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An Exploratory Case Study of Hospitality Students’ Perceptions of Experiential Learning

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An Exploratory Case Study of Hospitality Students' Perceptions of Experiential Learning

by

Joe Askren

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Curriculum and Instruction
with an emphasis in Adult Education
Department of Leadership, Counseling, Adult, Career, and Higher Education
College of Education
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April 3, 2017

Keywords: self-efficacy, human resources, group activities, hands-on, confidence, hospitality industry

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wife, Holli—my inspiration in all that I do. She encouraged me a long time ago to be passionate about life and continues to show me this daily. Also to my daughters Ilah and Noa, whom I hope continue to see value in having endless curiosity and a thirst for knowledge. My family has provided a solid foundation and are instrumental in my development as a life-long learner, husband, and father.
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I have been blessed with a beautiful, generous, brilliant, and amazing wife. Holli, I would have never been able to accomplish this without your support. I am eternally grateful for your love and support.
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how students described the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production class and how they perceived the curriculum prepared them for their future in the hospitality industry. The exploratory questions that guided the study were how do students describe the experiential learning curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course, what ways do students perceive the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course prepares them for their future in hospitality industry, and what changes in the curriculum do students think might improve the Introduction to Food Production course and why? The theoretical framework for this study was based on Kolb’s experiential learning theory model (1984).

Data collection methods were semi-structured interviews, student journals, and a researcher reflection journal. The cross-case analysis generated nine major themes: hands-on basics taught by professionals, memorable curriculum with useful application, challenging group work forced students to develop diverse insights, well designed facility for learning, gained confidence through memorable moments, observed industry best practices for success, connected to real world with hands-on methods, managerial skills needed for success in the future, and students desire more educational elements to the course and program. These nine themes summarize the students’ experiences in a hands-on teaching facility at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee. Implications for practitioners and policy makers were described. Results of this study
contributed empirical research on experiential learning theory and hospitality program curriculum. These results also add to the body of literature related to hands-on teaching activities, group work assignments, and industry-based projects.
Hospitality is a concept as old as civilization (O’Gorman, 2007). The word *hospitality* comes from the French word *hospice* meaning “generous and friendly treatment of visitors and guests” (Hospitality, 2017, para. 1). Once known for a place underprivileged people would seek refuge, today’s meaning defines the multifaceted industry known and frequented by travelers. The hospitality and tourism industry’s scope is enormous and includes: Travel, Lodging, Assembly and Event Management, Restaurant and Managed Services, and Recreation (Walker, 2016). According to the American Hotel Lodging Association (2016), the hospitality industry is one of the largest growing industry groupings in the world and provides job opportunities to millions of people of diverse age, gender, and ethnic backgrounds.

Kotler, Bowen, and Makens (2013) claimed the most unique aspect of the industry is the simultaneous delivery of product and service. This inevitable combination creates a profound reality for most business owners because “hospitality employees have the ability to affect the human experience by creating powerful impressions—even brief moments of truth—that may last a lifetime” (Walker, 2016, p. 14). *Moments of truth* is a commonly used hospitality industry term describing when a guest and employee meet face-to-face (Walker, 2016; Kotler et al., 2013). The final hospitality product essentially does not exist until both guest and employee connect.
Kotler et al. (2013) defined this critical hospitality marketing term as *inseparability*, saying a hospitality business transaction cannot occur unless both service provider and customer are present. Unlike other industries, the customer becomes part of the product. This creates a challenging situation for hospitality employees at times, especially if an unhappy customer can affect the experience of another customer they come in contact with during the transaction (Kotler et al., 2013).

Another critical part of inseparability is how guests coproduce the product being experienced and possibly purchased (Kotler et al., 2013). In many situations, customers must perform tasks, which lead to the final experience. For example, this may occur during the following situations: (a) restaurant guest being able to read and understand the menu; (b) hotel guest being able to understand and follow check-in and check-out procedures; (c) fast-casual (e.g., Chipotle, Moe’s, Blaze Pizza) restaurant guest having to wait on themselves and create their own meal combination; (d) hotel guest understanding how to operate phone systems, coffee maker, TV game console, etc.; (e) casino guest having to figure out how to play craps or blackjack; and (f) airline customer having to learn how to navigate the online website for ticket purchases.

Hospitality industry leadership has been forced to manage both their employees and guests because of this complex characteristic (Kotler et al., 2013). Consequently, the search for the most competent, skilled, and experienced employee is a common goal of hospitality businesses (Yang & Cheung, 2014).

Today’s competitive hospitality industry includes an environment where businesses have become more dependent on qualified employees (Johnson, 2015). This phenomena is supported by labor statistics showing how the hospitality industry
currently employees 7.9% of individuals and outpaces all other industry job creation in the economy by 42% (American Hotel Lodging Association, 2015; Johnson, 2015). Johnson reported, “decision makers in the industry are looking for qualified candidates to take their place in hotels and properties across the country” (2015, p. 60).

Statement of the Problem

According to multiple human resourcing firms around the globe (Hospitality Times, 2010), the industry now demands young employees who are critical thinkers and have a strong work ethic. From my 17 years of experience in the industry, I believe the challenge for employers is to find employees who can be immediately effective in their position; those who have enough skills and can be inserted into the management or even line-level positions. Yang and Cheung (2014) highlighted this challenge with a sobering statement: “Students have been criticized for having little understanding of how to practically apply knowledge they learn in classrooms once they have graduated” (p. 222). Maher and Neild (2005) claimed employers believe over half of new graduates are ill-equipped for hospitality industry employment, which has made this topic a powerful motivator for hospitality schools to make improvements in their curriculum. Other research has identified various lists of skills missing in students upon leaving their institution (Alhelalat, 2015; Lee, 2007; Moscardo & Norris, 2004; Ruhanen, 2005).

Although over half of hospitality managers start at entry-level positions (Johnson, 2015), the competitive nature of the industry creates an environment in which many new hires are promoted quickly if they possess problem-solving skills and the ability to communicate effectively. Even so, many hospitality employers mention the existence of
a gap and claim new graduates miss numerous skills, which are needed to be successful in the industry (Alhelalat, 2015; Ruhanen, 2005; Yang & Cheung, 2014). The problem is not discriminating, as it occurs in students globally. Taiwanese students entering the workforce have been observed showing less than perfect work attitudes. Taiwanese hospitality students working in the industry show “an inability to handle stress . . . cannot endure working long hours . . . and show low resilience” (Wang & Tsai, 2014, p. 130). In another example, an Australian study by Ruhanen (2005) discussed how hospitality businesses around the globe have pointed to a divide existing between institution and industry in this country, claiming students entering the work force are missing practical skills, which are needed to succeed in the industry. This problem of missing skills in hospitality graduates is also found in the top tourism sites in Jordan. Alhelalat (2015) discussed the concerns of hospitality executives at luxury hotels, claiming, “there is a gap between education outcomes and industry requirements” (p. 52).

Working both as an employer and educator in the hospitality industry has helped me experience the gap of knowledge existing in the hiring process of new graduates. Thus, the hospitality industry presents two major fronts: (a) Employers who seek out qualified hospitality graduates (Alhelalat, 2015; Johnson, 2015), and (b) Hospitality colleges who want to deliver qualified, confident job candidates to the industry (Cornell, 2015b; Oklahoma State University [OSU], 2016b).

The mission of most hospitality programs across the country and around the world is to produce highly skilled graduates ready to take on the challenges of this growing industry. Cornell University School of Hotel Administration, recognized as one
of the top rated hospitality colleges in the world, stated their mission is “to develop leaders for the hospitality industry” (2015a, para. 4). However, many hospitality businesses have agreed there is still an existing gap between a hospitality graduate skill set and the employer expectations (Alhelalat, 2015; Yang & Cheung, 2014). Many of these common gap characteristics are mentioned in the literature. Employers look for employees with good social skills, adequate critical thinking, hands-on experiences, visible self-confidence, and strong work ethic (Ball, 1995; Lashley & Rowson, 2005; Papamarcos, 2002; Ruhanen, 2005). Many researchers believe these common gap characteristics can be addressed if the curriculum offers experiential learning methods (DiMicelli, 1998; Moscardo & Norris, 2004; Papamarcos, 2002; Ruhanen, 2005). Breaking from traditional classroom approaches and embracing experiential learning will potentially lead toward improved “readiness for industry placement and advancement” (Maier & Thomas, 2013, p. 20).

Despite the ability to deliver graduates with improved social skills, confidence, critical thinking, and a good work ethic, and an opportunity to close the gap with the employers’ needs, no research exists that explored student experiences and perceptions with experiential learning activities in the Introduction to Food Production class in University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee (USFSM) College of Hospitality & Tourism Leadership (CHTL).

**Statement of Purpose**

My purpose in this study was to explore how students describe the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production class and how they perceive the curriculum prepared them for their future in the hospitality industry. I contemplated the use of
experiential learning in the context of a hospitality course where students applied theory to hands-on activities. Using qualitative research methods benefited my inquiry since this approach has been effective in studying educational programs (Stake, 1995). Throughout my experiences as a hospitality instructor, I have found experiential learning methods to be useful, but also part of a complex learning process. Using a case study approach allowed me to make sense out of the complicated dynamic existing in a classroom setting (Eisenhardt, 1989). Using the case study approach was helpful, since my desire was to better understand the real-life events occurring in the classroom setting (Yin, 2009).

Furthermore, since it was essential to have a special interest in the case being studied (Stake, 1995), my interest focused on the relevance of USFSM’s hospitality program. Other hospitality schools have seen the benefit of infusing more experiential learning into the overall curriculum, because there is a belief this will close the gap between academia and the industry (Lee, 2007; Moscardo & Norris, 2004; Ruhanen, 2005). Heeding this industry request, the CHTL at USFSM recently opened the Culinary Innovation Lab (CIL) with the main objective to increase the level of experiential learning in its program. The Introduction to Food Production class is taught at this facility and employs numerous experiential learning activities.

In this research, I proceeded with the intention of assessing the use of experiential learning in the Introduction to Food Production class. I was aware of the existence of experiential learning within this course, so I was motivated to explore the effectiveness. I did not seek out the perfect formula for using experiential learning. However, I hoped to collect student experiences, which would enhance my
understanding of the use of experiential learning methods in this class. I have always had curious questions about the curriculum. My ongoing curiosity helped develop the research questions, which I discuss next. I collected stories and analyzed them to find possible answers to these questions.

My goal in this qualitative study was to explore the current use of these methods and develop an in-depth understanding of experiences connected to these approaches from students. The experiential learning activities in this class included field work, internships, practicums, clinical sessions, and/or volunteer projects. Establishing verisimilitude on the course’s curriculum can be helpful in further research of this hospitality class and with other curriculum development at USFSM. The discoveries from this study may be used to further enhance other curriculum in USFSM's hospitality program, with the hopes of making it more relevant in today's hospitality industry.

**Research Questions**

In this study, I collected stories from participants relating to the following research questions:

1. How do students describe the experiential learning curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course?
2. In what ways do students perceive that the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course prepares them for their future in hospitality industry.
3. What changes in the curriculum do students think might improve the Introduction to Food Production course and why?
Significance of Study

Instructors have used experiential learning activities in four classes at the CIL since 2014, which is the hands-on facility in the CHTL at USFSM. Assuming experiential learning is the powerful learning tool researchers say it is (DiMicelli, 1998; Lee, 2007; Moscardo & Norris, 2004; Papamarcos, 2002; Ruhanen, 2005), my motivation for inquiry is a matter of verification and an assurance of verisimilitude.

The future success of the hospitality industry and human resources was the heart of this study. My intention was to explore students’ experiences in the class with the experiential learning curriculum. Simultaneously, the students’ stories brought about other unique aspects of experiential learning methods I had not yet identified. In some instances, other programs could use the results in this study; giving them examples of other forms of experiential learning they may not have considered.

Using experiential learning methods in hospitality programs has shown to be beneficial to students and businesses in the hospitality industry. Therefore, the aim of this study was to listen to the voices of students regarding the presence of experiential learning. I collected stories and experiences from students. This information may be helpful to other hospitality programs considering increasing or establishing experiential learning methods into their curriculum. Further research on the relevance of other courses in the CHTL at USFSM may be desired now that I have completed the study. Better preparing hospitality students for industry careers should be the ultimate goal of any hospitality program.
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework undergirding this study connects the theory of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) with hospitality education programs. Although there are other similar learning methods used in specific career-oriented educational programs, (e.g., active learning, project-based learning, work-based learning, technical learning, small cohort learning [Association for Career and Technical Education, 2009; University of California, 2013]), I have chosen to focus on experiential learning due to its universal presence at hospitality institutions. Using the earlier work of Dewey from 1897 and others, Kolb developed the Experiential Learning Model combining two related modes of grasping experience and two related modes of transforming experience.

This process is portrayed as an idealized learning cycle or spiral where the learner "touches all the bases"—experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting—in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation and what is being learned. (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 196)

Students’ initial objective is to attend a university hospitality program, which prepares them for industry challenges. While attending the university, the student may participate in experiential learning activities in various classes. Many scholars agree the use of experiential learning methods in hospitality curricula assists with closing the gap between institution and industry (DiMicelli, 1998; Maier & Thomas, 2013; Moscardo & Norris, 2004; Papamarcos, 2002; Ruhanen, 2005). These experiential learning activities are created in the program to simulate real-life industry phenomena. Often, students are connected directly to hospitality industry partners. While enrolled in a CIL course, they will experience the classic Kolb cycle of experiential learning. See Figure 1 for Kolb’s model of experiential learning.
One example of how a student learns through experiential learning methods would be a practicum in a USFSM restaurant management course that engages the students with legitimate restaurant industry activities. Another example would be an event management class engaging students with actual planned events occurring in the community. Students use these authentic experiences when discussing restaurant or event management topics throughout the semester.

Students can also post their opinions of these experiences in a discussion forum. These experiential learning activities give them opportunities to experience, reflect, conceptualize, and eventually test what is being learned (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Experiential learning activities such as these occur in a few classes during each student’s college program at the CHTL. Other examples include students having responsibilities connected to the operation and success of authentic industry events or food and beverage businesses.

Figure 1. Kolb’s experiential learning cycle model (1984). Moving in a clockwise direction, the cycle shows how a learner starts with a direct encounter with an experience (Concrete Experience), reflects on that experience, searchers for theories to explain what has been learned, and participates again in similar experience (Kolb, 1984).
Limitations

I recognized several limitations when conducting this qualitative inquiry. First, hermeneutic considerations may have been reported in the findings. Although my professional connection to the hospitality industry made me an expert in this discipline, this level of expertise may have brought to the study a narrow or sometimes stubborn perspective based on my past experiences. Heidegger believed impartiality is usually impossible when the researcher is strongly connected to the context (Reiner, 2012). Checking this at the beginning of the inquiry assisted me when I collected and analyzed the students’ stories and my own thoughts.

The interpretivism paradigm assumes reality is subjective. As such, completely putting aside my opinions and assumptions was challenging. I have over 17 years of industry experience and almost 10 years of teaching experience. Although this experience can be helpful, it may have also effected the opinions and assumptions I made. For example, it is possible that valuable experiences witnessed by students may not have been seen as valuable to me, since I observed the students with a more seasoned lens. I felt it was important to remain at a critical distance using my professional experiences to enrich my interpretations, while welcoming the stories I received from exploring student and faculty experiences.

Important to the collection process was the concept of reflexivity, especially since I was considered the major part of the instrument for this study (Paisley & Reeves, 2001). One helpful method of dealing with this subjectivity challenge was by debriefing myself and discovering any hunches or intuitive feelings I had during the collection process (Onwuegbuzie, Leech, & Collins, 2010).
Finally, students may have felt uncomfortable being interviewed by me because of my connection to the facility being used in the study. Although I did not teach the course, I was the director of the CIL. They may have purposely crafted their narratives during interviews and during assignment journals for reasons related to final grading in the course. It was critical to communicate the goal was to extract their shared stories and experiences, not grade them on their answers. Sharing my own relevant experiences with students during the research process was also helpful. I believe this created a healthy knowledge-sharing environment, which resulted in the participants feeling more comfortable sharing their own experiences. I soon realized the only way to truly understand the effectiveness of experiential learning methods, or any situation, was to start with shared knowledge and shared experiences (Reiner, 2012).

Definitions of Terms

The following terminology is pertinent to this study. To avoid any misinterpretation of their meanings for purposes exclusive to this study, I present the definitions here:

*College of Hospitality & Tourism Leadership (CHTL)*: The educational institution inside the University of South Florida system, which offers hospitality education to students (University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, 2016b).

*Culinary Innovation Lab (CIL)*: The hands-on learning center inside the College of Hospitality & Tourism Leadership, which provides experiential learning activities for students (University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, 2016a).

*Experiential Learning Methods*: A “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38), which includes activities such as field work, internships, practicums, clinical sessions, and/or volunteer projects.

*Haptic*: The perceptual learning style involving sense of touch or grasp with the hands (Institute for Learning Styles Research, n.d.). Some examples in this study included: knife skills, bread preparation, and whisking a vinaigrette.
**Hospitality Program:** The field of study concentrating on the education and preparation of students interested in working in the hospitality businesses (Kotler et al., 2013).

**Hospitality Industry:** The relatively large domain inside the tourism industry including service-oriented businesses such as restaurants, lodging, event planning, theme parks, transportation, cruise line, and other realms (Walker, 2016).

**Industry Careers:** Hospitality careers available for graduates can be found in the following areas: (a) food and beverage management (e.g., restaurants, catering companies, hotels); (b) lodging management; (c) casino management; (d) travel and tourism management; (e) event management; and (f) human resources (HCareers, 2016).

**Kitchen Speak:** Lingo used in a professional kitchen and restaurant environment, which benefits communication between employees and improves overall efficiency (e.g., mark off, 86, on-the-fly, 4-top, 1/2 400 pan). May also include various culinary terminology (e.g., julienne, batonnet, bain-marie).

**Mise en place:** a French culinary term for putting everything in its place (Culinary Institute of America, 1996).

**Students:** Individuals enrolled in a college hospitality program having the intention of future employment in the hospitality industry.

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the study. It includes the statement of the problem, statement of purpose, research questions, significance of the study, conceptual framework, limitations, definitions of terms, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of literature relating to this study. It incorporates information related to the hospitality degree problems, skills and characteristics of the hospitality employee, experiential learning methods, Culinary Innovation Lab, Introduction to Food Production, exploratory case study, and summary. Chapter 3 illustrates the methods used for this study. It incorporates the procedures utilized in this study, including the research design, research questions, interview protocol, data collection and
development, membership role/ethics/reciprocity, data analysis, confirmability/credibility, and summary. In Chapter 4, I present the discoveries. This chapter includes a profile of the participants, individual profiles, the eight participant cases, and a summary. Chapter 5 identifies and discusses the themes and how these themes relate to the research questions. This chapter also includes the researcher’s reflexivity and summary. To conclude, Chapter 6 provides a summary of the study, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

My purpose in this study was to explore how students describe the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production class and how they perceive the curriculum prepared them for their future in the hospitality industry. The parts of this chapter include the history of hospitality degree programs, skills and characteristics of the hospitality employee, experiential learning methods, Culinary Innovation Lab, Introduction to Food Production, exploratory case study, and a summary.

Hospitality Degree Programs

Compared to other industries and disciplines, hospitality education is relatively new. Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL), in Switzerland, is commonly recognized as the first hospitality school in the world (EHL, 2016). Established in 1893, this school began teaching hospitality management to young aspiring hotel and restaurant managers. Currently, the school offers the following degrees: Bachelors of Science in International Hospitality Management, Masters in Global Hospitality Business, and an Masters in Business Administration in Hospitality Administration (EHL, 2016).

The North American hospitality industry also listened to the needs of employers and, in 1922, started its first hospitality school at Cornell University (Guide to College Programs, 2004). As one of the only Ivy League business programs focusing on hospitality, they now offer a list of degrees including: Bachelors, Master of Management,
Master of Science, and Doctor of Philosophy (Cornell University, 2015a). The mission of the program is:

- to create and disseminate knowledge about hospitality management through teaching, research, industry relations, and service . . . to develop leaders for the hospitality industry. Today we continue to innovate and adapt our strategy to an ever-changing world, both within the hospitality industry and beyond. (Cornell University, 2016, para. 2)

Typical to other hospitality schools around the country and globe (Cornell, 2015a; Northern Arizona University [NAU], 2016; Oklahoma State University [OSU], 2016b), undergraduates in a hospitality program have to take mandatory core curriculum (e.g., Economics, Computing, Accounting, Finance, Hospitality Marketing, Introduction to Food Service & Culinary Theory, Restaurant Management, Facilities, Business Law). Some institutions may also offer unique electives, such as Beverage Management, Gaming, Real Estate, Cruise Management, or Science of Beer/Wine (Cornell University, 2015a; OSU, 2016b; USFSM, 2016b). Cornell and many other hospitality schools offer special concentrations to students wanting to specialize in certain areas, such as hospitality management, international hospitality, real estate, lodging, beverage management, restaurant and food service, and travel and tourism (Cornell University, 2015a; NAU, 2016; Florida International University [FIU], 2016a).

Providing creative and innovative curriculum that responds to industry changes is important for all hospitality schools (Li & Liu, 2016). This strategy has been seen as a way to effectively train future leaders in fields of hospitality, as well as keeping hospitality programs relevant and competitive. Although on-the-job experience is critical to an employee’s success, many hospitality executives around the country believe a formal hospitality education can impact student success (Moncarz & Kay, 2005; Solnet,
Kralj, Moncarz, & Kay, 2010). Garavan, O’Brien, and O’Hanlon (2006) claim managers who invested in their hospitality education were more likely to advance in their careers. NAU’s School of Hotel & Restaurant Management (SHRM), recognized as a top-10 hospitality program in the U.S. by TheBestSchools.com, makes this clear when discussing their undergraduate programs:

SHRM is a world player in the hospitality and tourism field. Our degree program is student-focused, future-driven, and charts a course that can take our students well beyond the hospitality field. The curriculum required for the hotel and restaurant management major combines management courses, technical training, and liberal arts studies. (NAU, 2016, para. 1)

Undergraduate degrees offered in NAU’s SHRM include: Hotel and Restaurant Management Bachelor of Science and an International Hospitality Bachelor of Science. NAU’s core curriculum for their degrees is similar to Cornell’s and include’s traditional classroom settings, experiential learning activities, and online settings. Students in this program must also complete 1,200 hours of professional training in a hospitality business before graduation (NAU, 2016). Some other schools requiring a similar mandatory internship program include the University of South Florida (USF) (2016b, para. 3), Cornell University (2016a, para. 5), Penn State University (2016, para. 1), and OSU (2016a, para. 2).

OSU’s School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration, a top-20 school for the past 75 years, defines their industry preparation strategy as a combination of “meaningful teaching, quality laboratory practices, and supervised industry work experiences and internships” (OSU, 2016b, para. 1). As mentioned at the top of OSU’s home page, “Learning is hands-on and provides a bridge between the classroom and professional practice in the field” (OSU, 2016b, para. 1).
The past 40 years in hospitality education has proven to be the most dynamic, with a boom in student registration occurring in the 1990s (Maier & Thomas, 2013). Competition among hospitality schools in this new environment has motivated many colleges to find ways to differentiate themselves from others. Recently, some hospitality schools have decided to develop educational partnerships across international borders. Chaplin School of Hospitality at Florida International University sends interested students to Germany, Spain, and Italy. This can be viewed on their study abroad webpage. The intention is to immerse the student in other global markets with the objective of improving cultural awareness, making them more employable domestically and abroad (FIU, 2016b). Michigan State University (MSU), a top-five ranked school, encourages their students to study abroad with global partners for a few weeks or up to an entire year. Understanding the global nature of hospitality business, Michigan State believes being successful in the industry includes having the ability to satisfy the “needs and expectations of your diverse customer” (MSU, 2016, para. 1). This global immersion learning technique is another way hospitality programs attempt to optimize their students’s value upon graduation (Griffin, Shea, & Roberts, 2004). Global experiences for students will provide: (a) exposure to “varying styles of codes of business”, (b) an “appreciation for cultural differences”, and (c) opportunities to gain confidence (p. 50).

Due to the current economic environment, market pressures, and the need for more frugal operational strategies, many businesses are expecting more from new employees than ever before (De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011). Over the past couple of decades, hospitality schools have come to realize the importance of
developing employability in their students during their programs of study (Wang & Tsai, 2014). In order to be immediately successful in the industry upon graduation, students must develop many of the needed skills during their typical stay at educational institutions. Studying this existing knowledge gap for students makes sense due to the competitive pressure on industry to hire qualified graduates and the needed support from hospitality institutions in targeting key skills for these students (Alhelalat, 2015). The challenge for hospitality schools is ensuring their students acquire these necessary skills and competencies before entering the job market (Wang & Tsai, 2014).

The literature on the critical topic of closing the knowledge gap in the hospitality industry boasts the use of experiential learning methods in college curricula (DiMicelli, 1998, Moscardo & Norris, 2004; Ruhanen, 2005). Employability development of hospitality students has also been shown to improve with the use of several experiential learning methods (Wang & Tsai, 2014).

**Skills and Characteristics of the Hospitality Employee**

Hiring qualified hospitality employees is not a simple task when considering the importance of product inseparability and the on-going need to create *moments of truth* (Kotler et al., 2013). Also, hospitality leaders are concerned about the existing knowledge gap between industry and institution, because these skills are needed for success on the job (Ruhanen, 2005; Yang & Cheung, 2014).

The recent challenge for hospitality schools has been the ability to produce highly skilled graduates eager to pursue leadership roles in professional businesses. The pressure has been on hospitality schools to identify the practical skills desired by the industry (Ruhanen, 2005). As Ruhanen mentions, creating curriculum that balances
classroom theory with these practical skills is demanded by hospitality businesses. Currently, many hospitality businesses agree many students do not have the necessary skills to be immediately successful after they are hired (Yang & Cheung, 2014). Industry employers believe this shortcoming occurs in a majority of hospitality graduates (Maher & Neild, 2005), which has forced hospitality schools to reevaluate much of their existing curriculum (Yang & Cheung, 2014).

Hospitality schools’ desire for optimized learning is discussed by Lawrence and McCabe (2001) involving a student assignment in hospitality, where student teams were put in charge of organizing a conference. Although noted as being a successful activity for students, the problems encountered by the students included conflict within the team, communication breakdowns, and difficulties involving application of learned concepts. Many of the struggles encountered in this experiential learning activity are similar to real-life challenges of the hospitality professional. Tesoni and Ricci (2006) asked practicing managers in the hospitality industry their expectations of potential new hires. The survey results indicated the top five characteristics desired of new employees were (a) team work, (b) effective communication skills, (c) professionalism, (d) grooming, and (e) ability to emphasize with guests (Tesoni & Ricci, 2006).

Hilton Worldwide (2013) claimed the hospitality industry is entering a important phase, which has created a critical demand for young upcoming employees. By 2022, the hotel sector is predicted to soar to 328 million employees worldwide (Hilton Worldwide, 2013). Their concern is the knowledge gap, which they call “The Skills Mismatch” (p. 5), and includes customer relationship skills, basic management skills, and management/leadership skills. Included in this discussion were core life skills, such
as: (a) self-confidence, (b) critical/creative thinking, (c) communication skills, (d) teamwork, (e) personal responsibility, and (f) conflict management.

RAM Training Services in Australia offers training courses to multiple industries. Their research of hospitality businesses claimed the top six skills and characteristics of successful employees include (a) commitment, (b) communication skills, (c) critical thinking, (d) teamwork, (e) organizational skills, and (f) flexibility (RAM, 2016).

According to Maher and Neild (2005), employers believed three major gap items found in hospitality students relate to (a) communication skills, (b) teamwork, and (c) time management.

Harkinson, Poulston, and Kim (2011) reported there was a divergence of opinion when defining the knowledge gap. Their study discussed how hospitality students believe knowledge and skill is most important when searching for employment, whereas hospitality executives are more concerned with personality and initiative. In order to avoid disillusioned graduates, Harkinson et al. claimed it is important for employers and institutions to agree on skill objectives needed.

Ogbeide (2006) summarized the important skills needed after graduation for hospitality students. Some of the skills preferred by interested employers include (a) communication, (b) self-development, (c) organization, (d) problem solving, (e) teamwork, (f) initiative and innovation, (g) time management, (h) ethics, and (i) leadership.

Kim (2008) discussed how hospitality degrees have been created to meet the needs of industry employers, but that they lack the connection to real-world scenarios. This has resulted in “gaps between the expectations and assumptions of students and
those of hospitality professionals, which (has) led to problems in the hospitality industry” 
(Kim, 2008, p. 6). According to Kim, some of the skills preferred by interested 
employers include (a) communication, (b) initiative, (c) human relations, (d) problem 
solving, (e) self-management, and (d) foreign language skills.

Hospitality institutions have the intention of advancing and disseminating industry 
knowledge to its students (Cornell University, 2016b, para. 2). Much has been written in 
earlier works regarding institution’s responsibility for preparing future industry leaders in 
a competitive hospitality world (Jenkins, 1999; Saunders, 1997). Consequently, 
educational theory matching hospitality industry requirements is not the problem 
(Alhelalat, 2015). The knowledge gap has occurred because there is a disconnect 
“between education outcomes and industry requirements in relation to what skills should 
gradautes have and the degree to which they match what the industry needs” (Alhelalat, 
2015, p. 53). According to the research of Alhelalat, today’s hospitality graduates are 
not meeting the needs of industry employers in key areas. Hospitality employers are 
now demanding graduates to have more substance in the areas of “problem solving 
skills, learning skills, technology, data collection and analysis, languages, management 
and leadership skills” (Alhelalat, 2015, p. 53). On a positive note, Alhelalat mentioned 
today’s hospitality employers have a “positive view of the hospitality graduates’ 
operation, information search, knowledge demonstration, teamwork, and time 
management skills” (p. 53).

Experiential Learning Methods

The experiential learning activities at the Culinary Innovation Lab are connected 
to field work, internships, practicums, clinical sessions, and/or volunteer projects.
Hospitality institutions welcomed the many benefits of using experiential learning methods in their programs (Austin & Rust, 2015). Discussions of a paradigm shift in higher education from traditional instruction to active learning can be traced to the late 1990s (Bobbitt, Inks, Kemp, & Mayo, 2000; Saunders, 1997). According to Ruhanen (2005), the ability to engage students in the curriculum is one of the major reasons for this popular teaching method. The definition is broad and activities associated with experiential learning may include apprenticeships, clinical sessions, cooperative learning experiences, field work, internships, practicums, service learning experiences, student teaching, study abroad programs, and volunteer projects (Northern Illinois University, 2015). These activities all included a “learn-by-doing” aspect and have the ability to enhance the intellectual growth of the learner (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999).

Using this learning cycle where hands-on activities are coupled with reflection and conceptualization is nothing new. For example, new research dates man’s discovery of fire to be over a million years ago (Shimelmitz, Kuhn, Jelinek, Ronen, Clark, & Weinstein-Evron, 2014). However, moving from a random opportunistic use to “habitual and planned” use of fire took another 650,000 years (Shimelmitz et al., 2014, p. 196). Although Stone Age man was using concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and retesting over a million years ago, educational literature shows the first discussions on this teaching method appeared with Dewey’s early works in 1944. Defining the experiential learning process, Dewey claimed (1971), “The student learns by doing: or to put this in other words, he tests hypotheses in the laboratory of real life” (p. 10). For example, hospitality students could enhance their understanding of restaurant cost control theory by connecting with an in-class activity involving recipe
making and ingredient cost calculation. Traditional hospitality classroom theories may be better explained or translated into something meaningful when using a hands-on approach (Qualters, 2010).

Austin and Rust (2015) claimed a student will have some control over the learning process while participating in an experiential learning activity. According to Austin and Rust, instead of sitting in a classroom listening to what is being taught, the student is encouraged to interact and engage with the curriculum topics. By reorganizing past experiences, the learner is able efficiently direct future experiences (Dewey, 1944). Taking responsibility in self-directing the learning experience is what Dewey claimed is the major difference between traditional classroom methods and experiential learning methods. However, Katula and Threnhauser (1999) suggested there is a need for balance between traditional classroom instruction and experiential learning activities. They warn it would not be of any help to the overall learning experience if the experiential learning activity was not “effectively integrated with the academic discipline” (p. 144).

The two pillars of the experiential learning method include a thoughtful reflection following an individual’s concrete experience (Higgins, 2009; Katula & Threnhauser, 1999; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). This act of reflecting is powerful for the learner, because it assists an individual with connecting the real world environment to what has been discussed in the classroom. Beard and Wilson (2009) described the experiential learning method as a sense-making process. The reflection aspect of this method does more than just enhance a current learning process for the learner. Steffes (2004) discussed the important step when hospitality students decide on what field of the
industry they will concentrate on after graduation. Steffes believed experiential learning opportunities give students a chance to reflect on whether or not they would like to pursue a specific career path. The controlled environmental nature of these activities gives students the opportunity to gain confidence before they commit long term to a career. Hence, greater job satisfaction after graduation has been found to occur with students who participated in experiential activities during their undergraduate studies (Purdie, Ward, Mcadie, King, & Drysdale, 2013).

The ultimate goal for hospitality programs is to produce highly skilled graduates ready to take on industry challenges, and one way to achieve this is by closing the existing knowledge gap by way of experiential learning methods (Lee, 2007; Moscardo & Norris, 2004; Ruhanen, 2005). Experiential learning methods are used in hospitality programs because research shows it has the ability to improve critical thinking skills such as reasoning (Coker, 2010) and application of learned theory (Eyler, 2009).

The studies discussed next show experiential learning methods can provide hospitality students with the necessary skills, which will assist them in crossing over into the industry more successfully. One study involves a Food Services Management course at State University of New York (DiMicelli, 1998). Hospitality students in this course participated in a real restaurant setting, preparing and serving menu items to peers and local industry guests. In another case, hospitality students taking a Convention and Events Management course were assigned to real industry clients (Moscardo & Norris, 2004). These students were tasked with typical event management responsibilities such as planning, marketing, and managing. Another recent study, designed to take students out of the comfortable passive learning
environment, involved a hotel technology consultant role-play scenario (Ruhanen, 2005). This hotel management technology applications course put students in a “simulated competitive work environment” (p. 40) and forced them to apply theory they learned earlier in the course.

Additionally, St. John’s University has found service-learning projects to be useful in engaging students in real-life scenarios (Papamarcos, 2002). Although a potential risk and time consuming for the professors, Papamarcos claimed the service-learning projects connected academic content with real-world environments. Finally, Lee (2007) conducted a study in the Rosen College of Hospitality at the University of Central Florida and found students’ perception of learning to increase with the use of experiential learning methods in the classroom. In this study, Lee (2007) made the following conclusions (a) all hospitality programs should implement experiential learning into their programs “in order to enhance and improve student learning” (p. 50), and (b) that these valuable experiential learning elements can assist the students in the industry upon graduation.

To summarize, results from these experiential learning activities mentioned above include a students’ ability to enhance their social skills, engage their critical thinking, acquire needed hands-on experience, improve their self confidence, and emphasize the need for a strong work ethic (DiMicelli, 1998; Lee, 2007; Moscardo & Norris, 2004; Papamarcos, 2002; Ruhanen, 2005). Also, all of these studies included experiential learning methods involving the Kolb’s four-step process of experiencing, reflecting, conceptualizing, and testing.
Culinary Innovation Lab

The College of Hospitality and Tourism Leadership was formed in 2002 at the USFSM. The College has approximately 200 students pursuing Bachelors and Masters degrees in hospitality management, and states their mission is as follows:

The College of Hospitality & Tourism Leadership at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee is to provide quality education for students in hospitality and tourism leadership positions by creating an intellectual, collaborative, ethical, inclusive environment for our students, faculty, industry and community to produce educational opportunities and innovate research that will benefit the constituents in Florida, the U.S. and the world. (USFSM, 2016c, para. 2)

The Culinary Innovation Lab (CIL) opened in January of 2014 and is the learning center where experiential learning methods are employed. Hands-on classes taught at the CIL include: Restaurant Management, Event Management, Introduction to Beer Science, and Introduction to Food Production. These four courses include assignments and projects connected to the real hospitality industry and receive participation from industry partners.

Introduction to Food Production

The Introduction to Food Production class is a mandatory course in the Bachelor’s program of the CHTL at USFSM and is taught at the CIL. The course description reads as follows:

The course focus is on food preparation, service standards, and techniques utilized in a professional restaurant operation. The class emphasizes factors affecting the quality and nutritional considerations of foods being served. Students will gain practical knowledge in food creation and service in accordance with principles in sanitation/safety, cost control, and sustainability. (Askren, 2016)

The course was conducted over a 15-week semester, which met one day each week for 2 hours and 50 minutes. The class was taught by a professional executive
chef from the industry who had over 15 years of industry experience and 14 years of
training experience. The class size ranged from 15 to 20 students; there were two
sections during the time of this study. Typical to most first days of class, day one
consisted of an overview of course objectives followed by a discussion on what would
be accomplished over the entire semester. The instructor asked students to introduce
themselves to the class with some generic prompt questions. I found this step to be
important, since students eventually worked in assigned groups by week three.

Overall, students participated in approximately 40 hours of activity involving
recipe preparation, menu research, cooking, tasting, and cleaning. In addition, all
students were required to assist the chef instructor during at least one real hands-on
event during the semester. These events were held at the CIL and involved paying
customers. After the equivalent of a typical 40-hour work week, the students were
tasked to prepare and execute a real event involving food and beverage. I must admit
this was intimidating to most of the hospitality students who lacked culinary experience.

On day one, the students received a much needed detailed tour of the lab facility,
which consisted of three separate kitchen areas, a small banquet space, and a main
office. The tour included in-depth explanations of various key pieces of kitchen
equipment, tools, and supplies. Although a few students already knew about some of
these common professional kitchen items, I have found most did not. The explanations
of kitchen items during the tour served four purposes: (a) explained what the item was
called and what it was used for, (b) showed students where the items could be found
and where they should always be stored, (c) assisted in emphasizing the attention to
detail and organization needed in operating a professional kitchen, and (d) acclimated
the students to the entire facility, which I found made the CIL less intimidating on day two.

Day two included discussions on sanitation, culinary history, and kitchen etiquette. The culture in most kitchens across the country include similar language and best practices, which were easily discussed in this class due to the real professional setting. After a chef instructor demonstration, students ended day two practicing basic knife cuts on common vegetables. This activity was followed by cleaning up the kitchen and using the industry-style dishwashing system. Prior to this closing activity, students were broken up into small groups. Each group was assigned to a rotating cleaning schedule, which concentrated on different areas of the facility.

Day three in the lab started the beginning of basic recipe and menu planning. The lab started with a brief overview of the day’s agenda followed by the chef instructor’s demonstration(s) of the day. The students were then tasked with duplicating the chef demonstration and were sometimes asked to create a food item relating to the demonstration. This activity was completed in the assigned groups. The last 30 minutes of class involved the students presenting their final products to the rest of the class. This was an important part of the experiential learning process, as students were tasked with discussing, explaining, and defending their thought process on the final products. The chef instructor encouraged students to share any struggles, major errors, and successes the students may have encountered. During this open discussion session, other students were asked to give comments, share similar experiences, and give any needed advice. This allowed the students to conceptualize for future experiences in the class based on their most recent experience. The Kolb-like learning
process was duplicated during each class and continued until the end of the course, and involved several recipe practicals and culinary operational procedures.

The curriculum used in the class forced individuals to understand classic cooking techniques, which gave them the tools needed to be successful with the creation of other unique recipes based on these foundational skills. The students discussed their final group projects in and out of the class from the time they were assigned their other group members. This final project was connected to a real industry event and was a ticketed event sold to the public. On designated days during the semester, each group was asked to update the chef instructor about their final project ideas. All of the groups’ ideas were organized a week before the final project event in what the chef called a “battle plan”. This tool was used by all students for the execution of the culinary event on the final day. At the conclusion of the final culinary event, the students discussed any and all struggles, major errors, and successes encountered along the way. This important followup step was completed live, after the event. An individually submitted reflection paper was also required from each student.

There were other meaningful learning activities besides the hands-on assignments discussed above that add to the overall learning experience. During the time of this study, industry guests were welcomed into the Introduction to Food Production classroom to discuss best practices—typically, the class includes visits to farms, vendor warehouses, and restaurants. After any of the industry experiences, students were assigned a reflection paper to submit to the chef instructor. The students were also required to make weekly journal entries based on a few general prompt questions.
The major class project involved student groups partnering with a local up-scale resort. The students toured the resort and its in-house restaurant during the early part of the semester. Students learned about the restaurant’s overall concept and communicated directly with the executive chef and the restaurant’s marketing department. The final presentation to the resort involved showcasing each groups’ menu creation during a final tasting held at the CIL. Each group had approximately five weeks to research and develop their final dish. Class time was spent brainstorming, exploring, and testing new flavors and recipe ideas. Each group worked with the chef instructor and communicated any special ingredients or equipment they needed. The objective was to design a recipe item that matched the restaurant’s concept, while presenting a fresh new look on the existing menu. Students experienced the demands of not only the chef’s standards, but also the challenges of having to satisfy the ever-changing restaurant guests’ palate.

**Exploratory Case Study**

Using an exploratory case study will provided me the opportunity to gain a rich understanding of how students and faculty describe the curriculum of the Introduction to Food Production class and how this curriculum could prepare them for their future. According to Yin (2003), an exploratory design is one of three types of case studies: the others being descriptive and explanatory. The differences, Yin claimed, are based on the questions asked during the study. In most cases, the exploratory approach is concerned with the *what* questions, and are usually asked at the time of a followup questioning phase (Yin, 2003). A common choice during an exploratory case study is to use the unique perspectives of an individual, situation, or program to develop
generalizations of the case being studied (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Lotzkar and Bottorff (2001) used this same case study method to understand the relationship dynamic between nurses and patients. Their research method made use of an inductive phase, where observations were conducted to discover the relationship building process between nurses and patients. Lotzkar and Bottorff attempted to make sense out of what they observed by asking “What is going on here” (p. 278), and eventually developed themes from their recorded observations and focus groups. Since I studied the perceptions of individuals in a college class setting and was not aware of any other related studies on this case, according to Yin (2003), the exploratory approach was ideal.

Yin (1993) claimed an exploratory case study is used to assist a researcher in developing a better understanding of the intervention that may not have clear outcomes. Case studies that are conducted to explore and discover complex programs or systems are truly never finished, because of their broad nature (Stebbins, 2001). Due to the absence of any early propositions in this type of approach, I believe exploratory research is conducted to inform the researcher as much as the reader. Baxter and Jack (2008) alluded to this by mentioning the goal of an exploratory study may be to gain “experience, knowledge, or information” (p. 552), which would allow the researcher to eventually make propositions in future research.

exploration in the social sciences can send the researcher down many paths. According to Stebbins (2001), exploratory research can be conducted with the intentions to “(a) examine, analyze, or investigate . . . , (b) become familiar with something by testing it . . . , (c) travel over . . . for the purposes of discovery . . . , and
(d) examine a thing or idea for diagnostic purposes” (pp. 2-3). Stebbins also encouraged the exploratory researchers to engage themselves with potential positions of discovery instead of waiting for serendipitous moments. Themes or theories can be developed from data by using exploratory research. Contrary to the belief of some social scientists, Stebbins (2001) explained the value of original ideas found in early exploratory research even though it may not confirm previous research. In this style of research, the focus is on the intimate moment being observed, and the individuals involved. Based on the discussion above, I believe my concern should be with what I am able to discover from the individuals involved and not with what I am unable to discover.

Well-known sociologist, Weber, discussed the curiosity of human behavior in the early 20th century. He coined the term Verstehen, which became the building block of sociology (Tucker, 1965). Verstehen is a social behavior term and involves understanding why people do the things they do. Tucker interpreted Weber's theory as suggesting sociologists should focus their inquiry on both the group of people and the individuals in those groups. However, Tucker highlighted the importance of understanding the situation as it exists. A qualitative study using an exploratory approach need not get into the psyche of each individual, but should seek to discover and make note of the shared experiences of the participants (Tucker, 1965). Tucker believed understanding the case study involves "knowing enough about the nature of the situation in which the action takes place" (p. 162). According to both Tucker (1965) and Stebbins (2001), the outcome of an exploratory study can yield possible
generalizations only about the group, situation, or program inside the bounded case study.

The inductive nature of the exploratory approach gives the researcher the ability to uncover new ideas and observations unlike a more deductive approach (Stebbins, 2001). Regarding its investigative nature, I chose to use an exploratory approach to uncover the unknown in this particular case. I believed an exploration into new or previously untapped areas of research is what made this the best approach for this qualitative research. However, the challenge was be interpreting what was discovered. Dohan and Sanchez-Jankowski (1998) agreed the real work happens when the researcher must conceptualize and present findings from the collection of notes, transcripts, and observations.

The employment of an exploratory approach was ideal, since research exploring how USFSM students described the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production class did not exist. Staying true to the qualitative approach, I sought to discover themes from student experiences, which allowed me to generalize only about the specific class within the study. This knowledge can be used to improve existing curriculum in this class and may lead to other exploratory studies in the CHTL program.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed hospitality degree programs and the skills and characteristics of hospitality employees. In addition, I discussed experiential learning theory and the learning methods used in classrooms. Next, I included a brief description of the Culinary Innovation Lab and the Introduction to Food Production
class. Finally, I explained the background of exploratory research and how it could be the approach for investigating this case study.
Chapter 3

Methods

My purpose in this study was to explore how students describe the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production class and how they perceive the curriculum prepared them for their future in the hospitality industry. In this chapter, I describe the methods utilized in conducting the study. This chapter is divided into six parts: research design, research questions, interview protocol, data collection and development, membership role/ethics/reciprocity, data analysis, confirmability/credibility, and summary.

Research Design

In this section, I describe the design for the research including my rationale for choosing an exploratory case study and the data I collected. I also discuss the theoretical perspective of interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), the case study’s goal, and the actual bounded location.

Exploratory research has long shown to be successful with discovering meaning in situations, programs, and groups of people (Stebbins, 2001; Yin, 2003). By collecting stories and notes from observations, I was able to propose themes that described the situations manifesting in the curriculum being studied (Stebbins, 2001). I sought to understand how a complex class dynamic in the Introduction to Food Production class functioned in order to improve the curriculum. In this study, I focused on a small group
of students and became familiar with how they described the learning process. Finding themes among the student experiences gave me the ability to develop new ideas for future curriculum. Neuman (2004) suggested using an exploratory study when “creating a preliminary picture of the situation” (p. 15), which focuses on a small group of people. Both Neuman (2004) and Tsai (2016) believe using an exploratory case study method gives the researcher an ability to generate and develop relevant ideas for the future. Williams and Buttle (2014) further suggested analysis of exploratory data could lead to managerial recommendations.

In this study, I collected exploratory data and discovered how students described their learning experience and how they perceived or in what ways the experiential learning methods used in the course prepared them for industry employment. The exploratory data included (a) student interviews, (b) notes taken during the interviews, (c) student journals, and (d) researcher reflection journal. I believe a qualitative approach assisted in collecting diverse interpretations from students regarding experiential learning activities in this course. Often, a diverse mixture of experiences can exist in a qualitative study, which can lead to “multiple constructions and interpretations of reality” (Merriam, 2002, p. 4). I believe a complex dynamic existed in the Introduction to Food Production class. As Merriam noted, it is difficult to quantitatively measure a reality that is not a single, fixed phenomena. Therefore, I used the interpretive qualitative approach to discover meaning individuals place on their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Accomplishing the ultimate goal of understanding the Introduction to Food Production class at USFSM started with the process of using a
qualitative approach to discover how students make sense out of their experiences with existing curriculum.

I interpreted the meaning from students with an interpretive lens, and understood their reality was constructed differently based on their own unique experiences and ideas (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Using the classroom as a natural setting, I gained an in-depth understanding by collecting and interpreting shared stories from all students selected for the case study (Creswell, 2007). Of course, this qualitative framework did not come without challenges. Richards (2011) discussed how human error can occur due to researchers being influenced by their own biases. She encouraged researchers to choose stories that illuminate and reflect the truth. Finding the truth of what actually occurred in the Introduction to Food Production class was the heart of this exploratory case study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Lotzkar & Bottorff, 2001).

I appreciated the human element in a case study, so I used a semi-structured interview format during the inquiry that allowed me to adapt with the changing environment I encountered (Fontana & Frey, 2005). According to Fontana and Frey (2005), in-depth forms of semi-structured interviewing can assist with making sense out of complex social behavior. My responsibility was to construct meaning from multiple student interpretations. I noticed early into the data collection phase that each student had their own unique background and level of industry experience. For example, two students of different gender had decades of restaurant experience, whereas the remaining students had less than three years. All students had different career interests, which certainly led to different perceptions on how this class could be useful in their career. Denzin and Lincoln described constructed meaning as multi-faceted: “The
product of the interpretive *bricoleur’s* labor is a complex, quilt-like bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage—a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations” (2005, p. 6).

In this case study, my goal was to discover the meaning derived from the student experiences. Therefore, the emergent and flexible nature of the qualitative method benefited this endeavor (Merriam, 2009). Day-to-day operations at the Culinary Innovation Lab (CIL) are fluid and sometimes unpredictable. For example, hands-on activities and demonstrations are often effected by outside forces (e.g., ingredient availability, weather at tour locations, on-site event business, service dynamic among guests and students). The impossibility of having a constantly controlled environment lends itself best to a research method that welcomes real contexts and real environments. Hence, I used the constructivism component of a qualitative framework to accept the existence of multiple truths (Crotty, 2004).

The college has designed a unique learning environment for hospitality students. The CIL was the site of the research. This facility is located 30 minutes east of the main Sarasota campus in the middle of suburban Lakewood Ranch Main Street, which is a boutique shopping and food venue. It is a 4,500 square foot facility with three separate kitchen production areas and a reception area for up to 80 guests. The Introduction to Food Production class is taught inside this unique location. Although completing this course is mandatory for graduation, students can take it any time during their program. Therefore, there is a mixture of different college levels of the students in each section. During class, students sit in one of the kitchen production areas. Since the bounded case is unique, I explored students’ experiences with the existing experiential learning
methods used in the classroom (Stake, 1995). I had a willingness to better understand the existing curriculum used at the CIL. According to C. Cobanoglu (personal communication, June 1, 2016), former USFSM Dean of the College of Hospitality School, many of the teaching methods used at the CIL are not used anywhere else in the university. Although there has been other research on courses regarding hospitality curriculum and the use of experiential learning at other institutions, no research existed that explored student experiences with this learning method at the CHTL.

See Figure 2 for a diagrammatic overview of the design of this study.

Figure 2. Diagrammatic overview of study from method selection to data analysis.
Research Questions

To accomplish the purpose of this exploration into the current use of experiential learning methods and to develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences from students, the following research questions were addressed.

1. How do students describe the experiential learning curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course?
2. In what ways do students perceive that the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course prepares them for their future in hospitality industry?
3. What changes in the curriculum do students think might improve the Introduction to Food Production course and why?

Interview Protocol

The primary instrument I created for this study was an interview protocol. I developed the interview protocol and utilized the conceptual frameworks of both structured and unstructured interviewing and the approach of polyphonic interviewing (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Kolb’s (1984) cycle of experiential learning was used to establish the content domain.

Using a semi-structured interview technique allowed flexibility during the encounter with students by using open-ended questions. However, Fontana and Frey (2005) still recommend the following approach for in-depth interviewing, which the researcher followed: “(a) Decide on how to present oneself . . . , (b) Locate a participant . . . , (c) Gain trust . . . , (d) Establishing rapport . . . , and (e) Collect empirical material” (pp. 707-708).
The interview questions were completed over a series of phases using my prior work and academic experiences, and feedback from my major professor and panel experts. During the instrument development process, I interacted with various educational experts and industry professionals. I consulted with representatives from the fields of adult education, research and measurement, as well as hospitality industry professionals including chefs, managers, and other respected business leaders. I used the similar approach to instrument creation used by other University of South Florida scholars in research and measurement and adult education (James, Witte, & Galbraith, 2006; McCrory, 2016).

**Interview protocol development.** I created the interview protocol using the following five-step process (McCrory, 2016).

- **Stage 1: Researcher and Panel of Experts.** I created the first draft of the interview protocol based on: (a) review of literature, (b) past IRB approved pilot study experience during the Summer of 2015, (c) conceptual frameworks of Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model, and (d) consultation with other hands-on experienced instructors at USFSM’s College of Hospitality & Tourism Leadership. Using the traditional technique in semi-structured interviewing, the interview protocol was designed with the intention of having an “informal conversation with the respondent” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 712). Remaining close to the inquiry’s overall goal of exploring the research questions, the interview protocol contained questions that *break the ice* followed by more specific questions, which
attempt to uncover truth in the participants’ relevant experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

• Stage 2: Initial Development. The initial review of the researcher’s first draft of the interview protocol used doctoral students from USF’s College of Education. I recruited other people familiar with the hospitality industry to review the first draft. These persons were asked each question from the interview protocol. They were asked to comment after each question regarding language, clarity, and completeness. I then made minor revisions and sought feedback from my committee chair regarding the first draft of the protocol along with these notes. Based on this feedback, I created a second draft of the interview protocol.

• Stage 3: Verification Panel. Before the field test, a panel of experts from the field adult education, research and measurement, and the hospitality industry reviewed the second draft of the interview protocol in two rounds. During round one, I invited the panel to modify or add to the existing questions. I then reviewed the recommendations and created a third draft of the interview protocol. During round two, the panel had the responsibility to verify the suitability, clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the questions on the third draft of the interview protocol using a 5-level Likert scale. I used a Qualtrics survey for round two. Appendix A lists the verification panel members. I have added a copy of the correspondence letter to panel members including instructions in Appendix B. After collecting this feedback, I created the fourth draft of the interview protocol, which included minor
revisions to the interview questions. The revisions came from the panel’s recommendations and consisted of word choice and sentence structure.

- Stage 4: Field Test. The interview protocol fourth draft was then field tested with adult learners at the Manatee Technical College (MTC). A hands-on course at MTC was chosen for the field test. MTC was chosen because it is not part of my case study population. I discovered two of the questions were awkwardly worded in the live setting and used the field-test experience to reword those questions.

- Stage 5: Final Review. At the conclusion of the field test, doctoral students at USF’s College of Education completed a final review of the interview protocol. Reviewers were asked to recheck verbiage, thoroughness, and completeness of the final interview protocol. See Figure 3 for a visual guide of the interview protocol creation process. I added the final version of the interview protocol in Appendix C. I illustrate how the research questions are addressed by specific interview questions in Appendix D.

Data Collection and Development

In this qualitative study, I used random sampling to select participants. This method eliminated any bias during selection process and gave all the students an equal chance of being selected to share their experiences. I sought an understanding of how the students described the course and how they perceived it assisting with their industry preparation.

I focused on the Fall 2016 undergraduate hands-on lab class titled Introduction to Food Production. Students were offered two different sections during the fall semester.
The first section was on Wednesday morning from 7:30 - 10:20am (morning). The second section was on Thursday from 11:00 - 1:50pm (afternoon). Introduction to Food Production was a course consisting of lectures, chef demonstrations, and student production assignments. The instructor for both sections was the same.

The instructor used professional kitchen methods and operational best practices to expose the students to the industry. This course was chosen because it is the only hands-on cooking class in the program. Also, students were at different levels of their programs when they took this course, which provided a variety of student perspectives.

**Pilot study.** I conducted a pilot study during the summer of 2015 as part of the instrument development. After receiving IRB approval, I pursued the completion of consent forms from the entire Introduction to Food Production class. I then randomly selected three students from the class. This summer course was scheduled on Wednesday mornings at 11:00am. My objective was to discover the students’ perceptions of the experiential learning methods in the context of a hospitality course. I had access to their weekly journals and conducted interviews at the end of the course. All three students were hospitality majors and ranged in age between 21 and 35 years. The group of selected students consisted of two males and one female.

During this pilot study, I also interviewed the chef instructor. He shared his thoughts on the experiential learning methods used in class. Although this was an enjoyable conversation, I chose not to duplicate this step in the future. The chef did not share anything during the interview I did not already know about the learning methods used.
Figure 3. Schematic representation of the development of experiential learning interview protocol for Culinary Innovation Lab at University of South Florida.
As the student interviews progressed, I began to realize how eager they were to share their experiences. These stories contained both successes and challenges, many of which I expected to hear. However, there were a couple of instances where I was surprised with their answers. Jacob mentioned how he appreciated the camaraderie in the group lab sessions. He said his group shared the stresses, challenges, and successes together throughout the semester. Jacob mentioned how this brought them together closer than he could have imagined. When he saw these group members on campus, he felt as if they were kindred spirits.

Tina mentioned how she felt the live demonstrations and hands-on activities with group members gave her a more intimate classroom experience. She said this intimate learning experience helped her focus on the material. The theme of closeness from both Tina and Jacob was one I did not expect.

These experiences during the pilot study prompted me to become more aware of the emotional impact experiential learning methods may have on students. During this time, I learned to listen intently as they shared their experiences. I also used this pilot study to test the initial interview protocol, which I would then revise and put through the 5-stage development process discussed in this chapter.

After analyzing the students’ journals and interview transcripts, I was able to distill within-case and cross-case themes. Below are the emerging themes identified in the pilot study.

• The facility was an ideal setting for hands-on learning compared to traditional experiences at the USFSM main campus.
• The relevant experiences gave students a holistic view of the industry.
• The students’ relevant experiences were not attained in the traditional classroom setting.
• Student/Instructor experiences were discussed with strong passion and sense of accomplishment.
• Feelings of anxiety eventually transformed into feelings of accomplishment.
• Although the class format was sufficient, the time was insufficient. More hands-on classes were desired.
• Hands-on group activities taught students professionalism, patience, and diplomacy.
• Unlike traditional classes, students were able to apply their learned skills immediately after leaving the CIL.
• Experiential learning activities taught students to critically think and communicate effectively.
• Experiential learning activities gave students confidence in a professional hospitality environment.

**Participant selection.** I chose eight student participants from the specific course because of the consistent and frequent use of experiential learning during the semester. Creswell (2005) suggests a case study with three to five participants combined with other data types would be acceptable. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) mention how themes can be found in qualitative interviews in as early as six interviews. Therefore, I believed eight student interviews coupled with their in-class journal assignments would provide a sufficient level of saturation.

At the beginning of the semester, I gave consent forms to the students and sought signatures from all students in both sections (morning and afternoon). All
consenting participants were then asked to complete a basic demographic questionnaire. These questions can be found in Appendix E. From the list of consenting students, I created a list of males and females in each section (morning and afternoon). Names of each of these students were written on a blank sheet of paper and placed in either a male or female box respectively. I then randomly selected two males and two females from each section. Since an insufficient number of males existed in one of the sections, there were three males and five females chosen. After the first week of class, two of the students I randomly chose dropped the course. I then repeated the random selection process with the updated roster to add back the two students lost. Participation in the study was not part of the curriculum and students did not receive any class credit for participating.

After the random selection process, I followed up with the eight students and collected more details related to the original demographic questions in an informal conversation. During this conversation, I also scheduled a convenient time for their interviews, which would take place after December 7th at the end of the semester.

There was clear communication about the voluntary nature of this study. Participants were able to withdraw from the study at anytime during the course. A copy of the consent form is included in Appendix F. Appendix G includes a demographic breakdown of all student and faculty study participants.

**Gaining access.** During this study, I was an instructor at the CIL, so entering the realm of this case study was not difficult. However, I considered the instructor's classroom as his property or *home grounds*. Collecting data on a case study is akin to
a *small invasion*, so the importance of getting permission for entering into this person’s classroom should be respected (Stake, 1995).

I made a request for approval to the instructor one week before the actual semester of the study. Upon approval from the instructor, I briefed him on the study’s objectives and details of the methods used. Specific calendar dates and times were also secured regarding interviews and classroom engagements.

I introduced myself and got acquainted with the students at the beginning of the semester. Although an important step in case study research involves acclimating oneself to the people and space, Stake (1995) also recommended this be accomplished with a tempered non-disruptive approach.

**Interviews.** I employed a semi-structured interview approach with the intention of collecting personal narratives from eight students regarding their experiences with the teaching methods used in Introduction to Food Production. Interviews are found to (a) be helpful in figuring out what is going on, (b) assist with answering research questions, and (c) provide insight during an exploratory study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhil, 2009; Robson, 2002). I conducted interviews at the end of the Fall semester of 2016. Each interview lasted approximately 40-60 minutes. As mentioned above, random sampling was used in student participant selection. The same protocol was used during each interview session. All interviews took place at the Culinary Innovation Lab at a convenient time for the student.

I distributed an IRB approved consent form to each student for their signature on the first day of class, which designated them as participants in the inquiry. I randomly selected the participants during the first two weeks of the semester. I attempted to
select an equal split by gender to ensure there would be a lack of gender bias arising during the collection of data. Confirmation emails and informed consent procedures were sent to the participants before the interview sessions.

Interviews were audio recorded using the researcher’s personal laptop and cell phone to ensure there were no technology problems. I also took occasional notes during the interviews. All audio files were kept on my computer and cell phone and were protected with a password. I have the only access to these files.

**Student journals.** I reviewed completed journals from the eight students in this study. I used this existing teaching tool as an additional layer of exploratory data. Over the past four semesters in the Introduction to Food Production course, students were required to keep daily journals on their experiences in class. The journals had typically included: recipes, techniques, sketches, pictures, errors made during lab work, solutions to these errors, opinions, and successes. Journals were originally required because the instructors believed this would help students collect all of their experiences, skills learned, and knowledge in one convenient place. It was the opinion of the instructors that the student journals would provide a useful way to reflect on their past experiences. Walker (2006) discussed how students improve their critical thinking skills and become better overall communicators with their learning experiences when they participate in reflective journaling. The completed journals collected at the end of the semester served as a window into the students’ overall experience in the course. I found similar stories in the journals relating to the interview transcripts, which told a story about the current program. These stories were collected to make sense out of what ways the experiential learning methods are adding value to the current curricula.
The journal entries were listed as a weekly assignment for each student enrolled in this course during Fall 2016. There was a 300-word minimum for each entry. The students were required to make a total of 14 journal entries over the 14-week semester. Each journal entry assignment had the same four prompts, which assisted the students in making their journal entries:

- **How would you describe what you learned today? Please list all techniques, skills, or best practices you learned today. [Please describe the activity]**
- **In what ways, if any, did today’s learning experiences prepare you for your future in the hospitality industry?**
- **What were some of your successes and/or challenges today? [Please describe in detail]**
- **What needs to be improved with today’s lesson and/or activities?**

**Researcher’s reflective journal.** In this study, I maintained a reflective journal during the data collection and analysis phases of the study. Journaling was used to (a) capture what actually occurred during the interview process and (b) bracketed out my biases, prejudices, values, and beliefs (Richards, 2013). Notes were taken during the interviews to describe the participants’ answers to interview questions, perceived behavior, and physical reactions. I referenced the notes before making an entry into the reflective journal. Extended thoughts, opinions, and beliefs were then entered into the reflective journal. The reflective journal was a place to compile (a) personal comments and discourse relating to experiential learning methods being used, (b) perceived challenges and successes for students, and (c) thoughts on ways to optimize the current learning methods (Janesick, 2011).
I used bracketing while completing my reflective journal, which gave me the ability to admit to any personal assumptions, belief systems, and deep-rooted values (Ortlipp, 2008; Russell & Kelly, 2002). This qualitative exercise exposing my preconceptions was completed during each journal entry. I believed using my reflective journals to highlight these limitations assisted in better communicating the choices and decisions I made during the collection and analysis stage. Richards (2013) points out that “studying one’s students requires special attention to the issues of undue influence, conflict of interest, and objectivity” (pp. 15-16).

Finally, I believed using reflective journaling added rigor to this qualitative study, because journaling allowed me to share my beliefs, assumptions, values, and interests. Peshkin (1988) noted how sharing experiences can help shape the research in a meaningful way. I believed sharing key episodes in my life as a hospitality professional was a contractual gesture made to the participants, since I was asking the participants to share their own experiences. Many qualitative researchers use this introspective tool of reflexivity as a way to “enhance the trustworthiness, transparency, and accountability of their research” (Finlay, 2002, pp. 211-212).

I am a faculty member at the CIL and have managed numerous hands-on curricula at other adult learning institutions. Using my past teaching experience along with two decades of hospitality industry employment gave me valuable insight and observation skills regarding adult learners. This was helpful during the interview sessions.
**Documents.** Introduction to Food Production used numerous organizational tools (e.g., prep sheets, menus formats, production sheets, plate design). One of these documents is included Appendix H.

**Membership Role, Ethics, and Reciprocity**

My background experience for this study came from both inside and outside the educational realm: inside as an adult educator and outside as a former hospitality professional. I worked as the director of the CIL and also taught as an instructor at the facility. During the time of the study, I taught three courses at the CIL, which were not connected to the course used in this study.

There were pros and cons to my role as director and instructor at the research site. Benefits included knowing the daily operations of the CIL and having open access to the facility. These benefits helped retrieve more in-depth data from the students and instructor. However, conflicts were also addressed during the study. For example, students may have modified their interview answers or journal entries for reasons related to loyalty toward the CIL and its director. I was also aware of the biases and assumptions I may have had towards the hospitality program at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee. However, my use of the interpretivism lens was grounded in the understanding that reality is subjective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). With this, I accepted my biases and assumptions as part of the process of understanding shared experiences and shared knowledge (Reiner, 2012). My early *a priori* questions came from the literature review and my own personal views and opinions of the proposed inquiry, and they were used in combination with participant data to form themes about the overall use of experiential learning methods.
Also, it was my goal to maintain empathetic neutrality throughout the study, which was achieved by writing down all of my related experiences and opinions (Patton, 2002). During the interviews, my goal was to remain open and approachable to the students. Janesick (2004) described interviewing as an eventual construction of meaning resulting from two individuals sharing information back and forth. For reciprocity, beverages, coffee, and lunch were offered to the students during the interview process. It was my intention to respect the time of the participants. A copy of the IRB approval letter is included in Appendix I.

Data Analysis

In this study, I employed qualitative data analysis to review: (a) transcripts of audio recordings from each of the semi-structured interviews with students, (b) notes taken during the interviews, (c) submitted text from class assignment journals from the eight students being interviewed, and (d) text from the researcher reflective journal.

Coding. First, I sent all my interviews to a transcription service, who returned typed versions within a five day period. I considered using a coding analysis software program but I decided against this based on my own personal opinions and feedback I received from fellow classmates. I believed manually coding the text would bring me closer to the students’ learning experiences.

I analyzed the sources of narrative language to identify themes, accomplishing this in two cycles. I used the coding process to discover the essence of each story shared by the participants, which resulted in highlighting the most important or salient attributes (Saldana, 2009). Themes came from reading the exploratory data, which were then grouped into categories. Also, possible subcategories were identified.
throughout the analysis phase. Looking for repetitive patterns in language was accomplished in phase one, followed by grouping these patterns into categories in phase two. I refined the categories into emergent themes, which best represented the voices and experiences of the participants (Long, 2013; Rapp, 2010). Understanding the essence of the meaning the hospitality students attributed to their experiences, aspirations, and concerns was my main objective during the data analysis phase.

I decided to manually identify codes, themes, and categories. The process was completed as follows: (a) transcripts were read to completely seize and make sense out of each participant’s experiences as a whole, (b) shared stories were then reread and notes were taken of transitions in meaning along the way regarding the phenomenon under investigation, (c) reflection and use of inductive reasoning assisted in discovering themes regarding the phenomenon under investigation, and finally, (d) coded and categorized themes were synthesized into statements best expressing the entire case study’s structure (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Wertz, 2005).

Specifically, I reproduced all of the interview transcripts collected and read each multiple times. During the readings, relevant sections were coded and underlined along the way by marker and pen representing a defined code. I then used post-it notes for each code and stuck them to the wall with plenty of space below. I eventually went back and identified text in the interview transcripts corresponding with each relevant code and cut out these passages. I then placed these cut out passages below the matching post-it note category. I organized the plethora of cut out text with a coding spreadsheet. The coding spreadsheet contained the following information: (a) all codes, (b) code definitions, (c) code links to research questions, (d) code links to
interview questions, and (e) transcript page number. As a professed kinesthetic learner, I was comfortable with this analysis technique and believed it assisted me to become one with the participant experiences, thereby making sense out of the data (Long, 2013). Appendix J shows a sample of the coding spreadsheet from one of the students. Appendix K shows a sample picture of how I discovered and organized the themes.

**Confirmability and Credibility**

I sought confirmability, credibility, and verisimilitude by using several procedures including triangulation, member checking, peer reviews, and creation of an audit trail. It should be noted that my goal was to not make generalizations about the findings over other groups. True to the spirit of qualitative research, my goal was to explore the depth of meaning students attributed to their learning experiences in the Introduction to Food Production class at USF. The goal was also one of confirmability, the ability to match the discoveries with reality (Merriam, 1998).

**Triangulation.** I employed the verification research procedure of triangulation with the intention of producing a clear summary of the findings and without any of my preconceived prejudices. I collected narratives from multiple viewpoints to produce an overall construct of the findings. Triangulating a final construct increased the credibility and validity of the results (Yeasmin & Rahmin, 2012).

**Transparency and trustworthiness.** The data analysis process included member checking to ensure transparency and trustworthiness (Stake, 2003). I emailed participants a copy of their interview transcripts, and asked them to email back any changes or corrections in their transcripts. The sharing of the data analysis with
participants further ensured transparency, trustworthiness, and assist with overall interpretation. A copy of the member check form can be found in Appendix L.

**Peer reviews.** A bifurcated peer review process was instrumental in providing a level of consistency to the research. The use of peer reviewers helped to remove unintended bias and added credibility to the findings. Validation of themes was confirmed with the assistance of four primary peer reviewers and four doctoral students who acted as supplementary peer reviewers. The primary peer reviewers were Ph.D. colleagues and associates of mine who had expertise in qualitative research analysis.

I used two versions of peer reviewing in this process. I gave four primary peer reviewers uncoded transcripts from sections of completed interviews in version one. The primary peer reviewers reviewed sections of transcripts, reviewed the coding made by me, discussed any changes to the coding structure, and made suggestions on possible themes. I gave supplementary peer reviewers specific quotes from students believed to be connected to my discovered themes for version two of the process. Reviewers given version two were asked to rate how successfully I attached a theme to the quotes from students interviewed. They were also asked to make comments. I have listed the primary and supplementary peer reviewers in Appendix M. I have shared a sample of the signed peer reviewer form and a sample response in Appendix N and O respectively. Feedback from the primary reviewers supported my findings and ratings from the supplementary reviewers translated into acceptance of my discoveries.

**Audit trail.** My reflective journal and coding spreadsheet discussed above were part of the audit trail and served as a means of ensuring transparency of the study’s processes and procedures. These tools were combined with other efforts of careful
documentation, which provided a step-by-step route for any reader interested in how I obtained my findings (McCrory, 2016).

**Summary**

In this chapter, I described the research methods for this qualitative, exploratory case study. Interviews and journals were the primary resources of data. The development of the interview was discussed in detail. Data collection included gaining access, site of research, interviews, researcher’s reflective journal, student journals, photos, and documents. I then addressed membership role, ethics, and reciprocity. Data analysis included a discussion on the coding process used in the study. Confirmability and credibility were supported with discussions on triangulation, transparency and trustworthiness, peer reviews, and audit trail.
Chapter 4

Discoveries

The purpose of this study was to explore how students describe the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production class and how they perceive the curriculum prepared them for their future in the hospitality industry. This chapter presents a general description of the group, and an individual profile of each participant. The individual profiles in this chapter discuss the background of the student, the interview session, and exploration of the student’s individual responses related to the research questions. The chapter ends with a summary.

Profile of the Participants

The eight student participants in this study were enrolled in the hospitality program at the University of South Florida in Sarasota, Florida. Although I pursued an even split of males to females, the participants consisted of three males and five females. All eight were pursuing their bachelor’s of science degree and were in the final two years of their program. The median age of these eight students was 22 years. However, two were over the age of 46 years. Seven out of eight students had at least a year of experience in the hospitality industry.

Individual Profiles

The individual profile for each of the students described their experiences as an individual case. In this section, I first describe the pseudonym selection process. Next,
I start each introduction of each student with a statement made by the individual during the interview session. Sharing a statement from each student pinpoints the perspectives regarding the overall experiences as a hospitality student taking the Introduction to Food Production course. Following each shared statement, a description of each student’s general background is given. Finally, a summary of the interview session was provided including a description of the student’s demeanors. Each individual profile includes a figure illustrating the student’s responses and links to the research questions.

**Name selection.** To ensure anonymity of each of the student, I de-identified the names of each student. I employed the ethics of care approach and took the responsibility of selecting their pseudonyms to ensure full anonymity. I chose popular male and female names in the United States and assigned these to each student. The careful process to ensure anonymity of selecting the participants’ names was in accordance with my ethics of care approach for the eight students.

In addition, selected statements used in their profiles were analyzed and pseudonyms were given for specific places, companies, and people mentioned. All selected statements in their profiles included the line number locations from the full interview transcripts.

**Case One: Noah**

A comment during the interview that I believe explains Noah’s experiences best was:

This class is for the real world, its [hands-on labs] the best way. I mean, some of these people have probably never picked up a knife before; now they have basic knowledge. (Noah, 232-234)
General background. Noah was a tall gentleman with a confident aura about him. He was a senior in the hospitality program and had hopes of graduating by the end of 2016. Noah had 33 years of experience in the industry and was 51 years old. He worked as a general manager in a local Sarasota restaurant and also found time to work mornings at a popular breakfast restaurant as a waiter. He mentioned how he hated idle time and enjoyed staying busy at work. Noah enjoyed the friendships formed at both of his work places.

Noah’s plans after graduation were to work in a luxury hotel. His experience in the restaurant business was evident, but he believed he lacked experience with the hotel operations. He had hopes of someday having his own business that would focus on staff training.

Interview session. Noah was in the morning class on Wednesdays starting at 7:00am. The class was held at the Culinary Innovation Lab in Lakewood Ranch, Florida. I chose to conduct all interviews after the completion of their final exam on Wednesday, December 7th.

The final class involved Noah’s group presentation of a menu item designed for an up-scale resort restaurant in Sarasota. He and his team had been researching and developing the proposed menu item for the past five weeks. I noticed Noah was relieved to have just completed this project. He seemed to remain focused during the stressful situation his class was under. They prepared, served, and explained their dish for the executive chef and other panel members an hour before.
After Noah’s team cleaned up their station, I invited him into the office for the interview. I asked him if he needed any water or coffee. We then sat down in the small office just down a short hallway from the kitchens. I explained I was recording on two devices to be safe and followed this with the IRB consent description. I made it clear I was not interested in evaluating his culinary techniques, but was wanting to listen to his shared experiences and opinions about the course he had just completed.

I interviewed Noah first because I knew he had to work that afternoon. He was eager to get started and wanted to share his stories. Noah seemed grateful for the learning experience. He did not have much difficulty with the techniques taught. Although he had a high level of industry experience, Noah explained how he enjoyed the camaraderie and being able to work with other students.

**Noah’s response to research question one.** Noah described the class as fun and interesting. He reported he enjoyed learning and working alongside professional chefs. He explained how the class taught the basics of an industry kitchen using a hands-on approach.

I would say it’s a hands-on intro to cooking class. It teaches you some basic cuts, gets you familiar with the kitchen. You are working with professional chefs that guide you. They make it fun. It was a fun and interesting class. (Noah, 6-9)

Noah’s section of Introduction to Food Production started at 7:30 am on Wednesday. He joked about the early time saying, “I thought, what am I doing taking classes at 7:30 in the morning” (Noah, 502-503)? However, he then went on to say, “It was pretty easy to get up and get here, because I wanted to be here” (Noah, 503-504).

One of the early questions during the interview involved showing Noah 11 individual index cards, which had culinary techniques and skills written on each of them.
All of these were included in the class’s curriculum. Noah agreed all of the techniques and skills were part of the Introduction to Food Production curriculum. I asked if he could think of any others and he said he could not. The 11 cards included the following culinary techniques and skills: cooking techniques, knife skills, sanitation methods, basic bread preparation, vinaigrette technique, kitchen speak, mise en place, team work skills, business knowledge, recipe creation/development, and communication skills.

Noah discussed how he felt comfortable in the classroom and believed the environment fostered teamwork activities.

Our whole class was kind of like, it was very communicative, everyone was very open, outgoing, and it was very easy to communicate in this class. (Noah, 190-192)

He found the kitchen labs useful because he learned important kitchen terminology and was constantly critiqued by the chef instructor. Noah found the class interesting because of the constant activity and liked learning throughout the entire class period.

Well, it was nice to go back to the original cuts, you are dicing the . . . your small dice, your brunoise, it was good to learn the terminology again, which helped me out when we were doing the hands-on activities. Chef kind of wanted us to perfect it, so we chopped a lot of carrots until we kind of had it the way we liked it. (Noah, 212-216)

The knife session helped me out a lot. It was just great to work, we didn’t sit around, which made the class much more interesting. You came in and you are working in the kitchen for two hours and learning. (Noah, 223-225)

Noah mentioned the term *mise en place*, which is a French culinary term for putting everything in its place (Culinary Institute of America, 1996). It refers to staying organized during every phase of the process when preparing or serving food.
Mise en place, I have learned before, but it was good to get that back together and to be reminded how much more efficient it is to have your mise en place made up. (Noah, 70-72)

Noah talked about his learning experience with how to properly cost out a recipe. He mentioned this was an important area of knowledge with his current job. Noah was vocal about his hands-on experience with this regular class activity. He appreciated being able to use real food receipts when making cost calculations.

Business knowledge; I have never really . . . in my time I have always had a kitchen manager, and more so now in the job I am in now. I have to worry about food cost and product cost. So it helped me figuring out how to price out a menu a little bit. (Noah, 103-106)

Noah shared his enjoyable experience communicating with his fellow classmates. “I think they kind of look to me knowing that I have been at it for a while and it’s kind of fun communicating with them” (Noah, 91-91). He mentioned how the class required students to work together and that his work experience assisted him with this.

Teamwork skills; again, I think that's kind of . . . I kind of specialize in that, because that's what I do and I try to make everybody work together. It was fun working together with the class. (Noah, 112-114)

Noah enjoyed the class experiences where brainstorming with his group was needed. Even though his partner did not have as much industry experience as he did, he seemed to appreciate the challenge of creating new recipes for the local up-scale resort attached to the project.

The recipe creation and development; that was probably my highlight of the class was putting together the recipe. It was fun brainstorming with somebody that doesn’t have the knowledge that I have and how many great ideas my partner had and how much he helped me out, and that was a lot of fun. (Noah, 95-99)
Noah enjoyed having to work with his team and the research for the recipe creation assignment. This group work forced him to explore current food trends and contemporary cooking techniques.

We kind of did it just almost like write the term paper, we brainstormed it, we put a bunch of ideas on paper, we dug into a culinary book, we dug into some [popular kitchen] magazines and started to get a little bit of ideas, and it was fun. (Noah, 259-262)

The group work completed throughout the class involved employing critical industry skills such as: exploring, organizing, teamwork, communication, and compromise. Typically, the chef instructor would connect the day’s culinary topic with the group activity or class recipe project. Noah described this process in detail.

John and I just never stopped, we just kept talking and within a half hour we had brainstormed it all up, pulled it all together. I compared it a lot to like writing the term paper, the way that we brainstormed, we pulled it all together, outlined it, and then went from there. (Noah, 264-267)

Sometimes he [chef] would demo something and then you would do it individually and sometimes you would do it as a group. Any gaps there with the group work? So again, we had such a class that just everybody dug in. It was kind of like a team that’s been working together for a year or so. It really came out like there was . . . so it was a pretty amazing class, it was, with all the people. (Noah, 283-289)

Collaboration was a large part of the curriculum and certainly critical for the class recipe development project with the local resort. Noah commented how the collaboration with his group was both a learning experience and a fun assignment.

I always like working with other people. It was a nice collaboration. It made it fun. I got to work with a very personable person and we had fun with it. We laughed and we had fun doing it, as well as learning. (Noah, 276-278)

Noah’s response to research question two. During each interview, I asked the students to rank all of the 11 different culinary techniques and skills they had participated in during the class. I instructed them to rank the top six index cards based
on the importance for their future in the industry. After a brief moment of silence, Noah began moving the cards around and ended with the following top six: (1) business knowledge, (2) sanitation, (3) cooking methods, (4) knife skills, (5) communication, and (6) teamwork skills. (1 = most important, 6 = least important)

Even with Noah’s long length of industry experience, he understood how the class prepared him for future industry employment.

I think everybody in the hospitality program has to take this class, and it's part of any hotel, any restaurant, you need to know basic cooking, and I think it’s a great intro to the kitchen. (Noah, 15-18)

Like I said, I think that the things that I didn't know that helped me out was making my own vinaigrette that simply; the knife skill, learning how to sharpen a knife on a stone, which I had never learned that in my 30 years, but now I do. So I put those two up there. (Noah, 126-130)

He believed the real world hands-on labs were essential to learning about the hospitality industry. Noah said it was the best way. He seemed content to know the students in class would be getting some valuable lessons on the professional kitchen.

Noah saw the relevance of the hands-on labs, especially the bread preparation lab. He commented how it might assist him with future business endeavors.

I had forgotten how easy it was to make bread. So I think it’s something that if I decided to have my own place I would definitely make my own bread. (Noah, 61-63)

He was especially thankful for finally learning the theory behind costing out a menu item. He knew the basics, but said the chef instructor was able to go into great detail on strategies for optimizing your food products. Noah was able to use this learned skill instantly and proudly stated this accomplishment.

I find myself, since we have taken this class . . . being able to put together two wine dinners at my restaurant, and I am able to cost things out a little better, from the skills that I learned from Chef. (Noah, 108-110)
During the semester, the class connected with an up-scale resort during the recipe development project. Students toured the facility and learned about the company’s business philosophy and discussed in great detail one of the restaurant’s menu concepts. There were other occasions when professional chefs came into class to assist with the learning process, hands-on labs, and group activities. Connections with active industry professionals was a key part of the curriculum.

The industry partner encounters were included in the curriculum to help students envision what reality is in the busy world of restaurants and hotels. Noah, being no stranger to the hospitality industry, saw the value of these encounters.

[They are] to let them know about the real world. I mean it gives them an insight of how things are done, what they are in for when they are out of school and they start pursuing jobs in a restaurant. (Noah, 381-383)

He recalled one occasion during the initial tour of the up-scale resort, where the employees demonstrated impeccable best practices. Noah was impressed by this and noted the importance of being able to witness a professional hospitality team in action.

We are at the [up-scale resort] and she [employee/guide] had such a personality and such a passion for it. She showed that the [up-scale resort] is a fun place to work and how much they really...you were able to get a grasp somewhat of a grasp on how they are so professional. They are working together. They are heart of the house. The people walk by each other and greet each other. The friendliness. You got to see how a professional, top-notch place holds it together. (Noah, 301-308)

Like I said, I think the enthusiasm of the employees at the [up-scale resort]. That girl, she really enjoyed her job. She loved being there. (Noah, 346-347)

This experience made him consider pursuing employment at this resort. Noah believed he could learn a lot from working for such a professional employer.

It's something I always thought about...that I thought I kind of wanted to maybe work at the [up-scale resort]. Now I kind of know I want to work at someplace
like this. I am a little older, but if I could finish my career, I wouldn’t mind doing what I am doing right now for a year or two and once I have my degree to start pursuing a job at places such as the [up-scale resort]. (Noah, 352-357)

Noah remembered the company’s creed, which was shared to all of the students during the discussion about the overall business philosophy. Watching the shared video about the company’s values and core beliefs made an impression on Noah. He recited from memory the company’s creed, which surprised me, “Their creed that they gave us . . . they actually passed one out I think to us, and we read through those. I do remember that” (Noah, 321-323).

Noah shared with me the learning experiences that helped prepare him for industry employment. Although some of these experiences were expected based on the overall curriculum, many of them came across as strong memorable experiences.

The recipe creation and development I thought was . . . I can't believe how easy it came to me . . . also I thought it was easy for teamwork and communication, was easy for me. (Noah, 180-186)

I am still impressed that I learned how to sharpen a knife on a stone, so it’s going to stay with me. I know I was in a cooking class and I have a lot of experience . . . but yeah, I learned how to sharpen a knife! So that was a top moment. (Noah, 494-497)

My most memorable experience was working with Tim to come up with our recipe, that brainstorming, that process of putting together our recipe for the [up-scale resort] judges. (Noah, 488-490)

**Noah’s response to research question three.** Many hands-on kitchen labs were conducted throughout the semester and were connected to real event needs at the CIL or were completed in tangent with the groups’ recipe development project. Noah communicated the amount of hands-on labs during the semester were sufficient, “I don’t think I expected much more from a one semester introductory class” (Noah, 241-242).
Regarding the student/teacher ratio, Noah commented the classroom could have accommodated more students than it had. There were 13 in Noah’s class.

I think that was perfect. I think it was enough . . . we probably even could have had a few more in there I think, because you have got so much workspace. (Noah, 437-439)

Noah was also impressed with all of the equipment available at the CIL. He had no complaints and believed nothing else was needed during kitchen labs.

I loved that stove. I loved the double oven. I guess we had state-of-the-art Robot-Coupe and everything you touched is Cuisinart or Viking. Everything is top-notch. I was very impressed by that. (Noah, 409-411)

Noah did not have much to say about how to improve the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production class. Also, he seemed happy with the physical design of the facility.

The ambience, it’s awesome. I would love to have this kitchen at home, you know what I mean? It's like a dream come true, I think. So atmosphere was just great. I thought I was in some rich person’s home. (Noah, 400-403)

To provide Noah’s experiences, Figure 4 illustrates Noah’s responses to the interview questions and linked to the research questions for this study.

**Case Two: Liam**

A comment during the interview that I believe explains Liam’s experiences best was:

I think learning about pressure helps to . . . I mean, if you’re going into a restaurant and back of the house work, I think it’s very useful. (Liam, 481-482)

**General background.** Liam was a young college student that showed a passion for the industry. Since the beginning of the course, he was constantly volunteering at multiple food and beverage events at the Culinary Innovation Lab. Liam was a junior in the hospitality program and hoped to graduate in 2018. His experience came from
mostly front-of-the-house rolls in restaurants. He currently was working as a server in a restaurant and had over two years experience with this position. Although Liam only had brief experience in professional kitchens, he was interested in attending culinary school after receiving his bachelor’s degree from USFSM. He had long-term goals of becoming an entrepreneur in the restaurant industry and believed acquiring knowledge in all facets of this sector was important.

**Interview session.** Liam was in the morning class on Wednesdays starting at 7:00am. The class was held at the Culinary Innovation Lab in Lakewood Ranch, Florida. I chose to conduct all interviews after the completion of their final exam on Wednesday, December 7th.

The final class involved Liam's group presentation of a menu item designed for an up-scale resort restaurant in Sarasota. I noticed during the presentation how prepared and confident he and his partner were. They had worked efficiently all morning and were standing around waiting to present at the last moment, while other groups were a bit more frantic. From my observations, Liam used his organizational skills effectively.

After his team cleaned up their station, I invited him into the office for the interview. I asked him if he needed any water or coffee. We then sat down in the small office just down a short hallway from the kitchens. I explained I was recording on two devices to be safe and followed this with the IRB consent description. I made it clear I was not interested in evaluating his culinary techniques, but was wanting to listen to his shared experiences and opinions about the course he had just completed.
Figure 4. Single case data analysis of Noah’s responses to each research question.

- Enjoyed learning kitchen basics from pros.
- Didn’t mind early start, wanted to be there.
- Agreed all 11 cards were part of curriculum.
- Felt comfortable in teamwork atmosphere.
- Found active hands-on labs useful with helpful critique.
- Learned how mise en place helped with organization.
- Believed important business lessons were taught in class.
- Enjoyed collaborating with group and brainstorming.

- Believe there were enough labs and time was sufficient.
- Commented student/chef ratio was good and could have had more students.
- Was happy with all equipment in class.
- Thought physical design was good.

- Believed business knowledge learned in class was most important to his future.
- Thought kitchen basics were important and enjoyed learning these techniques.
- Believed the hands-on labs connected to real world industry.
- Applied the business knowledge activities outside of class at work.
- Thought industry connections gave insight.
- Believed industry partners showed key elements of success.
- Had new interest in working for resort.
- Had memorable moments with recipe creation, working with group, and knife skills.
It was surprising to me how Liam seemed slightly nervous in the beginning of the interview, since he usually exuded confidence. However, he eventually opened up and shared a great deal. Liam is extremely professional for his age. He seems driven and I believe his strong desire to educate himself on the industry will serve him well in the future. At 24 years of age, Liam had a better than average level of experience coming into the class and made it clear he was always hungry for more industry knowledge. He proved this throughout the semester by volunteering on three extra occasions when it was not required.

Liam’s response to research question one. Liam shared his thoughts on how the class delivered a hands-on experience to students covering multiple areas of the restaurant industry. He commented how it was important for students to have a balanced understanding of the hospitality industry.

I think the purpose of the class is to get maybe those that are more familiarized with a hotel part of hospitality to be introduced into the restaurant or food and beverage side of the house. (Liam, 18-20)

One of the early questions during the interview involved showing Liam 11 individual index cards, which had culinary techniques and skills written on each of them. All of these were included in the class’s curriculum. Liam agreed all of the techniques and skills were part of the Introduction to Food Production curriculum. I asked if he could think of any others and he said he could not. The 11 cards included the following culinary techniques and skills: cooking techniques, knife skills, sanitation methods, basic bread preparation, vinaigrette technique, kitchen speak, mise en place, team work skills, business knowledge, recipe creation/development, and communication skills.
Liam already had experience with a chef knife, but was able to learn even more during the hands-on sessions with the chef instructor. The instructor often used the classic French pronunciation for certain ingredients and culinary techniques, which Liam had never heard before but appreciated.

You don’t really hear these in the kitchen that I work at, so . . . [it’s good] to learn how to really say some of the words other than saying this wrong the whole time. (Liam, 88-89)

He indicated the chef demonstrated everything first and then critiqued all of their knife-skill work during class. These lab sessions were often connected to real event prep, so the final product was used in sellable items. He appreciated the constant activity and felt it was useful.

Knife skills was another good one. It was good hands on. We got to work with the carrots and all the other veggies. Chef showed us all the different knife cuts, . . . he demoed everything. He evaluated it, which was cool. I don’t know, I never really thought to pick up a knife and look at it’s size. It was, it’s good practice. I liked doing that every time prior to an event. We’re able to just keep prepping too. I feel that’s the way to really get better at it, so keep doing it. (Liam, 132-138)

Liam shared his thoughts on learning in what he believed was a healthy environment. He mentioned how the interior beauty of the facility was humbling, and helped him with thinking creatively.

There’s no crazy amount pressure on anything. There’s no like unnecessary stress. It was just humbling. Like I had said earlier, a lot of freedom to express creativity or to even pull creativity from those that may not be as expressive. (Liam, 593-596)

According to Liam’s stories, the chef created an environment where techniques and kitchen basics were explained and then the students were challenged to think on their own and make decisions. He welcomed this part of the class and seemed to enjoy the challenge of occasional trivial kitchen stress.
The assistant chef is a very good teacher and mentor. He would explain everything as he goes. I don’t know. He probably didn’t have to do this with us, but he did and that was really good . . . working with him. And then getting into the project where we did start to get to cook towards the end, it was fun. Chef would go around and give his critique, what he would think. He gave us a lot of freedom and that was . . . I’m not so used to that word in the kitchen . . . things have certain methods. Every chef has their way of doing it. So to come here and work with a chef who gives you so much experience . . . it’s like he purposely put stress on us to like make those decisions. (Liam, 153-162)

Being around professional chefs gave Liam a chance to learn best practices in the kitchen and exposed him to cooking techniques he had never heard of. Much of this exposure came during his volunteer work outside of class. Liam took it upon himself to sign up for other events, which were not attached to class grades.

I was very familiar with [mise en place] going into it . . . what I learned from it was how he stored all of it . . . vacuum sealing everything . . . like putting the vegetables in the water after prepping everything and then working the events the next day, it’s so much easier. (Liam, 198-202)

Just being able to take [the skill] away and take it home. I love to learn, so the knowledge that comes with it, learning . . . like when you made semifreddo and it’s learning what . . . I mean I didn’t know. I have never heard of that recipe. (Liam, 376-378)

Liam described how the class demonstrated the importance of structure and organization in a professional kitchen. Before each class, the chef instructor would always review the action plan and production assignments. Each student or group of students would be assigned responsibilities. He learned this throughout the semester and became accustomed to the planning process.

It helps to . . . and we always talk about it at the beginning of every class, which helps. It gives you a basic understanding of what’s about to happen. And even if you don’t get chosen to do this part of the hands-on, you still know what’s going on because it was already briefed. He makes a battle plan and you have more of a reinforcement of what else is going on. And then when you finish, you have something that look at and say . . . maybe these people have a lot of things to do . . . you can go and help. So the structure, that was really good, especially having those hands-on activities. It’s fun. (Liam, 662-670)
Liam valued the class time on breaking down a recipe and costing it out as a chef or owner would do. This helped him discover culinary management techniques on optimizing profits, which was relevant to his future entrepreneurial endeavors.

Business knowledge . . . that was definitely helpful because I want to open my own business. Learning how to break food cost and what each recipes make sense to do, is it worthwhile and will it make me a profit as opposed to just kind of eating away at my revenue. It’s all very good information. (Liam, 176-179)

That helped a lot, being able to see the receipts and everything, breaking that down as a class and it’s like, “Wow, we made a lot of profit on this and that.” (Liam, 251-253)

He shared his tasting challenge with his partner during the recipe development project and noted the importance on relying and trusting your partner. Liam had an allergy to shrimp so he could not taste everything on the plate.

Teamwork skills, that was fun. It was a challenge because . . . I was saying out there to the [up-scale resort] guys . . . I had to work with a partner that had such different tastes than I had. We decided on shrimp and I’m allergic to shrimp. But it’s the working with somebody, making those decisions, finding what works best and then. Also, because I was allergic to shrimp, I would prep it and she would critique saying, “Oh, it needs this, it needs that” then I would have to rely on that. (Liam, 70-76)

Liam described how the class project challenged the students to brainstorm about recipes for an up-scale resort restaurant. Each group was tasked with learning about current trends and the restaurant’s existing menu. He said his group then had to think and work creatively with the hopes of delivering a menu item that fit the needs of the existing concept.

The recipe creation development . . . that was third part of the project. We had to learn about what the [up-scale resort] and it’s restaurant were all about. They had sold themselves as recognizable, comfortable cuisine. (Liam, 179-182)
The group work completed throughout the class involved employing critical industry skills such as: exploring, organizing, teamwork, communication, and compromise. Liam recalled a story regarding the importance of effective communication with group work. He shared how the communication skill was critical both inside and outside of class.

I had missed a day because my son was sick and she [partner] had made some good progress in class by herself and did some trial and errors on her own. She had sent me a message about it, and then explained everything . . . then we went from there. And it was just keeping in communication with each other, keeping each other in the loop. That was a benefit for me. (Liam, 440-445)

According to Liam, this ability to collaborate effectively resulted in a pleasurable group learning experience. He felt their recipes had progressed throughout the semester.

Between my group members during the project, communication in the kitchen was -- I mean, our communication was good. It wasn’t challenging at all to be able to communicate. She was a very open person and I appreciated that because you kind of need good feedback to keep improving some of your dishes. (Liam, 117-121)

Learning from mistakes was something Liam appreciated. The group work experiences during the class project and scheduled events sometimes involved collaborating on menu items where trial and error was necessary.

Being able to work with it, it’s just the hands-on . . . you don’t know until you try it and that was kind of how the group work was for me. I had never done some of these things. We would talk about it, “Oh, this might sound good,” and then we did it and we’re like, “Okay, maybe let’s not do this.” So just trial and error part of the group work. (Liam, 424-429)

Liam shared his excitement on being able to learn something during a specific class and then apply it at home the same day. He admitted to having good recall on recipes he enjoyed.
I like that he gave out the recipes, we can take it home and make these. Some or most of the ideas just kind of stuck and I made a couple of times, use the same technique at home. (Liam, 104-106)

Basic bread preparation is the next because again, it was just cool and it was such a cool hands-on experience and kind of just stuck to me forever. I think it will at least. (Liam, 267-269)

**Liam’s response to research question two.** During each interview, I asked the students to rank all of the 11 different culinary techniques and skills they had participated in during the class. I instructed them to rank the top six index cards based on the importance for their future in the industry. Liam began moving the cards around, making comments, and ended with the following top six: (1) business knowledge, (2) recipe creation/development, (3) knife skills, (4) bread preparation, (5) teamwork skills, and (6) communication skills. (1 = most important, 6 = least important)

Liam shared his stories in the class when he participated in real banquet events at the facility. He mentioned how this gave him the chance to finish the dishes he was prepping for in class. He enjoyed working with professional chefs at these events. And then during the events, it was where I got to help out with a lot of the cooking and that was really fun to incorporate the events and be able to work them. I was alongside with Chef Roberto and Chef Sai, and learning from them as well. I think the events were my favorite part. (Liam, 140-149)

Liam enjoyed seeing the proper technique on certain recipes and believed it was important to see these demoed the correct way. He valued the learning experiences because they were relevant outside of the classroom. He mentioned his desire to open up his own restaurant, so learning proper technique was preparing him for this endeavor. Liam share how he gained enough confidence with some of the techniques to share them with associates at work in the restaurant he worked at.
Vinaigrette technique, that was fun to learn because we’re making that at home too. But the way he [chef instructor] makes it is so much more . . . so much more of a process, but it feels more proper. (Liam, 100-102)

It [bread preparation] was so simple and it’s a fun skill to have and take home more than anything . . . to just do it with the family . . . I’ve taken that actually to my restaurant and shared it with other line cooks that are just getting into [bread making]. It was fun to do that with them too as well. (Liam, 191-194)

The industry partner encounters were included in the curriculum to help students envision reality in the busy world of restaurants and hotels. Liam shared his memorable experiences with these encounters.

Right off the bat, meeting everybody, the way they portrait themselves . . . for hospitality, I thought that was something important. I picked it up . . . how everybody was so warm and welcoming and everybody was always smiling, getting to taste their food, to see what they mean by when they say they like to use fresh ingredients and you taste it. For me it’s like, “Wow, this is good. It’s fresh.” Then you how to use local products, learning about the sustainability of the restaurant, conserving food, and having different uses for everything. (Liam, 491-498)

The industry visits allowed Liam to observe the key elements that make a hospitality business successful. Intimidation turned into revelation, which allowed him to discover the possibilities in the hospitality industry and in himself.

Going to these industry professionals and seeing for yourself like they’re successful, how are they doing it? And you go and you see and it’s like, “Okay, wow!” The standards they hold for themselves, how consistent things are. Everything was just . . . I couldn’t think of a bad thing to say about it. (Liam, 515-522)

Besides the main chef instructor, the class was visited occasionally by other chefs with industry experience. Chef Roberto worked with Liam and some other students during one event at the CIL. He had this to say about the experience:

I think Chef Roberto impressed me the most, down to the way he mentors and displays his skill. It was almost flawless to me. I liked how he did everything and his attitude about everything. Everything is humbling. It just adds to the overall
experience . . . . When you look at it in terms of role models, this is how a chef should be. It was a humbling experience. (Liam, 537-542)

Liam talked about learning many skills and discovering different perspectives from role models. He shared how his approach was to piece together what he believed was the ideal package based on what he observed from other professionals.

I think the biggest one was honing your skills in the kitchen. The business knowledge was definitely important to know and just getting to learn. If you work with so many professionals like [chef instructor] and Chef Roberto and Chef Sai and just take everybody’s different perspective on how they see food and putting it together like, “What did I like about each chef,” and being able to put that together into my own blend of creativity, I think that was the best. It goes back to the word “role models”, “What did I like best about him? How can I strive to be all of these things?” (Liam, 548-555)

The class gave Liam a big picture of the industry, which he found helpful. He discussed how seeing the flow of activity during event was enlightening. Liam mentions how this would assist in making his career choices.

To see how everything comes together, kind of like working in the events, how everybody does everything. You’ve gone from prepping the food the day prior to serving it the next day. It’s not just you’re back at the house or you’re front of the house. You’re doing everything and you get to see the big picture of how everything comes together. You understand the stresses of each individual job and then you understand the benefits of each. Which one do I like more? Do I like to be in front of the house, back of the house? Is it talking to people my favorite part? So getting to see the big picture I think was the biggest one. (Liam, 576-584)

Liam shared with me the learning experiences that helped prepare him for future employment in the industry. He indicated he felt comfortable with his organizational skills, which connected with the culinary term mise en place. Liam also believed his knife skills improved during the 15-week class. He indicated he felt confident with all of the techniques and skills presented in the course.

I mean, they're all pretty good. I understood and was able to grasp every one of these concepts. I think business knowledge is probably something I am
able to [understand]—just because going in, I didn’t know it and now leaving, I completely understand how to mark it up [recipes], how to break it down. (Liam, 310-313)

Liam did admit to failing at bread preparation on his first try. When I asked him what he was not successful with regarding techniques, he said, “Maybe basic bread preparation, just because that was my first time making it that way . . . learning the proper way to make it” (Liam, 322-323). However, he admitted that learning the proper technique was the best way. Liam said, “to learn to make it his way was a lot better” (Liam, 324). He did not give up after failing the first time in class. In the end, Liam learned more than just the recipe itself. He shares how his bread learning experience became taught him about effort and patience.

Well for us, I mean it was—the temperature of the oven was the one [problem]. My loaf came out half cooked. It was a little raw still inside. I realized how much effort that really goes into it. I don’t—I’ve never put that much patience into making bread. But now I learned, it takes a little patience to make it. (Liam, 328-33)

Although some of these experiences were expected based on the overall curriculum, many of them came across as strong memorable experiences.

To see somebody who is a professional chef and those that every week come and show you how he makes bread. At that level, it’s humbling to be a part of . . . It’s getting to learn this and taking it home with me. Now, I get to do it with my family. (Liam, 722-726)

Today was pretty memorable too as well, touring the [up-scale resort] earlier and then getting to stand in front of them today and present our plate . . . our story and doing all of that. (Liam, 736-738)

**Liam’s response to research question three.** Liam mentioned he enjoyed the class, but stated he believed an additional cooking lab on sauce making would have been helpful.
All right! I would have liked to have done more with sauces. We touched on them . . . the five mother sauces but we didn’t really get into it. Working in the events, I got to see some of it being made but a lot of times . . . it’s just prepped already so you just use it. But for me, personally, it is something I would have liked to have done as hands-on lab. (Liam, 397-401)

Although mentioning earlier in the interview how he felt comfortable in the low stress learning environment, his closing comments suggested adding more pressure-type situations or simulations. This is often called a _mystery basket_ challenge in professional kitchens. Liam realized this may not be possible in an introductory-type course and indicated he thought the overall curriculum was _solid_. However, he believes this might be helpful in learning how to deal with real industry challenges.

But for me, what I probably would have liked—how it could have improved for me in the class is maybe do more like a pressure . . . add something with pressure where maybe you time us and we get something done. How to work with let’s say the time management. Not having days to prep something, but down to the hour and the minutes, how we work under pressure with that. (Liam, 463-471)

Liam also suggested a minor change to the recipe development project. He said he would have liked to have been given the option of choosing what course they were to concentrate on. Currently, students are randomly assigned a menu category (i.e., appetizer, entree, dessert, children’s meal, special dietary).

I would have liked to have had more freedom . . . unlike what we did. Instead of like choosing out of a hat, maybe see who’s interested in doing what first and then picking categories, as opposed to just drawing it out of a hat and selecting partners. Because even if I was interested in doing this, maybe my partner wasn’t. (Liam, 743-747)

Relating to the first tour of the up-scale resort at the beginning of the semester, Liam shared how he would have liked to have journeyed a bit deeper into the [up-scale resort’s] restaurant kitchen. He believed this would have given him more details and information when researching the menu item.
I would have liked to have had more of a tour of the [up-scale resort’s] kitchen including what are their capabilities, what do they put out. To go there and see everything from the rooms to their venues that they had, but not really get to see the kitchen and how they operate was a tad bit of a let down. I thought we were going to go see it. But I get it. (Liam, 365-369)

In addition, Liam said, “I would definitely take any elective that involves more hands-on in the kitchen” (Liam, 408). He believed it would help with his career interests in the restaurant industry.

Regarding the physical design of the classroom, Liam was completely satisfied. He believed the overall layout was safe and ergonomically sound. He was also impressed with the equipment available.

Physical classroom I think is great. Everything’s organized, everything is safe, all the rules and guidelines were good—the sanitation method, those are all stated in the beginning, so everybody was clear on it. (Liam, 603-606)

I think it was all likes. The amount of equipment available . . . everything was there. You can do just about anything in this kitchen. It’s a lot of space for different groups to work at. It’s not just one kitchen where everybody is tight and close together. You have the entire, literally the entire building to work at. You can work or cook in any room, prep in any room. (Liam, 611-615)

I can’t think of anything either. Everything you—if you needed something, it was there, with everything that I’ve made. And if we didn’t have it, chef went and got it. Like the group that had the waffles. You got a waffle maker, so it’s not—I think it was well equipped. (Liam, 637-640)

To provide Liam’s experiences, Figure 5 illustrates Liam’s responses to the interview questions and linked to the research questions for this study.

Case Three: Emma

A comment during the interview that I believe explains Emma’s experiences best was:

You really learn a lot from other people. It’s . . . rather than just having one mind, you have multiple, and it just kind of helps you with thinking up ideas for plates. (Emma, 313-315)
Figure 5. Single case data analysis of Liam’s responses to each research question.
**General background.** Emma was a young energetic student that started working in restaurants right after high school. She was a junior in the hospitality program and hoped to graduate at the end of 2017. Her three years of experience in the restaurant industry had convinced her this was her passion. Emma had hopes of also gaining experience in the hotel industry and was attempting to secure an internship at a local hotel. Her long-term goals after graduation were to work her way up into management at a successful hotel. While taking courses in the hospitality program, she had developed an interest in senior living. Emma believed this might also be an opportunity for her after gaining some more experience in the hotel industry.

**Interview session.** Emma was in the morning class on Wednesdays starting at 7:00am. The class was held at the Culinary Innovation Lab in Lakewood Ranch, Florida. I chose to conduct all interviews after the completion of their final exam on Wednesday, December 7th.

The final class involved Emma’s group presentation of a menu item designed for an up-scale resort restaurant in Sarasota. She and her teammate had been working both in and out of class researching and developing their proposed menu item for the past five weeks. Her partner had an allergy, which made it challenging but one that she seemed to confront with out hesitation.

After her team cleaned up their station, I invited her into the office for the interview. I asked her if she needed any water or coffee. We then sat down in the small office just down a short hallway from the kitchens. I explained I was recording on two devices to be safe and followed this with the IRB consent description. I made it clear I
was not interested in evaluating her culinary techniques, but was wanting to listen to her shared experiences and opinions about the course she had just completed.

Emma was well spoken and shared her learning experiences in a natural, confident manner. Her demeanor surprised me since I only talked with her a few other times where she seemed shy and unassuming. During the interview, she exuded a self-assuredness that was refreshing. I pondered at the time if this was due to the class coming to an end. Emma shared some great class experiences and often related these stories with her past industry experience. From her stories, I deduced she truly understood the value of hands-on learning in the classroom and how it might prepare her for the industry.

**Emma’s response to research question one.** Emma described the class as both a personal journey and a group effort. She seemed to appreciate and welcome the hands-on nature of the course.

It's very hands-on. You do the class pretty much on your own or with your classmates. You can ask Chef questions if you need help with anything. But it's mainly on your own, and I feel like that helps a ton with learning. (Emma, 7-10)

One of the early questions during the interview involved showing Emma 11 individual index cards, which had culinary techniques and skills written on each of them. All of these were inside the class’s curriculum. She agreed all of the techniques and skills were part of the Introduction to Food Production curriculum. I asked if she could think of any others and she suggested adding **serving skills** and **plating skills**. I added these two to the other original 11 cards, which included the following culinary techniques and skills: cooking techniques, knife skills, sanitation methods, basic bread preparation,
vinaigrette technique, kitchen speak, mise en place, team work skills, business knowledge, recipe creation/development, and, communication skills.

She indicated the class involved many useful hands-on labs. Emma believed these activities served a good purpose and focused on important areas of the kitchen. Specifically, she remembered one lab where sanitation procedures were proudly discussed in detail and shared the following sanitation mantra:

Always wash your hands first, and make sure you wash the ingredients before you even use it, to make sure that it is clean. With shrimp, for example, you want to keep cold running water over it. If you are going to leave it out, you want cold running water.  (Emma, 242-246)

Emma often contrasted her traditional learning experiences with hands-on experiences. Her preferred choice of learning style was evident when describing the Introduction to Food Production class.

I personally don’t like sitting down in a lecture and this was the total opposite of sitting down in a lecture. Majority of the time we were standing up, just moving around.  (Emma, 412-414)

Personally, I learn by doing. So I am a very hands-on learner, and that’s one reason why I did like this class, because knife skills, you could explain to anyone. You can hand them that sheet that we got and just explain it, but that doesn’t mean they are going to know how to do it.  (Emma, 474-478)

Even when sitting, there was always something to do relating to culinary management. Emma described these times when the chef instructor would challenge the students to calculate the food cost of certain recipes they were preparing.

Business knowledge and [knowing] the costs of everything . . . we did that for a couple of classes. The [chef instructor] would give us the receipts from the local grocery stores, and we just had to kind of figure out on our own how much it would cost to prepare certain things, and then how much we could sell it for.  (Emma, 70-73)
Knowledge of the culinary field also came from learning various kitchen terminology. Emma laughed and said she learned the true meaning of *mandolin* in a professional kitchen. Initially thinking it belonged in a quartet, “I always thought that was just a [musical] instrument” (Emma, 110), she quickly learned it was considered a cutting device in a chef’s world. She also learned the important organizational term *mise en place*.

*Mise en place; a lot of that happened. When we were preparing for events, we always had to do the *mise en place* on every recipe. Everything was cooked either later on, or we might have made it then and there . . . I got to make a bread pudding, that was baked later on. (Emma, 116-121)*

Emma reported how the course created the need for brainstorming amongst classmates during the recipe development project. This involved perusing food magazines and searching online.

*I did a lot of that [recipe creation] from seeing pictures. For the [up-scale resort] project, we did the veggie slaw and that was very colorful. We saw it in a magazine, I believe, and were looking online. We just saw something that was extremely colorful and that's what we really liked about that. (Emma, 64-68)*

Similar to other students interviewed, group work completed throughout the class involved employing critical industry skills such as: exploring, organizing, teamwork, communication, and compromise. Emma enjoyed this part of the class and described it as a process, which needed to end in a final consensus.

*We kind of had to figure out what each of us like . . . then put it into one. For the [up-scale resort] project, my partner actually is allergic to shellfish, so we originally came up with using salmon, but it ended up being too heavy for the dish. We went with shrimp, because I personally do love shrimp and I love shellfish. We tried out what he could have, but it just didn’t work out too well. So we ended up going with what I had. And then, with him being Asian, we were able to put an Asian twist on, so it was just a little give and take. (Emma, 299-307)*
Emma described how one of the benefits of doing group work in this class was the rich creation of fresh ideas: “… getting everything together it helps, because when you have four hands rather than two. Thinking of ideas, yes, it may take longer, but it might also be better” (Emma, 324-326). She thought group work was valuable, “I love working in groups” (Emma, 319).

Emma mentioned how some of the kitchen labs on certain days went longer than expected due to cleanup and the occasional unforeseen incident. However, she did not mind sticking around to help out. “Some classes did take longer, but I didn’t mind staying longer, because I loved the class. I loved all the hands-on learning” (Emma, 409-410); “Sometimes I did stay later, but that’s also because I wanted to. Sometimes we were able to get out earlier, but I still ended up staying later” (Emma, 498-500).

**Emma’s response to research question two.** During each interview, I asked the students to rank all of the 11 different culinary techniques and skills they had participated in during the class. I instructed them to rank the top six index cards based on the importance for their future in the industry. Emma went right to work on the challenge and delivered her top six as: (1) teamwork skills, (2) business knowledge, (3) communication skills, (4) sanitation, (5) groups Knife, serving, mise en place, and cooking techniques together, and (6) recipe creation/development. (1 = most important, 6 = least important)

Emma shared how the class prepared her for the industry with stories relating to basic kitchen knowledge of a professional kitchen. In addition, she seemed to understand these skills may help her if she was ever employed as a manager in the restaurant business.
[Purpose of class]...just to get an idea of different ways to prepare food... how much it would cost to make the food for a restaurant and [how] to mark up the price. (Emma, 15-17)

It just taught me a lot of in the kitchen, how that works. If I were to ever be a restaurant manager, I would know how the kitchen should flow and work and teamwork and everything. (Emma, 269-271)

Communication skills, Emma noted, were successfully taught in class. She mentioned this was because the course was taught in a real professional environment.

You are not going to know how to do that [communicate] unless you are in a kitchen. So it's just more of the hands-on learning that really helped me understand everything a little more. (Emma, 480-482)

Many of the hospitality skills taught during class applied outside of the classroom. Emma mentioned she was not surprised how much teamwork was stressed throughout the curriculum, since it was key to her success on the job outside of class.

Outside of this I actually am a server, so I have to do a lot of teamwork. Where I work, we actually work in partners, so I picked up on that from work and just brought it into my school. (Emma, 88-91)

Emma was excited to learn how many of the culinary techniques she learning in class could be applied throughout her daily life, which seemed to give her a greater appreciation for cuisine.

Okay. Well, my knife skills, when I first started I had no idea. I didn't know that different knives were used for different things. I was horrible. But now I kind of learned a little more and I started to use all the different knives at my house rather than just one knife for everything. (Emma, 58-62)

Well, before I never made food at home or I rarely did; it was mainly just brownies from a box or cookies out of the package... if anything, but now I have gotten more into making homemade everything, whether it be bread or brownies or cupcakes or cake or everything, just more homemade. (Emma, 181-185)

The vinaigrette technique; you can make anything just from olive oil and vinaigrette, and then you can just add different things into it rather than buying different types of vinaigrette. So that was good. (Emma, 97-99)
Her class project on recipe development involved connecting with the up-scale resort. Emma mentioned the experience of seeing how things were managed on a successful hospitality property and how everybody shared the same enthusiasm. The best practices shared by the resort made an impression on her, which triggered a desire to seek out employment in the hotel industry.

I think it actually pushed me more towards working at hotels. There was one lady in particular; I don’t remember her name, but she was smiling, she was happy, it was just a good experience. Everyone seemed nice and just happy to be there. (Emma, 369-372)

She discussed the value of being exposed to successful industry professionals during the class and how it could provide a network for future employment.

Well, it does give students more connections for future jobs, and it teaches you with time that maybe having experience in school and then having a job there from school is a good connection. Yeah, there are just connections. (Emma, 399-402)

Emma shared how culinary skills learned early in the class led to her success with future recipes. She sounded proud about her accomplishments and went into detail about specific dessert recipes she prepared, which were well received by a client during an event.

Probably my cooking skills or cooking methods and knife skills . . . [most successful]. (Emma, 175-176)

For one class I did bread pudding and I had to have knife skills to cut the bread evenly. And I also had to have knife skills for an apple strudel that I made, to make all the apple chunks the same size. Cooking method [success] would probably have to be the bread preparation. (Emma, 196-199)

One of the guests at the event commented how she enjoyed the flavor and said she was reminded of her grandmother’s recipe years ago. Emma said the cooking experience and the guest’s feedback made this a memorable moment.
**Emma’s response to research question three.** Emma believed there was enough material covered in the Introduction to Food Production class. She said there was no need for any additional hands-on labs at the CIL and had no recommendations on the format or the student/teacher ratio of the course. However, Emma did share her desire to have an additional session at a restaurant where students could observe proper service styles and other best practices.

I think for the [up-scale resort] it would be nice to go during a lunch and sit down and eat or a brunch or dinner or anything and just sit down and eat to see how their services are—to see how everything is plated and served and just get the whole experience of it. (Emma, 384-387)

In addition, Emma shared her opinion regarding a desire to be in larger groups. She felt the end result of adding a couple more group members would be a more creative final product. She enjoyed the brainstorming and idea creation with her classmates.

Maybe do bigger groups, because we had partners. So try maybe three or four people in a group, so that way you have more minds, it might be a little harder, but it might turn out better for the food, just to think of ideas. (Emma, 332-335)

When asked about the physical layout of the facility, Emma said she “liked it all” (Emma, 421). She noted how the space was large and easy to work in. Although she preferred to work efficiently in small chosen areas of the facility, Emma appreciated the many choices of work space. Emma described how during each class time she would ergonomically setup her and her partner’s work space.

Everything was pretty open. There are a lot of things in different areas, but it is such a big kitchen that you kind of have to have things far away from one another.

A lot of cooking I like to do in the back kitchen actually, because everything is just right there. It’s a smaller space. It’s kind of more of like an
at-home kitchen where you just have everything within hand’s reach. (Emma, 428-435)

To provide Emma’s experiences, Figure 6 illustrates Emma’s responses to the interview questions and linked to the research questions for this study.

**Case Four: Olivia**

A comment during the interview that I believe explains Olivia’s experiences best was:

I've had too many classes where you sit there and the teacher is reading the book to you and I'm like, “I could have done that myself”. And you don’t remember any of it and somebody is falling asleep in the back . . . so this class keeps you interested. (Olivia, 385-388)

**General background.** Olivia had worked in the hospitality industry since the mid-80s. Her career started at a fast-food restaurant followed by a few years at a seafood franchise. At 47 years of age, she had a noticeable level of confidence about her, which may have also come from her four years in the Army. After serving her country, Olivia continued to work in the restaurant industry and also spent two seasons working at a theme park.

Olivia was a junior in the hospitality program and hoped to graduate by the end of 2017. She wanted to work in a hotel after graduation and had hopes of acquiring some management, events, and operations experience. Her long term goal was to own a small boutique hotel.

**Interview session.** Olivia was in the morning class on Wednesdays starting at 7:00am. The class was held at the Culinary Innovation Lab in Lakewood Ranch, Florida. I chose to conduct all interviews after the completion of their final exam on Wednesday, December 7th.
Figure 6. Single case data analysis of Emma’s responses to each research question.
The final class involved Olivia’s group presentation of a menu item designed for an up-scale resort restaurant in Sarasota. Her competitive nature came out during this assignment. Olivia and her partner were very creative and delivered a unique experience to the professional panel judging their menu item. I remember the wonderful feedback they got from the panel.

After Olivia’s team cleaned up their station, I invited her into the office for the interview. I asked her if he needed any water or coffee. We then sat down in the small office just down a short hallway from the kitchens. I explained I was recording on two devices to be safe and followed this with the IRB consent description. I made it clear I was not interested in evaluating her culinary techniques, but was wanting to listen to her shared experiences and opinions about the course she had just completed.

It was refreshing to hear Olivia’s stories. She brought up some critical points I had not heard from the other students yet. I came to realize how observant she was throughout her learning experience in the class. From her shared experiences, it was clear she had a cerebral understanding about the entire 15 weeks. Her recall on specific answers was impressive and she went into great detail. Olivia’s experience in the industry was obvious and she was constantly connecting the class activities back to the hospitality industry.

**Olivia’s response to research question one.** Olivia mentioned she was recently talking with another student who was going to be taking this class in the Spring. This student asked her what she thought about this course. She described the class by saying, “I told her it was hands-on and you actually feel like you’re learning something here rather than something you just need a grade on” (Olivia, 11-12).
She compared the class to other more traditional classes she had taken and seemed to prefer the learn-by-doing opposed to the formal lecture.

The whole class had spent hands-on, it's been fabulous. I've had too many classes where you sit there and the teacher is reading the book to you and I'm like I could have done that myself. And you don't remember any of it and somebody is falling asleep in the back so this class keeps you interested. (Olivia, 380-388)

One of the early questions during the interview involved showing Olivia 11 individual index cards, which had culinary techniques and skills written on each of them. All of these were inside the class’s curriculum. Olivia agreed all of the techniques and skills were part of the Introduction to Food Production curriculum. I asked if she could think of any others and Olivia said she could not. The 11 cards included the following culinary techniques and skills: cooking techniques, knife skills, sanitation methods, basic bread preparation, vinaigrette technique, kitchen speak, mise en place, team work skills, business knowledge, recipe creation/development, and communication skills.

She describe the class on being a good place to learn kitchen organization skills. Olivia mentioned learning the important French culinary term, mise en place, which had been echoed by every student so far during the interviews.

When we were practicing for the [up-scale resort] project the other day and my fish was overcooked it was because everything I needed wasn't there. When I started my mise en place it wasn't done properly. Today they said the fish was really good but that's because everything was done properly and laid out and done in the proper order. So that's key. (Olivia, 101-105)

The class taught students how to breakdown the cost of a recipe and how to make it profitable for a business. Olivia found this to be helpful and relevant to the job she has.

I know how to work in a kitchen and I know how to work in a restaurant. I know how to deal with people but when you get down into what it is going to cost
you . . . how you can save the most money, why it’s worth spending a little more on quality and then where all that goes and how to cost it out was . . . I found that very, very informative and helpful in this class. (Olivia, 139-144)

Olivia valued the skill of communication and mentioned how this was an important part of the class. Her candor when talking about communication was powerful. She seemed to be speaking from experience and even put the palms of her hands on her face when explaining how everything could go wrong if communication was unsuccessful.

Nothing gets done if people don’t [puts hands on face] . . . it falls apart. Without it, if people don’t talk to each other and don’t know what the other person is doing, something doesn’t get done or something get’s doubled and wasted, it’s ridiculous. (Olivia, 84-86)

So if you’re not communicating with people you’re working with, the rest of it, it’s all going to fall apart. (Olivia, 199-200)

Olivia explained how communication was connected to profit in a restaurant. She understood how miscommunication led to wasting food product. The course shared professional kitchen terminology, which is in place to make communication more efficient and consistent. Olivia proudly stated, “I did learn quite a bit of French in this class but that's key” (Olivia, 100-101). Simple words stood for important bits of information important to communication between cooks and servers.

I learned that sautéing means jumping in French again, but it was basic, it depends on what you're doing, how it's done. You can't say you're going to bake something if you're sautéing . . . somebody is not going to know what we're talking about which goes back to communication, same with the kitchen speak. If you don’t know what 86 means then you’re going to go hand it and tell the customer you have it and that's just going to cause problems for you. So, you've got to know what everybody is saying in there but it’s kind of neat how its own language has evolved. (Olivia, 109-117)

Olivia realized how many of the cooking techniques were more than just single recipes. The chef instructor would encourage the students to think outside the box and
be creative once they learned the basic technique. This allowed Olivia to discover the endless amount of versions there could be with a foundational vinaigrette and bread techniques.

We found out just exactly how simple and basic bread preparation is and how you can build from there and then go into different things, same with the vinaigrette. This basic little technique can build into a bunch of different things. (Olivia, 148-151)

The group work completed throughout the class involved employing critical industry skills such as: exploring, organizing, teamwork, communication, and compromise. Olivia noted having to work as a team in a group is something you cannot escape. She shared how the class forced her to develop the skills above.

But again, that’s [group work] . . . so vital because how many jobs do you do especially in hospitality where you’re the only person working on this one thing. It doesn’t happen. (Olivia, 471-473)

You might like it spicy, but that’s a bit much or that’s too sweet or something like that. So, working as a group is vital if you’re going to be any kind of success out in the real world. (Olivia, 483-485)

Olivia believed all of the group activities including the final product worked out great. She described how she was happy with the overall learning experience.

I think this works smooth. We were all at little groups for different things and we had to do all throughout which helped when it came down to the final project. I think it all culminated perfectly. I really enjoyed this class. (Olivia, 502-505)

Olivia appreciated the hands-on format of the class and shared how she felt about traditional lecture classes and hands-on lab classes. She pointed out how the hospitality major was unique to other majors because of the industry’s focus on service and doing. Olivia described the Introduction to Food Production class as having a simultaneous style of delivery. I believe she meant it was helpful to have two modes of learning delivered at the same time. The chef instructor would briefly lecture on
something, while often demonstrating the technique at the same time. This was
sometimes followed by students duplicating what the chef did and receiving the chef’s
critique simultaneously.

Again, all traditional classrooms just get redundant and people just stopped
paying attention to it. Structure and certain policies might fit in accounting or
something like that but that’s not the way hospitality works. So the fact that there
was no [long] lecture . . . I mean he gave us a little block of instruction on how to
use the knives and this is what’s expected. When it’s hands-on, he can teach
and talk as we’re doing it like an on-the-job type of deal. So you don’t have just
the boring lectures.

So it’s not like it’s structured out with a formal lecture time: “Okay, now
we’re going to do what we said.” It’s all done simultaneously. So it’s much easier
to—you can have a lecture and then say, “Okay, go do it.” Like if you’re in
chemistry class and you’re going to blow something up because you don’t
remember what was just said. But if you’re teaching and talking as the students
are doing what you’re saying, again, you’ve got much more retention. It sticks in
your head. (Olivia, 738-756)

Olivia enjoyed the connection to industry during her recipe development project.
She mentioned the contacts at the [up-scale resort] were approachable, which made
her feel more like an equal. Olivia observed the teamwork at the resort in real time and
claimed it was better than just listening to a lecture.

To actually be able to go in there and see how it worked was just fabulous . . .
they were great because I had their business card, they were open, I’ve talked to
them a couple of times in different areas where we ran into them. (Olivia,
520-524)

She described the valuable connections with the hospitality industry as an activity
which provided important feedback. The back and forth dialogue with hospitality
professionals meant a lot to her.

Feedback was number one. You can’t get that from a video. Instead, for you to
be able to communicate with them and ask some ideas about stuff off of them, or
present them something and have them give you instant feedback. It’s
immeasurable.
We’re essentially working with industry pros right? . . . our professors were working with people who have done this for a living and do it on a weekly basis already. So I think just being able to talk to people and get some feedback was good. (Olivia, 546-558)

**Olivia’s response to research question two.** During each interview, I asked the students to rank all of the 11 different culinary techniques and skills they had participated in during the class. I instructed them to rank the top six index cards based on the importance for their future in the industry. Olivia was methodical about this task. Eventually, she began moving the cards around and ended with the following top six: (1) communication skills, (2) teamwork skills, (3) kitchen speak, (4) business knowledge, (5) sanitation skills, and (6) cooking methods. (1 = most important, 6 = least important)

Olivia was no stranger to teamwork in a professional restaurant business. Her many years in the industry helped her realize the benefit of doing group work in the classroom. Olivia shared her thoughts on the challenging class project, and noted how it helped prepare students for the real world.

So while it’s hard to have a group project, when you go into the real world, nine times out of ten you’re working with a group. You have to be able to do it. So you have to know how to pick up for other people, not let it get to you. So teamwork is essential if it’s going to run smooth. (Olivia, 175-178)

She appreciated the hands-on labs and especially the real events held at the CIL where her classmates had to participate and help manage the event. Olivia agreed these type of activities taught multiple skills, exposed them to the industry, and made them more confident.

We do not just sit there and learn how to make bread, but you’re actually going to through the whole meal and you’re giving it to people. So you’re learning how to serve it, how to interact with different types of guests. (Olivia, 392-395)
Olivia had much to say about the real events held at the CIL. She believed having students work the events was better than role playing, because you were exposed to real guests and real product. She admits mistakes were made, but also believed this is what helped her classmates truly understand the pressures and demands of the real world. Olivia also mentioned how the student supported events help her retain what was being learned in class.

You can have a little role playing thing where people are pretending and either you’re uncomfortable or you goof around, it doesn’t give you the actual. But this one gives you a chance to make mistakes and fix them. (Olivia, 405-409)

The benefit of hands-on is first of all you’re going to remember it. You don’t [always] remember what you were taught or read last week in that class or that lecture; there might be one key point . . . but you retain that information [in hands-on]. You actually do it so it gives you a chance to make some mistakes, learn how to correct it, how to actually deal with people and get some real world experience. It’s just more interesting and more fun. When it’s more fun, you retain it. (Olivia, 422-427)

She recalled how the connection with industry professionals was a way to expose her to the real world. Olivia also found herself gaining more confidence because these activities took the mystique out of what was once intimidating.

You can watch and see how to do it but to see someone who’s already a success, I don’t see that you can get there [without it] . . . . So it takes a little bit of mystique out of this chef in this big hat in the back of kitchen that you see through a window. (Olivia, 573-580)

Again, I think it takes away the mystique. I think you just—anytime we start a new job or new experience, you’re going to be scared going into it. So when you can be eased into it and see what it’s like then you know you can do it. It makes it more attainable and real. (Olivia, 603-606)

After I graduate . . . you’re stressed because you’ve got a whole new life change. So this actually gives you an inside look. (Olivia, 610-612)

The industry partner encounters were included in the curriculum to help students envision what reality is in the busy world of restaurants and hotels. Olivia, already an
experienced restaurant professional, saw the value of these event and resort encounters. She commented how the visit to these places were helpful in creating a vision for possible employment. It let her know what was required and what she might be getting into if she worked in these types of positions in the future.

You don’t want to be just stuck into something you don’t want to do and that’s the way a lot of things are. You’ve got the job, you need to keep the job, you’re stuck there. So this gives you an idea of—or there might be a skill you didn’t know you had. (Olivia, 624-628)

The events were great. It’s nice to interact with people. I’m going out and setting out for the Food & Wine Festival, getting out there and working with the community I think is really key. You really get a taste of what you’re going to be doing on the outside. (Olivia, 793-796)

From an operational point of view, Olivia saw the value in what the class exposed students to. She had a new understanding of not only professional kitchen techniques but also in what culinary skills to look for if she ever had to hire a kitchen staff.

It’s very helpful if you want to go into management and to know what to look for in people you hire. So it’s really been helpful in knowing like the certain types of cuts and like I said in one of my things [her journal] auditioning a chef, I’ve never thought of it that way. (Olivia, 29-32)

Olivia shared areas where she felt successful during the 15 weeks. She believed having good communication skills help during group work. Olivia proudly admitted how she became successful with cooking in the class.

I was pretty good with the cooking methods. I think I did good with that and learned how to do the different things . . . how to sauté properly without throwing it on the floor. My dogs aren’t happy about that. (Olivia, 303-309)

She surprised herself by finding out how good she was at researching and creating new recipes: “I was very successful I think with my recipe creation which isn’t something I normally do, so it was nice to get into that one” (Olivia, 316-317). Olivia then began to think about what she was not successful with. It took her a second, but
she suddenly shared the story below. Admitting her mistake, she also noted how the failure gave her a chance to improve on her organization and to use the critical culinary term *mise en place* once again. She began to start thinking like a chef.

I know what it was, I didn't read my recipe properly and I used tablespoon instead of teaspoon. So that makes a difference. So paying attention to detail which I'm usually pretty good at goes back to military thing I think or just an OCD thing. I had to go back and try to fix it and change it all, which is where the organization . . . . This is where the *mise en place* comes in. I have to tend to—I need a teaspoon of this, I throw that in, and a teaspoon of that, then I go back and go “oh, I was suppose to mix these together instead of those together”, so you have to have it all set out in the order it goes in. So I've learned to lay it out and coordinate it a little better rather than just going down the recipe list before I follow the directions, part of the ingredient list. (Olivia, 337-345)

Olivia gained a lot of confidence from the recipe creation project. Admitting she did not think she was good at creating new recipes, Olivia appreciated how the project forced her to critically think and make strides in this area. She was proud of her group's dish and with her successes with creating new flavors.

I have never felt that I was very good at pulling flavors out or figuring out what flavors go with what, but this whole Ritz thing was awesome. I mean I've never actually—I mean I've done it at home with Thanksgiving dinner, I'd go with traditions and I know how to do it well. So it's kind of fun, you come up with something completely new like my grapes—my stuffed grapes and so I'm proud of my stuffed grapes. (Olivia, 164-169)

Olivia found it hard to point out a specific most memorable moment and described the course as a holistic learning experience with tangible results.

The Ritz of course is going to be the obvious one because we just did it, plus I think I'm getting Alzheimer's, I can't remember back that far. I don’t know, I just think each little class had its own little thing—like what we did with the bread or what we did with the vinaigrette and you saw something tangible from what you were taught. So I think each little experience was awesome on its own. I can’t think that there was one major moment. (Olivia, 786-791)

**Olivia’s response to research question three.** Many hands-on kitchen labs were conducted throughout the semester and were connected to real event needs at
the CIL or were completed in tangent with the groups’ recipe development project.

Olivia communicated the amount of hands-on labs during the semester were sufficient and indicated modifications were not needed. She believed the size of the student groups were good and the student/teacher ratio was acceptable.

Olivia appreciated the existing connections to industry professionals throughout the semester and reminded me about something the chef instructor said at the beginning of the semester.

He had mentioned at the beginning of the semester . . . [a possible trip] to a food distribution center to see where all these [products] come from, to see what all goes into it. Or maybe considering right here on the gulf . . . going to the farmer’s market and pricing out things or going to a fish market to see the difference between the stuff you get and the freezer at the grocery store . . . what truly fresh is and what quality is. I think some field trips would be great because I would love to see how a food distribution center works. (Olivia, 591-597)

The course used a textbook and other culinary resources during the semester. Students had the option of purchasing a hard copy or the online version of the textbook but it was not mandatory since copies of recipes were distributed each day. Olivia mentioned she did not believe the textbook was needed but suggested adding a glossary of kitchen terms to the course.

I know we don’t have a textbook which I like but there needs to be some sort of glossary or something because he [chef] started out with some terms so quickly that I have no idea how it was spelled or exactly what he said. So if there was a glossary or a web page that everybody can be referred to, or maybe even one class that says, “These are culinary terms we’re going to be using . . . and what they mean.” I wouldn’t say give people a test on them but maybe once in a while throw out and say, what’s the term for this position, what’s the term for what I just did. I told you before . . . it moves really quick. (Olivia, 434-442)

Olivia admired the entire physical layout of the CIL and felt everything inside the facility was ergonomically sound. She also believed there was no need for any other equipment.
I love it . . . It looks like a lab but incorporating the chandeliers and the fact that we have events here . . . it’s sterile but it didn’t feel sterile. You’re still working in a beautiful environment. I love the Tuscan kitchen. Now I know what my kitchen will look like. But all the little touches instead of just I’ve worked in professional kitchens that are just concrete with stainless and there you go. So I like the environment, you feel like you’re in the upper echelon . . . it’s a higher class. (Olivia, 643-655)

To provide Olivia’s experiences, Figure 7 illustrates Olivia’s responses to the interview questions and linked to the research questions for this study.

**Case Five: Mason**

A comment during the interview that I believe explains Mason’s experiences best was:

It’s like building a house I guess. I mean, you can either look at it while it’s sitting on paper, or kind of go out and see it. It’s more—seeing something before you do it. (Mason, 573-575)

**General background.** Mason had an incredible amount of hospitality experience for his age. He started out as a young teenager working in a sorority house where he assisted with food and beverage duties. Learning the service industry at an early age prepared him for positions in other restaurants. He had worked mostly for corporate companies and currently worked at a steakhouse chain restaurant for the past 14 years.

Mason said he enjoyed the fast-paced, ever changing restaurant environment. He believed his experience in the industry was important but understood the value of a degree. One of Mason’s future goals was to travel the world working on a cruise line. He also had long term goal of eventually owning his own restaurant and shared he started out as a business major.
Figure 7. Single case data analysis of Olivia’s responses to each research question.
**Interview session.** Mason was in the mid-day class on Thursdays starting at 11:00am. The class was held at the Culinary Innovation Lab in Lakewood Ranch, Florida. I chose to conduct all interviews for this section after the completion of their final exam on Wednesday, December 7th.

The final class involved Mason’s group presentation of a menu item designed for an up-scale resort restaurant in Sarasota. Before this interview, he shared with me how he was not happy with the final recipe flavor. However, he said he enjoyed the overall experience with his group. Shortly after this interview, he would find out the panel’s opinion of his group’s performance was good. Mason was happy to hear this.

After Mason’s team cleaned up their station, I invited him into the office for the interview. I asked him if he needed any water or coffee. We then sat down in the small office just down a short hallway from the kitchens. I explained I was recording on two devices to be safe and followed this with the IRB consent description. I made it clear I was not interested in evaluating his culinary techniques, but was wanting to listen to his shared experiences and opinions about the course he had just completed.

I had various conversations with Mason throughout the semester and found him to be unfocused at times. He would converse with sporadic thoughts not relevant to the conversation. I was not sure if this was nerves or his natural demeanor. During the interview, he seemed to communicate more effectively when talking about his experiences. I wondered if he was just relieved to have the semester come to an end. I know he worked a full-time job while in school.

**Mason’s response to research question one.** Mason described the class as being a basic culinary course, which included a lot of kitchen basics he had known.
However, he appreciated being able to practice more with the basic techniques and recipes. Mason believed the class’s objective was to get students to become “more confident in the kitchen . . . just confidence through anything” (Mason, 18-19).

Definitely a different type of learning experience, not a formal sitting class where you just kind of listen to somebody speak the whole time. It’s more hands-on, it’s more culinary approach. (Mason, 6-8)

Plenty of knife skills, plenty of knife safety techniques, that’s also falls into the kitchen speak. (Mason, 232-233)

Yeah, I mean I had the basics on it but it was definitely a good—like a refresh, sharpening knives, handling knives, and traveling with a knife. (Mason, 239-240)

Definitely a lot of development on recipes. I learned quite a bit on that . . . what did we do, just covered so many things. I mean just a variety of it. (Mason, 248-250)

One of the early questions during the interview involved showing Mason 11 individual index cards, which had culinary techniques and skills written on each of them. All of these were inside the class’s curriculum. Mason agreed all of the techniques and skills were part of the Introduction to Food Production curriculum. I asked if Mason could think of any others and he said he could not. The 11 cards included the following culinary techniques and skills: cooking techniques, knife skills, sanitation methods, basic bread preparation, vinaigrette technique, kitchen speak, mise en place, team work skills, business knowledge, recipe creation/development, and communication skills.

He mentioned he was happy to have learned much about the business side of a professional kitchen. Mason believed this was one of the most important topics in the class. I attributed this interest to his earlier focus on a business degree.

Probably the cost in revenue and all that kind of info on the portion of this. I definitely find it to be the most exciting, I mean yeah, cooking and—that’s all fun, that’s all scientifically amazing and rewarding. But I think that is where it needs to—that was where the emphasis was put. (Mason, 456-459)
Although Mason indicated teamwork skills were important to have in the class, he did question at times whether the entire class understood this, especially at the end of class. Sometimes Mason felt only he and a few other experienced students were cleaning up after class. This experience reinforced the importance of teamwork for him.

I mean, there were questionable times where I was like, “Really? Why are we doing—why are you doing this?” You know, team work . . . as in the whole class would be doing something in the kitchen and I would find myself and one other person at the end of the day cleaning up. It’s not exactly team work to work on that a little but that’s okay. That’s a lousy complaint but it’s still teamwork, a part of team work. It’s like side work at the end of your shift—to work at a restaurant or anywhere. (Mason, 303-315)

And then certain skills, team work. Everything is team work, you’re not going to find a restaurant, you’re not going to find a business that doesn’t work work without team work. (Mason, 429-431)

The group work completed throughout the class involved employing critical industry skills such as: exploring, organizing, teamwork, communication, and compromise. Mason appreciated how his group was able to work together and come to a consensus. He recognized the challenge of having people with differences of opinion, but noted he had an enjoyable time with his group.

I remember another one very specifically was—we were doing a—I don’t remember what the exact dish was. It was the Hawaiian coleslaw maybe or something about summer. Where we had a group and we had everybody doing something. Again, what’s team work, you’re doing this, we’re doing that, I'm doing this. That was a fun one—yeah. It was fun, it was definitely more group work but with a lot of hands on. Everything has been hands on in this class. (Mason, 619-628)

You know, it’s kind of—you just want the group as a whole to make a decision. You don’t want the executive decision of one person saying something. We had a group text message going on for the entire time and we would just bounce ideas back and forth between each other and finally everybody would go like, “Yeah, that sounds good.” Instead of one person to be like, “This is how it’s going, shut up and figure it out.” (Mason, 645-650)
I mean, we had group work almost every class, probably five to six weeks I believe . . . I think group work just takes time, you have to understand your group, if you keep—the thing is—I think you’re aligning with new people so everybody still got questions. Everybody’s always got a different answers but you want to just find that common interests. (Mason, 673-677)

Mason seemed to enjoy the hands-on setting of the class and discussed how he thought the activities and labs assisted him in learning the overall course material. He suggested maybe the benefits of his learning experience went beyond just the confines of the classroom.

*Mason’s response to research question two.* During each interview, I asked the students to rank all of the 11 different culinary techniques and skills they had participated in during the class. I instructed them to rank the top six index cards based on the importance for their future in the industry. Mason started to move the cards around but then questioned whether he was doing it right. I told him there was no right answer and it was his opinion. Eventually, he ended with the following top six: (1) business knowledge, (2) cooking methods, sanitation, vinaigrette, recipe development, bread, and knife skills all together, (3) teamwork skills, communication skills, kitchen skills all together, (4) serving skills, (5) mise en place, and (6) plating skills. (1 = most important, 6 = least important)

Mason described how the chef instructor conducted kitchen labs with the intention of turning them into *professionals*. The techniques and recipes were basic but useful and relevant to the restaurant industry. Learning the proper industry methods was something Mason appreciated.

I definitely remember we would all spread around the stove and watch the chef cook some crazy creation but that was—I don’t know if you would call it more hands on. Yeah, we were definitely dicing carrots or celery, or doing things like
that. He would walk by and show us, guide us, make us professionals... we had a learning experience there. (Mason, 554-558)

That was probably the best bread presentation day I've ever had in my life, unbelievable. I mean, just the kneading and this and that and the real—almost like, you kind of like make love to the bread basically. You don't do it nothing half-assed. (Mason, 205-208)

Yeah, I think I did well on the basic bread preparation. Just because of this learning from such a—well-renowned guys. It's a good memory, yeah, definitely a good memory. (Mason, 471-476)

We definitely did a nice little discussion on that just basic vinaigrettes, lemon vinaigrette, balsamic vinaigrette. What else did we do? But it was very simple, very basic. It was nothing crazy, it was nothing out of this world or whatever. This is very simple, delicious vinaigrette. (Mason, 179-182)

Mason gained a lot from the hands-on lab sessions and believed it was a way to build confidence in a professional kitchen, which would prepare him for the real world.

Personal gain within the kitchen? ... a little bit more confidence when you look at a knife or when you—a piece of carrot, or a carrot stick—should I know what I could do with that. That's not just a carrot stick and I can make dices or whatever and know the French names for them. (Mason, 563-567)

The industry partner encounters were included in the curriculum to help students envision reality in the busy world of restaurants and hotels. Mason had a good amount of experience already and had no problem connecting with these activities. He believed the best practices he observed during the [up-scale resort] tour applied to work and life in general. Visiting real hospitality professionals was helpful to Mason. He indicated this experience broadened his mind and made him consider other possibilities.

[On the tour] all you did was hear them say, ladies and gentlemen, serving ladies and gentleman, kind of one of those things. That's—and that goes beyond the resort, I mean it can [be used] every day.

That's kind of like an everyday thing. I mean, everyday, you're surrounded by teamwork and business knowledge... it just all incorporates into one. Now that's kind of just something you take with your every day, form the moment you wake up. We get to see more experience. I mean, it's like traveling the world
instead of staring at a book in front of you. I think it broadens your mentality in a way. (Mason, 757-772)

He shared how the experience with industry professionals at the [up-scale resort] was inspiring and may have changed his career outlook. He felt lucky to have them share their philosophy on the service industry.

I would definitely say the [up-scale resort] guys put a little bit more emphasis on . . . how you go about your daily life. Maybe that does change my future plan or something but I think it’s definitely more inspiring in a learning moment to sit there and just listen to them speak about how they approach every day. (Mason, 732-735)

Mason had some memorable learning moments during the semester. He felt the cost control activities helped prepare him for the industry and found these exciting. He claimed this was relevant information for understanding the real world.

I was successful because—yeah, it’s very easy, I kind of just saw it like this. I could just break it down and put—what category where it needed to go and how much basically . . . what the 4 ounces of chicken were—what’s the ending plate price could run on. (Mason, 463-466)

Even when Mason was not at first successful during a lab he commented it helped him understand the technique in more detail. He shared how the vinaigrette lab was a struggle at first, but he eventually began to understand the cooking technique through trial and error.

You know, it’s an easy thing to do but you still have to know the ratio and you still have to tweak it to your interest and somebody else’s interest. So it’s not something that just comes easy. I understood it, absolutely, it’s just a matter of finding what takes what—taste. (Mason, 517-525)

When I asked what experiences he considered the most memorable, Mason said making bread with the visiting chef. He recalled how the chef help guide his hands properly on the dough. Mason smiled and said he noticed there was not one person unhappy on that day. The entire class was smiling. He also had strong memories of
hanging out with the staff at the [up-scaled resort]. The industry connections in the curriculum made a strong impression on him.

Probably the [up-scale resort] too. I mean anything that was—got you up out of your seat, really, is the most memorable. Not many people can say they've made fresh bread or sat around the [up-scale resort] and had fun with that. (Mason, 950-961)

**Mason’s response to research question three.** Many hands-on kitchen labs were conducted throughout the semester and were connected to real event needs at the CIL or were completed in tangent with the groups’ recipe development project. Mason communicated the amount of hands-on labs during the semester were useful and recommended an additional lab on international flavors.

I’d add . . . maybe just some other type of dish. Maybe another—what’s the word I’m looking for, maybe a dish from another country. Something ethnic, why not? Although we did have some of that from Chef Sai. I think it would be cool. I mean, they’re totally different ingredients—it’s not even different ingredients mostly but it’s just a different approach how—just to broaden your horizon I guess. (Mason, 588-608)

He believed the size of the student groups were good and the student/teacher ratio was acceptable. The physical design and layout of the facility impressed him and he described it as being “on a stage of—in front of 10,000 people” (Mason, 787).

Mason felt the amount of time spent in each class was sufficient and all equipment needs were met. However, Mason mentioned he wished his class would have visited the pastry department during the visit to the [up-scale resort]. Although the in-class labs covered kitchen basics, it did not focus much time on desserts.

Maybe something in the bakery department, I don’t know, I'm not a baker so I don’t know. I just think that would be a little bit fun, I mean making chocolates and sweets. (Mason, 746-748)
To provide Mason’s experiences, Figure 8 illustrates Mason’s responses to the interview questions and linked to the research questions for this study.

Figure 8. Single case data analysis of Mason’s responses to each research question.

- Believed class taught kitchen basics in a hands-on setting to give confidence.
- Agreed all 11 cards were part of curriculum.
- Felt emphasis was put on business side.
- Teamwork skills were reinforced during class during groups activities.
- Believed teamwork was critical to success in the real world.
- Enjoyed collaborating with group but realized it was a challenge.
- Believed the hands-on nature of class helped him understand the material.
- Felt confidence gained in kitchen extended to outside of class and life.

- Suggested an additional lab on international flavors.
- Wanted a lab on desserts.
- Believed all other labs were useful, relevant, and time spent sufficient.
- Felt he was on stage in professional kitchen and physical design great.
- Believed physical design was good, ratio good, equipment good.
- Commented student/chef ratio was good.

- Believed business knowledge learned in class was most important to future.
- Felt the chef was attempting to make them think like professionals.
- Felt hands-on labs taught by pros was relevant to industry.
- Gained confidence in professional kitchen.
- Believed industry connections helped in understanding of real world.
- Felt visits to industry changed his career plans.
- Learned technique through trial and error.
- Most memorable moments were with bread day and on resort visit.
Case Six: Ava

A comment during the interview that I believe explains Ava’s experiences best was:

It’s just like, “That’s what I made.” I look like a chef the way I plated it and I feel like accomplished. I feel . . . “Yeah, I could be a chef if I want to. I got this.” (Ava, 779-781)

General background. Ava was a junior in the hospitality school and had an apparent knack for cleanliness. She took her education serious and often was the first student to arrive. Ava was a junior in the hospitality program and had little experience in the industry. She currently worked at a large retail store, but did complete a six month internship in main entrance operations at a popular them park.

Ava had a desire to work in the event industry after graduation. She was hoping to learn the event business in a hotel environment and had a desire to someday own her own wedding planning business.

Interview session. Ava was in the mid-day class on Thursdays starting at 11:00am. The class was held at the Culinary Innovation Lab in Lakewood Ranch, Florida. I chose to conduct all interviews for this section after the completion of their final exam on Wednesday, December 7th.

The final class involved Ava’s group presentation of a menu item designed for an up-scale resort restaurant in Sarasota. This was hard to fathom knowing her level of kitchen experience just 14 weeks prior. I remember being present at the knife skill lab where she was having issues holding a knife correctly. She had come a long and now seemed as though she was enjoying the frantic kitchen environment.
After Ava’s team cleaned up their station and listened to the panel’s final critique, I invited her into the office for the interview. I asked Ava if she needed any water or coffee. We then sat down in the small office just down a short hallway from the kitchens. I explained I was recording on two devices to be safe and followed this with the IRB consent description. I made it clear I was not interested in evaluating her culinary techniques, but was wanting to listen to her shared experiences and opinions about the course she had just completed.

During the interview, she shared stories with great detail. Ava took good notes in class and also had longer than average journals each week. She seemed energetic through the entire session and was eager to share all of her experiences. At the close of the interview, Ava admitted to being sad the class was over.

**Ava’s response to research question one.** Ava shared how the class taught her kitchen basics. She described the learning process involved constant supervision with a chef walking around critiquing their work. Ave noted each class was different and they got to work with a variety of product.

I would tell them it’s really like you learn a lot. Because I never knew how to hold a knife properly, and when they go around and they teach us how to cut the Julienne and dice, it was really cool learning the different types and also how to hold it. I was almost chopping off my finger the way I was holding the knife before. (Ava, 13-18)

Yeah. We learned how to chop, dice—I even learned how to devein a prawn. That was a weird and interesting experience. It was cool though. And cooking methods was—I liked it. Like I like—there were—each class there was a different event going on and we’d be able to just pick out a random thing we’ve never done before and make it. And you’d always have the chef instructor and Chef Sai. (Ava, 73-86)
One of the early questions during the interview involved showing Ava 11 individual index cards, which had culinary techniques and skills written on each of them. All of these were inside the class’s curriculum. Ava agreed all of the techniques and skills were part of the Introduction to Food Production curriculum. I asked if she could think of any others and she said she could not. The 11 cards included the following culinary techniques and skills: cooking techniques, knife skills, sanitation methods, basic bread preparation, vinaigrette technique, kitchen speak, mise en place, team work skills, business knowledge, recipe creation/development, and communication skills.

Her 15 weeks included getting to learn how to make bread from scratch with expert chefs. Ava enjoyed the hands-on format of the course and claimed learning one simple technique allowed her to imagine other possible variations.

Well, my favorite was the bread baking, definitely. I liked how we were all—we actually had a professional come in like of the bread, and he showed us how to do it and they made it look really easy. (Ava, 390-393)

Yeah. And it was wonderful. Like, he showed us how to do the little braids in them and we got to even roll them out, do some braids. It was cool to see the different types of bread we could make. (Ava, 397-400)

Comparing it to traditional classroom experiences, Ava believed the hands-on format in this class forced students to engage with the curriculum. She noted how a lot of students in other classes are distracted with other things unrelated to the class.

I think it makes us pay attention more because if we’re just sitting in a class listening, some people are texting, they’re on their laptops doing something else. They never really learn anything. They’re just pretending to learn. So, I think hands on is very good, very interactive. (Ava, 429-433)

Ava indicated the class encourage organization, which led to more success in the kitchen during labs.
Organization, oh, that's always good. It's good to like be able to clean up after yourself while you're still cooking so that you don't get cluttered. Because I noticed when you get cluttered or you get dysfunctional and it's really bad. (Ava, 112-119)

She learned the key methods and protocols of communicating in a busy kitchen. Many of these simple phrases are standard throughout professional kitchens. Ava realized how the simple, consistent phrases were effective at the CIL.

Communication is always good because if someone's—I learned when you're walking with a knife and you're going behind someone, you have to say, “Behind you,” because you just got to be alert . . . . Very good communication. And also, like if you're cooking something and you need someone to take it out, it's good to be on the same page. (Ava, 129-138)

The group work completed throughout the class involved employing critical industry skills such as: exploring, organizing, teamwork, communication, and compromise. During the recipe development project, Ava described the group activity involving creative thinking and the benefit it had on the final flavor of her group’s dish. She admitted once her group was able to decide on main objectives, the brainstorming process was enjoyable. Successful collaboration was important to problem solving.

The recipe, that was the funniest thing. It was kind of—also goes with teamwork. Because with my team, it was hard for us to like in the beginning to get on the same page for what we wanted to make, but once we got the idea then we started to roll a bit. And we would bounce ideas off because sometimes, we'd say, “Oh, we have this coleslaw,” and it's all orange and lemon juice but it was so acidic and we don't know how to fix this. But eventually, we found out that we got honey Dijon and the honey in it made it sweeter. So, it was good to bounce ideas off to each other. (Ava, 140-149)

Ava admitted to being stubborn with the choice of recipe she wanted to create with her group. Originally, Ava wanted to play it safe. However, she shared how this class forced her to learn how to compromise.

Oh, that was hard. Teamwork, I'm very [stubborn]—when I like something, I stay with my idea, so it was hard to kind of bend a little bit. And at first, I was
really . . . it was hard because we didn’t get to choose what we were making, we just got assigned by picking out of the hat and I really wanted to do dessert because I had ideas all over the place. (Ava, 201-206)

Ava’s admitted to being unsure with many of her partner’s initial flavor ideas. However, she shared how the class activity forced her to keep an open mind. Ava’s candid story below describes the final payoff.

I liked that I was able to listen to her in trying that. And she also was a big part in helping us with the coleslaw because we couldn’t figure out how to get it any less acidic.

The next week she came in, she’s said, “I found a recipe for coleslaw that has honey and Dijon and that twang, which might get it a little sweeter.” So we tried it out the next time we got together and it brought everything together in the dish. That was the sauce that did it and she found it. It was good to have someone to communicate with about it. (Ava, 485-494)

Ava shared the class put her group in a situation where they had to listen, converse, and eventually compromise about the final flavors. She notes combining different personalities in a group project is not easy. However, Ava confidently said their final product could have never happened without the group effort.

I think it’s just being able to communicate with people because sometimes you’re not as good with talking to different personalities. And when you’re put in a group and you’re forced to work together, it makes you learn to deal with different personalities, be able to—what is it? When you let them have their ways. Compromise, there we go. You’re able to compromise more with them and be able to create a dish that’s part of all three of your personalities.

If it was just you, you wouldn’t have like—I wouldn’t have had the colors. I wouldn’t have had the coleslaw. But together, our whole team basically made a dish with all of us in it. (Ava, 500-519)

Ava indicated the hands-on format matched her learning style. She said having to recall a hands-on technique was easy because it was a haptic learning experience. Ava’s mentioned she struggled sometimes in traditional classes where it was strict lecture.
I think that’s really great because if you ever want to make [the recipe] again, you know the steps and you’ve been through it all. You don’t have to guess, “Oh, I wonder how I make this bread.” No, you’ve seen it, you’ve touched it, you’ve made it—and just you’ve got it down. (Ava, 417-422)

I noticed Ava often stayed after class to help out with upcoming events in the evening even though it was not required. She seemed to enjoy the environment and felt at home in the CIL.

There was one time where I was left alone because my classmate had work and I was cleaning up the dishes, and there was an event going on too so I started to clean up those dishes but I didn’t have to. I did anyways because it was just fun to be there. With this class, I liked to come. I didn’t miss a single class. But my other classes, I’ve missed a few. (Ava, 790-795)

She described feeling welcome around the industry partners at the [up-scale resort] and appreciated their openness and candor. Ava said the tour gave her group inspiration because they were able to better understand the project’s objectives.

With the Ritz-Carlton, they were amazing. I loved being able to actually go to the Ritz-Carlton and get a tour of their restaurant, because I feel that gave us more inspiration for our dishes, because we were able to see what it looks like, how it felt. And then also I liked that they were actually able to take timeout and talk to us because we had some very high up [employees] talk to us. (Ava, 544-550)

Ava’s response to research question two. During each interview, I asked the students to rank all of the 11 different culinary techniques and skills they had participated in during the class. I instructed them to rank the top six index cards based on the importance for their future in the industry. Ava started to move the cards around without too much hesitation. She ended with the following top six: (1) sanitation skills, (2) teamwork skills, (3) business knowledge, (4) mise en place, (5) communication, and (6) kitchen speak. (1 = most important, 6 = least important)

Before the class, she did not fully understand the number of costing variables connected to a restaurant business. Ava proclaimed the business knowledge topic on
costing was enlightening and she learned a great deal about what goes on in the mind of a chef or restaurant owner.

The costing issue, that was really—that was good to know about because like, I always wondered how restaurants base their menu items, because I’m like, “Oh my gosh, $11 for a piece of food, why?” But it was because they need to make the revenue off of it. (Ava, 151-155)

She thought the hands-on labs were essential for teaching students real world skills in the hospitality industry. In addition, she mentioned it was important for students to be exposed to all the different facets of hospitality. Ava pointed out the restaurant component is connected to almost every area of hospitality, therefore, knowing how a restaurant functions and how a chef manages a kitchen is essential.

I’d say since I’m in the hospitality field, it’s good to know all of the different fields that are in your area, so you can learn if you have interest in it and also so you can relate. If you’re owning a hotel or something and you have a restaurant, you need to know how to communicate with them, how to make sure they’re doing everything correctly. (Ava, 28-33)

I think a majority of students that are in the hospitality field need to have hands-on training because that’s how you learn in the field . . . being able to have a hands-on lab and be able to learn from it. (Ava, 414-417)

Her confidence with certain kitchen basics was improved through both the hands-on labs and the real events held at the CIL. Ava proudly shares this in the quote below:

At the beginning of the class, I was skeptical. I thought that it wouldn’t—it was just, “Oh, we’re helping out for these events,” whatever. But now that I finished the whole class and everything, I see how valuable certain things were, going back, learning the cuts and everything. When we were prepping, they’re like, “Do Julienne,” and I would think, “Oh, I know what that is. I got this.” If anyone says, “Do Julienne,” I can do that. (Ava, 613-619)

The recipe development project with the [up-scale resort] was another confidence builder. She valued the opportunity to connect with industry professionals and felt she matured over the 15-week semester.
Many of the learning experiences for Ava helped her see the reality of what it would be like working in the industry; the hard work it would take to make it in a competitive environment.

It definitely makes me more passionate about the field. I really appreciate cooking now. I appreciate it more. It really helps to learn how—if you are working in hospitality and they have the restaurant, it helps to know what they have to do on a daily basis, and the fact that they have to do all of these things, like the costing, they have to be on board, get everything cooked correctly . . . that was hard. (Ava, 599-605)

The connections with industry professionals gave Ava a chance to network. She understood the value of having her class work with the [up-scale resort], and this gave her confidence in a possible future with this resort.

We were able to get—I got a card from the [resort manager] . . . if we need help or anything, we can contact them. I liked that they were so open to being able to talk to us about our dishes and that we could go to them if we needed any help.

Well, it opens doors. It’s a great opening of a door because you can say, “Hey! I was from USF. I presented to you guys one time.” You have a better chance if you’ve already connected with them on a personal level, on a business level as well. (Ava, 550-566)

Ava did not have any hospitality industry experience coming into this class. However, as she shares below, her confidence in securing a job after graduation has improved because of her 15-week experience in the Introduction to Food Production class.

It’s nice to know that you feel like you’re on that level, because a lot of times when you’re looking for jobs, they’re like, “Oh, you have to have four years of experience.” We’re like, “What? How are we supposed to get that? We just got our degree. But we don’t have experience.” I feel like this gave us a lot of experience. We’re allowed to say, “Hey! I presented to the [up-scale resort]. I’ve prepped food. I know how to Julienne.” (Ava, 641-648)

She had become confident in many areas of the kitchen by the end of the semester. One of her weakest areas, knife skills, had become something she was
confident with. During the recipe development project, Ava discovered how much she enjoyed the challenge of cooking something outside of her comfort zone.

I really—I felt comfortable actually doing the cutting, like the different cuts because we started week one with Julienne, Brunoise. So when I was told, “Hey, you can cut the veggies,” I was like, “Awesome,” because I just love getting the slice just perfectly even. (Ava, 284-288)

I really enjoyed eating all the food . . . like being able to taste the food and I can cook now. I can make more food than just grilled cheese so it’s an accomplishment. (Ava, 5-8)

When we got assigned entrée, I feel like I grew more from doing something outside of my comfort zone because I was able to think about actually making an entrée . . . for someone which I probably would never do because I love sweets. I always stay in the sweet realm. (Ava, 206-211)

Ava admitted to gaining an incredible amount of confidence during the semester. She shared one of her most memorable moments was serving her final dish to the [upscale resort] judging panel. Their dish consisted of a pan-seared swordfish with a colorful slaw.

Definitely getting the coleslaw, like doing our final presentation, seeing it come together. I got a picture. I was so happy about it. It’s just like, “That’s what I made.” I look like a chef the way I plated it and I feel accomplished. I feel like, “Yeah, could be a chef if I want to.” I got this. (Ava, 777-781)

**Ava’s response to research question three.** Many hands-on kitchen labs were conducted throughout the semester and were connected to real event needs at the CIL or were completed in tangent with the groups recipe development project. Ava communicated the hands-on labs during the semester were useful, but recommended an additional lab on kitchen equipment operation. She said she observed a student struggling with lighting a kitchen stove top burner.

I would say just from seeing today, the oven in the kitchen area, like our main class area, there is—the stovetop, when you turn it on, you have to light it with a
lighter . . . So I would definitely suggest training in that a little bit if you’re going to use it, because I was really worried for him. (Ava, 718-724)

Ava commented on how during most labs each student was prepping different items. She indicated adding a few labs where every student was preparing the same item, because this would improve a student’s understanding of what was being executed. Ava also added how it might be helpful to have two students work on the same prep item, which would give better results at the end. She realized much of the food prep completed in the class was for an actual event, so this may not be realistic. Ava’s main critique was improving the overall understanding of a culinary technique by having everyone in the class participate in the same culinary experience.

I would definitely say with hands-on labs, whenever we prep something, it was always different things. I would say as a class, either have more than one person doing one task because sometimes, it was just me doing one thing and I was like, “I don’t know what I’m doing.” So I would say, have two people per task so they can work together to make it better which would kind of go into the group work . . . or have the whole class do the same task, but that’s not helpful to the event that we’re making. I would say maybe, add a class where we do something—we make something else all together, because we did the cutting, and then we did the bread and we did the vinaigrette, but I think there needs to be maybe one more class where you make something, maybe an entrée or something. (Ava, 439-453)

Ava confessed her struggles with the vinaigrette lab. She wanted a more precise recipe and more detailed feedback.

The vinaigrette, that was a hard one . . . I feel with the vinaigrette, you need certain specific amounts, and I’m a person that needs to see an exact amount. I need to measure the exact amount. And with the vinaigrette, it was more of a—when we got taught it, just go with how you feel and I was said to myself, “Oh no, I can’t”—I was couldn’t balance it. (Ava, 316-325)

She mentioned one occasion where she felt more instruction was needed. Ava felt as though she was expected to know what to do but she did not.
There was one time we were prepping like—I think in general when we got assigned each class for a different event to cook something. We weren’t given a lot of instruction on it. It was just kind of the go with the flow and Chef Gary would come around and tell us how to do it. But I felt like if you would have had like directions for us, it would have been easier to like get us all started at the same time. But it’s hard when you’re making so many different things to do it all at the same time. (Ava, 335-342)

Ava indicated how she had an interest in taking other culinary classes with hands-on labs. She was looking for classes with advanced techniques, which would show her how to prepare and present more professionally.

I wish there was another class, like a higher up class instead of just an entrée of food. Yeah, because I’d like to get into even more technical things, because I know there’s more than just Julienne and Brunoise. You can make various good dishes, like higher up, something like . . . Maybe like a grilling class, that’d be cool. Yes . . . So you can present classier dishes to the Ritz. (Ava, 806-824)

Ava said the physical layout of the facility was beautiful and the size of the groups and class were good. However, she had a comment about the line of sight during one class.

We had a class, and he played a video but when he played the video, it was only played on the screen’s—on one side and I was on the edge, in the corner and that TV had just a picture of the countertop. So I couldn’t see the TV without moving around the corner. (Ava, 698-702)

According to Ava, the noise level, and overall climate of the room was good. She appreciated having multiple rooms to choose from during the lab sessions.

Well, if ever got too loud, you can move into the other kitchen. So we just move in the other kitchen if it was too crowded or loud. I think it was great. I think your line of sight is great because there’s no wall on the table counter where you’re cooking. You can see onto the other side. You can see where the boards are. (Ava, 689-694)

To provide Ava’s experiences, Figure 9 illustrates Ava’s responses to the interview questions and linked to the research questions for this study.
**Figure 9.** Single case data analysis of Ava’s responses to each research question.
Case Seven: Madison

A comment during the interview that I believe explains Madison’s experiences best was:

I felt not only did I get to do it, *I was nervous about having to do it*, but once I accomplished it, I said to myself, “Oh, that wasn’t so bad.” And I was able to execute the idea and show Chef that I’m capable of ideas in that kind of setting. (Madison, 345-349)

**General background.** For not having much hospitality experience, Madison exuded a high level of confidence. A sophomore at USF, she was one of the youngest students in the study. Although having little industry experience, Madison was proud of her culinary and event stints with an international service organization in high school. This was a club she belonged to and it seemed to be her first introduction to hospitality. She also helped out at her church with food and beverage events. Madison shared with me her passion as a home baker and enjoyed the Introduction to Food Production class because it taught her some important foundational skills.

Madison was an admitted fanatic of a multinational mass media and entertainment conglomerate and talked about her dreams of someday working for one of the company’s theme parks. She had recently applied to their college program and was eager to make her dream a reality. A strong goal oriented individual, Madison had aspirations of working in their management or marketing divisions.

**Interview session.** Madison was in the mid-day class on Thursdays starting at 11:00am. The class was held at the Culinary Innovation Lab in Lakewood Ranch, Florida. I chose to conduct all interviews for this section after the completion of their final exam on Wednesday, December 7th.
The final class involved Madison’s group presentation of a menu item designed for an up-scale resort restaurant in Sarasota. Her group had come into the lab on off days to work on their final plate. They seemed organized and focused during this final day of class.

After Madison’s team cleaned up their station and listened to the panel’s final critique, I told her I would interview her in a couple of hours after the others. All of the participants were given a gift card to a sandwich shop next door. Instead of going to lunch, she decided to sit and study for her next final and wait for her interview session. At that time, I asked Madison if she needed any water or coffee. We then sat down in the small office just down a short hallway from the kitchens. I explained I was recording on two devices to be safe and followed this with the IRB consent description. I made it clear I was not interested in evaluating her culinary techniques, but was wanting to listen to her shared experiences and opinions about the course she had just completed.

At 20 years of age, Madison presented herself professionally and seemed very polished in her delivery. I believe her communication skills were excellent and she shared some powerful stories about her experience in the class. Madison had a recognizable passion for the hospitality industry.

**Madison’s response to research question one.** Madison described the class being imbedded in real culinary events. She discussed the basic kitchen skills taught during the semester and said she became accustomed to the pattern of activity.

I would explain first off how we prepare for events over here because that’s a huge part of the first half of the class. We always do the the basic stuff, all those little things that need to start before they can have the big event in here tonight or that kind of thing. And how it’s difficult because if you’ve never done those kinds of cuts or had to prepare this kind of foods then you don’t know what you’re doing. The method that we kind of had was . . . here is how it’s done, do it. It’s
easy to get used to it and once we start doing it, it’s awesome, so not to be afraid of that because I know that—when I first started on this class, I had a friend who was like, “Ooh, it’s kind of scary.” (Madison, 6-15)

One of the early questions during the interview involved showing Madison 11 individual index cards, which had culinary techniques and skills written on each of them. All of these were inside the class’s curriculum. Madison agreed all of the techniques and skills were part of the Introduction to Food Production curriculum. I asked if she could think of any others and she said she could not. The 11 cards included the following culinary techniques and skills: cooking techniques, knife skills, sanitation methods, basic bread preparation, vinaigrette technique, kitchen speak, mise en place, team work skills, business knowledge, recipe creation/development, and communication skills.

Madison said the class involved mostly prepping during labs or for events, but she also mentioned a time where a guest chef came in and they focused on bread. She appreciated the change.

Chef Daniel, yeah he was great. Having that bread day, just because it was our next break, because we have been doing a lot of the mise en place labs where we were preparing, and then he came in and we were able to just have a day of fun bread, and he was so charismatic and he had such a good time with us, and we -- he said, “Get in there. Use your hands, make the bread.” And that was just such a fun time. (Madison, 480-485)

She described the classroom as a comfortable learning space with a healthy environment for communication. According to Madison, the curriculum forced everyone to communicate and work as a team. Madison appreciated the feedback from the chef instructor and from her peers. She felt at home in the facility.

Obviously, the first couple of class, everybody was a little bit new and it was different, but once we got to know each other, it was easy and especially with the group work where we’re forced into communicating and working together on a
regular basis. We were able to be very comfortable and confident and ask
questions, and get answers and receive that feedback from each other, and it
wasn’t negative and I think everybody had good time. (Madison, 589-594)

Madison mentioned how the change from the traditional classroom with tests and
Powerpoint presentations was nice. She welcomed the hands-on learning method and
thought it was more natural and less forced. Madison shared how everyone learned at
their own pace and believed, in the end, her classmates acquired the same learning
objectives.

I think that doing the hands on work was so much better than like having a Power
Point in the test at the end of the week and stuff like that, because when you get
to work on it, and there’s no pressure, you’re being tested on this in two weeks,
you need to know it and all you do is rote memorization and it just flies the other
end when you’re over it.

When you get to do hands on stuff and there’s no pressure to have a test
done, and there’s no pressure to understand exactly what these words mean,
you’re able to retain it in your own way on your own time. I think that it’s better
because I came in the second week, and I remember what batonnet was . . . I
remember how to get those cuts, but somebody else didn’t. And then, by the end
of the course, they were able to grasp those concepts, because there was no
pressure to know it by week two.

It was—know it at your own time, understand what they mean and be able
to execute them when you can. I think it was a very comfortable environment in
order to grasp the concepts I think. (Madison, 673-689)

Madison shared that organization was a big part of the class. She noted mise en
place was “all we did for the first couple of weeks” (Madison, 202). This skill showed the
students how to set everything up before starting any recipe or activity, which was
essential in a professional kitchen.

We just would help prepare the basic things and I think that’s an essential part of
it too because it shows how to delegate your time and everything like that. In
management and working in a restaurant, you have to understand those aspects
of everything. So I think mise en place was a great aspect to this class too,
helping out with those events. (Madison, 206-210)
She shared how she knew the basics of costing out of a product, but claimed this was not the same as when you do it for a real event. Madison appreciated being able to use the basic costing theory on real events. This helped her truly understand the concept.

I understood the basics of taking just how much this ingredient cost and then . . . we’re going to use this much of it for this portion, so weigh them, we divide it, everything like that but actually having to do it when you would say, “Okay, we’re having this event and this is how much revenue we need to make and we need to up charge it and it still needs to be reasonable.” I think that was a great part of this class to have. Any aspect of hospitality, but especially for someone like me that wants to do management and needs to say, “We need to make this much money from our restaurant so we need to have these revenues come through.” (Madison, 185-194)

Madison described the importance of how the class used kitchen terminology, which was important to successful communication. Her own success, as well as her group’s, heavily depended upon successful communication.

Kitchen speak is important just in general because—I mean, I know . . . bain-marie, I knew those kinds of terms but having them be used in having to understand what somebody says, “get me a balloon whisk or get me, emulsify this for me”. You have to understand where that’s coming from and even in any aspect of hospitality, you need to be able to understand and decipher what they’re trying to get across. (Madison, 120-125)

Communication was super important especially when you’re working with your group during our presentation today. We had to—I would say to Chelsea, “Oh, I need you to get this for me and I need you to get this for me,” and if she didn’t know those kitchen terms or if she didn’t understand why I needed or something like that, then it was difficult and so being able to communicate in the kitchen is also an important thing. (Madison, 138-143)

She admitted to having doubts about the group project. In the beginning, she shared her reluctance to pair up with another student because she thought she would be more productive on her own.

I think I’m always afraid of group work because you can be confident in yourself more than you can be confident and relying on others for responsibilities and
coming up with ideas and you always just want to be independent so that you can do what you think is best. (Madison, 413-416)

The importance of teamwork was often stressed by Madison when she described the class. She observed how some of the other groups struggled. Fortunately, she had a successful team during the semester.

I know that there are some groups that didn’t have that but I was so grateful that I had a great partner like Chelsea and we were able to communicate well and work together and break—divide and conquer and it was awesome. (Madison, 196-199)

The class involved tasking the students with having to brainstorm and create a unique recipe based on the [up-scale resort's] needs. Madison enjoyed being given the freedom of creation.

I really think that the way that it was set up was most beneficial because we were able to create our own recipe and execute that kind of thing with the [up-scale resort] and that was hands-on and then we were also able to be given instruction and have to do that, it also implements some of our own liberties and changes if Chef thought they were appropriate. (Madison, 373-377)

The group work completed throughout the class involved employing critical industry skills such as: exploring, organizing, teamwork, communication, and compromise. Madison enjoyed these collaboration sessions with her group and thought it was helpful to her group’s final recipe presentation. She thought the resort’s expectations were challenging and believed her group came together during the creative process. It seemed as though she appreciated the effort her group gave.

Madison described the class as giving her more than just basic cooking recipes. Techniques demonstrated in class gave her the ability to build and create new versions.

I remember we made that vinaigrette—it was a raspberry or something that it was good and then he had everybody taste it and he put it on some water crests and some people didn’t like that because it was really pepper. It’s like that and like a mayonnaise. If you know how to make those things, your life is just easier.
It’s like bread. Knowing how to basically have those simple things, you can do anything. It’s like learning to ride a bike. Once you know it, you now it and you can do anything else. (Madison, 172-178)

Madison said the classes included connections to industry professionals. She believed they showed an interest in how her class wanted to learn from them. Madison described how impressed she was by the beautiful property and how the staff acted as mentors to them.

I think it’s just because the [up-scale resort] everybody—it’s a very nice hotel. It’s magnificent and we’re lucky enough to have one here in Sarasota, and to be able to go in there and be treated with dignity or respect and to be treated as people who are wanting to learn beyond just being a guest there was just wonderful. (Madison, 509-513)

She said the connections with industry professionals was helpful because her classmates received synchronous feedback, which did not always happen in other classes.

I think going to the [up-scale resort] and meeting those people and saying, “Oh, I like this. Why did you do this?” and getting their feedback.” The live time . . . it was awesome. (Madison, 494-496)

**Madison’s response to research question two.** During each interview, I asked the students to rank all of the 11 different culinary techniques and skills they had participated in during the class. I instructed them to rank the top six index cards based on the importance for their future in the industry. Madison had no problem completing this task. She ended with the following top six: (1) business knowledge, (2) teamwork skills, (3) communication, (4) recipe creation/development, (5) mise en place, and (6) cooking methods. (1 = most important, 6 = least important)

Madison linked certain skills taught in class directly to the industry. She believed learning how to create and develop a recipe would apply to real world situations.
Knowing what works well together and all that stuff, that was a good team effort especially if you’re a manager at a hotel and somebody is saying, “I want to make this dish,” you have to know that it’s going to work well in the restaurant and it’s not going to be too time consuming to be creating that kind of stuff. (Madison, 154-158)

She indicated many of the skills could be used immediately outside of class.

“I mean, learning how to make bread is a skill in life that I think everybody should have . . . that was a good class too” (Madison, 114-116).

Although she was reluctant to work in a group at the beginning of the semester, Madison eventually realized the benefits of working together as a group. She saw the value in improving group interaction skills and commented how it was critical to industry success.

But when you have somebody else with you, and you are able to delegate, you’re able to not feel as stressed and I think that breaking down that stigma and that uncomfortable feeling about group work is so important. Making people work with people they don’t know, making people do things that they are not used to is so important in life as well as in the hospitality industry.

In life, you need to know how to communicate with other people and be able to work in situations that you’re not comfortable with. In the hospitality industry, you’re going to be going to meetings and conventions where you’re going to be seeing and working with people that you’ve never met before . . . not having those basic group work skills . . . you would just be floundering. (Madison, 416-428)

She saw the relevance in taking a hands-on course concentrating on professional kitchen basics. Madison believed the class with hands-on labs and real event activities better prepared her for a management position in the industry.

I know, from me personally, I’m not doing the culinary aspect or like food service for hospitality. And I think it’s really important that in any part of hospitality, you know what it’s like to prepare food. You know what it’s like to do these kinds of events because without that experience and you’re walking into a job blind, and then you’re—you might be in a management position and you have no idea what they’re talking about and they’re saying, “We have this event tonight, we need to do these things. We need these many people,” and you’re like, “What?” And this
is a great basis, I think for anything involving management or like preparation, it’s awesome. (Madison, 26-35)

Madison made several comments about how she appreciated the industry demonstrating key elements of success. She also gained confidence in knowing some of her class’s recipe ideas would be used at the [up-scale resort].

I love going behind the scenes. I love going up to the hotels, in the rooms and seeing why they chose the decorations that they did. Why they cost the rooms the way they do and everything like that . . . the way they implement just everything. It was a great experience I think. (Madison, 472-475)

I think that the [up-scale resort connection] and Chef Daniel, they were great people to see in action, because again, this is a good class to work on things and get hands on experience. But to go and meet somebody who’s doing this everyday in their industry, and to know that they are succeeding and they’re implementing ideas that we have and they are respecting the ideas that we have is incredibly beneficial. (Madison, 489-494)

Madison shared how at the start of her college career, she was completely focused on working at [well-known theme park]. After taking this course and others, her view of her future has broadened.

I knew I needed to take hospitality but after I’ve started taking courses I’m said to myself, “Oh, I like that hotel aspect of that, like management, I like to be in charge, I like these things about it.” So this course has definitely helped me when I had to volunteer for the one event that I had to do, seeing that event come together and helping prepare all the items—everything just synced in, it was—that was part of it, it was setting it up, making it look pretty and then watching our people come in and having—have a good time. That was the part that I thought was going to help me in the future. (Madison, 54-63)

Madison shared her thoughts on learning hospitality theory in the traditional class versus experiencing hospitality in hands-on situations. She described how taking this class has helped give her a better vision of reality.

I think it’s just the reality of it, because I feel while in classes, and everything like that, you get the “why is this important”, but also you get this romanticization, if that’s the word, of the industry and everything such as the theoretical side of it, where everything goes into place perfectly or the problems are easily solved.
And going into a hotel like the [up-scale resort], where you see that they have everyday issues. They have real life people working there and you get to see the conflict that they have and the needs that need to be met everyday. It's very important to kind of reality check that, because when you sit there and you have these theoretical classes you might think, “Oh this is how you manage a hotel and you have this guest, there is a problem and you fix that and everything is happy again”. But that doesn’t always happen. And so to expose it is good. (Madison, 556-567)

The learning experience has given her a clearer vision of her day-to-day challenges in the future. Madison described a successful manager as being one that has a balance of understanding of multiple departments. She admits being exposed to a professional kitchen over the semester has given her this vision.

I think it just makes me more aware, because when you think—I'm going to be the manager of a hotel, or you think you’re going to be doing . . . sitting in an office, kicking your feet up all day until a guest has a problem. But the reality is that you're going to be stuck helping everybody out.

You have your hands in a little bit of everything and I think to know every aspect of your job and to know that you’re going to be doing restaurant work . . . you’re going to be helping do mise en place, you’re going to have to delegate and everything like that, it's very important. (Madison, 572-580)

Many connections to industry professionals gave her the chance to network. She took advantage of these opportunities. Madison was currently working in retail and realized she had better start making connections with hospitality businesses.

I wanted to be really up close and personal so that I could get as much information as I could from her, and I did get to know her a little bit and we were able to just click. I asked her, “Are you guys hiring?” And I was just so interested because I want to do hotel work right now. I work at Target and it's boring and I don’t like it because it's not where I want to be and I know that soon I'm going to have to get into my career field.

And so, going to somewhere like the [up-scale resort] where I know what's going on and I get to see it first hand is so—was very influential to helping me really hone in on that hotel aspect of the hospitality industry for me. (Madison, 523-534)
Madison had learned many professional kitchen techniques and skills throughout the semester. She indicated experiencing success with teamwork and organizational skills. Although she usually liked working alone, she had learned the benefits of working together. Madison embraced the mise en place term and noted this was used a lot throughout the semester and was critical to her staying organized.

I would say that the most successful I’ve felt was when I was using teamwork because it was such an important aspect of this final project with the [up-scale resort]. Chelsea and I spent so much time together and if we didn’t have good teamwork skills, if we weren’t able to work out the kinks and the bumps and everything like that. We wouldn’t have been successful in our final product and we wouldn’t feel as confident and successful as we did.

We did spend a lot of time on that [mise en place] and I really didn’t know what it was before. I understood the importance of prep but I never thought about it in a way that it made sense to start here and do these things prior and then you’re able to so easily put them together at the end. And so mise en place was something that I felt I understood better at the end of the 15 weeks in this class and that I really had a grasp on it as I was doing it. (Madison, 265-281)

She also confessed to not feeling completely successful with knife skills.

Madison said she was scared of the large chef knives used in class at the beginning of the semester. Although not feeling completely successful, she did admit to not feeling scared anymore and now she was more comfortable with her knife techniques at the end of the course.

In my house we only have like two set of knives and we have a small one that’s a steak knife and then we have a medium sized one that we just use for whatever else is left. And so I am good at home when I have the sized knife that I’m comfortable with but when I come here and you guys have the chef knives that are the big, hunk, and scary ones, and they’re so sharp but I just—I feel like if I spent more time on it and I wasn’t so afraid, I would probably get better but I feel like in the time that we had, I just ran away from doing it and not making all those things. (Madison, 290-297)

She admitted the repetition with the knives during the course helped her become less intimidated by the end of the 15 weeks. Madison said, over time, it got a lot better.
Madison shared some of her most memorable moments over the semester. She appreciated the time she spent with the [up-scale resort] and working with her partner.

Going there and being able to be with my peers and wanting to absorb all that information was just such a good time, because I’ve known about [up-scale resort], but I’ve never experienced that before and it was a good experience to have. (Madison, 709-711)

Madison shared another story where she was put in a precarious situation. This experience is another one of her most memorable moments. She describes it in the detailed comments below:

There was one class where I came on Wednesday instead of a Thursday because I had a scheduling conflict with work and . . . the [chef instructor] was talking about how we needed to [fabricate] this fish. (Madison, 330-332)

Madison listened to the class challenge, raised her hand and then made a suggestion to the chef instructor on how to portion the fish for the upcoming event. She was caught off guard with his reaction.

“Great idea. You get to do the fish now.” [Chef said] And so I was trapped cutting out the mahi-mahi . . . in my head it sounded like a great idea . . . I’ve learned my lesson about talking up in class. But getting the chance to come up with an idea and then go and execute it and do it in a way that I felt was best and it was my own idea, it was a great hands on lab. I felt not only did I get to do it, I was nervous about having to do it, but once I accomplished it, I said to myself, “Oh, that wasn’t so bad.” And I was able to execute the idea and show Chef that I’m capable of ideas in that kind of setting. (Madison, 336-349)

After her experience, she shared with me her thoughts:

It’s so funny, because I came home that day and I was—I wreaked of fish. I was so bad about it, and my mom said, “What?!” And so I told her, and she’s said, “Well that’s awesome. You had a great day. You were able to show your teacher that you’re willing and able to come up with great ideas, and you executed it and everything went well.” And I said, “But now I smell like fish.” But it was—and it was a good class. I had a great day that day, even though I wasn’t with my own class. I was with the Wednesday class, but I had a fun time even though I got stuck doing a crappy job in my head. (Madison, 720-728)
**Madison’s response to research question three.** Many hands-on kitchen labs were conducted throughout the semester and were connected to real event needs at the CIL or were completed in tangent with the groups recipe development project. She believed the size of the student groups were good and the student/teacher ratio was acceptable. Madison communicated the amount of hands-on labs during the semester were sufficient but indicated her desire for more sharing of information from her peers. Madison wrote about this in her journals. She appreciated the group hands-on labs but would have liked more interaction among groups during and after the activities. Madison believed there was tremendous value in the sharing of successful ideas, best practices, failures, and solutions. She admitted sharing group experiences was common but suggested it should have been present at the end of every lab session.

I like the group work aspect of it because we would be in our own individual groups, but I like when we get to go and see what the people are doing. I’m the kind of person that wants to go in. So I’m working on the bread and somebody comes over and says, “Oh, I like how you’re doing that. Why are you doing it this way?” And then I can go over to their thing and say, “Oh, look how you’re cutting this and why are you doing it that way?” And being able to do interconnect, because you have your group, but to come back together and to have a conversation about it, I think it’s something that’s important. And sometimes we were able to do that at the end of the class, and sometimes we just clean up the lab. So, having that [coming back together] I think would be nice. (Madison, 436-448)

She liked the model used during the final presentation on the last day of class, where the entire class got to hear every groups’ critique.

Yeah, like today. Where I knew what other people are making, but I wanted to know what their feedback was going to be. I wanted to know how it went, because I could see it, and so today, at the end of class, everybody came together and the [up-scale resort] said this, how great everything was and here’s some feedback, and that was awesome, because I got to see—I get critiques, they get critiques . . . I think that’s important. (Madison, 453-458)
Regarding the facility’s physical design, she wished there was one common meeting area with more space for congregating.

I like that there’s two separate kitchen areas, but I kind of don’t like that they’re so broken up that the walls are very dividing, and it kind of makes the space. When we’re trying to take the picture, it’s just like there’s no real open area and so I think having more of an open space in the middle where you can congregate would be nice. (Madison, 605-609)

Overall, she seemed to like the different sections of work space but said the line of sight was sometimes a challenge when the whole class was spread out over the entire facility. I believe her desire was to know what was going on at all times in the classroom.

Yeah, the lines of sight . . . a little bit. The walls and between the two kitchens. They’re just a bit—like the glass on the front of one, the cabinetry, it kind of really breaks it up, and it’s positive in some lights and negative in others. Like when we’re all working in one kitchen, it’s not bad, but if we all have to have stoves and we’re all in separate areas and we’re running around. (Madison, 618-623)

Madison also commented on the open, public feel of the classroom. Since the facility is on the main street of a popular walking area, curious shoppers and guests will often come in to ask about the facility. The CIL also is frequented by guests who often want to book an event at the facility, so this adds to the traffic. This street side location is viewed as a marketing benefit from most leadership, administration, and staff. However, Madison saw these conditions as a distraction sometimes.

I wouldn’t suggest renovating because that would be crazy, but those are just walls, and then the people that stick their head in everyday. We have those people that are walking around like one minute when they come in and they walk all the way in and they’ll stick their head around the corner. I don’t mind, but that happens daily and that’s crazy. (Madison, 629-623)

To provide Madison’s experiences, Figure 10 illustrates Madison’s responses to the interview questions and linked to the research questions for this study.
Figure 10. Single case data analysis of Madison's responses to each research question.
Case Eight: Sophia

A comment during the interview that I believe explains Sophia’s experiences best was:

I’m a hands-on learner anyways. You can sit there and tell me something all day and I try to listen, I really do, but it will go in one ear and out the other. I have to do it. (Sophia, 811-813)

General background. Starting in the industry as a 16-year old, Sophia worked at a theme restaurant for six years. Sophia had a unique background as a hospitality student, which may have explained her ability to think creatively. She had started her studies in mechanical engineering and had always had an interest in art design. As a young teenager, Sophia worked with her dad who had his own amusement park business, which built, designed, and refurbished amusement park rides. She shared how she grew up a carny, and had fond memories of this experience. At the time of this study, Sophia was part owner with her father. The business also designed and built sets at trade shows. She had just secured a contract with an Italian amusement ride manufacturer. Sophia explained this is why she had missed two of classes over the semester.

Sophia was a senior in the hospitality program and hoped to graduate by spring of 2017. She hoped to continue with her business and had other entrepreneurial interests.

Interview session. Sophia was in the mid-day class on Thursdays starting at 11:00am. The class was held at the Culinary Innovation Lab in Lakewood Ranch, Florida. I chose to conduct all interviews for this section after the completion of their final exam on Wednesday, December 7th.
The final class involved Madison’s group presentation of a menu item designed for an up-scale resort restaurant in Sarasota. Her group impressed the resort and she was elated at the conclusion of the final day. Every group besides Sophia’s walked up to the judge’s table and presented their final recipe creation. However, Sophia’s group invited the panel to standup and follow them outside, where they created a beautiful table setting for the judges. Their dish was well received.

Sophia had another exam immediately after the final class, so I scheduled her interview the next morning at the CIL. She arrived the next morning and I asked her if she needed any water or coffee. We then sat down at a marbled table in the Tuscan room. I explained I was recording on two devices to be safe and followed this with the IRB consent description. I made it clear I was not interested in evaluating her culinary techniques, but was wanting to listen to her shared experiences and opinions about the course she had just completed.

Sophia shared some wonderful stories about her experiences in this class and said she got a lot out of the course. She enjoyed the hands-on learning activities and had a good experience with her group, even though she admitted to not liking group work.

**Sophia’s response to research question one.** Sophia described the class as having hands-on culinary activities with guidance from a professional chef. She described it as a relaxed learning environment.

I would start by saying that it was a lot of fun. It was a great hands-on learning experience. We came in everyday and did something new. Sometimes it felt kind of loosely structured, but there was always like an end goal which was cool. So we kind of got in here and we're given an idea and kind of made to get dirty and figure it out ourselves. Chef was always there to kind of answering questions that we might have. But for the most part, we kind of just had a free
reign to a really cool facility and some good expert knowledge. So yeah, it was a cool way to kind of learn how to be in a kitchen. (Sophia, 10-20)

Sophia contrasted the professional kitchen experience with others she has had. She valued the calm demeanor of the chef instructor, and shared an observation she made from yesterday’s stressful final class.

You know, I've worked in [another kitchen], the chefs are—they're so passionate about what they do. They're almost jerks, you know, and stressful and hot and I never had that. Chef was nothing but just cool as a cucumber. Even yesterday when you could tell he was starting to get a little bit messy though there was no—nobody was ever ugly and called names, or yelled, or it's always very calm and it was great. (Sophia, 706-711)

She also appreciated how the class occasionally brought in chef help during class time. This was often the case in conjunction with a scheduled hospitality event. She believed the ratio of student to teacher was great.

It was good having—I don't know if Chef Sai a teacher, I don't know what you would call him, but it was nice having him in here too . . . because I think that without having a second set of hands and eyes it might have been understaffed, but it was good having them here. (Sophia, 771-774)

One of the early questions during the interview involved showing Sophia 11 individual index cards, which had culinary techniques and skills written on each of them. All of these were inside the class’s curriculum. Sophia agreed all of the techniques and skills were part of the Introduction to Food Production curriculum. I asked if she could think of any others and she said mentioned equipment operation knowledge. I added these two to the other original 11 cards, which included the following culinary techniques and skills: cooking techniques, knife skills, sanitation methods, basic bread preparation, vinaigrette technique, kitchen speak, mise en place, team work skills, business knowledge, recipe creation/development, and communication skills.
The class taught organization skills by constantly demonstrating the use of mise en place. Sophia recognized this term from her previous film classes, and valued the benefit of adopting this skill.

I had mise en place in my film classes so I already knew that coming in. But yeah, everything is the same . . . . Everything that happens, everything that is in the shot and filmed, has been put in there. So, same kind of thing, just making sure that everything is laid out. We did that yesterday before our presentation, we had all of our stuff prepared. Onions were diced. Our vinaigrettes were made. Everything was ready to go. So, all we had to do was just basically heat it up, it was simple, you know. (Sophia, 214-224)

She recalled the many times when they would be given real grocery receipts for an event and had to calculate the per portion food cost, menu price, profit, etc. They also employed this skill during their own recipe creation.

We figured out the costing on our project. But every week, Chef Gary would bring in his receipts for what he had purchased and we would come up with the cost for whatever dish it was that we are preparing that day. (Sophia, 200-203).

Sophia noted how communication in the kitchen was stressed throughout the 15 weeks. Simple, key phrases were used to communicate efficiently and effectively.

You definitely got to [communicate] even if you are walking behind somebody, “Hot pan!” you know? You got to constantly know what is going on around you. Know what’s expected of you. (Sophia, 196-198)

Working together as a team was a skill needed in this class. Sophia shared how each of her group members, especially during the final, had responsibilities. She attributed this to her group’s success. Sophia described the class as forcing her group members to work together. The task was more complicated than just agreeing on what to cook. She describes the many questions her teammates had to answer below:

Yeah, I think the most challenging part of it was brainstorming and getting everybody onto the same page, and then once we have aligned our view of what we thought the project was going to be, and from there it was pretty easy for us to all—you know, as we were doing recipe development to taste. We would say,
“Oh, it needs this.”, “Oh, it needs that”, that came together quickly. Yeah, kind of just aligning the ideas of, “okay, we want to make sure that it’s a Florida dish”, and “do we want it to be vegan, do we want it to just be vegetarian, how do we want to go about doing that?” What’s the story behind it? That was kind of more challenging, I guess. But once from there it was pretty easy for us to work together. (Sophia, 495-504)

Besides learning kitchen basics, the group work completed throughout the class involved employing critical industry skills such as: exploring, organizing, teamwork, communication, and compromise. Sophia connected this part of the curriculum to working in the real industry.

I guess it would be to prepare you for working in any hospitality situation like hotels—you know, everybody’s got a kitchen and restaurants. But you know, we just finished our finals and one of the things was time management and working together as a team, communication is huge even just planning, outside of our classrooms, meetings . . . when we are going to meet?, who is going to do what? We really had to be organized, which—our group, we did not have any of that stress that I was worried we are going to have. But I think it is because we really did prepare enough and know what to expect and set goals and really time it out good. (Sophia, 28-36)

She described the collaboration process as involving trial and error with your teammates. Making early mistakes helped them discover better ways to improve the recipe.

We worked on our recipe creation. We went through, I guess, three or four rounds of tweaking to get our barbecue sauce just right. When we began, we didn’t know that citrus—if we cook the citrus, it was going to change the flavor. It kind of got bitter in our barbecue sauce. So after learning and testing, we made sure in our recipe that we put that you need to remove it from heat before adding the citrus at the end. (Sophia, 226-231)

She believed group work taught her about leadership and about being responsible. Sophia claimed having good character and work ethic was a big part of their success and mentioned she was lucky to have good teammates.

I think naturally somebody always comes out as a leader but it makes everybody have to work together and you have to, you’ll be able to delegate. And you know,
be responsible for your end of the bargain, whatever you say. Group work so often can go so poorly too, especially if you know, you’ve got the social loafing person in your group that’s just there for the ride, you know. Fortunately, I was very lucky with this group. I did notice some teams that maybe some people were absent in the beginning of their project. I was thankful that everybody in my group was very on board. (Sophia, 519-529)

Sophia claimed she was a hands-on learner and shared instances or modes of learning where she was not successful in comprehending the material. According to Sophia, the courses material could only be learned from doing.

I’m a hands-on learner anyways. You can sit there and tell me something all day and I try to listen, I really do, but it will go in one ear and out the other. I have to do it. Sometimes even if I physically read it . . . but it does not really stick. But if I do it, you better believe that the next time that a similar situation comes up, I’m going to know how to handle it. Now something like this I don’t think you can learn from a book. Because it’s always so different, it’s you know somewhere in between science and art, and you have to do it. (Sophia, 811-818)

**Sophia’s response to research question two.** During each interview, I asked the students to rank all of the 11 different culinary techniques and skills they had participated in during the class. I instructed them to rank the top six index cards based on the importance for their future in the industry. After clarifying the task again, she quickly ended with the following top six: (1) communication skills, (2) teamwork skills, (3) business knowledge, (4) mise en place, (5) sanitation skills, and (6) equipment operation knowledge. (1 = most important, 6 = least important)

She claimed many of the professional recipe techniques she learned in class had been taken into her own kitchen. In addition, Sophia indicated these hands-on lab sessions improved her understanding of other cultures and basic nutrition. The class had made her more passionate about food in general.

But to learn what I learned, and again the bread making was like—that’s like the basis, the foundation of so many cultures lives. I learned that in your food and culture class, and it was just so cool to see when we go to the grocery store and
we flip over the bread and we see the ingredients on the back but you know just flour, water, salt, and yeast . . . you've got this thing that can sustain you. It's just amazing . . . I think I've got passion, the knife skills, it's something that you know I'm trying to work on at home. So I'm bringing these into my own personal kitchen more so than going out to the industry. (Sophia, 626-634)

Sophia believed the class helped prepare her for the industry by giving her a valuable behind the scenes look at the real industry. She was enlightened with the industry partner connection, even with all of her experience in the event and amusement industry.

The [up-scale resort] was really neat. You get to go walk around in their facilities, see everything behind the scenes. It was awesome. I mean I had no idea the kind of—I don’t want to say underground, but you know their area, their behind the scenes was just expansive, which is huge. Of course you would have to think to run a hotel like that, it would have to be that, but still even the loading docks, I couldn't believe. They have more loading docks than I have at my warehouse, you know. It was cool. I guess getting to see the real world kind of, especially with the [up-scale resort] . . . I'm not going into the hotel industry, but I know a good majority of the kids in our class were, and I would imagine that was like coolest for them to see that. (Sophia, 582-594)

Sophia indicated the connections to industry partners, including the tours and project, were critical to the students who had little to no experience in the industry. She said these class connections were sometimes the only experience the students may get before applying for an intern or job.

This could be the last semester for some of these kids. They're about to go out into the real world and they're going to, not only represent USF, but you know, they have to be able to set them to a real environment . . . I've been working, you know for ten years now, so I know how to go out into the industry, but I've met some of these kids that have literally never had a job and so this is their training for that. You want to have a job six months from now, you better have some kind of experience. (Sophia, 658-665)

She herself admitted to the hands-on lab sessions made her more comfortable and confident in a professional kitchen. Sophia said on the first day of class she remembered students being nervous.
Oh, so many of the students have never done anything like that. I mean the first day, there were like a handful of kids that were nervous to be in here, in the kitchen, doing things because they're like, “I don’t know how to cook, I can't cook you know.” So I think it gave confidence, you know, to get us more comfortable . . . not only at home, but you know at work as we are going to the industry. (Sophia, 453-458)

Sophia surprised herself and admitted to feeling successful with the recipe creation and development project. She admitted to not being the best cook, so this was something she had to work at.

After yesterday and the critiques that the [up-scale resort] gave us, I am going to say I was most comfortable with the recipe creation and the development, which I am surprised by because I always thought of myself as not being somebody that can follow a recipe. But we really worked hard on that and I think it turned out really nice . . . . I thought it turned out pretty good. (Sophia, 381-386)

She was also impressed with how she improved her knife skills. She mentioned this on several occasions and noted how difficult it was at first.

And then the knife skills, I thought it was one of the most challenging things, but it was most impressed with myself. I couldn’t believe how good it turned out. (Sophia, 388-390)

I was impressed that I was able to do what I did. But yeah, I mean that was important and definitely way more challenging that I thought it was going to be and worth the practice. (Sophia, 254-256)

The final presentation to the [up-scale resort] was a memorable experience for her. Sophia and her group thought outside of the box and invited the sitting judges outside to a unique dining experience. The table was set in the theme of the resort's restaurant, which she claimed impressed the judges. Sophia said, “You know . . . six months ago I would have never thought that I'd be serving . . . real chef's, you know, ever. Okay, so I loved that” (Sophia, 868-870).

The class on baking bread was probably one of her most memorable moments. “I think that I gained a lot of confidence and it was so simple” (Sophia, 845). She
mentioned this experience several times during the interview, and said she surprised herself on this day. Sophia had always wanted to learn this skill but was intimidated before taking the class. She appreciated the Chef Daniel’s passion for bread preparation and how he wanted them to learn the skill.

Baking the bread was awesome. I can't bake. Or I thought I couldn’t bake at least—at all. I can't follow recipes really, until I came in here and made bread. That was so cool. Yeah, the bread preparation, that was hands down my favorite class that we did. (Sophia, 265-268)

The bread was like—that was . . . something I never thought I would do, but something that I definitely wanted to, just personal . . . have a skill that . . . you know, I'd like to start making my own bread. I knew in theory, how bread making worked, but I have never done it, and it was like magic watching that happen in the oven. It was so cool and yeah, you could just see he was passionate about it. He wanted us to learn and experience and I thought that was great, yeah, just really-really a cool experience. (Sophia, 568-578)

The bread . . . . Yeah, hands down. I think it's because it's something that I've always been so intimidated by and to see just how simple it was. (Sophia, 826-829)

She shared how Chef Daniel’s teaching method was to make her classmates come up and roll their hands on dough. He demonstrated the technique and then started calling them out of their seats. Sophia welcomed the challenge of being pulled out of her comfort zone.

I really liked he—you could see—he made everybody come up and you know, okay, “Now three of you come up here while I'm doing this and sit here and make the bread.” And I mean it's challenging to sit there and do that if you've never done it before, and then he pulled three more people up there to do it. Everybody was out of their comfort zones. They didn’t want to have to stand in front of the class. You know, the cameras are pointing on them and everything. And I thought that was really good that he made us get up there and engage with him like that. I loved that, I think that's how you learn and grow in spite doing something that's uncomfortable. (Sophia, 602-614)

**Sophia’s response to research question three.** Sophia said she enjoyed the class overall, but made several comments about adding to the curriculum. She realized
there was only so much time in the semester but was curious about lessons in proper
table service. I did inform her this was a topic covered in a restaurant management
class she would take in a future semester.

I would have liked to have had a time when we sat down and we had done—so,
“You serve from the left,” that’s one thing. I worked in a fast casual kind of place
so it was not ever—you know, had to actually sit down and serve. But I would
love to know how to serve wine and how to really—and maybe this is for the 101
kind of class, maybe that should not be in there, but I would like to have had a
time—and I could have missed that class because I did miss a couple classes.
(Sophia, 276-282)

Even though she was a vegetarian, she would have liked to have had a class on
cooking meat including how to check the doneness of individual steaks.

I would have liked to have seen how to be able to kind of squeeze it [steak] and
know that that piece of beef is, you know, cooked just right on the inside or
something more of that. (Sophia, 473-476)

Sophia commented the class involved a lot of prepping for events but she
thought it would have been helpful to see how all of the recipes were finished. All of the
students had to work a couple events through the semester. Students at these events
got a chance to see what the recipes looked like presented to the guests.

I know we did a lot of prep in the hands-on labs but not so much like the finishing
of the meals, but I know that we’re doing stuff for events, which is real life stuff,
but maybe more like the cooking. (Sophia, 480-483)

She also discussed how the class should have a lab on reviewing various
equipment and fixtures (e.g., light switches, hood system switches, dishwashing
equipment). Again, Sophia admitted to missing two classes but indicated she was not
educated on how all of these devices operated.

Regarding the final recipe project for the [up-scale resort], Sophia said it would
have helped if the assigned groups had a couple other mandatory cooking assignments
before the final. She felt getting a chance to research other recipes would be good practice before the real team final: “Maybe a smaller recipe development like kind of thing, like maybe a practice for the big project” (Sophia, 546-547)? Sophia also commented how her group of three worked out fine but believed two would have been just fine.

Sophia was aware of the time limitations but was excited to learn even more about basic cooking technique. She used the example of how learning the technique of a basic soup recipe would be valuable to anyone. Sophia also felt having more labs would have helped with practicing the mise en place skill.

Sophia shared her love for the physical layout of the facility. She thought it was beautiful and told me the story about when she first walked by and saw it from the sidewalk.

Oh, it's beautiful. I mean it's awesome. So I was walking down Main Street out here [2 years ago], I had no idea you guys had any program like this. I had you know, again, done this in high school, always really liked it. I was kind of at a place where I was finishing my associate's degree at State College of Florida in film. I had no idea what I wanted to do and I walked by and I saw this and I said to myself, “You know - what is this, do they teach how to cook?”. And so I saw USF on the door, I went home, I Googled it and found out that this program existed. So this was like a huge billboard for me. (Sophia, 684-692)

To provide Sophia's experiences, Figure 11 illustrates Sophia's responses to the interview questions and linked to the research questions for this study.

**Summary**

This chapter presented a general description of the group, and an individual profile of each participant. The individual profiles in this chapter discussed the background of the student, the interview session, and exploration of the student's
individual responses related to the research questions. Finally, the researchers' reflexivity were discussed.
Figure 11. Single case data analysis of Sophia’s responses to each research question.
Chapter 5

Themes

The purpose of this study was to explore how students describe the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production class and how they perceive the curriculum prepared them for their future in the hospitality industry. This chapter identifies and discusses the themes in the study. The first section identifies themes from interviews. The remaining sections of this chapter include a discussion on the themes as they relate to the research questions for the study, researcher’s reflexivity, and a summary.

Identified Themes

The themes were discovered from the experiences and opinions of the eight students on how they described the curriculum, perceived the curriculum prepared them for the future, and believed changes might improve the class. The nine primary themes discussed in this section are: (a) hands-on basics taught by professionals, (b) memorable curriculum with useful application, (c) challenging group work forced students to develop diverse insights, (d) well-designed facility for learning, (e) gained confidence through memorable moments, (f) observed industry best practices for success, (g) connected to real world with hands-on methods, (h) managerial skills needed for success in the future, and (i) student desire for more educational elements to the course.

Theme one: Hands-on basics taught by professionals. All eight students shared their stories about learning professional kitchen skills and techniques in the
Introduction to Food Production class. Each student agreed the curriculum addressed specific skills and techniques (i.e., cooking techniques, knife skills, sanitation methods, basic bread preparation, vinaigrette technique, kitchen speak, mise en place, team work skills, business knowledge, recipe creation/development, communicating skills). Liam explained in detail what was covered in class.

You learn the basics of all around the kitchen. This includes how to prep food down to understanding the hands-on cooking of it. The events that we do, we get to serve it. We get to socialize with guests that are coming in and paying for those dishes. And then the back of the house things like doing the dishes, learning the safety, the health regulations, anything you would look for if you were to work in a restaurant. (Liam, 5-11)

Madison felt a lot of the class time was spent on prepping for real events held at the facility. She believed it was critical to understand every part of the process even though she said she was not going to focus on the food production side after graduation. Madison admitted to being nervous in the beginning but soon gained confidence in a professional kitchen.

Ava shared how she knew little about knife techniques, but by the end of the semester felt confident about her ability. She mentioned how she liked when the chef instructor would walk around and critique them on each specific cut. She admitted not feeling too safe with how she was originally holding the knife. Learning from a professional chef taught her the necessary skills to succeed with this kitchen skill. Mason believed he was proficient with the basic knife skills but mentioned he appreciated how the hands-on demos improved his understanding. He was able to improve his knife skills and also learned how to properly sharpen a knife.
Noah and Emma described how they enjoyed the hands-on format of the class. They both felt having the product right in front of them was a good visual aid when the chef instructor was explaining how to cost out a recipe with grocery receipts.

Well, the hands-on and looking at grocery bills and figuring out the cost, I think was very beneficial. That was hands-on, learning how to price out a menu. Like I said, so much was—it was hands-on, how you couldn’t learn it, you know what I mean, it’s the material, it’s right there in front of you. I think it was a commonsense kind of thing to me. (Noah, 456-461)

Learning basic kitchen terminology was helpful to all of the students. Some of them struggled with French pronunciations but agreed they were helpful in communicating efficiently during group activities. Liam had already had some previous experience in a professional kitchen but admitted the review of certain terms was helpful and corrected some of his unknown mispronunciations. This improved his confidence in using the terms at work. Olivia claimed the term mise en place helped her stay organized during the recipe creation activities.

All of the students shared their experiences with using teamwork skills in the classroom. Many described how the group activities forced them to work together as a team. Sophia shared one experience where her group agreed to take on different responsibilities with the goal of succeeding with the assignment. She found this helpful.

On a project . . . we had to work together. You know, we kind of assigned—for yesterday, I think part of the reason it went well was because we had assigned—before we came in here, we assigned tasks. So, I was in charge of one thing and we all worked together still. But ultimately, I was in charge of making sure that it happened. And so I think that’s one reason that worked for us. But that was us managing our team well. (Sophia, 205-210)

**Theme two: Memorable curriculum with useful application.** Most of the students shared how they were hands-on learners and believed this method helped them retain the information more successfully. Sophia reported how she often struggled
in traditional classrooms where listening to lectures was the only delivery method. She claimed learning by doing was her favorite way to acquire knowledge. Ava and other students commented on how they could retain recipes easily after doing it in class. Ava said “you’ve got it down” after seeing it, touching it, and doing it (Ava, 421). She thought the class’s constant hands-on approach was great.

I’m a visual learner and a very hands-on learner too as well. So being able to actually see it happening in front of my eyes, like cooking it, cooking food, that was great. It helped me great because a lot of classes, they are just sit down and listen, and I learn nothing. I can’t pick it up. I’m just like, “Oh.” Yeah. I’m very creative. I need to touch it or feel it or see it and I’m good. (Ava, 747-763)

Liam, Sophia, and Olivia both said the information stuck because the hands-on format helped with retention. In addition, they appreciated how the lessons and demos applied to real events and were tangible. Liam, Olivia, Noah, and Emma said the constant activity and moving around in the classroom helped them retain the information. Olivia appreciated the usefulness of the hands-on labs and how they were more realistic than other classes she had taken.

The hands-on labs assisted Madison in understanding the real world. She talked about how a lot of what she had learned in high school and college was not relevant or useful. Madison believed all of the labs in this class were tangible with the hospitality industry.

I think when you can really dig your hands in there, it becomes less theoretical and more practical . . . . So being able to get in there, understand that it’s more time consuming than you think it is and all these things shows that you’re able to kind of grasp it more. (Madison, 366-368)

Mason believed the hands-on methods used in the curriculum were important because they gave him more confidence in the kitchen. According to him, these memorable learning experiences applied to more than just course objectives.
I think [hands-on] is 100% of everyday experience of learning, of feeling more confident in the kitchen, outside of the kitchen and in life and it brings you out of—just staring at someone talking.

It makes you think . . . it opens different parts of your brain where you have to be there or not at all. And not just what you’re learning. It helps you learn in everything. You’re not just learning, it’s a lot better than—just saying it’s a lot better than staring at a video all day . . . I mean, you’re learning, not only learning everything in the kitchen but yeah, it’s more—it’s deeper than that.  

(Mason, 885-914)

Noah, Ava, and Emma all mentioned how they were motivated to come to class because it was fun, and they also did not mind staying late after class. Ava was proud of how she had never missed a class because its was fun to be there.

**Theme three: Challenging group work forced students to develop diverse insights.** All of the students recognized the importance of being able to collaborate with a group of people. Olivia commented how it was not common in the hospitality industry to be working by yourself. You were always depending on other people. She connected the class group activities with critical industry skills, and described the demands placed on her classmates.

So you have to learn to work with the group. You have to compromise and—if you do have two different people with two different tastes, you don’t want to get into the rut of only cooking what you like and what you want, because you’re cooking for other people, you’re not cooking for yourself. So you need all that other input from everybody else. (Olivia, 477-483)

Sophia believed the group activities put her in real hospitality situations. Ava and Sophia both said the hardest part of group work is getting everyone to think together as a team. Both of them believed this was challenging but once their teams got to this point the process became easier.

The group work in the class involved students working together during hands-on labs and on the final project. For the final project, each group was assigned a specific
menu item category and had to create and develop a new menu idea for the [up-scale resort]. Mason shared how there was a lot of group work and mentioned the challenge was dealing with new people who had different opinions and questions. He said finding *common interests* was the key to success.

Liam and Noah said they enjoyed working in groups. Noah commented how his group stayed organized by outlining their ideas after *brainstorming*. Liam indicated that successful communication is what kept his group on track and said on one occasion they had to text each other back and forth when someone was absent. “Keeping each other in the loop” was beneficial to him (Liam, 445).

Liam felt the final project with his group tested their abilities, but liked how it was connected to the real industry. He said the [up-scale resort] was clear on their needs during the information session, and also did a good job describing their current brand and the restaurant’s style of cuisine. The information session motivated his group to want to do their best.

We had to incorporate those things with our own creativity. How do we take something that’s comfort food and elevate it a little to where it’s still recognizable but it’s interesting. It becomes a challenge but it’s a fun challenge to do, right? (Liam, 183-185)

Madison said the final project was challenging due to it’s link to real industry. However, she claimed working together in groups assisted with the creative process. She believed it would have not been possible without the group effort.

And so having to come up with that in the group work and—because I was thinking spaghetti and pasta but I was trying to think of how we could incorporate what the [up-scale resort’s] requirements were. It was difficult and so being able to work in a group and bounce ideas off of each other and get more comfortable with the idea of what the idea was and where our menu was heading, it was very beneficial. (Madison, 399-404)
Emma had similar opinions of how the group work assisted with creation of menu ideas and brainstorming. She believed it often took longer to reach a consensus on decisions but felt it was worth the time, because the results were better than doing it individually. She also admired how all of her group members along with her entire class pitched in to help with setup and cleanup duties.

**Theme four: Well-designed facility for learning.** All of the students had a positive description of the feel and ambiance of the facility. Table 1 below shows the words and phrases used to describe the physical environment and ambiance of the facility.

Table 1

*Words or Phrases Used to Describe Physical Environment and Ambiance of Facility*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noah</th>
<th>Emma</th>
<th>Olivia</th>
<th>Liam</th>
<th>Madison</th>
<th>Ava</th>
<th>Mason</th>
<th>Sophia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>awesome</td>
<td>liked</td>
<td>love it</td>
<td>humbling</td>
<td>comfortable</td>
<td>pretty</td>
<td>loved</td>
<td>perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great</td>
<td>loved</td>
<td>upper echelon</td>
<td>great</td>
<td>great</td>
<td>gorgeous</td>
<td>could not be beat</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state-of-the-art</td>
<td>open</td>
<td>organized</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>on a stage</td>
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<td>impressed</td>
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<td>amazing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Noah described the classroom as having an open and outgoing feel. He felt communication was easy in the facility’s environment. Liam shared how there was no unnecessary stress and he was able to express his creativity each day. He believed it may have allowed others who felt passive to be expressive in this comfortable
environment. Madison also felt *comfortable* and *confident* in the class environment. She admitted maybe not on the first day of class, but over time, she and her partners eventually felt comfortable enough to share feedback. Madison and Olivia both shared the class environment allowed them to make mistakes and felt they learned from these trials and errors. According to Madison, all of the students seemed to learn at their own pace since there were different levels of skill in the kitchen. She said the class was able to learn the basics and *grasp those concepts* by the end of the course. All of the students gave good feedback on: (a) student/teacher ratio, (b) total time spent in class, and (c) equipment.

**Theme five: Gained confidence through memorable moments.** Every student shared multiple stories where they were successful with techniques and skills in the classroom. Many of the stories contained detailed descriptions with proud emotional elements. Often, the memorable moments started out as struggles turning into to successful understanding of culinary topics. Olivia, Liam, Madison, and Mason all recalled moments where they worked through confusion and failure and got to the point where they felt a clearer understanding was reached. Olivia learned from failure when attempting to cook a recipe with multiple ingredients. After failing on the first attempt, she was successful the second time and attributed this to learning how to use proper *mise en place*. Other failed first attempts included Liam’s bread recipe, Mason’s vinaigrette, and Madison’s use of the large kitchen knives used in the facility. She admitted to being afraid in the beginning of class during the knife skills lab. Although she admitted to never feeling like a pro, she began to feel less intimidated.
Once I got into it, I was like, “Oh, it’s not that bad.” But initially it is kind of like you’re handing me a giant knife and I’ve never used a big knife before but after that it definitely got a lot better. (Madison, 17-19)

Madison’s most memorable moment involved accepting the chef instructor’s challenge to fabricate a large fish during class. She described how, at the time, it felt like a *crappy job*. However, her memory of this incident had turned into a proud story to tell and she believed it was a good learning experience.

Before the class, Emma said her knife skills were poor and she cooked most things from a box at home. During the course, she realized the importance of learning basic kitchen skills because it was key to her success in the hospitality industry. During one of the events held at the Culinary Innovation Lab (CIL), she was tasked with making the homemade bread pudding and apple strudel, which required knife skills and baking technique. She claimed this was one of her most memorable moments in the class.

I love eating bread pudding, but I had never made it. So tried it at work all the time with the sauce that goes with it. I can’t remember what it’s called, but I had never made it at home, ever, so it was my first time making it. So it was really good to hear the feedback. One older lady, I believe, said that it reminded her of her grandmother’s bread pudding back when she was a kid, so that was kind of nice to hear the feedback. (Emma, 508-514)

Noah, who had the most industry experience among both classes, shared his most memorable experience included learning how to properly sharpen a knife and working with his group on the recipe creation project.

Emma, Liam, Mason, and Sophia all mentioned the bread session with the guest chef as their most memorable moment. They admitted the learning experience made them want to immediately try the technique at home. Sophia was caught off guard but appreciated how the chef challenged each student to come up and shape the bread. She accepted the challenge, as many other students did too, and proved to herself she
could make bread. Mason recalled how this learning experience had inspired him to want to make the recipe over Thanksgiving.

I like bread [class]. That was just one of those— that's probably not what should stand out. But it definitely did. I love it. He was just such a cool guy. Everybody was just so involved. It is kind of one of those things where you could look around and not one person was crying. Everybody was smiling basically. (Mason, 932-942)

All of the students told stories of the recipe creation and development project with the [up-scale resort]. Ava had no experience in an industry kitchen before the class, but proudly voiced during the interview how she could see herself in the role as a professional chef. Madison said the project with the resort was a good experience, which gave her confidence with her organizational skills by the end of the course.

Theme six: Observed industry best practices for success. The class included connections with industry partners, which combined a site visit at the [up-scale resort] with a final tasting and presentation in front of the resort's staff. There were also visits from guest chefs who both worked with the students during planned events and demonstrated specific culinary techniques. All of the students agreed the industry connections gave them a vision for the future and helped show key elements of how to be successful in the industry. Many students agreed the feedback received instantly from the industry professionals was powerful. Olivia said the feedback was something she could not get from a video. Madison agreed and said the instant feedback was awesome.

Noah believed he observed a superior version of hospitality when he visited the resort early in the semester. He noticed the demeanor from the employees at the resort and felt it was genuine.
I think getting to see the professionals and how a well run—one of the best run hotels is running, you know what I mean, how they bring it all together, the hospitality part of it, how they show their guests the hospitality profession. I just think the professionalism, that's what I got the most out, it made me want to go there and work. (Noah, 336-340)

Emma felt the same way and found it helpful to discover how a successful award winning property operated.

The behind-the-scenes . . . I loved going and touring everything and just seeing how they work and seeing how enthusiastic they are about their jobs. It was just a refreshing experience. (Emma, 354-356)

Liam, Olivia, Madison, and Ava all commented how they felt the industry partners were able to relate to them and treated them as fellow members of the hospitality world. Madison mentioned she felt the resort staff realized her classmates were there to learn and this made a difference in how they were able to interact with each other. Ava appreciated the time the industry partners spent with her classmates because she knew their time was valuable. Olivia described it as a refreshing experience.

It was nice to see up at the top where there is a very successful company that people are willing to help each other out or pull each other up and show each other around. So it was nice to have that hands-on rather than just somebody coming in and giving a lecture. (Olivia, 528-532)

Sophia, Ava, Mason, and Olivia all believed spending time around professionals in class and at the resort took the mystique away from getting a good job in the industry after graduation. Mason appreciated how he learned about a typical day of a resort professional. Ava valued how her final presentation to the industry partners gave her confidence and indicated she might use the experience in conversation when interviewing for a job.

All of the students shared stories of how the class prepared them for the future by putting them in real world scenarios. Mason felt it broadened his mind about the
hospitality industry. Noah, Ava, and Olivia mentioned it gave them ideas and strategies for handling restaurant management decisions. Liam said the class gave the big picture on how everything comes together in a professional kitchen environment. Madison claimed many of her other hospitality classes gave only romanticized examples where simple solutions were discussed. She appreciated the reality check of the hands-on classroom and how it connected to the industry where mistakes happened and time sensitive issues had to be solved immediately.

Theme seven: Connected to real world with hands-on methods. Every student believed the hands-on methods used in class were best for exposing them to real world scenarios. The students’ stories had comments mentioning how the hands-on methods showed them the real world in ways a traditional classroom could not. Emma mentioned the communication skill could only be truly taught in a hands-on class. She believed you needed to be in a kitchen to learn. Ava and Sophia claimed the activities helped prepare them for the industry. Ava said connecting to the real world made her feel more mature.

It helps [students] prepare for the future when they’re actually in the field. I think it’s wonderful to—I feel like an adult. I feel like I was actually in the field presenting to the [up-scale resort]. It’s good to have us prepared for going into what we’re going to do if that make sense? (Ava, 633-637)

Madison commented how prepping and cooking for authentic events forced them to think of real world consequences. She shared her classmates would ask themselves if the dish they were working on would succeed in a real restaurant. Flavor combinations and being able to duplicate the dish in a real restaurant setting were critical questions they asked each other.
Mason and Olivia shared how the class prepared her for the real world by having her participate with other chefs and students during events held at the facility outside of class. They believed these hands-on portions of the class were best for learning because she had an easier time remembering what was taught. Experiencing, correcting, and learning from mistakes was something Olivia believed could not be accomplished in the traditional classroom.

So I think the events having people actually work the events was brilliant and it really gives you the real world feel and when you have to actually go into it and you’ve tasted it, so you’re not scared. (Olivia, 395-398)

Liam said working at the events with the chefs and with real guests is where he learned a lot about cooking. Noah agreed the entire class was hands-on and claimed it was critical to the understanding of the real world.

The hands-on labs are for the real world. This class is for the real world and it’s the best way. I mean, some of these people have probably never picked up a knife before; now they have a basic knowledge. (Noah, 232-234)

One of the main comments about the curriculum was how the techniques and skills were instantly applicable outside of the classroom. Many students commented how they had or were going to use a learned skill outside of the classroom. Noah mentioned he learned the intricacies of costing out a menu in the class and immediately found it useful at his current job. He proudly shared how he used this new skill when costing out two wine dinners at work over the semester. Madison believed she could use her knowledge of how an event was coordinated on the job in the future. Emma, Sophia, and Mason both said they felt more competent with a knife at home. Mason and Liam said the vinaigrette technique they learned in class was being used at home.
Liam said he enjoyed the bread technique so much he took it into work and showed his friends.

**Theme eight: Managerial skills needed for success in the future.** At the beginning of the interview, students were shown 11 cards corresponding to techniques and skills taught over the past 15-week semester. All of the students agreed the following areas were covered in class: cooking techniques, knife skills, sanitation methods, basic bread preparation, vinaigrette technique, kitchen speak, mise en place, team work skills, business knowledge, recipe creation/development, communicating skills.

After a few more questions, each student was asked to rank all 11 cards based on level of importance in the industry. Overall, the top three were business knowledge, teamwork, and communication. All eight students ranked business knowledge in their top six based on level of importance. All but one student ranked business knowledge as their top three. Further, all eight students ranked teamwork and communication in their top six. None of the haptic topics were ranked in any of the students' top six (i.e., cooking methods, vinaigrette technique, bread preparation, knife skills).

**Theme nine: Student desire for more educational elements to the course and program.** Seven out of eight students made a recommendation on the existing curriculum that involved adding various educational elements. Sophia shared the most on this topic. She was curious about some basic kitchen skills including cooking meat to the proper temperature and techniques on cooking soup. She desired more knowledge in these areas. In addition, Sophia and Ava believed there should be more
in-depth discussions on how to operate the many different pieces of kitchen equipment.

Sophia specifically mentioned the industrial dishwasher and kitchen hood system:

And again, you know the vent fans, I would have never known—you know, and maybe that's a simple thing but it's kind of also not a simple thing. There's a lot of switches over here. I know one of them does it, but I don't want to touch something, nothing is labeled. (Sophia, 899-902)

The dishwasher in the back, I had seen people use it through the semester, but we have never been trained on it. (Sophia, 906-907)

Serena and Sophia both thought a sit down formal dining experience would have been useful. They would have liked to learn about proper serving techniques since their final project involved serving the judges at a table.

Liam appreciated the creative atmosphere of the classroom but felt the labs should challenge the students even more with pressure-type situations.

But for me, what I probably would have like—what could have improved for me in the class is maybe do more like a pressure, add something with pressure where maybe you time us and we get something done . . . . I think it helps to—I mean, if you're going into a restaurant and back at the house work, I think it's very useful. (Liam, 469-482)

Liam wanted another lab showing how to make basic sauces. He said the chef talked about the well-known mother sauces, but noticed they were usually completed at events before he arrived. Ava shared how she was often given a recipe to make and was not paired with another student. She seemed to have felt more comfortable working with a partner. Ava believed a few labs should be added where the entire class made the entire recipe.

Many of the students mentioned how they appreciated the feedback given during the hands-on labs. Madison noted how she enjoyed the times during the end of class
where her classmates shared their experiences. She recommended this should be a regular part of every class.

I like when we get to go and see what the people are doing. I’m the kind of person that wants to go in. So I’m working on the bread and somebody comes over and says, “Oh, I like how you’re doing that. Why are you doing it this way?” And then I can go over to their thing and say, “Oh, look how you’re cutting this and why are you doing it that way?” And being able to do interconnect, because you have your group, but to come back together and to have like a conversation about it, I think it’s something that’s important. And sometimes we were able to do that at the end of the class, and sometimes we just clean up the lab. So, having that like coming back together I think would be good. (Madison, 435-448)

Ava and Liam both claimed they would sign up for other hands-on food classes if offered at the university. Olivia thought a tour of an outside food vendor would have been helpful. Mason and Liam wanted to learn more about the culinary departments during the tour of the [up-scale resort].

Olivia also felt having a glossary of kitchen terms would have been useful. Olivia shared how many culinary terms were used during class and wished there was some type of review session on theses terms.

I know we don’t have a textbook which I like but there needs to be some sort of glossary or something because he started out with some terms so quickly that I have no idea how it was spelt exactly what he said. (Olivia, 434-437)

Discussion of Themes

Themes from this study were based on the information gathered to address the three research questions. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do students describe the experiential learning curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course?

2. In what ways do students perceive that the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course prepares them for their future in hospitality industry?
3. What changes in the curriculum do students think might improve the Introduction to Food Production course and why?

The eight hospitality students in this study had distinct personal backgrounds, each was a unique individual in a different situation and each had different career ambitions. Even though there were differences among the eight students, there were common themes that bound them together. These themes assisted in understanding the participants’ learning experiences in the Introduction to Food Production class.

**Student descriptions of the experiential learning curriculum.** The themes generated from the eight students answered research question one for this study. The students described the curriculum as hands-on, memorable with useful application, group oriented with industry skills, and oriented in a well-designed facility.

**Hands-on basics taught by professionals.** During the interview process, all of the students agreed about the culinary basics taught over the semester. To assist the students with remembering what they learned, I asked them to look at 11 individual index cards. Each card had a specific skill or technique. These 11 skills and techniques were gathered from the syllabus and from a conversation with the chef instructor. The students felt the curriculum presented major elements of what a real industry kitchen would be like. None of the students had a problem remembering stories and experiences related to these 11 areas.

The delivery of real industry basics improved the students understanding of an important facet of the hospitality industry. Madison and Sophia both admitted understanding this facet of the industry was critical even though they did not plan on managing a restaurant in the future. None of the students claimed they wanted to
become professional chefs. Several of the students admitted feelings of nervousness before the class, but later shared how they gained confidence and conquered their fears by the end of the course.

The hands-on basics were taught in group labs sessions, during individual task assignments, and during real events held at the facility. Although Liam and Noah had some previous experience in the culinary industry, they still shared stories of discovery and believed the curriculum was relevant.

I was not surprised by the words and phrases students used to describe the course. However, I was taken aback with their sense of enthusiasm and passion. Many of the descriptions were connected to emotional experiences including both admitted struggles and accomplishments.

*Memorable curriculum with useful application.* The students described the curriculum as being more engaging than their traditional classes. Students shared stories of learning experiences in other traditional settings, claiming those were not as memorable as the hands-on experience in Introduction to Food Production. Olivia mentioned an experience where information was simply transmitted from the teacher to the student in one of her previous classes. She believed this was not the best method for her and felt she was able to retain knowledge better in a hands-on lab environment. Three students used the word “stuck” when explaining how they had no problem remembering certain techniques or culinary skills.

Students in this study claimed it was more than just cognitive learning. They told stories of being able to successfully retain culinary techniques after watching a demo and performing it themselves. I believe the reason students talked about feeling
encouraged to come to every class was because they were engaged in the entire learning process. Kolb’s (1974) experiential learning theory discussed how engaging the adult learner to the process was critical to the learning. Successful learning is about the entire process not just one stage or mode. All four stages in the Kolb cycle of learning are important and need to be experienced by the learner (1974). The process of traveling through the four Kolb stages was present in all of the students' stories, and are connected to experiences throughout the curriculum. Figure 12 below shows a learning experience of a student using the Kolb model.

Figure 12. Liam's learning experience inside Kolb's experiential learning cycle model (1984).

As the model above shows, Liam progressed through the four stages during his encounter with learning how to make bread. Although he mentioned making bread before taking the class, Liam said the initial in-class experience (stage 1) was the first time he had made bread the proper way. He admitted this first experience was not
successful and he shared in his reflection (stage 2) how the bread came out raw in the middle because he removed it from the oven too soon. Liam’s contemplation of his initial experience (stage 3) involved developing theories on what went wrong. He mentioned being *impatient* was the major reason for the failed attempt. He would later attempt the recipe both at home and at work several times (stage 1 repeated) where he achieved success. Also, Liam also shared how continued reflection (stage 2 repeated) and contemplation (stage 3 repeated) came from valuable observations made when a well-known chef came to class. The memorable experiences he had watching a master bread maker in class gave him more confidence during future bread making.

For another example, Figure 13 below shows the learning experience Noah had with the Kolb model during his involvement with the in-class menu costing activity. First, he acquired this basic experience in costing out a menu item with real grocery store receipts (stage 1). Noah mentioned how this activity gave him relevant business skills which could help prepare him for the real world (stage 2). Next, Noah recognized the usefulness of the new skill and contemplated using the skill at work in the future (stage 3). This new skill was quickly applied at work when he was asked to assist with developing a menu for a wine dinner (stage 4). Noah shared how, since learning this skill in class, he had successfully costed out two wine dinners for his boss.

The learning process in the class was described as being useful and relevant. Students enjoyed the constant activity in the classroom. Their stories shared how the activities in the classroom had each of them using multiple learning styles. The students were successful with learning the new techniques and skills because of the holistic process, which involved thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving (Kolb & Kolb,
Students believed the curriculum was relevant to the hospitality industry and worth the investment.

*Figure 13.* Noah’s learning experience inside Kolb’s experiential learning cycle model (1984).

**Challenging group work forced students to develop diverse insights.** The students enjoyed the hands-on group work because it was connected to the *real world*. Their stories described how the encounters with fellow classmates forced them to communicate, organize, and compromise in challenging situations. I discovered the stressful, sometimes awkward situations created closer bonds between the students. They recognized these collaboration opportunities to be strongly connected to the real world.

An important proposition shared by leading experiential learning theory scholars mentioned the valuable *synergetic transaction* between the student and the real world.
Kolb made this major component the heart of his experiential learning theory model. The oscillating exchange from experience to conceptualization becomes the engine of learning for students (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The eight students in the study told stories of how they learned from experiences during the recipe creation project over the entire semester with the up-scale resort. The concrete experiences both at the up-scale resort and with their group members led to the creation of new ideas. True to the Kolb cycle, these new ideas were tested in the lab, which created a new concrete experience for each student. After several cycles, the final version was tested on the real world during the final presentation to the industry professionals. This process was duplicated many times with other parts of the curriculum to teach new skills (e.g., knife skills labs, costing out recipes, mise en place). The holistic learning process in this course is purposeful and shows that acquiring knowledge is more than just cognitive (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

**Well-designed facility for learning.** A physically well-designed learning environment is critical for engaging students and creating successful learning (Phillips, 2014). The Culinary Innovation Lab in Lakewood Ranch, Florida was described as having a positive ambiance and physical structure. Also, the students shared how they had the right equipment, plenty of time, and a comfortable student/teacher ratio. Phillips (2014) believed “the physical structure of a classroom is a critical variable in affecting student morale and learning” (p. 1).

The chef often gave students the control of how they set up their work area during hands-on activities. According to Phillips (2014), this is an empowering method meant to give students a sense of ownership and positively affects motivation. Ava
mentioned how she preferred to customize her work area and that this process made
her feel more in control.

Many of the students described the class environment as professional and real
world. Students connected the well-designed physical layout with industry
professionalism. I believe the physical structure of the facility acted as a symbol for
what the chef instructor valued as important. In comparison, a poorly designed facility
may have an effect on what the students think of the curriculum and its relevance to the
real world.

The students shared stories describing the efficiency of the skills and techniques
taught. I believe the physical layout of the classroom assisted with the organization of
activities and accommodated students’ learning experiences.

Student perceptions of how curriculum prepares them for their future in the
industry. The themes generated from the eight students answered research question
two for this study. The students’ stories shared perceptions of gaining confidence
through memorable moments, observing best practices, connecting with the real world,
all which helped prepare them for their future.

Gained confidence through memorable moments. There were numerous
stories from each student regarding their successful learning experiences. These
stories appeared in the transcripts when they were discussing the curriculum topics and
when they were describing their most memorable moments. Students mentioned how
certain activities were preparing them for their future. There were also stories about
how an initial unsuccessful experience led to an eventual successful learning
experience.
The students’ perception of gained confidence may be explained by the experiential learning theory model. Kolb (1984) illustrated how learning is relearning. Students were challenged to consider their ideas about curriculum topics. Through the experiential learning process, their ideas were “examined, tested, and integrated with new, more refined ideas” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 195). All of the students believed they were immediately successful with many of the skills and techniques. They gained confidence through these experiences and also discussed how these were connected to real industry. Their continuing cycle through the experiential learning theory model reinforced and enhanced their understanding of the skill or technique.

Olivia, Liam, Mason, and Madison shared stories where unsuccessful experiences eventually led to success. I believe these valuable learning episodes can be attributed to the four students continuing through multiple cycles Kolb’s model. Hence, knowledge was created by the transformation of experience. The initial unsuccessful experience was reflected upon and was followed by a modification of the existing abstract concept. The student then applied this new transformed understanding to another hands-on attempt, or action. Continuing around the experiential learning theory model eventually led to a feeling of accomplishment and resulted in a feeling of confidence.

The live classroom setting involved hands-on activity and created a rich environment for experiential learning. This created many opportunities for the students to participate in grasping experience and transforming experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). “Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process” (p. 195). Students described their struggles and conflicts during the interview session. Ava
shared this when she was discussing her early struggles with working as a group. She agreed, after a period time, that she began to welcome the opinions of others and let go of some personal stubbornness. Liam also shared how early disagreements eventually were worked out in his group. All of the students shared stories of gaining confidence by reflecting and thinking about both previous experiences and future actions. The back and forth process is one of the keys to learning (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

**Observed industry best practices for success.** Students said they were impressed with how industry professionals related to them during visits and classroom encounters. It was reported that the industry professionals showed elements important to industry success. These encounters gave students a vision for the future. Students also valued the instant feedback from industry professionals. I concluded from the interview stories that coming in contact with industry professionals in and out of the classroom removed the sometimes intimidating mystique, and gave them confidence. As a result, students were able to envision themselves in these leadership positions.

Kolb’s model is based on the learner creating their own knowledge. He suggests the learner is in charge of building onto any original learning foundation (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). I believe this constructivist theory, where knowledge is created and recreated by the person, is enhanced by bringing together the learner and the expert. The eight students in the Introduction to Food Production class were not simply experiencing a transference of knowledge from expert to pupil. They were personally involved and invested with the entire process, and took part in the building of their own understanding of various topics. The Kolb model helps describe the back and forth process of learning between the student and the industry professional. The learning process can be
described as a continuous transaction, where the student is taking in each new experience and adding to their existing beliefs (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Learning is ongoing since the students must reconcile the existing belief with the new experience during each cycle.

**Connected to real world with hands-on methods.** All students believed hands-on methods were critical for teaching industry skills. Some students championed the hands-on methods because other classes they had taken did not engage them with relevant industry topics. They all mentioned how many of the skills and techniques in the Introduction to Food Production class were not only relevant to the hospitality industry, but also immediately applicable.

The holistic nature of the course, as described by the students, helped prepare them for real industry. Kolb discussed the importance of a holistic learning experience where cognition is combined with *doing, reviewing, concluding, planning* (Kolb, 1984; McLeod, 2013). Stories shared by all of the students during the interviews described these important functions and how they connected with the real world.

**Managerial skills needed for success in the future.** I was surprised how the eight students ranked the top three skills during the interview sessions. They reported business knowledge, teamwork, and communication to be most important to their future in the hospitality industry. Although many of the memorable moments described by the students included hands-on, haptic activities (e.g., bread preparation, vinaigrette method, knife skills), none of these hands-on skills made it into the top three. During the interviews, students emitted strong emotion when talking about the hands-on
experiences, so I assumed these powerful stories would translate into the ranking of skills most important to their future. However, this was not the case.

I began wondering why I was surprised with the students’ ranking consensus of the skills most important to their future in the hospitality industry. After some thought, I concluded the following: All of the students were majoring in hospitality and did not plan on working in the culinary realm. Their encounter with the haptic activities were stimulating to many of their senses and this is why they spoke with so much emotion when describing these experiences. However, since they were focused on hospitality managerial occupations, their ranking consensus was understandable.

I continue to contemplate the effect of haptic-style activities on the entire course’s learning experience. Were the business skills, teamwork, and communication components more effectively delivered in a curriculum with hands-on components? Were the hands-on components more meaningful when combined with business skills, teamwork, and communication components?

Further contemplation of why students gave a high ranking of business skills has made me consider the wording of this choice. Business skills may be more than just a managerial skill but also a haptic one. During the interviews, students shared stories of learning how to properly cost out a menu, which they considered to be a business skill. This class activity involved the student weighing various food product and visualizing the components of a recipe. I would recommend that future use of this interview protocol in a study should include definitions for each of the 11 cards shown to the students. I would also recommend breaking up business skills into several skill categories (e.g., menu calculation, forecasting, staffing, product knowledge).
Changes students think might improve the course. The themes generated from the eight students answered research question three for this study. The students’ stories shared a desire for more educational elements.

Student desire for more educational elements to the course and program.

Only Noah believed nothing should be changed with the existing class. The other seven students made comments regarding what should be changed to improve the course. Many of these students understood there was limited time during the 15 weeks to add more educational elements. Nonetheless, their recommendations included adding more curriculum similar to what already existed. I believe this overwhelming desire to learn more about other culinary facets suggests a second hands-on culinary class is needed in the program.

Olivia was the only student to suggest having a glossary of kitchens terms. I believe this was a helpful suggestion. This could easily be shared on the course’s web page. Most of the students had never heard of these common industry terms. It should also be noted that many of the students used the internet (i.e., cell phone, laptop, ipad) to answer questions about culinary terms, techniques, and recipes.

Researcher’s Reflexivity

During the entire research process, I made an effort to contemplate how I was listening to and processing the students’ shared stories. I was aware that how I viewed their experiences was influenced by my own values, beliefs, and past experiences. Constantly checking this human element during the research process was helpful in truly understanding the meaning behind the students’ experiences. I often found myself reflecting on my past industry experiences while listening to and reading the students’
stories. I shared many of their feelings of doubt, anxiety, and fear, as well as feelings of discovery and gained confidence. Having similar experiences helped me relate to what the students were saying. However, I believe during some interviews this was distracting. A brief personal recall of a similar incident sometimes kept me from concentrating on what was being said by the student. I realized this after the live interview when reading through the interview transcripts and listening to the audio recordings.

I found the interview protocol to be helpful during all of the interviews. However, there were often times when I wanted to ask follow-up questions unrelated to the interview protocol. I made an effort to stay on track with the script. Before starting the interviews, I believed asking the same questions consistently from one interview to the next was critical. However, I discovered ways to improve the phrasing of some questions early in the interview process.

My understanding of Kolb’s experiential learning theory model became much clearer during this study. I am convinced learning through hands-on activities, industry engagement, and group activities is a true cyclical experience. This model stresses how each individual experience is never static or even perfect the first time. Through reflection and conceptualization, a person will transform his/her understanding of the experiences. Challenging the students to travel through this cycle lends itself to improved overall understanding, builds confidence, and encourages future learning. All eight students shared their desire to learn more about culinary topics. I believe it is important to mention that not all of the students had complete understanding of the entire curriculum. Although some students shared stores where they believed success
never occurred with a specific skill, they also mentioned a desire to learn more and make another attempt. In relation to the Introduction to Food Production class, I believe the crux of the Kolb’s experiential learning theory model is fostering fearlessness—encouraging the learner to continue around the cycle until confidence is achieved.

Summary

This chapter identified and discussed the themes in the study. The first section identified the themes from the interviews and included specific examples by the students. The next section of this chapter included a discussion on the themes as they related to the research questions for the study. The final section includes a researcher’s reflection on the study.
Chapter 6

Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how students describe the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production class and how they perceive the curriculum prepared them for their future in the hospitality industry. The first section of this chapter begins with the summary of the study. I then provide conclusions and implications of the study. In the final section of this chapter, I provide some recommendations for further research.

Summary of Study

The body of research about the experiences of hospitality students in the Introduction to Food Production class at USFSM’s College of Hospitality & Tourism Leadership (CHTL) has been limited. Research has been conducted regarding the benefits of experiential learning methods in the hospitality classroom, but no research exists that explored student experiences and perceptions with experiential learning activities in the Introduction to Food Production class in USFSM’s CHTL (DiMicelli, 1998; Moscardo & Norris, 2004; Papamarcos, 2002; Ruhanen, 2005; Maier & Thomas, 2013).

I addressed the following research questions in this study to facilitate an understanding of the experiences of the hospitality students:

1. How do students describe the experiential learning curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course?
2. In what ways do students perceive that the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course prepares them for their future in hospitality industry?

3. What changes in the curriculum do students think might improve the Introduction to Food Production course and why?

I used randomly selected students in each of the two class sections. I made the attempt of choosing an equal number of female and male students. However, the lack of males in the afternoon section forced me to choose an unbalanced number of females and males. Two of the students I initially chose dropped the class during week two. After reselecting two more students, I then had eight students in the study (5 females and 3 males). All eight students completed the interview process during the final week of class. I interviewed each student during one session. All of the interviews lasted less than one hour.

I developed the interview questions through a protocol with five stages. After five drafts, which including a field test, the final version of interview questions were completed. I conducted all of the interviews at the Culinary Innovation Lab (CIL) over a period of three days. I also had access to all of their weekly journals, which was a required class assignment for all students enrolled in the class.

The eight students described the experiential learning curriculum and shared how they perceived the curriculum prepared them for the future in the hospitality industry. They also shared suggestions on what could be accomplished to improve the course. The students’ encounters with the skills and techniques followed the four stages of the Kolb experiential learning model.
Conclusions

I drew the following conclusions related to the research study.

There was a consensus among the students on how they described the curriculum. All of the students appreciated the experiential learning methods and described the culinary techniques and skills presented in the curriculum to be relevant to their future. They recounted in unison that they were taught in a professional setting by experienced instructors. When sharing their experiences about the group activities, the students described these episodes to be especially challenging because the activities forced them to be actively engaged in the learning process and caused them to develop diverse insights. Students also expounded with detail how the course material was relevant to the demands of the hospitality industry. The students confidently expressed how the skills and techniques taught in the classroom had instant application outside of the classroom.

Students shared their perceptions on how they gained confidence in their ability to be successful in the real world inside the hospitality industry. The students had many encounters with hotel and restaurant professionals throughout the 15 weeks. They made conclusions from their observations of industry best practices and perceived these experiences as having the ability to remove the mystique of the real world. Consequently, gaining confidence and feeling comfortable in hospitality industry settings allowed the students to envision themselves doing similar work in the future. Although some of the most passionate and memorable stories were those chronicling experiences with haptic skills, the consensus from the students on what was most important to their future voiced a different opinion. According to all eight of the students’
rankings, the management related skills of business knowledge, teamwork, and
communication were the most essential.

Most of students shared their thoughts on what could be changed to improve the
course. Students suggested adding additional elements to the curriculum, but also
admitted their suggestions may not be possible due to time constraints of a 15-week
semester. Other suggestions on adding to the curriculum were related to providing
more culinary knowledge and hands-on guidance during lab sessions. Two students
reported they were unsuccessful in a specific skill or technique because instruction of
some topics was superficial. From listening to their opinions on what could be added to
improve the course, I discovered most of the students had a desire to further educate
themselves about the culinary industry.

Implications

In the section below, I discuss implications from the research for employers,
hospitality program directors, professors/instructors, and students.

Employers. The employers connected to the curriculum in this class had a
powerful effect on the students' learning process. Continued partnerships between
industry and academia are encouraged from the implications of this research, since
elements of the curriculum offer human resource departments the ability to create
bridges for skilled students entering into the industry workforce. Further, there is an
opportunity for employers to assist in creating class projects that produce valuable
discoveries for their company's future endeavors.

Hospitality program directors. USF's hospitality program directors may want
to continue building relationships with other industry partners and find ways to create
assignments connected to industry. The implications of this research make a strong case for adding more experiential learning activities in the college’s traditional classroom settings. Further development and improvements to experiential learning methods depends on support from program directors. Program directors may find value in listening to the voices of students regarding these memorable hands-on learning experiences, since these teaching methods improved the students’ ability to acquire knowledge. The research showed students demanded more culinary-based knowledge, this may affect future course development.

Hospitality programs without lab facilities can be confident that experiential learning activities are still feasible. This powerful tool for combating the hospitality industry knowledge gap issue includes the following areas, which do not necessarily require a culinary facility: apprenticeships, clinical sessions at businesses, cooperative learning experiences, field work, internships, off-campus practicums, service learning experiences, student teaching, study abroad programs, and volunteer projects (Northern Illinois University, 2015).

Professors/Instructors. Instructors teaching the Introduction to Food Production class may now have a better understanding of how students’ described their learning experiences as memorable, authentic, and useful. This understanding may encourage continued efforts when managing the course and future courses. Continued use and further development of hands-on labs, group activities, and industry projects may be seen as a benefit to the students’ learning experiences and to their entrance into the hospitality field. Regarding students’ suggestions to add more culinary labs,
instructors may conclude this translates into the students’ overall enjoyment and interest in relevant industry topics.

**Students.** The implications of the research indicate the eight students felt they were getting essential industry skills in the Introduction to Food Production class. Future students are encouraged to be open to the learning methods used in Introduction to Food Production and can be confident they may have similar learning opportunities.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The recommendations for further research for this study include:

1. Additional qualitative research could be conducted on other classes taught at the CIL. Meaningful discoveries could be compared with those found in this study. Students in this study were asked to rank 11 techniques and skills important to their future in the industry. A purposeful research objective may be if students in other courses taught at the CIL reported similar results regarding haptic versus management skills.

2. Another study could be completed on the program’s more traditional classes. The researcher could begin the investigation by inventorying other traditional courses for any hands-on elements in the curriculum. Exploring the students’ stories in more traditional settings could provide additional discoveries about student perceptions of the curricula.

3. Another study interviewing a larger pool of students may yield meaningful findings. Eight students were interviewed in this study. Although themes were identified among all students in this study, conducting research on a
larger number of students would be beneficial from a statistical point of view.

4. A study using focus group methods could result in relevant discoveries. A researcher could use the entire class as a single group or divide students into genders, levels of work experience, etc. Comparing focus group themes with the existing themes in this study could be worthwhile.

5. Research could be undertaken exploring the learning experiences of alumni from USFSM’s hospitality school. The researcher could explore the alumni learning experiences in the Introduction to Food Production and other hospitality courses.

6. As mentioned by Harkinson, Poulston, and Kim (2011), there is a divergence of opinion between academia and industry with regards to the most important characteristics for a student’s success. Further research could be completed in the hospitality industry focusing on the important characteristics and skills desired in ideal job candidates. A researcher could connect with ownership, management, human resource departments, convention visitor bureaus, and other leaders in the industry. Identifying gaps in industry skills with graduates and discovering preferred training objectives could offer useful findings.

7. Qualitative research could be conducted on other hospitality schools in the state of Florida. Comparing results from other schools in the state with USFSM could yield beneficial information.
8. Further research could be initiated on other hospitality programs throughout the United States. There are tremendous differences among many of the top hospitality schools regarding degree focus, program objectives, and specific placement in universities. Some hospitality programs are titled as colleges within a university, whereas others are labeled as programs within a college.

9. Research could be carried out on students in culinary schools across the country. There are many culinary schools inside community colleges or technical institutions. Of course, there are also more well-known culinary institutions with recognizable brands rooted in stand-alone locations. Since these graduates are entering into similar fields (e.g., hotels, restaurants, club, cruise), the discoveries could be helpful.

10. There may be interest in research conducted inside other colleges and programs unrelated to hospitality. Experiential learning methods can be found in most educational institutions (e.g., apprenticeships, clinical sessions, cooperative learning experiences, field work, internships, practicums, service learning experiences, student teaching, study abroad programs, and volunteer projects [Northern Illinois University, 2015]).

11. International programs in hospitality and other disciplines may benefit from this research. The problem of existing gap characteristics between industry and academia is globally recognized (Alhelalat, 2015; Ruhanen 2005; Wang & Tsai, 2014).
12. Another study could be conducted using quantitative methods. The interview protocol in this study could be converted to a survey. This could give a researcher the ability to collect data on a greater number of students.

13. Finally, a study could be conducted with the intention of discovering the meaning of what was not said by the students. Although the eight students in this study shared many memorable haptic experiences, none of the students ranked any of these haptic skills in their top six of most important skills for their future success. Additional research into the reasoning behind their choices might be enlightening.

From the discoveries made in this study, I concluded the experiential learning methods in the Introduction to Food Production class assisted the eight students in fostering strength for learning in a laboratory of reality. Their shared experiences of learning highlighted both the importance of relevant hospitality industry topics and the power of connecting curriculum to industry partners. Therefore, I believe it is crucial to challenge students in an authentic hospitality program and remain steadfast with objectives closing the knowledge gap between industry and academia. Hopefully, this study begins the process of achieving this desired goal.
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Appendices
## Appendix A: List of Verification Panel Members for Interview Protocol

Table A1

*Tentative List of Verification Panel Members*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Expertise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Gunce Malan-Rush</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hospitality Technology Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ray McCrory</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Adult Education Research and Measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Katerina Berizina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hospitality Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Faizan Ali</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hospitality Research and Measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Keith Barron, Esq.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hospitality Law and Ethics Culinary Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean Pat Moreo, Ed.D.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hospitality Education Food and Beverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Byron Marlowe</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hospitality Education Wine Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. John Walker</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hospitality Education Food and Beverage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Correspondence and Instructions for Interview Protocol Verification Panel

Interview Protocol Verification Panel Invitation Letter

Study: An Exploratory Case Study of Hospitality Students’ Perceptions of Experiential Learning

RE: IRB #00027159

Dear (Verification Panel Participant),

Your expertise is vital to the success of research being conducted at the University of South Florida. In this early phase of the research, a panel of experts will assist in the creation of an instrument (an interview protocol), which will be used with hospitality students at the University of South Florida.

If you choose to participate, your role as a verification panel participant would be to review, concur, or refute the suitability, clarity, relevance, and completeness of the twelve interview questions and sub-questions.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact the researcher at the address or phone number below.

Thank you in advance for considering this.

Joe Askren, MBA CEC
Doctoral Candidate [Contact Information]
Appendix B: (Continued)

Interview Protocol Verification Panel Letter of Explanation

Study: An Exploratory Case Study of Hospitality Students' Perceptions of Experiential Learning

RE: IRB #00027159

Dear (Verification Panel Participant),

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of research being conducted at the University of South Florida. In this early phase of the research, a panel of experts will assist in the creation of an instrument (an interview protocol), which will be used with hospitality students at the University of South Florida.

In your role as a verification panel participant, you are being asked to assess the appropriateness and accuracy of the questions and sub-questions for their intended purposes; as well as provide feedback on the comprehension, wording, and appropriateness of the questions.

Attached to this correspondence you will find an explanation of Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle Model (1984). Many scholars agree the use of experiential learning methods in hospitality curriculums will assist with closing the gap between institution and industry (Maier & Thomas, 2013; Moscardo & Norris, 2004; Ruhanen, 2005). Together, this has been used to guide the content domain of the key questions on the interview protocol. With a basic understanding of the experiential learning concept and how it has been a successful tool in education, please review the eleven questions (and sub-questions) using the following Qualtrics link. With this link, you can provide online any comments, questions, or feedback you may have for each question based on your area of expertise and your initial impression of the instrument. I will receive a notification when you have finished the review. It is expected that the process should take from 10-20 minutes.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact the researcher at the address or phone number below.

Thank you in advance for considering this.

Joe Askren, MBA CEC
Doctoral Candidate [Contact Information]
Appendix C: Interview Protocol Final Draft

Interview Protocol Form

IRB Title: An Exploratory Case Study of Hospitality Students’ Perceptions of Experiential Learning

IRB #00027159
Date:
Time:
Location:
Interviewer: Joe Askren
Interviewee:

Introductory Protocol

Good morning (afternoon). My name is Joe Askren. Thank you for participating in this research study. Before we get started, I’d like to review a few important items with you.

As discussed previously, to facilitate note taking, I would like to audio record our conversation today. Only researchers on the project will have access to the audio recordings, which will eventually be destroyed after they are transcribed. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

This interview should last no longer than one and a half hours. During this time, there are a variety of questions that I would like to cover. Your responses can be as thorough as you would like to respond. Do you have any questions? Shall we begin?

At this point, I am turning on the recorder.

Good morning (afternoon). My name is Joe Askren. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. You have been identified as a student within the College of Hospitality who has information to share about the topic of my research. This research project focuses on how experiential learning activities used in this class can prepare students for industry careers. This study does not aim to evaluate your culinary techniques. Rather, I am trying to learn more about your experiences and opinions as they relate to the Introduction to Food Production class and the experiential learning activities you participated in. If we need to stop for any reason along the way, just let me know and we can pause the recording.

I really hope you will give me some suggestions. I will do my best to provide probing questions or to re-word the question as necessary for you. Do you have any questions before we begin?
1. How would you describe your experience from this class to another student who has not taken it yet?

   Probe: What would you tell them is the purpose of taking this class?

2. What are your future job aspirations?

3. What culinary techniques or skills have you learned in this class? [Show cards and ask if there are others not shown on the cards]
   
   CARDS:
   - Cooking techniques (baking, sautéing, roasting)
   - Knife skills
   - Sanitation Methods
   - Basic Bread Preparation
   - Vinaigrette Technique
   - Kitchen speak
   - Mise en place
   - Team Work Skills
   - Business Knowledge (costing, profit/loss)
   - Recipe Creation/Development
   - Communicating skills

4. What technique(s) or skill(s) do you think will be most helpful in preparing you for your future aspirations in the hospitality industry? Why?

4a. [Show student a card with all of the courses techniques/skills. Ask them to comment on each one. How does each prepare them for the future?]

4b. [Have students rank all cards based on level of importance]

4c. Describe the experiences you had with culinary techniques or skills where you felt most successful? Why?

4d. Describe the experiences you had with culinary techniques or skills where you didn’t do so well? Why?

5. You participated in many learning experiences during the semester involving hands-on labs, group work, and connecting with industry professionals. Some of the hands-on culinary labs involved a combination of knife skills, sanitation, recipe execution, and plate presentation. What were some of the specific learning experiences or activities you remember from your lab sessions?
Appendix C: (Continued)

5a. What was the greatest benefit from the hands-on lab activities?

5b. What other hands-on lab activities could be added to improve the course?

6. Some of the group work assignments involved menu research, recipe creation, and consensus on final flavors. What were some of the specific learning experiences or activities you remember from your group work?

6a. What was the greatest benefit from the group work activities?

6b. What other group work activities could be added to improve the course?

7. Connecting with industry professionals included tours and professional discussions on best practices. What were some of the specific learning experiences you remember from these industry professionals? [Show them the list of industry professionals the came in contact with]

7a. What was the greatest benefit from the industry tours or guest speakers?

7b. Which guest speaker or tour impressed you the most? Why?

7c. In what ways did a tour or guest speaker impact or change your future career aspirations?

7d. What other industry tours or guest speakers could be added to improve the course?

8. What is the importance of exposing students to the real industry during their program of study?

9. How would you describe the physical environment and ambiance of the lab facility?
   
   Probe: What do you like about the physical classroom? What do you not like about the physical classroom? How would you describe the climate...lighting...noise level...lines of sight?

10. What could be improved (physically)?

   Probe: In what ways could the lab facility be better equipped? Was the class size appropriate?
Appendix C: (Continued)

11. In what ways do you believe the learning experiences and activities used in this course helped you better understand the overall material?

12. Do you feel more class time was needed in either (a) the activities portion or (b) the traditional lecture portion?

13. In what ways did the textbook material used in this course relate to the activities done in this class?

14. Describe your most memorable learning experience over the past 15 weeks in this class.

14a. Describe a second one if you can.

15. Do you have anything else you would like to add?
Appendix D: Overview of How Research Questions are Addressed by Specific Interview Questions

Table D1

Overview of How Research Questions are Addressed by Specific Interview Questions

RQ1: How do students describe the experiential learning curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How would you describe your experience from this class to another student who has not taken it yet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What culinary techniques or skills have you learned in this class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4c. Describe the experiences you had with culinary techniques or skills where you felt most successful? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4d. Describe the experiences you had with culinary techniques or skills where you didn’t do so well? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. You participated in many learning experiences during the semester involving hands-on labs, group work, and connecting with industry professionals. Some of the hands-on culinary labs involved a combination of knife skills, sanitation, recipe execution, and plate presentation. What were some of the specific learning experiences or activities you remember from your lab sessions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Some of the group work assignments involved menu research, recipe creation, and consensus on final flavors. What were some of the specific learning experiences or activities you remember from your group work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Connecting with industry professionals included tours and professional discussions on best practices. What were some of the specific learning experiences you remember from these industry professionals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How would you describe the physical environment and ambiance of the lab facility?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-Probe. What do you like about the physical classroom? What do you not like about the physical classroom? How would you describe the climate...lighting...noise level...lines of sight?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. In what ways do you believe the learning experiences and activities used in this course helped you better understand the overall material?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Describe your most memorable learning experience over the past 15 weeks in this class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: (Continued)

Table D1 (Continued)

RQ2: In what ways do students perceive that the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production course prepares them for their future in hospitality industry?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What are your future job aspirations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>What technique(s) or skill(s) do you think will be most helpful in preparing you for your future aspirations in the hospitality industry? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a.</td>
<td>[Show student a card with all of courses techniques/skills. Ask them to comment on each one. How does each prepare them for the future?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b.</td>
<td>[Have students rank all cards from above based level of importance]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5a.</td>
<td>What was the greatest benefit from the hands-on lab activities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a.</td>
<td>What was the greatest benefit from the group work activities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7a.</td>
<td>What was the greatest benefit from the industry tours or guest speakers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7b.</td>
<td>Which guest speaker or tour impressed you the most? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7c.</td>
<td>In what ways did a tour or guest speaker impact or change your future career aspirations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>What is the importance of exposing students to the real industry during their program of study?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ3: What changes in the curriculum do students think might improve the Introduction to Food Production course and why?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5b.</td>
<td>What other hands-on lab activities could be added to improve the course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b.</td>
<td>What other group work activities could be added to improve the course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7d.</td>
<td>What other industry tours or guest speakers could be added to improve the course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>What could be improved (physically)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Probe.</td>
<td>In what ways could the lab facility be better equipped? Was the class size appropriate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Do you feel more class time was needed in either (a) the activities portion or (b) the traditional lecture portion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>In what ways did the textbook material used in this course relate to the activities done in this class?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Demographic Questions

Student Name: _____________________________________

Gender (M/F): ____________

AM or PM class? _______________

What year in school are you? (freshman, sophomore…) _______________

Career Focus?

Hospitality Experience?
Appendix F: Copy of Consent Form Signed by Participant

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Pro #00027159

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:
An Exploratory Case Study of Hospitality Students’ Perceptions of Experiential Learning
The person who is in charge of this research study is Joe Askren. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. Dr. Waynne James is guiding Joe Askren in this research.

The research will be conducted at USFSM Culinary Innovation Lab during Fall 2016.

Purpose of the study
The purpose in this study is to examine how students describe the curriculum in the Introduction to Food Production class and how they perceive that the curriculum prepares them for their future in the hospitality industry. The Principal Investigator will use student journals, researcher reflection journals, and interviews (student) with the intentions of assessing the use of experiential learning in the Introduction to Food Production course.

Why are you being asked to take part?
We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are currently in a hospitality class, and/or have had experience with the teaching methods being explored in this study (e.g. hands-on activities, group projects, learning by doing).

Study Procedures:
If you take part in this study, you may be asked to:

- Share your journals with the Principal Investigator if you are a student in the class. The course already uses journaling as an assignment. Your journals will be viewed at the end of the course and returned to the instructor.
- Participate in one interview session during the Fall 2016 semester, which will last approximately 60 minutes. The interview session will be conducted at the Culinary Innovation Lab at a convenient time. Questions will involve how you perceive the Culinary Innovation Lab and certain methods of teaching.
Appendix F: (Continued)

- The Principal Investigator will seek approval from each participant to audio tape each interview. The audio recording will assist the PI in analyzing the participant’s answers. Only the PI will have access to the recordings.
- The PI will clearly communicate when recording starts and stops during the interview.
- All recordings will be destroyed/deleted after the PI transcribes the recordings. The transcriptions will be held in the PI’s possession up to 5 years after the initial IRB approval. All hard copy transcription records will be shredded and disposed of in a secure plastic garbage bag.

Total Number of Participants
The Principal Investigator will randomly sample 4 students in each class (total of 8) in the College of Hospitality & Tourism Leadership. Also, the PI will use the student assignment journals from each of the 8 students randomly sampled.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal
You do not have to participate in this research study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. The decision to not participate will not affect your student status or course grade.

Benefits
We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study.

Risks or Discomfort
This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation
You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

Costs
It not cost you anything to take part in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality
We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- The Principal Investigator and his PhD Committee Chair.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.
Appendix F: (Continued)

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints
If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem, call Joe Askren at xxx-xxx-xxxx.
If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study
I freely give my consent to take part in this study, and understand by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

______________________________              ____________
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study                                    Date

_____________________________
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent
I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

_____________________________
Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent                          Date
Appendix G: Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Table G1

Demographic Characteristics of Student Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Time of Class</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Career Focus</th>
<th>Hospitality Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noah</td>
<td>7:30 am</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Management/Hotels</td>
<td>30 years +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>7:30 am</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Hotels/Senior Living</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>7:30 am</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Management/Hotels</td>
<td>20 years +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>7:30 am</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Restaurant/Culinary</td>
<td>2 ½ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophia</td>
<td>11:00 am</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Event/Entrepreneur</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ava</td>
<td>11:00 am</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>11:00 am</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Cruise/Entrepreneur</td>
<td>14 years +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>11:00 am</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Hotel/Theme Park</td>
<td>&lt;1 year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H: Examples of Organizational Tools Used: Sample Recipe Card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Qty</td>
<td>Qty in Oz.</td>
<td>Ingredients</td>
<td>Recipe Qty</td>
<td>Yield %</td>
<td>A/P Qty</td>
<td>Price per Oz.</td>
<td>Total Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>Qt</td>
<td>32 oz</td>
<td>Beef stock</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>16 oz</td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>16 oz</td>
<td>Celery</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>16 oz</td>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>16 oz</td>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>lb</td>
<td>16 oz</td>
<td>Barley</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sub Total: .

Total: .

Spice x .03 = .

Total: .
Appendix I: IRB Approval Letter

August 12, 2016

Joe Askren
Teaching and Learning
Sarasota, FL 34241

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review
IRB#: Pro00027159
Title: An Exploratory Case Study of Hospitality Students’ Perceptions of Experiential Learning

Study Approval Period: 8/12/2016 to 8/12/2017

Dear Mr. Askren:

On 8/12/2016, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and APPROVED the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):

Protocol

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
Consent Form.pdf
## Appendix J: Sample of Coding Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tara Interview Question</th>
<th>What is being said?</th>
<th>RQ</th>
<th>CODE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Friend told me it was kind of scary......later...not that bad. Prepared for events with food. Here’s how its done...then do it</td>
<td>1 Hands-on class with pros teaching basics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1p</td>
<td>Prepares you for future...so you’re not walking into a job blind. Helpful with management prep</td>
<td>2 Use of skill outside of class relevant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Its helped me become more specific about my future...not just “I’ll work for Disney”.</td>
<td>2 Vision for future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>any facet of hospitality of requires communication....class taught this.</td>
<td>2 Communication skill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>My partner and I had to communicate effectively</td>
<td>1 Communication skill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>The project related to if you were in the industry and had to understand the process...recipe creation</td>
<td>2 Real world Labs is critical to preparing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>“Vinaigrette technique... (and) like bread... Knowing how to basically make those things, you can do anything. It’s like learning to ride a bike. Once you know it, you know it and you can do anything else.”</td>
<td>1 Learned Technique translates into more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>I understood basics of costing but not the hands-on reality of costing a recipe...profit....acceptable price</td>
<td>1 Costing out recipe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>Divided and conquered with my partner...good communication</td>
<td>1 Teamwork taught</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>Learned the importance of mise en place</td>
<td>1 Organization skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b</td>
<td>Tara’s Top 6 ranking of skills/techniques for industry:</td>
<td>2 Top 6 for Industry Prep</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business knowledge, Teamwork skill, Communication, Recipe and development, Mise en Place, Cooking methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4c</td>
<td>Teamwork. ......on the project. If we didn’t we would have failed.</td>
<td>2 Successful with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4c</td>
<td>Mise en place helped me stay organized...</td>
<td>1 Organization skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4d</td>
<td>Not successful with knife skills...</td>
<td>2 Not Successful with reinforced a new skill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The fish butchering with Chef Garry.... The FISH challenge</td>
<td>2 Gained confidence with new skill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5a</td>
<td>hands-on helps with the practical...able to grasp the concept more.</td>
<td>1 Hands-on learning sticks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b</td>
<td>project was designed to have us create our own recipe ideas</td>
<td>1 Brainstorming on Challenging project w/ real world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kid’s menu challenge forced us to brainstorm, conceptualize... (merge to page 8)</td>
<td>1 Brainstorming on Challenging project w/ real world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bouncing ideas off each other... working together on process was beneficial to the final product. The challenge was assisted with the group effort</td>
<td>1 Collaborative Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

221
Appendix L: Member Check Form

Dear ________________________________,

Thank you for an enjoyable and insightful interview. Attached please find a draft copy of the verbatim transcripts of the interview. Please review the transcription for accuracy and completeness of responses. Please feel free to contact me at (XXX-XXX-XXXX) or via email at (doreenXXX@XXX.com) should you have any questions. If I do not hear from you by __________, _____2017, I will assume that you agree with the attached draft of the transcription.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study.

Joe Askren
Appendix M: List of Peer Reviewers for Themes

Table M1

List of Primary (P) and Supplementary (S) Peer Reviewers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Expertise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Gunce Malan-Rush (P)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hospitality Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary: Dr. Ray McCrory (P)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research and Measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary: Dr. Faizan Ali (P)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hospitality Research and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary: Dr. Byron Marlowe (P)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hospitality Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wine Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharlene Smith (S)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhitton Cavusoglu (S)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caitlin McKeown (S)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Adult Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Carpenter (S)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Adult Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix N: Signed Peer Reviewer Form

Peer Reviewer Form

I, [Name], have served as a peer reviewer for “An Exploratory Case Study of Hospitality Students’ Perceptions of Experiential Learning,” by Joe Askren. In this role, I have worked with the researcher in identifying codes and emerging themes from participant interviews.

Signed: [Signature] Date: 02/06/17
Appendix O: Sample Response from Peer Reviewer

Hi Joe,

It was eye-opening to read the transcripts. Thank you for including me. Please see my comments below. As I read through, both students were interested in more hands on experience and one of them asked for more pressure while the other one needing more directions. I also noticed, they were both more interested in personal skills and the way industry professionals were treating them.

I would probably include in 4d "more description of the process before the session" for Ava.

I would add into 6 “Specific terminology knowledge” for Liam ( ), as he was able to name multiple activities.

I would add into 7, “certain personality types, people skills and industry knowledge” for Liam ( ).

I hope these helps.
Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,
Joe Askren received his Ph.D. from the University of South Florida (USF). Joe is an instructor at the College of Hospitality and Tourism Leadership (CHTL) at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee campus. He is also the director of the Culinary Innovation Lab, which is the hands-on teaching facility in the CHTL. His teaching responsibilities focus on food & beverage courses including: Event Management, Restaurant Management, International Food & Culture, and Introduction to Beer Science. Joe was a former Chef Instructor at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts from 2007-2012. While teaching at Le Cordon Bleu, he was voted Teacher of the Year twice in 2008 & 2011 by the school’s graduates. Joe received his BSBA from the University of Florida in 1992 and an MBA in Hospitality Management from Colorado Technical University in 2011. He is also a culinary graduate of Florida State College and an American Culinary Federation Certified Executive Chef.