

## Social Psychology Insights from Hell's Kitchen

I confess I'm a fan of Hell's Kitchen. I like the pressure-cooker Gordon Ramsay puts aspiring chefs into (such a boot-camp experience, notes this Army vet), and plus I'm a foodie, so what's not to love. Now, catching up on episodes, just saw this interaction and it makes me do a **double-take about how people perceive their situations, versus what is really going on:**

Season 11, Episode 13: A chef from women's team is chosen to go play on the men's team (balancing competitor numbers, basically, plus altering interpersonal dynamics). (**Spoilers** follow.)

When the person changing sides (Nedra) is announced, the men mutter amongst themselves "Sabotage." She's black, she's fat, she's not a hottie at a glance, and perceived (apparently) to be a problem person. Chef Anthony on men's team says to the private candid camera, "Red Team, tell me the truth: you wanted to get rid of her, and you couldn't eliminate her, so you did the next best thing and you sent her to us."

Which really makes one whiplash, because **in fact**, the Red Team (all women), had first drawn a name from a hat (equal odds for all), because **all** saw going to the opposing team as a leadership opportunity, so all were interested. When Ramsay discovered the person going over was on the basis of random draw, he made them go back and select someone on the basis of consensus.

Now that the women's team knew what problematic competitor from the men's team was still around ("I thought for sure they'd send Chef Zach home") - **no one** wanted to go to the Blue (Men's) Team -- except Nedra, who still saw it as an opportunity. So, the women "sent" her because she was the only one still interested in going, **while the men thought she was being sent to torpedo them.**

My my my my. Just makes me shake my head about how one small social group interprets the motives of another, **without really having the foggiest clue about what really went on, or how/why decisions were made as they were.**

Although this event happens in an "entertainment" format (for some value of "entertainment", in the land of Reality TV) --in fact **this social psychology "connect the dots" exercise happens in all kinds of environments all the time, and to me is a cautionary note about how quick we are to impute motives to others.**

Odds are we're probably wrong. (And *this* is why I watch some, selective reality tv: there are a lot of small group dynamics and social insights to be had if one watches through a particular filter. Works for me, anyway.)

And now back I go to see how the personnel shift all plays out. So there you have it, my sociology snippet du jour.