of the beef industry culture. JBS, one of the largest meat producers world-wide, includes the language of stewardship

in its statement on responsibility (JBS 2015b). The North American Meat Institute, a national trade association, states that “the health and welfare of animals is a key concern of the meat and poultry industry” (North American Meat Institute 2015). One of the cornerstones of Cargill’s commitment to corporate responsibility is animal welfare:

As co-founder of the North American Food Animal Well-being Commission, Cargill considers the humane and respectful handling of our animals to be a moral obligation. Our livestock handling procedures were designed in consultation with Dr. Temple Grandin to help minimize animal stress, and we strictly adhere to AMI animal handling standards. In fact, we were the first major beef supplier to use 24-hour video monitoring by a third-party auditor to validate compliance. (Cargill 2015).

The language of stewardship is present in Cargill’s commitment as the company sees the “respectful” handling of animals to be a “moral obligation.” The language of stewardship is a language associated with an ideology of domination in environmental philosophy and sociology (Merchant 1980, Paterson 2003). Man is given dominion over the land and animals and charged with acting as a steward of the Earth. Cargill, like many other beef companies, also claims to be committed to reducing the environmental impact of its operations, to be good stewards of the land, even though the treadmill of production continues to run faster in order to meet the global demand for animal protein.

Quality, innovation, and safety are all core values that make up the company culture of the beef industry. Safety refers to both food safety and employee safety. JBS publishes a list of core safety values for employees including that “each employee is responsible for their safety,

and the safety of their co-workers,” and that “working safely is a condition of employment” (JBS 2015a). All of these companies include in their employee training a safety mandate training consisting of procedures such as lock out/tag out², confined space entry, and fall protection in order to prevent accidents on the job. In reality, however, the work culture of the packing and processing facilities is one that is beholden to producing the maximum amount of product in a short period of time. The training for employees often consists of a one day workshop or in some cases simply sitting down and watching a video on the first day of employment, “an hour of mind-numbing do’s and don’ts...and warnings about various injuries ‘common to this type of work’” (Pachirat 2011:104). In reality, these videos provide a sense of insurance for the company so that if an employee is injured, the company can show that there was a safety video shown on the first day of work. Gail Eisnitz (2007) also confirms this lack of training in her interviews with employees of slaughterhouses: “Training? Someone tells the stun operator, ‘You put the stunner on the hog.’ End of training” (2007:83). While employee safety is one of the tenets of corporate culture in the beef industry, the work culture reveals that safety training and occupational training is minimal. The majority of individuals who work in the processing rooms and slaughterhouses in the beef industry are from minority populations, some of them here illegally, and are vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace. Women especially take on devalued jobs in these rooms and work with dangerous machinery over long shifts. The physical toll on employees and the reticence of employees to report injuries and health issues do not show up in the core values and beliefs of the beef industry.

² Lock out/tag out is a process required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to properly shut down and disable machinery or equipment to prevent injury in the release of hazardous energy (Occupational Safety and Health Administration. 2014, "Control of Hazardous Energy (Lockout/Tagout)", Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved January 12, 2015 (<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/controlhazardousenergy/>)).

Gender and Work in the Meatpacking Plant

Background on Gender and Work

Women have always worked, whether in the home, in agriculture and food production, in the service economy, or industrial manufacturing. The changing nature of women's work over time has accompanied several structural changes in U.S. society. Along with structural changes, however, has been the continued presence of gender norms and ideology that supports a system of domesticity, a "gender system comprising most centrally of both the particular organization of market work and family work that arose around 1780, and the gender norms that justify, sustain, and reproduce that organization" (Williams 1999:1). This system separates caregivers from ideal workers and produces patterns of inequality in the workplace that are still apparent today. While variations exist in the patterns of women's inequality in the workplace, especially variations between white women and women of color, it is apparent that the interaction of patriarchy and capitalism has served to devalue women's work and legitimize a gendered occupational system.

Women in the 19th century worked in agriculture and service occupations. This area of the economy is often neglected in historical accounts of gender and work since most attention is paid to the impacts of industrialization and the movement of work from the home to the factory. Women were still responsible for child-care and cooking but they also did much of the agricultural work such as cheese-making and spinning (Lorber 1994, Valenze 1991). The overlap of tasks during this time when the work unit was the household meant that women and men often worked together, side by side. The agriculture and service sector is also often neglected as most of the research on gender and work tends to focus on white women. However, agriculture and

service were the “primary employers of black and Mexican women until the postwar era” (Helmbold and Schofield 1989:501). Overall, there are few treatments of women of color and only a handful of monographs during this time that compare race, gender, and class hierarchies in the labor force. The emphasis on industrialization produces an orientation to white women’s experience as the norm in the study of gender and work. The history of women’s labor is often assumed to be a white history. Black women’s work, however, stems back to the institution of slavery where many women served as field hands and the majority of “jobs” were not segregated by sex. Nevertheless, the focus on white women in labor studies continued to be the norm throughout much of the twentieth century.

Industrialization introduced a “time honored truism” regarding gender and work: women’s work left the home and women followed (Helmbold and Schofield 1989:501). Industrialization introduced a permanent feature to the labor market and economy which was the sex segregation of women workers, a pattern that continues to persist today. At the onset of industrialization, many jobs were still performed in the home; however, a division of labor between the sexes was introduced as well as a hierarchical organization of control as the family did piecework under the authority of the man, the head of the household (Lorber 1994). Once the jobs moved outside of the home to the urban factories, many of the lower skilled, low-wage jobs took on the role of “female,” as gender ideology permeated the social structure. Women were viewed as possessing a tolerance for tedium along with nimble fingers which suited them for tasks such as shoe-making and cigar-rolling and later on clerical work and retail sales. This ideology characterized women as “uniquely suited to boring, menial tasks where qualities of leadership or independence were totally unnecessary” (Reskin and Roos 2009:12). The low wages paid to women were legitimized due to the perceived desire of women for marriage and

family. Therefore, employers believed that women would not be in the workplace for long and their wages were simply supplemental to the male breadwinner's salary once they were married. In fact, women who were mothers, with the exception of Black mothers, were unlikely to work for wages prior to World War II.

Gender ideology also allowed for the feminization and masculinization of certain job types over time; women's role in the family was to serve and that later extended into occupational types. The clerk, secretary, maid, and even prostitute were "natural extensions of women's position in the home" (Helmbold and Schofield 1989:503). In contrast to the rationalization of men's work in industry, many of the "feminized" jobs retained a pre-industrial quality where they featured personal relationships with employers and task-oriented roles. In her discussion of the role of women in dairy work in the 19th century, Deborah Valenze (1991) notes that Max Weber held an opinion of women that was widely supported at the time of his writing; women were the antithesis to the "spirit of capitalism" and stood in the way of progress by holding on to traditional methods of work and opposing rational alternatives. This depiction of women workers as the bearers of unreason has had an impact on the economic structure as well as on women's status in society. Weber argues that one of the universal complaints of employers of women is that they "are almost entirely unable and unwilling to give up methods of work inherited or once learned in favour of more efficient ones" and that they are also unable to "learn and to concentrate their intelligence, or even to use it at all" (Valenze 1991:142). Traditional versus rational, industrial ways of production echo the familiar dualism in society that women are closer to nature, men to culture (Ortner 1972). Women are identified with "something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being at a lower order of existence than itself...and that is nature" (Ortner 1972:10). This stands in contrast to the world of

men or of “culture” which transcends the boundaries of the natural world and bends them to its will. This persistent gender ideology that superseded capitalist production maintained gender inequality in the workplace and served to further divide occupations by sex and contribute to the devaluation of women’s work in the economy post-World War II.

Post-war Trends for Women in the Workplace

Until the 1970s the feminization and masculinization of jobs continued to hold as the trend in the U.S. occupational structure. Reskin and Roos (2009) examine six jobs in particular that became feminized due the introduction of technology and the restructuring of the economy after World War II and the influx of males returning from the war into the labor supply for manufacturing jobs as well as management and supervisory positions. The restructuring of clerical work and an increased demand for clerical labor helped to “feminize” this occupation in the years leading up to World War II as well as the years following the war. Clerical workers used to resemble managers; however, the bureaucratization of work “created specialized jobs, such as filing, shipping, and billing clerks” while at the same time office work was mechanized through the introduction of new technologies which “permitted employers to break down more skilled office work into simpler, more routine tasks” (Reskin and Roos 2009:11-12). This allowed for a new type of clerical position to arise with no hope for promotion or mobility. The wage advantage that most male clerks had held over manufacturing positions also eroded as the occupation became feminized. Declining wages prompted men to seek jobs elsewhere and opened the door for more women to enter these positions, a pattern that replicated itself in the positions of public school teachers, bank tellers, telephone operators, and wait-staff. The masculinization of occupations usually followed a shift in industrial management strategies that

had once employed native born females to instead employing foreign born males, such as the textile industry and cigar industry. Even the practice of medicine, which had once been performed by female healers and midwives, became masculinized with the professionalization of medicine and the creation of doctors and surgeons in the field.

Structural changes in the 1960s and 1970s allowed women to start to integrate into male-dominated occupations. The influence of the women's movement and the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s opened doors for white women and women of color to enter the labor market and take on traditionally male-dominated occupational positions. Modest gains were made in traditionally male blue collar work which required a set of skills one gained through specialized training or apprenticeships. Changes in opportunities followed the growth of service sector jobs as well as the increased demand for part-time labor; although it should be restated that a lot of the inroads women made in work during this time was due to the shortage of male workers. Women entered male-dominated occupations only when these occupations "depleted the supply of suitable men" (Reskin and Roos 2009:302). The concept of gender queues in the job market necessitates that it is only when job growth outpaces the number of qualified workers from the male labor supply that employers "will resort to nontraditional workers" (Reskin & Roos 2009:302). Most service sector jobs experience a change in wages and rewards that rendered these jobs unattractive for men who sought better pay and better benefits in other work areas. The male flight from growing service sector jobs allowed for women to make inroads into traditionally male occupations. The queueing perspective that Reskin and Roos (2009) develop views labor markets as made up of "labor queues" which are employers' rankings of possible workers, and "job queues" which are workers' ranking of jobs. The lowest ranked workers end up with jobs that others have rejected. This allows scholars to understand the differences in the

occupations that white women have been able to integrate versus women of color, especially African-American women who still tended to work primarily in lower tier, personal service occupations and factory occupations in the 1970s and 1980s.

While white women made inroads in the job market during the 1970s and 1980s, the intersection of sex, race, and ethnicity still remained a strong factor in the occupations that women held and the industries in which they worked. Race segregation in the workplace began to decline during World War II “because the labor shortage brought on by World War II forced factories to hire blacks” (Reskin and Padavic 1999:344). The 1970s brought with it the shrinking of sex segregation in the workplace although the hierarchical segregation still remains today with fewer and fewer women, especially women of color, occupying upper management positions and professional occupations. Reskin and Padavic (1999) argue that workers’ sex and race are linked to the types of jobs they do because of a number of factors. These factors include employers’ and workers’ characteristics, their preferences and their actions. Building from Kanter’s (1977) observation of homosocial reproduction in corporations, Reskin and Padavic (1999) argue that a major reason women and minorities are concentrated in different jobs is because employers “prefer persons of different sexes and races for different jobs” (Reskin and Padavic 1999:353). This preference then leads to not only men and women segregated into jobs, but also different industries and different pay scales that vary depending on race/ethnicity as well as sex. White men continue to out-earn men of color and women from all racial and ethnic groups. In 1995, Hispanic women employed full time earned “just 53% of what white men earned, Hispanic men earned 61%, black women earned 63%, white women earned 72%, and black men earned 74%” (Reskin and Padavic 1999:357). Explanations for these disparities often emphasize group differences in the opportunities in education, experience, and jobs that are available. However,

given society's devaluation of women and minorities, it is not surprising that female and minority-dominated jobs are also devalued.

Women and Work in the Meatpacking Plant

The work of slaughterhouse employees has been documented from the time of Upton Sinclair's (1988) groundbreaking novel, *The Jungle*. Sinclair vividly depicts the stockyard community outside of Union Stockyards in Chicago, IL and captures the poverty, environmental pollution, and delinquency of this community. While certain aspects of the job in meatpacking plants have changed with developments in food safety regulations, technology, and worker safety protocols, line work in meatpacking plants and meat processing rooms continues to take a physical and psychological toll (Pachirat 2011, Stull and Broadway 2004). In the 1970s and 1980s, the geography of production changed and many of the packing and processing plants relocated to rural communities in right-to-work states which allowed for employees to work without joining a labor union. Working with boxed beef instead of carcasses has made distribution efficient, cheaper, and has reduced the skills required by labor (Fitzgerald 2010). The literature on gender and work shows that women move in to masculine-type jobs when technology changes and the skills required for the job are lowered (Helmbold and Schofield 1989, Reskin and Roos 2009). Women are usually recruited for these low-skill jobs in the meatpacking and processing plants and many of these women are from immigrant populations, as has been the case over the course of history for slaughterhouse work. Women are usually employed in the devalued positions within the slaughterhouses and processing rooms and face a rigid sexual division of labor in processing animals for food.

In the early 20th century, women's opportunities in the meat-packing plants were not only influenced by gender but also by race and ethnicity. Horowitz (1997) documents the unpleasant jobs that women held in these plants, literally working in departments "where men will not work" (1997:187). Women in the meatpacking machine performed subordinate roles in the production process and filled jobs located along the side roads of the flow of meat through the plant. The production of specific types of meat in different parts of the plant became gendered and, consequently, gender became encoded in the actual physical structures of the plant (Fitzgerald 2010, Horowitz 1997). In one pork plant, men in the cutting positions would push scraps down chutes that directed the material to women's tables in the trimming room (Horowitz 1997). Women did not manufacture any type of product; "they separated, cleaned, and dispatched materials for use elsewhere...while the main flow of meat...went through male-dominated departments"(Horowitz 1997:198).

The research of Warren (2007) and Fink (1995, 1998) shows that the knife represented the traditional dividing line between men and women in the packing plants. The knowledge and skills of a butcher marked a worker as one who was skilled. Men dominated the butchering of livestock and therefore controlled the flow of fresh meat and the pace of production throughout the plant. Men who were butchers obtained a usable skill which gave them the opportunity to climb the occupational ladder in a packing plant. In contrast to this position, women's jobs carried less pay and a lower social status as many women were ashamed of working in the packing plants and the physical toll of the jobs made it difficult to conceal their place of employment (Horowitz 1997). Women were often paid by the piece instead of an hourly wage which further reduced their wages in comparison to men working in the facilities. Women also often worked in ancillary departments like canning, sausage-making, sliced bacon departments,

and casings and offal departments which registered as a different category of work. Horowitz (1997) and Warren (2007) document that women started taking the places of men in the sausage departments and the pork trimming departments in the early 1900s. Pork trimming required knife work and heavy lifting, “women had to move forty to fifty-pound buckets filled with meat trimmings,” but men working in the meatpacking plants did not consider this to be “skilled” work (Warren 2007:100). Even when women and men both worked in a trimming department, there was an “equal-unequal pay clause” which stipulated that a woman who took a male job “must be paid the male wage, while a man who took a ‘female’ job would be paid on the basis of the male basic hourly rate” (Fink 1995:257).

During the early 1900s, women also had to endure the social perception of what it meant to work in a meatpacking plant. Knife work was thought to be unpleasant; only women of a certain type would take these jobs. That certain type of woman was often a newly arrived immigrant; “only ‘European peasant type’ women, typically of Slavic descent, took these jobs” (Warren 2007:100). As Fink (1995) points out in her study of Iowa women who worked in meatpacking, the work was hard and dirty and moving into that type of work would create rumors and questions of the fundamental decency of these women. It was not uncommon for a woman’s reputation to be soured when she took work in a meatpacking plant. Men controlled the reputation of women in their departments which allowed them to retain power over their employees.

Women’s jobs in the packing plants were further divided by race and ethnicity. It was common for white women to dominate the jobs that entailed the most training and skill as well as the jobs that were most visible to the public; black women predominately worked in the least desirable jobs located in the offal and casings departments. The sliced-bacon department in

processing facilities became the picture of “clean work” in the facility. White, native-born women worked in these departments that were often visible to the public through tours. Women “could be found arranging, weighing, and wrapping bacon (but not using the slicing machine – that was men’s work)”(Warren 2007:102). Black women were not allowed to work in these “clean” jobs; employers often harbored the belief that black men and women could handle jobs where “the heat is intense and the smell uncongenial for workers of more sensitive disposition” (Horowitz 1997:197). Many of these positions entailed working with the leftovers of the valuable products made by men which is also why many men did not protest when these jobs were open to women. These were the jobs men did not want. As the packing plants moved outside of the urban centers, many companies were able to invest in technology that simplified the tasks needed to work on the lines, which prompted an influx of jobs that were open to women as long as they were in newly created departments and not in conflict with the male-dominated occupations. Meat cutting as a male-type job persists in the meat industry even today (Pachirat 2011, Stull and Broadway 2004). While women operate more machines than they did in the early-to-mid 1900s, women work with the less-complicated machines in the plants today. Many of these positions lead to physical maladies and require long hours of work with very few breaks. In Stull and Broadway’s (2004) work on slaughterhouses in Garden City, Kansas, the authors profile two women who work in a packing plant and who suffer from pains of repetitive motion work over the course of a 12 hour day. “Peggy” and “Betty” describe the workday as starting promptly at 7:00am with a break from 9:30-10:00am then another for lunch from 12:30pm-1:00pm. By the time they disrobe and clean up after working on the line there is usually about 15 minutes left to eat their lunch (Stull and Broadway 2004). After lunch, the line runs without a scheduled break

until it is time to quit which can vary depending on how many animals are left to process. Peggy offers a glimpse of line work at a plant:

There is no bathroom breaks. You do not leave that line. They will relieve you to go to the bathroom, but you get in trouble for it. They say you don't, but you do. The day I was sick and needed to leave the line, like in a hurry, I waited 10 or 15 minutes before I was allowed to leave the line, before somebody come to do my job so I could leave, because you do [your job] or USDA shuts the line down (Stull and Broadway 2004:77).

Since most of the largest plants process 400 cattle per hour³, the threat of shutting down the line means lost profits and the possibility of job loss for the employee.

Many meatpacking and processing facilities now employ Latina women who face some of the same challenges of working in devalued positions that Black women faced in the World War II era. These women are often recruited through friendship and kinship networks to move to these rural locations where the large meatpacking and processing facilities are now located and work in physically demanding occupations (Griffith 1995). Baker (2004) examined the impacts on Latina women who move into meatpacking communities and the struggles they face not only on the job but also in their home life. She describes a type of gender paradox that arises from trying to maintain a traditional female role while at the same time exhibiting behavior that conflicts with that role. Through interviews with Mexicana women in Iowa, Baker (2004) illustrates the experiences of these women living in a rural community. She found that the desire to improve the lives of their children and dedication to their extended families were both topics

³ Pork plants can process 1,000 hogs per hour and poultry plants process close to 200 birds per minute (Stull and Broadway 2004).

at the forefront of what it meant to for these women to be a wife and a mother. In conflict with this conventional type of gender construction, however, was the behavior of these women. Many had left their homeland either with their husband or sometimes just with their children. Many of Baker's (2004) participants had also taken on work in traditionally masculine occupational roles, jobs in meatpacking and processing. There is also an aspect of danger and adversity as many are in the U.S. illegally. They face discrimination both in the public realm and in their jobs. The undocumented status of many Latina women working in these communities makes them even more vulnerable to harsh working conditions.

While several ethnographic studies have illustrated the impact of these plants on the surrounding community as well as the impact of this type of work on the employees (Broadway and Stull 2006, Broadway, Griffith and Stull 1995, Pachirat 2011, Striffler 2005, Stull and Broadway 2004), the impact of gender, race, and ethnicity on the organizational and personal life of the women who work as meat cutters and meat packers has not been adequately explored. The packing plant presents an occupational setting that has historically been characterized by a rigid sexual division of labor. It is important to understand the roles that women play in these organizational settings as well as how women have entered into male-type positions within the plant. Dorothy Smith (1974, 1987) argues that women experience a "bifurcated consciousness" as they work in the abstract, subjective world of men and must face their role of mother and wife in the concrete world of the home. To further this division, women who work in meatpacking and processing today are often first generation immigrants to the U.S. who must also negotiate cultural differences along with a gendered division of labor.

Brown Collar Workers: Race and Ethnicity in the Beef Industry

Brown Collar Employment

The growth of meatpacking and processing facilities in rural areas of the Midwest and South has prompted a demographic shift from a majority white, native-born population to a majority Hispanic population in many counties. In meatpacking plants, “now they speak Spanish, Vietnamese, Marshallese, or K’iche Mayan instead of German, Polish, Czech, or Lithuanian” (Stull and Broadway 2004:67). While some might argue that the recent waves of immigrants moving into these areas have taken jobs from native-born White residents, there is an established body of literature that supports the structural dynamics of a segregated workplace due to employer preferences. Saucedo (2006) refers to this setting as it pertains to race/ethnicity status as the brown collar workplace. She argues that this type of workplace is one where newly arrived Latino immigrants are overrepresented in certain jobs. While immigration status is a key component, it is important to note that employers group together earlier arrived and native born Latinos with recently arrived Latino immigrants into this type of subservient worker category (Catanzarite 2000, Saucedo 2006). Brown collar workers experience “wage penalties, occupational segregation, and pay degradation because of their status in the workplace” (Saucedo 2006:964-65). Through targeting, structuring, and network hiring, employers are able to perpetuate the myth of the unwanted job and recruit more workers at the end of the job queue for employment in undesirable jobs like meatpacking.

The employer often sets the stage for recruiting the brown collar worker through pay rates, working conditions, and the allowance of more than one language to be spoken in the workplace. For many immigrants working in the service economy or the manufacturing industry,

their newly arrived status makes them vulnerable to harsher working conditions than native-born minority workers. If they are in the U.S. illegally, the fear of job loss and deportation is at the forefront of their worries. Lack of knowledge about workplace rights, language barriers, political disenfranchisement, and a fear of “rocking the boat” at work and losing their job are all conditions bound up in the identity of many brown collar workers (Saucedo 2006:968). Network hiring allows for a continuation of the segregated workplace. Recruiting workers through friendship and kinship networks reinforces segregation patterns and leads to further disempowerment (Fink 1998, Saucedo 2006). Immigrant Latino workers often help to channel new immigrant workers into the field. This type of network hiring is supported by the employers and leads to a type of labeling for certain kinds of jobs. Jobs descriptions are created based on the type of employee the employer seeks to hire. Bias and stereotypes about Latino immigrant workers pervades employment decisions and are built into the policy and practice of the organization (Saucedo 2006). Certain jobs in the meatpacking plants become “Latino immigrant jobs” much like the segregation of men’s and women’s jobs that had occurred earlier in these facilities (Catanzarite 2000). Warren (2007) argues that the most important reason for reliance on Latino, specifically Mexican, workers in the new meatpacking communities was low-cost labor. Even in the most isolated Midwestern community, work in the meatpacking industry was unwanted work. One Iowa union official made it clear in his remark that “No American white man wanted those [packing plant] jobs” (Warren 2007:67). Research by Catanzarite (2000) shows that Latino immigrant workers experience an inequality relative to White workers that is not shared across native minority groups. The Latino immigrant worker experiences inequality from a number of different intersecting lines; Latina women become the most vulnerable to the brown collar workplace setting.

Community Impacts

The movement of meatpacking facilities from urban to rural locations in the direct buying era has resulted in a changing composition of workplace employees. Gone are the Eastern European immigrants who dominated employment in these facilities in the early-to-mid 1900s. The pattern since the 1990s has been “the replacement of older groups of whites and blacks in the industry by Southeast Asians and, most dramatically, by Mexicans and other Latinos”(Warren 2007:66-67). This demographic transition in rural packing communities from predominantly White to predominantly Latino has created a type of identity crisis in these communities. Many of the current tensions in these communities have to do with housing markets, crime, and education. In the 1990s in Garden City, Kansas, minorities became the majority in the public school system, “up from 39 percent in 1990 to 63 percent in 1999” (Stull and Broadway 2004:105). Hispanics comprised 57 percent of the students in Garden City public schools in 2000, up from 31 percent in 1990; some schools have over 90 percent Hispanic students (Stull and Broadway 2004). In their study of Garden City, Kansas, Stull and Broadway (2004) also note that crime reports rose in the 1990s before falling near the end of the decade, although they hypothesize that language and cultural barriers might have prevented some reports of criminal activity. The larger problem has been maintaining an adequately sized police force to deal with a growing population, an area where many rural communities cannot afford to invest. The Garden City Police Department is relatively small (63 sworn officers) and has to rely on a pool of translators for Spanish and Vietnamese; finding bilingual officers has become a major issue (Stull and Broadway 2004). Many of these communities had never interacted with different cultural groups and many residents of these communities had never had direct experience with immigrants or non-whites for that matter (Warren 2007). The influx of immigrants into these

rural communities where meatpacking plants have located has prompted changes in attitudes and new dialogue between residents in some locations; however, Latino immigrants still face a number of challenges fitting in to such a different culture and community in the move from their home country to rural communities in the U.S.

A major theme of rural life for Latino immigrants is spatial segregation within the community. There is often minimal contact between white and non-white residents. Latino immigrants not only live separate lives from their white counterparts but they also live separate lives from the established Latino community. Lichter (2012) argues that just because we are communities experience growing ethnic diversity does not necessarily mean that we are now living in a society void of race issues, especially if “routine interactions between majority and minority populations are hostile, or maybe worse, limited or nonexistent” (2012:25). In a study of Garden City, Kansas, Campa (1990) found that not only are newly arrived Mexican immigrants “isolated from mainstream Anglo-American life, but they are separate from the native Mexican-American community as well” (1990:351). Campa (1990) found that there was minimal interaction between the native and immigrant Latino populations, a finding that shows the differences that these two groups place on each other while at the same time sharing the brown collar worker identity.

Dalla, Ellis, & Cramer (2005) examine three meatpacking communities in Nebraska and interview forty three immigrants, primarily from Mexico, in order to ascertain perceptions of immigration as well as residence in rural packing communities. The focal area of perceptions of residence is especially illustrative of perceived racial or ethnic discrimination. Residents claim that they were “rejected as renters because they were Latino; others reported being ignored in

stores or treated poorly by retailers” (Dalla, Ellis and Cramer 2005:177). Subsequent research also supports the housing discrimination that serves to reinforce spatial segregation in these communities. Many immigrant residents described problems they encountered in trying to secure a home in a nicer neighborhood; in one instance a respondent states “they didn’t want any Mexicans in that neighborhood” (Dalla and Christensen 2005:33). Raffaelli and Wiley (2013) interviewed 112 Latina mothers in a rural Central Illinois community to better understand relationships between majority and minority group residents as well as the relationships between long-term Latino residents and recent Mexican immigrants. They argue that immigrant family well-being is contingent upon both risk and resiliency factors. They find that the challenges many Latino parents face include language barriers, low access to services like childcare and discrimination at work and in public spaces. The establishment of social networks within these communities appears to be a function of the number of family members one has in the community and not the ethnic social networks seen in many gateway communities.

Summary

The beef industry has evolved over time from a seasonal, small scale production system to an industrial machine that can slaughter 350-400 cattle per hour. Throughout this shift from small to large scale production, there have been structural changes and advancements in technology that have pushed out the skilled jobs that paid well and have allowed for a lower-skilled workforce to attain entry level jobs. This lower-skilled workforce is often comprised of women and, more recently, newly-arrived Latino immigrants.

Women who work in this male-dominated industry often take on devalued work and are not able to climb the ladder to an improved occupational position. Minority women occupy an

even lower rank in the job queue as employer preferences for subservient workers create a job environment where native, White men and women will not work. At the same time, bound up in the corporate culture is a language of attention to animal welfare and human rights. Animal welfare is viewed as an important tenet of the corporate culture since the animal represents the input into the machine that produces a profitable output, meat for human consumption. However, the feedlot environment is one that is not conducive to animal welfare. The beef industry is a tough, masculine-oriented industry where an elite group dominates the production of meat in the U.S. Many studies have examined the political economy of the beef industry, the working conditions, and the environmental impacts of beef production. However, these studies have not examined what the “work culture” is like in the beef industry. How do women experience work in this industry? Is there a difference in experience between women who work in the office jobs and women who work in the processing rooms? Do men and women experience this type of work in different ways? This study seeks to examine the lived experience of men and women in the beef industry and to illustrate how these individuals negotiate the physical and psychological demands of this work with their life outside of the packing rooms.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORY & METHODS

Grounded theory was used throughout the study to collect, analyze, and frame the data. In keeping with this inductive approach, this study does not emerge from any one particular theoretical framework. However, a constructivist grounded theory approach to analysis builds upon a symbolic interaction perspective that allows the researcher to provide a rendering of participants' realities. Constructivist grounded theory was employed in the collection, coding, and analysis of my data. However, my research did not begin as a blank slate without the influence of other social theories. My research was influenced by symbolic interaction and feminist standpoint theory in order to examine the lived experience of women in the beef industry.

Symbolic Interaction

My research uses Charmaz's (2006) version of a constructivist grounded theory approach. Charmaz builds upon a symbolic interaction perspective and pulls grounded theory research away from the objectivist path that Glaser and Strauss (1967) had forged. A constructivist grounded theory places an emphasis on understanding meaning and process as opposed to static concepts and facts. Grounded theories are constructs that we assemble through our interactions with different people and perspectives. Mead, one of the founding fathers of social psychology and symbolic interaction, argues that we should view society as a series of social processes. Human behavior must be analyzed within the social context in which the behavior is derived. Mead's (1934) work in *Mind, Self, and Society* focuses on language, symbols, and gestures in the construction of the self in society. He argues that humans live in a symbolic world of learned meanings and it is these meanings and symbols that allow individuals

to carry out interaction in society. Language is very important in adopting shared meanings and allowing us individuals to coordinate with each other in a social setting. To ignore language and meanings in society is to neglect the basic building blocks of behavior in society.

Blumer (1969) built upon Mead's work and developed the symbolic interaction theoretical perspective to study how meanings are formed and maintained in society. Blumer (1969) produces three premises on which symbolic interactionism rests:

The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them...the second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows...the third premise is that these meanings are handled in an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (Blumer 1969:3).

Understanding meaning is a key part of the socialization process; meaning arises through the interaction between people thereby making it a social product. The language and values that make up the organizational culture of the beef industry can be viewed as a social product that this occupational "world" produces. Blumer (1969) argues that in order to understand the action of people "it is necessary to identify their world of objects" which can be social, physical, or abstract (Blumer 1969:11). In the beef industry, animals are viewed as products. This is a language that is used throughout each occupational level in the industry. The language of the beef industry, the values and norms of this industry are all created from within these organizations. Individuals tend to disassociate the animal from the production of consumption (beef) in order to change the meaning of the object. No longer is it an animal that you consume,

it is a steak. Even the names of the animal products we consume are far removed from the actual animal name, thus rendering the back loin that wraps around the rib of an Angus steer into a porterhouse steak or filet mignon. The language of the beef industry is also a gendered language as it is constructed in a male-dominated industry. For example, the cowboy and cowgirl steaks are both ribeye steaks; the cowboy is generally a larger cut with the bone-in and the cowgirl is a smaller cut, usually around 10oz. as compared to 18oz. This labeling is just one example of how objects take on male and female identities in the industry.

Feminist Standpoint Theory

Just as important as the examination of language and meaning in this research is the exploration of the role that women play in a male-dominated industry and the ways in which they negotiate their female identity in a very masculine culture. In order to analyze these interactions and relationships, my research is also informed by standpoint theory, developed in the 1970s through the writings of Dorothy Smith and Nancy Hartsock. Feminist standpoint theory emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a feminist critical theory concerned with the relationship between the production of knowledge and the practices of power. Major contributors to the theory based their logic in the foundational thinkers of sociology but used these classic paradigms to push for an alternative epistemology, a unique “standpoint for women” (Smith 1974). Dorothy Smith first advanced the idea of a “women’s perspective” in her 1974 article, *Women’s Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology*. Smith tackled the framework of sociological thought and argued that the methods and theories of sociological thought have been “based on and built up within, the male social universe” (Smith 1974:7). Nancy Hartsock’s work (1983) showed that just as Marx used the proletarian standpoint to understand the world and go beneath bourgeois ideology,

“a feminist standpoint can allow us to understand patriarchal institutions and ideologies as perverse inversions of more humane social relations.” Marx’s writings greatly influenced the early standpoint theorists; Hartsock’s work draws heavily from Marx’s writings while Smith uses the work of Marx as well as Schutz’s (1967) phenomenology framework to inform her writing. Methodologies inspired by phenomenology seek to understand social phenomena from the everyday world of lived experience; Smith (1974, 1987) inserts gender into this methodology as she seeks to set apart a specifically female perspective to the social world. The work of Patricia Hill Collins (1986, 1989) adds race to the concept of a feminist standpoint and draws from theory on the sociology of knowledge using Mannheim (1968), Berger and Luckmann (1966), Schutz (1967), as well as several black feminist writers to inform her development of a specifically black feminist standpoint. However, Collins does more than just simply add a variable to the analysis; her work emphasizes the interlocking nature of a wide variety of statuses that make up an individual’s standpoint.

Smith introduces the concept of the bifurcated consciousness by arguing that women are participants but not creators; “the discourse expresses, describes, and provides the working concepts and vocabulary for a landscape in which women are strangers” (Smith 1987:52). Smith argues that there are two worlds and two bases of knowledge that stand in unequal opposition. The world of men stands in authority to the world of women and the world of women is one in which women are alienated from their experience by the concepts and terms that protrude from the world of men. The domestic world is subordinated by the world in which the rules are made that govern us. When Smith writes about how the female perspective is a radical critique of sociology, she is specifically referring to the problems of the academic world and the problems of what she terms the “academic-conceptual imperialism” of the sociology profession (Smith

1974:9). This is where she introduces the concept of bifurcated consciousness, which she would later elaborate on in *The Everyday World as Problematic* (1987). Working within the sociological perspective, the sociologist works within the boundaries of the discipline. These boundaries of inquiry in academia are “set within the framework of what is already established” (Smith 1974:9). The sociology profession is predicated on a male universe and is a profession appropriated by men as their territory. Stepping out of the natural world (the domestic world) and in to the world that governs us creates a bifurcated consciousness for anyone who participates in this process. Because women are participants but not creators of this world, women sociologists stand in contradiction regarding the relation of the discipline to their experience in the world. Because the natural, domestic world is appropriated to women, the place of women in relation to the conceptual mode of action is “that where work is done to create conditions which facilitate his occupation of the conceptual mode of consciousness” (Smith, 1974:10). While Smith specifically focuses on the academic world, this type of bifurcated consciousness can be applied to the beef industry as women must work within the male-constructed boundaries of the organization. For Latina women who work in the lowest paid jobs, the bifurcated consciousness further divides as intersecting lines of oppression contribute to their lived experience.

Doing Gender at Work

Women who work in executive level jobs in the beef industry often encounter hardship in managing gender displays and trying to actually minimize actions that could be construed as “gender appropriate.” Building from West and Zimmerman’s (1987) work on “doing gender,” several scholars have embarked on examining the social interactions and gender frames at play in

building networks and assessing the role of women in positions of power. Patricia Yancey Martin (2001, 2003) uses stories gained from interviews and participant observations to show how men and women socially construct each other at work by means of a two-sided dynamic. This dynamic encompasses gender practices and the practicing of gender. Martin states that to view gender as practice means to view it as a “system of action that is institutionalized and widely recognized but also is dynamic, emergent, local, variable, and shifting” (Martin 2003:351).

Gender practice refers to activities that are available for people to use in different encounters and situations, acting “like a man” or “like a woman” for example. Practicing gender is the literal event, the “doing, displaying, asserting, narrating, performing, mobilizing, maneuvering” (Martin 2003:354). Martin contends that sociologists must find ways to understand these micro-interactional practicing dynamics instead of only describing actions that have already taken place. As Francine Deutsch (2007) later argues, gender operates at multiple levels and in order to understand change, “we need to theorize and research the relations between the structural and interactional levels” (Deutsch 2007:117). Martin’s work takes up the interactional levels to question why and how people practice gender at work. Through the stories she collects from interviews with men and women in multinational corporations, Martin is able to show how these gendering practices work to impair women workers’ identities and confidence in the workplace. One key analytical choice that Martin makes in her research is to define agency independently of intention which “leaves us free to assume that individuals and groups practice masculinities and femininities at work without consciously intending to, although they may consciously intend to do [so]” (Martin 2003:355-56). This separation of agency and intentionality makes way for a discussion of reflexivity and the choices people make to think

how their actions or sayings may affect individuals of different genders in the workplace (Martin 2006).

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Although my study was informed by symbolic interaction and feminist theoretical frameworks, a grounded theory approach was employed for analysis. Grounded theory is a methodology for theory development that is grounded in the analysis of data. This type of theoretical framework emphasizes the discovery of theory from the data collected, often in exploratory qualitative research. Glaser and Strauss (1967) initially developed grounded theory methodology in their research on dying in hospitals. This methodology served as a reaction to the positivist conception of knowledge that had come to dominate social science research in the 1950s and 1960s. Quantitative methods of research began to replace qualitative approaches as the dominant method of research in sociology. Positivist approaches using quantitative methods emphasize causal explanations, logically formed hypotheses, and the reduction of experience into quantifiable variables. Positivist methods “assumed an unbiased and passive observer who collected facts but did not participate in creating them” (Charmaz 2006:5). The epistemological critique that Glaser and Strauss (Glaser and Strauss 1967) put forth argued that systematic qualitative analysis could be used to generate theory instead of just producing descriptive case studies. Grounded theory methods provide systematic guidelines through an inductive process to build “middle-range theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data” (Charmaz 2000:509).

The defining components of grounded theory center on the simultaneous collection and analysis of data (Charmaz 2006, Glaser and Strauss 1967). Analytic codes and categories are constructed from the data as part of this constant comparison, not from preconceived hypotheses. Theory development is advanced at each step of the data collection and analysis process through the process of coding and memo-writing. Theoretical sampling is used to develop emerging analytic categories for theory construction. Glaser (1978) describes the process of theoretical sampling as a way in which the researcher can make shifts in the research plan and emphasis early in the process to reflect what happens in the field. The researcher engages in a constant comparative analysis of the codes generated from the data and then uses those codes to further direct data collection. Glaser (1978) refers to this process as the researcher following his or her emerging theoretical sensitivity. Grounded theory does not separate theory from the actual research process; theory is constructed during the process of data collection and analysis. Theoretical sampling on a code ceases “when it is saturated, elaborated, and integrated into the emerging theory” (Glaser 1978:36). Theoretical sampling allows the researcher to find holes or gaps in the data. Once those are identified, the researcher goes back in to the field with a more structured focus on collecting data in order to fill in those gaps in the data and further develop the emerging categories of analysis.

While grounded theory offers a systematic data collection and analysis method for qualitative researchers to use for theory development, the systematic approach and objectivist framework of grounded theory have elicited many critiques based on Glaser and Strauss’s (1967, 1978) adherence to a positivist epistemology. Grounded theory was created as an epistemological critique of positivist approaches to research, yet many components of this

method stay true to a positivist epistemology. Although Glaser and Strauss have moved in different directions in regards to using grounded theory methods, they both assume an external reality that researchers can discover; they imply that “that reality is independent of the observer and the methods used to produce it”(Charmaz 2000:513). Charmaz (2006) departs from Glaser and Strauss (1967) in her argument that neither data nor theory is discovered; rather “we are part of the world we study and the data we collect” (10). Charmaz (2006) builds upon a symbolic interaction theoretical perspective and argues that our grounded theories are constructed through our interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices. Charmaz’s constructivist grounded theory makes the following assumptions: “(a) Multiple realities exist, (b) data reflect the researcher’s and the research participants’ mutual constructions, and (c) the researcher, however incompletely, enters and is affected by participants’ worlds” (Charmaz 2001:678). A constructivist grounded theory method distinguishes between the real and the true. While positivist approaches seek one truth that is knowable and able to be discovered through quantitative research methods, a constructivist grounded theory approach seeks instead to “addresses human realities” (Charmaz 2000:523). What is real is based on our perspective. Using a constructivist grounded theory allows us to find out what research participants define as “real” and produce a rendering of an individual reality. In contrast, an objectivist grounded theory views the data collected as real, objective facts about a knowable world (Charmaz 2001, Strauss and Corbin 1994).

Constructivist grounded theory seeks to understand meaning, both the researcher’s meaning and the respondents’ meanings. In order to understand this, we must go beyond the surface and “look for views and values as well as for acts and facts” (Charmaz 2000:525). A

constructivist grounded theory allows us to study people in their natural settings and moves qualitative research in a direction away from positivist approaches. When using in-depth interviews as a method of data collection, we must listen to respondents' stories with a type of openness that does not mask the experience of our respondents. Charmaz (2000, 2006) argues for the use of active codes and categories in grounded theory analysis in order to preserve the respondents' experience and keep that in the foreground of our research.

While Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original framework for a grounded theory approach represents a standard inductive approach to research, it is difficult to proceed in a study of the experience of women in the beef industry without providing an accurate rendering of each participant's reality. It would also be dismissive to state that the experience captured in these interviews represents an objective reality not based on each participant's perspective of their work. Therefore, I use Charmaz's (2000, 2006) constructivist extension of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original methodology as the guiding framework for this research.

Sampling and Recruitment

A total of 15 participants were recruited for this study. All participants worked in the beef industry, approximately half of the participants worked in beef processing rooms that ranged in size from 10 employees to approximately 100 employees. The rest of my sample worked in executive-level management positions in the industry. This sample size allowed me to gather rich data from a variety of individuals in the beef industry and allowed me to explore how women attempt to fit in to their roles at all levels of the organizational hierarchy in a male-dominated industry. While my main focus was on women in the meat industry, I also chose to interview men in both management and processing room positions in order to establish a comparative case

and to see how women's experience of work in this industry differs from men's experience of work. Participants were recruited through snowball and purposive sampling techniques.

Snowball sampling, a technique that is respondent-driven, is a useful way to find participants that belong to difficult-to-reach populations (Berg and Lune 2011). The basic strategy involves first identifying several people with the relevant characteristics for the study and interviewing them.

These participants are then asked for the names of other people who possess the same characteristics that they do. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which the researcher uses a special knowledge or expertise about a group in order to select individuals that represent this population (Berg and Lune 2011). A purposive sampling technique ensures that individuals displaying a certain set of attributes are included in the study. Both of these

sampling techniques involve actively seeking out a select group of participants instead of choosing a random sample of participants to take part in the research study. A limitation to this type of sampling technique that is important to keep in mind is a potential lack of heterogeneity in the sample. For example, one of my participants, Christina, was able to connect me to three additional people to interview. Had I relied on her for more participants, however, I would have run the risk of only interviewing women who were similar to her in demographics: White,

middle-aged, and working in executive-level positions. While this would have been an interesting path to take considering the noticeable lack of women in executive positions in the meat industry, my purpose was to capture women's experiences of work in both white-collar jobs in the front office and blue-collar (or brown-collar) jobs in the processing and packing rooms (Saucedo 2006). Therefore, I needed to make sure that I started several branches of

snowballing to minimize this potential effect and make sure I captured men and women at all levels of the industry. Another limitation to this type of sampling technique is the possibility that

the branches of sampling will cease to grow. At a certain point, my branches of snowball sampling started to slow in their growth toward more participants. My sample, which is described in the next section, leans a little more toward the women in management positions instead of the women who work in processing rooms. I initially started sampling women in the processing rooms of beef companies since their experience was my main interest. I also wanted to compare their experience with women in higher-level positions within the company. For this reason I also started a branch of snowball sampling with women in management positions. About midway through my data collection in the fall of 2014, my branches of sampling with women in the processing rooms started to slowly dissipate. The women who I would come into contact with either no longer wanted to talk to me or simply did not fully answer the questions I would ask. I could tell at one point that some of these women might be afraid to talk to a researcher, even though I could ensure confidentiality of records. For this reason, near the end of my data collection, I began to record more interviews with women in management positions. The difficulty in reaching more women in the area where I was conducting research became an impediment to continuing on with those interviews. At the same time, the last two interviews I conducted with women who worked in the processing rooms re-confirmed the themes I had started to develop and yielded no new information about the work experience.

One critique against non-probability sampling techniques like purposive sampling and snowball sampling is the lack of generalizability in the research. Snowball samples make it difficult to generalize results to the broader population under study due to the lack of randomization to the sample selection of the study population. However, a constructivist grounded theory study seeks to understand the unique meanings and experiences of each

participant in the study. It is possible that if I had attempted to elicit a random sample of individuals who work in meat processing rooms, the majority of my sample would have been male and Latino. I would have missed the unique experience of women working in these facilities which is a major goal of this study. I also would not have been able to seek out different paths to my research and examine the similarities and differences in the experience of women working at different organizational levels in this industry. I would not have been able to purposively seek out diversity in the population on the basis of race, age, nationality, and occupational status to examine the intersectional hardships that men and women face on the job. The goal is not to generalize to a broader population; the goal of this study is to dig deeper into the experiences of men and women working in the beef industry and understand how they perceive their work and how they manage identity construction in the workplace.

I also engaged in theoretical sampling in order to pursue interesting developments and variation that came up during the data collection process. For example, the initial women I interviewed all had children and were single parents. While there were similarities in their experience of negotiating their identity at work and their identity as a mother at home, I wanted to see if there were any differences in how men who were fathers dealt with missing time with their children and women who were mothers. Therefore, I actively sought to recruit men who were fathers into the sample in order to further engage this potential variation and draw out any differences in how men and women experienced this sense of loss of time with their children. Theoretical sampling allowed me to pursue different avenues of exploration during the data collection process in order to capture a variety of narratives in how men and women experience their work in a male-dominated industry.

Sample

The respondents for this study are fairly diverse. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of my respondents. There is a good degree of age diversity as participants' age ranged from 19 to 66. The mean age is 45 years of age and the median is 44. The sample is comprised of 9 women and 6 men. For race/ethnicity, I did not present different categories for each participant to choose from. I left the question open-ended and allowed each participant to define his or her own racial and ethnic category. I felt that country of origin was also an important demographic characteristic to record since so there are sub-divisions of groups in the processing rooms based on nationality as well as gender. Of the 15 participants, 7 identified as Latino or Hispanic, 7 identified as White, and 1 identified as Asian. The majority of participants were born in the U.S., 4 were from Colombia, 1 was from El Salvador, 1 from Puerto Rico, and 1 was born in Japan but was a U.S. citizen. Noticeably missing from the sample are individuals who identify as Black or African-American. I tried to get participants in this group but I was not successful in finding African-American participants in managerial or processing/packing room occupations. That is not to say that there are not Black or African-American individuals working in these occupations, I was simply unable to contact them for recruitment with my sampling techniques. As far as education, the majority of participants had a High School Diploma or equivalent, 5 had bachelor's degrees, and 2 had some high school but had never received a diploma. While initially this looks like a very under-educated sample, it is not uncommon in the food industry to find a majority of employees who have only a High School Diploma or a bachelor's degree. This industry is still one in which you work your way up the ladder through experience and your occupational status does not necessarily depend on educational attainment.

Table 1: Respondent Characteristics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Country of Origin	Education	Occupation	Marital Status
Shirley	27	Female	Latina	Colombia	HS equivalent	Meat cutter	Divorced
Mary	44	Female	Latina	El Salvador	Some HS	Grinder	Divorced
Alice	55	Female	White	U.S.	Some college	Processing room manager	Divorced
Junior	60	Male	White	U.S.	B.A.	Sales Manager	Divorced, remarried
David	38	Male	Hispanic	Puerto Rico	HS diploma	Processing room manager	Divorced, remarried
Matt	57	Male	White	U.S.	HS diploma	Assistant processing room manager	Married
Christina	47	Female	White	U.S.	B.A.	Purchasing director	Married
Laura	52	Female	Asian-American	Japan	B.A.	Purchasing manager	Divorced
Lisa	38	Female	White	U.S.	B.A.	Purchasing director	Single, never married
Gary	66	Male	White	U.S.	HS Diploma	President	Divorced, remarried
Patricia	66	Female	White	U.S.	B.A.	Sales Director	Divorced, remarried
Elisa	44	Female	Hispanic	Colombia	Some HS	Packer	Divorced
Catherine	31	Female	White/Latina	Colombia	HS Equivalent	Packer	Married
Javier	30	Male	Hispanic	Colombia	HS Diploma	Meat cutter	Divorced
Carlos	19	Male	Hispanic	U.S.	HS Diploma	Packer/In training as a meat cutter	Single, never married

Data Collection

Data were collected through face-to-face, in depth interviews and one phone interview. Ideally, I would have liked to have conducted face-to-face interview with all of my participants; however, travel difficulties for both me and my participant, Patricia, necessitated the use of a phone interview. The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions to allow the participants to narrate their experience of working in the beef industry with a minimal amount of structured guidance from me. In-depth interviews are an ideal method of data collection for grounded theory studies (Charmaz 2001). Qualitative interviewing provides an “open-ended, in-depth exploration of an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial experience” (Charmaz 2001:676). In-depth interviews allow the researcher to learn about the participant’s subjective world. Interviews are emergent techniques that allow the researcher to follow leads that develop out of ideas that begin to materialize during data collection. Grounded theory interviewing and traditional qualitative, in-depth interviewing both view the interviewing relationship as a partnership where the interviewer and interviewee both work to produce information (Weiss 1994). However, in the grounded theory interview, the range of topics is narrowed as the researcher engages in theoretical sampling and begins to carve out categories of analysis during data collection.

In-depth interviewing allowed me to prompt my participants for clarification and dig deeper when an interesting development would arise during the course of the interview conversation. I was also able to tailor my interview schedule to fit the analytical categories that had emerged in the later parts of data collection. Charmaz (2001) states that the interviewer must find a balance between listening to the participant’s story and probing for social psychological

processes. Questions need to be general enough to explore these processes but also narrow enough to fit the participant's individual experience. Each of my interviews were guided by open questions that allowed participants to tell their story without the risk of me imposing my own concepts about the participant's reality and "forcing the data" (Charmaz 2001:681). Each interview began with a general question about the participant's job and what it was like on a typical day to work in that position. I tried to elicit as much detail as possible from each participant as to what a typical day involved in order to gather a rich, detailed narrative of what it is like to work in a meat processing room, or as the only female in executive level meetings, etc. The description of each participant's typical day on the job then allowed me to pursue different leads that I would hear in their description and move towards piecing together the total experience of their work.

All of the interviews were conducted in English and audio-recorded in order to allow for active listening on my part and to ensure that my full attention was devoted to each participant. Some of my participants did not speak English very well and at times I relied on a family member to help translate when my basic knowledge of Spanish would not suffice. This language barrier may have affected the interviews with two of my participants as far as the amount of information I was able to gather; however, I am certain that all of the data collected reflects an honest depiction of women's experience of work in the processing rooms. I kept a notebook of field notes during the data collection process to write down any non-verbal cues like long-pauses, facial expressions, and gestures that participants used, especially when describing machine operations and the different knife skills used in the processing rooms. Each interview took place at a location chosen by the participant in order to ensure a relatively comfortable

setting. One interesting thing to note about setting is that for the seven interviews I conducted with executive/management level individuals, each one was conducted at the participant's place of work. The phone interview with Patricia took place at her home. It could technically be considered her place of work since she travels quite a bit for work and often works from home when she is not at one of the regional offices; however, for the purposes of this study, I will classify her interview location as "home" and not "place of work." For the seven interviews I conducted with individuals who worked in the processing room, only one was conducted at the participant's place of work. The rest were conducted at a variety of locations chosen by the participants. This allowed each participant to feel as comfortable as possible with answering questions related to their job and also allowed for the establishment of rapport. By conducting the interviews at the participant's home or at a neutral location, I was able to offer a more comfortable atmosphere and less of an "official" setting to discuss elements of work and family life. In total, my data consisted of approximately 16 hours of audio files and approximately 120 pages of typed, single-spaced interview transcriptions.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed using the aid of dictation software, Express Scribe. Once the audio files were transcribed, I used constructivist grounded theory coding procedures for data analysis. Coding strategies used in grounded theory research shaped the frame of my analysis. Charmaz (2006) states that coding is an important link between data collection and the emergence of theory. Coding allowed me to explain what was happening in the data and directed future data collection. It was in the initial coding stage of analysis that I began to see patterns emerge and started to construct a theoretical frame. Initial coding took the form of line-by-line

coding of each transcript to ensure that I remained close to the actual words each participant used. I used action codes which “curbs our tendencies to make conceptual leaps and to adopt extant theories before we have done the necessary analytic work”(Charmaz 2006:48). Action codes like “going” or “seeing” help grounded theorists make comparisons about processes in the data across different respondents (Charmaz and Belgrave 2012). Using action codes enabled me to make comparisons in the data, a major technique of grounded theory research. Action codes enabled me to see processes and not static concepts, a main component of constructivist grounded theory. It is important to remain open to exploring different paths in the data during the initial coding phase which is why I adopted a line-by-line strategy. Certain concepts like “missing time with family,” “feeling pain,” and “feeling separation” emerged during the initial interviews, but I kept an open mind to exploring the data in subsequent interviews and did not allow these initial codes to form the framework for my analysis.

For the second round of coding, I adopted a focused coding strategy. This allowed me to use the initial codes and sort them into larger categories of analysis. Focused codes are more “directed, selective, and conceptual than word-by-word, line-by-line, and incident-by-incident coding” (Charmaz 2006:57). This round of coding involves decision-making about which initial codes make the most sense to begin grouping into categories. During both rounds of coding, however, I continued to look back at my initial coding and refine the focused coding as I moved forward with thematic category construction. While I moved on to a more focused round of coding, that does not mean that I did not continue to revisit previous rounds in order to maintain an active involvement in the process. The first reading and coding of the data acted as a block to jump off of when I started collecting and analyzing data. As I was building major categories

from a focused coding of the transcripts, I continued to check back with my initial codes to ensure that my analytic notes made sense.

Part of the transition from coding to analysis takes place through memo-writing. In staying true to the grounded theory approach to research, I engaged in active memo-writing throughout the entire data collection and analysis process. According to Charmaz (2006), memo-writing represents an important step between data collection and writing drafts of your paper. Memo-writing forces you to start thinking about your codes and analyzing your data early in the process. I kept three sets of memos to guide my analysis and writing: Code memos, theoretical memos, and personal memos. Theoretical memos were used to bring focused codes to conceptual categories and allowed me to test different branches of thought in analyzing the data as well as analyze patterns across different interviews. Code memos allowed me to organize my initial and focused codes into themes and sub-themes in order to start developing conceptual categories from the data. Personal memos acted as my own personal field notes that began to mimic a reflexive statement about the data collection process including times when it was difficult to secure an interview, certain individuals who I could tell were not being entirely honest in their answers, and other issues that would come up during the data collection process. Memo-writing helped me to make sense of the data and keep each part of my analysis organized for revisiting and comparing with subsequent interviews.

Confidentiality and Ethical Concerns

The most important concern I had during my data collection was to ensure that the identity of my participants was kept confidential. All of my participants received pseudonyms in the transcription and analysis. Companies and locations also received pseudonyms in the final

draft to ensure that no facility or individual would be able to be identified. Many of my participants actually chose their own pseudonym and seemed to have a lot of fun choosing an alias. The interviews were audio-recorded and all audio files were saved on a computer that requires a secure username and password for access. All transcripts, notes, and written documentation were kept in a locked file cabinet to preserve confidentiality. Several of my participants could risk backlash from their respective company managers if they were to find out that some of their employees had talked to me. Therefore, I felt compelled to offer the most protection I could in ensuring the safety and confidentiality of the data I collected.

A second aspect of protecting participants involved ensuring that I did not cause harm to their mental health and overall well-being. Some of the topics I wanted to cover in the interviews were sensitive topics involving divorce, strained relations with children, and physical injuries that had happened on the job. Participants were made aware that they could refuse to answer any of the questions they did not feel comfortable with and that they could stop the interview at any time. I also made sure that participants understood that they could decline having the interview audio-recorded, in which case I would just take detailed notes. I was also aware that some individuals might be uncomfortable discussing their immigration to the U.S. and their current status in the country. I made the decision at the beginning of my research to not ask about the participants' current immigration status. This was not a vital part of the research; I imagined that any relevant experience would come out in the discussion about home life and moving to the U.S. without needing to know their current legal status. This also stopped participants' from being placed in an uncomfortable position and opened up a little bit more trust between me and the interviewees.

Reflexive Statement

As a vegetarian, most people would probably think that my interest in the meatpacking industry would center on animal rights and animal welfare, not on the people who work in these facilities. Although I have made the choice to not eat meat, this industry has been the background of my life. My family has worked in the meat processing business and I have worked in the business as well, although my work was in the front office and not in the processing room. My great-grandmother worked as a meat-packer during World War II, my great-grandfather owned and operated a small produce and meat stand in Pennsylvania when my family first immigrated to the United States. My father has always worked in some capacity in the meat processing industry and currently owns a U.S. Department of Agriculture meat processing facility and food distribution company. Beef is in my blood but not in my body; this is my own separation that I have to address and manage during the course of this research. The lives of the individuals working in the back-rooms of these facilities were hidden to me for a long time; now it is my hope to offer a glimpse into their lives.

The beef industry is overwhelmingly male-dominated and it can be difficult to move up the ladder if you are a woman. My time working for a food distribution company before I entered graduate school presented a number of opportunities to witness the sexism, discrimination, and sometimes misogynistic viewpoints of male sales associates and purchasing agents. What initially sparked my interest in this research was a simple observation of more and more women occupying the role of meat-cutter in the processing rooms and taking on more of the male-oriented positions within the room. The highest skilled positions are ones that have historically been dominated by men and yet, over the past ten years or so, more women have started working

as meat-cutters, taking on this prestigious and skilled position. This initial spark of interest and my curiosity about what would motivate women to pursue this line of work initiated my journey into this study. I have tried to enter the field with very little pre-conceptions about what I will find; however, my knowledge of the industry does present certain biases that I am fully aware of and perhaps even some that I am not aware of. Part of this bias is a result from a slight pull to not represent this setting in an entirely negative light. This industry has been very good to my family over the years, which presents a potential source of tension in my research. Hearing my father say “Don’t make us out to be too bad,” when I first informed him of my dissertation topic made me think about what impact this research study may have. I have friends and family who work in the industry and who are wonderful people; however, as a researcher it is my duty to present the most accurate description and analysis, using the words of my participants, of the lived experience that women have in this industry. It is my hope that I can present a research study that captures these experiences and offers a glimpse into the everyday world of the women who work the lines in slaughterhouses and processing facilities.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

The beef industry is a male-dominated structure that has a very masculine-type culture. From the beginning of the industrial process in beef production, men have always dominated the industry at every level of the organizational hierarchy. For women who work in this industry, the options are to either assimilate to the cultural traditions of the industry or to try to carve out their own niche and forge a path for future women in the industry. To understand women's experience of work in the meat industry, in both the processing rooms and the executive-level boardrooms, one must understand the culture of the industry and the hierarchy of the beef organization. Throughout all of my interviews, different components of the culture of the meat industry emerged as women talked about the stress of work, the stress of balancing their work life with any type of domestic life, and their experience working with men in the industry. The dichotomy between corporate culture and work culture, what Stull and Broadway (2004) call the reality of what happens on the floor, can be viewed in the language of the corporation and the conflict between corporate values and industrial production.

The Setting: Inside the Beef Company

In order to understand the experiences of women in the beef industry, it is helpful to first understand how these organizations are structured and how the hierarchical divisions within both the front office and the processing room are constructed. In the spring of 2013, I conducted observations at Pinecrest Beef and Brandon Beef Company, both located in the southeastern United States, where I was able to note the physical structure of the companies along with how and where men and women were divided in the organizational hierarchy.

Division and separation are built into the structure of the beef company. From my field notes taken during my observations, I was able to note how there are separate entrances for those individuals who work in the processing rooms. This section of the company is almost completely separate from the front offices where the executives and staff in sales and purchasing work. In the two locations I observed, there were a series of doors separating the office staff from the processing room staff. One door separated the pristine office environment from the blue-collar warehouse. A second door then separated the warehouse from the processing room. Each of these divisions served to mark the division of labor within the organization.

For the processing room, the day begins at 7:00am when all employees arrive and clock in and then start assembling their uniform for the day at their lockers. This would include special coats that protect them from the cold temperatures inside the facility and sweatshirts or zippered, hooded jackets that they bring with them from home. All of the employees in the room also put on white coats and plastic aprons along with hairnets and hard hats. The color of the hard hats differentiates the types of workers in the processing room. White hats signify the line workers. Blue and yellow hats signify the different line and room managers. Everyone wears the same uniform within the room, with the exception of hard hat color. The majority of the women work in the packing line and the men work on the cutting tables. The room is kept cold so as to not spoil the meat, around 36 degrees Fahrenheit. The inside of the room is set up like a normal industrial assembly line where there are long tables where people stand on both sides cutting and trimming meat. Directly across from the meat-cutting tables are the packaging machines that seal the different cuts of meat into plastic pouches which then get boxed and labeled and moved to the cooler in the room next door. This is where the meat will stay until it is sold.

There were two things that stood out the most during my observations: silence and speed. For all of the cutting and disassembling that takes place, the processing room is a quiet room. In my two observations, I noticed that the workers rarely talked to each other in the room except to ask a question or verify a pack slip order with the processing room manager. Speed is everywhere in the processing room, from the motion of the knives that workers use to cut the meat to the cycles of the packaging, or Rollstock, machines that seal the meat into cryovac pouches where the air is removed with a vacuum pump, increasing the shelf life of the meat. What is most interesting about the speed of the processing room is that the meat-cutters, who are predominantly men, control the speed of movement in the entire room. It is their cutting speed that controls the conveyor belts moving the meat to the packaging line or, in the instance that there is not a conveyor belt or it is broken, the rate at which women have to move to get the meat from the cutters and bring it to the packaging area. From this point, the Rollstock machine controls the speed of women's work as it goes through ten cycles per minute, producing ten packages of meat per minute. Women run these machines but they do not get to determine the speed at which the machines operate. The speed is set by the processing room manager, the majority of which are men. While corporate values might emphasize food and worker safety, the reality of the floor is that the speed of the cutting lines and the speed of the machines, which women do not operate, does not stop. Work inside the room is dictated by the men in positions of power and by machines that are controlled by men. Women work in positions lower on the hierarchy and become the most vulnerable to accidents and injury.

Corporate Culture and Work Culture

Corporate culture and work culture often reflect different values. While the mission statements and values of different beef companies might reflect the concepts of high quality, best price, environmental stewardship, and food/worker safety, the work culture of the organization often reflects a different reality. The language of the beef industry is a very masculine, economic type of communication. The constant use of the word, “product,” in the everyday language of the organization is one example of how the beef industry strives to separate the non-human animal from the steak that consumers purchase. The term “product” itself is a mechanistic term that implies reducing the slaughter and processing of cattle to a simple input/output production process. The participants in my study worked at a number of different meat companies in the southeastern United States. All of these meat companies had mission statements that reflected this type of language, working to translate the non-human animal into a non-descriptive commodity:

Peachtree Beef Company⁴: Provide the best possible *product* at the best possible price (emphasis added).

Brandon Beef Company: We strive to continuously improve and innovate our *products* and services. We insist upon top quality *products*...we offer superior *products* combined with exceptional service (emphasis added).

Pinecrest Beef Company: Delivering quality *products* (emphasis added).

⁴ The names of the meat companies have been changed to pseudonyms.

Holloway Meat Company: We deliver *product* during its peak freshness...aged to perfection (emphasis added).

These mission statements and values are found throughout the literature that makes up part of the corporate culture of these companies: training manuals, brochures, business cards, and signs.

Quality, innovation, and safety are also core values that make up the culture of the beef industry.

As illustrated in the above paraphrased statements from four meat companies, quality and innovation are two key terms included in the language of each mission statement.

Food and Worker Safety

Safety is a third major core values that is found in the literature distributed by each of these companies. Both food safety and worker safety are part of the core values that make up the corporate culture of meat companies. Holloway Meat Company lists food safety as one of its most important concerns. The company websites describes food safety as paramount to its operations. The company literature lists various outside agencies that inspect the Holloway plant and whose requirements exceed those of the USDA. There is a large emphasis on safety to ensure to customers purchasing this beef that all necessary steps are taken to provide assurance that the “products” are safe. The culture of food safety in the beef industry hides the reality of what happens on the floor, the work culture of food safety. The phrase “USDA-inspected” is often used in company literature to frame the practices of the company in the language of regulatory oversight and inspection. The reality, however, is quite different. The safety plans that are regulated and inspected by the USDA, the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points

(HACCP) plans, are really just programs that each company creates for its own processing and slaughter facilities. The USDA does not mandate specific points that need to be addressed; the beef companies create their own safety plans and then allow the USDA to monitor and inspect those self-created safety programs. As one USDA inspector to whom I spoke stated, “we don’t approve HACCP plans, we accept them.”

I was able to explore more of the reality of regulatory oversight through an informal conversation with Jeremy, a USDA inspector in his mid-40s who has worked for the USDA for close to seventeen years. He described how the inspectors’ hands are tied at the USDA in the process of plant inspection. When boxed beef was introduced through the creation of Iowa Beef Processors (IBP), the HACCP plans were created to replace the old command and control system which had allowed inspectors to visually inspect the meat and stop production if something did not look right in the processing line. The creation of HACCP removed any power that USDA inspectors had. The consequences of removing regulatory oversight power have been illustrated in previous studies that explored the power that the beef companies hold over government agencies (Eisnitz 2007). Jeremy stated that in contrast with the pre-HACCP inspection process, today if the inspectors say anything or try to stop production, tag meat, anything that hurts production and profit, all that a business owner has to do is call their Congressperson and say “this guy’s giving me a hard time.” The result would be the removal of the USDA inspector from that particular facility. Jeremy stated that if that were to happen with him in one of the processing rooms he inspects, within an hour he would get a phone call telling him to remove himself from the facility. If an inspector shuts down the line or writes up a non-compliance report, especially in the slaughterhouses, there would be serious consequences for that inspector. The bottom line

is that most inspectors are not going to speak up because they don't want to lose their jobs. This same pattern was seen in the work of Eisnitz (2007) and Pachirat (2011) in their description of quality control and inspection in slaughterhouse and processing facilities. Jeremy saw the move to HACCP to replace command-and-control safety plans as ruining any kind of oversight and "you would be surprised at what goes in these rooms." All that these men and women who work for the USDA can do as inspectors is sit and observe. As long as the company complies with their safety plan then there's nothing that the inspectors can do, their hands are tied. Job turnover is high in some of these positions as there is only so much you can watch in regards to the treatment of animals and violations of safety in the processing rooms.

The core value of safety not only applies to food safety, it also applies to worker safety. The demands of production often conflict with the values of safety. Matt, a 57 year-old meat cutter and assistant processing room manager, states that "you can still work safely and get production, I mean we do it here at Pinecrest Beef Company. We haven't had an injury in the room with time loss for a long time." Matt works at a medium-size beef processing facility with a relatively organized schedule of production. However, at some of the larger companies, the conflict between production and worker safety has been more pronounced. Alice, a 55 year-old processing room manager at a large processing facility, described how production level often wins out over the safety of workers:

When you're running ground beef patties, with our limited space, we had a freeze tunnel that runs with liquid nitrogen. And we ran it at -178° F. Now -178° F, coming out the end of that thing and handling those patties, are extremely cold. And so what happens is every 30 minutes, you move [the workers]...your legs are

cold and it's just a cold job. Now you have exhaust fans that are supposed to pull up the residual gas...it works for the first couple of hours and then they start to freeze up, and again whatever people tell you, the bottom line is to move product from A to B as fast as you can with the least amount of people. So are you going to stop when that fan starts to get frozen? No you're going to let [the gas] settle on the floor. The only time you would stop production is if the nitrogen pulls oxygen out of the air and the buzzer goes off and then you would stop it.

The process Alice is describing in this quote relates to the individuals who work the grinding line in a processing room where ground beef and beef patties are made. Alice's story reflects the conflict between production and worker safety; the bottom line as she states is to move product quickly through the machines to increase production yields while keeping labor costs low. This means that companies will run the processing rooms with the least amount of people possible in order to increase overall profit margins. Labor costs are one of the highest costs to a beef company. By making these jobs low-paying, physically difficult and sometimes dangerous, beef companies are able to ensure a certain type of workforce demographic that will be willing to undertake this role in the processing rooms.

The Male Culture of Sales and Purchasing

During my interviews with men and women in the executive-level and managerial jobs, the phrases they would use to describe the process of their work all included very masculine-oriented words. Words and phrases like "aggressive," "eat them alive," and "competitive," were all used to describe the work in the white-collar jobs of the beef industry. Because profit margins are so narrow in this industry, individuals who work in the white-collar positions have to be

creative in how they attain new business for beef distribution. Junior describes on creative tactic that he has always relied on:

I remember when I was first in a territory in Chicago, I loved going up against the older guys because they were complacent, I would eat them alive. They were casual, comfortable, and I was hustling. I was running my ass off and I would just target them. I would steal this from this guy and I would follow their trucks and see what they were unloading and make up a special sheet with prices listed beneath cost. All I wanted to do is make them look bad so I would get a chance. When you're young and aggressive you are creative you know? Go to the garbage can and see what boxes are there because then you know exactly what they're buying. It goes back to knowledge. Believe me. I didn't have a problem going and looking in a dumpster.

Both Gary and Junior described going into dumpsters to look at the manufacturer's label on the boxes these companies were throwing out. By doing that, they were able to see what type of beef product was moving through other distributors quickly and the name of the company that was selling the beef product. The thrill of gaining a new customer and making a sale is a feeling that pushes both men and women in the industry. Patricia, a 66 year-old regional sales manager for a large meat company, states that "it's unbelievable. It just reconfirms why you're in the business. When I make a sale, I tell everybody." Gary, a 66 year-old CEO of a medium sized company, said that even after all these years, the thrill of making a sale and selling beef to a new customer is still the most exciting part of the business. The competitive nature of the business attracts a certain type of personality to the white-collar jobs in the industry. In my interview with Junior, a

60 year-old sales manager for a medium sized meat company, we talked about the type of personality that beef sales positions, in particular, tend to draw:

It draws athletes, competitive people for a number of reasons. One of them is they never grew up...and if they're competitive, which all are, it just matters how long you were a jock and how spoiled you became because you're treated differently. It's the same environment, when you get a sale, success, you get accolades and patted on the back. Rules are different for you. Well you're already used to that if you were a jock. Competitiveness goes to drinking, womanizing, I can do anything, I'm superman. I can be drinking all night and be at work at 7am and still kick your butt. Been there, done that, seen it, wrote the book, goodbye. You survive in some fashion, some not as well as others. It's a hell of a price to pay. Those who learn soon not to get into it, [learn] moderation, but moderation doesn't work for a competitive person. If you have to win...there's no such thing as moderation. You're on, you're off, there's black and white. Shades of grey? You make shades of grey in your head just to do it. But you know damn well black and white, trust me.

The thrill of the competition, the chase for sales and maximization of profit margins on the sales side of the industry directly influences the speed of production in the processing rooms. Speed dominates both sides of the spectrum in the beef industry. Cattle prices change on a daily basis and so making sure that sales are up and production levels are high becomes a core value of the industry, no matter what the costs are to its employees.

Coping Mechanisms

The stress of working in the beef industry causes many people to seek out mechanisms for coping with the occupational hardships. Women who work in the processing rooms spend their days disassembling animals and packaging beef for consumption. This act of pulling apart and separating pieces of an animal can take a psychological toll on the individuals who endure this work every day. The meat industry requires workers to view and treat animals as “widgets, a means to an end” and not as living beings (Dillard 2008:395). This can take an emotional toll on individuals who empathize with animals. The meat industry requires workers to view animals as one piece of the machine of production; the structure of the industry allows beef packing and manufacturing plants to view its workers in the same way. Most of my participants in both the processing rooms and the executive-level positions described their work as stressful. To work in the meat industry is to be constantly moving. Men and women in the processing rooms are always moving in order to handle the cold environment. Men and women in the executive-level occupations are constantly moving from one meeting to another, from one customer’s problems to another, and from home to work and back. Many of my participants described their work as being constantly on-call, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This type of lifestyle takes an emotional toll on an individual. Participants discussed several coping mechanisms that they use as a buffer to the reality of their work. The main mechanisms for coping revolved around three main areas: 1) the process of psychologically separating the “animal” from the “meat,” in the work environment 2) engaging in alcohol and drug use, and 3) engaging in isolating activities that promote a feeling of numbness. I explore each of these mechanisms in sequential order in this section.

Psychological Separation

People who work in the meat industry must labor to distance themselves psychologically from the job of cutting animals. The nature of the industrial food system is about speed, amount of production, and assembly-line efficiency in the mechanization of beef. Timothy Pachirat (2011) describes the environment of meat production as a kind of construction environment. It is the work of “making up, of framing and invention, an alchemy of deception that authorizes mythical tales – lies, really – about ‘meat’ in contemporary industrialized societies” (Pachirat 2011:30). Both a type of linguistic and material separation occur in the processing of meat; “steers” become “steak,” and “heifers” become “hamburger.” The women who I interviewed stressed that they cannot see the meat they cut as once belonging to an animal. As Shirley, a 27 year-old meat cutter, expressed:

Oh my God. It is difficult. I don't see it as an animal, only a piece. No, I could not see it as a cow. Cows are on the grass eating, peaceful. Scary to see it as a cow.

The cow was a long time ago. I only see a big piece of meat that I have to cut.

Mary, a 44 year-old processing room worker, also expressed a type of psychological disassociation to separate the meat from the animal that she had to practice in order to perform her role effectively:

This is meat. No, I could not see it as an animal. That would be a big problem with me eating meat. This is just meat that I'm grinding. I just see the pieces but I don't see it as arms or legs or pieces of an animal...I still like meat but I heard from other people who worked there. They would say “I don't want to eat meat.”

Discussing the implication of cutting animals with the women I interviewed made me wonder if somehow female employees in meat processing plants retain a stronger intimacy to the animals they are cutting than the male employees do. While the separation in meat processing facilities is not as graphic as it is in the slaughterhouses, there is still an act of cutting that these women perform on animals. One interesting finding in my research was that for most of the women I interviewed, beef was not a staple of their diet. In fact, most of the women who worked in the processing rooms did not eat beef at all:

Shirley: No we don't eat beef. I see it all the time. Maybe we had it once for a special occasion but that's it.

Cathy: We eat a lot of soups, stews, but not beef.

Mary: I cook a lot of food from back home like stuffed tomatoes and cabbage...not too much beef.

Elisa: People who work here, they say "I don't want to eat meat."

This type of psychological separation from the work of processing animals did not impact the men in my study who worked in the processing rooms in the same way that it impacted women. The men in my study still ate beef on a regular basis and were often able to purchase and take home partial boxes of beef that they had processed in the room. Matt, a 57 year-old meat cutter, illustrates the typical response from men in the processing room: "It don't bother me at all. I see [the job] as having a skill. I like being a meat-cutter and getting feedback from the customers on how good my cuts were." Matt enjoys the skill involved with being a good meat cutter; he knows that his job entail disassembling animals but that process does not affect his outlook on his job in

the processing room or his taste for eating beef. Matt is able to compartmentalize his life and separate his work experience from his experiences outside of work. Junior, a 60 year-old sales manager, echoed this sentiment to some extent when he said “it’s a mindset.” He goes on to say that “you have to not think about the head and the face, the parts, it’s not pretty how they slaughter these animals. And when you’ve been in that cutting room back there and you’ve seen the blood, it’s just a type of mindset.” Junior believes that it is easier for men to handle the psychological aspects of disassociating the animal from the meat that is processed than it is for women. He says that “maybe it is part of this manly bullshit that we do, it doesn’t bother me...it’s a man thing.” This statement, however, implies that men adhere to a type of masculinity display in order to show that animal slaughter does not bother them as much as women.

Industrial agriculture is at its heart a utilitarian, profit-based construction. Through technology, the industrial system mediates relationships between humans and animals (Purcell 2011). The separation that Purcell (2011) describes in meat-packing plants mimics the separation found in meat processing plants where each employee is responsible for doing one specific action, either cutting beef carcasses into steaks, grinding it for beef patties, or sending it through a cubing machine or packaging machine to produce a neatly packaged artifice of nature. The language that Alice uses in describing the meat processing business reflects this mechanization as her description is devoid of any reference to animals or any reference to the personal feeling of cutting an animal; “in our business, detail is everything...especially yields. That’s a big deal because...all of your pricing is based on labor cost per pound.” In this statement, there is no language associated with animals, no reference to the actual “product” that comes out of these rooms.

The history of meat production is the story of increasing mechanization, increasing centralization and “concomitant decreases in the intimacy among workers, consumers and livestock” (Purcell 2011:61). The mechanization of nature in this industry becomes a rapid, piecemeal process in which there is an assembly-line order in place that would work equally well in assembling cars or other manufactured goods. The manufacturing of meat, taking it from the natural world and breaking it down into a commodity, distorts the natural world and the psychological bond between humans and animals. Nowhere is the manipulation of the natural world more apparent than in the meat industry; as Cronon (1991) argues, it is the “capitalist social and economic structures that have enabled privileged consumers to isolate themselves physically and emotionally from the violence...caused by their lifestyles” (1991:384). Along with consumer isolation, however, there is also the meat-cutter’s isolation from the animal, or “product,” she disassembles. To hear Shirley describe her job as a meat-cutter is to hear an objective, ordered description that could easily translate to any other part of industrial manufacturing:

I work for two hours and then take a break, you know coffee, then I go back to work and work until noon, then go to lunch. Then the rest of the day, I cut meat.

That’s it. Cut, break, cut, break, cut break...order for 8oz. tender, I cut 8oz. Order for 12oz. I cut 12oz.

Nowhere in this statement is a reference to the animal she is cutting. Absent of any emotion, Shirley’s description mimics the mechanization of her job. Cathy, a 31 year-old packer offers a description of her job that is similar in the mechanized description of work: “I make the boxes, put 20 pieces or so depending on the order, just putting meat in the box. Other person puts meat

in the machine, I just make the boxes, put the meat inside, all day.” Mary’s description of her role as a meat-grinder is also similar in content:

As long as you are good at your job and fill the orders, there is no trouble...it was cold. I had to wear a lot of layers and sometimes we were working in the tunnel with frozen meat and it’s so hard on the hands. When I put the ground meat in the grinder I had to go and help the people on the tunnel.

Here Mary refers to the meat going into the grinder but does not reference an animal or how she felt about handling meat in the grinder, other than it was a very cold job. This could be a job in any other factory setting; the industrial agriculture process de-personalizes the connection between man and nature and turns animals into “products” that are manufactured by humans. Women in this study who worked in processing rooms used mechanized language as a way of coping with the psychological separation between human and non-human animal that is necessary for this type of work.

Alcohol, Drug Use, and Numbness

Many of my participants discussed using alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism but they also described this use as part of the culture of the industry. While previous studies have examined the abuse of alcohol and drugs by slaughterhouse employees (Dillard 2008, Eisnitz 2007, Pachirat 2011) as coping mechanisms, none of these studies have looked at employees in the processing part of the industry. What was interesting to find is that none of the women who worked in the processing rooms talked about abusing alcohol and/or drugs as a way to cope with the demands of their jobs. This makes sense as many of these women are single parents who

have responsibilities at home when they get off work. As Mary, a 44 year-old processing room worker said, “it’s hard because your weekend goes by so fast. You don’t have time to go out or something like that.” Women in the executive-level jobs had the same experience, with the exception of one participant. For these women, engaging in activities that allowed them to wind down after work and introduce a type of mental numbness was preferred. All of my female participants acknowledged that going out and drinking was part of the culture of the industry, but their responsibilities at home, or the need to put in extra hours and do extra work to surpass the bar that was set for them, prevented them from engaging in this cultural activity. Laura, a 52 year-old purchasing manager, said that people are always inviting her to go out with them after work but “it’s always ‘oh I have to work,’ that’s the way it is.”

From my interviews with women and men in the industry, it seems that alcohol and drug use acts as a type of buffer between work and home life. This may be the reason why many of the single women who have children in both the processing room and the executive-level jobs are not able to partake in this cultural activity at the same rate as men. For the men in my study, there was not the same urgency in the need to get home after work. The stress of the work, both physical and psychological, requires some type of buffer before these individuals can re-enter their domestic world. Junior describes how the bar is used as a buffer for this very reason:

Well, that’s what the bar was for. The bar was the buffer. It was really hard especially when I first got into it and you had a cut off time. If you didn’t transfer your orders by that time they didn’t get on the truck. And you’re out til 5:30pm and we had these stupid little machines...and you punched the order in. Now if you had a phone line problem then it garbled the transmission. It was stressful to

get in your orders by the cut-off time. You couldn't wait to get a damn drink. You were right up to the minute and you were screwed if you didn't make it on time.

So yes, the bar was the buffer. It was not conducive to a good life.

Alcohol use acts as a buffer between work and home for men in the meat industry, but it also acts as a type of organizational activity that everyone in the executive-level and managerial level jobs is expected to participate. Gary, a 66 year-old CEO of a medium-size meat company, states that because of the stress of the business and the urgency of the business, "there is a lot of alcohol use." However, he also goes on to state that since the culture of the industry is very much a male organizational culture, the process of selling meat and locking down agreements often occurs when you take customers out and "the alcohol is flowing liberally." Lisa, a 38-year old purchasing director, is the one outlier from the women in my study on this particular theme. Lisa talked about how she went full throttle into this cultural activity in order to fit in with the other men in her group. She does not drink as much now as she did when she first started in her position but she describes the alcohol and drug use as "almost like a rite of passage." She goes on to describe the intensity of this part of the meat industry's culture:

I mean that's part of your daily culture. And it's not just drinking one. I mean you drink six, seven, eight, you know, double Grey Goose's and a splash of cran or whatever it is and that's all you get. There's no drinking Mai Tai's or a daiquiri or...never would I order that anyways...no ice in your wine...drugs come in to play at some point, it doesn't matter where you work and how high-falutin you are, it comes into play. A lot of people in our business do a lot of coke...I mean

that's a big thing. Because there's so many hours worked and there's so much...it's hours on your feet, running around, constant, constant, constant.

Lisa's description in this quote of the constant movement in the meat industry was also supported by most of the other participants in this study. The fact that Lisa is single without children allows her to engage in the male-constructed cultural activities in the meat industry. For other women like Patricia, a 66 year-old regional sales director, the coping mechanism of choice is "just sitting down and watching TV, zoning out...it's the monotonous...I like the numbness of it." This type of monotonous, mind-numbing activity was also a mechanism that other women in the executive-level jobs used to cope with the stress and urgency of the meat industry.

"It Offends Their Sensibilities": Gender Talk in the Beef Industry

Women who work in the beef industry must adapt to a male-constructed environment. Women are participants in this environment but not creators of the organizational knowledge. As Dorothy Smith (1987) argued, this creates a bifurcated consciousness where there are two worlds and two bases of knowledge that stand in unequal opposition. The beef industry is a male-dominated structure where women are viewed in the traditional gender dichotomy. Patricia, a 66 year-old regional sales manager, says that where she works, "we have two women and we have twenty-two men [in sales]...I go to food shows and conferences and you know, women are like one for every thirty to forty men." Traditionally women were hired as secretaries or in customer service which is where Patricia started. Junior, a 60 year-old sales manager, said that companies used to hire "these gorgeous women who were built, you know what I mean? And the guys would just drool. These guys you couldn't get an appointment with...these girls come in and they're like 'come on in.'" Women were used to get sales staff in the door with hard-to-please

customers. There was a bit of frustration in Junior's voice when he told this story; he said it was not fair, "I don't have those accoutrements, I'm shaped differently!" This sense of reverse gender discrimination was interesting to observe as Junior told the story. Women in this case were used in an objectifying manner to make the entrance smoother for the initiation of beef sales. While they were able to gain entry, the male sales agent would then take over and make the sale with the customer. Gary, a 66 year-old CEO of a medium sized company, told me during his interview that there are still companies that operate in this manner. In a discussion that I was a part of between Gary and a sales manager, Gary described how some companies use women in these positions:

Women can open up doors [to customers] when men can't...if they're attractive and approachable, they have a personality, are inviting, they...what happens is that it gets them in the door. But they have to be good and know what they're talking about it. You better know it. The bar might be a little higher than with men, men will feel more confident. There's no difference in intelligence, but it's the confidence level in being able to talk about raw meat.

He later told the story about how Brandon Beef Company would pair salesmen with a woman to open up doors. But, he said looks only get you so far. You still have to know your numbers and know what you're talking about when it comes to raw meat sales. The women at Brandon Beef Company are also used to draw in customers at the annual food conventions held in various cities throughout the year. One sales manager, Robert, who I was able to talk with informally during my data collection process, said that these "girls" remind him of "Hooters girls." The use of women in this particular fashion is meant to draw in a certain type of clientele who will be

attracted to this type of marketing strategy and will buy more from the Brandon Beef Company. Both Gary and Junior knew about this practice and stated honestly that now that they're older and have daughters of their own, they find the practice appalling. They might not have viewed it the same way when they were younger but now they see it in that way.

One interesting finding that I was able to uncover was revealed when I asked men in my study why they thought there weren't more women in the white-collar jobs in the beef industry. Through my own observations in different meat companies and at industry food shows, I had noticed that in raw meat sales (beef, pork, chicken), there were very few women who managed sales. Women might work in a different area of the company but not in raw meat purchasing or sales. Gary states that he thinks it's "the psychology of it...I'm not sure a woman wants to be around where they're cutting up animals. I think the psychology of it is a big part of it." He goes on to talk about the long hours and stress of the industry, but the psychological aspect was a theme that emerged when I interviewed other men in the industry as well. When asked why there aren't more women in the industry, Junior used this psychological theme to frame his response:

Let's be chauvinist for a moment. It offends their sensibilities. If I take a steak to my house and I open the package and blood goes on the counters, my wife has a conniption. She doesn't want to see the blood. And this is a gutsy broad, but she doesn't want to see the blood. So maybe it's part of this manly bullshit that we do, "it doesn't bother me, whatever."

Here Junior suggests that this part of "doing gender" involves acting like the blood and dismemberment of non-human animals does not bother him like it does his wife. In his view, women are more sensitive, more prone to be offended by seeing blood on the counter. This is

how many of the men in my research study viewed women; the women in my research study never once mentioned this type of psychological barrier or that they were averse to being around blood of any other type of body part of the steer. When I mentioned this psychological theme to women in my research study, laughter was the most common response.

Even in the processing rooms where women take on a transformative gender role in their work, most men in the rooms see women in this same manner: sensitive, averse to psychologically dealing with the visual images of non-human animal dismemberment. When asked why women are usually packers and not those workers who operate the machines or handle the saw, David, a 38 year-old processing manager, said that “most women don’t want to deal with the saw.” He immediately prefaced this statement with “we’re not biased or anything like that,” which is a type of rhetorical “discursive buffer” that is often used in conversations about race (Bonilla-Silva 2010:57). In this instance it is used for gender talk instead. David goes on to say that since a machine like the saw is intimidating, “most women don’t want to deal with that.” This belief then becomes part of the structure in the processing room ensuring the continued segregation of men and women into gender- role specific jobs. A second point that I pursued in the discussion of women’s sensitivity to blood and animal parts was the presence of women in the processing room. If this type of work environment offends women’s sensibilities, what about the women who work in the processing rooms and who cut and process these animals eight hours a day? Patricia, a 66 year-old regional sales manager, summed it up as “well, that’s a totally different type of person.” She went on to say that “those people are different.” Gary reiterated this type of talk about women in the processing rooms; “women that work in the processing rooms are immigrants. They are new people coming to the country; they will take

jobs that white people won't take." This framing of those who work in the processing room as different types of people implies that even within the traditional gender dichotomy of the beef industry, women of color hold a lower position in the job queue than women who are white (Reskin and Roos 2009).

"That's a Different Type of Person": Understanding Race Talk in the Beef Industry

There is a clear division between the processing room jobs and the white-collar jobs in the beef industry. Over the course of data collection, I constantly heard workers in the processing rooms referred to as "those people," an all-encompassing category for men and women of various nationalities who work in physically demanding jobs, those jobs that no one else wants. David, a 38 year-old processing room manager, knew exactly what the phrase "different type of person," or "those people," implied:

We're going to dig a little bit deeper into that. When the phrase "I know how to handle these people," people in general, people who need to work who have no other choice than to do the job they're doing because they can't get anything else...they just need this specific life that they're in, it has to be that way. When the phrase "these people," is used...they're talking about immigrants.

There is the implication in my interviews with men and women in the beef industry that immigrant will take the jobs that no one else wants, meaning the jobs that White people do not want. Immigrant labor is a fundamental structural component of the beef industry. Without men and women to work in the processing rooms, beef production would grind to a halt. However, even women like Patricia, who is of a definite minority in the industry, view women in the

processing rooms as a level beneath her. The hierarchy places men and women of color at the near the bottom level, with women of color placed at the very bottom.

David had a bit of a different perspective of why women of color especially would take these types of jobs compared to the perspective of men and women in white-collar positions. For example, my participants who worked in white-collar jobs saw the processing room jobs as hard work, but still a much better life than where most of the workers were coming from. Gary said that “there aren’t a lot of men and women who want to work in the processing room...immigrants will take the jobs no one wants.” He went on to give a specific example: “Look at Vietnam, they are not going to complain, they come from an environment that is absolutely horrendous. This is nice, it’s full-time employment year around.” This sense that immigrant workers will not complain about the working conditions ties in to the brown-collar worker environment that Saucedo (2006) explores. Alice, a 55 year-old processing room manager, sees the same pattern. She states that most of the workers in the processing room will not complain about harassment or poor working conditions because they don’t want to draw attention to themselves. Some of these workers are illegal immigrants and they fear job loss and/or deportation if they cause trouble. David, on the other hand, does not view processing room workers as compliant individuals who will toil in a physically dangerous job that no one else wants. From his viewpoint, the structure of the processing room is a little different:

They’ll do jobs no one wants to do, we’ve heard it for years, but it’s not that.

What happens is that when one group of people get in to a good job situation, it pays ok, the job’s not that difficult, they’ll bring somebody else, and then at that point, it doesn’t become a race thing, these groups of people are helping their

group...it's a network that gets brought in which is kind of what I've seen.

Everybody knows everyone; they're from the same country or similar countries.

For David, nationality plays a larger role in who works in the processing rooms than just simply race or ethnicity. Networks are built that bring similar people together in the rooms. Instead of reducing the structure of the processing room to just immigrant/non-immigrant workers, David is able to see the nuances that exist within the rooms. At the companies where I drew my sample of participants, a good number of my participants were from Colombia. They had found out about their job through other Colombian individuals who worked in processing rooms. David did say that “you do have a few whites, a few blacks come in, but in the end what I've seen is that the immigrants will outlast the whites.” This creates a sort of in-group/out-group mentality, what David calls the “politics of the processing room.” The processing room becomes a segregated environment, but based on nationality, not race:

I know some Cubans who don't like Colombians, I know Puerto Ricans who don't like Colombians or Cubans. So they all work in their own little niches but you have your own little world wars in there and you have to know how to work around it.

David's comment about little world wars breaking out in the processing rooms illustrates how different groups are divided in the processing rooms by nationality.

A second important finding that emerged from the data on race talk fits into Bonilla-Silva's frame of color-blind racism, naturalization (Bonilla-Silva 2010). The naturalization of race-related matters “allows whites to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are

natural occurrences”(Bonilla-Silva 2010:28). The naturalization frame allows people to say that segregation is natural because people from similar groups and background tend to gravitate towards the same groups. Preferences are biologically driven. The naturalization of race-related matters joined together with the minimization of racism to frame how white participants saw the lack of diversity in white-collar job groups. One immediate observation that I made was that there were very few to no African-American individuals working in the processing rooms or offices of the companies from which I drew my participants. Several of my participants explained this lack of diversity due to the following “natural” causes: 1) self-segregation and 2) population statistics. Gary stated that you have to look at population statistics to understand this pattern:

The reason about race is the population. The percentage of African-Americans in the U.S. is what, thirteen percent? So there’s a smaller pool to draw from...I think the whole Equal Opportunity Employment deal, I don’t think people take into account the small percentage of the population that African-Americans make up, there’s a smaller pool.

During this conversation, another sales representative who happened to walk by chimed in that you see a lot of Hispanics in white-collar jobs in areas where there is a high concentration of Hispanic people; Hispanics do well in the beef industry in areas where their customer base is also Hispanic. This type of statement fits in the naturalization frame of color-blind racism because it points to the self-segregation rhetoric of how to explain lack of diversity in a certain occupational category. Gary’s statement above illustrates a combination of naturalization and minimization of racism as frames for analysis. He minimizes the fact that there is a lack of

diversity in the white-collar jobs of the beef industry by appealing to statistics. However, according to his own logic, there should be at least one African-American employee in the company. In the division in the processing rooms, African-Americans are grouped with Whites as a type of outsider group compared to the in-group of Hispanic men and women. The dividing line changes as you walk through the door dividing the executive offices and the processing rooms.

Summary

The culture of the beef industry is a predominantly white, male culture. There is a dividing line between men and women, between immigrant and native-born citizen. This dividing line takes its form in the doors that separate the office environment from the processing room environment, the separation between clean and dirty jobs, white-collar and brown-collar. The corporate culture values of quality, safety, and innovation often come into conflict with the reality of the workplace environment. Food safety and worker safety are sometimes sacrificed for the benefit of production, including the safety measures that are inspected by the USDA and put in place to protect consumers. However, the reality of these safety measures is that the beef industry is able to create their own regulations, minimizing the role of government to protect consumers. Worker safety, while viewed as important to the continuation of production, is often ignored as companies try to maximize profits through increased yields and decreased labor costs. One way to reduce labor costs is to hire a workforce that will not complain about working conditions in the processing and packing rooms. The role of immigrant labor is paramount to the success of the beef companies. The reduced labor costs that companies enjoy come at the expense of the well-being of many men and women who work in these rooms. Women fare the

worst, especially women of color, who must try to adapt to the male culture of the beef industry while retaining their sense of gender and cultural identity in a new environment. The beef industry, as Gary had said, “is and has always been a good old boy network and I don’t ever see that changing.”

CHAPTER FIVE: FITTING IN AND SURVIVING

One of the major themes that emerged during the course of my data collection and analysis was this theme of fitting in and surviving at work. This “survival” theme took on a different meaning for women who worked in management compared to women who worked in the processing room. Women in management do not experience the same type of gender segregation that is built into the occupational structure of the processing room. There are simply very few women in management positions in the meat industry. As this theme emerged, I began to see that women’s experience of work in management positions is the experience of an outsider. Women work to become a part of the “man’s world” of the meat industry but they do not make the rules of the organization. Instead, they must adapt and “play a part” in order to fit in and gain respect in a male-dominated environment. Women’s experience of work in the processing room is the experience of respected but unequal workers who are blocked from attaining the same status and prestige as their male counterparts.

Women’s Experience of Work in the Boardrooms

Women’s experience of work in the executive-level and/or supervisory positions in the meat industry takes on a different meaning compared to men’s experience of work at this level. Women who work in these positions often feel like outsiders who need to pass certain tests in order to prove themselves to the rest of the group. It’s not just about being smart and good at your job; it’s about putting in the extra hours and taking on the extra tasks in order to show that you can go above and beyond what would normally be expected of an employee. In my participants’ descriptions of their experience of work, three main themes stood out the most: 1)

proving yourself and showing your ability to do the job, 2) getting compensated at a different rate than men, and 3) having a different managing style compared to men.

All of the women who worked in at this level of the meat industry discussed their experience with “proving yourself.” Lisa, a director of purchasing for a large corporation, says that a lot of her frustration came from having to constantly prove herself to the men around her; “you know I’ve swallowed a lot of pride, you know, held back some tears I’ll tell you that. It’s a tough business, it’s tough.” She later talks about how as she was moving up the ladder at her company, she just had to be willing to do whatever job was put in front of her:

If I was asked to do something, fine. If I was asked to do something in a ridiculous time period, I made it happen. I just had to figure out how to get it done, it was going to get done and it was going to be done on time and thoroughly and well. It’s just a lot of times you sacrifice you know, personal time, sleep, everything. Everything. Eating. Sometimes it would be like 2:00pm, I’m starving, oh I haven’t eaten in two days. I just knew I had to do it and get it done and I had to be the best ever and I needed to knock everybody’s socks off because this was my one chance because I knew they were quizzing me and testing me to see if I could do it or not.

There is pressure to do a job no matter what is being asked and what time frame you are given and if that means having to sacrifice your own time with family and friends, then you just do it. Lisa’s job requires a lot of research on different products; it is not uncommon to go to sleep at 1:00am or 2:00am and then get up at 6:00am to start the day over again. It’s an “addiction, an insane passion,” that drives Lisa to do her job and be successful at it. She uses the word

“addiction” quite often in her description of work in the meat industry, a descriptor that Junior, a sales director for a medium-sized corporation, also uses in his description of work in the industry. He states that there are a lot of “addictive personalities, they definitely come in handy, usually they’re alcoholics or drug addicts or sex addicts, or because you’re addicted to the action.” This type of addictive personality that feeds on the action of the business runs through the blood of the industry. Men and women both revel in the transactions that take place every day. In the end, the meat industry is a difficult beast to tame for both men and women. However, due to differences in expectations at work and compensation, women who work in this industry end up running faster on the executive treadmill to keep up and become insiders to the group.

Christina, a purchasing director for a large corporation, was actually the youngest female on the executive committee for the company where she works. She said that men definitely don’t expect to see a woman when they come in the room for a meeting, “I get a lot of like ‘Oh!’ They don’t expect it when they walk through the door.” She states that she has worked in environments where she really did not feel appreciated, environments where she was the only female and “I was definitely on the outside. It was the boy team and the single female. And I was so far on the outside and it was, I was just there to fill a space.” In her current position, before she was promoted she felt that her supervisor was “a nice guy, [but] I just never really felt from him that if I didn’t show up tomorrow that it would really make a difference.” There were times when the men on the executive committees would go on “male outings” as Christina refers to them where they would “go golfing, drinking, do whatever,” and she would be stuck doing everyone’s work for that day, holding down the fort. In those types of situations, Christina points out that there is really no one to go to when you’re one of the only women:

Who do you go to? There was just nobody to go to so you just really, you buck up and you do your job and you know you know who you are and you know you've got your conviction to do the best job you can do despite everything else that's going on around you...but I'll tell ya, it's really hard to keep your chin up and to keep your mouth shut when you just feel like you've just been completely taken advantage of because you're not part of the club.

Laura also talks about being the only woman in a group of men and feeling like an outsider when she discusses the "young guns," her name for the young male managers at her company. They "had their own clique...I just remember feeling like an outsider at that time because I didn't go out you know drinking with all of them. I was always too busy working and so I didn't feel that I had support."

Throughout the interviews with women in the white-collar positions in the meat industry, there was a pattern of using language to build your self-esteem when dealing with situations like the ones Christina and Laura described above. This was not seen in the language that men used to describe their work. Junior and Gary both used the language of competition where "I'm going to eat you alive," and "I'm going to beat them any day of the week," were common phrases in telling the story of how they worked their way up through the system. In a contrary fashion, my female participants did not use this language. Instead the language was more about knowing you can do the job, believing in yourself, being true to who you are, etc. Perhaps this is due to the lack of competition that women face with each other; the competition for women in these positions comes from men and that gender difference changes the language of the story.

Competition between men and women does not translate to the compensation packages they receive in executive-level positions. One question that I asked all of my female participants, those who worked in the processing rooms and those who worked in executive-level positions, was whether or not they felt that they were compensated at an equal level to their male counterparts. Among the women in my study, all answered no. For my participants who worked in the executive-level positions, this answer was often followed by “not even close.” Lisa told me that her company compensated very, very well but never at the same rate as men in her position:

No, never [laughter] never, never, never. I mean they compensated well. I mean like more money than most people ever make in their lifetime. But then you know, if you looked at it competitively to people before me or after me, whatever, it's not even, I wasn't even in the same ballgame. Not even close, not even close. We're talking like thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars.

Christina and Laura echoed this sentiment. For Laura, who had just been promoted to a manager position, she knew she was not getting paid the same wage as her predecessor who had been a man. For Christina, the pay was not even close compared to her predecessor:

Never, never, Even now, um, just from having some information on the pay of my predecessor...now after being with the company almost 19 years but 5 years in this position and after going in and re-negotiating my pay, I'm still making less than what he did. If the money was everything, I wouldn't still be here. But when you have such phenomenal benefits sometimes, you just gotta...you know?

Christina's point about benefits and how if it were only about money she wouldn't be there brings up an interesting point that all of my female participants touched upon. For the women in my study, it was never only about the money. Lisa talks about having validation, earning respect, knowing you are capable of doing the job. For Christina, her satisfaction is derived from working in a nice environment, working with wonderful people, all of the intangible items that most might take for granted if the sole concern was money. Laura talks about being there for her employees and feeling empowered to help more women advance through the system. Patricia, a 66 year-old regional director for a large corporation, talks about the satisfaction she gets from "the fact that people respect me and respect what I do." Putting things like respect, empowerment, and validation at the top of the hierarchy of satisfaction allows women to handle the difference in compensation compared to men in the industry. It also allows them to practice a different style of management than their male colleagues and create a team environment that is generally more supportive and family-oriented.

A third theme that emerged during the interviews with executive-level women in the meat industry was a difference in managerial style as compared to their male colleagues. Christina describes her style as open and always willing to check in with employees to see how their families are doing, how their days are going, and find out if there is anything she can help them with to accomplish the day's tasks. She still manages with discipline but does not see the need to intimidate those around her to get what she wants out of her employees:

You know I'm not a yeller. And I don't think you have to yell to be successful, to get your point across. You don't need to yell at your children to get a point across with them and so I'm always respectful to people and demand the same respect

back. Now I can give them the “what’s what” with a smile on my face and they know...but you don’t need to, you know I think of the stereotypical male that is banging his fist and yelling “you’re going to give me this and you’re going to give me that.” I just don’t see the need at all.

Christina says she hopes that her management style attempts to bridge the gender gaps by being so open and knowing a little bit about what’s going on with her employees and to be there for them in a professional way. Laura also acknowledges that her style is a little bit different than a male manager’s style might be. She says that just being female makes her approachable for her female employees; “I listen to people and...I might have a little bit more of a soft side than you know, maybe the other male managers. I think that makes me more approachable.” She goes on to say that before her, all of the managers were men so women did not feel completely comfortable going to them with certain problems. She states that “if they say ‘I’m having really bad cramps,’ you know they don’t want to talk to men about that. They’d be like, ‘well, take some aspirin.’” Laura’s presence on the floor allows for more women to speak up and feel free to discuss problems that they would not want to discuss with male managers. Lisa states that the hardest part for her when she was promoted was learning not be scared to say what she needs to say and to not keep her opinion to herself; “men and women don’t think alike and you know there are reasons to do stuff and reasons not to do stuff and if you don’t have any diversity, then you’ll always go down the same path.” While women can bring a different managerial style to the industry and allow for more women to potentially move up the ranks, the women in my study still felt like they first needed to join the “in-group” of men in the industry and prove themselves

to others in the group before they could effect change. Yet, as shown in the compensation levels, proving that they are capable of doing the job can only elevate women executives so far.

Act Like A Man

For women in executive-level jobs in the meat industry, there was a clear pattern of negotiating gender display at work. Goffman (1978) sees gender display as the portrayal of a culturally defined correlates of sex. Femininity and masculinity are types of expression that can be conveyed in different social situations and types of behavior that display our “essential nature,” the signs that we give off in social situations. West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that “doing gender” is an ongoing activity that is rooted in everyday interaction.

Across several of the interviews, the emergent theme of “acting like a man” came up as a way to gain credibility or acceptance in the circle of male executives. Christina, a 47 year-old director of purchasing, expresses this idea of what it means to act like a man:

You almost have to play a man you know, whereas a male may be a little more reserved, not talking about their family a lot. They have this wall, this façade that’s there...you know in situations, I think women are, maybe it’s just me. I’m very sensitive and when something gets under your skin you couldn’t let them see it.

The characterization of a man as being “reserved” and “having a wall” contrasts with Christina’s description of women as more open and “sensitive.” It is clear that Christina differentiates male and female in this instance as based on displays of emotion at work. Part of this emotional display is dependent upon how each woman experienced treatment by their male counterparts at

work. For example, at one company that Christina worked before moving to her current job, she describes one of the directors as a male chauvinist “and [I] walked in and I always felt like a piece of meat really. He eyed me from the foot all the way up to the top of my head and was just really awful. It was you know, ‘go clean something, that’s what you’re good at.’” She later states that she remembers crying a lot on that job but “you don’t ever want to let them see you cry.” This sentiment is echoed by Laura, a 52 year old manager, when she says “you know, you can’t be weak when you’re working in a man’s world.” Women in the white-collar positions in this industry feel like they need to display more masculine qualities of being closed-off, unemotional, and separating what’s going on at home with their life at work. Laura states that “I typically try to be professional...I think maybe you know, I think if I had children...that could be an issue.” Having responsibilities at home that could potentially take you away from work puts women in a vulnerable position, especially when the organization has just one or two women in an entire department. This occurs at all levels of the organizational hierarchy from the executive office to the processing room.

While “acting like a man” and playing down femininity is a strategy for most women, there were a few of my participants who emphasized their femininity as a strategy for securing a desired outcome. Lisa describes this tactic as she explains why she acted the way she did in an interaction I witnessed with a male vendor representative who helped her to solve a problem:

I’m not going to lie and say I don’t play into my femininity because I do, you know like right there, he just did me a favor. I will totally hug and kiss him and tell him how awesome he is because boys like that and I know that and that’s how I get my way. And I’ll “cheers to that” every time [*raises her glass of water*].

Patricia, a 66 year old regional sales manager, adds to this by playing up her “Southern belle” identity. She states “I’m perceived as I guess a Southern belle, I live in the South you know, I have this really Southern sound to my voice...seriously, they know when I open my mouth who it is.” Patricia comments that she always dresses “like a lady” when she meets with customers and treats them like family members, always asking about their kids and how their spouses are doing. This works to her advantage as she is able to bring a more personable touch to the hard sell of beef. Her customers see her as a breath of fresh air.

One important theme that appeared throughout all of these interviews is that when it comes to “doing gender” at work, you have to find a balance. Christina states that “I think there are ways to balance it out between letting you be who you are and then having to put up the façade of being who you’re not.” This balance between how you define your identity and how you play at another identity to fit in and survive at work applied to other women in my study who worked in executive-level positions. Lisa found that balance by walking the tightrope of displaying her femininity but still hanging with the guys:

I want to fit in but I want to be cute too. That was always my shtick. Like I’ll do whatever, you can douse me with whatever, I’ll be the guinea pig, I’ll sit in the dunk tank, I don’t care. But I’m going to be a lady about it. Minus my mouth and my drinking skills. Outside of that, I’m going to be a lady.

The concept of “acting like a man” involves a certain type of emotion management at work as well as an active engagement in “masculine-type” behavior. Alcohol and drug use is “part of the daily culture” of the executive side of the industry as Lisa points out, although according to Gary and Junior, two male executives in their 60s, it is not as much as part of the

culture as it was ten to twenty years ago. Both Gary and Junior attribute this to age, however, indicating that perhaps for them it is no longer a part of the culture. Nevertheless, Lisa talks about how drinking with the “boys,” as she calls, them is part of your day. As much as this is part of the culture, you still have to be able to show up for work on time the next day. Both Lisa and Laura describe these kinds of “tests” that women have to pass to gain an “in” or acceptance with men in the industry. Laura describes being a sports fan as a way that she could fit in with men in her department. Lisa echoes this sentiment and talks about being tested with her sports knowledge when she describes herself as a die-hard St. Louis Cardinals baseball fan and that “sometimes I come in, they’ll watch the stats and scores and quiz me to see if I know what I’m doing, you know? And then once they realize that, you know, I know what I’m talking about, I can sit [and watch the game].” Lisa describes being a sports fan as “using my masculine piece” more than altering her physical appearance. She still believes in playing up her femininity in the way she dresses and acts, but for her, sports is her way of “acting like a man” in the industry. Knowing a lot about sports also carried over to the actual playing of sports. Golf is a popular sport among executives in the meat industry and Lisa describes her first experience of being out on the course with the top-level people from her company:

You know, I had to pick up golf, I had to pick up...um, I mean I played like casual drinking golf? But like I had to get a nice bag. So the first time I went out I had my old clubs and everything and I was with the CEO of the company and I was playing at a really famous golf course and that was a complete disaster. Everyone made fun of me the entire day for my bag and clubs and my outfit. I mean I knew people wore "golf clothes" but I was like I'm not going to be one of those...well I

turned into one of those. I went to Golf Garage the next day and bought all new everything, new outfits, new bags, new clubs, new shoes, whatever because I was like ok, you know what? And I talked to my dad and he was like "If you're going to play with the big boys, you gotta to play with the big boys," and I'm like you're right, you're right.

Playing with the big boys means you have to be able to play their games and play by their rules. For this particular experience, Lisa knew what she needed to do to fit in and act the part. She was also able to receive reassurance from her father that she was moving in the right direction which helped her to see how she needed to manage her position to be with the “in-crowd.”

Women’s Experience of Work in the Processing Rooms

One interesting finding on this subtheme of “acting like a man” was that the women who are actually performing masculine-type work in the processing rooms do not experience this pressure to “act” or engage in any type of gender display at work. Everyone in the processing room wears the same uniform, heavy layers of clothing with a white lab coat, hair net, hard hat and orange smock. The only differentiation in the way individuals dress in the processing room is in the color of the hard hat. Different colors mark who is a line supervisor, floor supervisor, quality control agent, and then who is a line worker. The work is very physical; in the processing rooms, “acting like a man” means working in a masculine-type occupation category like meat-cutter. However, even when women work in these positions, once they earn the respect of their male counterparts through showing they can do the work, there are generally no problems with

harassment or feeling pressure to build up a façade. This is not to say that harassment does not take place at all in the processing room. It simply shows that for my participants, harassment and gender discrimination in the processing room was not as big of a problem as it was for women in the white-collar positions. Shirley, a 27 year old meat-cutter, states that “there are no problems with the men. Everyone helps me lift the meat. I’m the only woman so they help me with the heavy cases.” What appears to be more important in the room is pulling your weight with your assigned crew.

There is pronounced gender segregation in the processing rooms where most of the women work as packers and most of the men work as meat-cutters or on the grinding line. When a woman moves to one of the “male” positions, like a meat-cutter, she is now part of that team. Alice, a 57 year old processing room manager at a large meat processing facility in the Southeast, says that she has not really seen a lot of problems between men and women on the meat-cutting line, but what she does see is competitiveness. She states that “what I have seen in more than one occasion is women becoming very competitive...because they want to be the best one and it can get pretty intense.” The bulk of the competition in the processing rooms is not necessarily based on gender, but more often than not is based on race and ethnicity. In the particular example that Alice described where two women became very competitive, “it was a white lady that did not like the Spanish lady because the Spanish lady was very, very good. A little better than her. And she resented the fact that somebody from another country was better than her.” Race, ethnicity, and nationality appear to provide a greater dividing line between individuals in the processing rooms compared to gender. Women in the processing rooms act like men in regards to the work they do, but they do not feel the same pressure to engage in

emotion management or any particular type of gender display as did women in management in order to fit in to the environment. Gender is a significant factor in assigning jobs, but not in how individuals interact with each other on the line. Once you are part of a crew, your identity becomes wrapped in the occupation you hold.

Women's experience in the processing room is tied to the physical environment of the the room and the job of disassembling non-human animals. The processing room of a meat company is where the large primal cuts (sides of the steer carcass) and sub-primal cuts are broken down into different size steaks that are sold and distributed to grocery stores, restaurants, hotels, and other food outlets. The work requires physical strength, attention to detail, and the ability to move and work quickly on the line in order to keep up with production. The environment is cold with a temperature between 35-37 degrees Fahrenheit. Many of my participants described their experience in the processing rooms as cold, hard, and tiring.

While both men and women experience work in the same environment, due to gender segregation within the room, women often work longer hours and have more physically demanding jobs as packers and grinders compared to the men who work as meat cutters and trimmers. Both Horowitz (1997) and Warren (2007) describe women's roles in the packing houses and processing rooms as subordinate. Warren points out that many women historically held jobs in these facilities where they dealt with the animal by-products, received lower wages, and worked longer hours due to the male butchers' control of the production schedule. This description is still true of the processing rooms today. Alice, a 55 year-old female processing room manager who has worked in the industry for over 20 years, describes how it is still a male-dominated industry:

People have yet to recognize that women can actually cut meat and women can pack meat better than men...they can also lift, you don't think of women lifting heavy batches or lugs of meat and they do. People just don't realize the impact that women have on our industry. It's still a male industry...mainly when you hired a female, you didn't even consider anything but a female can only pack, that was just the attitude. And it's still pretty much the attitude today, alright? It's always been a man's job.

In the above quote, when Alice talks about women having to carry lugs of meat, she is referring to bins that can weigh between forty to fifty pounds depending on what types of cuts are inside them. Alice enjoyed talking about the role that women play in the processing rooms and the impact that women have on this industry. The lines on Alice's face and the cut marks on her hands showed a body that had endured work in this industry for a long time. She was very smart and was often able to foresee where I was going with a question before I had even finished my thought. It was interesting to get her perspective on the male-dominated beef industry where females are continuously relegated to a subordinate position within the room. Although these women often perform their job better, they are never paid at the same rate as a man who has more experience but is an inferior meat-cutter or grinder. The amount of work that women put in to producing meat for distribution is unmatched, yet the rate of pay still places women in a subordinate position.

Mary, a 44 year-old woman who worked on a grinding line for a large beef processing facility, said that she and the other women who worked on the line were always paid less than the men. The meat-cutters were paid ten dollars per hour, packers were paid seven dollars per

hour and “some people got eight dollars, it just depended.” Mary was paid a little over eight dollars per hour since she worked on the grinding line where she had to operate a machine. The grinding line consists of both men and women and is one area in the room where men and women work together. Nevertheless, men will be paid at a higher rate. Alice confirms this when she talks about one of her female meat-cutters who gets paid twelve dollars per hour. She states that “women get paid less...it goes back to the old, I don’t know how you put it, but it’s always been that way and it’s always going to be that way because it’s a male industry.” Alice described how her one female meat-cutter could yield better results every time when compared to men who had close to eighteen years of experience. The company “only allowed me to pay her \$12.50 per hour but yet she’s better than a man that...makes \$18 per hour. Would they allow me to pay her \$18 per hour, no. It was never fair that she would only make \$12.50 but it was ok for this guy who’s not as good to make \$6 more.”

All of the women in my study who worked in processing rooms started in packing where the job is to put boxes together, run the packaging machines that seal steaks, beef patties, and other cuts of meat, move the packaged meat into the boxes and properly label the boxes using a labeling machine. The packaging machines are set to run at a certain speed which can be increased or decreased depending on the day’s production schedule. Alice told me that generally the rule of thumb is to “get the machine to cycle 10 cycles per minute. That way you still get speed but you still get them putting [the meat] in the pocket correctly.” Alice’s reference here to the cycling speed paints a descriptive picture of how fast these machines go. Ten cycles per minute means that there is one tray moving through the machine every six seconds that a packer

would have to fill with the right amount of meat according to the order specifications. This job requires attention to detail as well as speed of movement.

Women work in packing and are sometimes able to move up to different positions, depending on the demand for those positions and the training involved. David, a processing room manager, stated that there might be a few women cutting meat, “maybe 5% are women but they’ll be doing trimming.” Shirley, a 28 year-old Colombian woman, was trained by an older woman, also from Colombia, who had initially recommended that she apply to work at the processing room. Shirley learned how to trim meat and how to cut steaks both from her friend and from her boyfriend at the time who worked as a meat-cutter. Because she had this training while she worked as a packer, it was easy to move her up to a meat-cutter position when there was an opening. Cutting tenderloin filets quickly became Shirley’s specialty, a point that she brought up during the interview saying “My specialty is tenders, I cut extremely well.” David, a 38 year-old processing room manager, noted that even when you start out working as a meat-cutter, you don’t move into tenderloins right away. The tenderloin is an expensive cut of meat so generally this job is not handed to a new meat-cutter. If a meat-cutter makes mistakes cutting tenderloin, those mistakes can cost a meat company a significant amount of profit dollars.

The process of cycling through the packaging machine mimics the process of cycling through the workday. When asked to describe a typical day at work, my participants who worked in processing rooms described the same pattern:

Shirley: I go to my locker, get my stuff ready, get the machines ready, get the scales ready and then I start working...I work 2 hours and then get a break, then

back to work and work until noon, then go to lunch, then the rest of my day, I cut meat. Cut, break, cut, break, cut break.

Cathy: I start to clean, start to cut and after that we go in to packing...I make boxes, 20 pieces of meat or so depending on the order go inside the box, just putting meat in a box. I just make the boxes and put the meat inside, all day.

Javier: Get the product, start cutting...cut until your break.

David: I'd check in with my supervisor, see what the orders were, request the product I needed from the warehouse and then go to work. I'd start throwing the product into the grinding machine and on to the meat lift. Back and forth all day.

The description of work in the processing room mimics the mechanized environment. The way in which my participants described their typical day at work very much resembled the same description of disassembly that takes place in the room. Breaking down the day and breaking down the animal parts for steak incorporates the same mechanized language. The movement in the processing room is like a machine where each individual acts as a moving part in the machine to disassemble animals for meat consumption. When an employee is absent or the machines break down, it causes a disruption that means longer hours and more stress for the men and women working in the room. Mary talked about how she never knew what time she would be home, especially when the machines would break. She says "sometimes we would have to wait like three hours or four hours while they fixed it, finish work at 11:00pm." This breakdown in the systematic movement of the processing rooms really affects women as most of them work in packing where they are the last to leave the room at night. Many women in the processing

rooms have children at home and the stress of not knowing when they will be able to clock out leads some to cut corners and use the machines in unsafe ways, potentially causing pain and harm to themselves and those working around them. Pain is an inherent part of working in the processing room, either due to an acute injury or chronic pain caused by years of repetitive movement and heavy lifting.

Pain and Injury

Both men and women experience pain as part of the process of working in the meat industry. Mary, who worked the grinding line for eight years, says that “sometimes I could not feel my fingers; I think sometimes that’s why my hand still hurts, from arthritis.” The pain that Mary describes is a common injury to many women working in this industry. Shirley also describes the pain in her hands and feet from standing and making a cutting motion for eight to ten hours a day. Shirley says that by the end of the day her feet are usually aching and “you see my fingers, too much pain. My leg, oh my goodness. Too many years.” Most of the aches and pain that men and women feel hit them when they go home; the cold environment of the processing room masks some of the signs of long-term injury. Cathy says that she doesn’t ever feel pain at work, “but at home, yeah I start to feel the pain. I don’t feel it in the cold room.” David, a processing room manager, started out working in the processing rooms on the grinding line making ground beef and beef patties. He describes that work as causing wear and tear on your body, “picking ten pound boxes all day long and you’re doing like 200, 300, 400 boxes a day, it kind of wears you down...needless to say you go home and go straight to bed. Start the day the next day all over again.”

Meat production targets an “economically and socially vulnerable workforce...especially non-English-speaking immigrants” (Purcell 2011:70). The loss of their job presents a great risk to many of these individuals, which makes them very compliant to the productivity demands and long hours that their employers require. Owners and managers know that these workers will perform the job for lower pay and will not complain about the working conditions or long hours because they do not want to draw attention. This condition completely disempowers these women and allows for the subordination of women in the room to continue. Companies care about the quantity produced at the end of the line and the speed at which it is produced. There is no real incentive for these companies to work with their employees on benefits like sick pay or family leave, considering that when you are down a meat-cutter on the line, that means less production and less profit for the day. As Alice states, “the famous line is ‘you have too many personal problems to work here.’” This vague language represents a broad category of reasons for letting people go from the processing room. These reasons can include childcare issues, sickness, injury or simply slow production.

Working at fast speeds makes individuals in the processing rooms more prone to accidents. Women especially are prone to these accidents as they are usually the ones working at the end of the night, packing the remaining product created by the meat-cutters. The traditional male role of meat-cutter presents an interesting relationship between meat-cutter and meat-packer in this industry. In the World War II era when more and more women were entering the meat-packing industry, many facilities would use “chutes to convey product from a male-dominated department to female workers below them...this aptly represented in physical form the relationship between men and women in a packinghouse” (Horowitz 1997:2006). In today’s

meat processing plants, the female packers are still left to finish the work of the male meat-cutters at the end of the night.

Although women have started to move into the masculine occupations within meatpacking and meat-processing, they still occupy subordinate positions which put them in danger physically. According to David, a processing room manager who has worked in the industry for close to 20 years, sometimes there is a good balance of men and women in the processing room, “but the majority...99% of all packing is women. All packing is normally done by women, I’ve never seen any males...I’ve been in charge of that area before, but I was the only male.” Packing has its dangers, especially near the end of the night when women working in the room are tired and looking forward to going home. David has seen women “who are missing digits and it’s from the Rollstock machine...just not paying attention...their fingers are the first things to go.” Alice describes how women cut corners in order to finish quickly so they can get home to their families and the consequences of shortcuts:

They’ve got those last three steaks and [the packaging machine] cycles, they’ll try to go underneath it and what happens is when the dye box closes, I mean it’ll take all your fingers off your hand. That and the cuber. And they always, because the packers are the ones that are going to cube, and what’ll happen is that the meat-cutters will be slackers, cut corners and won’t cut the meat on the bias, they’ll cut it in chunks. Well the chunks get stuck in there and so the girls at the end of the night...you’ve got to remember, all the packers are girls and they want to go home and usually the standard is an hour and a half after you finish cutting is what it takes to finish. And so you’re running until 8:00pm and then it’s going to

be 9:00-9:30pm, they just want to get out of there. So they lift the lid, hold the safety down so they can just use it without the safety and they can just push [the meat] down. It's quicker but you'll see a lot of them take fingers off. I've seen a girl just lose her whole hand, it was just turned to mush.

David has also seen this injury happen to a woman who was working the cubing machine which tenderizes the meat the make cube steaks:

She was just dropping the meat in “bloop, bloop, bloop,” and the meat got stuck and I turned around and I see her using a knife to shove the meat down...instead of sticking it in like this [*holds the handle of the knife*] she turned it around with the blade like this [*pointing towards the hand*] and it got caught in the teeth and the knife just went through her hand. She learned her lesson there.



Figure 2: Rollstock Machine
(Wikimedia Commons 2015)

Understanding women’s experience in the processing room requires an understanding of pain. Both men and women experience pain and injury on the job. Every position has its danger whether you are a meat-cutter or a packer. The common impetus of injuries in the processing rooms is pressure. David acknowledges that pressure plays a large role in the industry and that “people cut corners because they’re under pressure and they’re trying to get that job done fast and they’re rushing.” It can also be that your line leader is trying to rush everyone and push group to move faster. Often these leaders are not concerned with the proper safety measures; the concern lies in getting as much production as possible in a short period of time. However, David says that what you need in the room is a calm situation:

When you’re busy like that and people come in and stir things up to get it moving faster, it gets chaotic. All that people are thinking are “I’ve got to get this done and I’ve only got ten minutes,” or “I’ve got to go to the bathroom,” or “I’ve got to go on break,” they’re thinking about all of these things instead of what they’re doing. It’s pressure, Time rules at that moment.

The injuries that David has seen in his twenty years in the business have happened because people were cutting corners. The pressure combined with long hours and exhaustion leads people to take shortcuts in order to complete production as quickly as possible. David goes on to talk about “guys with the tips of their fingers missing,” the saw “catching a guy’s fingers and rolling his arm,” “fingers getting trapped in the Rollstock machine,” as well as a number of other minor cuts that have happened because people were rushing and not following the proper safety procedures. However, it can be hard to remember all of the proper safety procedures when, as he puts it, “you’ve got the boss in your ear.” Worker safety and production levels continuously butt heads. Because of the demographic make-up of the workforce in the meat processing industry, however, it is unlikely that anyone would complain about long hours or lack of safety in the room. The marginalization of a largely immigrant population in these facilities, and the marginalization of women within these populations, allows for production levels to remain high, margins of profit to rise, and workers to suffer more injuries and ailments.

Summary

The experience of work in the meat industry differs by gender, race, and class. Women who work in the executive level positions in the industry are often the only women in their departments. They experience the feeling of being an outsider and feel the need to prove that women can do the job required. This feeling of being an outsider occurs not only due to differences in managerial approaches, but also to differences in compensation and workload. Many of the women who participated in my study talked about having to be more prepared than the men at the board meetings, doing more research and overall putting in more hours than their male counterparts. Because of the need to fit in, many women adopt strategies of gender display,

resulting in the pressure to “act like a man.” While some women attempt to alter their appearance through wardrobe or emotion management, others play up their femininity to gain an advantage in a male-dominated environment. Patricia, a 66 year-old sales director, said during her interview that many of her male customers see her as a breath of fresh air since she is one of the few women with whom they interact for their beef purchasing.

Women in the processing room have a different experience compared to women in the executive-level positions; these women still, however, experience their work in a different way than their male colleagues in the processing room. Most men work as meat-cutters or as grinders whereas many of the women work as packers. Both jobs bring with them the risk of physical injury as well as the experience of long-term physical pain. Women have been able to move in to meat-cutting positions, yet only about five percent of meat-cutters are women. It is interesting to note that when asked why men did not work as packers, David, a processing room manager, said that men will not take that work. Men feel that it is beneath them to work in those positions. Plus, he said, women pay more attention to detail which is a helpful trait to have as a packer. Nevertheless, the simple statement that men will not take that kind of work reiterates the findings of previous research on jobs in the packing and processing rooms that shows how women are employed in subordinate positions (Fink 1995, Horowitz 1997, Warren 2007). The fact that the majority of these women are Hispanic reinforces the subordinate position of these workers. Most of the white male workers get promoted quickly to line supervisor, assistant processing room manager or processing room manager.

Physical injury in the processing room is a result of the structure of the industry. Pressure to produce often trumps the safety of workers whether it is pressure that the individual packer or

meat-cutter internalizes or pressure that is placed upon them by line supervisors and managers. Nevertheless, the stress that is an outcome of the structural components of the meat industry produces the need to cut corners which is where most of the injuries occur. It is clear that women in both executive-level and processing room jobs feel pressure from their male supervisors to perform what seem to be impossible tasks and to do it faster and better than anyone else. Speed is an inherent trait of the meat industry; however, it is often the precursor to physical injury or unhealthy coping mechanisms that spill over into life at home.

CHAPTER SIX: WORK AND FAMILY

Women have historically borne the task of domestic work, even before industrialization and the movement of women's occupations outside of the home. Joan Williams (1999) argues that the entrenched American norm and practice over history is the gender system of domesticity. This system organizes market work around the concept of the "ideal worker" who "works full time and overtime and takes little or no time off for childbearing or child rearing" (Williams 1999:1). This ideal-worker continues to define what society considers good jobs today. Caregivers cannot perform as ideal workers since the system of domesticity marginalizes their role, thereby "cutting them off from most of the social roles that offer responsibility and authority" (Williams 1999:1). Since more and more women have entered the workforce and are spending significant hours outside the home working for a wage, their ability to do the work of the caregiver, the domestic work, is affected. Therefore, the quality of family life is affected, leading to what Abbott (1993) describes as a work/family conflict. Throughout all of my interviews with women in the meat industry, I found that this work/family conflict was a significant feature of every conversation I had with my participants on the effects of work on the family and on relationships.

Lorber (1994) describes the discrimination that married women with children used to receive in hiring and promotion decisions in the past. This discrimination often continues today because the so-called "mommy tracks" keep women professional and managers in lower-paid, lower-prestige occupational ranks. The exclusion from top-level positions is legitimated due to women's roles as mothers; "mommy-tracks thus reinforce and legitimate the structural glass ceiling" (Lorber 1994:235). My interview with Alice, a female processing room manager, served

to reinforce this pattern. According to Alice, “if somebody comes out and you’re just taking with someone at the interview and they say ‘I’m a single mother,’ that ain’t happening...because companies know that she’s going to miss a lot of time.” Women with children do not fit the role of the ideal worker who can devote one hundred percent of their time to their job. The women I interviewed in the meat processing rooms were mainly single mothers or simply felt like single mothers, as one participant pointed out, since they had the dual roles of bread-winner and caretaker. All of my participants discussed the tension between work and family, but men and women seemed to adhere to different cultural scripts to describe what it felt like to miss time with their kids or maintain relationships with their partners/spouses. The spillover of work into family/home life centered on missing events and missing time with children, maintaining relationships, and feeling separated from home and from cultural networks. Many of my participants had immigrated to the United States and felt a disconnection between their life in their home country and their life in the United States. These women also felt a loss of their role as a “mother” at home. The concept of “home” itself took on a different definition for these participants in comparison with those who were native-born U.S. citizens. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) and Segura (1994) both describe the cultural script of solo mothering in the home as an ideal that many Latina women hold. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) argue that this social construction of motherhood is not only based in a White, middle-class way of thinking, but that there are also “strong Latina/o traditions, cultural practices, and ideals...that cast employment as oppositional to mothering.” (1997:551). This break in the traditional gender ideology for Latina women further serves to intensify the separation that they feel from their ideal “home.”

For all of my participants, the three major areas of focus on how work in the meat industry spills over to family and home life were 1) missing time with family 2) struggling to maintain relationships, and 3) feeling separated from family. Missing time with family involved not only missing out on time with children and negotiating the conflict between embodying the ideal worker type and embodying the ideal mother, it also involved missing important family events and feeling guilty about how work impacts family bonds. Maintaining relationships became a central focus as many of my participants were eager to discuss the hardship of struggling to keep a marriage together or struggling to get support from other family members when work conflicted with family responsibilities. Both men and women discussed their experience with these focal areas; however, there was a difference between the male and female perspective on the work-life balance that reinforced cultural scripts of breadwinner/provider and domestic caretaker.

Missing Time

Missing Family Events

One sub-theme of missing time with family centered on missing important family events like reunions, vacations, births, and funerals. Women in the processing rooms and women in the executive offices both described missing important events due to the uncertainty of their work schedule and the demands of their job. Laura, a 52 year-old purchasing manager, talked about putting both family events and important outings with friends on the backburner because of her job. Currently single, she wishes she had time to go out with her friends, but it's usually "I have to work. That's the way it is. I had family get-togethers where I said 'oh, I can't go. I have to

work.' I've always had to set aside even my family get-togethers or vacations or plans in order to accommodate my work...I can't even have a life." Lisa, a 38 year-old purchasing director, has also missed important family events because of her demanding work schedule. At the time that I interviewed Lisa, she had her phone by her on the table because she was waiting for a call from her parents about her grandmother. They were taking her grandmother off of life support that particular day and Lisa talked very openly about how guilty she felt because she should be there with her family instead of at work:

So like I keep my phone here today you know by my side...they just called, my family, my grandmother she's passing today. She's been off life support and she's passing, probably like pretty much about right now. So it's one of those like I'm just waiting for the phone call and it's a sacrifice. Like I've never been home for...I've had to miss funerals before, I missed the birth of my niece and nephew, you name it I've missed it. I've never been there for birthday parties and all this stuff and that's just part of it. So like today is a weird day because I'm just sitting here just waiting for the inevitable to happen and it's like, I started struggling last night thinking I should be home, I'm like the worst daughter ever. There should be no reason why I'm not there.

Lisa goes on to talk about how her family never makes her feel guilty for missing these types of events; she places that guilt upon herself because she knows she needs to be there for these important events. She also talks about how a man in her situation would receive different treatment from his employer for this type of an event:

I'm lucky that my family gets it and they understand what this is, what a big responsibility this is. So they don't, like they don't make me feel guilty or make me feel weird about it but I think if it were a man in the same situation, I think they're automatically thought of as they have to go take care of the family, they're in charge so they have to be there. Female is kind of more like the motherly figure, um, I kind of think about sons and men or fathers or whatever you want to say are you know, kind of get a little more of a grace period than women do.

What is interesting about this statement from Lisa is her feeling that men get more of a grace period in these situations compared to women. Lisa's perception is that a company thinks that in a time of crisis, like a death in the family, men need to be there to take care of things more than women do. It could also be that there are different standards for male and female executives when it comes to time missed from work due to family situations.

For women to move into executive-level positions in a male-dominated industry, they must jump over a greater number of hurdles, including distancing themselves from the "mother" script. Returning to the ideal worker concept put forth by Williams (1999), it is clear that there is a greater amount of pressure placed on women who have to miss work to take care of children or be there for family than is placed on men by the employer. The ideal worker should not have to split time between the domestic realm and the occupational realm. While both men and women have to miss work at times to take care of family emergencies and different family situations, the time missed is viewed through a different lens for women. For women who work in the processing rooms, missing time to take care of children is not received well. Women who miss too much time and take too many sick days to take care of their children run the risk of losing

their jobs in the room. Mary, a 44 year-old processing room worker, says that it is especially hard when your kids are sick and there is no one to take care of them: “They are sick and you have to go to work. It’s very hard leaving your kid when they are sick. You get stressed.” Alice, a 55 year-old processing room manager, reiterated this point when she talked about sick leave policy for processing room workers and the unfair treatment that a lot of single mothers get from their employers. She said that the famous line that Brandon Beef Company uses is “you’ve got too many personal problems to work here.” The domestic world is pushing too far into the work world. While men and women would experience this type of disciplinary action at any job, women in the processing rooms are often individuals who have immigrated on their own with their children to the United States and do not have a strong network in place to cover some of the domestic responsibilities.

Missing Time with Children

While the floor of the meat processing room looks like an assembly line, the work schedules for most of these women do not conform to a rigid structure. There is a lot of uncertainty in the workday of meat processing employees, especially those working in grinding or packing. Although a shift begins at the same time each day, the end of that shift can depend on many factors. These factors can include the number of production orders for that day, the delay in production due to machine malfunction, and the ability of your fellow team members to perform their jobs quickly. Although she occupied a higher status position, Shirley, a 27 year-old meat cutter, still suffered the same uncertainty in knowing when she would get to leave work for the night:

At [Brandon Beef Company]...I work from 7:00am and maybe I come back at 8:00 or 9:00pm. I didn't see my babies. I mean "I love you goodnight." The next day the same. Too much production. Meat-cutting tenders with no machine, all by hand. So it's too much. On one ticket there might be 400 pieces, 800 pieces, so it's too much. Stress, oh my god. Big problems in my house with my babies.

Where Shirley worked there were only two women who worked as meat-cutters. All of the other women were packers, a traditional role for women in the meat-packing and meat-processing industries. The women who work as packers and grinders often do not leave until the meat-cutters are done with the orders for the day. This means that most of the time, these women are not leaving until anywhere from one hour to two hours after the end of production. The time taken away from their families places a large amount of stress on these women who are already under a tremendous amount of physical and psychological stress in their job. The schedules for meat-cutters, on the other hand, seem to be more consistent with the typical eight hour workday. However, this can vary by company and the number of meat-cutters employed in the room.

Missing time with children can also result from working in a position that is dependent on complex machines to finish production orders. Mary, a 44 year-old processing room employee, worked the grinding line for seven years and describes how on days when the machine would break down, she would have to work much later in order to make up that time lost in production. Arranging childcare was a great source of stress to her especially on short notice:

Sometimes we would work like ten to twelve hours, because sometimes the machine would break, you have to wait for them to fix it. Sometimes I would wait

three or four hours while they fixed it and finish work at 11:00pm...It's supposed to end by 4:00pm, supposed to be eight hours but always work more than that...sometimes when you can't find who is going to take care of your kids, there is a lot of stress and sometimes when you finish at 11:00pm, you're not at home with your kids. When you get home, the kids are already sleeping. When I get up in the morning, because I had to get out early, the kids were still sleeping. I would not see my kids, play with them or share time with my kids. I didn't have it.

When I discussed the strain that these working conditions placed on their relationships with their children, both Shirley and Mary classified themselves as absent mothers or bad mothers. The absence of time with their children places a separation between mother and child that cuts at the intimate bonds of this relationship. While they are not absent in support of their children, these women are absent in the daily tasks that go on in a household from picking kids up from school to helping with homework and making sure they have everything they need for the next day. Women in my study who worked in the meat-processing rooms were for the most part single parents with the responsibility of supporting and caring for their children all on their own. They are essentially cut off from any support network that may have been in place in their native country. Because they are not able to perform the traditional homemaker role that they were brought up to believe is very important, they see themselves as lacking in their natural maternal role. Every ounce of free time they have on the weekends is devoted to fulfilling this role of homemaker, one that they take pride in and attempt to recapture during the down time at home. Of course, with the short amount of time that exists on the weekends, this can lead to even greater stress in their lives. Here Mary describes how she spends her time at home on weekends:

It's hard because it's your day off but you have to do laundry, grocery store, and a lot of things, it's like your weekend goes like this (snaps fingers) you don't have time to go out or something like that, especially because I always worked Saturdays in grinding, like 7:00am to 12:00pm.

For David, a 38 year-old processing room manager who has worked in the industry for twenty years, the absence of time with children does not affect how he views his role as a father in the same way that women viewed their roles as absent mothers. David views his absence as part of providing for his family, being a good father:

I would come home, tired, eat, didn't want to do anything, say hi to the kids, just lay down on the couch and fall asleep. Working six days a week... You have to make sure your family is take care of. That's what my mindset was for the longest time, I have to take care of my family, so I was always working, working, working... I was never home.

Here David adheres to the traditional view of the "father" to be the bread-winner and provider for the family. David acknowledges that he was never home with his kids and when he was, he was so tired that he did not have that much interaction with them. In contrast to Shirley and Mary, however, it was clear from the way in which David described his role as a parent that he does not think of himself as a bad father. He sees himself as a provider. A good father is one who takes care of his family by providing an income and providing the economic means for his family's survival. David remembers his own father always working to provide for his family, "and when he did spend time with us, I remember it." The quality time that David remembers with his father outweighs the lack of quantity time spent with his father growing up.

For White, middle and upper class men and women in the meat industry, the same adherence to the cultural scripts of what a good mother and/or father looks like is equally applicable. Junior, a 60 year-old sales manager, readily admits that his work life created a wall between him and his two daughters who are now grown. His description of the relationship he has with his daughters illustrates the adherence to the script of the ideal father:

Sure, work definitely created a schism in my relationship with my daughters. As much as we are close and love each other, we have nothing to do with each other 99% of the time. We love seeing each other but an hour or two, that's enough. They have grown up separate from me to a degree which is ok with me too though. What more do you want? I wanted them to be strong and happy and be able to take care of themselves. It wasn't always intentional, not always the game plan to end up that way. You give up something for this.

Junior views his absence as having a positive effect on his two daughters, enabling them to grow up without being dependent upon their father. Later in the interview, he mentions that his younger daughter ended up in a rehabilitation facility at one point but that she was strong enough to pull herself out of her bad habits and become successful in life. This is clearly a negative effect of his absence at home; however, he still turns it into a positive by talking about the emotional strength of his daughter and her ability to turn her life around and get her priorities straightened out.

For women who work in executive-level positions, the stress of missing time with their children because of work obligations has a similar negative impact as it does for women in the processing rooms; however, missing time with their children does not seem to harness the same

feelings of “being a bad mother,” or “not being a mother,” that many women in the processing room expressed. Christina, a 47 year-old director of purchasing for a large food corporation, talked about missing her son’s baseball games, “when he hit his first high school home run, I missed it.” Christina later goes on to state that she knows her son understands her job and the hours she needs to work, but at the same time she knows there is always the thought of “why weren’t you there? This was important to me.” Because of her spouse’s work, Christina was able to stay at home with her son after he was born up until he started school, but it is clear when she talks about the things she has missed that not being there for important events in his life outweighs the time she was able to devote to him when he was younger. She states that between her job and home “you’re definitely pulled in a lot of directions and I think that by nature, by being a woman, you want to be everything to everybody.” This idea of being there for everyone and being able to wear multiple hats is one that was reiterated by several women participants when they discussed managing work and home life. For men in my study, this type of experience did not come up in conversation. The idea of being everything to everyone and making sure everyone is taken care of on multiple levels was not a priority for my male participants when it came to the discussion of balance between work and home.

Maintaining Relationships

Work in the beef industry presents a difficult environment for maintaining relationships. In sales and purchasing, people are often on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Divorce is prevalent in the industry due to the long hours at work and the stress of the work. Out of my fifteen participants, eleven had been divorced at least once. Two had never been married and two were married and had never been divorced. Gary, a 66 year-old male who has worked in the

industry for 32 years and owns a meat distribution company, said that he thinks a lot of women are turned off from working in the meat industry because it is a 24/7 business. He said “we are on call 24 hours a day; women with children are not going to do that...like I had a salesman call me on Christmas Day to come open up the office because he needed to run product out to someone.” It is not uncommon to have certain problems come up on days off or on holidays that require an immediate fix. The women in my study had a harder time negotiating the demands of the business with the demands of their home life in comparison to the men in my study. Even the women who were married and had stayed married talked about the strain that the job puts on a marriage and the importance of having support from your partner or from other family members who can pick up the extra weight when necessary.

Having Support

One thing that women in both occupational levels discussed was the importance of having support from family members or friends in balancing work with family. Women who work in the processing rooms are usually women who have immigrated to the U.S. from the Global South. For the women in my study, those who worked in the processing rooms had moved to the U.S. from Colombia and El Salvador. Shirley, who is from Colombia, talked about the benefit of having her mom live with her and help take care of her kids when she had to work. While this was a benefit, it also caused tension between Shirley and her mother. Shirley’s mom holds on to the traditional view of a mother as a woman who stays home and takes care of her children and the household. Shirley said that back home in Colombia, “the women stayed home, cleaning house, taking care of kids... [My mom] used to call all the time and say ‘what are you

doing? You need to be home!” Nevertheless, Shirley’s mom understands that the need for a paycheck is greater than adhering to the traditional cultural view of a mother.

Catherine, a 31 year-old meat packer, has a 5 year old child at home and was a single parent up until this year when she re-married. She also has her mom living with her in the U.S. while her father still lives in Colombia. She states that it is nice to “have my mom with me...she helps take care of things...she supports me.” Even though she is re-married now, Catherine still continues to work full time. She does not hold on to the traditional view of gender roles that had been part of her experience growing up in Colombia She stated that she likes the work and she is learning how to be a meat-cutter from her husband who also works in the processing room. One interesting thing about Catherine is that she is currently pregnant and yet continues to work in a physically demanding environment. Packers usually have to lift forty pound lugs of meat to load the machines; however, she has been able to let others in the room take up that work for her so that she only has to run the machine and make the boxes. Still, when I asked her about working in the processing room while pregnant, she responded “some people don’t like the cold room, but for me, I like working in the cold right now. It’s better than working in the hot sun all day.” Catherine views the cold environment as a benefit right now and stressed that she will keep working even after the baby is born. She continues to send money to her father in Colombia each month and so she needs to continue working in order to do so.

While Shirley and Cathy have a family member who can take care of their children when they have to work long hours, other women in the processing rooms relied on networks of friends in the community to help with childcare. Mary, a 44 year-old meat grinder in the processing room, spoke about the support she received from her ex-husband while they were still

married and her friends in the community. Since Mary and her ex-husband both worked in the processing room at a large beef manufacturing plant, they were often on different schedules and so it became a juggling act to figure out who would take care of their two children. Mary states that “I would have to pay for a babysitter for the kids...we would get friends who did not ask for much, not like when you take your kids to daycare.” Mary states that even though she was married at that time, she felt like a single parent most days. It was hard to maintain a relationship since she and her husband had very different schedules. He worked as a meat-cutter in the processing room which had a set schedule each day. Mary’s work in the meat grinding room was never on a set schedule and she often had to work overtime to finish production for the day. She says that “we lived in the same house but we were separate. It was like being single.” She describes her life at that time as “not comfortable...there was stress at home, stress in my job and at home.” For Mary, the spillover of work in the processing room into her family life created a fissure in her relationship with her husband and structured her family in such a way that she felt like a single parent. Near the end of their marriage, Mary states that she and her former husband were even living in separate bedrooms. She describes it as “not like normal couples...probably for about five years we had different rooms.” Mary was required to put in difficult hours, often erratic shifts, in the processing room whereas her husband, in the traditional male-dominated role of meat-cutter, was able to work a normal 7:00am to 3:00pm schedule. The stress Mary felt being away from her children was compounded by the stress of living a separate life from her husband.

While women who work in the processing rooms struggle with finding support through networks of friends and relatives, women in the executive-level positions who are married with

children must rely on support from their partners. Patricia, a 66 year-old regional sales director, had her children before she was promoted to an executive-level position. She started out working as a secretary and was able to successfully move up to a regional sales director position during her 36 year tenure in the meat industry. Since she initially worked as a secretary, her schedule allowed her to still be at home and take care of her children when they were young. Looking back on that experience now, Patricia says “I’ve thought about it before. I couldn’t have done this job...because I travel a lot you know? I’ll leave on Sunday, come back Wednesday night, but yeah, I couldn’t have done it as a younger person with a family.” Christina, a 47 year-old director of purchasing at a large meat company, relies heavily on her husband for support at home while she works. She describes her marriage as similar to being part of a team; “we’ve always had a real good relationship, kind of like being a team which is great.” Christina’s husband also works in the food industry which she describes as a bonus because he understands the schedule better than someone who does not work in the meat industry. Still, she holds on to the traditional female role of being the homemaker at the same time that she works in a top executive-level position:

I will...you know the traditional roles that a woman plays, I will tell you that even if I get home at 7:30 at night I cook the full meal every night. I make lunch for my husband every day for him to take to work, I make lunch for my son every day to take to school. I do those things. Am I tired when I get home and it’s really the last thing I want to do? But I do it because I love them and that’s one of those things I can do for them.

For Christina, being able to take on those traditional female roles of cooking dinner, making lunches, and doing housework, allows her to show support and care for her husband and son. She equates performing in this role as one way that she can show she cares for her family. The traditional gender ideology that creates a tension between work and home for many women still affects Christina even though she has a significant amount of support from her husband and son.

What was really interesting is how Christina described the change in her marriage as she began to move up through the ranks at her job. She stands out in my group of participants because she is very successful at her job and maintains strong family ties that support her in her career. However, for Christina, maintaining a relationship while working in the meat industry means being able to adapt to change and personal growth in your marriage. Christina discussed how she has grown as she has moved up to the director position at her company:

I was young when I got married and my husband is nine years older than I am. So I was 22. And I always was kind of strong and independent but, because he was older and had more life experience...I definitely was not as strong and vocal and convicted as I am today. Those are those things that as I've grown in my career and my roles I've grown stronger about who I am and initially it was hard for him ...But I was the same person, I was just finally standing up and speaking. I was confident...I don't want to be dismissed, I have something to say.

As Christina advanced through the ranks at her company, she had to adapt to an increasing amount of responsibility at work and had to become more confident. This change in self-confidence then impacted the relationship she had with her husband, who was forced to adapt to a more confident spouse. Both partners had to adapt to change in their relationship in order to

maintain the balance between work and home. Maintaining a relationship for Christina meant growing into an equal partner to her husband and knowing which traditional female roles she was willing to hold on to and which ones she needed to let go.

Postponing Family

Many women in my study were willing to openly discuss the struggle between the demands of work in the meat industry and maintaining a strong relationship with their spouses, children, and friends. Two of my female participants, Lisa and Laura, had a different experience when it came to talking about family and maintaining relationships. Laura, a 52 year-old purchasing manager, had been married but had gone through a divorce and had no children. Laura reflected upon her choice to postpone having a family and appeared to lament the fact that she had put her career ahead of everything else:

I never, that's the problem with working in this industry is that you work so much that you forget to have, take time to have children. So that was my...I would say "oh, one day I'll have children" and then all of a sudden I said, "you know, it's getting too late." You just think about career.

Both Laura and Lisa discussed the effect of a hectic work schedule on relationships in the industry. Laura stated that most of the time relationships start at work; "you'll see that's how relationships start. You'll say, oh, they used to work together, now they're married. Because you see certain people, you don't ever meet other people, it's hard." Lisa, a 37 year-old director of purchasing, agreed with the statement that you end up only meeting people at work because of the intense schedule and long hours at the office. She talked about the negative effect of being

the only female in the group of executives on her relationships: “They have to understand that the people who are going to be calling and texting me are 95% of the time going to be men. And it’s not for any reason except that’s the only people I work with, that’s the only people I have around.” Both Laura and Lisa were able to confirm the negative impact that working in the meat industry has on maintaining relationships. Lisa even went so far as to state that “you can’t do it. I mean you can...it never works out. I’ve never seen, I don’t know any of my friends who are still in the same business with kids at home and everything. Or that aren’t divorced. I don’t know anyone...zero.”

Lisa had also decided to put career first and postpone having a family. The nature of the industry makes it very difficult to try to maintain the picture of a nice house with three kids and a white picket fence; Lisa talked about how if that is the picture you want, then this business is not for you. In contrast to Laura, however, Lisa had no regrets about the choices she had made in life and she still thinks about having children of her own at some point:

I think like once I probably got out of college, got into this business, realized what it is, what a beast it is. I just ruled [having children] out. I probably actually have thought about it more lately in the past year or two that I realize ok, I control this. And I don’t have to answer to anybody; I don’t have to hear the ridicule from people. Cause everybody knows if that ever happened and I was pregnant or whatever, they all know I would be here until 15 minutes after my water broke. Fighting with the ambulance, like just give me just a minute, I’ve gotta fix this order. I know everybody knows that. I don’t question it anymore, I really don’t question myself anymore either.

Earlier in the interview, Lisa had discussed what would happen if a female executive had to take maternity leave. She noted that there were always several people waiting to move in on her job. If a female executive left for maternity leave, her job was basically up for grabs among all of the junior executives. The company would not fire the employee; other executives would simply see that there were people in place who could do that same job without having to miss time at work for any type of family or medical leave situation. That type of pressure combined with the chaotic schedule of her job is what made Lisa postpone having a family; it is only recently that she has become comfortable enough in her position and in her own capabilities to consider that option: “I’ve probably actually thought about it more lately in the past year or two... [it’s been] a lot easier to open up to the idea.”

Maintaining relationships is one process that women face at work in the meat industry. Whether women work in the processing rooms or in managerial positions, they all must contend with the struggle to balance the physical and emotional demands of work with the demands of the household. Some women in executive-level positions make the decision to postpone family to forward their career. Others manage a balance between work and home with the assistance of a family support network. For women who work in the processing rooms, the struggle to maintain relationships and balance the demands of work with their roles at home becomes amplified due to the different experiences these women have with moving to a new country. Not only must they work to maintain relationships in their household, they must also work to maintain relationships between their current household and their true “home.”

Feeling Separated from Family

The stress that women in the processing room feel stems from a separation from a traditional gender ideology in their new role at work. Phyllis Baker (2004) finds a similar paradox between traditional gender ideology and transformative gender roles in her study of Mexicana immigrants working and living in Iowa. The women in Baker's study transgress the traditional notions of gender roles by working in the paid labor force, mainly in meat-packing plants. This is very different from their home country in which their role was to take care of the house and children. Embedded in their lives is "a gender ideology based on traditional notions of what it means to be a woman, wife and mother" (Baker 2004:397). It was interesting to see the parallels between the Mexicana immigrants in Baker's study and the immigrant women that I interviewed. As Baker found, many of these women have a strong desire to improve the lives of their children which spurs them to take on this new life and transgress the traditional gender ideology of their native culture. The difference between the old life that they are now separated from and the new life is that now they must be the sole caretaker of the children as well as the sole breadwinner of the household. When asked what made her decide to move to America, Mary spoke of the opportunities for her children, even if it meant having to bear both responsibilities as caretaker and breadwinner:

You know, you always hear when people [in America] are making good money, living better, these stories, and giving my kids a better life...because I love my country, but it's so different. Everything here is more opportunity especially for your kids...I had more time for family [in El Salvador]; El Salvador is more relaxed but the money is more tight.

Shirley's description of her life in Colombia echoes the traditional gender ideology inherent in these communities:

In Colombia, I stayed home. My oldest was just a baby. I stayed home, relaxed. No working. My husband worked...in Colombia, most of the men worked. The women stayed home, cleaning house, taking care of kids. Very relaxed...in Colombia I never worked. I stayed home all the time. I liked it.

It is evident that there is a certain level of pride that these women have in taking care of the home and the children. Segura's (1994) study of Chicana and Mexicana women in the San Francisco Bay area illustrates the precarious position that that women have in balancing cultural ideals with the reality of needing to support a family. She introduces the concept of the Ambivalent Employed Mother who feels that employment "interferes with motherhood, and feel 'guilty' when they work outside the home" (Segura 1994:217). The majority of the women in my study who worked in the processing room fit this category of analysis. Despite feeling guilty, most of these women continue to work to provide a better life for their children, "a goal that transcends staying home with their children." (Segura 1994:221). Both Shirley and Mary talked about needing money to support their children and provide a better life for them. While their home countries were very nice and relaxed, the money was tight and there were not very many opportunities to move up in economic status. Catherine, who was pregnant at the time of her interview, stressed the need to keep working even after she has the baby so she can continue to contribute to the family and send money back to her father in Colombia. The remittance payments back home are another impetus to keep working for many women in the processing

rooms. They work not only to provide money for their own children but also so their families back home can live a better life.

The cutting of family connections is also apparent in the move to the United States from the home country. These women either moved on their own or with parents but then had to cut ties with extended family in order to find a job and support their children. In Shirley's case, one of her daughters actually stayed behind in Colombia until she had enough money to bring her daughter to the U.S. She could only afford to bring her oldest daughter when she moved to the U.S. While her mother was able to move with her to her current residence, the tie between mother and daughter in this situation has also been strained due to the working conditions of the meat processing industry:

My mom is here and watches my babies...she has cancer so she's not well. She cooks, cleans and takes care of my babies. I clean Saturday and Sunday...when I was getting home at 10:00pm from work, my mom would call me all the time 'What are you doing? Change your job! Hurry up, get home!' Stuff like that. She wanted me to get a better job because I was spending too many hours working.

The stress of having to shift parental responsibilities onto another and place yourself in a subordinate role in the family only adds to the stress that these women have in their processing room jobs. Segura (1994) points out that for the women in her study, most were raised in rural or working-class families "where they and their mothers actively contributed to the economic subsistence of their families by planting crops, harvesting, selling homemade goods, and cleaning houses." (1994:224). The women in Segura's (1994) study had actively contributed to the family economy in their home country, where there is less of a divide between work and

domestic life. This was the same pattern I observed in my interviews with women who had immigrated to the U.S. and now worked in meat processing rooms. In their home countries, whether it was Colombia or El Salvador, their work at home was viewed as a contribution to the family economy. In the United States, however, they now encounter a more rigid division between work and domestic life. For Shirley and Catherine, who both have their mothers living with them to help with childcare, this difference between cultures and economic structures is constantly reinforced.

For Elisa, Shirley, Mary, and Catherine, the move to the United States was something that they undertook either on their own, or with a brother or father, none of them had followed a husband to the United States. Shirley immigrated with her brothers and her father. Her mother moved later to join Shirley in her current home. When Shirley's family first came to the U.S., they moved to New York. After a few years, she and her brothers moved further south. Her brothers now live in a different state and her father still lives in New York; her grandmother still lives in Colombia. The separation from her family network causes a great amount of stress to Shirley and places stress on her relationship with her mother. Mary and Elisa both moved to the U.S. from El Salvador and Colombia, respectively, without their family. Mary initially moved to North Carolina before moving to a state further south to find work. She talked a great deal about opportunity in the U.S. and how that affected her decision to move, as can be seen in the quote at the beginning of this section. Catherine and Elisa both also used the word "opportunity" and alluded to the opportunity that would be there for future generations. Elisa is a single mother who moved to the U.S. from Colombia and became a close mentor to Shirley when she first started work in the processing room. Elisa takes on the role of an "older sister" to many of the

women in the processing room and is able to show them how to do the different jobs in the room. She plays the role of a caretaker in the processing rooms even though she is in a work setting. Elisa describes her friends in the room as a type of family, where everyone knows each other and more importantly, everyone knows each other's cultural traditions. Most of the women Elisa works with are also from Colombia and so they are able to share a comradery in the processing rooms. This grouping of men and women by nationality in the processing room enables many of these women to hold on to a small piece of their home country while navigating a new country, a new job, and a new economic structure that separates economic life from domestic life.

Summary

The tension between family life and work in the meat industry affects women and men at all levels of the organizational hierarchy. Missing time with children and struggling to maintain relationships with family and friends impacts everyone who works in the industry. However, men and women experience certain processes in very different ways. For men in my study, missing time with their children was viewed as part of the role of the father. A good father is one who provides for their family and teaches their children to be independent and self-sufficient. The responsibilities inherent in economic life outweigh any responsibilities in domestic life for these men. If something has to be sacrificed, it is always the domestic life. The women in my study struggle to maintain a delicate balance between their economic life and domestic life without having to sacrifice one for the other. While this sacrifice inevitably takes place, there is a greater amount of guilt that is placed on women for making these sacrifices compared to men. Some women choose not to have a family in order to focus solely on their career and economic life and they are able to accept that path. For others, it continues to be a struggle. However, it is

clear in my findings that the ability to put together a support network is a key to balancing the demands of work with the demands of family. Some women, like Christina, are able to find support in their spouse and children. For others, that support rests with extended family, or in Mary's case, with friends in her community who can help with childcare responsibilities.

For women who work in the processing rooms, this struggle to balance work and family is exacerbated by the cultural tension they feel every day. Leaving their home country where domestic work was factored into the total family economy and moving to the U.S. where economic and domestic life is still rigidly divided presents an additional struggle between work and home life. Some women are able to reach out to available networks in their community while others, like Shirley, have moved to a new place without any help in place from friends or relatives except her mother. It is clear from Shirley's interview that her current situation as a single mother working chaotic hours has placed a strain on her relationship with her mother. It is possible that her mother's traditional gender ideology sits in conflict with Shirley's current employment situation, which serves to reinforce the guilt Shirley already feels about being away from her children. The intersection of traditional gender ideology and transformative gender roles in the processing room presents an extra layer of self-reflection that many women must face as they try to provide a better life for their family and open doors of opportunity for their children to succeed.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current study examines the experience of women who work in the meat industry, a male-dominated industrial sector. In-depth, open interviews were conducted with fifteen men and women who worked at four different beef manufacturing companies. The men and women in my study worked in a variety of occupational categories ranging from the processing rooms where non-human animals are disassembled for meat consumption to the executive-level offices of sales and purchasing. Interviews were transcribed and the data were coded and analyzed using constructivist grounded theory. Three major themes emerged from the analysis of the data: 1) the process of adapting to the culture of a male-dominated organization, 2) fitting in and surviving at work, and 3) managing family life. The overlap of work into domestic life became a major theme because the demands of the meat industry often created fissures in the domestic lives of my participants. This chapter presents a discussion of the key findings, limitations to the study, and directions for future research.

The first major theme from this study is the process of understanding and adapting to the culture of the meat industry. Industrial meat production and distribution is an industry that has been historically dominated by men. Even when women started to work in the packing houses, they held marginalized positions within the packing and processing rooms. Because of this dominance, the culture of the industry, both material and non-material, was created and is reinforced by men. The findings on the culture of the meat industry are reflective of Acker's (1990, 2006) theoretical work on gendered organizations. Masculinity is a part of the everyday organizational processes which serves to marginalize women and contributes to the continued maintenance of segregation in the workplace. For women who work in this male-dominated

structure, it is difficult to adapt to and work in this type of environment. The values illustrated in corporate culture language of quality, service, safety, and even in certain cases “family-oriented,” are not reflective of the work culture that dominates everyday life in the meat business (Stull and Broadway 2004). Race, gender, and nationality are all key factors in the development of the organizational culture in the meat industry. Acker (2006) argues that the organization of work takes place in the context of a “gendered and socialized substructure in which gender- and race-neutral images of ‘the worker’ and organizing obscure underlying arrangements based on gendered and racialized assumptions” (107). The hierarchy of work in the meat industry is one based on a gendered organizational structure that views “female” jobs as less skilled and as holding less responsibility than “male” jobs. Organizational hierarchies are essentially class hierarchies where white males hold the elite positions and women of color are often at the bottom, a point that Saucedo (2006) argues in her work on brown-collar jobs. The meat industry is similar to any other type of industrial bureaucracy in this sense. From my interviews with women in the industry, it is clear that women who aim to rise to the executive-level positions must learn to adopt the image of the “abstract worker” or “ideal worker”, two descriptions that assume a male worker (Acker 1990, Williams 1999).

The corporate values of the meat industry reflect a largely white, male organizational environment. Men hold the positions of power and are able to create the rules of the organization. For example, the processes at work are described in a very economic, mechanized language of industry. The language of the beef industry relegates non-human animals to “products” and works to disassociate the production of beef from the process of non-human animal slaughter, encapsulating the non-human animal as an object and not a living

being. For women in my study who worked in the processing rooms, this was a necessary psychological process that allowed them to perform their work roles. The very idea of thinking about the meat they cut and grind as an animal was “scary”; a majority of these women also chose not to eat beef at home.

Women in the processing rooms also experienced gender segregation as almost all of the women in my study worked as packers or at least had started out as packers. Historically, women have always worked as packers, jobs that require taking the meat that the men cut and weighing and packing it into boxes. These women also operate cubing machines that work to tenderize the meat into cube steaks, an inferior type of steak compared to the strip steaks and tenderloins. Warren (2007) and Fink (1995, 1998) describe how historically, the knife was the dividing line between “male jobs” and “female jobs” in the packing and processing rooms. The knife designated skilled labor compared to the unskilled labor of packing. This use of the knife also represented a division in pay scale as women have historically received lower wages than men in the meat industry as well as in most other industries and occupational roles. My interviews with men and women in the meat industry confirmed that this historical pattern still exists in contemporary meat production. Women who work as packers use and operate machinery, but they do not work with or operate the complex or physically demanding machines like the band saw. Men operate those complex machines that require skill. Both Matt and David, two of my participants who worked in the processing rooms, confirmed that women always work in packing. The majority of the women in my study either currently worked in packing or had started in packing and worked their way up to the grinding machines or to the meat-cutter position. David had an interesting way of describing why women are selected into the lowest-

paid position in the processing rooms. He said that “it’s not really about women or men working [as packers], it’s just that women care more and they’re better at working in that area...they pay a little more attention to detail.” On the one hand, women are viewed as more detail-oriented, careful, and even smarter when it comes to quality control in the processing room compared to men. However, all of these qualities position women in the lowest-paid, lowest-prestige role in the meat processing rooms. The description and qualifications needed for the packing job in the processing room uses language that is aimed at recruiting women for these positions, specifically women of color. The assumptions that are held within the organization about what is appropriate work for particular categories of people go in to the recruitment of Latina women for packing jobs in the beef industry.

The physically demanding requirements of working in the processing room combined with the long hours and low pay deters white men and white women from applying for these jobs. The men and women in my study who worked in the processing rooms confirmed that the majority of employees in the room are Latino. My participants also confirmed that there is a high employee turnover rate in the processing room due to the dangerous and physically demanding nature of the work. My findings indicate that most of the jobs in the processing room are aimed at recruiting Latino workers. Instead of the traditional blue-collar type of work in manufacturing industries, Saucedo (2006) calls this group of workers brown collar workers. When asked about the predominance of Latino workers in the processing rooms, my participants in the front office positions explained it away with the phrase “they’ll take the jobs no one else wants.” This myth of the unwanted job allows employers to recruit workers at the end of the job queue for employment in what has become an undesirable job for anyone. The demise of worker protection

in the meat industry has allowed employers to create positions that are undesirable to reduce labor costs and increase profit margins. These positions then continue to be filled by Latino workers, many of whom are immigrants, through networks of recruitment. My findings on race-based and nationality-based divisions in the processing room helped me to explore how this type of recruiting works. The niches that different groups construct in the processing room create a type of in-group/out-group environment where those who are part of the national/cultural group, for example Colombian, work very well together in the room. However, if a white or African-American individual is hired to work with that particular group in the room, the language barriers and cultural barriers will create an outsider effect and reinforce the current cultural divisions within the processing room. Individuals experience segregation based on race and nationality as well as segregation based on gender in the meat processing room. Employers are able to recruit workers at the bottom rung of the job ladder; the intersection of gender and race places women of color in the most vulnerable positions.

In order to adapt to the male-constructed culture of the meat industry, women must adapt and step into a world where they are participants, but not creators of the cultural knowledge. Standpoint theory allowed me to approach this phenomenon in the meat industry and link the micro-level interactional processes with macro-level structures in society. The corporate culture of meat companies is often at odds with the everyday lived experience of women who work in this industry, contributing to the divide between corporate culture and work culture. Smith (1974, 1987) refers to this contradiction as a bifurcated consciousness that women experience when they step out of the private sphere and into the public realm. The boundaries of organizational knowledge have already been created. Women at all levels of the hierarchy must adopt strategies

of survival to fit in to this culture. This leads to the second major theme in my findings: fitting in and surviving. Women who work in the meat industry face a series of challenges. One of the main obstacles is in the practicing of gender in interactions with men. Gary, one of male participants, said that “from the packing plant down [to the distributor], most of the packing plant sales are men, distributor sales are men...I think [our] customers feel more comfortable with men.” Martin (2001) argues that since men usually have higher status and power, “it is their behaviors that shape the context for everyone in organizations” (2001: 588). I found this to be true with the women who worked in the more white-collar occupations within the meat industry.

The women in my study who worked in the front office, executive-level positions discussed the ways in which they had to negotiate gender displays in order to fit in with their colleagues. The act of “playing a man” or “acting like a man” came up often in the discussion of interactions with men in the workplace. The major component of “acting like a man” seemed to be emotion work (Hochschild 2003). Women in my study discussed the process of being reserved and putting up a wall to not display the emotions they felt. Lisa was the one outlier in this group. As a director of purchasing for a large company, she actively engaged in displaying her femininity and used this display as a strategy in dealing with men. By using the term “femininity,” I am referring to practices that are interpreted by individual actors as feminine in a gender relations system. While she had to engage in certain actions like golf or going out to the bars after work in order to fit in with her colleagues, Lisa never altered her sense of femininity to act like a man. She even displayed her femininity while engaging in actions that are socially viewed as male-oriented, like playing golf. Lisa was going to learn the game but wanted to still

look cute while playing. That was the sense of self-identity that Lisa had built in her occupational role.

One of the more interesting findings in my study was the difference between how women experienced work in the white-collar jobs and how women experienced work in the processing rooms. The practicing of gender and impression management that some of the women discussed did not apply to the women in my study who actually performed in a transformative gender role. Women's experience of work in the meat industry seems to differ by class and occupational role. While the women in my study who worked at the top of the organizational hierarchy had to negotiate gender practices to assimilate into a male-constructed culture, women in the processing rooms had to work in a largely gender segregated environment. Gender is a significant factor in job assignment, but once women have their jobs in the processing room, their identity becomes wrapped in the occupational category and not in the signs or symbols of femininity or masculinity that are displayed. Women are packers and men are meat-cutters. Some women are able to move into the male-dominated role of meat-cutter; yet even when this transition is achieved, women are still paid a lower wage in comparison with men in those occupational roles. Generally, the meat cutters are the highest paid because the job requires the most skill. Packers are at the lowest level of the hierarchy within the processing room and receive the lowest wages. Women are usually segregated into the packer positions which place them in a subordinate role in the segregated environment. This subordinate position in the processing room also forces women to work longer hours than their male counterparts when the demands for production are high. The long hours and stressful environment can sometimes lead to injuries and accidents on the job. The packers are the last group to leave the processing room at the end of the day. These

women must wait for the men to finish the day's production of meat in order to properly weigh, pack and label the different orders to be shipped the next morning.

Warren (2007) and Horowitz (1997) described the historical role of women in meatpacking and processing as a role that relegated women to the sidelines of production. The women in my study who worked in processing rooms experienced this same position in the rooms. These women were not tasked with the production of expensive cuts of meat; instead, the women I interviewed either worked in packing or in grinding beef for patties. One woman, Shirley, worked as a meat-cutter. Shirley stood out from the rest of my participants not only because of her role in the room but also because of the amount of pride she took in her work. Shirley knew she was good at her job and that she could beat any of the men working on the line with her in terms of yield and production. Nevertheless, even though Shirley worked as a meat-cutter, her specialty was tenderloin steaks. This type of steak is easier to cut compared to ribeye steaks or strip steaks. There is less muscle and fat to cut through and the bone has already been removed when the meat-cutters start to work on the tenderloins. While Shirley works in a masculine-type role as a meat-cutter, she still only works on one particular type of steak which is viewed as physically easier than other types of steak produced in the processing room.

Most women who work in the processing rooms are in occupational roles that require working an extended shift in order to finish the men's production in the room. These extended hours and the physical stress of the work spills over into stress at home. This spillover into domestic life introduces the third main theme in this study which is the process of managing family life. This theme of the process of managing family life emerged throughout all of my interviews with both women and men in the meat industry. Women and men experience the

management of family life and the balancing of work and family in different ways. There are also differences in the way that women in white-collar positions in the meat industry experienced this type of balancing act in comparison with women who worked in the processing rooms. Most of the women in the processing rooms were immigrants who had moved to the U.S. to find better opportunities for themselves and their children. The whole concept of “home” took on a different meaning for these women compared to the predominantly white, native-born women who worked in executive-level positions.

Research on gender and work has shown that the gender system of domesticity organizes market work around the concept of an “ideal worker” who can work full-time without needing to sacrifice time at work for time at home (Williams 1999). A work/family conflict is created as women leave the domestic world of the home to enter into the workforce; women spend significant hours outside of the home working for a wage which affects their ability to perform the work of a caregiver. This work/family conflict was a central subtheme of my research on women in the meat industry. In the investigation of this work/family conflict, the additional subthemes of maintaining relationships, feeling separated from family, and missing time with children also emerged. While both the men and women I interviewed discuss this tension in balancing work life and home life, men seemed to adhere to different cultural scripts to describe what it felt like to miss time with their children or maintain a healthy relationship with their spouse compared to women in my study. For the women in my study who had immigrated to the U.S., the concept of “home” and the location of “home” took on a completely different meaning in comparison to native-born women. Most of these women felt a type of cultural loss as well as a loss of identity as a mother.

Missing time with children and missing family events were two categories under the subtheme of “missing time” that emerged in my analysis. For a parent, missing time with children can sometimes evoke feelings of guilt or neglect. Men and women viewed missing time with family in different ways. Men were much more likely to adhere to the cultural script of being a good dad as being a good provider for your family. Men like Gary, Junior, and David all stressed this script in their interviews when they discussed the relationships, or lack of, that they had with their children. For David, working long hours and being away all the time meant that he was working to provide for his family. This was his way of thinking about his children and his family; he channeled those thoughts into working longer and harder in order to provide his children with a better life. Junior rationalized his absence from home as a way to help his daughters build independence and self-reliance. While men viewed their absence from home life as being a good dad and a good provider, women viewed their absence from home life as being a bad mother. The separation of public sphere and private sphere that is entrenched in the gender system of domesticity is clearly at the forefront of each of my participants’ views on good parenting. A good mother is one who puts her children first. As Williams (1999) argues, the ideal worker is one who does not take time off for having children and raising a family. An ideal worker is one who is completely devoted to their job and to the organization. Because of this typology, work and family are placed in opposition. This opposition places stress on women who want to succeed in the workplace and succeed at being a good mother in the way that society defines this role. In the meat industry, this is a rare occurrence. Both Lisa and Laura, two women who work in white-collar positions in the industry, discussed the number of relationships they have seen fall apart in the industry. Lisa’s view is that to be successful in the meat industry, a woman has to sacrifice certain aspects of family life. Lisa has sacrificed having a family of her

own as well as being present for important family events with her parents and siblings. She loves her job and loves the environment of the meat industry, but she is clear in her acknowledgment of the sacrifices she has had to make to get to the top. The men in my study did not discuss the element of sacrifice in being successful. Both the men who worked in the front office, executive-level positions and the men who worked in the processing rooms indicated that any sacrifice they had to make regarding family was the result of being a good provider. The tradeoff was not as emotionally taxing for men compared to women in my study. The difficulty in maintaining relationships and feeling separated from family was expressed by both women in executive-level positions and women in the processing rooms. The difference between these two groups of women was in the feeling of separation from family members. The separation that women in the processing room felt was derived from not only the loss of a family environment in the move to the U.S., but also a cultural loss, especially in the cultural concepts of work and home. Many of these women had worked in the domestic realm in their home country; however, the work they did at home in their native countries counted as a way of providing for the family and contributing to the family economy. The separation between public/private and work/home was not as rigid for many of these women in the lives they had left behind. Because of this rigid division in U.S. society, the loss of family and the feeling of loss in regards to being a mother resonated more deeply with the immigrant women in my study compared to the white, native-born women.

Overall, this study makes an important contribution to the sociological research on gender and work, race and ethnicity studies, and family studies, especially the concept of transnational mothering. It also allows for a connection of the experiences of my participants

with the macro-level structure of the gendered organization that reproduces inequality. The gender segregation of work in the processing room is created by organizational practices that view women as able bodies for certain “types” of jobs. These jobs are less skilled and involve less responsibility than men’s jobs of meat cutting and operating complex machinery. Just as in the past, the men control the pace of production and they create the most expensive cuts of meat that come out of the processing room. Women in the processing room are left to literally “clean up” after the men and handle the packaging of the different cuts of meat produced by men. When women do operate machinery, it is only those machines that handle the byproducts of the daily production. Women still handle the leftovers of men’s work in the beef industry, just as they did in the terminal markets of Chicago and St. Louis (Warren 2007). Acker (1990) argues that the structure of the labor market and the control over work and wages are “always affected by symbols of gender, processes of gender identity, and material inequalities between women and men” (145-146). These processes serve to not only reproduce gender inequality in the bureaucratic organization; they also serve to reproduce class structure. My research on women’s experience of work in the beef industry illustrates how the industrial system of food production operates under the same capitalist structure that views a “job” as separate from the individual who occupies it. The abstract job and universal worker that appear in organizational thinking actually assume a male, ideal worker who has no other responsibility except to his job (Acker 1990, Williams 1999). My research delves into the experiences of women working in this type of gendered organization where women are participants but not creators of cultural knowledge. My participants’ stories illustrated the experience of working in the meat industry and the obstacles for women working in a predominantly male-dominated industry. These stories also shed light into the differences based on race, nationality, and class in women’s experiences in a gender-

segregated environment. It is my hope that by examining the experience of women in executive-level positions and women who work in the meat processing rooms, I can contribute to an examination of the subtle differences in how women experience work and show how this experience of work in a male-dominated industry impacts social roles at work and at home.

Limitations to the Study

This aim of this study was to explore how women experience work in a male-dominated industry, the meat industry. Like most studies, there are limitations to the research. The limitations to this study are centered on sampling techniques, the interview method of data collection, and the data collected. Because the purpose of this study was to explore and attempt to understand women's experience of work in the meat industry, this study used the method of in-depth interviews to capture how women experienced their work and how their work impacted their role at home. This method allowed me to gather rich data and gain a deeper insight into what it is like to work in the meat industry and how this experience differs according to race, gender, nationality, and class.

One limitation that often comes up in the discussion of qualitative research samples is the lack of generalizability. As was stated earlier in the study, generalizability is not the main goal of qualitative research; the aim of this study was to study the experiences of women in the meat industry. While there were themes that emerged in the data and in the experiences that women shared, it would not be prudent to make the broad statement that all women in the meat industry experience these same processes. The scope of the sample was sufficient enough to provide me with themes for my analysis chapters and to allow me to make conclusions based on the analysis of these themes. While my sample was not very large at only 15 participants, I was able to

accumulate over one hundred pages of transcripts through the interviews I conducted. These transcripts provided a clear insight into the lives and experiences of women who work in the meat industry that a quantitative study would not have been able to capture.

The method of snowball sampling and theoretical sampling allowed me to recruit participants in an industry where it is notoriously difficult to find and or talk to people about their work. The meat industry has been attacked in the media for its practices in animal welfare and worker safety; therefore it is understandable that many employees would be hesitant to discuss their experience with an outsider. Snowball sampling allowed me to recruit participants through established networks in order to create a study sample. A limitation to this type of sampling is the problem of homogeneity in the sample. By using theoretical sampling, however, I was able to make sure that my sample was diverse on several demographic characteristics. One limitation was that I was not able to recruit African-American participants. While this is an important group that is missing from the data, previous ethnographic studies of meatpacking and meat-processing facilities have rarely mentioned this group of individuals (Broadway and Stull 2006, Pachirat 2011, Stull 1994). It is possible that since my focus was solely on the beef industry, this demographic group is under-represented.

The use of in-depth interviews as the method of data collection represents a final limitation to the study. While interviews allowed me to gather rich data on the experience of working in the meat industry, this method of data collection relies on the participant's memory and ability to recollect previous events and interpret abstract constructions. I would argue that my respondents were as open and honest as they could be in telling their personal story. However, there were a couple of interviews where I had the feeling that my participants were not

being entirely open and forthcoming about their experience of work. While I know there was hesitancy with some of my participants in answering questions about the work environment, I trust that all descriptions in the transcripts reflect a relatively accurate description of the environment.

Future Directions for Research

This research focused on the experience of women working in the meat industry. This research was conducted using in-depth, open interviews with men and women in the meat industry that included only a few guiding questions. The research was conducted using grounded theory methods of inquiry, an inductive approach that constructs theory from the data, building from the ground up. This approach allowed me to capture in rich detail the participant's stories of how they experience work and how their work experience impacts their life at home. Future research on women in the meat industry might want to look at more specific experiences that arose during the course of data collection. An exploration of some of the key subthemes in this research study would make for an interesting research project in the future.

One such direction of inquiry would be to interview more women in executive-level positions in the industry and explore how they manage their gender identity in the workplace. Several of my participants had mentioned that there were a good number of lesbian women who worked in the industry. It would be interesting to examine their experience of managing interactions with men at work and examine how these women construct and maintain their sense of identity in the meat industry. Sexual orientation would be an interesting demographic characteristic to add to the sample. In what ways do gay and lesbian men and women experience

work that might be similar or different compared to heterosexual men and women in a male-dominated industry?

A second road of inquiry would be to explore more of this idea of self-segregation and divisions within the processing rooms based on nationality. This was a fascinating line of inquiry that I was able to explore a little bit of in my research study. However, the group segregation that takes place in the processing rooms through network hiring produces cultural divisions that are a dynamic area of inquiry to pursue. One of my participants, David, described the cultural differences in the room as “little world wars” at times. Along with the gender segregation in job role in the processing room, this added layer of segregation on a cultural level would be an interesting research study to pursue.

Lastly, the concept of transnational mothering and the separation that many of the women in my study described as feeling from their children and their families would be an interesting area of research to pursue. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) researched Latina domestic workers in Los Angeles, California to see how these women build alternative constructions of motherhood and what women have to give up to build these alternative constructions. The women in my study who worked in the processing rooms touched on a type of alternative construction of motherhood in their discussion of family life. However, it would be interesting to explore alternative constructions of motherhood with women who have immigrated to the U.S. and who work in meat processing rooms. Sometimes a physical absence can exist while an emotional one does not and there can be an emotional absence when there is a physical presence. This balance in constructing alternative definitions of motherhood would be a fruitful endeavor since more women are starting to take the lead in immigrating to the U.S. either on their own or

with their children. The absence of men in many of these families, including the families of women I interviewed in this study, forces an alternative construction of both motherhood and family in for women in these positions.

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board
#1 FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Jessica R. Jacques**

Date: **February 20, 2013**

Dear Researcher:

On 2/20/2013, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: Women on the Line: A Study of Female Workers in the Meat Processing Industry
Investigator: Jessica R. Jacques
IRB Number: SBE-13-09119
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 02/20/2013 09:53:30 AM EST

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Joanne Muratori'.

IRB Coordinator



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Jessica R. Jacques**

Date: **August 28, 2014**

Dear Researcher:

On 8/28/2014, the IRB approved the following minor modifications to human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Modification Type: Changes are being made to the study population and number of total participants: men will be interviewed in addition to women and the total number of participants is being increased from 10 to 25 individuals. A revised protocol has been uploaded in iRIS and revised Informed Consent documents (in English and Spanish) have been approved for use.
Project Title: Women on the Line: A Qualitative Study of Women in the Meat Industry
Investigator: Jessica R. Jacques
IRB Number: SBE-13-09119
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 08/28/2014 03:26:45 PM EDT

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX B: EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH



Women on the Line: A Qualitative Study of Women in the Food Industry

Informed Consent

Principal Investigator(s): Jessica Racine Jacques, M.A.

Faculty Supervisor: Elizabeth Grauerholz, PhD.

Investigational Site(s): University of Central Florida, Department of Sociology.

Introduction: Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study which will include about 25 people state-wide. You have been asked to take part in this research study because you work in the food industry. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study.

The person doing this research is Jessica Racine Jacques of the Department of Sociology at the University of Central Florida. Because the researcher is a graduate student she is being guided by Dr. Elizabeth Grauerholz, a UCF faculty supervisor in the Department of Sociology.

What you should know about a research study:

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you.

1 of 3

- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between women and food production. It is only in the past ten years that we have seen more and more women working in various capacities from meat processing rooms and meat packing facilities to sales and purchasing. This research is designed to attempt to understand why more women are drawn to these jobs and to examine how these working conditions affect women in their life outside of work. It is important to understand the role that women serve in food production and the way that it affects their lives.

What you will be asked to do in the study: You will be asked to participate in an interview lasting for about one hour. During this time, the researcher will ask you questions about your life working in the food industry. Some of these questions will refer to your daily tasks where you work and some questions will refer to your life at home. The interview will take place at a location that is agreed upon by you and the researcher. You do not have to answer every question during the interview.

Location: The researcher will meet with the participant in an agreed upon public place.

Time required: We expect that you will be in this research study for one interview session lasting approximately one hour.

Audio or video taping:

You will be audio taped during this study. If you do not want to be audio taped, you may refuse and notes will be transcribed during the interview. Discuss this with the researcher or a research team member. If you are audio taped, the tape will be kept in a locked, safe place. The tape will be erased or destroyed when transcription of the interview is complete.

Risks: There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study. All audio recordings will be deleted after transcription is complete and all interview notes will be destroyed once the research study is complete.

Compensation or payment: There is no compensation or other payment to you for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality: We will limit your personal data collected in this study to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of UCF.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to: Racine Jacques, Graduate Student, Department of Sociology, College of Sciences, (407) 823-3744 or Dr. Elizabeth Grauerholz, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Sociology at (407) 823-4241 or by email at jaltif@knights.ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Schedule

Demographics

1. How old are you?
2. Where were you born?
3. What do you consider your race? ethnicity?

Work Experience

4. What is your current job title? Describe what that is please...
5. Tell me about a typical day at work
6. How long have you worked as a _____?
 - a. What jobs did you have before?
 - b. Did you have training/mentors?
7. Did you always want to work in the food business?
8. What would you say is the most challenging part of your work?
 - a. Can you describe how you manage interactions with men at work? Co-workers, food salesmen, chefs, administration?
9. Can you describe a time that was very stressful for you at work?
10. Can you tell me about your colleagues? Network of friends? Support group at work?
11. Would you say that this industry is mostly male, female, or a good balance?
 - a. Explain

Home Experience

12. Tell me about your family. Are you married? Have children?
 - a. What does your husband/wife do?
13. Where did you grow up? What was home like?
14. How do you like to spend your time when not at work?
15. Would you say that your work life has impacted your life at home? Have there ever been instances where stress from work spilled over into your family life?

APPENDIX D: DEFENSE ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcing the Final Examination of Jessica Racine Jacques for the degree of Doctor of Sociology

Date: April 6, 2015

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Room: PH 406 I

Dissertation title: Women on the Line: A Qualitative Study of Women's Experience of Work in the Meat Industry

This study examines the experiences of women who work in the meat industry. Drawing from symbolic interaction and standpoint theory frameworks, this research focuses on how gender, race, and nationality influence work experiences and family life for women in comparison to men in the meat industry. This study is based on 15 in-depth interviews with men and women who work in management positions and in the processing rooms of meat companies where non-human animals are disassembled in the production of food. Data collection and analysis were performed using grounded theory methods of inquiry. Participants' stories highlight women's experience in adapting to the organizational culture of the meat industry, strategies of survival in everyday life in the organization, and the conflict between work and family. While women in management positions discuss the process of fitting into the male-dominated organizational culture, women in the processing room experience gender segregation and inequality that prevents moving in to the men's world of processing management, a separation that is built into the structure of the facility. This study contributes to the literature on work in the meat industry as well as the sociological research on gender and work, race and ethnicity studies and research on the family.

Outline of Studies:

Major: Sociology

Educational Career:

B.A., 2003, Barnard College, Columbia University

M.A., 2010, University of Central Florida

Committee in Charge:

Dr. Elizabeth Grauerholz

Dr. Fernando I. Rivera

Dr. Shannon Carter

Dr. Patricia Yancey Martin

Approved for distribution by Elizabeth Grauerholz, Committee Chair, on March 16, 2015.

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