**Understanding the Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence in the Food System**

by

**Maryam Ahmadi**

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# Abstract

Gender-based violence is prevalent in society. This Capstone research focuses on the social problem of gender-based violence in the food system, examining its hidden forms. The main conceptual frameworks used in this research are gender and violence, which includes both direct and hidden forms of violence. My overall research question asks, what are the hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system? To answer this question, I conducted a content analysis of literature relevant to gender-based violence in the food system. Research findings document hidden forms of violence throughout the food system, which are evident in the advertising industry, retail stores, restaurants, supermarkets, households, food production, government, and farms. Overall, I conclude that hidden forms of violence exist all around us and occur in front of our eyes, but we cannot distinguish them because they are normalized to the point that they are unrecognizable. To create more socially just food systems and society, it is essential to acknowledge and confront the hidden forms of gender violence.

Keywords: Food system, social justice, patriarchy, gender, gender-based violence, direct violence, structural violence, cultural violence

In loving memory of my grandpa, Baba Ali Shishegaran. You always believed in me even when I did not believe in myself. I wish you were here to see my achievement. As constant as the stars above, I will always love you dearly.

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## One—Introduction

The right not to be tortured is basic but also shallow. The deeper right would be the human right to live in a social and world structure that does not produce torture.

—John Galtung

While it is good to have a rule against torture, it is more important to stop the things that lead to torture in the first place. This means fixing the causes of problems like inequity that lead to many forms of harm. This idea aligns closely with my research on hidden forms of violence, as it seeks to elucidate how hidden structural and cultural factors contribute to instances of direct violence. I suggest that instead of solely addressing the effects of violence, it is imperative to tackle the broader systemic issues that exacerbate its likelihood. My research is aimed at instigating changes to create a fairer environment for all individuals involved.

Violence is widely present in society, but why does it continue? Can we find a solution to prevent it from poisoning our lives? There are many unanswered questions regarding violence—questions that trouble many of us—with no easy answers in sight. We've all seen violence, whether in person or on the news, yet we tend to point fingers at the person doing the violent act without considering the bigger picture. We must look beyond the individual committing the violent act and aim to discover the underlying circumstances that enable such behavior to occur in the first place.

My research focuses on gender violence in the food system. Gender and violence are interconnected and co-constituted. Gender violence exists in the food system, often occurring at sites of labor in the food system. Understanding the dynamics of food system labor is crucial, as

these environments often serve as sites for gender-based violence. This violence has underlying causes that need to be uncovered and understood. Therefore, my research explores the hidden forms of violence that undergird instances of direct gender violence in the food system. Understanding the concept of gender will help us address these unanswered questions about women experiencing violence because gender and violence are co-constituted, leading to gender-based violence, which creates unsafe and hostile environments for women within the food system, putting their physical and mental health are at risk.

My interest in the prevalence of gender-based violence in the food system was sparked when I had the opportunity to learn about the concepts of "violence" and "gender" in my coursework. I learned about these concepts individually and read about the instances where women experienced violence as well. As I learned more about the instances where women faced violence, it woke something within me, telling me desperately to get up and do something about it, to dig deeper. Then it reminded me of all the times I have seen women around me experience violence, whether in person or through the news. Having grown up in Iran until the age of 13 and then having moved to the United States, I have had the opportunity to witness how women are treated in both countries. For example, in Iran I heard that women should not go out in the dark alone because it is unsafe for them and they might get abused by men. I also heard from our friend when I was younger that a man would hit his wife and verbally abuse her; but as the neighbors were complaining and trying to save the woman, the man said, "Well, she is my wife and I can do whatever I please, so go back to your houses and mind your own business." Having witnessed these instances during my childhood in Iran, I have become aware of the prevalence of violence against women. Growing up in an environment where such incidents were unfortunately common has shaped my perspective and heightened my sensitivity to this issue. As a result, now

that I live in the United States, I can look beyond the visible forms of violence and consider the bigger picture to see why it is happening in the first place.

All the experience and knowledge that I have collected up to this point have led me to think about the root of gender-based violence that causes all this visible and overt violence to occur. What about society enables this violence to happen? This inquiry led to my research problem of focusing on hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. My research addresses gender-based violence by asking about its hidden forms in the food system so those forms can be better understood and more effectively addressed. This is important because by exposing and explaining these hidden forms of gender-based violence more people can understand that they exist, what their consequences might be, and how they can be addressed. In addition to uncovering these hidden forms of gender-based violence, I am able to set the table for others and for myself to do more investigation in the future, because we cannot solve a problem that people do not know exists.

As I examined the social problem of gender-based violence in the food system, focusing in this Capstone on its hidden forms, I discovered that these hidden forms are present all over the food system. However, since they are hidden, people pass them by on a daily basis. Women have to contend not only with direct violence, such as physical and verbal abuse, but also with hidden structural and cultural violence buried within the deeper layers of gender-based violence. These hidden forms add another dimension to the challenges women face in the food system.

This chapter serves as an introductory overview to my Capstone research and is followed by four chapters. Chapter Two: Background and Significance builds the foundation for my research by explaining fundamental concepts such as food systems, society, social problems, and social justice. Chapter Two also explains my social problem of gender-based violence and my

research problem's focus on hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods defines my research paradigm of critical inquiry and my positionality, and then explains how I designed and constructed my research to address my questions. Chapter Four: Research Applications and Contribution presents my research findings, an analysis of themes I noticed in my findings, and an account of how my research contributes to comprehending social justice and gender-based violence in the food system. Lastly, Chapter Five: Conclusion addresses my personal understanding of gender-based violence and its hidden forms in the food system, its relevance to social justice, and possible ways to apply it to the creation of a socially just society.

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This chapter introduced and highlighted the overall purpose and points of the overall Capstone and individual chapters. In the next chapter, I am going to build the base foundations of my Capstone by explaining my social problem of gender-based violence within the domain of food systems, society, and its relevance to social justice.

**Two—Background and Significance**

In this chapter, I explain the concepts that are foundational to understanding my social problem, research domain, and research problem. I begin by defining and explaining the domain in which I conducted my research, which is food systems and society. Then I define social problems in general, social justice, and the criteria that are relevant to my Capstone social problem and research problem: equitable access to resources and power, equality, freedom from violence, the right to be safe, and the right to be healthy. Next, I articulate my Capstone social problem of gender-based violence in the food system. Then, I demonstrate gender-based violence's prevalence through literature, highlight its significance to social justice, and explain relevant conceptual frameworks. After that, I explain the Capstone research problem, which focuses on hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. Lastly, I further explore the relevance of my research problem to my social problem, social justice, and conceptual frameworks that are useful and related to it.

**Domain of Food Systems and Society**

My Capstone explores a social problem within the domain of food systems and society. Food systems, both contemporary and historical, are social creations, socially constructed and fundamentally shaped by social decisions. For instance, Gladek et al. (2017) emphasize that food systems are a complete set of people, processes, and infrastructure, all involved in the consumption and production of food (8). Nguyen (2018) further elaborates on this by highlighting that food systems involve a diverse range of actors performing interlinked value-adding activities such as aggregation, distribution, food service, and disposal of food products originating from agriculture, fisheries, and various economic and societal environments (1). These authors underscore how modern food systems are complex and have many aspects to

them, including physical components as well as the intricate connections and dynamics between them. Furthermore, the complexity of food systems extends beyond mere production and consumption. Neff and Lawrence (2014) assert that the context of food systems includes policies, environment, processes, infrastructures, education, social justice, health, food cultures, and labor dynamics (2). The drivers and outcomes of these processes, and the complex relationships between them, are all encompassed within the food system (2). Overall, food systems contain different dimensions, components, and complex relationships.

Most relevant for my research are the areas of the food system where labor occurs. Labor is defined as the activities, tasks, and services performed by individuals in exchange for wages or other forms of compensation within the modern workforce (Frenkel 2006, 357). It encompasses a wide range of occupations and industries, including both manual and intellectual work, and can involve various levels of skill and expertise. In today's context, labor often takes place within formal employment arrangements, such as full-time or part-time jobs, as well as informal settings (357). Some examples of informal settings include gig work and freelance arrangements. Labor involves the interaction between employers and employees, where individuals give their time, energy, and skills to make things or offer services in exchange for money. Additionally, labor encompasses the various activities and services carried out by workers across different industries and sectors, including service work, manufacturing, healthcare, education, and information technology, among others (357, 360, 361). Transitioning from the broader understanding of labor within formal and informal settings, we now shift our focus on defining domestic and nondomestic labor.

Labor also includes the unpaid and paid domestic and nondomestic labor or care work. Unfortunately, unpaid domestic labor or care work often goes unnoticed, and it is the invisible

backbone of many families. Unpaid domestic labor or care work, as McCarthy (2018) defines, involves productive tasks carried out within households, typically performed by women, to meet the needs of others without receiving any wages (cited in Bain 2021, 48). It includes activities such as cleaning, shopping, and cooking (48). Additionally, Lawson et al. (2020) expand on this unpaid domestic labor or care work definition by adding that it includes providing care and assistance to individuals, such as bathing children or looking after sick or elderly adults, without getting paid for it (29). There is also paid domestic labor or care work that occurs in both public and private sectors, including areas such as education, healthcare, and social work, as well as within private households (29). Lastly, nondomestic labor refers to productive work performed outside the home for wages (or not, as in the case of volunteer work). Nondomestic labor often occurs in businesses and institutions with assigned tasks. Overall, unpaid and paid domestic and nondomestic labor or care work are part of the definition of labor and are integral to the food system. As illustrated by the topic of labor, the food system is deeply intertwined with society and influenced by social choices.

Food systems are embedded in society and are the product of social decisions that create benefits and harms. Society—defined as a group of people sharing classes, customs, values, institutions, relationships, a common way of living, and feelings that unite them—plays an essential role in shaping food systems (Bennett et al. 2005, 327–29). Society plays an essential role in shaping food systems because both food systems and society are products of social decisions, capable of producing positive or negative outcomes. Additionally, Allen (2004) highlights that many aspects of the food system are governed by and operate within economic, social, and food policies (102). These policies are influenced by the larger economic and social structures in society (102). Therefore, people's lives are influenced by global, national, and

regional levels of governance (102). This underscores the systemic nature of inequalities within the food system, which are influenced by societal factors including policies and governance mechanisms. This means that exploring the impact of social decisions in food systems and society can uncover inequalities based on race, class, culture, and gender.

Our society reflects inequalities arising from societal factors like race, class, culture, and gender. For instance, Allen and Sachs (2007) highlight that the intersection of race, class, gender, and culture plays a crucial role in determining people's roles and condition in the food system (4). Our current food systems and society frequently perpetuate these inequalities, resulting in harm to both people and the environment.

In this section, I have explored the definition and relevant components of food systems and society, highlighting their interconnection. In the next section, I provide definitions of problems and goals for change to address food system inequities. Concepts such as social problems and social justice will help develop these definitions and goals.

**Social Problems and Social Justice in Food Systems and Society**

Social problems arise within society and have social causes, social consequences, and social cures. According to Alessio (2011), a social problem arises when one or more individuals are impacted, threatened, harmed, or distressed by a particular social condition, resulting in undesirable outcomes (2–3). Some individual problems can be caused and resolved by a single person, affecting only that individual (9–13). Conversely, there are problems caused by society, which means that the solution to these problems involves systemic change and goes beyond an individual's actions (15–16). The key characteristics of social problems are that they include at least one social cause, social consequences that can be harmful and beneficial, and social cures (3). Social causes are often challenging to identify due to lengthy causal chains of events. Social

causes frequently lead to consequences that can be harmful to a group of people while being beneficial to others (8). Cures are the ways that these social problems can be addressed and removed from our society. Since social problems are embedded within our society, they can be solved within it as well. Overall, I am most interested in social problems that are relevant to social justice.

Understanding and addressing social problems requires a clear definition of social justice. The consequences of social problems lead to injustices, in that they impact certain groups negatively while benefiting others. Therefore, effective cures require a clear picture of what social justice would look like. Articulating and defining social justice helps clarify the goal for creating positive social change while addressing social problems. Overall, the more we understand social justice, the better we can identify what's missing in social problems and what needs fixing. To further understand social justice as a goal, we need to define social justice.

Social justice means everyone having equal rights and opportunities— economic, political, and social—as well as fairness, equity, and equality in resources and power. Levy (2019) emphasizes this point, arguing that a just society ensures an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities (12). In such a society, everyone has the right to health and enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental well-being (12). Basok et al. (2006) further expand on this concept, highlighting that social justice necessitates freedom from oppression, exploitation, and violence (cited in Allen 2008,157). This means that in a just food system, everyone would have their fundamental needs met, not just to survive, but to flourish. For example, in all political interactions, it is crucial to ensure that various groups within society can voice their concerns regarding change, without disregarding the struggles faced by minority groups (Basok et al. 2006, cited in Allen 2008, 157). However, before

applying the principles of social justice to address my social problem, we need to identify the relevant social justice criteria involved.

Social justice contains many different criteria. Here I explain the criteria that are relevant to my Capstone social problem and research problem: equitable access to resources and power, equality, freedom from violence, the right to be safe, and the right to be healthy. Equitable access to resources and power, as defined by Levy (2019), means providing individuals with the tools they need to achieve equal outcomes, regardless of gender, race, or culture (4). Everyone deserves a fair shot at success, and this requires equal access to both resources and the ability to influence decisions. Equally important is ensuring freedom from violence and safety for all. These criteria are interconnected, with each playing a crucial role in building a just society. By promoting equitable access to resources and power, upholding equality, preventing violence, and fostering good health, we can create a society where everyone can thrive. However, Allen and Shervey (2021) point out that our society falls short of these ideals, and inequitable access to resources and power, persistent inequalities, and violence are prevalent (264). These shortcomings threaten the lives, well-being, and safety of individuals within our society (264). Platt (2019) also argues that many individuals are unable to make desired choices in their lives due to the absence of these criteria (1). Ultimately, the lack of social justice perpetuates inequalities within society, leading to the very social problems we seek to address.

This section has defined social problems, social justice, and the relevant criteria that connect them. In the next section, I will delve deeper into the specific social problem of my Capstone project and explore its relationship to social justice.

**Capstone Social Problem**

My Capstone social problem is about gender injustices in the food system. To explain this social problem, this section focuses on the concepts of gender, gender inequality, and gender-based violence.

The concept of gender is a complex cultural construct that affects how society sees and treats men and women and impacts their roles and opportunities in life. Gender, as defined by Russo and Pirlott (2006), is a complex, multilevel cultural construct that, in particular situations, determines what it means to be a male or female (180). This construct is typically based on social distinctions between males and females assigned at birth according to biological sex (180). However, gender isn't fixed by biology; rather, it evolves over time within the cultural environment. Furthermore, gender encompasses interconnected elements such as expectations, emotions, norms, traits, values, and roles (180). These elements can vary widely across societies and transform over time. Understanding this multifaceted concept of gender is essential for recognizing and addressing gender-based injustices.

Gender functions as a fundamental aspect of society that influences norms, values, and behaviors, perpetuating inequalities. Russo and Pirlott (2006) describe gender as having a "master" status, which manifests and perpetuates both overt and covert inequalities (180). Gendered expectations, emotions, norms, traits, values, and roles can be unjust and serve as a foundation for violence. Platt (2019) argues that inequalities are structurally embedded within our society and determined by gender roles and expectations, which can lead to the presence of violence (61). Gender's role is pivotal. For instance, Cross and Madsen (1997) elaborate that throughout the life cycle, the appropriateness of psychological, behavioral, and social characteristics of males and females is defined by gender (cited in Russo and Pirlott 2006, 180).

This process profoundly influences the ways in which humans construct their identities and understandings of themselves. Consequently, these inequalities, determined by an individual's gender, may lead to the presence of gender-based violence, a pervasive issue worldwide, including within the food system.

Gender-based violence is a social problem that is most often recognized as direct violence. Direct violence is intentional, purposeful, and a threat of action to hurt another human being physically or mentally (Galtung 1990, cited in Khoja-Moolji 2012, 3). Direct violence is related to the concept of gender as women are more likely than men to face this type of overt violence physically and mentally. For example, Katz (2013) pointed out, 99 percent of rape is done by men and only 1 percent of rape is done by women (343). Similarly, Mukanangana et al. (2014) present the National Violence Against Women Survey that estimated that nationally about one in five women is a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime (111). Direct violence extends beyond physical harm to encompass mental abuse. This includes verbal insults, bullying, and shouting (Galtung 1990, cited in Allen and Shervey 2021, 264). As Bott, Morrison, and Ellsberg (2005) mention, the consequences of such abuse results in women experiencing psychological and mental effects such as depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, posttraumatic stress syndrome, self-harm, suicide, lack of sleep, and eating disorders (12). Overall, gender-based violence in overt and direct forms exists all over the world and its prevalence also manifests in the domain of the food system.

My Capstone social problem is gender-based violence in the food system. Women often experience direct violence from their bosses, partners, and other men in the food system and so feel unsafe. For example, women working in restaurants tend to experience this violence in the form of sexual and verbal harassment from their supervisors, coworkers, and customers, such as

unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors (Allen and Shervey 2021, 265). In the restaurant industry, 83 percent of women filed sexual harassment complaints to US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which is more than in any other industry (Galarza 2017, cited in Allen and Shervey 2021, 265). The situation is no better for women farmworkers. Waugh (2010) shows that 80 percent of women farmworkers experienced at least one of the following at work: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, sexual coercion, and/or sexual assault (cited in Sexsmith and Griffin 2021, 329). The danger does not disappear when women leave their workplaces, however. The home environment, which should be a safe haven, can also be a breeding ground for violence. As Russo and Pirlott (2006) point out, women are more likely to experience intimate partner violence, including threats, physical harm, and sexual assault and often occurring during family meals (181–82). Overall, the violence that women experience in their workplace and home in the food system limits and affects them negatively. Gender-based violence affects women negatively in the food system on a daily basis, which leads to lack of social justice for women in our society.

The prevalence of such violence creates unjust and unsafe spaces for women; this violates social justice criteria by jeopardizing their physical and mental health. These criteria include the right to be free from violence, to feel safe and healthy, and to have equitable access to resources and power. Direct violence manifests through physical abuse, leading to various adverse effects on women's health. These effects include gastrointestinal disorders, physical injuries, unwanted pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV among others (Heise, Ellsberg, and Gottemoeller 1999, cited in Bott, Morrison, and Ellsberg 2005, 12). The existence of direct violence perpetuates social injustice, by further violating women's mental and physical health. Direct violence also contributes to an unjust society where women frequently

feel unsafe and face potential verbal and physical violence from their bosses, partners, and other men. Women being threatened, insulted, or coerced in public or private settings to act against their will results in sexual, physical, or psychological suffering (United Nations 1995 and Platform for Action D.112, cited in Russo and Pirlott 2006, 181). The consequences for women experiencing mental or psychological suffering include depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, eating disorders, and suicide (Bott, Morrison, and Ellsberg 2005, 12). This perpetuates a cycle of harm that undermines women's well-being and perpetuates social inequality within the food system.

This section discussed gender and how gender-based violence, both globally and within the food system, undermines social justice. The next section explains Galtung's theory of violence, which highlights hidden forms of gender-based violence and explores the connection between gender and social justice.

**Capstone Research Problem**

This research focuses on hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. Although people often think of violence in terms of direct violence as discussed in the previous section, there are other hidden forms and processes of violence that are structural or cultural in nature. I want to discover if these hidden forms of violence are present in the food system in a gender-based way. I am also concerned with discovering how hidden forms of violence—that are structural and cultural in nature—can legitimize, justify, or lead to direct violence. I believe that exposing hidden forms of gender-based violence is necessary to eliminate them. This line of inquiry can help me better understand my social problem of gender-based violence in the food system. However, before exploring these hidden cultural and structural forms of violence in the food system, they need to be defined and explained in more depth.

Galtung's theory of violence from peace studies is a useful conceptual framework for explaining how to identify hidden forms of violence that contribute to gender-based violence in the food system. Galtung developed his conceptual framework of violence in his 1969 article "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research" (Confortini 2006, 335–36). This framework includes three types of violence: direct (which I have already discussed), structural, and cultural. In this research, I aim to apply Galtung's theory of violence, focusing on its cultural and structural aspects, to identify hidden forms of gender-based violence within the food system. Additionally, I want to explore how these hidden forms of violence may lead to direct violence. To explain Galtung's framework and how it is helpful and relevant to gender-based violence in the food system, I explore each type in what follows.

The first type of violence in Galtung's conceptual framework is direct violence, which is overt and well recognized. According to Galtung (1990), direct violence is intentional, purposeful, and a threat of action aimed at causing physical and mental harm to another human being in an observable manner (cited in Khoja-Moolji 2012, 3). Winter and Leighton (1999) further elaborate, emphasizing direct violence's stark visibility, brutality, and ability to seize our attention (1). Moreover, direct violence not only inflicts immediate harm but also serves as a means to perpetuate and reinforce structural violence. This is evident in situations where abusive men exert control over women's educational and employment opportunities (Galtung 1990, cited in Confortini, 2006). Whether manifesting through physical abuse like forced intimacy, hitting, or torture, or through verbal abuse such as insults, bullying, and shouting, the effects can be severe. These forms of abuse frequently result in victims enduring sexual harassment, severe injury, or death (Galtung 1990, cited in Allen and Shervey 2021). Direct violence, however, is

only the tip of the iceberg; it is often undergirded by hidden forms of violence, which I will discuss next.

The second type of violence in Galtung's conceptual framework is structural violence, which is often hidden. Galtung (1990) defines it as a process that is embedded in systems and practices and orchestrated by those in power (cited in Allen and Shervey 2021, 264). It occurs when people are disadvantaged due to political, economic, or other systemic conditions. Structural violence lacks a specific subject; instead, it seeps through the fabric of society, operating unnoticed beneath the surface. Whenever economic, legal, or political traditions disadvantage certain groups, structural violence occurs (Galtung 1969, cited in Winter and Leighton 1999, 1). When structural inequities are hidden and seem normal, people do not take action to change them. Galtung (1969) adds to this by pointing out that, similar to direct violence, structural inequities also lead to suffering and death (cited in Winter and Leighton 1999, 1). The key difference, however, lies in the subtlety of structural violence. It causes harm gradually, making it both more widespread and more difficult to redress (1). Using structural violence from Galtung's conceptual framework can better demonstrate the circumstances and contexts of gender-based violence. Structural inequities often appear normal and go unnoticed by many. This is largely due to the significant role that cultural violence plays in perpetuating and normalizing these injustices.

The last type of violence in Galtung's conceptual framework is cultural violence. This type of violence is often hidden and includes aspects of culture, attitudes, practices, and beliefs that have evolved over the years and limit a category of people (Galtung 1990, cited in Allen and Shervey 2021, 264). Galtung (1990) explains this type of violence by discussing how cultural violence is everywhere, as it impacts institutions by shaping their policies and values (cited in

Khoja-Moolji 2012, 3). Moreover, aspects of culture such as ideologies and religion are contained in all areas of social life (Galtung 1990, cited Confortini 2006, 339). Galtung (1990) adds that these aspects of culture not only motivate and legitimize violent actors, but also provide justification for engaging in both direct and structural violence (Confortini 2006, 339). This underscores how cultural norms can reinforce systemic inequalities and perpetuate forms of violence against marginalized communities. The cultural dimension of Galtung's conceptual framework can better illustrate the circumstances and contexts of gender-based violence. To fully comprehend the relevance of these types of violence to gender-based violence, it is essential to consider them collectively.

In this Capstone research, I apply Galtung's theory of violence, which includes direct, structural, and cultural forms, to ask about hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. Understanding Galtung's theory of violence and its three forms is essential for comprehending the complexities of gender-based violence in the food system. By examining these types of violence, specifically the hidden cultural and structural forms that are the focus of this study, we can uncover the underlying mechanisms perpetuating gender-based violence. Without understanding the hidden forms of violence, we cannot identify and address them. However, Galtung's theory of violence does not fully align with my Capstone research interests.

My Capstone research problem focuses on gender in a way that Galtung's theory does not. Galtung's framework is useful, but it lacks an explicit focus on gender. Confortini (2006) argues that gender should be understood as integral to the framework of violence and that we must focus on gender because gender and gender inequities are inseparable from violence (342). Traditional approaches that overlook gender leave a gaping hole in our understanding of violence. Confortini (2006) bridges this gap with a gender-conscious approach informed by

feminist perspectives. This approach highlights how gender, as a socially constructed dichotomy rooted in biological sex differences, operates as a power relation (342). This gender-conscious framework shows how violence becomes possible through gender inequities, explores hidden power dynamics, and uncovers the system that contains violence and relies on gender relations to do so (338). The concept of violence and gender are co-constituted; violence doesn't exist without gender and gender inequality (354). This means power and gender relations create the conditions for violence, and this violence, in turn, perpetuates these very relations. Gender and gender inequalities produce violence, which helps us understand the origins of structures of domination (338). This understanding will be valuable for my work because it highlights how gender-based violence can be fueled by both structural and cultural inequalities. By examining these inequalities, I can uncover hidden forms of violence within the food system.

Thus, my research will directly apply Confortini's (2006) framework to explore how gender and violence are co-constituted within the food system, focusing on how hidden forms of violence happen in the food system. Overall, developing a foundational understanding of gender-based violence within the food system can help pave the way for identifying potential solutions in the future.

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In summary, this chapter established how food systems are embedded in society and explained the components that are relevant to my Capstone inquiry. I defined social problems, social justice, and gender-based violence, which is my social problem. I identified how gender-based violence is relevant to social justice, its criteria, and the relevant conceptual frameworks. Then, I introduced my research problem focusing on hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system and explained how it is relevant to my social problem and social justice. I also

explained conceptual frameworks that build the foundation for examining hidden forms of violence, which Galtung's theory of violence and Confortini's (2006) framework for violence that focuses on gender in a way that Galtung's theory does not. As I observe gender and gender inequalities producing violence, I will apply Confortini's (2006) framework to explore their co-constituted relationship in the food system. In the next chapter I explain the methodology and methods I use to apply these frameworks to address my research problem.

**Three—Methodology and Methods**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how I investigate the research problem of identifying hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. First, I give an overview of research paradigms and critical inquiry as a research paradigm. Then I explain how critical inquiry is relevant to my research and my positionality related to this research. In the next section, I introduce my overall research question and elaborate the conceptual frameworks that help with understanding hidden forms of gender-based violence. Lastly, I outline the research design for my research question.

**Capstone Research Paradigm**

This section discusses the purpose of research and introduces my research paradigm of critical inquiry. It explains that there are a variety of research paradigms and identifies the roles of ontology, epistemology, objectivity, subjectivity, and positionality in research paradigms and research. Lastly, it explains the research paradigm of critical inquiry, justifies it as an appropriate research paradigm for my Capstone research, and explores my positionality.

*Overview of Research Paradigms*

The aim of research is to enhance our understanding of the world. By conducting research, we can add new perspectives to our collective knowledge. Research occurs within the framework of research paradigms that contain different aspects, such as ontology, epistemology, objectivity, subjectivity, and positionality. Ontology refers to what is out there to know; it is the starting point of all research (Grix 2002, 177). Ontology aims to categorize things and understand how we see the world around us. Blaikie mentions that ontological claims are about social reality and its nature, what exists, what units make it up, and how these units interact with each other (cited in Grix 2002, 177). Secondly, epistemology is about how we can uncover what

we know. Grix (2002) highlights that epistemology is one of the core branches of philosophy; it is concerned with the theory of knowledge (177). The focus of epistemology is the process by which knowledge is gathered and new models and theories are developed (177). The third component of research paradigms is subjectivity. Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2018) define it as relying on our feelings and personal experiences to determine what is true, which can introduce bias into our research (140). Fourthly, objectivity is the opposite of subjectivity: truth is not based on our emotions but rather on neutrality, leading to it being unbiased (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018, 135). The last component is positionality, which concerns how our social location, experiences, and social position shape our identity and research. Positionality shows how we view the world and solve problems depending on our position in the world (Selka 2022, 93). All research is influenced by positionality. Jensen and Glasmeier (2010) mention that positionality is often acknowledged in qualitative social science but less so in quantitative social science (83–84). Overall, research is influenced by the researcher's ontology, epistemology, positionality, objectivity, and subjectivity. However, various research paradigms approach these aspects differently, yielding different outcomes.

How our research is performed depends on research paradigms, such as positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, and constructivism. For instance, Spencer, Pryce, and Walsh (2014) indicate that positivism is a paradigm that rests on the assumption that some objective reality or truth exists (83). Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2018) further elaborate that the positivist paradigm prioritizes the scientific aspects of research, focusing solely on objective values (116). This means that positivists believe that objectivity is possible, which sets them apart from other research paradigms. Additionally, Spencer, Pryce, and Walsh (2014) define postpositivism as a paradigm that insists on theories being tested to be verified as well as falsified (84). Lincoln,

Lynham, and Guba (2018) also add that postpositivism contains the belief that the validity of the research comes from peers and not from the subjects that are being studied (116). While positivism and postpositivism prioritize objective methods, critical theory and constructivism focus on social influences.

Critical theory and constructivism share similar approaches. Both paradigms assert that research cannot achieve complete neutrality and objectivity, because researchers' decisions shape the research process (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018, 110–11). Spencer, Pryce, and Walsh (2014) further elaborate that critical theory emphasizes the ways that the researcher's values impact the social world (90). Similarly, in constructivist paradigms, the research process is understood as influenced by the researcher's background and position. Both paradigms operate under the premise that knowledge is relative and true objectivity is impossible (Spencer, Pryce, and Walsh 2014, 85). Critical theory and constructivist research are also both driven by the study of social structures. Researchers in these fields hold the belief that existing knowledge can change and even remove the oppression within our society (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018, 116). Overall, there are different types of research paradigms best suited to different types of research questions.

*Critical Inquiry and Positionality*

The research paradigm of critical inquiry is well-suited for social-justice inquiry. Critical inquiry, as described by Flick (2017), emphasizes the transformative potential in addressing social injustices (3). It seeks not only to oppose and redress inequalities but also to expose the underlying structures of oppression. This paradigm, according to Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2018), is oriented towards understanding oppressive circumstances and actively working towards social justice through systemic transformation (110–11). A critical researcher's

responsibility is to evaluate social relations and use data to critique oppressive conditions and structural power (110–35). A critical researcher is a detective on the case of injustice, sifting through evidence to expose the root causes and positively change the world. Since a critical researcher's agency is crucial for evaluating social relations and critiquing data, their epistemology, ontology, and positionality may favor certain results (110–35). In other words, their own beliefs and experiences can shape what they see as important. This can make critical research subjective and dependent on the researcher's paradigm, resulting in varied outcomes (110–35). Overall, critical inquiry is special because it has the intention of improving society and the existing inequalities embedded within society's structure (Denzin 2015, 32). Critical inquiry helps us look behind the visible to see the invisible (Comstock 1994, 628–29). While all critical inquiry is focused on addressing social injustice, the ways in which it does so depends on the research questions asked.

This research uses critical inquiry to explore the hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. Critical inquiry works towards social justice by seeking to learn about the oppressive circumstances of a system (Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba 2018, 110–11). Through critical inquiry, violence and oppression in different forms become apparent, drawing attention to social problems in the food system (110–111). Thus, I use the research paradigm of critical inquiry to uncover hidden structural and cultural violence within the food system. After revealing instances of hidden violence in the food system, I can analyze it through a social justice lens to explore potential solutions. Additionally, my own relation to this research can affect the way I use critical inquiry and the way I view gender-based violence in the food system.

My positionality as a female who lived in two different countries influences and has led to the selection of my research problem. My positionality reflects that I am a female from a

middle-class family who migrated from Iran to the United States twelve years ago. I lived in two different countries with norms and inequalities around gender roles that are similar in some ways and different in others. In Iran, women are relatively more oppressed than women in the United States. Experiencing this difference provides me with a strong understanding of gender roles and how women are treated. Thus, this research deeply resonates with me and allows me to draw from my own encounters with inequitable gender roles and the experiences of female friends and family members. This personal connection has fueled my desire to understand the underlying reasons for such violence against women and to uncover any hidden dimensions behind these injustices. Overall, my personal perspective allows me to move beyond surface occurrences of violence to take a broader view and examine the underlying reasons for its existence.

This section discussed the purpose of research and a variety of research paradigms and identified their roles. It explained critical inquiry as a paradigm and its relation to studying causes of gender-based violence as well as my own position concerning this research. The next section will revisit the explanation of the Capstone social problem and research problem and introduce the overall research question and corresponding conceptual frameworks.

**Capstone Research Questions and Conceptual Frameworks**

In this section, I initially review my social problem, which is gender-based violence in the food system, and the research problem which is a focus on hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system, as introduced in the previous chapter. Then, I state my overall research question and explain how it addresses the social justice aspects of gender-based violence. Lastly, I describe conceptual frameworks necessary for understanding and answering my overall research question.

*Research Problem and Research Questions*

My research question addresses my social problem of gender-based violence with a focus on understanding its hidden forms in the food system. My social problem of gender-based violence in the food system includes hidden forms of violence, such as structural and cultural violence. My research problem focuses on uncovering these hidden forms of gender based-violence in the food system. My overall research question (ORQ) asks, what are the hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system? I focus on these less visible forms of violence because I want to uncover them, show that violence is not just direct, and show that these less visible forms can lead to direct forms. To answer this question, I apply specific conceptual frameworks that provide a lens for finding the answer.

The conceptual framework I apply for my ORQ focuses on hidden forms of violence. As Galtung (1990) suggests, there are both structural and cultural forms. There are many forms of structural and cultural violence, which can be interactive and interrelated. To elaborate on them further and to provide some background on these hidden forms of violence, I will explain contextual factors and provide evidence of their existence. To do so, I explain examples of hidden forms of violence such as religion, patriarchy, and discourse. Religion and patriarchy embody both structural and cultural violence; discourse is a way in which structural and cultural violence are transmitted. I illustrate and elaborate on the nature of these hidden forms of violence in what follow.

Religion, as a powerful institution, profoundly impacts women's lives. It encompasses belief in a higher power, whether a transcendent god, gods, or Satan. Fortune and Enger (2005) discuss that for most of the population in the United States, religion is both an institutional reality and a personal one (1). Religious institutions convey belief systems to their members

through doctrine and teachings (1). Moreover, members within religious institutions and communities often seek counseling or direct support from religious leaders for guidance (1). These leaders can act as counselors, mentors, and figures of authority, offering a sense of belonging to members and helping them to navigate life's challenges. However, the same religious institutions that provide support and guidance can also reinforce traditional beliefs and practices that limit women's freedom and rights.

Religion, which often plays a major role in people's lives, can be an institution or a social practice that creates social, structural, and cultural forms of violence. Many women contend with victimization in religious settings, where religious affiliation and teachings provide a crucial context (Fortune and Enger, 2005, 1). Although religious institutions can help guide people through life regarding violence against women, they can also incorporate practices and beliefs that may be misused to excuse men's abusive behavior towards women (1). The negative impact on women's lives is evident across various faiths, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

Christian texts and doctrines have historically justified male dominance and violence against women, as evident in biblical interpretations and historical records. For instance, in the "Rules of Marriage" compiled by Friar Cherubino in the fifteenth century there is evidence of careful instruction for a husband to reprimand his wife; and, if that did not work, to "take up a stick and beat her, for it is better to punish the body and correct the soul than to damage the soul and spare the body" (Bussert 1986, 13, cited in Fortune and Enger 2005, 2). Additionally, there are biblical verses that are interpreted to confirm male dominance over women by suggesting that "Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands" (Ephesians 5.22–24 NRSV, cited in Fortune and Enger 2005, 2). These verses show

that the church often advises women to forgive and forget, be better wives, and remain in their abusive relationships (2).

Like Christianity, Judaism also negatively affects women. Within Judaism, male partners often misuse the concept of *shalom bayit* (peace in the home) to perpetuate domestic violence against their partners. Shalom bayit, which is an important Jewish value, has unfortunately been manipulated by abusive partners (Fortune and Enger 2005, 2). For example, many women go back to and stay in homes where they are abused because they feel pressured to keep things peaceful. This pressure stems from the belief in the myth of the perfect Jewish family associated with shalom bayit, leading to a sense of shame, and discouraging women from seeking help to end the cycle of abuse (2). However, Judaism and Christianity are not the only religions that tend to worsen the abuse of women by justifying it. Islam does so as well.

Islam has been misused by abusive men who incorrectly interpret verses to justify their violence against women. For example, according to Sharifa Alkhateeb (1999), the verse that is most misinterpreted by such men is "Concerning women whose rebellious disloyalty you fear, admonish them, then refuse to share their beds, then hit them; but if they become obedient, do not seek means of annoyance against them" (Sharifa Alkhateeb 1999, 54–55, cited in Fortune and Enger 2005, 3). The problem is that the word translated as "to hit" and the verse more generally are incorrectly translated. Some translators suggest that the term refers to women being obedient to Allah's desires rather than men's. Unfortunately, abusive men use the wrong version of the translation and continue justifying their abuse toward women and their wives.

Overall, these religious traditions historically endorse abusive male behavior, promote male superiority, and enforce dominance, disadvantaging women and undermining their safety. This endorsement and promotion of male dominance is often supported by religious narratives

that have been interpreted in ways that favor and legitimize abusive men at the expense of women's well-being (Carlson 2005 and Le Roux and Pertek 2023, 24, cited in Fortune and Enger 2005, 3). These examples from Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are an illustration of how religion can be an institution or a social practice that creates cultural forms of violence. However, religion is not the only institution or social practice that creates hidden forms of gender-based violence. Patriarchy also contains ideologies that impact our society.

Patriarchy is a system where men dominate and control women, leading to gender-based traits being culturally ascribed to women and men based on binary biological sex. In this system, traits associated with men are prioritized and valued more highly in society. For instance, Johnson (2013) explains that the patriarchal system encompasses a set of ideas and symbols embodied in everything from film and literature to the content of everyday life, constituting the core of culture (333). In patriarchal cultures, women and womanhood are often seen as less important than men and manhood (334). This belief contributes to unequal power dynamics that affect what is expected of men and women in society, such as their behaviors. Additionally, it establishes a hierarchy where traits traditionally linked to men are seen as more human, while traits associated with women are considered "other" or less valued (334). Examples of traits associated with traditional gender roles for men include showing little emotion and having more strength. Traits associated with women include being emotional and perceived as weak or fragile. Therefore, male-identified, male-centered, and male-dominated values are defining elements of patriarchy (333). Overall, in a patriarchal society, women are often controlled or marginalized as traits linked to men are prioritized and those associated with women are undervalued, highlighting the dominance of men and the subordination of women within this system.

Men dominate women and continue to do so by being taught from a young age that emotions are seen as a weakness. For instance, Khoja-Moolji (2012) discusses that boys are often labeled as violent by school disciplinary structures (5). These draw on the hegemonic construction of masculinity as violent and reinforce it (5). This reinforcement occurs when physical strength and academic success are combined to make violence seem like a marker of being a successful man. Hooks (2018) further illustrates that boys are taught that they need to be tough and not express their true feelings (38). Boys often learn these lessons from other males, whether in school or during sports. Then boys feel pressured to conform to patriarchal masculinity to gain acceptance from their male peers and authority figures (38). Contact sports that valorize aggression further emphasize this hegemonic construction of violent masculinity (Khoja-Moolji 2012, 5). On the other hand, girls are often labeled fragile and weak. Even when girls become women and boys become men, these labels stay with them and shape every aspect of their lives. For example, whereas women have emotions, men are strong because they are emotionless (Hooks 2018, 97). Like any system of domination, patriarchy wishes to rule over the powerless, socializes everyone to believe that one group (men) is strong while the other (women) is weak (97). Overall, societal pressure to suppress emotions and embrace aggression creates a rigid masculinity that reinforces patriarchal dominance over women. This also leads to subordination of women as emotionless men get to do as they please.

Patriarchal systems grant men the privilege to lie and manipulate women without consequence, reinforcing male dominance and control. Hooks (2018) illustrates that patriarchal masculinity requires men to use lying as a means of gaining power in relationships and to maintain that power by controlling women (40). For example, within a patriarchal system, males have the privilege and power to lie and easily be forgiven (37). This advantage that men have

hurts women badly. For instance, when women are asked about their relationships with men, we hear stories where women were controlled, lied to, and subordinated by men (37, 161). Women frequently endure harm in relationships where men deceive them and often don't show any remorse. Men acknowledge that they can lie and escape consequences within this patriarchal framework. This is particularly evident in their intimate relationships with women, which are fueled by the perception of women as gullible and inferior (161). This occurs because men have the privilege to bend rules since it is believed that to be a "real man" means having the freedom to do as one pleases (37). Such advantage enables men to perpetuate the narrative of their superiority, while women are considered subordinate and inferior. Unfortunately, the harm done to women by male domination within patriarchal institutions is not an unintended consequence but a fundamental feature of patriarchy and its values. Overall, in a patriarchal system, men are expected to lie and manipulate to control women, ultimately reinforcing male dominance and harming women in their relationships. These lessons from patriarchy, such as the normalization of dominating women, accumulate and spread, influencing people's communication patterns.

Hidden forms of violence can also be manifest through discourse. Crossley (2005) defines discourse as the act of communicating with others through various forms, including speech, writing, electronic messages, and online interactions (60). Communication involves diverse engagement styles, such as initiating or ending conversations, expressing agreement or disagreement, taking turns, and responding to each other (Burman 1991, 15). When considering how discourse can harm women, it is crucial to examine how people, especially men, communicate with women during these interactions. This harm can also relate to the ways that people talk about women, whether it is in speech or written words in textbooks, articles, or online. For instance, a study by Posetti et al. (2020) found that 73 percent of women have

experienced online violence related to their work, such as inappropriate comments, threats, and hateful messages (5). Overall, discourse can be a hidden form of violence against women through how people—especially men—talk to and about them. But violence against women goes beyond words. There are specific hidden forms of violence that affect women in a different ways.

Having provided context on general hidden forms of violence such as religion, patriarchy, and discourse, I now explain specific forms of hidden violence based on my interpretation of Galtung's framework and my knowledge of the food system, focusing on structural and cultural violence. Structural violence occurs when there is inequality in the distribution of material and decision-making power and control. Cultural violence occurs when there are cultural practices that legitimize direct and structural violence. Therefore, the specific forms of hidden violence I look for in the food system in this research are unequal distribution of material resources, unequal distribution of decision-making power and control, and cultural practices that legitimize structural and direct violence. In the following, I explain each of these categories of hidden violence and provide examples so we can know each when we see it.

The first category of hidden violence I examine in the food system is structural violence, which occurs when women have unequal and less access to material resources including wealth, assets, opportunities, and wages. Regarding wealth and assets, Lawson et al. (2020) explain that our economic system was built by powerful and rich men (12). This legacy continues to shape wealth distribution today and creates a self-perpetuating cycle, where men have historically held positions of power and control over resources, allowing them to accumulate greater wealth and assets. This advantage is then passed down through generations, further widening the wealth gap between men and women. Globally, men own 50 percent more wealth than women (12). This

gap, often stemming from factors like unequal pay, significantly limits women's economic security and independence. For example, research by Treviño et al. (2015) demonstrates that even when male and female professors have equivalent performance evaluations, men are more likely to be awarded endowed chairs (cited in Ellemers 2018, 279). Endowed chairs offer greater resources and influence, yet women are disadvantaged despite equal achievements. This bias may be due to unconscious stereotypes. Census data further support this, revealing that women with similar qualifications are less likely to be promoted or chosen for prestigious positions (Buffington et al. 2016, cited in Ellemers 2018, 279). This shows how unequal pay can contribute to the larger wealth gap between men and women and how persistent bias unfairly limits women's career advancement. However, unequal distribution does not only persist regarding material resources; it also persists regarding decision-making power and control.

The second category of hidden violence that I examine in the food system occurs when women have relatively less access to decision-making power and control. Confortini (2006) defines unequal distribution of decision-making power and control as a situation where certain individuals possess more authority compared to others within a society leading to fewer life chances (336). To further demonstrate and elaborate on the presence of unequal distribution of decision-making power and control, I provide two examples.

The first example is about men having more power than women regarding political positions and institutions. Lawson et al. (2020) discusses that our economic system was built by powerful men who make the rules and reap the lion's share of the benefits (12). Even up to this day, women are still underrepresented in political institutions, and no country has yet achieved full gender equality (United Nations 1997, 2000, cited in Williams and Chen 2013, 437). This lack of parity in political leadership reflects a wider societal pattern. Men around the world are

more likely to lead religious and social institutions and hold positions of political power and

corporate positions (Catalyst 2008 and United Nations 2000, cited in Williams and Chen 2013,

438). This point shows that men are more commonly found in positions of leadership and

political power globally. Given patriarchal relations, this may mean that men do not leave space

for women's opinions and desires. For instance, globally only 18 percent of ministers, 24 percent

of parliamentarians and 34 percent of managerial positions are women, which further evidences

the domination of men over women in political power (Lawson et al. 2020, 12). This example

highlights the unequal distribution of decision-making power, as it shows men hold more power

than women and men are able to influence economic policies and structures by making rules.

This leads to women being left out of making major decisions. Overall, the underrepresentation

of women in political leadership globally reflects a broader societal pattern where men hold most

decision-making power across political, religious, social, and corporate spheres. In addition to

women's underrepresentation in leadership roles, they also face difficulties related to both paid

and unpaid domestic labor.

The second example of women having less access to decision-making power and control

concerns the types of labor that are most often performed by women. Specifically, paid and

unpaid domestic labor or care work is less legally protected, such as by regulation regarding

work hour limits, leaving women vulnerable to exploitation and control. Lawson et al. (2020)

argue that many women work as domestic workers and are among the most exploited workers in

the world even though they provide care without a limit (15). Women make up two-thirds of the

paid domestic labor or care workforce and more than three-quarters of unpaid domestic labor or

care workforce (15). Paid domestic labor or care work is when someone gets paid to care or do

chores for people such as elderly people with disabilities in or out of the home. Women might

work in places like hospitals or homes, helping with tasks like cleaning, cooking, and laundry (29). On the other hand, unpaid domestic or care work is mostly done in one's home. It includes bathing a child or caring for sick adults and managing household chores for their own household or for their family or friends (29). Both paid and unpaid domestic work are crucial for our economies and societies (13). Unfortunately, only 10 percent of wage-earning care workers are covered by legal protection such as limitations on hours worked (15). By contrast, more than half of both paid and unpaid domestic workers have no such limits on their labor; some are even trapped in people's or their own homes, which leads to the house owners or their spouses controlling every aspect of their lives (15). This example highlights the unequal distribution of decision-making power among men and women. The low percentage of women in care work who are covered by labor laws suggest a potential link between the lack of representation and the lack of strong legal protections for women in the workplace. However, in addition to facing challenges related to decision-making power and control, women also contend with the normalization of direct and structural violence.

The third category of hidden violence that I examine in the food system entails cultural practices that normalize and legitimize structural and direct violence. This occurs as a result of gender stereotypes, gender expectations, normalizing sexual harassment, and sexism. Bennett, Grossberg, and Morris (2005) define culture as a set of shared beliefs, customs, common traditions, and ways of thinking within a particular social group (63). These cultural norms shape how we perceive and interact with the world around us. Firstly, gender stereotypes are general views and expectations of men and women (Ellemers 2018, 276). While stereotypes are influenced by cultural norms, they are distinct from them. Stereotypes represent specific expectations or perceptions about gender roles and behaviors rather than encompassing the

broader range of beliefs and values within a culture. Essentially, stereotypes define how each gender should behave and the roles they should fulfill in society. For instance, the phrase "Women are from Venus, men are from Mars" is used to explain observed differences in men's and women's ways of thinking, feeling, and acting (276). This phrase is used to indicate that the difference between men and women is millions of miles apart. This means that men and women need to be separated as if they are different species. For example, women's ability is judged especially in their education and careers. That is because the way we judge the abilities of women and men is influenced by gender-stereotypical expectations and assumptions (278). For instance, in various science fields, female students are often perceived as less skilled or talented compared to their male counterparts. Grunspan et al. (2016) illustrate that in biology, even when female students get higher grades, male students are seen to excel (cited in Ellemers 2018, 279). Another example pertains to the workplace, where gender stereotypes affect how people see and rate the work done by women and men. MacNell et al. (2015) discuss that online course evaluations of teacher behaviors were rated a full point higher when the instructor was identified by a male name than a female name (cited in Ellemers 2018, 279). Overall, gender stereotypes negatively impact and limit women's education and career opportunities. In addition to gender stereotypes, gender expectations lead to limiting women.

Gender expectations, which assign specific roles based on gender, also disadvantage women and limit their opportunities and empowerment. Marcus et al. (2015) define gender expectations as shared social expectations and informal rules that relate specifically to gender differences (4). For example, women are expected to do most of the household chores while men are expected to work outside (8). Such expectations can undermine women's well-being and limit their development opportunities, power, and resources. This limitation is due to setting

boundaries on what women and men think and do, such as making decisions or speaking up (Sen et al. 2007 and Marcus and Harper 2014, cited in Marcus et al. 2015, 6). For example, women often engage in negative self-talk due to the influence of cultural expectations such as the ideal body image. This inner dialogue, known as inner speech, plays a significant role in shaping how individuals perceive themselves. It is not just communication with others but also our internal dialogue that impacts our self-perception and behavior. Lin, Flynn, and O'Dell (2021) further elaborate that women whose bodies do not match this ideal body image may have a negative self-image, such as feeling like they are fat, which leads to self-hatred (10). Overall, gender expectations create disadvantages for women by assigning chores, limiting opportunities, and even influencing how negatively women talk to themselves due to cultural pressures like body image. Gender expectations can undermine women but cultural practices that lead to normalizing sexual harassment can hurt women even more.

The normalization of sexual harassment creates a pervasive threat, silencing women and trapping them in abusive situations. In any shared space, women are at risk of exploitation and abuse. Sexual harassment is normalized when other people witness verbal and physical sexual misconduct and do nothing about it. This normalization also puts the blame on women who are sexually harassed or who are in a difficult financial position and so cannot risk reporting the sexual harassment. The normalization of sexual harassment creates a pervasive threat, silencing women and trapping them in abusive situations. The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines workplace sexual harassment to include requests for sexual favors, unwelcome sexual advances, and physical harassment (cited in Allen and Shervey 2021, 265). The problem goes beyond simply unwanted physical contact. Sexual harassment can manifest in subtle ways, through comments or jokes that create a hostile environment. Unfortunately, many

people mistakenly view sexual harassment against women as solely a "women's issue" (Katz 2013 64). This dismissive attitude ignores the reality: a significant portion of this harassment comes from men, including sexual abuse, rape, and verbal assault (64). Men mostly perpetrate these harassments in typically hypercompetitive, traditionally masculine workplaces. For example, some women may not even recognize the harassment they're experiencing because it's become so commonplace (Jayaraman, cited in Allen and Shervey 2021, 265). Overall, sexual harassment thrives when ignored by witnesses, creating fear that silences women.

This silence and fear around sexual harassment is rooted in broader societal issues of sexism, which can result in women facing hidden cultural forms of gender-based violence. Hackman (2013) defines sexism as discrimination based on one's gender; this mostly happens against women, and it largely goes unnoticed and unquestioned (317). This means that discriminatory behaviors against women are so ingrained in society that they are often accepted without challenge. For example, Spence and Helmreich (1972) discuss that social norms and expectations often dictate different behaviors for men and women. This can manifest in the idea that women should prioritize domestic roles such as focusing on becoming good mothers and wives and not worry about their rights (cited in Swim and Campbell 2003, 224). As a result, men may discriminate against and unjustly treat women due to their sexist beliefs in two different ways.

The first type of sexism is hostile sexism. Glick and Fiske (1997) define hostile sexism as hostility towards women such as endorsement of traditional gender roles and negative stereotypes (119). Hostile sexism supports male dominance by reinforcing old-fashioned gender roles and encouraging men to treat women as objects for their own desires, often through insulting language and behavior (121). Barreto and Doyle (2023) further add that hostile sexism

is fueled by the outdated idea that men should control women, according to which it not just

normal but even desirable (101). This belief perpetuates prejudice and rationalizes the silencing

of women and the denial of their opportunities. For example, limiting women to roles and

behaviors that grant them less power and status than men, fitting them into certain societal

prescriptions, and using sexist language or calling them names (Glick and Fiske 1997, 119).

Additionally, hostile sexism creates a double standard. Women who embrace nontraditional

careers or leadership roles face a barrage of negative stereotypes and criticism (Barreto and

Doyle 2023, 102). For instance, women are called bossy or aggressive for the very behaviors that

would be praised in men. This is a form of punishment for daring to break free from traditional

gender expectations. Overall, people with hostile sexist beliefs tend to limit women in many

places such as their work environments by evaluating women negatively compared to their male

counterparts (Oswald, Baalbaki, and Kirkman 2018, 363). Overall, hostile sexism has far-

reaching consequences, limiting women's opportunities. However, the danger doesn't end there,

as sexism also subtly negatively affects women.

A second type of sexism, benevolent sexism, while seemingly positive, is equally

insidious and hard to recognize. In this case, a sexist person harbors positive attitudes toward

women regarding traditional roles (Glick and Fiske 1997, 119). Even though on the surface

benevolent sexism can appear to be positive, it still limits women in so many ways. For example,

Oswald, Baalbaki, and Kirkman (2018) discuss the belief that women need protection because

they are weak (362). People who hold benevolent sexist beliefs are more likely to limit women's

professional aspirations and goals for the future, both personally and professionally (363).

Benevolent sexism is directed only towards women who are considered worthy because they

conform to traditional gender roles (363). Thus, women would be constrained to operate within a

narrow and predefined role. Lastly, women are more likely to accept restrictions placed on their behavior by male romantic partners as they endorse benevolently sexist attitudes (Moya et al. 2007 and Viki et al. 2003, cited in Oswald, Baalbaki, and Kirkman 2018, 363). The worst part about benevolent sexism is that it is a cultural form of hidden violence, subtle and hard for women to identify, and so it is difficult to disrupt.

Together, benevolent and hostile sexism reinforce gender inequality. Hostile sexism continues by punishing women for not following gender-traditional behaviors and benevolent sexism continues by rewarding women as they follow the gender-traditional behaviors (Oswald, Baalbaki, and Kirkman 2018, 363). These dynamics of hostile and benevolent sexism illustrate how traditional gender norms are upheld through both punishment and reward mechanisms.

This section initially delved into the overarching hidden forms of violence against women within societal contexts like religion, patriarchy, and discourse. It elucidated how these elements perpetuate discrimination and curtail women's rights and opportunities. Subsequently, it examined the specific categories of hidden violence based on Galtung's framework and the context of the food system. These included structural violence, characterized by inequality in material resources and decision-making power, and cultural violence, involving practices that justify structural and direct violence. Overall, this comprehensive exploration lays the groundwork for the Capstone research design, which will be elaborated upon in the next section.

**Capstone Research Design**

In the last section of Chapter Three, I explain the methods for addressing my overall research question (ORQ). I will do so in two subsections, "Research Frameworks" and "Elements of Inquiry." A research framework is a systematic way of guiding and conceptualizing

the research process. Elements of inquiry are specific concepts used to elaborate research methods and collect, analyze, and frame data.

*Research Frameworks*

The research framework that applies to my research question is content analysis of literature. My ORQ is, what are the hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system? Content analysis of literature is a research technique for systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages by compressing text into fewer content categories (Berelson 1952 and Holsti 1969, 14, cited in Stemler 2001, 1). According to Krippendorff (1989), this method allows researchers to use coding to systematically break down, analyze, describe, and categorize data within a specific context that holds meaning to a group, culture, or individual (403). For example, with the use of content analysis researchers can efficiently analyze and categorize meanings, themes, and examples within a large amount of data and evaluate the overall content or outcome (GAO 1996 and Weber 1990, cited in Stemler 2001, 1). This framework is most relevant to my study because it allows me to examine and analyze literature containing examples of what people and authors are saying about hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. Therefore, it enables me to systematically explore, understand, and document the various perspectives and narratives surrounding this issue, contributing to a comprehensive analysis of the topic.

*Elements of Inquiry*

The elements of inquiry contain foundational concepts used for research such as unit of analysis, research framework, unit of observation, data scope, data sources, data sample, and analytical criteria. Here, I define and explain each of these concepts as they pertain to my Capstone research project.

Firstly, a research question's unit of analysis defines what we want to say something about. Given that my ORQ is, what are the hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system?, my unit analysis is the hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. Secondly, a research framework is a systematic way of conceptualizing, organizing, and guiding the research process. My research framework is a content analysis of literature. Using this framework, I examine what individuals and authors say in literature, including gray literature, reports produced by nongovernmental organizations, and social movements that talk about structural violence and its forms in the food system. Content analysis makes sense as a research framework for understanding cultural violence in the food system because it allows me to analyze and categorize the meanings, themes, and examples within literature that contains instances and examples of hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system and then evaluate the overall content or outcome of the literature.

Thirdly, the unit of observation indicates what we will observe when addressing the unit of analysis. This helps us make statements about our unit of analysis during the observation process, specifying what we examine. My units of observation are sources that contain instances of hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. Since hidden forms of gender-based violence is a broad category, I used my analytical criteria to identify and analyze specific instances. These criteria include instances of gender inequity related to wealth, assets, opportunities, wages, power, control, gender stereotypes, gender expectations, normalizing sexual harassment, and sexism.

Fourthly, data scope describes the range of data collected to examine units of observation. My data scope contains peer-reviewed articles, books, gray literature, speeches and reports published from 2000 to 2024 in the United States. I chose this scope because I wanted to

make sure that my sources included current information. I also chose the United States because I want to become more aware of my surroundings as a woman living in the United States and help other women to live a violence-free life.

Fifthly, data sources are where I found the units of observation. As noted, my data sources included gray literature, books, peer-reviewed articles, speeches, and reports produced by non-governmental organizations or social movements. I found these data sources by searching for literature on hidden gender relations and inequities in the food system. This allowed me to observe the presence of my analytical criteria, which indicated hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. The key words that I used to conduct my literature search were wealth, asset*, opportuniti*, wage*, power, control, gender stereotyp*, gender expectat*, normaliz*, sexual harass*, sexis*, gender, violen*, workplace, discriminat*, segregat*, structur*, and cultur*.

Sixthly, the data sample is the subset of data that I selected among the data and within the data scope from the sources available. My data sample focused on identifying instances of hidden violence that correspond to my analytical criteria.

Lastly, analytical criteria are the lenses that we look through when analyzing data. The analytical criteria relevant to this question derived from Chapter Two: Background and Significance and the elaboration of conceptual frameworks in Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods. My analytical criteria concern unequal distribution of material resources, decision-making power and control, and cultural practices that legitimize structural and direct violence. My analytical criteria for unequal distribution of material resources include instances of gender inequity related to wealth, assets, opportunities, and wages that can be considered hidden forms of violence. My analytical criteria for unequal distribution of decision-making power and control

includes instances of gender inequity related to power and control that can be considered hidden forms of violence. My analytical criteria for cultural practices that legitimize structural and direct violence includes instances of gender inequity related to gender stereotypes, gender expectations, normalizing sexual harassment, and sexism that can be considered hidden forms of violence.

Overall, this section on research design outlined the process of how research was conducted for my ORQ. It included justification of the relevant research framework, content analysis, and an explanation of my elements of inquiry and analytical criteria that operationalize this research framework to answer my ORQ.

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In this chapter I started by elaborating research paradigms, critical inquiry in my research, and my positionality. I then reviewed my social problem of gender-based violence in the food system and stated my overall research question. Following that, I introduced additional conceptual frameworks for hidden violence that provide some background and contextual factors, as well as specific analytical criteria for structural and cultural forms of violence. Lastly, I stated my overall design for my ORQ. In the next chapter I present my results and analysis.

## Four—Research Applications and Contribution

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of my research to address my overall questions. I begin by restating my overall research question and briefly examine how it addresses my social problem of gender-based violence in the food system. I then restate my research problem, which focuses on hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system. Then, I share my findings, which includes a table summarizing key findings. Next, I provide an analysis with an overall summary. Lastly, the Contribution section explains how my Capstone research addresses my research problem and social problem and provides recommendations I have based on my research.

**Research Findings and Analysis**

My research findings and analysis address my ORQ, what are the hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system? In this section, I present my findings for my ORQ through narrative descriptions and a table that contains the key takeaways relevant to each of my analytical criteria for hidden forms of violence in the food system. For each category, I remind the reader of the concept and give examples of the concept in the food system before transitioning to the next category. The analytical categories for hidden forms of gender violence in the food system are addressed in the following order: unequal distribution of material resources, decision-making power and control, and cultural practices that legitimize structural and direct violence.

*Unequal Distribution of Material Resources*

This section addresses the first category of hidden violence within the food system: unequal distribution of material resources. My analytical criteria focus on instances of gender

inequity concerning wealth, assets, wages, and opportunities, which often constitute hidden forms of violence.

Men wield greater wealth and assets through their ownership of corporations in the food system, where they also enjoy higher wages and superior positions compared to women. For instance, Koch (2019) highlights that men are more likely to own supermarkets and constitute 80 percent of supermarket managers despite comprising less than half of the workforce in beverage and food stores (45, 95). This imbalanced representation is a cause for concern and exemplifies the unequal distribution of material resources. This also suggests that there may be obstacles preventing women from reaching leadership roles in the supermarket industry, even though women make up a significant part of the workforce. For example, women occupy only 18 percent of higher store-management positions, along with 60 percent of first-line retail supervisor roles and many low-wage and entry-level positions (45). The data reveal a troubling pattern of segregation in the industry, with women largely confined to lower-paying and less influential roles, while men occupy the higher-paying and more powerful positions. This gender gap in supermarket extends beyond leadership and ownership roles.

Compounding the wage gap, women in supermarkets face an additional hurdle: a workforce divided along gender lines. For instance, men dominate butcher positions nationwide, holding 90 percent of them, with 25 percent of workers earning over $17 per hour (Center for Popular Democracy 2016, cited in Koch 2019, 45). Meanwhile, three-quarters of food-preparation roles, such as those of supermarket deli counter workers, are held by women, often earning a median wage below $9 per hour (45). This evidences a pattern of inequitable gender segregation within the industry, where women are concentrated in lower-paying service jobs. For another instance, women are predominantly hired for service jobs like customer service, clerk,

and cashier roles, where they typically receive compensation below $13.30 per hour (Center for Popular Democracy 2016, Tolich and Briar 1999, and McKie et al. 2009, cited in Koch 2019, 45). However, getting paid less in these jobs is not the only struggle. Cashiers, mainly women, face a demanding work environment. They are under constant pressure to maintain efficiency and speed, with their performance being monitored (Tolich and Briar, 1999 and Barndt 2008, cited in Koch 2019, 45). It is also physically draining due to the need to stand in the same place for long hours. As cashiers, women need to be friendly and fast and not show feelings of anger or boredom (45). Overall, in the supermarket industry, women frequently find themselves relegated to low-wage service positions due to gender segregation and unequal pay. This reinforces wage disparities and constrains women's economic opportunities, thereby contributing to the unequal distribution of material resources. However, the disparity in wealth and assets between men and women, fueled by men's dominance in supermarket ownership and higher-paying positions, is only part of the issue. Women also face limited opportunities for professional growth.

Women encounter obstacles in advancing their careers and are often excluded from informal networks dominated by men. An illustrative example of this limitation occurs in the retail food sector. Even though male and female cashiers hold the same positions, managers in the retail food sector favor male cashiers by allowing them to roam the store, providing them with opportunities to familiarize themselves with the store's operations and layout (Tolich and Briar 1999, cited in Koch 2019, 45). As male cashiers become more familiar with the store's operations and layout, they enhance their prospects for career advancement (45). By giving male cashiers more freedom to move around the store, managers are providing them with an opportunity to develop a wider range of skills and knowledge that can be valuable for promotions. Furthermore, managers discriminate and restrict women's opportunities by failing to

post job openings and excluding women from informal networks predominantly comprised of men (Featherstone 2004, cited in Koch 2019, 46). Examples of such networks could include informal gatherings, after-work events, or professional associations where male employees predominantly interact and network. Managers and male employees often plan casual meetings outside of work hours without informing women employees. By excluding women from these networks, managers put them at a significant disadvantage. Men gain access to valuable information, build relationships with decision makers, and benefit from informal mentorship, all of which enhance their career prospects. In contrast, women are left out of the loop, hindering their ability to learn about new opportunities or build relationships with influential figures. Overall, the favoritism shown by managers toward men in the same position disadvantages women in their careers, impeding their access to opportunities and resources such as promotions and higher salaries. This perpetuates an unequal distribution of material resources based on gender, where men benefit from greater chances for advancement compared to women. This inequality is also present and impacts women in agriculture.

Women are less likely than men to benefit from agricultural loans and subsidies. Managing the economic challenges of farming depends and relies on U.S. agricultural subsidies (Leslie, Wypler, and Bell 2019, 857). For instance, the Farm Bill heavily favors industrial agriculture and large farms, which are typically owned and managed by men (Ayazi and Elsheikh 2015 and Johnson and Monke 2016, cited in Leslie, Wypler, and Bell 2019, 857). This information highlights gender inequality in agriculture, as large agricultural farms benefit more from subsidies. In contrast, small and organic farms, which are more likely to be owned and managed by women, receive less coverage and support (Hall and Mogyorody 2007, cited in Leslie, Wypler, and Bell 2019, 857). This disparity means that women in smaller farms face

additional obstacles in accessing support compared to men engaged in larger-scale and heavily subsidized agriculture. This information highlights the unequal distribution of material resources in the sector and the need for policy reforms to address gender inequality in agriculture. Furthermore, the issue extends beyond subsidies, with women also encountering challenges in accessing loans.

Women farmers who seek loans to expand their operations often fail to receive them. For instance, loan officers give women their loans late, offer smaller loans, and unfairly deny their loans because loan officers do not even read women as farmers (Alsgaard 2012, 391 and Keller 2014, 76, cited in Leslie, Wypler, and Bell 2019, 858). This is gender inequality perpetuated by loan officers. Similarly, the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) also gives men more loans than women. FSA loans are farmers' loans to start, grow, or keep their farms going (Joseph, Roesch-McNally, and Looser 2024, 23). There are two kinds: direct loans from the FSA to farmers and guaranteed loans from approved lenders with FSA support (23). These loans help farmers manage money and expand their businesses. However, between 2015 and 2022, around 82 percent of FSA direct loans were given to men or male-owned farm organizations, while slightly over 16% went to women or women-owned farm organizations (24). When considering the dollar amounts, over 87 percent of the money went to men, with only about 10 percent allocated to women (24). This further indicates that women tend to receive smaller loans compared to men. Overall, women farmers encounter gender inequality in obtaining loans, receiving smaller amounts, and experiencing delays or denials from loan officers and the USDA's Farm Service Agency compared to men, all of which highlights the broader issue of unequal distribution of material resources. Accessing the loans is challenging for women, but so is accessing land.

Women continue to face challenges regarding limited land access within the farm sector. Unequal gender relations have heavily shaped land access, which is farmers' biggest economic challenge (Ackoff, Bahrenburg, and Schute 2017, cited in Leslie, Wypler, and Bell 2019, 857). Unlike men, who have an easier time to purchasing land, women farmers have far fewer options. Traditionally, women have relied on three main routes. First, women may gain access to land through marriage, by inheriting it from their husbands, or receiving it in a divorce settlement. Secondly, in some cases, women can purchase land using their husband's income from sources other than farming. Thirdly, women might purchase their own land by saving enough money by themselves (857). However, these options are clearly unequal compared to the straightforward purchasing power men hold, particularly because land is a crucial material resource in the agricultural sector. Owning land directly translates to greater economic power and potential for farmers. Since land is such a vital resource, limited access for women directly restricts their ability to generate wealth and income. Overall, women are limited regarding land access in ways that men are not. This situation is reflective of women's unequal access to resources relative to men as described throughout this section. I now turn to the ways in which women have inequitable access to decision-making power and control in the food system.

*Unequal Distribution of Decision-Making Power and Control*

This section examines the second category of hidden violence in the food system: unequal distribution of decision-making power and control. My analytical criteria focus on instances of gender inequity concerning power and control, which are hidden forms of violence.

Men hold the majority of power across the food system, from government to policymaking, while women are relegated to lower-paying and less powerful roles. In the United States, for example, men make up 75 percent of state legislators and 80 percent of federal

legislators (Koch 2019, 95). This gendered power imbalance has significant consequences. It can lead to policies that do not fully consider the needs of women in the food system. While women are disadvantaged in their low-paying jobs, men continue to make decisions about laws and policies in our food system and society (95). This underscores a gendered disparity in decision-making power and control within the food system, where men predominantly occupy leadership roles in government and policymaking. Consequently, women are disadvantaged both in their employment opportunities and in shaping the policies that affect them. Overall, men holding more power and control affects women negatively, especially in the restaurant industry, which is dominated by men.

Restaurants are male-dominated workplaces and, as women enter them, men often attempt to control them through a variety of tactics that make it difficult to succeed. These tactics can include assigning women to lower positions and lower wages in the kitchen and using harmful stereotypes. Even when women get jobs in the kitchen, the types of jobs women are assigned to are typically lower positions in the kitchen hierarchy such as the garde-manger or pantry station (Harris and Giuffre 2015, 98). Additionally, men may claim that women are too emotional to handle the intense pressure and stress in the kitchen (98). Men use this stereotype to justify keeping women out of leadership roles and high-pressure areas. This further perpetuates the idea that the kitchen is a man's area and that women who choose to enter it are intruding (104). For instance, male chefs often believe that if women are expecting the environment to adapt to them, it means women do not belong in the kitchen as chefs (104). Overall, since restaurants are a male-dominated environment, men often hold all the control. This illustrates unequal distribution of decision-making power and control because women are left with a little space to assert themselves and speak their minds on issues such as the rules of the

kitchen or their desire for higher positions. If a woman disagrees with a low position or a rule, she is often pressured to leave the kitchen entirely. Essentially, women are expected to accept whatever the men in charge say, because the professional kitchen is seen as their territory. These practices ultimately reinforce gender inequality in the workplace and hinder women's advancement in the culinary industry. However, the restaurant industry is not the only place where men have power and control; farms are also another place for it.

Women who own or co-own farmland often face barriers in making management decisions due to social pressures and expectations related to power and control over decision-making. Even women who appear on paper as farm owners are likely not the final decision makers on cultivation practices, conservation, or government programs (Bigelow, Borchers, and Hubbs 2016, 39, cited in Leslie, Wypler, and Bell 2019, 857). This lack of final say is often due to the social pressures and expectations women face, which can create other disadvantages as well. These expectations include being pressured to prioritize household chores over farm work, having their decisions questioned, and facing criticism for not conforming to traditional roles (Leslie, Wypler, and Bell 2019, 857). Such social pressures can erode women's confidence and make them hesitant to assert their authority despite having ownership rights. The constant questioning and criticism lead to women feeling pressure to defer decision making to men. The unequal distribution of decision-making power and control is evident as a consequence these social pressures. Women landowners often face pressure to defer to men, perpetuating traditional gender roles and diminishing their autonomy in agricultural management. This lack of control and pressure also happens within women's households.

Women often have more responsibilities regarding domestic work at home due to stereotypes about women. This imbalance extends beyond household chores, impacting women's

control in other aspects of their lives. Despite some increase in men's housework contributions, Jabs and Devine (2006) indicate that women still carry more responsibilities within households, than their husbands (cited in Chard and Roth 2014, 226). Stereotypes portray women as naturally suited for housework, leading to them taking on greater responsibility than men for cooking, grocery shopping, and ensuring family nutrition (Lake, Hyland, and Mathers, 2006, cited in Chard and Roth 2014, 226). This societal expectation translates to judgment if something is lacking in their partners' or children's nutrition. The weight of these responsibilities not only limits women' abilities to pursue personal interests and goals, but also deprives them of crucial "me time" or time for self-care and relaxation. This lack of time for themselves further exacerbates their sense of limited control and agency over their lives. The imbalance in domestic duties and the resulting scarcity of personal time reflect a broader pattern of unequal distribution of decision-making power and control, with women disproportionately burdened by household responsibilities. This unequal dynamic further constrains their ability to assert their autonomy and pursue their goals. These responsibilities and constraints regarding domestic work are also present in other areas of women's lives and are undergirded by cultural practices that legitimize violence.

*Cultural Practices That Legitimize Structural and Direct Violence*

This section delves into the third category of hidden violence within the food system: cultural practices that legitimize structural and direct violence. My analytical criteria for such practices include instances of gender inequity related to gender stereotypes, gender expectations, normalizing sexual harassment, and sexism that can be considered hidden forms of violence. My findings are presented in this order: gender stereotypes, gender expectations, and the normalization of sexual harassment, and sexism.

Gender stereotypes persist in industries like restaurants, food production, and retail stores, restricting opportunities for women throughout their employment. Firstly, women are assigned to undesirable positions in restaurant kitchens due to men's false assumptions and stereotypes about them. In the preceding section, I mentioned that restaurants are male dominated. To maintain this status quo, men assign women to low-wage positions with less authority and autonomy, thereby retaining control and power. However, the following example illustrates how stereotypes about women legitimize both structural and direct violence. For instance, women often end up in undesirable kitchen positions and are frequently denied jobs, particularly as chefs. Harris and Giuffre (2015) found that during interviews, stereotypes were mentioned that portray women as less physically capable than their male counterparts in the culinary profession (94).These stereotypes include reasons such as women's menstrual cycles and potential pregnancies as limitations on their abilities (94). These biological realities have no bearing on a chef's skill and creativity in the kitchen; they are simply forms of discrimination disguised as concern. Even when women secured jobs in the kitchen, they were often assigned to low positions in the kitchen hierarchy. These positions include women working as garde-manger or at the pantry station (98). Garde-manger is a place where cold appetizers and salads are prepared. Male chefs put women in this position without even looking at their résumé (99). Women are often placed there because it is considered less demanding than the hot side of the kitchen (Leschziner 2007, cited in Harris and Giuffre 2015, 99). Gender stereotypes, such as assumptions about women's menstrual cycles and potential pregnancies, serve to legitimize structural violence in the kitchen by denying women chef positions and relegating them to lower-status roles. These beliefs justify the exclusion of women from higher-paying, prestigious chef

positions and their relegation to lower-status roles. These stereotypes about women are also present in food production industry.

Secondly, women are pushed to stay in their current roles within food production, and their opportunities are limited due to gender stereotypes and assumptions. These assumptions create an unfair playing field, directing women into specific tasks often labeled as "women's work." For example, jobs like picking crabs or preparing chickens are often deemed more suitable for women due to the stereotype that women possess nimble fingers (Chard and Roth 2014, 226). However, it is crucial to note that crab picking is not considered a desirable job. The stereotype about women's nimbler fingers prevents them from accessing better opportunities in the food production industry, such as advancing into higher positions or becoming managers. Conversely, men may have opportunities for better jobs and a wider range of roles within food production because their abilities are not perceived as limited by stereotypes about nimbleness. However, the stereotype about women's nimble fingers further restricts their opportunities. It also leads to their participation in the production of packaged and precooked meals (Allen and Sachs, 2012, cited in Chard and Roth 2014, 226). Overall, the assumption about women's greater manual dexterity reflects a cultural practice in the industry that legitimizes structural violence against women. This assumption reinforces discriminatory barriers and hampers women's advancement by directing them into specific tasks based on stereotypes. Consequently, the food production industry creates an unequal playing field, restricting women's access to higher-paying and more prestigious positions. Additionally, these stereotypes extend to retail stores and limits women during their job interview.

Thirdly, interviewers often perceive women as weak and incompetent and so refuse to offer women the available job positions at retail stores. For example, there was a job posting from

Costco, a large wholesale retailer, seeking new store managers (Good and Rudman 2010, 482).

Women with university degrees applied for the position. Jennifer, who held a BA degree and had

two years of experience at Macy's department store, was among those applicants and secured an

interview (482). Evidence from Good and Rudman (2010) illustrates how gender stereotypes

influenced Jennifer's job interview at Costco. The interviewer, Bob, subtly implied that the role

might be challenging for a "young lady," suggesting Jennifer's perceived unsuitability. He hinted

at potential dangers for a young and weak woman, implying that male candidates might be better

suited. Ultimately, Bob ended the interview, indirectly rejecting Jennifer (492). This information

reinforced gender stereotypes and limited Jennifer's opportunities. This example about Jennifer

is representative of what so many other women experience when they try to get a job at places

like Costco. A lot of women are perceived as weak and then feel disappointed after an interview.

This experience reflects a broader cultural practice that legitimizes structural violence. The

structural aspect of the violence women face lies in the systemic nature of gender discrimination

within the job interview process. The cultural norms and expectations that perceive women as

weak and incompetent are deeply ingrained in society and perpetuated throughout various

industries, including retail. This systemic discrimination often manifests as benevolent sexism,

where women are subtly undermined and underestimated based on traditional gender roles and

stereotypes, hindering their opportunities for advancement. These gender expectations and

stereotypes also exist in agriculture and continue to limit women.

Gender stereotypes persist in farming, limiting women farmers and their engagement with

male farmers. Despite an increase in women's participation in farming without male partners,

these stereotypes endure (Sachs et al. 2016, cited in Kitch et al. 2021, 9). These stereotypes and

assumptions, such as that women are not "real" farmers, lead to limited financial opportunities

for independence and create an inhospitable climate among their male peers. For instance, wholesale clients would bypass women farmers entirely, looking to talk only to the husband, who is not even involved in farming (Wright and Annes 2020, cited in Kitch et al. 2021, 9). This gender stereotype not only undermines women's sense of empowerment in nontraditional roles but also restricts women farmers' access to financial opportunities for independence. For example, consumers still have the stereotypical assumption about farm wives in mind and expect women to give them advice about making jams and canning vegetables (9). This example reinforces the perception that women are not serious agricultural professionals. Kitch et al. (2021) discuss that in the midwestern United States women are still laughed at for calling themselves a farmer (9). Additionally, women farmers often face an inhospitable climate among their male peers, even in seemingly neutral settings like agricultural extension meetings (9). If women skip agricultural extension meetings, they are perceived as not serious or genuine farmers because it is perceived that they do not take their work seriously or challenge themselves to demonstrate their capabilities to their male counterparts. Gender stereotypes such as that women are not real farmers, legitimize both direct and structural violence. Direct violence includes ridiculing women who identify as farmers and results in their exclusion from agricultural discussions. Meanwhile, the normalization of structural violence, including denying recognition and opportunities to women while relegating them to traditional gender roles, limits their financial prospects and hinders their participation and advancement in farming. Overall, these stereotypes about women farmers aren't the only barrier for women; gender expectations also limit them, especially regarding the belief that women should handle grocery shopping duties.

Women are commonly expected to take on the responsibility for grocery shopping in a household. More than a merely practical matter, this expectation is tied to gender performance.

One way that women are expected to "perform" their gender role is by expressing love through grocery shopping (Miller 1998 and Cook 2009, cited in Koch 2019, 48). This expectation stems from cultural norms that cast women as primary caregivers and homemakers (Koch 2019, 49). Grocery shopping becomes an extension of these roles, with women being held accountable for food choices and shopping trips, not men. When asked about why they do the grocery shopping, women comment that it is "just easier" for them to do (49). However, this perceived ease can be a consequence of internalized gender norms. Being a good mom, caregiver, and spouse can become intertwined with the outcome of grocery shopping, making it difficult for women to resist taking it on (49). These cultural norms reinforce traditional gender roles, limiting women's autonomy and perpetuating inequality. The expectation for women to handle grocery shopping legitimizes structural violence by systematically disadvantaging women. For example, added domestic responsibilities make it harder for women to pursue higher education or career advancement, perpetuating gender inequality. However, these gender expectations go beyond grocery shopping and influence food consumption habits.

Gender expectations also influence food consumption as they perpetuate the idea that men should be strong and dominant, while women should be nurturing and submissive and feel pressured to restrict their food intake. Every aspect of our food system, including the selection of foods, is influenced by gender norms. Koch (2019) highlights how certain food categories are assigned to specific genders based on normative models of femininity and masculinity (93). This is particularly evident in patriarchal cultures, where meat consumption takes on a symbolic meaning. Women are traditionally expected to prepare and serve meals, including meat, catering to the dietary preferences of their husbands (Adams 2010, 56). Conversely, men are encouraged to consume protein-rich foods like meat, which are associated with masculinity and physical

strength (Bourdieu 1984, Sellaeg and Chapman 2008, and Twigg 1983, cited in Koch 2019, 79). Adams (2010) explains that meat is understood as a term denoting male power: it is "king," and the attributes of masculinity, such as strength, are achieved through eating just such masculine food (56–57). Men consume meat to sustain their strength, reinforcing the notion that meat is crucial for their physical abilities. This is evident in examples like meat-eating wrestlers, boxers, and football players who are associated with strength and adhere to this meat-centric patriarchal culture (56). Therefore, men who do not eat meat are feminine and not masculine.

On the other hand, a constructed cultural perspective encourages women to consume "light" foods, reflecting a societal expectation around dietary preferences. This focus on "light" foods is seen to keep women's femininity intact and their bodies conforming to certain beauty standards (Koch 2019, 93). Fruits, salads, sweets, and pasta are often categorized as these "light" foods associated with femininity (Bourdieu 1984, Sellaeg and Chapman 2008, and Twigg 1983, cited in Koch 2019, 79). This belief comes from thinking that vegetables and fruits are not very filling or heavy. It matches the idea that women should eat less and control their hunger and cravings. This contrasts with the stereotype of the unemotional, protein-consuming strongman (Bordo 1993, cited in Koch 2019). It is important to recognize that gender norms portray women as too emotional for protein-rich foods, while men are seen as the sole beneficiaries of strength-giving meals. Overall, these patriarchal food practices that restrict women to "light" foods while granting men meat perpetuate structural violence by enforcing unequal gender norms around food. Men are encouraged to consume meat, symbolizing masculinity, while women are steered towards "light" foods to maintain femininity. This reinforces a system where women cater to men's preferences and restrict their own choices. These restrictions on women's food contribute to broader oppression and limit autonomy, ultimately reinforcing unequal power dynamics and

perpetuating structural violence. Additionally, gender norms often constrain women's dietary choices and are reflected in societal expectations regarding women's appearance.

The idealized body image within our society set expectations for how women should look, resulting in women's negative self-talk and industries exploiting this for increased profits. Women engaging in self-critical speech is a form of negative self-communication. Advertising industries worsen this through various forms of discourse on online media platforms. Regardless of age, women have always had problems and dissatisfaction with their weight and body (Paquette and Raine 2004, cited in Allen and Sachs 2007, 10). For example, women who do not have this ideal body image talk negatively to themselves, saying things such as "I feel so fat" or "I hate the way I look" or "I shouldn't have eaten so much (Lin, Flynn, and O'Dell 2021, 10). Therefore, women stay hungry most of the time and follow unhealthy weight-loss practices to achieve the ideal body image. Doing so leads to eating disorders, poor self-esteem, and depression (Paquette and Raine 2004, cited in Allen and Sachs 2007, 10). Industries such as fashion take advantage of this idealized body image to sell their products.

Women's obsession with their weight and becoming thin is used by the diet and fashion industries to make enormous profits. The media bombards people, particularly women, with unrealistic beauty standards that associate thinness with attractiveness. For example, women encounter four hundred to six hundred messages through advertisements each day, reinforcing the implied connection between thinness and attractiveness (Allen and Sachs 2007, 10). This constant exposure fuels a market for products and services that promise to attain this unrealistic ideal (Ballentine and Ogle 2005, cited in Allen and Sachs 2007, 11). However, women often overlook the fact that the ideal body image depicted in advertisements is unattainable and primarily serves as a means for industries to profit. Consequently, the cycle of negative self-

perception persists as advertising exploits women's insecurities for profit. These cultural practices legitimize both direct and structural violence through unrealistic beauty standards. Direct violence manifests as industries exploit women's insecurities, promoting products promising quick weight loss or enhanced appearance, all legitimized by beauty standards, resulting in harmful behaviors like disordered eating and low self-esteem. Meanwhile, structural violence, such as setting unattainable standards for women, is legitimized by the idealized body image, which associates thinness with attractiveness in media, advertising, and fashion, leading to negative self-talk when women don't meet these standards. Women continue to lose their self-esteem while they must also contend with other inequalities such as experiencing sexual harassment and perceiving it as normal.

The normalization of sexual harassment, exemplified by the lack of enforcement of policies on farm fields, leaves women vulnerable to experiencing such misconduct. Most of the time men tend to regulate policies in our food system and society (Koch 2019, 95). These policies, predominantly implemented by men, often fail to adequately protect women from sexual violence and may overlook their needs. For example, Waugh (2010) points out that workplace policies on sexual harassment may be too flimsy to undo women's oppression on the field (cited in Sexsmith and Griffin 2021, 330). These weak policies leave women to deal with uncomfortable and risky situations on their own. Moreover, sexual harassment policies often don't extend to very rural locations because federal law doesn't require them to do so (330). Even if these policies on sexual harassment are in place, women who report harassment may be accused of lying by male management, leading to no punishment for the perpetrators (Kominers 2015, 39). This lack of consequences allows perpetrators to continue their actions, putting women at even greater risk. Overall, the predominance of men in implementing policies within

agricultural workplaces legitimizes both structural and direct violence. Structural violence is legitimized by men making policies that often reinforce existing power imbalances, resulting in weak measures that fail to adequately protect women from sexual harassment. Direct violence, like fostering an environment where women experience sexual harassment and fear reporting it due to potential accusations of lying or retaliation, is also legitimized by policies made by men, particularly in rural areas where police may not reach, giving perpetrators the upper hand. There is a need for a change within the structure and enforcement of these policies so they could protect women instead of worsening the situation for them. Flimsy policies are not the only way of normalizing sexual harassment; hypermasculinity is also used as a tool to normalize sexual harassment.

In male-dominated and competitive environments like restaurant kitchens, hypermasculinity is used as a tool to normalize sextual and verbal harassment. In the preceding section, I discussed how restaurants are male-dominated, and men strive to maintain this status quo by offering women low wages lower-status positions, using harmful stereotypes to justify it. Additionally, I addressed stereotypes about women that hinder them from obtaining desired jobs within the restaurant industry. However, here I focus on how hypermasculinity is used as a tool in the kitchen to cover up and normalize men's physical and verbal harassment of women. This toxic masculinity is rooted in the belief that cooking is exclusively women's domain at home, while professional cooking in restaurant kitchens is deemed suitable for men (Allen and Shervey 2021, 265). This belief system fosters an environment where men assert their masculinity through sexual and verbal harassment to demonstrate dominance over women. Within the competitive environment of restaurants, this leaves women feeling powerless and creates a situation where instances of harassment may go unnoticed or unaddressed (265). The logic here

lies in the intertwining dynamics of toxic masculinity, harassment, and normalization: toxic

masculinity drives the behavior, leading to the normalization of harassment, which in turn

perpetuates a sense of powerlessness among women. As a result, women may not even recognize

when they are being sexually harassed, as such behavior has become ingrained and accepted.

Furthermore, even when women do become aware of sexual harassment, fear of retaliation and a

lack of knowledge about how to address or report it often prevent them from taking action

(265). Women not only have to bear sexual harassment, but they also have to deal with verbal

harassment. For example, a culinary instructor named Lisa talked about the time that she got

promoted within a corporate restaurant (Harris and Giuffre 2015). After her promotion, her male

coworkers felt resentful and tried to bring her down by verbally abusing her. Lisa's male

coworkers continued to make snide comments and insults such as "I'm not listening to some

dumb bitch; you don't know what you're talking about" (135). All these hateful comments led to

Lisa quitting her job; the worst part is that Lisa's manager heard what these her coworkers were

saying to her and did nothing to stop it (135). Overall, hypermasculinity normalizes direct

violence and structural violence. The belief that cooking is exclusively a man's profession,

reinforced within a culture of toxic masculinity, legitimizes structural violence such as the failure

of management to address harassment and perpetuates it by allowing perpetrators to act without

consequence. Additionally, women's experiences of sexual and verbal harassment constitute

direct violence, as they are often silenced by the legitimization of these abuses within a

hypermasculine culture, denying them agency and perpetuating the marginalization of women

within the industry.

Overall, hidden violence in the food system arises from unequal distribution of material

resources, decision-making power, and cultural practices that legitimize structural and direct

violence. Firstly, men dominate ownership, leadership, and higher-paying roles in supermarkets, agriculture, and other sectors, resulting in wealth and asset disparities. Women are concentrated in lower-paying positions, face wage gaps, and encounter career obstacles due to informal networks and managerial favoritism. In agriculture, women receive fewer subsidies and loans and have limited access to land, exacerbating economic disparities. Secondly, men dominate decision-making in the food system through leadership in government and policymaking that result in policies that often overlook women's needs. In restaurants and farms, men control high-level positions, relegating women to lower-paying roles and undermining their decision-making authority. At home, women bear the burden of domestic responsibilities, limiting their autonomy. Lastly, cultural practices legitimize structural and direct violence. Gender stereotypes restrict women to low-status roles and additional domestic duties, while food consumption norms enforce gender roles. Idealized body images promote unhealthy practices exploited by industries. Sexual harassment is normalized due to weak policies and hypermasculine cultures in agriculture and restaurants, silencing women and perpetuating marginalization. Overall, these factors reinforce gender inequality and limit women's opportunities and autonomy. Table 1 summarizes these findings and provides a foundation for my analysis in the next section.

**Table 1. Instances of hidden gender-based violence in the food system**

| Hidden forms of violence | Unequal distribution of material resources | Unequal distribution of decision-making power and control | Cultural practices that legitimize violence |
|---|---|---|---|
| Instances of hidden violence | Men typically gain wealth and assets by owning corporations like supermarkets, where they also enjoy higher wages and superior positions compared to women.<br><br>In supermarkets, men typically hold higher-paying roles, while women are often relegated to lower-paying positions, reinforcing wage gaps and limiting women's career advancement amid demanding work conditions.<br><br>Male cashiers in retail often receive preferential treatment, accessing opportunities that women miss, hindering women's career growth and perpetuating gender-based inequalities.<br><br>Women in agriculture face difficulty accessing US agricultural subsidies, as policies favor large, industrial farms owned by men, leaving smaller farms run by women at a disadvantage in accessing financial support.<br><br>Compared to men, women farmers face significant challenges in accessing loans such as delays, smaller loan amounts, and unfair denials from loan officers and the USDA's Farm Service Agency.<br><br>Women in agriculture have difficulty accessing land, limiting their economic power compared to men who have more straightforward purchasing options. | Men hold most of the power in the food system, from policymaking to government, resulting in policies that often overlook the needs of women. This lack of female representation in leadership roles disadvantages women, confining them to low-paying jobs.<br><br>In restaurants, men's dominance in power and control leads to women receiving lower positions and wages and encountering harmful stereotypes, hindering their advancement and perpetuating gender inequality in the culinary industry.<br><br>Women who own or co-own farmland face barriers in making management decisions due to social pressures and expectations.<br><br>Women shoulder more housework, due to stereotypes which limit their personal time and control over their lives. | Gender stereotypes persist in restaurants, food production, and retail, restricting women's advancement. In kitchens, women are assigned lower roles, while food production funnels women into specific tasks. Retail employers often undervalue women's qualifications. These stereotypes limit women's career advancement.<br><br>Stereotypes persist that women aren't "real" farmers, limiting their access to resources, financial independence, and respect from male peers.<br><br>Grocery shopping is gendered, tied to women's caregiving roles, limiting their choices and autonomy, perpetuating inequality.<br><br>Gender norms around food dictate that men consume meat to symbolize strength, while women are directed to "light" foods to maintain femininity.<br><br>The idealized body image within our society sets expectations for how women should look, resulting in women's negative self-talk, and industries take advantage of that to increase their profits.<br><br>The normalization of sexual harassment, particularly evident in the lack of enforcement of policies in agricultural workplaces predominantly run by men, leaves women vulnerable to experiencing such misconduct.<br><br>Hypermasculinity in male-dominated kitchens normalizes sexual and verbal harassment, with managers often turning a blind eye to women being abused. |

**Analysis**

In the sections above and in Table 1, I provided examples of hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system according to the analytical criteria that I discussed in Chapter Three. This section analyzes the findings presented, considering all of the examples of hidden violence I discovered in the food system according to analytical criteria associated with unequal distribution of material resources, decision-making power, and cultural practices that legitimize structural and direct violence in the food system. My findings indicate that instances of hidden forms of violence are present everywhere in the food system, including farm fields, advertising industries, restaurants, food production, food consumption, households, food retail, and supermarket industry. Hidden forms of violence present in all these areas, categories, and places are often unrecognized by other people, but nonetheless constitute violence, even if they are not considered direct and recognized; significantly, they may also lead to direct violence. Moreover, the examples provided in my findings show how cultural practices such as gender stereotypes, gender expectations, normalizing sexual harassment, and sexism all are part of cultural practices that can lead to legitimizing structural and direct violence.

After reviewing my findings and Table 1, I began contemplating the omnipresence of gender-based violence. I have noticed that these hidden forms of violence coexist with us daily and occur right before our eyes, yet they are so normalized and concealed that no one pays attention to them. It starts with women performing domestic work at home, often without limits and without wages, which goes largely unnoticed because it is expected of them. Then it continues as women in their workplaces have to contend with a lack of decision-making power, control, fair wages, and equal opportunities compared to men. This even extends to women sometimes not being able to choose their own food due to societal expectations surrounding food

consumption, such as the belief that women should only consume light foods and avoid meat. However, violence worsens for women regarding sexual and verbal harassment, which stems from cultural practices that legitimize structural and direct violence. For example, in the restaurant industry, women often face sexual and verbal harassment. Due to the hypermasculine culture that dictates women do not belong in the restaurant kitchen, there is a belief that once women enter the kitchen, they must endure all forms of harassment to stay there. Sexual and verbal harassment thus become normalized and even go unnoticed by women, who may perceive it as just part of the challenges thrown at them by men to push them out of the kitchen. Even when women are aware of these issues, their words are often not taken seriously because it is considered "men's place."

Moreover, women may engage in negative self-talk because they do not conform to the ideal body type glorified in our society. I noticed that I sometimes find myself looking in the mirror and questioning why I don't resemble the models I see on Instagram. However, after reflecting on my findings about the ideal body image, I now catch myself and remind myself of the profit-driven nature of the fashion industry. I hope that other women can also adopt this mindset and develop a more positive relationship with themselves. I also realized that women do not give themselves enough credit for dealing with all these hidden forms of violence. Overall, I noticed that to make these hidden forms of violence visible, we need to start with the reflection in the mirror, which is ourselves, and start paying attention to how we talk to ourselves and how others talk to us women. Hidden forms of violence are everywhere within the food system starting with women's households, themselves, and then expanding to their workplace.

Additionally, recalling Galtung's theory of violence and Confortini's framework, I realized several key points. First, after looking at my findings and Table 1, I can see clearly how

what Galtung is saying about the iceberg is true. I noticed that structural and cultural violence are beneath the surface and direct violence is at the tip of the iceberg. I noticed this especially as I learned about flimsy sexual harassment policies that cannot protect women on the fields and do not even reach rural areas. Before understanding Galtung's theory, I only noticed that women were exposed to sexual harassment, which is direct violence. However, Galtung's theory allowed me to look beyond what meets the eye and examine the structural reasons. For example, the root cause of this issue is structural: policymakers are predominantly men, which results in a lack of recognition of women's needs. This explains why these inadequate policies, often implemented by men, lead to the persistence of sexual violence in the fields. If the sexual harassment policies were assertive and properly enforced, it would significantly change the situation for women. This understanding clearly illustrates how hidden forms of violence lie beneath the surface, pushing direct violence into visibility.

As for Confortini's framework, their point about how violence is tied to gender helped me notice the relationship between gender stereotypes and expectations and violence. For instance, I observed that gender stereotypes and expectations limit women in many ways across the food system. Women are expected to behave in certain ways, occupy certain jobs, or perform domestic tasks. These stereotypes dictate that women should do this or that, that women belong here and not there, which all leads to violence. The burden placed on women is overwhelming and exhausting. For example, women are expected to manage the kitchen in their homes but are often deemed unable to handle the heat in restaurant kitchens. Women can do grocery shopping, take care of children, and handle household tasks, but the physical and emotional demands of professional kitchens are considered too much for them because women menstruate, become pregnant, and are viewed as emotionally weak. Confortini's framework helped me realize how

gender and violence are interconnected and how these stereotypes impact women on multiple levels, including in their workplace, domestic, and societal roles. It underscores how gendered expectations contribute to violence and limit women's opportunities and recognition in various fields.

In summary, the answer to my ORQ is that instances of hidden forms of violence are present everywhere in the food system including fields, farms, food production, restaurants food consumption, households, food retail, the supermarket industry, and advertising. Hidden forms of violence present in all these areas, categories, and places are not often recognized by other people, but all constitute violence—even those that are not direct and recognized. Moreover, these forms of hidden violence may also lead to direct violence.

Hidden violence, such as cultural practices and structural inequalities, create environments where direct violence can thrive and is legitimized. For example, when women are subjected to sexual and verbal harassment in environments where such behaviors are normalized or tolerated due to cultural beliefs, it may eventually escalate to physical violence. Therefore, these hidden forms of violence not only perpetuate inequality and discrimination but also create conditions where direct violence becomes more likely to occur. Galtung's theory underscores the foundational role of structural and cultural violence in precipitating direct violence, as evidenced by shortcomings in sexual harassment policies. Confortini's framework underscores how gender stereotypes constrain women, resulting in inequality and violence, thereby unveiling the interconnected nature of gender and violence. Both frameworks urge us to challenge societal norms and create a more inclusive environment.

Overall, this section demonstrated the findings and analysis of my ORQ. It presented my findings through narrative descriptions and a table that contained the main findings relevant to

each of my analytical criteria for hidden forms of violence in the food system. Table 1 summarized these findings and provided a foundation for my analysis in this section. Next, the Contribution section explains how this research addresses my research problem and social problem.

**Contribution**

In this segment, I address the significance of my Capstone work by exploring the insights gained and the rationale behind selecting my Capstone research problem. I first reiterate the social problem, research problem, and ORQ. Secondly, I explain how my research findings and analysis address my research problem of identifying hidden forms of gender violence in the food system. I then scrutinize how my Capstone research addresses the broader societal issue of gender-based violence in the food system. Lastly, I provide recommendations for implementing an introductory course on hidden forms of violence and for examining and critically evaluating everyday actions based on the findings of this Capstone research.

*Applications to Research Problem*

My social problem is gender-based violence in the food system and my research problem is documenting hidden forms of gender violence in the food system. My overall question asks, what are the hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system?

My analysis and results collectively address my ORQ and research problem by shedding light on hidden forms of gender-based violence within the food system. I demonstrate that these forms of violence permeate every aspect of the food system, from farm fields to restaurants, food production and consumption, households, food retail, the supermarket industry, and advertising. Through this process, I learned that instances of hidden violence are not confined to specific sectors but are ubiquitous throughout the food system. For instance, men often accumulate

wealth and assets through ownership of corporations like supermarkets, where they also enjoy

higher wages and superior positions compared to women. Also, restaurants are male-dominated

workplaces, and as women enter them, men exert control over women through practices such as

assigning them to lower positions, offering them lower wages, and saying that women are too

emotional to handle the intense pressure in the kitchen. In addition, women are particularly

vulnerable to experiencing sexual harassment due to the lack of enforcement of sexual

harassment policies in agricultural fields.

In summary, my findings and analysis address my research problem by showing that

these forms of hidden violence are pervasive and can lead to direct violence, such as women

experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace and being verbally abused in restaurants. Next,

I consider how my findings address the social problem of gender-based violence in the food

system and could increase social justice in food systems and society.

*Applications to Social Problem*

The overall purpose of my Capstone research was to identify and uncover the hidden

forms of gender-based violence in the food system. By understanding how these hidden forms of

violence lead to direct violence, the goal is to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence.

Identifying hidden forms of gender-based violence in the food system helps address the broader

issue of gender-based violence by revealing the underlying mechanisms and subtle dynamics that

perpetuate it. By uncovering these hidden forms, we gain a deeper understanding of how

everyday practices, norms, and beliefs contribute to and sustain direct acts of violence. This

awareness is the first critical step towards developing effective interventions. It allows us to

target the root causes and systemic issues that fuel gender-based violence, thereby enabling us to

implement more comprehensive and sustainable solutions. Ultimately, this approach fosters

positive social change by not only addressing overt violence but also dismantling the subtle, ingrained practices that perpetuate inequality and harm. With these hidden forms now revealed, I can formulate solutions and take positive steps toward social change. Based on my research, I identified ways that we can step toward social change, which include recommendations for implementing an introductory course on hidden forms of violence and examining and critically evaluating everyday actions.

My first recommendation is to implement an introductory course on hidden forms of violence, mandatory for college and perhaps high school students. I am recommending this age group because the students are mature enough to understand what violence is and are more aware of their surrounding as they have to deal with violence more often. The purpose of this introductory course would be to educate students about the existence of hidden forms of violence and differentiate them from direct violence. The course could incorporate interactive learning methods such as group discussions, role-playing exercises, and guest lectures from experts in the field of gender studies and violence prevention. These interactive elements would not only enhance student engagement but also provide practical tools and strategies for recognizing and addressing hidden forms of violence in real-life scenarios. By combining these interactive learning methods, the introductory course can create a supportive and inclusive learning environment where students feel empowered to explore and engage with the topic of hidden forms of violence in a meaningful way. Through active participation and experiential learning, students can develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to recognize and confront hidden forms of violence in their personal lives and communities, ultimately contributing to positive social change. Overall, as highlighted in my research, awareness is the first step towards addressing hidden violence. Without awareness, individuals cannot recognize or address it.

My second recommendation delves into the importance of examining everyday actions and perspectives to understand their underlying roots and implications. I have realized through conducting this research that focusing on everyday practices and perspectives is crucial because they serve as the foundation upon which larger systems of violence are built. For example, by thinking and talking about our everyday actions and questioning the meaning of concepts like "okayness," we can uncover the underlying norms and beliefs that shape our behaviors and perceptions. It is essential to interrogate whether what we consider "okay" is genuinely acceptable or if it is a product of societal conditioning and power dynamics. Through this critical examination, we can uncover hidden forms of violence embedded within our everyday practices and perspectives.

These seemingly innocuous actions and beliefs may not appear violent on the surface, but they can contribute to a culture that perpetuates harm and inequality. For example, my mom and I used to do the grocery shopping all the time while my dad did not, because in the society women like my mom and I are assumed to be better at it. However, after conducting this research, I realized that my everyday assumption of my mom and I doing the grocery shopping as our task is not fair. I talked to my dad and he agreed. It has been a while since my dad started doing the grocery shopping as well, and he is actually great at it. This simple shift in our household dynamic challenged the ingrained gender roles that dictated who should perform certain tasks, highlighting how even seemingly innocuous actions like grocery shopping can perpetuate unequal expectations based on gender. This realization underscored the importance of critically examining everyday practices to uncover and challenge deeply ingrained norms and beliefs that perpetuate inequality. Overall, by addressing these underlying norms and beliefs, we

can disrupt the cycle of violence and create meaningful change. It's imperative that we challenge ingrained ideologies and behaviors and strive to create a more equitable and just society for all.

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This chapter presented my research findings to address my ORQ about hidden forms of violence in the food system. I provided a table of key findings and an analysis with an overall summary. Lastly, in the "Contribution" section, I explained how my Capstone research addresses my research problem and social problem and I offered recommendations based on this research. In the next chapter, I conclude my Capstone Research Synthesis by providing an overview of my contribution to social justice in food systems and society and what I learned about it overall.

**Five—Conclusion**

This final chapter is the conclusion of my Capstone Research Synthesis and provides an overview of my contribution to social justice in food systems and society, explaining what I learned about it overall. First, I review my social problem, research problem, and findings. Secondly, I explain what I learned about social justice and how it is supported through critical inquiry. Lastly, I articulate the conceptual relevance of my work to social justice, social change, and social problems in food systems and society.

This Capstone research addressed the social problem of gender-based violence in the food system by asking about the hidden forms of that violence. After conducting research regarding gender-based violence in the food system, my findings indicate that hidden forms of violence are prevalent throughout the food system, evident in the advertising industry, retail stores, restaurants, supermarkets, households, food production, government branches, and farms. However, most of the time hidden structural and cultural forms of violence are either legitimized or normalized to the point that people witness it yet see it as normal and, consequently, acceptable. Many instances of gender-based violence stem from hidden sources, such as structural and cultural factors, which can perpetuate direct violence. For instance, the failure to implement policies addressing sexual harassment results in women consistently experiencing direct forms of violence, such as sexual harassment from their bosses and colleagues.

Galtung's theory of violence was the conceptual framework I found most powerful and useful for discovering and identifying structural and cultural violence. Using this theory of violence as a conceptual framework was essential because it allowed me to understand the three types of violence (structural, cultural, and direct) in depth before looking for them in the food system. Since I and others often witness and recognize violence in its direct and overt form, and

are not aware of the existence of structural and cultural violence learning about it was needed before doing research on its existence in different parts of food systems. I frequently referred to Galtung's theory of violence to differentiate between direct and hidden forms of violence, which proved immensely beneficial throughout my research process.

Additionally, using Galtung's theory of violence as a conceptual framework helped me to identify hidden forms of violence within my data sources to develop my findings. I realized that hidden structural and cultural forms of violence have been right in front of my eyes all along, such as all the times that I was called weak because I was a girl; every time my grandmother told me stories about her being responsible for taking care of the children and housework just because she was a woman; the times I heard our friends' telling stories of women being too scared to get a divorce because they were not satisfied with their marriage but stayed in there because a woman is expected to deal with all the ups and downs and not say a word; the times I was so frustrated at school and wanted to cry but since I was told crying is a sign of weakness, and I would suppress it. I aspire to open other people's eyes to all the instances that they experienced or other people experienced in their lives to stop normalizing violence and start to view it as a major problem.

As I tried to address gender-based violence in the food system by using critical inquiry, I originally wanted to record the instances of direct violence. However, as I continued to write each chapter and used Galtung's theory of violence as my conceptual framework, I realized there are more sides to gender-based violence than I could ever imagine. Critical inquiry and my conceptual frameworks proved to be essential tools. Without them, I would not have been able to uncover the hidden aspects of gender-based violence that fueled the many instances of direct violence I documented.

I gained an understanding that there are the hidden sides of gender-based violence that led to all these instances of direct violence—not all violence is on the surface. Without employing critical inquiry and my conceptual frameworks, I would not have been able to identify the results and findings that I did. I got to uncover so many hidden connections and incidences that we see every day but do not pay attention to. We see them in restaurants and other places, but we pass by them because we do not know recognize them as violence. Overall, I believe that through research I can address social justice as I look through different dimensions of social problems and discover new things, just like the unexpected outcome of my research. So, through research, I and other people are able to see so many hidden and unexpected sides of social problems and share that with others to look for ways to address social problems and move toward a socially just society.

I believe that my work is related to social justice, social problems, and social change in food systems and society because with this work I am uncovering the hidden sides of the social problem called gender-based violence. By uncovering these hidden sides—structural and cultural violence—I reveal to my reader a problem that exists but too often goes unnoticed. This means that exposing and explaining hidden forms of gender-based violence can show people that they exist, what the consequences might be, and how they can be addressed. Also, with my Capstone research, I am setting this table for others and for myself to do more investigation on finding specific solutions to address these hidden forms of violence. That is because we cannot solve a problem that people do not know exists. Overall, my Capstone research relates to social justice because, firstly, I did this research aiming to show others about gender-based violence and how this social problem affects women in the food system in ways that violate criteria for social justice. Then, secondly, I revealed the hidden sides of violence for others and myself, so we can

move toward social change by addressing them in the food system. I hope that this research can

inform a lot of people and make everyone aware of what all women go through on a daily basis.

As a woman, I wish to see the days when not only direct violence does not hurt women anymore,

but also when hidden forms of violence are stopped. I hope to be a part of this amazing

transformation!

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