
Allen, Patricia.


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Patricia Allen and Carolyn Sachs described their article Women and Food Chains: The Gendered Politics of Food the many ways in which women are exploited and largely forgotten about in the business of food. The second of three questions they pose is the most interesting to me regarding my research on the politics of food in general. This second question asks about concerns the “configurations of food-connected gender relations” (Allen and Sachs 2007:1). In addressing this, Allen and Sachs focused on what they referred to as “food domains” (Allen and Sachs 2007:1), and listed three as the most important domains to study: material, socio-cultural, and corporeal (briefly define this unusual word, e.g. “the domain of the body” or “the bodily”). They assert that these domains are not only important to women’s relationships with food and the food industry but also that these domains define their relationships as well. I’ve changed all the tenses to present to make the paragraph consistent.

Allen and Sachs describe the effect that the corporeal domain has on women in that they are consistently fed counterproductive images from the media when it comes to food. Women are often obsessed with being thin because the media portray this look as the prevailing image of female beauty. Because of this, many young girls are now turning to diets and developing eating disorders in order to remain a certain size(Allen and Sachs 2007:2). The socio-cultural domain is even more counterproductive. They describe here how the predominant view of women as the home-maker has led to more and more women becoming increasingly obsessed with providing meals to their families. The economic status of that family however, often plays a large, if not the largest, role in the kinds of foods these women are able to serve their family. The most striking detail of this particular argument to me is the information they passed along regarding the amount of work that is put into one family dinner and how almost 100% of the time, all of this work goes largely unnoticed , unpaid, and unappreciated by anyone within the family (Allen and Sachs 2007:3).

Finally, in the material domain, the larger social, political issue at hand here is the overrepresentation of women in the workforce who work in low-wage food production, manufacturing and processing jobs and their extreme underrepresentation in any management positions or high-end positions in the food industry. As a nation, America prides itself on many things; first and foremost that we are a country which emphasizes equality between races and genders but the truth it seems is far from this ideal. Allen and Sachs (2007:9) state: “Women are overrepresented among low-wage food workers, but are underrepresented in the areas of management and science. Food work, earlier performed by middle and upper-middle class women in the home, has been transferred to low-wage workers, often women of color, in the labor force” (Allen and Sachs 2007:9). This article presents a clear, concise description of some of the problems with the food industry in the United States, especially in relation to women. It seems likely that our culture has subordinated our own beliefs in equality regarding these issues. The question I think we need to ask ourselves now is: Where do we go from here? What can we, as citizens of America, male or female, do to alleviate these issues and create a stable, equal, mutually beneficial food industry?