

An appetite for better jobs?

An analysis of job quality among chefs in Australian restaurants

Susan Luisa Belardi

Discipline of Work and Organisational Studies

The University of Sydney Business School, The University of Sydney

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Signature:

Name: Susan Belardi

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines job quality among chefs in Australian restaurants. The restaurant industry has expanded significantly over the last two decades in response to growing consumer demand, yet it faces significant challenges related to the recruitment and retention of chefs. Existing research on the causes of these issues has been piecemeal. Consequently, this thesis draws on emerging job quality literature as its conceptual basis, which refers to the characteristics of a job that are conducive to worker wellbeing, commonly including work organisation, skill and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, job security, and working-time arrangements. This literature has raised the importance of workers' life stage in shaping subjective assessments and the impact of market segment and organisational size on job quality.

This research is based on a comparative case study of chefs' job quality at six mid-upper market segment restaurants, involving semi-structured interviews with 36 chefs, managers, and industry experts. The findings revealed that, objectively, the quality of jobs for chefs is poor overall, with subjective assessment varying over the life course and impacting recruitment and retention. Some job quality dimensions varied across the case study sites, however there was no simple relationship between job quality overall and market segment or organisational size. These findings suggest that addressing job quality will improve recruitment and retention outcomes, as well as worker wellbeing, yet the relevant job quality dimensions differ according to workers' life stage. Furthermore, life stage is a broader notion than has been traditionally conceived, encompassing age and career stage in addition to family stage. Finally, the factors that shape job quality are complex and not easily explained by variables such as market segment or organisational size, with interventions required at the workplace, regulatory, and policy level.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Australia's restaurant industry has expanded significantly over the last two decades, reflecting the emergence of a more sophisticated food culture and growing interest in gourmet food experiences, particularly in urban and metropolitan centres (Finkelstein, 2003). Such cultural shifts are acutely evident in the rise of celebrity chefs, particularly their integration into popular culture through shows such as *MasterChef Australia* (Lee, 2014). These developments are not confined to Australia, with a similar phenomenon occurring in many developed nations abroad, most notably the United States and the United Kingdom (DeSoucey & Demetry, 2016; Lane, 2014).

The expansion of the industry has simultaneously resulted in substantial growth in the employment of chefs. The number of chefs is forecast to increase by 19,200 workers (22.2 per cent) in the five years to 2020 (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016b). This places chefs among the top ten occupations in terms of expected employment growth in the Australian economy. This growth would exceed the strong historical growth in the previous five years to November 2015, in which the number of chefs grew by 18.9 per cent (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016b).

Yet, the industry faces significant challenges related to workforce recruitment and retention, which threaten its performance and growth potential (Deloitte Access Economics, 2011). These issues have culminated in government inquiries and a range of government initiatives designed to alleviate the problems associated with recruitment and retention in this important and expanding industry (Australian Parliament House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation, 2007; Davidson, Timo, & Wang, 2010; Iverson & Deery, 1997). These challenges are of significance as research suggests that high levels of turnover have negative impacts on sales, productivity, and customer service quality, as well as direct and indirect costs, which together impact firm performance (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pierce, 2013; Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011).

Despite the importance of these challenges in the restaurant industry, empirical research examining their causes remains scant. The limited Australian and international hospitality-based research suggests that working conditions are likely to be responsible for recruitment and retention challenges (Beesley & Davidson, 2013; Deery & Jago, 2015). The analysis, however, has been fragmented, focusing on a disparate range of concepts and lacking any real conceptual or analytical framework that would enable more rigorous and systematic research. Consequently, this thesis draws on the emerging literature on job quality (Gautié & Schmitt, 2010; Holman, 2013b; Knox, Warhurst, Nickson, & Dutton, 2015) as the conceptual basis for analysing job quality among chefs and developing an understanding of how the quality of their jobs impacts recruitment and retention in the restaurant industry. While a consistent definition and conceptualisation of job quality remains elusive, the most commonly included dimensions are work organisation (including factors such as autonomy, workload and task complexity), skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, job security, and working-time arrangements (Burgess, Connell, & Dockery, 2013; Holman, 2013b; Munoz de Bustillo, Fernández-Macías, Esteve, & Anton, 2011). Job quality literature suggests that higher quality jobs benefit firms through enhanced job commitment, job satisfaction and, importantly, recruitment and retention (Montague, Burgess, & Connell, 2015; Morgan, Dill, & Kalleberg, 2013; van der Aa, Bloemer, & Henseler, 2012). Higher quality jobs also contribute to worker wellbeing (Broom et al., 2006; Horowitz, 2016; Van Aerden, Puig-Barrachina, Bosmans, & Vanroelen, 2016), and create more sustainable economies (Knox, Warhurst, & Pocock, 2011) that improve social mobility (Carré, Findlay, Tilly, & Warhurst, 2012).

While better quality jobs have been shown to have important benefits for individuals, firms and the economy, there is a concern that the quality of jobs is, in fact, deteriorating. This is thought to be due to factors such as the predominance of cost-cutting business strategies, brought about in part due to growing ‘financialisation’, globalisation, and the continued ascendancy of neo-liberalism (Carré et al., 2012; Kalleberg, 2011; Vidal, 2013). In particular, the growth of the service industries, particularly those related to personal or consumer services rather than professional services, is argued to be associated with the increased availability of poor quality jobs (Goos & Manning, 2007; Jany-Catrice & Ribault, 2010). Like many other developed nations, the Australian economy has transitioned from primary industries and manufacturing toward services (Connolly & Lewis, 2010). Restaurant industry

jobs are therefore emblematic of those that are increasingly available in the modern Australian economy, and, as such, an important focus for improving the overall quality of jobs (Green, Sissons, & Lee, 2016; Holtgrewe, Kirov, & Ramioul, 2015).

Relatively little is known about the quality of jobs in Australia. Unlike Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States, Australian job quality research has only begun to emerge (Knox et al., 2011). Only recently have attempts been made to develop a framework or index for job quality in Australia (Burgess et al., 2013; Charlesworth, Welsh, Strazdins, Baird, & Campbell, 2014). To date, Australia's collection of empirical job quality research has largely focused on exploring the quality of part-time and casual jobs (Bamberry, 2011; Campbell & Chalmers, 2008; Campbell, Charlesworth, & Malone, 2011; Chalmers, Campbell, & Charlesworth, 2005; Watson, 2005), and the quality of jobs in a limited number of occupations or sectors, such as trainee hospitality and retail workers (Roan & Diamond, 2003), hotel room attendants (Knox et al., 2015), café workers (Knox, 2016), aged care workers (Clarke, 2015; Martin, 2007; Meagher, Szebehely, & Mears, 2016; Montague et al., 2015), mining workers (Connell & Burgess, 2014; Peetz & Murray, 2011) and call centre workers (Hannif, Burgess, & Connell, 2008; Hannif, Connell, McDonnell, & Burgess, 2014; Hannif, Cox, & Almeida, 2014). Thus, this thesis contributes Australian evidence to the growing body of job quality literature, advancing our knowledge of the nature of jobs in an important industry and occupation.

1.2 Thesis aims

Given the intractable nature of the recruitment and retention issues facing chefs and the potential relevance of working conditions to explaining them, this thesis examines the relationship between job quality and recruitment and retention within the restaurant industry. In doing so, it uses an enjoined approach to job quality (Knox et al., 2015), which combines objective and subjective assessments of job quality, recognising the value and shortcomings of each, and enables an understanding of how they relate to each other. The objective approach overcomes the threat of biases (Burchell, Sehnbruch, Piasna, & Agloni, 2013; Muñoz de Bustillo Llorente & Fernández-Macías, 2005) but is unresponsive to preferences and omits workers' lived experiences (Brown, Charlwood, & Spencer, 2012; Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005). In contrast, subjective perceptions of job quality are thought to be more relevant to explaining the "labour market behaviour of workers" (Brown et al. 2012, p.1011), but, in isolation, obscures whether it is objective conditions, rather than preferences and

expectations, that are shaping individuals' assessments (Osterman, 2013). Job quality will be analysed using the most commonly included work characteristics: work organisation (including factors such as autonomy, workload and task complexity), skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, job security and working-time arrangements (Burgess et al., 2013; Holman, 2013b; Munoz de Bustillo et al., 2011). Given previous studies have generally examined a limited, incomplete and variable set of job quality dimensions and have not used the enjoined approach, this research will facilitate a more complete examination of the relationship between job quality and recruitment and retention. Consequently, this study will explore the objective and subjective quality of jobs for chefs in Australian restaurants, and assess its impact on recruitment and retention.

Studies incorporating workers' subjective assessments have highlighted the importance of workers' context in shaping their experience of a job, and therefore their perceptions of job quality. An emerging interest in the job quality literature is how workers' perceptions of job quality might vary across the life course, leading the same job to be perceived qualitatively differently during different life stages (Burgess et al., 2013; Clarke, 2015; Cooke, Donaghey, & Zeytinoglu, 2013; Knox et al., 2015; Skinner, Elton, Auer, & Pocock, 2014). Importantly, these different perceptions could produce different outcomes, such as recruitment and retention (Erickson, Martinengo, & Hill, 2010; Skinner et al., 2014). However, the extant literature has traditionally focused on the relationship of life stage to a limited range of job quality dimensions, most commonly those associated with work-life reconciliation, such as working hours, scheduling, and flexibility. Relatedly, the analysis has centred on the impact of family status or care roles, neglecting other potentially important facets of the life course such as age and career stages. Consequently, this study will investigate whether and how worker perceptions of job quality vary in relation to the life course, and the implications for recruitment and retention.

Importantly, understanding what influences job quality can provide insights into how to improve jobs (Findlay et al., 2017). While it is thought there are 'sectoral anchors' that cause the quality of jobs to cluster within an industry or sector (Grimshaw & Lehndorff, 2010; Siebern-Thomas, 2005), some degree of variation does occur across workplaces (Vidal, 2013). Product market segment and organisational size have been consistently identified as factors that can impact job quality outcomes, but substantial debate exists regarding these

relationships given the variation in findings across studies. In relation to product market segment, firms adopting a strategy that targets premium segments are thought to improve job quality outcomes (Schuler & Jackson, 1987), yet studies within the service industries have produced divergent results, with evidence to both support (Boxall, 2003; Frenkel, 2005; Keep & Mayhew, 1999; Kelliher & Perrett, 2001) and refute this relationship (Bailey & Bernhardt, 1997; Hilton & Lambert, 2015; Lloyd, 2005; Lloyd & Payne, 2013; Lloyd, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2013). Similarly, in relation to size, Storey et al. (2010) and Tsai et al. (2007) showed that job quality improves in smaller firms, while Lloyd and Payne (2012) and Haley-Lock (2012) found evidence contrary to this. Consequently, this study will consider the potential impact of these factors on job quality outcomes in the design of the study, and subsequently contribute to the debate regarding the impact of these factors. Additionally, a substantial stream of literature, based on cross-national comparative data, has examined the importance of institutional regimes in shaping job quality outcomes (e.g., Gallie, 2007; Gautié & Schmitt, 2010; Holman, 2013a, 2013b), suggesting that more inclusive regimes, characterised by the strength and institutionalised participation of trade unions and the extension and coverage of bargaining outcomes, are associated with improved job quality. As this research is confined to Australia, the potential impact of the institutional regime is held constant, enabling useful comparisons with other countries in future research.

In sum, this research will examine the relationship between job quality and recruitment and retention within the restaurant industry. More specifically, it intends to address the following questions:

- What is the quality of chefs' jobs in the Australian restaurant industry?
- Do perceptions of job quality vary according to life stage?
- What is the relationship between job quality and recruitment and retention?
- Does job quality vary according to firm and industry characteristics, such as product market segment and size of the restaurant?

1.3 Methods

To achieve these aims, this study deploys a comparative multiple-case study research design to examine the job quality of chefs at six Sydney-based restaurant venues. The case design enables the collection of sufficiently rich contextual information as it retains “the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2003, p. 2), enabling explanation and

theoretical understanding of complex, yet bounded, phenomena (Easton, 2010). Additionally, the use of qualitative data preserves the complexity of a multi-faceted phenomenon such as job quality (Hannif et al., 2008; Watson, 2005). Case study venues were selected purposively, according to product market segment and organisational size, in order to examine potential variation in key characteristics that could impact job quality. As a result, case study sites were equally drawn from mid-level and premium market segments of the restaurant industry, which were defined according to the average main meal price of \$20–35 for the mid-level segment and above \$35 for the premium segment. Case study sites were also selected evenly from two categories devised for organisational size: independent single-site venues and group-owned multi-venue organisations.

Within each case, interviews were undertaken with three to five chefs, in addition to the restaurant owners and managers. This enabled an examination of employee perceptions of their jobs, rather than rely on management accounts of job quality. However, the perspective of management was included in order to explain the design of the available jobs and provide an account of the associated recruitment and retention challenges. Interviews with non-managerial employees explored both objective and subjective elements of job quality in relation to the following indicators: work organisation, skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, working-time arrangements, and job security. Interviews with managers focused on the restaurant's business and human resources (HR) strategy, explanations for job design, and related recruitment and retention experiences. The interview participants varied in seniority at each venue, and efforts were taken to include a range of ages and life stages to enable an examination of the impact of life stage. A total of 36 interviews were undertaken for this study. Analysis occurred at the case and individual level, making it a multiple embedded case study (Yin, 2003).

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters, which seek to provide a detailed examination of the objective and subjective quality of chefs' jobs and its relationship to recruitment and retention outcomes, as well as an understanding of how this varies according to life stage, product market strategy, and firm size.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two reviews the current theoretical and empirical research. It begins with a more detailed analysis of the industry's recruitment and

retention challenges and current explanations within scholarly literature. In doing so, it demonstrates the lack of a systematic analytical framework in the extant body of research. The chapter then sets out the conceptual framework for this study—an enjoined job quality framework incorporating the job quality dimensions of work organisation, skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, working-time arrangements and job security. The emerging literature related to the impact of life stage on job quality is then outlined, including its particular relevance to understanding recruitment and retention outcomes. Having established the research gap and the conceptual framework, the chapter concludes with an analysis of the existing literature related to the quality of jobs in hospitality, and for chefs specifically, drawing attention to the factors that research suggests may impact job quality in the service sector.

Chapter Three provides the methodological approach of the study, outlining the multiple comparative embedded case study design and the qualitative data on which the findings are based. It provides an overview of the underpinning ontology and epistemology, the purposive basis for case selection, and an overview of the case study sites and interview participants.

Chapter Four presents the findings based on the case study data. It examines objective and subjective assessments of job quality according to the identified job quality dimensions: work organisation, skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, working-time arrangements and job security. In doing so, it illustrates each dimension's relationship to recruitment and retention and the way in which individual subjective perceptions differed according to life stage, as well as the impact of the firm's product market strategy and size on each dimension.

The findings are discussed in Chapter Five, analysing how they relate to the previous literature. Overall, it outlines the way in which job quality is related to recruitment and retention and shows the usefulness of the enjoined approach in advancing theory related to job quality.

Finally, Chapter Six provides the conclusion to the thesis, emphasising the key findings and contributions of the study. The implications for policy and practice, in terms of improving

recruitment and retention outcomes and worker wellbeing, are also considered. It concludes with suggestions for further research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature related to recruitment and retention in the hospitality industry, the job quality concept and the current empirical knowledge regarding job quality for chefs and the broader service industries. It begins with an analysis of the industry's recruitment and retention challenges and current explanations within scholarly literature, demonstrating the lack of a systematic analytical framework in the extant body of research and establishes the relevance of the job quality framework. The chapter then reviews the literature related to the conceptual debates concerning job quality in order to establish the conceptual framework for this study. It is argued that a multi-dimensional and enjoined or integrated approach is necessary to fully explore job quality effectively, incorporating the job quality dimensions of work organisation, skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, working-time arrangements and job security. Furthermore, conceptually, the impact of life stage on job quality has been signalled as important in the existing literature and therefore warrants further exploration, particularly given its potential relevance to understanding recruitment and retention outcomes. Having established the potential importance of job quality to the industry's recruitment and retention issues, the existing job quality literature related to hospitality, and chefs specifically, is outlined. This demonstrates our understanding of jobs in this industry and occupation is incomplete. Finally, to consider how jobs may vary within an occupation and industry, research related to what impacts or determines job quality is reviewed. This analysis reveals the potential importance of product market strategy and firm size, but shows that the evidence remains inconclusive.

2.2 Industry recruitment and retention

According to scholarly, industry and government reports, Australia's hospitality industry faces significant challenges related to workforce recruitment and retention, which threaten its performance and growth potential. According to the Australian Government Department of Employment, the industry's vacancy rate of 28 per cent is almost double the all-industry rate (2014). Moreover, 32 per cent of the hospitality industry's workforce has been with their employer for less than one year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013b). A study commissioned by Australian state and federal governments into the tourism and hospitality labour force found significant attraction and retention challenges, with 57 per cent of surveyed businesses identifying recruitment difficulties and 46 per cent identifying retention

difficulties (Deloitte Access Economics, 2011). Additionally, its forecasting showed that the shortfall in labour was expected to increase into the future. An Australian government inquiry into workforce challenges in the broader tourism and hospitality industry also found widespread employer reports of recruitment and retention challenges (Australian Parliament House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation, 2007).

Chefs are consistently identified as the occupation with the most severe and prolonged shortage of staff within hospitality. The Australian Government Department of Employment has placed chefs on the national *Skill Shortage List* for most of the last decade, which is the only hospitality-specific occupation currently included (2016c, 2017b). Additionally, research commissioned by Restaurant and Catering Australia (2014), the industry's peak body, found 22 per cent of businesses experienced extreme difficulty finding staff, with chefs among the most difficult positions to fill. Exacerbating recruitment difficulties, 'food trade workers', which includes chefs, have been identified as having the lowest training completion rates of all occupations, with only 40.6 per cent completing their apprenticeship (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2016). Such workforce issues have serious consequences for the viability of the sector, with research in luxury hotels finding that labour turnover produced significant cost impacts, which has the potential to impair business profitability (Davidson et al., 2010).

Several international studies have offered explanations for the existence of recruitment and retention issues in the hospitality and tourism industry. While different aspects are emphasised, the existence and perception of poor working conditions is chief among them. Deery and Jago's (2015) review of employee retention literature identified three pertinent themes: organisational and industry attributes, such as low pay and skill requirements, personal employee dimensions such as stress and job burnout, and work-life conflict. Beesley and Davidson's (2013) literature review identified similar explanations. These included industry factors, such as poor pay and progression; an inadequate skills system; changing employee expectations, with leisure and family life taking a precedence over work; increased expectations related to career progression; and industrial relations and government policy. These factors are argued to make hospitality relatively unattractive compared to other

industries and has encouraged increased use of migrant labour, which has diminished incentives to train and retain a skilled workforce.

Focusing on Australian evidence, several studies have identified the role of the hospitality industry's poor working conditions in recruitment and retention challenges, the most common being low wages, long, unsocial and inflexible working hours, and limited training and progression opportunities (Hamm, 2009; Iverson & Deery, 1997; Richardson, 2009; Whitelaw, Barron, Buultjens, Cairncross, & Davidson, 2009). For example, hospitality managers identified several reasons for the industry's recruitment and retention issues, including low wages, poor work-life balance, inadequate career progression and a negative industry image (Whitelaw et al., 2009). Similarly, Richardson's (2009) study of Australian undergraduate hospitality and tourism students highlighted the importance workers placed on key job characteristics—pay, promotion opportunities, career prospects, working hours and job security—characteristics mostly perceived as not present in tourism and hospitality. These perceptions became more acute as students progressed their studies and gained more exposure to these industries, reducing their likelihood of remaining in the industry.

Within hotels, Iverson and Deery found that the “turnover culture”—the belief of employees in the “legitimacy of labour turnover”—followed by the availability of job opportunities, poor career development and promotional opportunities and routinisation were responsible for retention challenges (1997, p. 73). Additionally, Hamm's small-scale qualitative study of Australian event management students and their attitudes to a hospitality career choice found that their poor work experiences, which consisted of inflexible and long hours, poor pay and low levels of training, had led them to develop “a quite negative opinion of the hospitality industry” (2009, p. 16). Finally, the Commonwealth Government's inquiry into tourism workforce challenges received submissions raising the issues of pay levels, career progression opportunities and working hours as causes of recruitment and retention issues (Australian Parliament House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation, 2007).

While these studies have focused on the broader hospitality industry, and often to the exclusion of the restaurant industry in particular, a small number of Australian studies have examined the recruitment and retention of chefs specifically. These studies have typically

acknowledged the broader industry's findings related to pay, working hours and career progression, but have emphasised the additional importance of other job characteristics to chefs' recruitment and retention. Robinson and Beesley (2010) identified job creativity as an additional factor of importance to chefs beyond pay and working conditions, and that it was the most significant of all job characteristics in explaining chef's recruitment and retention. Similarly, Robinson, Solnet and Breakey showed that chefs had a "desire to be challenged and excited through learning, experimentation, work variety and even an attraction to glamour, or recognition", and that, therefore, "boredom" and routinisation led to turnover intentions (2014, p. 72). Both of these studies, however, were based on chefs working within clubs, rather than restaurants, which is distinct in its different competitive pressures, market segments, ownership arrangements and industrial instruments.

Consequently, the literature demonstrates the existence of significant recruitment and retention issues and points to the relevance of the industry's working conditions to explaining them. However, there is limited evidence specifically related to the context of Australian chefs within restaurants, which are experiencing acute and prolonged workforce challenges. As Davidson and Beesley assert, in relation to explanations for the shortage of chefs, "the core issues remain poorly conceptualised, and at both a theoretical and practical level" (2013, p. 266).

2.3 Job quality and recruitment and retention

While numerous studies have highlighted key job characteristics and working conditions that impact recruitment and retention within the hospitality industry, analysis remains piecemeal, largely due to the absence of any systematic conceptual framework. What is needed to progress our understanding is a conceptual framework like job quality, which literature suggests is positively associated with recruitment and retention outcomes. For example, van der Aa, Bloemer and Henseler (2012) found in their study of call centre workers that job quality was related to employee turnover, mediated by job satisfaction and affective commitment. Qualitative case study findings have also pointed to the importance of job quality in explaining staff attraction and retention in a range of industries (Clarke, 2015; Connell & Burgess, 2014; Montague et al., 2015).

The precise nature of this relationship, however, is unclear. Several studies using data from a range of industries have identified a relationship between dimensions of job quality and

turnover or retention, but the studied job quality dimensions have been inconsistent, making an overall assessment difficult. Retention and turnover has been shown to be impacted by job status congruence, which is the extent to which working hours match preferences (Loughlin & Murray, 2012); work environment (Markey, Ravenswood, & Webber, 2015); training, opportunities for advancement and job security (McPhail & Fisher, 2008) and organisational support, supervisor support, work-life balance, work stimulation, and job clarity (Dupré & Day, 2007). Using a more comprehensive concept of job quality, Morgan, Dill and Kalleberg (2013) examined a range of extrinsic and intrinsic job quality factors. They found that extrinsic factors, including financial reward, promotion opportunities and workload, influenced intentions to stay. By contrast, intrinsic factors, such as supervisor/co-worker support and meaningfulness of tasks, did not. In sum, the potential relationship between job quality dimensions and retention outcomes remains unclear.

Most studies have examined employee intentions to leave, and therefore, retention, and simply implied that the impact on attraction is a corollary of the results. However, one study examined the impact of signalling job quality to prospective employees to assist in attraction and reduce vacancy rates (Backes-Gellner & Tuor, 2010). As Backes-Gellner and Tuor highlight, not all dimensions of job quality are observable to potential recruits, thus different job quality dimensions may become relevant. This study, based in Germany, examined the following job characteristics that employers could signal to potential recruits: career prospects (through the existence of training programs), job security and work atmosphere (through the existence of works councils) and challenging/interesting tasks (through the existence of training programs and the skill level of the existing workforce). The survey findings indicated that the job vacancy rate was reduced in the presence of these signals, suggesting job quality improves attraction as well as retention. Consequently, this highlights the potential utility of job quality for understanding recruitment and attraction, as well as retention.

2.3.1 Broader impacts and importance of job quality

Beyond recruitment and retention issues, job quality research has been highlighted for its positive effects on a number of levels: the individual, the firm and national economies and labour markets (Warhurst & Knox, 2015). Improved job quality is associated with worker wellbeing, promoting positive physical and mental health outcomes, life and job satisfaction

(Broom et al., 2006; Horowitz, 2016; Van Aerden et al., 2016), improved firm outcomes such as labour productivity, service quality and financial performance (Bryson, Forth, & Stokes, 2014; Lau, 2000; Ton, 2014). Finally, these individual and firm benefits culminate in national outcomes, improving national productivity and competitiveness, reducing inequality (Gerhard Bosch & Weinkopf, 2017; Siebern-Thomas, 2005). Thus, understanding the quality of chefs' jobs is also worthwhile given its potentially broader benefits beyond improving recruitment and retention.

2.3.2 What is job quality?

Although a single concise definition remains elusive, job quality broadly entails an assessment of a job according to a set of job dimensions that are conducive to worker wellbeing (Burgess et al., 2013; Green, 2006; OECD, 2013). Interest among academics and policymakers in job quality has flourished since the turn of the century. This interest is more accurately a resurgence, as its roots can be traced back to the 'quality of working life' research agenda that occurred during the late 1960s and 1970s. It has also been driven by the policy agendas of the European Union, the International Labour Organization and, most recently, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

As asserted by Carré et al., "despite the best efforts of governments and academics, there is no universally accepted definition of job quality" (2012, p. 7). Burchell et al. note that the concept of job quality has suffered because "multiple and relatively diffuse concepts have developed in parallel" (2013, p. 463). Aside from job quality itself and quality of working life, such concepts and terminologies include 'quality of work', 'quality of employment', and 'decent work'. Burchell et al. (2013) argue that this reflects multidisciplinary interest and the inherent complexity of the concept. Indeed, literature has come from sociology, psychology, economics, industrial relations, politics and even ergonomics. While the multitude of definitions and concepts has undoubtedly added confusion, it has also been a strength. Findlay et al. (2013) argue the complexity of the concept is best served by a multidisciplinary approach. Consequently, more recent conceptualisations have embraced this multidisciplinary, adopting a multi-faceted definition including a range of dimensions. The inclusion of the broadest set of job factors has also been shown to enable a more thorough understanding of job types and their quality. For example, Holman's (2013b) research showed that jobs that had both high pay and high autonomy, yet differed on the point of long

and atypical hours demonstrated different outcomes for psychological and physical wellbeing. Consequently, studies of one or two dimensions, such as wages, are subsequently no longer regarded as appropriate.

Table 1: Job quality dimensions used in previous studies

Study	Pay	Job security	Skills and/or training	Progression opportunities	Work intensity	Autonomy	Working hours/ flexibility	Employee voice	Relations at work
(Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2013)	x	x	x			x			
(Eurofound, 2012)	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
(Munoz de Bustillo et al., 2011)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
(Burgess et al., 2013)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
(Holman, 2013b)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
(Edwards, Sengupta, & Tsai, 2009)	x		x	x	x	x		x	
(Burns, Hyde, & Killett, 2016)	x	x	x		x	x			
(Osterman, 2013)	x	x	x		x	x			
(Kelliher & Anderson, 2008)			x	x	x	x			
(Handel, 2005)	x		x		x	x			x
(Clark, 2005)	x	x	x			x	x		x
(Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005)	x	x	x	x		x			
(Bamberg, 2011)	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
(Vidal, 2013)	x	x	x	x	x				
(Green, 2006)	x	x	x			x			
(Knox et al., 2015)	x		x	x	x	x			
(Gallie, 2007a)		x	x			x	x		
(Sengupta, Edwards, & Tsai, 2009)	x	x	x	x	x	x			

While there is consensus around the inclusion of multiple dimensions of job quality, the particular dimensions remain contested. It is generally accepted that job quality is composed of more than wages, including both economic and non-economic factors (Fernández-Macías, 2012; Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005). Various studies suggest the inclusion of different variables or dimensions, as shown in Table 1 above. Gallie argues that a contributor to this lack of consensus has been the addition of work dimensions, such as flexible working hours, as cultural values and economic contexts have changed over time; however, the core elements of job quality have been skill, autonomy, opportunities for skill development, job security and work-life balance (2007a, p. 6). While Gallie (2007a) asserts that pay is rarely included in job quality dimension, many studies on job quality do incorporate pay as a relevant factor (e.g.

Knox et al. 2015; Kalleberg 2011; Clark 2005; Handel 2005). An analysis of key job quality studies indicates that the most common objective job quality dimensions are work organisation (work intensity, autonomy and task complexity), skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, job security and working hours.

2.3.3 Approaches to job quality

In terms of the conceptualisation and operationalisation of job quality, a major source of debate has been the use of objective or subjective measures. In many ways, these opposing views are just as much philosophical as they are empirical and often reflect disciplinary divides. However, the debate has progressed beyond the simple dichotomy, with increasing recognition that each approach is distinct and it is the relationship between the two that deserves greater understanding.

2.3.3.1 The objective approach

An objective approach prescribes the criteria that determine worker wellbeing and thus the quality of jobs (Budd & Spencer, 2015). The underpinning assumption of objective-based job quality research is that it is the material conditions, rather than workers' perceptions of their jobs, that are the dominant influence on worker wellbeing (Handel, 2005) and that there are fundamental human needs that must be met through work (Green, 2006). As asserted by Holman (2013b, p. 477), "objective work conditions...shape the experience of work over and above personal preferences". Green (2006) and Gallie (2007a) highlight that this approach has roots in the Marxist tradition, which emphasises meeting the material and creative needs of workers, such as autonomy, skill development and discretion.

An objective approach is also distinguishable by its use of objective data, that is, data that is directly measurable and independently verifiable. While some scholars suggest that not even subjective or self-reported data on objective dimensions should be used (e.g. Sehnbruch 2006; Floro and Messier 2011), it is acknowledged that this is difficult in practice (Brown et al., 2012; Burchell et al., 2013; Campbell et al., 2011; Sengupta et al., 2009). For example, Kalleberg and Vaisey (2005, p. 438) highlight that accessing truly objective data for "inherently subjective" job quality dimensions is not possible, such as whether the work is interesting or challenging, or uses workers' skills. Other dimensions, such as autonomy, are difficult to measure objectively (Sengupta et al., 2009). The objective approach also often

assigns weightings to each dimension, which determines the relative importance of each dimension.

Advocates of the objective approach often base their arguments on the shortcomings of subjective measures, where it is argued that they do not reflect actual conditions. Several scholars support this proposition with evidence that job satisfaction data, which is often used as a proxy measure for subjective job quality, have a poor relationship with objective measures of job quality (Clark, 2005; Green, 2006; Handel, 2005; Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005). For example, Munoz de Bustillo Llorente and Fernandez Macias (2005) outline the little variation in job satisfaction over time and across nations, despite very different underlying objective conditions. Similarly, Brown et al. (2012) highlight that workers have reported high job satisfaction in objectively low quality jobs. It is important to note, however, that some scholars argue that job satisfaction is conceptually distinct from job quality, making it an inappropriate measure or proxy of job quality (e.g. Knox et al. 2015). Furthermore, some argue that workers' subjective data cannot be relied on as workers may not possess accurate information about certain job quality dimensions, such as job security and progression opportunities (Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005).

A key reason for distrust toward subjective assessments is that they are considered prone to biases. Several scholars have drawn on Sen's notion of adaptive preferences (Budd & Spencer, 2015; Green, 2006; Holman, 2013b; Schokkaert, Van Ootegem, & Verhofstadt, 2011; Vidal, 2007), which suggests that individuals acclimatise or adapt to certain circumstances, "which distorts their ability to evaluate their job characteristics objectively" (Burchell et al., 2013, p. 465). Munoz de Bustillo Llorente and Fernandez Macias (2005) outline a similar theory as cognitive dissonance, while Brown et al. (2012) term this as social conditioning. Others highlight that perceptions are shaped by unobservable societal and historical norms or expectations (Brown et al., 2012; Green, 2006). Finally, workers may provide socially desirable responses (Handel, 2005). Consequently, some academics consider subjective measures of job quality to be "contaminated" by workers' subjectivity (Muñoz de Bustillo Llorente & Fernández-Macías, 2005, p. 663).

2.3.3.2 The subjective approach

In contrast, other job quality research recognises and values the importance of workers' subjective assessment of job quality. This approach is favoured by some on the basis that job quality (and related wellbeing) is a subjective notion, and therefore should be based on subjective assessments (Handel, 2005; Kalleberg, 2011). To reject the subjective dimension is to ignore "the lived experience of work" (Brown et al., 2012, p. 1011). Underpinning the subjective approach is the belief that there is no one definition of job quality and that the 'fit' with workers' preferences is the superior measure of the quality of a job. As articulated by Kalleberg and Vaisey, "[p]eople differ in their expectations and needs regarding work as well as their preferences about the importance of various job facets and so may differ in their conceptualisation in what constitutes a 'good' or a 'bad job'" (2005, p. 432). Subsequently, this approach may include workers identifying which dimensions are important and their relative importance, as well as their assessment of each dimension and of job quality overall.

The value of the subjective approach also stems from the growing diversity of the workforce, such as the increased proportion of older or female workers, who may have different needs (Loughlin & Murray, 2012; Pocock & Skinner, 2012). Consequently, the subjective approach enabled us to move beyond the common conceptualisations of job quality based on an increasingly outdated 'breadwinner model' (Loughlin & Murray, 2012). Such arguments have support in recent studies. For example, Sutherland's quantitative research (2011b) found that different groups have different ideas about what constitutes a 'good' job—women tended to value flexible hours, whereas workers holding higher qualifications valued jobs that used their abilities, and workers with dependent children placed greater emphasis on pay.

Others highlight that it is problematic to assume the universal importance of certain dimensions, which is implied in the objective approach. As argued by Osterman, "[i]t may seem straightforward to assume that high wages are preferable to low ones but, as an example, what about work intensity? Some people may enjoy and seek out a high pressure environment while others may detest it" (2013, p. 747). Similarly, Vidal's research demonstrated that 'worker orientations' determined the perceived value of participatory arrangements—an inclusion in some measures of job quality—reporting that "[i]f one does not desire the opportunity to participate, it may be experienced as more stressful than rewarding" (2007, p. 273). Consequently, the worker's interpretation of the objective

condition should be privileged and the weighting assigned to each should be determined according to each individual's subjective preferences (Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005; Osterman, 2013).

Finally, how workers experience and assess their jobs is especially important for explaining the "labour market behaviour" of workers, which impacts recruitment and retention (Brown et al., 2012, p. 1011). Thus, subjective job quality is acknowledged for its practical use and implications. However, without the associated objective conditions as a reference point, it is difficult to compare different subjective job quality assessments (Green, 2006) and poor aspects of job quality can be obscured if the workers have low expectations or norms (Watson, 2005).

2.3.3.3 Enjoined approach

Given the benefits and shortcomings of each approach, a more recent and promising development has been to assess both objective and subjective job quality in tandem using an 'enjoined' or 'integrated' approach (Knox et al., 2015). As noted by Findlay et al., the debates over objective and subjective approaches to job quality "often leads to something of a dead end" (2013, p. 444). While objective measures can be seen as paternalistic and unresponsive to preferences, a subjective approach suffers from adaptive biases (Budd & Spencer, 2015). A key strength associated with the enjoined approach is its ability to overcome the problems of the objective and subjective approaches used in isolation, as well as harness the information contained in each.

More importantly, it is also recognised that subjective and objective approaches are separate but related phenomena, and thus, the relationship between the two requires greater understanding (Brown et al., 2012; Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005; Knox et al., 2015). According to Kalleberg and Vaisey (2005), exploring the relationship between the two uncovers how subjective assessments vary with objective conditions, or, how the same or similar jobs can be experienced differently by different individuals (Cooke et al., 2013; Knox et al., 2015). Using a subjective approach in isolation can make it impossible to interpret whether objective conditions or preferences and expectations are shaping the assessment (Osterman, 2013), while an integrated approach can show how preferences, norms and expectations influence job quality (Brown et al., 2012). This development has parallels with similar debates in the 'quality of life' literature, which also concluded that "the separate investigation

of each dimension [subjective and objective] can provide important insights into the QOL construct” (Cummins, 2000, p. 56).

Some studies have begun to utilise an enjoined approach, such as Kalleberg and Vaisey (2005), Bamberry (2011), Álvarez-Galván (2012) and Jones, Haslam and Haslam (2017). However, Knox et al. (2015) have advanced the conceptualisation of this approach by developing a job quality typology that demonstrates how the subjective and objective dimensions of job quality can be combined. Jobs are assessed as subjectively fulfilling or unfulfilling, while objectively assessed as good or bad jobs, producing four job quality outcomes (fulfilling good jobs, unfulfilling good jobs, etc.). In the case of the studied hotel room attendants, it was found that the jobs could be determined as objectively bad, yet received varying subjective individual worker assessments, which were shaped by worker characteristics and preferences.

As discussed, studies incorporating workers’ subjective assessments have highlighted the importance of the jobholder’s context in shaping their experience of a job, and therefore their perceptions of job quality. These contexts have generally been understood as encompassing worker characteristics, worker preferences and expectations and the workers’ economic situation. As argued by Cooke et al., “assessing work is a highly relative process which varies greatly depending on the priorities individuals identify in their lives and the economic and social context within which they are set” (2013, pp. 520–521). Consequently, Holman calls for further research that “examine[s] how personal and contextual factors shape employee experiences of job types” (Holman, 2013b, p. 496). Similarly, Brown et al. suggest that further research is necessary to “theorize the social and individual processes that influence workers’ norms and expectations” (2012, p. 1015). However, research in this area remains nascent and warrants further conceptual and empirical clarity and, as outlined above, requires an enjoined approach to unravel this complexity.

2.3.4 Workers’ life stage

The position of workers within the life course, or their *life stage*, has been signalled as an important way to understand how their experiences and perceptions of work vary. Life stages are generally understood as the socially, culturally and institutionally defined sequence of transitions and roles within the life course, especially related to the major life domains of

family, education and employment (Hamilton & Cass, 2017; Heinz, 2016; Heinz & Krüger, 2001). Interest in the link between worker life stage and job quality predominantly emerged from studies concerned with work-life reconciliation, which includes a sub-set of job quality dimensions primarily focused on working-time arrangements and workload. More recently, it has become a key theme in qualitative studies of the broader concept of job quality, which seek to explain workers' divergent perceptions of the same or similar jobs. Importantly, the life course approach to understanding job quality perceptions has been identified as useful for developing targeted retention (and potentially recruitment) strategies for different workers (Erickson et al., 2010; Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005; Skinner et al., 2014). This makes it particularly relevant to a study of the restaurant industry given its severe recruitment and retention issues.

Work-life studies have argued for a life course perspective due to the rigidity of current job quality conceptualisations. For example, traditional conceptualisations of job quality do not account for the specific needs of those undertaking family and other informal care roles (Pocock & Charlesworth, 2017; Pocock & Skinner, 2012). Work-life reconciliation needs have traditionally been overlooked for 'worker-carers' at life stages beyond mothers of young children, such as older workers (Erickson et al., 2010; Loretto & Vickerstaff, 2015; Moen, 2011). Qualitative and quantitative studies consistently show that work-life reconciliation needs peak in life stages related to parenting young children but continue, albeit at reduced levels, and thus, workers at these life stages have different needs from work (Erickson et al., 2010; Fagan & Walthery, 2011; Skinner et al., 2014). An emerging area of literature also acknowledges that care roles increase again later in life as elder care responsibilities are taken on (Page, Baird, Heron, & Whelan, 2009; Smith, 2004). Consequently, it has been argued that job quality should be understood as a dynamic concept, changing in accordance with different worker-carer life stages, by which different job quality dimensions become "more or less desirable over the life course as personal and family circumstances change" (Pocock & Charlesworth, 2017, pp. 27–28; Pocock & Skinner, 2012).

It has also been argued that a life course perspective requires a gendered focus "given the distinctive life paths of women and men" (Moen, 2011, p. 82; Richardson, 2013). This understanding stems from the persistent "gendered breadwinner/homemaker model of the lifecourse" despite rhetoric about advances in gender equality (Moen, 2011, p. 88). Evidence

from Fagan and Walthery (2011) also supports this, who found that the trajectory of workers' work-life reconciliation needs differed by gender.

These work-life studies, however, only focus on a subset of job quality dimensions most commonly associated with work-life reconciliation. These typically include aspects of working time, such as working hours, scheduling and flexibility (e.g. Erickson et al., 2010; Fagan & Walthery, 2011; Skinner et al., 2014). Therefore, these studies have not examined the impact of life stage on the full set of job quality dimensions. Indeed, studies suggest that life stage may have an impact on a broader set of job quality dimensions than those traditionally associated with work-life reconciliation. Skinner et al. (2014) identified that attitudes toward skill and career development and the physical intensity of the job changed over the life course. Additionally, Fagan and Walthery (2011) showed that dimensions outside of working time impacted work-life balance and also interacted together. For example, the positive impact of flexible working hours was negated if the job had high workloads and tight deadlines. These studies point to the importance of considering the relationship between life stage and a broad set of job quality dimensions.

Recent studies have provided empirical evidence to suggest life stage affects a broader set of job quality dimensions than the work-life reconciliation literature suggests. However, this body of evidence remains scant and, as argued by Knox et al. (2015), requires further systematic research and analytical development. An emerging body of qualitative job quality literature has pointed to life stage as an important factor in shaping the subjective assessment of job quality. For example, Knox et al.'s (2015) qualitative study of hotel room attendants in Australia and the UK examined the factors that affected perceptions of job quality. Life stage—defined as early, mid, or mature—shaped perceptions of the job and it was a factor highlighted as worthy of further, systematic research. Similarly, Cooke et al. (2013), in their study of rural workers in Newfoundland and Ireland, highlighted that age and family status appeared to shape perceptions of job quality, yet this was unable to be assessed comprehensively as interview subjects were confined to those 40 years of age and older. Nevertheless, the study concluded that life stage, work/life values and available alternatives combined to influence subjective perceptions of work quality. The influence of life stage has also been identified in the case study job quality research of Burgess, Connell, & Dockery (2013) and Clarke (2015), although the relationship was not explored in depth.

The work-life literature has focused exclusively on life stage in terms of care roles, yet other aspects of the life course may also be relevant, such as age and career stage. Indeed, Pocock and Charlesworth proposed: “what makes a good job also changes over an individual’s life cycle regardless of caring responsibilities” (2017, p. 28). Quantitative job quality studies have also shown a relationship between age and subjective job quality. Kalleberg & Vaisey (2005) found differences between perceived job quality by older and younger workers using data from 840 North American workers. Their analysis found younger workers most commonly valued an interesting job and autonomy, while older workers preferred autonomy with either an intrinsically rewarding job, high pay or promotion opportunities, suggesting older workers had more options for what constituted a good job. However, this study only included a limited number of job quality dimensions: pay, job security, benefits, interesting work, and promotion opportunities, which most notably excluded job quality dimensions related to work-life reconciliation, which prior literature has shown to be relevant. Additionally, as a quantitative study, it was unable to examine the underlying drivers of the relationship between age and subjective job quality.

Other literature, outside the job quality stream, has also provided evidence of changing employee needs and preferences over career stages. A study of preferred psychological contracts over career stages showed differences over time (Low, Bordia, & Bordia, 2016). Singaporean public sector workers aged 25–65 were interviewed about their preferences for inducements (and contributions) and analysed according to career stage, as defined by Super (1957) and Dalton (1977). The ‘inducements’ encompassed autonomy, skill development, progression, participation, flexibility, interesting work, rewards and management relationship, which have a degree of concordance with job quality dimensions. Early career workers in the ‘exploration stage’ were associated with preferences for skill development opportunities and interesting work, while those in the ‘establishment stage’ were focused on career progression. Moving into the maintenance stage, workers reported a greater emphasis on containing work to fit into life priorities, flexibility, autonomy and supportive management relationships. Finally, in the ‘disengagement stage’ approaching retirement, lighter workloads were valued. These changing preferences were attributed to the worker’s changing self-concepts. Workers in earlier stages framed their work preferences around discovering their workplace identity and their career ambition, while later in life, life

priorities were re-evaluated and, approaching retirement, workers felt less able to contribute (Low et al., 2016).

Another quantitative study of workers' job attribute preferences in the UK found that age, years of experience and family status had an impact on preferences (Sutherland, 2011a). Older workers (aged 46–65), compared to younger workers, placed less value on promotion, pay and security, but were more likely to value choice of hours or working hours convenience. Additionally, those with greater work experience were less likely to value advancement, training, benefits, and variety. However, married workers with children were more likely to value pay, security, hours and benefits. These studies provide evidence to suggest the importance of life stage and that it can be conceived more broadly in terms of age, family stage and career stage.

Within this context, it must be noted that life stage has been conceptualised in various ways across existing studies. Work-life reconciliation studies consistently conceptualise it in relation to family status, given the specific relation between care roles and work-life reconciliation. For example, Erickson, Martinengo and Hill (2010) used six categories: before children; transition to parenthood; pre-school children; school-age children; adolescent children and 'empty nest'. By comparison, Fagan and Walthery (2011) included the three categories of youngest child under six years old, youngest child 6–14 years old and aged 50 and over without dependent children. However, these categorisations of life stage may be potentially too narrow when considering their relationship to a more complete set of job quality dimensions. Indeed, Skinner et al. (2014), who incorporated career stage as well as family life-stages, were able to show the impact of personal relationships and other "valued life activities" (p. 52) on job quality perceptions in earlier life stages, highlighting the need to broaden the consideration of life stage beyond care roles.

Consequently, the existing literature provides evidence to suggest the importance of life stage in understanding job quality perceptions, yet our understanding of how it relates to job quality dimensions beyond work-life reconciliation is currently under-developed. In particular, the relationship between life stage and the relative importance of particular job quality dimensions requires further examination, as this will support the targeted attraction and retention of workers at different life stages. In order to achieve this, the concept of life

stage will need further development and clarification in terms of the relevance of family stage, career stage and age.

2.4 Job quality in the hospitality and restaurant industry

Given the potential importance of job quality to understanding the recruitment and retention issues related to chefs in restaurants, it is necessary to consider the current literature regarding the quality of jobs in this occupation and industry. A review of the literature shows that there is little understanding of the quality of chefs' jobs within restaurants, particularly in Australia. However, existing research examining the wider Australian and international hospitality industry indicates job quality is likely to be poor. Additionally, the research that does exist has not applied the conceptual framework of job quality in a systematic manner. Additionally, industry or occupationally-specific studies are an important research area for advancing our understanding of job quality (Burgess & Connell, 2008; Hannif et al., 2008; Knox et al., 2011; Pocock & Skinner, 2012). Aggregate studies obscure the variations across workplaces, occupations, industries and individuals (Holman, 2013b; Vidal, 2013) and sectors often exhibit specific factors that produce environments that encourage or stifle good job quality outcomes (Grimshaw and Lehndorff, 2010).

Within the wider hospitality industry, several job quality issues have been identified. Hamm (2009) and Poulston (2009) provided evidence from Australia and New Zealand illustrating poor conditions, such as inflexible working hours, poor managerial support or abuse, low levels of training, long hours, infrequent breaks and low pay. Hay (2015) also described job quality issues within hospitality related to low pay and difficult physical working conditions including insufficient breaks, hot working conditions and high physical demands.

Within restaurants, similar evidence of job quality concerns exists, but there appears to be variation according to occupation. Kelliher and Perrett (2001) examined the variables of “planning, staffing, appraising, compensating, training and development and labour-management relations” (2001, p. 424) with a ‘designer’ restaurant. Their research found that, within the same firm, the two occupations—front-of-house waiters and back-of-house chefs—experienced different levels of job quality. Chefs were provided with development opportunities and greater levels of participation (employee voice), resulting in higher quality jobs, while these were not provided to the waiters. Similarly, Haley-Lock and Ewert’s (2011)

research studied a limited set of job quality variables—wages (and tipping practices), staffing and scheduling, and fringe benefits, within US restaurants and overall, job quality was found to be low, consisting of poor pay with limited pay progression, and low control over scheduling. Part-time workers were also found to receive poorer conditions than full-time workers. Both of these studies suggest that the sector cannot be studied as a whole, and that analysis should occur at the occupational level, which is consistent with aggregate job quality studies that show job quality varies within occupations and sectors (Holman, 2013b; Vidal, 2013).

Studies of chefs in international contexts also suggest poor quality jobs specifically for this occupation. Long and inflexible working hours, low pay, high work intensity, restricted autonomy and poor physical conditions have been highlighted for American and British chefs (Chivers, 1973; Harris & Giuffre, 2015; Pratten, 2003; Pratten & O’Leary, 2007). High levels of workplace stress and aggression have also been a focus of studies in Australia and abroad, which is believed to be an ingrained aspect of the occupational culture but also another outcome of poor working conditions such as high work intensity and long working hours (Johns & Menzel, 1999; Meloury & Signal, 2014; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Zohar, 1994).

In sum, the wider hospitality industry is typically marked by poor quality jobs. While few studies examine the restaurant sector or chefs specifically using a job quality framework, existing evidence suggests job quality is also poor; though variation appears to occur between firms and occupations. Additionally, while the current literature related to the quality of jobs in restaurants is severely limited, the most relevant studies are internationally-based, with virtually no research having been conducted in Australian restaurants. These international studies may not be generalisable to the Australian context given the different institutional arrangements. Even more significantly, there is a need to generate evidence within a job quality framework, given the ad hoc and incomplete examination of working conditions in extant studies. A number of studies only examined a limited selection of relevant variables; yet, as argued by Holman (2013b), the inclusion of the broadest set of job factors, rather than only one or a few dimensions, is necessary for a complete understanding of job quality, and, therefore, its relationship to recruitment and retention.

2.5 Factors affecting job quality in the service sector

While little is known about job quality for chefs in restaurants, research suggests that a number of factors may impact job quality outcomes, which would produce variation at the industry or sector level. The key factors identified within job quality literature are product market strategy, firm size and institutional arrangements, yet emerging research acknowledges that these factors intersect with managerial choice, which is where the ultimate responsibility for determining job quality resides.

2.5.1 Product market segment

Frenkel (2005) argues that better quality frontline jobs can be found in service firms with a ‘value-added’ model, where businesses seek a competitive advantage through the provision of better quality and customised service. In contrast, firms with a ‘mass services’ model and cost reduction focus have tightly controlled, narrowly prescribed work. Consequently Frenkel (2005) argues that the only way to upgrade service jobs is to encourage firms to adopt a value-added strategy. However, the effect of product market strategy on job quality remains contested. While a body of literature demonstrates clear links between product market strategy and elements of job quality, such that quality-based strategies are associated with higher quality jobs, other studies suggest that the links are weak or even absent (e.g. Lloyd, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2013; Mason, 2004).

Illustratively, in the service sector, some literature has provided evidence of a link between job quality and product market strategy. Batt’s study of 324 call centres found that servicing higher value-added segments was associated with greater higher skill requirements, worker autonomy, reduced forms of supervision and control and higher pay levels given that “efficiencies based on rationalization are difficult to realize” (2000, p. 556). Similarly, a study of nursing assistants in nursing homes found job quality was positively related to three aspects of product market strategy: price premiums, servicing client niches and servicing clients with complex and acute care needs (Hunter, 2000).

More recently, evidence within the service industries, particularly in the hospitality industry questions this link. Based on the UK Employers Skill Survey, Mason (2004) found there was a generally positive link between skill requirements and product market strategy, but the effect was mediated by the dominant product market strategy of the sector. Restaurants and

hotels were given as a prime example of industries with ‘entrenched’ low value-added strategies, where a move upmarket was found to lead to a very marginal increase in skill, as measured by qualification requirements. However, using qualifications as a proxy for skill may not be appropriate in an industry with low prevalence of formal training requirements. Case study evidence from a UK restaurant also did not support the existence of a straightforward relationship between competitive strategy and job quality (Kelliher & Perrett, 2001). Higher-end ‘designer’ restaurants were found to have improvements in training, working time and scheduling, relatively high pay for the industry and positive relationships with management, but this was confined to the kitchen staff. This was explained by the shortage of chefs which necessitated efforts to obtain commitment from staff in contrast with the acceptance of ‘transience’ among front-of-house wait staff. Given the relationship applied for one occupational grouping in the firm, but not the other, the authors concluded that “the relationship between approaches to HRM and business strategy is a more complicated one than suggested by the models based on notions of fit” (Kelliher & Perrett, 2001, p. 435).

Within hotels, Lloyd, Warhurst and Dutton (2013) found no difference in autonomy, skill requirements, pay or work intensity—although some improvement in job security and stability—for hotel attendants in luxury compared to mid-market hotels. Additionally, a comparative study of hotel attendants across six countries—Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States—demonstrated that “high-road product market strategies (for example, based on high-quality goods or services) do not necessarily entail high-road human resources practices” (Appelbaum et al., 2010, p. 16). Finally, Hilton and Lambert (2015) also concluded that there was no clear link between the strategy choice and job quality of low-level occupations in hotels. Front desk attendant and cook jobs were generally rated as ‘high’ quality across both cost-focused and quality-focused hotels in terms of pay, scheduling stability, retention and promotion opportunities, while room attendants and kitchen attendants (stewards) were consistently rated as ‘low’ quality jobs.

Beyond the hospitality industry, other service sector jobs have been shown to be immune to upgrading in quality-focused firms. Bailey and Bernhardt’s (1997) case study of six retail firms found that quality competitive strategies did not produce positive effects on job quality, particularly for low-skilled and entry-level workers, in terms of wages, opportunities for

promotion or skills and training. Rather, information technology was linked to enhanced quality. Similarly, focusing on the relationship between skills and market strategy in the fitness industry, Lloyd (2005) found that fitness instructors were not better trained or qualified in high-end gyms compared to lower cost gyms. As in the case of hotels (Lloyd et al., 2013), higher quality was achieved through the physical infrastructure, fittings and amenities, rather than the skills and expertise of their staff.

2.5.2 Organisational size

Research has shown size to be an additional factor that can influence job quality, although there is no consensus on the direction or nature of the relationship. The wide discrepancy in the results and positions is encapsulated in two broad theses: small organisations as ‘beautiful’, or small organisations as ‘bleak’ (Saridakis, Muñoz Torres, & Johnstone, 2013). There is some evidence to support the ‘small is beautiful thesis’, where job quality increases in smaller firms. For example, subjective job quality, when examined as a composite measure, has been shown to be highest in small firms and decreases with increasing size (Storey et al., 2010). Using organisational commitment as a proxy for subjective job quality, similar results were found by Saridakis et al. (2013). Others, focusing on particular dimensions, have highlighted that smaller firms benefited from high levels of autonomy and good relations with managers (Tsai et al., 2007). In contrast, other research has found larger firms to be associated with better job quality. For example, a positive relationship between size and job quality has been argued on the basis that wages increase in larger firms (Hohti, 2000), and that smaller organisations have inferior progression opportunities and benefits (Lloyd & Payne, 2012).

Alternatively, studies that have examined a broader set of job quality dimensions have tended to find that the impact of size differs by dimension. For example, within restaurants, Haley-Lock (2012) found that smaller organisations had difficulties providing progression opportunities, or employee benefits such as annual leave and private health care, yet offered improved pay and scheduling stability. Among other studies, a pattern has emerged whereby small organisations are associated with improved intrinsic factors, while larger organisations provide improved extrinsic factors. Lai, Saridakis and Blackburn (2015) showed that autonomy, communication and employee engagement were better in smaller firms, yet increased size improved progression and security. Similarly, Kalleberg and Van Buren (1996)

found that smaller organisations had improved autonomy, but larger organisations had improved earnings and promotion opportunities. Finally, Wagner (1997) found smaller firms had less rigid work organisation but lower wages and benefits, job security, participation and skill development opportunities.

Explanations for evidence of improved job quality in smaller organisations have emphasised the role of HR formality (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996; Storey et al., 2010; Tsai et al., 2007). This perspective argues that larger organisations are constrained by formal HR practices—developed in response to the lack of “control over their internal environment” and “internal uncertainty” (Storey et al., 2010, p. 308)—which are inflexible and counterproductive. In contrast, smaller organisations can benefit from close and informal working relationships, which are able to adapt to different workers’ needs.

Importantly, scholars have also highlighted that size can be analysed in terms of both workplace or firm size, with Storey et al. (2010), finding that firm size had a more significant role in determining job quality than workplace size. That is, single site workplaces have different job quality outcomes than multi-site workplaces of a similar size.

2.5.3 Institutions

The ‘inclusiveness’ of institutional arrangements or the employment regime are also thought to influence job quality outcomes (Gallie, 2007a; Gautié & Schmitt, 2010; Grimshaw & Lehndorff, 2010; Holman, 2013a). Inclusiveness typically refers to the degree to which negotiated wages and conditions and regulation are extended across the workforce, especially to industries, occupations and labour market groups with less power, and the institutionalised role of unions (Gallie, 2007a; Grimshaw & Lehndorff, 2010). Within Gallie’s employment regime framework, inclusive regimes extend protections and negotiated outcomes to the workforce as broadly as possible, which builds “the capacity of governments and organized labor to constrain the actions of employers in the interests of improving the quality of work life of employees” (Gallie, 2007b). In contrast, dualist regimes focus on protecting conditions and rights for the “core” workforce to the exclusion of “periphery” and market regimes are characterised by minimalist worker protections and rights (2007a, p. 228). Evidence for this thesis has come from a growing body of large-scale comparative research. For example, Gallie (2007a) finds that skill development, task discretion and job security was higher in

inclusive regimes compared to dualist or market regimes. Similarly, wages, working-time arrangement, skill and autonomy were found to be higher in Nordic countries, which are typically considered a prime example of an inclusive regime (Holtgrewe et al., 2015). Other important aspects of institutional arrangements is the strength and role of unions in an economy (Esser & Olsen, 2012; Gautié & Schmitt, 2010; Hoque, Bacon, Earls, Conway, & Bacon, 2017; Simms, 2017) along with the presence and nature of skills formation and welfare systems (Grimshaw & Lehndorff, 2010; Lloyd & Payne, 2016). Together, these point to institutional arrangements that may have relevance for explaining job quality outcomes in this case research.

There is some research to suggest, however, that there are sectoral effects that can override institutional effects, particularly for the service sectors, or if protective institutions retreat for certain categories of workers or sectors in inclusive regimes (Doellgast, Holtgrewe, & Deery, 2009; Gautié & Schmitt, 2010; Grimshaw & Lehndorff, 2010; Jany-Catrice & Ribault, 2010). For example, the Russell Sage Foundation's influential study of five cases of low-wage work in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands found that while institutional effects were generally apparent across most occupations, for hotel room attendants, there was little variation across countries and therefore institutional regimes. This was due to the existence of regulatory "exit options", the lack of bargaining power, and the workforce's high composition of vulnerable workers, such as migrants and young people (Appelbaum et al., 2010, p. 13). While this proposition requires further research, it suggests that institutional arrangements may be less influential in the service industries. However, while this factor is of importance, it is unable to be examined in depth as this study is located in one country, analysing a specific occupation and industry.

2.5.4 Managerial choice

Some researchers highlight that the aforementioned factors do not have a deterministic relationship to job quality as employers retain agency in choosing how to design work and jobs, and thus ultimately determine job quality. Rather than these factors having a direct impact on job quality, they instead shape, influence and constrain the choices available to employers by closing off or opening up options, after which employers make an active choice from the remaining alternatives (Edwards et al., 2009; Findlay et al., 2017; Kochan, McKersie, & Cappelli, 1984; Sung, Ashton, & Raddon, 2009). Some argue that employers

will make a rational choice from among the options (Kochan et al., 1984), while others emphasise values (Findlay et al., 2017) or depict it as a cultural and political process, involving ‘institutional logics’ (Vidal, 2013).

The scope for managerial choice is argued to imply that, within organisation, sectoral and institutional constraints, the opportunity remains for firms to ‘choose’ the ‘high road’ and provide better jobs (Batt, Hunter, & Wilk, 2003; Findlay et al., 2017). Additionally, managerial choice has been proposed or used to explain variation in job quality in similar institutional settings (Findlay et al., 2017; Vidal, 2013) or product market segments (Batt, 2000; Batt, Hunter, & Wilk, 2003; Edwards et al., 2009; Knox & Warhurst, forthcoming; Sung et al., 2009). As a result, managerial choice is a relevant consideration when examining the influence of organisational and sectoral factors on job quality, and should be examined more closely when studying job quality within a singular industrial and institutional context.

2.6 Conclusion

This literature review demonstrates that significant recruitment and retention issues exist for chefs in Australia. While the chief reason proposed for these issues is related to the existence and perception of poor working conditions, these analyses have not been based on data related to chefs in Australian restaurants and have lacked a systematic conceptual framework. The emerging literature related to job quality provides such a framework and initial research suggests enhanced job quality is positively associated with recruitment and retention outcomes, although the precise nature of this relationship remains unclear.

Job quality is defined as a set of job dimensions that are conducive to worker wellbeing, most commonly including work organisation (work intensity, autonomy and task complexity), skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, job security and working hours. Recent research has pointed to the need to take an enjoined approach to job quality, which combines both objective and subjective assessments. In isolation, objective measures are argued to be paternalistic and unresponsive to preferences, while a subjective approach suffers from adaptive biases, and either approach in isolation makes it difficult to interpret which element is shaping the assessment or impacting on outcomes, such as recruitment and retention.

An enjoined approach can also reveal how the jobholders' context, preferences, norms and expectations influence subjective job quality. A particular aspect of jobholders' context—worker life stage—has been signalled as particularly warranting further research. While highlighted as important, the extant research has not examined the impact of life stage on the full set of job quality dimensions, but has rather focused on a subset of job quality dimensions most commonly associated with work-life reconciliation including working hours, scheduling and flexibility. This has been due to the emphasis on life stage transitions associated with changes in family status and caring roles. Yet other research suggests that other dimensions of life stage, such as age and career stage, may also be relevant. Consequently, there is a need to further develop our understanding of job quality in terms of the impact of life stage.

No studies to date, in Australia or internationally, have examined the quality of jobs using a holistic and complete job quality framework, nor has it been applied to understand recruitment and retention issues. However, the existing literature shows that the hospitality industry generally is typically marked by poor quality jobs. Job quality, however, may also vary across firms, with research suggesting that product market strategy, firm size and institutional arrangements may impact the quality of jobs, yet substantial debate exists concerning their impact. While a body of literature demonstrates clear links between product market strategy and elements of job quality, such that quality-based strategies are associated with higher quality jobs, other studies suggest that the links are weak or even absent. Similarly, studies of the impact of organisational size have either suggested that small organisations are either 'beautiful', or 'bleak'. Additionally, emerging research acknowledges that these factors intersect with managerial choice, which is where the ultimate responsibility for determining job quality resides. Thus, the impact of these variables remains unclear.

In light of this literature, this research examines the job quality of chefs and its relationship to recruitment and retention within the restaurant industry. In doing so, it employs an enjoined approach to job quality and analyses the impact of life stage on subjective assessments, and the impact of product market segment and organisational size on objective job quality. More specifically, this review has identified the following questions that will inform the research presented in subsequent chapters, based on gaps and tensions in the literature identified above:

- What is the quality of chefs' jobs in the Australian restaurant industry?
- Do perceptions of job quality vary according to life stage?
- What is the relationship between job quality and recruitment and retention?
- Does job quality vary according to firm and industry characteristics, such as product market segment and size of the restaurant?

3 METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter reviewed the literature related to the recruitment and retention of chefs and the emerging field of job quality, identifying the need to consider how job quality might explain the persistent recruitment and retention challenges of chefs in Australia. This chapter presents the case study methodology that will be adopted in this research to address the identified research questions. This approach enables the collection of a rich descriptive account of the quality of jobs in context, enabling an in-depth examination of the relationship between job quality and recruitment and retention, and its determinants. This chapter is composed of three sections. It begins with a justification of the methodology, including an overview of the underpinning ontology and epistemology. It then proceeds to outline the design of the study and how it was conducted. This entails the case selection, the conduct of the interviews and the data analysis. Within the outline of case selection methods, an overview of the industry and the case study sites are provided. The chapter concludes with remarks regarding the limitations of the study as a result of the methods adopted.

3.2 Justification of the methodology

3.2.1 Ontology and epistemology

This research is underpinned by a critical realist approach. Ontologically, critical realism differs from an interpretative approach in that, while acknowledging that the social world is socially constructed, it is believed that some social phenomena are ‘socially real’. Such social phenomena are considered to exist independently from the world that constructed them and have “causal efficacy”, as well as existing beyond pure discourse—an “extra-discursive” dimension (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 199). Thus, it considers interpretivist approaches to be an “ontological exaggeration”, as some phenomena, such as organisations, cannot literally be conceived of as existing solely through human thought or speech (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 206). Conversely, it differs from positivism in that it does accept the role of discourse and social construction of phenomena, thereby rejecting an exclusively objective view of the social world that operates according to universal laws.

Such a perspective of reality is appropriate for studying the social phenomenon of job quality. There is still significant debate over whether to adopt a subjective or objective view of job quality. Some scholars believe that job quality is best studied in terms of objective features

and accounts, which frequently leads to the use of large-scale quantitative surveys (e.g. Muñoz de Bustillo Llorente & Fernández-Macías, 2005). Conversely, others, such as Handel, argue that “for anyone seeking to draw conclusions regarding actors’ wellbeing or utility, which are subjective concepts, [not using subjective variables] must be considered a significant omission” (2005, p. 72). Others have also pointed out that there is no one ‘standard’ for job quality (Pocock & Skinner, 2012). Consequently, those in favour of a subjective view of job quality acknowledge the plurality of truths in terms of job quality and privilege subjective accounts of the lived experience of work.

An emerging viewpoint that progresses this debate is the ‘enjoined’ approach to job quality (Knox et al., 2015), which is adopted in this study. This model integrates both objective and subjective dimensions of job quality in order to advance conceptual and empirical research on job quality. Such an approach is consistent with a critical realist perspective that acknowledges the importance of subjective perceptions, but also acknowledges that there are components of job quality that can be considered “materially real” (Fleetwood, 2005), such as long work hours or low pay.

In taking a critical realist philosophical approach, this research does not seek to identify generalisable laws, but rather develop explanations for how job quality, as it is perceived subjectively or seen to exist objectively, may vary across individuals and firms within the defined context of Australian restaurants. The epistemology of the critical realist approach makes it “possible to contrive a theoretically grounded account of institutions, society and social processes, despite their origins as social constructions” (Ackroyd, 2004, p. 136). The critical distinction here is the focus on explanations and accounts, which are bounded to a certain context, as opposed to laws, which imply generalisability. Thus, the critical realist approach provides “more detailed causal explanations of a given set of phenomena or events in terms of both the actors’ interpretations and the structures and mechanisms that interact to produce the outcomes in question” (Wynn & Williams, 2012, p. 788).

3.2.2 Methods

While critical realism is considered “tolerant” of different research methods, it is considered a natural fit with the case study design, particularly when the purpose is to explain complex, yet bounded, phenomena (Easton, 2010). The case design enables the collection of

sufficiently rich contextual information through retaining “the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2003, p. 2) to enable explanation.

As defined by Piekkari, Welch, & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki (2009, p. 569) the case study approach is “a research strategy that examines, through the use of a variety of data sources, a phenomenon in its naturalistic context, with the purpose of ‘confronting’ theory with the empirical world”. It is this ‘confrontation’ of data with theory that is powerfully able to generate theoretical insights into the phenomenon under investigation. In this thesis, the case study approach, informed by critical realism, enables the examination of causal factors that may explain different job quality outcomes at the workplace and individual levels, enabling theory development.

This research uses a comparative multiple-case design, with qualitative data collected from six restaurants. A qualitative approach was developed for this research given the subjective element of job quality (Campbell et al., 2011; Hannif et al., 2008). A qualitative method enables employees’ perspectives to be drawn out, rather than relying on imposed assessments of job quality, and enables further investigation of complex ideas. As Watson stresses, where concepts are related to attitudes, survey responses merely “summarise complex sentiments” (2005, p. 377). Similarly, aspects of job quality that are difficult to quantify, such as worker autonomy, skill and progression opportunities, can be examined (Hannif et al., 2008; Kalleberg, 2003).

A restaurant, for the purpose of this research, was defined using the Australian and New Zealand System of Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) definition (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a). Cafés and restaurants share a classification under the ANZSIC, but it distinguishes these businesses from take-away food services based on whether the business primarily provides food and beverage services for consumption on the premises and table service. To further distinguish restaurants from cafés, an additional criterion was included in this study of operating during a dinner service period, with or without lunch service. Thus, restaurants were defined as businesses providing food and beverage services, with:

- consumption on the premises with minimal to no provision of take-away food
- provision of table service
- night-time operation (with or without lunch-time operation).

Establishing clear boundaries for the sample ensures the analysis is confined to a known and comparable set of variables, enabling greater control over “extraneous variation” that may impact the results (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 537).

A multiple comparative case design, rather than a single case design, was utilised to permit additional theoretical insights and assist in confirming or rejecting the emerging theory (Yin 2003). As Emmel argues, “each case contributes to the work of interpretation and explanation in the research” (2013, p. 141). The inclusion of additional sites is not intended to enhance generalisability, as argued in positivist methodologies, such as Eisenhardt (1989). To do so would be to inappropriately treat the case study approach as a statistical sampling procedure (Yin 2014, p.40). Rather, this study sought to identify “contingent generalisations rather than universalities” (Welch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki, & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2011, p. 757), which is consistent with a critical realist perspective on contingent causality. Tsang identifies the potential for case study research within a critical realist framework to contribute to “empirical generalisation”, which is “whether the findings of a case study are typical of the population from which the cases are drawn or of another population” and “theoretical generalisation”, which generalises findings to theory within the case study population and possibly other populations (2014, p. 180). Within this approach, it is still possible to determine related settings where findings and theory may be transferable.

While additional analytical opportunities arise from a comparative case study approach, the benefits of including additional cases must be balanced against the practical implication of reduced depth of investigation at each case site (Easton, 2010). In this study, the time-constrained nature of the industry did not permit a more detailed study of one or more restaurant sites, as this level of access was unlikely to be granted. Consequently, given the constraints to access and resources, six sites at the available depth were deemed sufficient to meet the aims of the research.

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Case selection and analysis

The primary unit of analysis for this study is the workplace. Comparative analysis across the six case study sites enables an examination of how workplace outcomes vary, including the quality of jobs and the recruitment and retention of staff. This approach is consistent with

prior research, for example, Holman (2013b) and Vidal (2013), who both found that job quality varied across workplaces within occupations and sectors. Attention was paid to selecting case restaurants that exhibited diversity in key characteristics that could impact on the quality of jobs—the product market segment and organisational size, as discussed below. Consequently, the approach taken was not purely inductive or theory-free, as is dictated by a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) nor was it deductive, with the intention of testing predefined hypotheses. Rather the approach was more akin to exploring intuitive theory, or “articulated preconceptions” (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 555) through the creation of conceptual categories to assist selecting analytically interesting cases. Dubois and Gadde (2002) describe this process as ‘abductive’.

While the workplace is the primary unit of analysis, additional units of analysis were also defined within and across cases, making this a study of “multiple embedded cases” (Yin, 2003, p. 52). As Findlay et al. (2013, p. 448) assert:

[M]ultiple factors and forces operating at multiple levels influence job quality. It is shaped by: at the micro-level, psychological characteristics such as personality traits and dispositions; meso-structures, such as how work is arranged and ordered within organizational divisions of labour; and macrostructures, such as the institutional regimes, employment policies and capital-labour relations within particular countries. The forces operating at all of these levels of analysis need to be taken into account when explaining differences in job quality.

While a comparative study of the influence of national institutional regimes on job quality was outside the scope of this study, it was necessary to look at the impact of micro and macro factors, as Findlay et al. (2013) highlight above, operating across the selected workplaces. As such, the relevant units of analysis are the occupation of chefs and the life stage of individual workers. This degree of causal complexity and contextual importance also necessitates a qualitative case study approach. Qualitative research can unravel this complexity, while quantitative studies are likely to obscure it (Grimshaw, 2005).

Analysis at the level of the occupation is important given the systemic recruitment and retention problems among chefs, making it a fertile context to understand both job quality and its relationship to recruitment and retention issues. Restaurant managers and owners were interviewed to describe the organisation’s experience of recruitment and retention and to explain the aspects of job quality under management control. However, during the conduct of the interviews it became apparent that the restaurant managers were equal in decision-making

capacity to the head chef, with restaurant managers only responsible for front-of-house staff within the restaurant, including recruitment. This is consistent with a critical realist approach to case study research, whereby conceptual categories are expected to be fluid throughout the research. As argued by (Ragin, 1997), the process of ‘casing’ involves beginning with a ‘working hypothesis’, which develops alongside the conceptual work of the research.

Units of analysis at the level of individual worker characteristics enable an examination of the different factors influencing subjective assessments of job quality, particularly in relation to life stage. Pocock and Charlesworth have proposed that perceptions of job quality will change as certain job quality dimensions become “more or less desirable over the life course as personal and family circumstances change” (2017, pp. 27–28). Gender is also relevant “given the distinctive life paths of women and men” (Moen, 2011, p. 82; Richardson, 2013). A number of studies have approached the definition of life stage differently. Studies focused on the impact on work-life reconciliation, a component of job quality, have tended to categorise life stage according to family status, such as the age and presence of children (Fagan & Walthery, 2011). Alternatively, studies have shown the importance of age (Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005; Knox et al., 2015) and career stage (Low et al., 2016; Sutherland, 2011a). Consequently, this study adopts a broad definition of life stage that incorporates a combination of age, family stage and career stage.

The multiple-case design reflects a “replication logic”, rather than sampling logic, involving “theoretical replication” of cases across different variables of interest, which can then be compared to develop theoretical insights (Yin, 2003, p. 47). As a result, case selection was undertaken ‘purposively’ (Emmel, 2013). From the outset of the research, a framework was developed for the types of restaurants to be selected. This drew on the theoretical assumptions, or ‘bold conjectures’ as described by Emmel (2013), of which variables might be of interest, which were formulated from existing research and an understanding of the nature of the sector. The product market segment and organisational size were identified as factors likely to impact on the phenomenon of job quality, and therefore were included in the case selection strategy. Following an overview of the industry, the rationale for the purposive case selection strategy is outlined.

3.3.1.1 Overview of the Australian restaurant industry

Restaurants are a component of the food and beverage services sector, which, with accommodation, is commonly known as the hospitality industry. The food and beverage services sector, which comprises cafés, restaurants and takeaway food services; pubs, taverns and bars; and clubs (hospitality), contributed around \$30 million to the Australian economy in the year to June 2015. This accounted for 77 per cent of the hospitality industry's economic contribution (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016a). A total of 39,472 café and restaurant businesses operated across Australia as at June 2016; these were primarily small businesses, with 92.4 per cent employing less than 20 staff (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017a).

The café, restaurant and takeaway food services sector is a significant employer in the economy. It employed 567,000 workers in November 2016, which accounted for 4.7 per cent of the total Australian workforce (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016a). Employment in this sector is also forecast to grow very substantially, with estimates predicting growth of 15 per cent in the five years to 2020, which would result in employment increasing by 84,300 (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016a). In absolute terms, this is the largest expected growth of all industries in the Australian economy at the 3-digit industry group level of the ANZSIC.

The café, restaurant and takeaway food services workforce is overwhelmingly part-time, accounting for 64 per cent of workers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017c). There is an approximately equal split of female and male workers, with 54 per cent female employees. Based on census data, the café and restaurant workforce is also predominantly young, with 40 per cent of the workforce aged 24 and under (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The share of employees among older age groups falls rapidly from ages 25 and over, with 23.6 per cent of workers aged 25–34 and 15.7 per cent aged 35–44 in 2011.

A total of 85,000 chefs were employed in November 2015 (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016b). Among chefs, male employees dominate, accounting for 74 per cent of workers in 2014 and 78 per cent are employed full time (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2017a). Similar to the hospitality industry, chefs are predominantly young, with sharp declines among older age groups. In 2015, the largest

proportion of chefs was aged 25–34 (42 per cent), followed by 23.3 per cent aged 35–44 (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2017a). The share of chefs aged 15–24 (10.9 per cent in 2015) was relatively low, which is attributable to the lead time involved in undertaking training to enter the occupation.

Chefs are a craft or trade occupation that demands technical skills, and is subsequently regarded as a relatively skilled occupation in the restaurant industry. The occupational skill level is reflected in the educational attainment levels within the industry, in which 48.4 per cent of workers held a certificate III or IV as their highest education, and a further 28.7 per cent holding a higher-level qualification in 2015 (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2017a). Despite this, wage levels for this occupation are relatively low. Median weekly earnings (before tax) for full-time chefs were \$1,000 compared to \$1,200 for all workers in August 2014 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Wages growth in accommodation and food services over 2011–2016 has also been lower than all other industries (Fair Work Commission, 2016, p. 38). This reflects the sector’s high level of award usage, in which 64 per cent of organisations are classified as award reliant, which is the highest proportion of all industries, and 78 per cent of organisations in this sector used award-based pay-setting (Wright & Buchanan, 2013). Additionally, only 4.7 per cent of the food and beverage services workforce was a member of a trade union in 2013 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

The employment levels of chefs are similarly forecast to increase significantly in the five years to 2020, with an increase of 19,200 workers (22.2 per cent) currently expected (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016b). This places chefs among the top ten occupations in terms of expected employment growth in the Australian economy. This continues and exceeds the trend of strong historical growth, in which the number of chefs grew by 18.9 per cent in the five years to November 2015 (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016b). This growth has exacerbated—and will continue to exacerbate—the long-documented shortages and recruitment difficulties in this occupation. The Australian Government Department of Employment (2017b) currently rates this occupation as in shortage, which has existed continuously for the last decade. Additionally, the accommodation and food services vacancy rate of 28 per cent is almost double the all-industry rate (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2014) and 32 per cent of

the industry's workforce has been with their employer for less than one year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016b). A study commissioned by Australian state and federal governments into the tourism labour force found significant recruitment difficulties, and its forecasts showed that the shortfall in labour, particularly chefs, was expected to increase into the future (Deloitte Access Economics, 2011). More recently, research commissioned by Restaurant and Catering Australia (2014), the industry's peak body, found 22 per cent of businesses experienced extreme difficulty finding staff, with chefs among the most difficult positions to fill. Employers argue that these shortages explain the high number of migrant staff working as cooks or chefs on 457 visas, which respectively are the highest and eleventh-ranked occupations to be granted such visas in Australia (Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2016).

3.3.1.2 Product market segment

A great deal of research has examined the impact of the product market segment on the quality of jobs, making it relevant to case selection. While there is a general thesis that competing on quality, as compared to cost, results in improved job quality, there has been evidence in the service industries to refute this relationship (Bailey & Bernhardt, 1997; Hilton & Lambert, 2015; Lloyd, 2005; Lloyd & Payne, 2013; Lloyd et al., 2013). Importantly, however, a UK study of restaurants found some impact on job quality, with a premium market segment delivering better quality jobs for kitchen roles, but not for those working in the front-of-house (Kelliher & Perrett, 2001).

IBISWorld identifies three market segments of low-cost, mid-range and premium dining segments distinguished by the price, quality of food and ingredients, levels of service, settings and ambience, and degree of takeaway service (Magner, 2015). This study excludes low-cost venues given the prevalence of takeaway dining in this segment, which is a different sector from restaurants and involves different occupations, such as cooks rather than chefs. There is also often significant overlap in the low-cost restaurant segment with cafés.

Without an existing objective definition of mid-level and premium restaurants, the *Gourmet Traveller Australian Restaurant Guide 2015*, a key industry publication, was consulted to devise a benchmark as it provides main meal price ranges for over 500 restaurants nationally. Based on the prices listed for restaurants in Sydney, it was determined that the premium segment would be defined as restaurants with an average main meal price of \$35 and above,

while the mid-level segment would incorporate those with average main meal prices of \$20–\$35.

3.3.1.3 Organisational size

The organisation's size was considered an important characteristic for case selection as research in other settings has shown this to be an important determinant of job quality, although the direction of the relationship is contested (Haley-Lock, 2012; Lloyd & Payne, 2012; Rowley & Purcell, 2001; Storey et al., 2010). Importantly, scholars have also highlighted that size can be analysed in terms of both workplace or firm size, with Storey et al. (2010), finding that firm size had a more significant role in determining job quality. Consequently, this study focused on firm size, as can be measured by the number of venues and total number of staff within the company.

Reflective of the restaurant context, two categories of organisational size were developed— independent, single-site enterprises or group-owned, multi-venue organisations. Independent establishments typically operated one site or venue, though up to three could exist, and were 'owner-operated', with the restaurant owner(s) as the head chef, restaurant manager or similar. In contrast, group-based restaurants were those that had a portfolio of venues, and therefore often accompanied by more complex ownership and governance structures, such as a company with the oversight of a board of directors. While in other industrial settings such an arrangement would operate as a 'chain', this is rare among restaurants in the mid-to-upper market segments, where each venue has its own distinct brand.

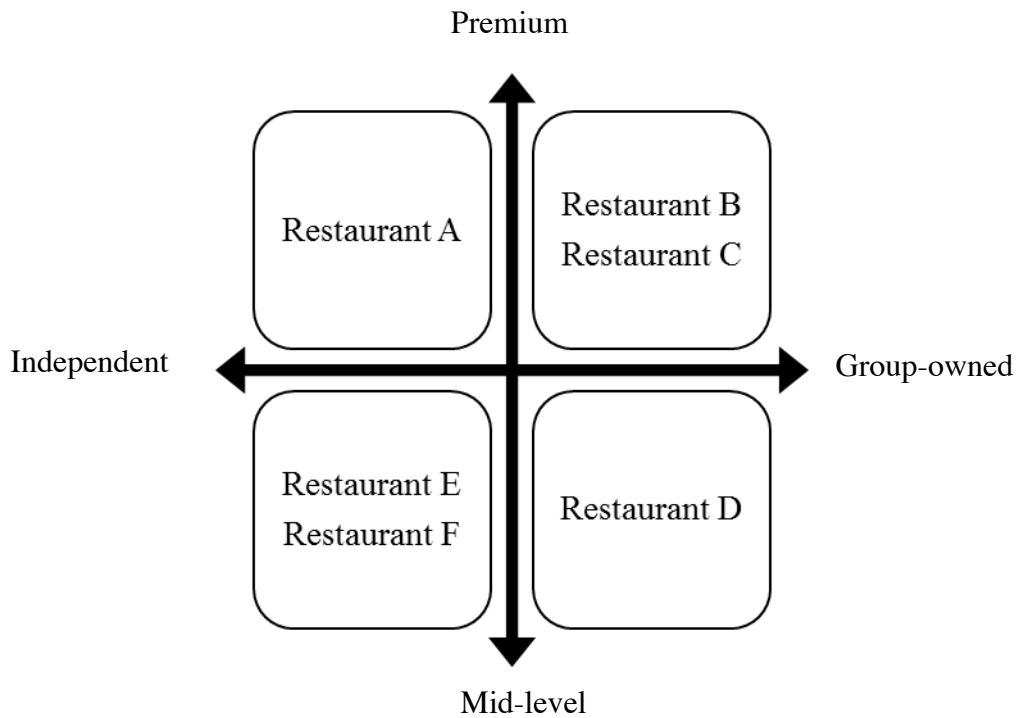
As the research progressed, the reality of these ideal types was challenged to some extent. For example, some restaurants that operated virtually like an owner-operated restaurant were in fact owned by a partnership of 'silent' investors, with the head chef as an investor and operator. While this structure has parallels with group-based restaurants, as the investors were also involved in other restaurants, management agreed when interviewed that the venue operated as a single-site establishment with an owner-operator, given the other investors were not involved in day-to-day or even strategic operations. Furthermore, unlike more traditional group-based restaurants, there were no centralised functions across the associated restaurants, such as human resources, or management policies. Rather than reflecting the operations of the business, this was more related to the financing of the business, driven by an increased reliance in the industry on 'financial backers' than traditional bank finance.

As noted by IBISWorld, the restaurant industry is primarily made up of small, independent operators (Magner, 2015). ABS figures also indicate that only 7.6 per cent of café and restaurant businesses employ more than 20 staff (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017a). However, a recent media report pointed to increased consolidation in the industry, particularly among upper-end restaurants in Sydney and Melbourne (Harden, 2014). Importantly, the restaurant owners quoted in the article specifically discussed the enhanced ability for multi-venue enterprises to attract and retain staff through improved career progression opportunities, thus potentially improving job quality. It was therefore beneficial to study both small and large venues, despite the industry being primarily composed of small businesses.

Geographic location, in terms of proximity to a major urban area, has also been found to be an important factor influencing the quality of jobs given the different nature of labour markets in major cities compared to more regional areas (Cooke et al., 2013; Haley-Lock, 2012). However, it was not practical to incorporate this into the research design and, thus, the selection of restaurant case study sites was confined to inner-city Sydney, defined as approximately 5km from the Sydney CBD, in order to control for any geographical effects.

Consequently, six case restaurants were selected in total, with half (three) drawn from the premium segment and half from the mid-level segment. In addition, half were drawn from independent, single-site restaurants and half from group-owned organisations, as shown in Figure 1. This sample was the result of inviting a total of 37 Sydney restaurants that fit the sampling framework to be involved in the study. Venues were progressively invited over an 8-month period between April to October 2015. Venues were sent a letter of invitation by email, which was addressed to the owner, restaurant manager and/or head chef. Given the time and resource constrained-nature of the industry, gaining access to restaurants was a challenging endeavour, as evidenced by the three additional restaurants that agreed to participate but were later not able to commit the time.

Figure 1: Theoretical selection of case restaurants



3.3.1.4 Overview of cases

Restaurant A

Restaurant A is a small, independent hatted inner city restaurant seating approximately 50 guests, with a largely local clientele. This premium venue has mains that are priced at approximately \$38. Restaurant A has a team of approximately 10 staff in the kitchen and approximately 10 in front of house. Within this restaurant, interviews were conducted with the restaurant manager and head chef, and two chefs. The venue is co-owned by the head chef.

Restaurant B

This restaurant is a premium, hatted restaurant based in the CBD. It is a large restaurant seating in excess of 100 guests, with a primarily business clientele. It is owned by a company with a portfolio of over 10 venues. Main meals are approximately \$50. The kitchen consists of approximately 20 staff and approximately 50 staff in the front of house. Five interviews were conducted in this restaurant, including the restaurant manager, and the sous chef, two chef de parties and a commis chef.

Restaurant C

This long-established premium restaurant is part of a family-run business operating between five and 10 other venues. The large venue seats over 100 guests and the mains are priced at approximately \$45. The clientele is varied across business guests, tourists, locals and events. The restaurant has a team of approximately 30 front of house staff and approximately 10 staff in the kitchen. At this venue, five staff were interviewed, including the human resources manager, the restaurant manager, the sous chef, and two chefs.

Restaurant D

This venue is a mid-level restaurant located in the CBD owned by a group with over 20 venues in their portfolio. The average main meal price is approximately \$32, with capacity to seat in excess of 100 guests. The clientele is largely business-based. The kitchen is made up of a team of approximately 15 staff and approximately 25 staff in the front of house team. Three interviews were conducted at Restaurant D with the executive chef, and two chef de parties.

Restaurant E

Restaurant E is a small owner-operated venue, with capacity to seat approximately 50 diners. The clientele is largely local. Operating in the mid-level market, mains are priced at approximately \$28. The small team is made up of approximately 5 front of house staff and 5 staff in the kitchen. Six interviews were conducted at this restaurant including the two owners (head chef and maitre'd), the operations manager, restaurant manager, sous chef, and commis chef.

Restaurant F

Restaurant F is a small owner-operated venue, seating approximately 50 clients. It has a largely local clientele, and is within the mid-level of the market, with the mains priced at approximately \$25. The team is made up of approximately 15 front of house staff and approximately 10 staff in the kitchen. Four interviews were undertaken at this venue with the restaurant manager, head chef, and two chefs.

3.3.1.5 Recruitment of participants

Within each of the six case restaurants, between three and five interviews were conducted with owners, managers and chefs, resulting in a total of 26 interviews. The case studies were

supplemented with two interviews with female chefs at additional venues, which provided further insight into the experiences of women at later life stages in the industry, which were lacking from the case study interviews. Additionally, eight interviews were conducted with vocational education practitioners within public and private registered training organisations to provide further industry context. Consequently, a total of 36 interviews were undertaken for this study.¹

As outlined, restaurants were selected for inclusion in the study after accepting an invitation addressed to the owners, restaurant manager and/or head chef. Once the case restaurants agreed to participate, the relevant person was asked to distribute the letter of invitation to the staff. The letters of invitation, participant information statement and participant consent form are provided in the appendix. The restaurants were advised to invite all members of staff, and it was emphasised that participation was voluntary and each staff member would need to individually consent to participating in the study. Each restaurant and research participant was assured confidentiality and anonymity from the outset, as stated in information and consent forms provided to all participants.

The participating chefs ranged from 20 to 44 years of age, with an almost equal split by gender. The characteristics of the chef participants are shown in Table 2. Attempts were made to include participants across a variety of life stages, however given the characteristics of the industry, older workers, especially with dependent children, were not present in large numbers at the venues studied.

A modified categorisation of existing life stage conceptualisations was used to better reflect the data and context, yet maintain consistency and comparability with similar studies. Similar to Fagan and Walthery (2011), family stage was conceptualised as no children; youngest child under 6; youngest child 6–14 years old; youngest child 15+, however, only the first two categorisations were present in the data. Age was categorised according to four age ranges found among the participants: 20–24; 25–29; 30–34; 35–39 and 40–44. These age categories are consistent with those utilised in national labour force data sets; are found to be sensitive enough to differences in life stage; and assist in maintaining participant anonymity.

¹ An additional 17 interviews were conducted with wait staff at the case restaurants but were not included in the analysis for this thesis due to space constraints.

Table 2: Participant characteristics

Participant	Position	Gender	Age range	Career stage	Family stage
John	Sous chef	Male	40–44	Mature career	Youngest child under 6
Harry	Executive chef	Male	40–44	Mature career	Youngest child under 6
Colin	Head chef/Owner	Male	35–39	Mature career	Youngest child under 6
Mat	Head chef	Male	35–39	Mid-career	No children
Alicia	Head chef	Female	35–39	Mid-career	No children
Jack	Commis chef	Male	30–34	Early career	No children
Natalie	Chef	Female	30–34	Mid-career	No children
Paul	Chef de partie	Male	30–34	Mid-career	No children
Mark	Head chef/Owner	Male	30–34	Mid-career	No children
Chloe	Chef	Female	25–29	Early career	No children
Caitlin	Sous chef	Female	25–29	Early career	No children
Thomas	Chef	Male	25–29	Early career	No children
Nancy	Demi chef	Female	25–29	Early career	No children
Lucas	Sous chef	Male	25–29	Mid-career	No children
Emily	Sous chef	Female	25–29	Mid-career	No children
Mary	Commis chef	Female	20–24	Early career	No children
Claudia	Pastry chef de partie	Female	20–24	Establishment	No children
Gareth	Chef de partie	Male	20–24	Establishment	No children
Jessica	Apprentice chef (3rd year)	Female	20–24	Early career	No children
Jeremy	Chef de partie	Male	20–24	Early career	No children
Sophie	Chef	Female	20–24	Establishment	No children

Finally, the conceptualisation of career stage was based on a combination and modification of two pre-existing frameworks. It combined Super's framework, cited in Low, Bordia and Bordia (2016), of 'exploration', 'establishment', 'maintenance' and 'disengagement' career stages, with Skinner et al. (2014)'s framework of 'coming into the workforce and the early years at work', 'family formation', 'mid-career' and 'late career/pre-retirement'. These were then modified to reflect the classifications that emerged from the interviews, resulting in four modified categories of 'early', 'establishment', 'mid' and 'mature' career stages. To be considered early career, participants had less than five years' experience and a junior title within the kitchen (apprentice chef, commis chef or chef). Participants in the establishment stage had 6–12 years' experience and had progressed in the kitchen to a mid-level role, such

as chef de partie. In the mid-career stage, chefs had 13–20 years' experience and had gained management responsibilities, such as the role of sous chef. Finally, mature stage chefs had 20+ years of experience and a senior title, such as head chef, executive chef or owner. However, it should be noted that life stage, conceptualised in this way, did not form part of the participant recruitment strategy, but was developed in response to the data for the purposes of analysis.

3.3.2 Conduct of interviews

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken one-on-one with each participant, as opposed to unstructured or structured interviews. This enabled a degree of thematic consistency, yet did not impose or constrain the respondents in what they identified as important or relevant, and enabled deeper exploration of emerging themes (Alvesson, 2011; Flick, 1998; Fontana & Frey, 2000). The themes covered in the semi-structured interviews are provided in Appendix C. The duration of the interviews was usually 60 minutes, with a small proportion lasting 30–45 minutes. Each interview took place either in a private area at the workplace or a location offsite and was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed, except for one interview where the participant did not consent to audio recording and therefore notes were taken during the interview.

Interviews were conducted with both workers and managers as it was important to obtain employee views of their jobs, rather than rely on management accounts (Haley-Lock & Ewert, 2011), yet also understand the rationale for the way jobs were designed and the venue's experience of recruitment and retention. Consequently, the interviews with the non-managerial employees explored both objective and subjective indicators of job quality. Specifically, interviewees were asked about the following indicators to determine job quality holistically: work organisation (task complexity, job autonomy, work intensity, and monitoring), skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, working-time arrangements and job security (Burgess et al., 2013; Holman, 2013b; Munoz de Bustillo et al., 2011). To ascertain subjective indicators of job quality, respondents were also asked about their perceptions of job quality dimensions in their current job, as well as their willingness to continue working in their current job, and future career intentions. To better understand what influences subjective assessments, personal characteristics related to life stage—age, career stage and family status—were also collected from each participant.

The managerial staff interviews covered the restaurant's business and HR strategy, recruitment and retention experience, and their perspective on the quality of jobs available in their organisation, including their own job. These interviews also permitted a degree of triangulation, by accessing a range of views on the objective nature of jobs available within each workplace.

Finally, interviews were conducted with external industry informants. Eight interviews took place with management and frontline workers within public and private training providers. These interviews were able to provide further information on the nature of industry training and the skills required for the industry, the historical supply and demand of trained graduates, and recruitment and retention challenges within the industry.

To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents, pseudonyms were developed. A key concern given the involvement of management in facilitating the participation of staff was the reassurance to staff that their responses would be confidential and not passed on to their employer. Additionally, it was important to ensure that the write up of results would not inadvertently identify individuals through the description of distinguishing characteristics. As well as fulfilling ethics requirements, this was essential for developing rapport and a degree of openness between participants and the researcher.

3.3.3 Analysis and interpretation

As previously mentioned, data were collected according to the themes identified in the job quality literature, yet was not excessively constrained owing to the format of semi-structured interviews. The data were content analysed to identify trends and relationships within and between key concepts (Yin, 2003) using an iterative thematic process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The data were first coded according to broad, pre-identified themes, namely the subjective assessments and objective assessments of job quality dimensions (work organisation, skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, job security and working hours), and worker views on recruitment and retention, and factors impacting job quality (worker life stage, organisation size, product market, and managerial discretion). Following this, sub-themes and additional themes were added as they emerged from the data, as well as the revision of categories considered to be important a priori. As argued by Emmel, "our ability to categorise is an important one, but the researcher's skill to disrupt, question and re-subscribe categories is essential" (2013, p. 129). Consequently, this study did not

apply the extreme inductive approach of grounded theory, whereby the coding process is entirely data-driven, but was still inductive in the sense that the data influenced the analysis.

Coding was undertaken using NVivo 10 software and was conducted so as to retain the contextual richness of the data. This was achieved by avoiding overly narrow coding that assigns brief excerpts of speech in isolation to a label; rather, the context of statements were retained and thematic relationships between data were identified (Maxwell, 2012). As noted by Coffey and Atkinson (1996), the coding process does not constitute the analysis, but must be followed by interpretive work. This is similarly argued in Emmel's "rejection of the micro-empirical account", whereby the researcher plays an active role in turning "weak constructions" into "strong interpretation and explanation" (2013, p. 143). Consequently, coding was approached as a process that predominantly categorised and ordered the data, enabling relationships between and within concepts to become evident.

3.4 Limitations of the study

This study has some limitations, which must be considered when interpreting its findings. Firstly, the study is based on a limited sample of workers and case study sites, which restrict the confidence with which the findings can be generalised to the broader restaurant industry, in particular to non-metropolitan locations and to international contexts operating under different industrial relations frameworks. The generalisability to other industry contexts can also not be assumed. As other job quality studies have noted, a case study approach may not be able to account for the impact of local labour market conditions on job quality if undertaken in one location at a single point in time (Haley-Lock, 2012). Subsequently, further research is required to determine the generalisability of the findings to other contexts.

Another limitation is that official turnover data was not available for the sites studied as this was not computed or recorded by the venues. However, the managers interviewed were able to report more generally on their experiences of recruitment and retention, as were the workers able to reveal what informed their decisions related to recruitment and retention. Additionally, for the most part, the interview data captured detailed information regarding the quality of jobs and their context, however, for some job quality dimensions such as skills and work organisation, additional detail could have been obtained from observation data.

Furthermore, given the nature of recruitment of case study sites, there is the potential that restaurants that accepted the invitation to participate were more likely to have better working conditions than those that did not. Employers who chose to be involved expressed a motivation to improve conditions in the sector, which is likely to be reflected in the managerial practices of the establishment. Consequently, this study may not represent the full breadth of conditions that exist in the industry, and further research using a different participant recruitment methodology may be required to gain access to workers at possibly poorer quality sites.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the findings related to the objective and subjective quality of chefs' jobs in the venues studied. As discussed, this is in accordance with an enjoined approach to job quality, which acknowledges that examining both perspectives in tandem offers analytical value and overcomes the shortcomings of each approach in isolation. The findings are presented thematically for each job quality dimension: work organisation, skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, job security and working hours. In addition to providing a detailed account of the quality of jobs, it also identifies each dimension's impact on recruitment and retention and examines whether the dimension varies according to product market segment and organisational size.

4.2 Work organisation

Work organisation is examined on the basis of four factors: work intensity, discretion and autonomy, monitoring and task complexity, which are considered in turn.

4.2.1 Work intensity: objective assessment

Work intensity was high across all the sites studied. Workers consistently described a high pace of work, often describing it as 'running': "the minute you get in to the minute you go out, you're running; you're going a million miles an hour and you don't stop" (Paul, Chef de Partie, Restaurant C). In most venues, the pace of work was considered highest during service periods, where the flow of customer orders was high in a compressed time period, combined with the pressure of delivering consistently high quality food across the team in the required time.

During service it's just like hammering the tongs, it's so fast. Everyone's screaming at each other and it's just pretty full on. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

You don't realise how precise things have to be and how pressurised the environment is... it's very quick and in the moment, because the customer doesn't care what's going on behind the scenes. They're paying for their meal and they want their food in the timing that they want it—they don't give a shit why it's not like that. They don't care that your meat supplier showed up at five o'clock instead of 10am or whatever. (Mark, Head Chef, Restaurant F)

For Restaurant D, a venue that served lunches and was located in the CBD and therefore had a high lunchtime trade, the pace was even higher given the shorter time period for lunch. One chef recounted that the kitchen would be serving over one steak per minute during this service.

[L]unch is the hardest service period. Mainly because everything happens within one hour, like 12:30 to 2, it's just when we're busy, and within that hour and a half we do like 160 [guests]. And generally 80 per cent of the people do buy steaks, so that's about 120–140 steaks. (Jeremy, Chef de Partie, Restaurant D)

This intensity resulted in, and was exacerbated by, the absence of breaks during service. This practice was the norm across all venues, and it was explained as follows: “[during service] we don't have the time [for breaks]” (Emily, Sous Chef, Restaurant A). Instead, breaks were confined to a one-hour meal in between the lunch or daytime prep and dinner service. The intense pace, absence of breaks, combined with the high number of hours and the physical nature of the work in hot conditions, created a physically demanding job.

While the intensity was high across all the studied venues, some venues benefited from having single dinner service periods rather than double (lunch and dinner) services. Not only did this remove the most intense component of work—the lunch hour—but also provided more time to carry out the ‘prep’ work involved for the dinner service. While single-service venues would allow at least six hours of ‘prep’, venues completing two service periods would only allow two to four hours before each service period. Consequently, chefs in double-service venues described having to work at greater intensity during ‘prep’ as well as during service. Overall, however, venue size and product market segment had no relationship with the intensity of work.

4.2.2 Work intensity: subjective assessment

The perceptions of the intensity of the job were strongly influenced by the life stage of the worker, specifically age. Younger workers, while acknowledging the physical intensity and subsequent exhaustion, felt able to handle the conditions, particularly if they maintained their fitness, as described by two younger chefs, Emily and Nancy:

[I]t is [tiring] physically...That's why I say we have to keep fit. Otherwise you are going to get really tired. (Nancy, Demi Chef, Restaurant D)

[W]hen you're just exhausted and it's getting towards the end of the week, you've just got to keep your head down and keep going. (Emily, Sous Chef, Restaurant A)

In contrast, a key concern for the older chefs was their ability to cope with the combination of the physical intensity and the extended hours as they aged. An older chef, Harry, had revealed that he had considered exiting the industry multiple times due to “feeling tired and being worn [out] because of what this industry tends to do to you”. However, this was avoided when he was able to negotiate reduced hours, which lessened the impact of the work

intensity. Given chefs reported that this flexibility was not the norm in the industry, for many older chefs, the physical intensity of the work would prompt them to leave the occupation and industry.

Younger chefs were also highly cognisant that, given the job's physical nature, their bodies would not be able to withstand longer hours and the intensity of kitchen work in the future as they aged. Therefore, they often reported that they were preparing for how they would cope with this in the future, such as considering exiting the industry or selecting venues and jobs within the industry based on the work intensity.

You get to a certain age and you can't really work in a kitchen anymore. (Sophie, Chef, Restaurant F)

Catering companies, they only need to prep; they don't have to deal with the pressure of dealing with the service. [So] if I am older, 30–40, that would be a good job because you don't need to deal with the pressure. (Mary, Commis Chef, Restaurant E)

Therefore, life stage had a clear impact on subjective assessments of work intensity, which affected recruitment and retention. This was most related to age, while career and family stage were less explicit drivers of life stage changes to perceptions of work intensity.

4.2.3 Autonomy and discretion: objective assessment

Generally across the venues studied, chefs had little scope for autonomy and discretion. Menu design was usually confined to the head chef, and the chefs were required to follow the mandated techniques and recipe to carry out the dish precisely as the head chef instructed.

Here, you come into work, you do other people's food...you gotta do it their way. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

[You] come to work, you do your list, you do your jobs, you organise everything in your mind—it's kind of very systematic. As much as everyone is like 'oh it must be so fun to be creative and cook things everyday', I'm like no, that doesn't happen, we cook the same things every day and it's practically more routine than anything. (Caitlin, Sous Chef, Restaurant E)

While it was more prevalent among smaller venues for there to be greater opportunities for menu contribution, these were largely ad hoc developmental opportunities rather than being given responsibility for menu design as part of their job role.

The extent of decision-making available to the chefs was confined to deciding how to approach the set tasks within the time available, whether it was during 'prep' or service periods. Thus, the chefs could control their own workflow:

There's a big prep list written down and you write your name down on what [you want]...you choose five or six jobs each. And generally you start your bigger jobs first, whilst that's going—it's all time and motion—you've got like two other jobs happening over here. But you've got to be finished by like 11:30. And as long as that's done, hunky dory. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

Overall, opportunities for autonomy and discretion were low and varied little across venues, and thus there was no apparent relationship between this job quality dimension and product market segment or organisational size.

4.2.4 Autonomy and discretion: subjective assessment

Perceptions of autonomy were clearly driven by life stage, specifically career stage. While chefs acknowledged that opportunities for autonomy were necessarily limited when developing their skills, mid-career chefs described coming to find the autocratic method of kitchen management stifling, with limited opportunities to exhibit creativity through developing menu ideas or suggest improved techniques. Subsequently, this drove most chefs to aspire to own their own venue, where they could be permitted to make these sorts of decisions. As one chef described:

The thing about opening your own restaurant—you're just not a slave anymore...you just wanna be your own boss—you can do your own food, you don't have to answer to anyone. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

Advancement to management roles within the kitchen, such as head chef, was not seen as a route to achieving greater autonomy and discretion given restaurants were generally under the financial control of a parent company or backers, which restricted the freedom of the head chefs in those venues.

Consequently, given the current industry practices related to menu design and work organisation, recruitment and retention of workers was not impacted by perceptions of poor opportunities for autonomy, but instead focused workers on developing routes into owning their own venue. Improving opportunities for autonomy and discretion would likely improve recruitment and retention given its clear importance in later career stages.

4.2.5 Monitoring: objective assessment

Extensive monitoring or surveillance of staff was not described as a prominent feature in the venues studied. Chefs and managers both described a 'light' approach to ensuring that work was being completed on time and to a sufficient quality.

[U]nless you get some new staff in [there is no supervision]... whoever has been here for longer will supervise what [the new staff] do until they know how to do it, but after that, not really. (Mark, Head Chef, Restaurant F)

While overseeing staff's work was depicted as 'easier' in small kitchens, as all aspects of the kitchen could be seen readily, it was still not described as a strong focus for head and sous chefs in small and large venues alike, with those in large venues recounting that this would be delegated to lower level staff.

[Y]ou've got to make sure everyone is doing their job how you want the food to turn out. It's pretty easy, it's quite a small kitchen to oversee... [It's] just keeping an eye on it really. (Emily, Sous Chef, Restaurant A)

[I]f you've got a problem, you just talk to the person higher above you—we can't always be everywhere. So sometimes the chef de parties do take on a little bit with the apprentices. (Lucas, Sous Chef, Restaurant C)

Given the low level of variation in monitoring across case venues, there was no relationship with organisation size or product market segment.

4.2.6 Monitoring: subjective assessment

Chefs similarly described little emphasis on monitoring staff in the kitchen, and in fact perceived monitoring as a positive measure to ensure quality, which they shared as an important goal to protect their own workloads and the reputation of their venue. As one chef described, she was concerned in previous workplaces where there was little monitoring and oversight, but was appreciative that her current workplace ensured everyone maintained standards.

[Y]ou can't tell [in large kitchens] if someone is not doing their job right, you can chuck it in the bin...they can take the easy way, just hide the mistakes. While here it is such a small kitchen, you can't really do that, we are basically working next to each other. If you screw up, they know and they are always tasting your food. (Mary, Commis Chef, Restaurant E)

Overall, however, given the relatively low level of monitoring, chefs did not find this job attribute remarkable and therefore it did not drive recruitment and retention decisions, nor did perceptions vary by life stage.

4.2.7 Task complexity: objective assessment

The work of chefs primarily involved two components: 'prep'—preparing items needed in advance of lunch or dinner service—and 'service'—cooking their assigned meals during service periods. Subsequently, skill requirements were determined by the complexity of the

menu items and the organisation of the kitchen, which impacted the division of labour and the complexity of workflow management.

The complexity of dishes in the venues studied ranged from low to high and varied according to product market segment. At Restaurants E and F, both mid-level venues, the dishes were described as very simple, often involving deep-frying, which enabled them to be produced at high pace. The attraction for diners at these venues was not the intricacy of menu items, but the creative and inventive recipes created by the head chef and the commitment to sourcing high quality ingredients, as well as the fun atmosphere that accompanied the high pace. Similarly, at Restaurant D, while more complex, the focus was on relative simplicity to reduce the labour-intensiveness of the dishes.

[O]ur core philosophy in regards to food is you select the best produce, you add two to three components to it, don't process it too much, and then you let the product speak for itself. Whereas there are a lot of restaurants out there that will take a base ingredient, process the heck out of it, take another ingredient, process the heck out of that and then put it all together. Now all of this processing requires labour hours and we're very conscious of the fact that these labour hours cost a lot of money. (Harry, Executive Chef, Restaurant D)

In contrast, the more premium venues produced dishes involving considerably more complex techniques. However it was acknowledged that there had been a shift among even more premium venues to more simple styles of cooking, which responded to both labour cost pressures and consumer tastes:

Now people understand to have good food and a good reputation, you don't necessarily have to have the shallots julienned in exactly the same size and you don't have to be in the kitchen from the morning till one o'clock in the morning. You can make people happy and serve good food and just be a bit more simplistic. (Paul, Chef de Partie, Restaurant C)

Despite this, chefs at these more premium venues were also careful to emphasise that more simplistic styles of cooking at this level still necessitated a high level of skill and knowledge from the chefs.

[I]t is simple, but you've got to do it really well. Simple can get confused with complacency; people go 'oh that's easy to do', but you have to understand how to cook the onion, to slice it, to make whatever it is—to make that dish what it can become. (John, Sous Chef, Restaurant B)

Consequently, the complexity of dishes was positively related to product market segment, yet there was evidence of an industry-wide shift to simpler food styles.

The organisation of the kitchen also impacted task complexity, which was generally determined by venue size. Larger venues tended to organise the kitchen such that entire

dishes were cooked within a section. Chefs explained that this reduced the degree of coordination with other sections of the kitchen, reducing workflow management and coordination skills, but also resulted in a narrower range of dishes within a section. In contrast, smaller kitchens were more likely to organise the kitchen so that the team as whole produced each dish. The head chef at Restaurant A explained how this operated in practice:

[T]here's a few styles of restaurants, and one does it so you're on entrees, you're on mains, you're responsible for a whole dish, which is definitely not the way we do it. Here, even prep during the day...everyone will have had some part of that dish somehow. And then during service, somebody will cook the meat, protein, and they'll pass it to the back, get it chopped up and put on the plate and then I'll sauce it at the front while I'm calling it. (David, Head Chef, Restaurant A)

This method required the chefs to be able to cook and manage the timing across a greater number of dishes, and the higher interaction with the rest of the team required greater communication and coordination skills.

Additionally, larger venues were also more likely to report the use of outsourcing, reducing the extent of cooking within venue kitchens. However, in one venue, items were not outsourced to an external company, but rather, the multi-venue site had a central kitchen that made items for all its venues in large batches and distributed them to each site. Thus, overall, venue size, through its implications for how work was organised, had a negative relationship with task complexity. Larger organisations tended to have reduced task complexity through highly defined sections and greater use of centralised or outsourced food production. In contrast, smaller organisations tended to operate more as a collective team, increasing coordination skills and the breadth of technical skills.

4.2.8 Task complexity: subjective assessment

The opportunity to use skills was perceived as one of the most significant contributors to job quality for workers and had a clear link to recruitment and retention decisions. However, life stage effects were also evident, as its importance relative to other job quality dimensions diminished at later career and family stages in particular. These perceptions and impacts were closely related to those concerning skill development and are addressed in further detail in the following section.

4.3 Skills and training

Training comprises initial training that provides entry to the occupation and orients new workers to the particular establishment's required skills, and ongoing training, which promotes the development of new skills as the worker becomes more experienced and takes on new tasks and roles. Additionally, training can be provided in a formal, structured format or informally on-the-job. Each of these are analysed in turn.

4.3.1 Skills and training: objective assessment

4.3.1.1 Initial formal training

Initial formal training for chefs has had a longstanding role in the industry. As a result, the Certificate III in Commercial Cookery was prevalent among the workers interviewed, which, in most cases, was undertaken as an apprenticeship. In the apprenticeship model, one day per week was spent at a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) or private training institute and the remainder with an employer. This was traditionally completed over four years, but was recently reduced to three years. 'Accelerated' apprenticeships were also available, particularly for mature age apprentices (beyond school-leaving age), who were able to complete their qualification as soon as they were assessed as competent across all course requirements. One older worker who had changed career indicated he was able to complete his apprenticeship in just over one and a half years under this scheme. These initiatives were introduced to increase entrants to the industry, however chefs reported they have also reduced the skill level of new entrants.

Alternatively, the qualification could be undertaken through classroom-only training (an 'institutional pathway'), in which the duration was typically one to one and half years full time. This option was reportedly taken by predominantly international students unable to access the apprenticeship system, given it is only available to permanent residents and citizens. The institutional pathway was often considered an inferior training method to an apprenticeship, particularly if the student had no other previous or concurrent work experience. For chefs with international experience, it was reported that the educational requirements to practice in the industry were below those internationally and that, resultantly, the skill level of Australian chefs overall was lower.

[The skill level,] it's lower [In Australia] compared to France definitely. The schools are really serious there—you can do a master's degree in cooking, which is what I wanted to do. (Natalie, Chef, Restaurant F)

Given the role for employers in apprenticeships, employer willingness to hire apprentices and conduct training was pivotal to the maintenance of the training system. There was a clear relationship between the size of the venue and the organisation's willingness to hire and train apprentices. Smaller venues consistently reported not hiring apprentices due to the labour and food wastage costs involved and the resources required for existing senior staff to train the apprentices. It was particularly highlighted that apprentice wages had increased in recent times, which they believed had become 'unaffordable'. In contrast, large venues saw hiring apprentices as highly beneficial, providing additional recruitment sources and the opportunity to develop staff with the skills customised to the needs of the restaurant.

[We're] more than happy to take [chefs] on as an apprentice...Me personally, I'd rather get someone in green and start them up that way [than hire an experienced chef]. (Lucas, Sous Chef, Restaurant C)

However, recruitment difficulties and training quality issues increasingly challenge the Certificate III requirement, threatening formalisation and recognition of skill in the future. Employers reported a reduced reliance on the qualification when hiring. For instance, one employer placed more emphasis on the quality of the previous work experience, references from previous employers and the individual's personality.

[Y]ou don't even look if they've got a TAFE qualification, it doesn't mean anything—you know like you look at someone's résumé, where they've worked, and you call those people who they've worked for and you go 'is this person a dickhead?' or 'are they switched on?' You know, like is it worth my time? You look at the restaurants they've worked at and how long they've worked in those restaurants and go off that. And then you go off personality as well. (Mark, Head Chef, Restaurant F)

Similarly, the one chef who had not completed the Certificate III noted that it had not affected her career prospects given the recruitment difficulties experienced in the industry.

I don't really need to have an apprenticeship to get a job because there are so many jobs available and they don't really look at what you've got in regards to qualifications. (Sophie, Chef, Restaurant F)

In addition to the severe recruitment difficulties, the declining importance placed on entry qualifications was reportedly driven by diminishing confidence in the quality of training by TAFE and other providers. Employers frequently reported that the content of training had not remained reflective of current industry techniques and practices.

[W]hat they teach you in TAFE is...not even fundamental. It was set, or continues to be set, by people who were in the industry 20 years ago. (Harry, Executive Chef, Restaurant D)

[The classroom training] doesn't really teach you anything. Like if you went to TAFE and came to work here, you would have no fucking idea what you're doing because we don't do anything in that curriculum. (Mark, Head Chef, Restaurant F)

Workers who completed the training reiterated these issues as well.

[F]or me, TAFE was a waste of time. Like the Certificate III in cooking, you just learn the basic food from 20 years ago. It isn't relevant to nowadays... (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

The low relevance and currency of training was partly attributed to the weak connection between the training system and industry, which was highlighted as particularly poor in comparison to other countries' training systems. Restaurants mostly reported that they did not have any relationships with training schools in terms of facilitating work experience or other employment opportunities for students, or collaborating in the institution's learning initiatives.

The training was also considered excessively focused on theory and knowledge compared to developing practical skills, which was what employers valued. Skill standards for teaching and assessment were also perceived as too low for the level required for commercial purposes, such as the time available to complete tasks and minimum quality standards.

[T]hey're probably not strict enough, not walking around going 'nah that's not right, start again—you're not cutting that right or you're not making that properly', so the teaching level at TAFE, the push to get everything properly done, is not quite there. (John, Sous Chef, Restaurant B)

While there appeared to be genuine quality issues, it was also apparent that the industry lacked a consensus on the objective or outcome of the entry qualification, despite the existence of industry-defined skill standards through industry training packages. While many saw the qualification as not meeting its objective of developing a fully competent chef, some perceived the goal of the qualification as imparting only basic, foundational skills which would be built on over a career.

Just the basic stuff is all they need to learn, because all the rest, the finer points, you can get on the job. As long as you're in the right job, people will show you. You've got enough things to learn, you're constantly learning. (David, Head Chef, Restaurant A)

This discord in views further threatens the formalisation and recognition of skill, which will potentially lead to declining formal skills and training in the future.

4.3.1.2 Further formal training

Relative to initial training, there was very little support for further, formal training in advanced cookery or management skills. Only one restaurant among the case studies provided further structured training to staff. Here, the chefs were provided enterprise-specific unaccredited training through head office as they progressed through different positions in the hierarchy. Taking place over five months, the training would cover the new tasks involved in the position, such as the restaurant's ordering, rostering and finance software and systems.

Despite recognition of the significant increases in skill requirements associated with moving into management and ownership positions, it was commonly believed that further formal training was not required or beneficial, with a preference, instead, to learn on the job.

[W]hen you come to owning your own business, it's a completely different ball game. Like I've had to learn heaps of other skills, like I've had to learn HR skills, financial skills, like just management skills in general. There's nothing to train you for that really. Like I don't have time to do a fucking course. And reading out of a textbook doesn't really teach you what you need to know, you need to be hands on and stuff. (Mark, Head Chef/Owner, Restaurant F)

4.3.1.3 Unstructured on-the-job training

Despite the low provision of structured, ongoing training, there was a significant amount of training occurring on-the-job. As described by the chefs, this occurred in a one-on-one mentoring or coaching style.

[T]he head chef will show you, talk about it and have a go by yourself to see if you can sort of nail it. If you can't, then you kind of come back and work on it together—just give you the space to play around and once you're ready, you can do it all by yourself...you can't really just have someone tell you how to do it, you have to sort of play around with it yourself. (Sophie, Chef, Restaurant F)

The emphasis on on-the-job learning was driven both by a preference for this method of learning as well as the volume of knowledge and breadth of skills that a chef could acquire. This led most chefs to acknowledge they needed to continue learning throughout their entire career, which was partly related to the diversity of cooking styles and techniques, in addition to the continual innovation in the industry.

Every place has a different way of doing things as well... So you need people to come on board that will be willing to learn and still develop no matter what level you're at. (John, Sous Chef, Restaurant B)

Given each restaurant had its own specialisation, it had become an industry norm for workers to develop new skills by moving to new venues. For example, chefs would seek out employment at one of the studied venues to learn how to make pasta, while two other venues were known destinations to learn about cooking steaks. Collectively, this enabled chefs to build a diverse portfolio of skills.

On-the-job training occurred frequently and on an ongoing basis. It occurred at the start of the person's employment, but also as each chef moved through different sections of the kitchen and with every menu change. The initial training for new recruits or as chefs moved to a new section commonly took place over one to two weeks in most venues. Chefs also described the occurrence of spontaneous training occasions where another chef would impart a new skill by observing its need or in response to a query.

[You learn by] generally just communicating with other chefs about their experience and what they've learnt and how to do that. You've got all the time in the world to pick somebody's brain. (Sophie, Chef, Restaurant F)

While the sous chef was frequently in charge of monitoring training needs of staff, it was often more junior staff, such as chef de parties, who conducted the training.

Size influenced the degree of on-the-job training, whereby smaller venues were associated with increased on-the-job training. Smaller kitchens were often structured so that each chef's tasks were broader and the chefs were often rostered to work across multiple sections throughout the week. This was because multi-skilling chefs across sections enabled the team's skill set to be diversified so that all chefs could be called on to work on any section as needed. As chefs explained,

With a smaller kitchen it's easier to learn everything fast because you have to...each chef needs to know every section so you can bail the other chefs out of the shit. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

[T]he positions we have can be filled with the people [we have]—like all the staff in the front is cross-trained so they can be a bar tender, they can be a hostess, they can be a waiter. But that's how we train people, so you're not at the mercy of one person. And the same with the kitchen. (Colin, Owner/Head Chef, Restaurant E)

In contrast, larger venues generally trained their chefs to work one section at a time, and the tasks required for the role were narrower. With the reduced concern over having enough chefs available that were equipped with the required skills across the kitchen, the restaurants prioritised having their chefs develop proficiency in one area.

[Whereas] with a [large] restaurant like this, you work in the same section for six months, you don't get promoted or you don't move up a section for a long time. So that means you're doing the same shit every day. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

[W]e work in the same kitchen but we all have our own jobs, so we don't actually know what the other people do in the kitchen—we might have glimpses, you might learn a bit, but you never actually know how to make it. (Jeremy, Chef de Partie, Restaurant D)

In this context, the frequency at which chefs were allowed to move to new sections of the kitchen determined the extent to which they would develop new skills. Among the larger venues where this was relevant, workers at some venues reported issues while others did not, suggesting it was dependent on managerial discretion. In those that reported difficulties moving to a new section, these opportunities were dependent on vacancies becoming available, rather than an explicit regard for fulfilling worker needs for skill development and task variety.

[E]ighty per cent of the time when someone gets moved around it's because someone higher up leaves, so the kitchen shifts...The majority is circumstance. (Jeremy, Chef de Partie, Restaurant D)

I've been here in the company for a year and still haven't left the side section, so I'm definitely feeling like it's time for me to learn some new skills as far as cooking is concerned. (Jack, Commis Chef, Restaurant B)

Another opportunity for skill development was linked to menu changes as the chefs were required to learn new menu items, involving new cooking techniques and ingredients.

[Menu changes are] a new challenge for the first few weeks...Keeps you on your toes. (Lucas, Sous Chef, Restaurant C)

[The head chef] changes the menu a lot here, so for me I get to learn different skills through that. (Sophie, Chef, Restaurant F)

Restaurant size also had an impact on the frequency of menu changes, and thus the frequency of on-the-job training that accompanied it. In smaller restaurants, constant menu changes occurred, enabling exposure to new dishes that required new techniques and knowledge and thus further development of skills on-the-job. Conversely, the larger restaurants all described changing menus on a seasonal basis, therefore four times a year. This was explained by the

additional logistical difficulties arising from implementing a new menu in a kitchen of 15–25 chefs than in a team of five to seven.

Another aspect of skill development was learning about the creative process of creating new dishes. Chefs indicated that these opportunities were more likely to be present in smaller kitchens, but also dependent on the views of the head chef.

Smaller kitchens are fantastic for creativity. The smaller places I came from, we could experiment with things because we had a little bit of free reign and we'd show the head chef something that we came up with and if he liked it, then he'd refine it and put it on the menu. ... But a place like this that's so renowned and big, there's just no chance for that unless you're quite high up in the food chain. (Jack, Commis Chef, Restaurant B)

[A]t other restaurants I've had the opportunity to [be creative], but I think it's also on whoever's in charge to push people and encourage people to do that, which I think is a good way. I was encouraged when I was an apprentice to help put things on the menu, which definitely helps. It doesn't make the work boring and it changes how you work. (Emily, Sous Chef, Restaurant A)

However, some of the larger restaurants that did not provide learning opportunities related to menu development found other means of satisfying this need among the chefs. This involved instituting specific activities, such as 'mystery box' activities or impromptu challenges to develop a dish.

[The head chef] has experimented in the past, like in the quieter months, we'll do a chef's challenge to keep people's minds active... every two weeks, he'll give the 'chef's challenge' to one of the chefs and then we'll rotate it around...he'll come up with something—'Italian' or 'Moroccan' or...like 'chef Gordon Ramsay' or like 'out of Noma', and you just have to come up with one dish. We'll all taste, we'll all stick around and eat it...all of us will come in if it's our day off or not, we'll all try it. He'll tell us why he picked it, why did he do this or that, he'll explain all that and then we'll all taste it and tell him what we all think...the younger guys like it because they don't always get the chance to express themselves on the menu and all that. (Lucas, Sous Chef, Restaurant C)

Therefore size influenced on-the-job skill development opportunities due to the structure of the kitchen, which determined the breadth and depth of skill required for each position; the rostering practices, which determined how many sections a chef worked across; and menu rotation and development practices, which influenced how many new dishes they were exposed to or involved in creating.

Outside of organisational size, product market segment did not have a clear impact on on-the-job training as it did not impact the structure of the organisation, the rostering or progression practices or menu development practices.

In sum, initial formal training was moderate, formal ongoing training was low and informal, on-the-job training was high. Product market segment had no relationship with skill development, neither formal nor informal, while organisation size had a positive relationship with formal skill development, yet a negative relationship with informal, on-the-job training.

4.3.2 Skills and training: subjective assessment

The chefs interviewed consistently placed a very high emphasis on the importance of using and developing skills, particularly those developed in the workplace through job rotation. The ultimate aim of most chefs was to accumulate as much knowledge as possible, which they could then put to use in their own venue.

That's what everyone wants to do: learn as many techniques, learn like different disciplines, different ways and approaches of food and then ideally open up your own place. (Thomas, Chef, Restaurant A)

Recruitment and retention issues were strongly aligned with skill development opportunities, particularly among early-career chefs. These workers specifically sought jobs that offered opportunities within the kitchen for task complexity, task variety and a craft focus on quality, resulting in skills use and development. Chefs sought venues with specialisations different to those they already held, and those with a commitment to quality standards. For example, certain segments of the hospitality industry, such as pubs or hotels, which had lower skill requirements, were considered undesirable jobs.

I moved to a pub, which was nasty...The food is not very freshly produced. They import all of the stuff. It is not a very interesting or challenging role for me, so one day I just [left]. (Mary, Commis Chef, Restaurant E)

At the end of the day, it all depends on the food and cooking. Like I don't want to do shitty hotel food for 400 people. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

Even in higher-end restaurants, there could be a reluctance to take positions in venues if the skill level was not sufficiently high:

I didn't like the food, I didn't like what it was about...In my mind I wanted to go to like more of a fine dining style, a bit of a finesse. Like 'white cooking'...[this venue] is obviously black cooking—high char, very high flavour, very robust...I did the trial: prep was uninspiring, the food was semi un-inspiring, but I took it...you don't want to be unemployed. (Thomas, Chef, Restaurant A)

This would also extend to taking unpaid positions as a ‘stagiaire’² to learn new techniques. As one chef recounted her experiences during her early career stage, she outlined her efforts to acquire a breadth of skills, which included extensive overseas travel to take unpaid stagiaire positions.

I would try to go and stage in a butcher so I knew how to do really good butchery, same with fish and also pastry. I would try and [learn] everything. (Natalie, Chef, Restaurant F)

Chefs would also leave a venue once all opportunities for skill development had been exhausted or if they were inhibited. While skill development is generally considered desirable for its links to advancement, for these chefs, it was related to a sense of mastery over their subject matter and maintaining their interest through variety and challenge. As was consistently emphasised:

You go to a place because you want to learn that food and once you’ve stopped learning, you should move on. (Sophie, Chef, Restaurant F)

I felt that I’ve learned whatever I could here. I have worked every section...so yeah, I’ve learnt everything, it’s becoming boring... [If I leave] I’ll learn a lot more techniques with the food. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

Similarly, those chefs that had chosen to stay at an establishment often cited the venue’s unique focus on skill development. For example, Jeremy, a young chef who had worked at his current venue for three years already had no intentions to leave because of these opportunities:

[I will stay] mainly because of [the] constant learning; our head chef just comes up with stuff, brings us over and shows us what he’s made and all that stuff. (Chef de Partie, Restaurant D)

Smaller venues, which were known to offer better job rotation and multi-skilling and thus on-the-job training, were also sought after. However, this emphasis on skill development tended to favour the more widely available on-the-job opportunities rather than formal training opportunities, given workers had similar concerns to managers over the quality and usefulness of classroom teaching methodologies. Therefore, most workers did not tend to choose or stay at venues based on the availability of formal training opportunities.

² A stagiaire is an unpaid intern, and a stage is the act of working as a stagiaire. The terms have been adopted from European kitchens, where their role is more entrenched.

The commitment to attaining work in high-quality venues, which offered exposure to cutting-edge cooking techniques, was so highly prized among early career chefs that they were willing to overlook objectively poor aspects of the job, such as low pay, long hours and poor management styles.

Sometimes as chefs they're willing to compromise on the way that they're treated purely to work for someone. Like an example would be some of the better restaurants around Sydney... They know that they're going to get treated like crap, they know that they're going to get a lot of hours that are not necessarily going to be compensated. But the fact that they're going to work with some of the best chefs in Australia, they are willing to put that aside. (Harry, Executive Chef, Restaurant D)

As one young chef, Gareth, explained, he would consider working in a “psycho kitchen” because it “wouldn’t really matter, you just put your head down”, as he would have the opportunity to learn from the best chefs in the field (Chef de Partie, Restaurant B).

The importance of skill development opportunities was at its highest among early career chefs, who were willing to sacrifice other key job quality components in return. However, for more experienced chefs at more advanced life stages, skill development and use remained important but was re-balanced against other priorities. For example, an older chef who had attained senior positions, Harry, while wanting to reduce the intensity of his work by opening up a small restaurant and bed and breakfast, emphasised that he still needed to be “doing the food [I] want to be doing”. While the emphasis on skill development and use remained for older, more experienced workers, pay, work-life balance, job security and work intensity increased in prominence. As summed up by Natalie as she approached a more mature career and life stage, “[What’s important in my job] is different now than it was a few years ago... Before it was always only about the food.”

Table 3: Key job quality dimensions for chefs

Job quality dimension	Objective assessment	Subjective assessment	Impact on recruitment and retention	Impact of size	Impact of product market segment
Work organisation					
Intensity	High	Considered problematic for older workers	No relationship for younger workers; positive relationship for older workers	No relationship: little variation	No relationship: little variation
Discretion/ autonomy	Low to moderate	Greater autonomy and creative involvement desired in later career stages	No relationship in early career; positive relationship in later career	No relationship: little variation	No relationship: little variation
Monitoring	Moderate	Perceived as benign	No relationship	No relationship: little variation	No relationship: little variation
Task complexity	Medium to high	Perceived as important, particularly in early career	Positive relationship, especially in early career	Negative relationship	Positive relationship
Skills and training					
Initial (formal)	Moderate: three-year apprenticeship or one-year course	Perceived as poor quality and limited in value	Not applicable	Positive relationship	No relationship
Ongoing (formal)	Low to moderate	Further training desired but constrained by quality issues	No relationship	Positive relationship	No relationship
On-the-job training	High	Perceived as highly important, particularly among early-career chefs	Positive relationship, particularly among early career chefs	Negative relationship	Unclear relationship

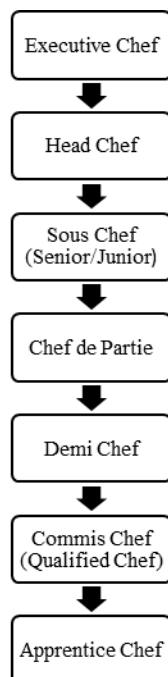
Job quality dimension	Objective assessment	Subjective assessment	Impact on recruitment and retention	Impact of size	Impact of product market segment
Progression opportunities					
Internal	Moderate	Perceived as highly important.	Positive relationship	Positive relationship	No relationship
Pay and benefits					
Pay per hr (ordinary time)	Relatively low. Award-based (and under): \$45,000–\$55,000 for qualified chef (Grade 3)	Acknowledged as objectively low; considered important at more mature life stages	Positive relationship in later life stages	Unclear relationship: generally award reliant	Unclear relationship: generally award reliant
Benefits	Meals and venue discounts. Tips increasingly provided	Not perceived as valuable	No relationship	Unclear relationship	No relationship
Working-time arrangements					
Working hours	Long hours (up to 80 hours per week) at unsocial times (evenings/weekends)	Not considered problematic until later life stages	Negative relationship in later life stages	Negative relationship	Negative relationship
Scheduling and flexibility	Poor. Limited availability of flexible or non-standard schedules. Variable or semi-variable roster.	Acknowledged as objectively poor; not considered problematic until later life stages	Positive relationship in later life stages	Positive relationship	No relationship
Job security					
Job security	High	Perceived as high, considered important in later life stages	No relationship	No relationship: little variation	No relationship: little variation

4.4 Progression opportunities

4.4.1 Progression opportunities: objective assessment

Progression opportunities within venues were dependent on the structure of the kitchen, which in turn was related to the size of the venue. In all of the larger sites, the kitchen structure was based on the traditional Escoffier brigade system. As shown in Figure 2, the structure is organised into hierarchical job roles, ranging from apprentice chef up to executive and/or head chef. An establishment would have both an executive and head chef role when it was a multi-venue establishment. In this arrangement, the executive chef oversaw high-level strategic decisions and did not tend to be involved in the day-to-day operations. They were often the executive chef across more than one venue within the organisation. The head chef, in contrast, would be responsible for the overall kitchen operations: menu development, food costing, stocktake, recruitment and rostering, and during service, would generally ‘call the pass’ rather than cook any food items. ‘Calling the pass’ involved directing and coordinating the entire kitchen during the service period as orders were sent to the kitchen, as well as inspecting and potentially making any final amendments to the dish before allowing for it to be delivered by the wait staff.

Figure 2: Hierarchy of chef job roles



The position of sous chef is a junior management role, when chefs are given more significant operational and managerial responsibilities, with less of an emphasis on performing cooking duties. They are officially second in charge and therefore fill the head chef's role when they are absent; however, particularly large venues would have a team of senior and junior sous chefs. The sous chefs were responsible for monitoring day-to-day operations and had a closer focus on the staff.

So my job on a day-to-day basis is making sure everything is getting made properly, everyone is doing their job properly—things are organised with the *mise en place* [traditional French term for preparation for service], getting set up for service, the cleaning of the place—monitoring all of that. Also, ordering and managing all the staff, making sure everyone is all good, everybody's heading in the right direction. (John, Senior Sous Chef, Restaurant B)

The position of chef de partie is when a chef first begins to take on some managerial responsibilities as they are tasked with overseeing a particular section of the kitchen, supervising any apprentice or commis chefs working under them in that section, and directing what needs to be done based on the orders received.

[I]n the middle of service you've got 40 or so items that you need to look through in the space of 10 seconds or 15 seconds to make sure you've told everyone who's cooking stuff for you that you need it up in five minutes. (Jack, Commis Chef, Restaurant B)

Finally, the commis or qualified chef was responsible for cooking a defined set of tasks within a given section, as well as the 'prep' of items needed before service. Similarly, apprentice chefs carried out the same tasks but were in training and generally undertook simpler tasks.

Promotions up to the position of chef de partie were associated with pay increases in the award, but workers reported difficulty in achieving them. Additionally, these pay increases were relatively minimal, equating to \$1,000–2,000 per annum. Chefs reported that significant pay increases were not expected until the position of sous chef was achieved.

Despite the informal presence of a hierarchy, one large venue (Restaurant B), had shifted, formally, to a simpler structure. For chefs below the level of sous chef, all were simply referred to as qualified chefs and their responsibilities could vary on a daily basis.

[Y]ou'll get the responsibilities from day to day of different levels of hierarchy—so some days I'll be working as a chef de partie and other days I'll just be a normal qualified [commis] chef or doing the same thing as an apprentice. It really varies from day to day and no one really gets

the title of a demi chef or a chef de partie here. You're either qualified, the sous chef or the head chef, so it's really only three levels of qualification. (Jack, Commis Chef, Restaurant B)

However, their pay differed according to whether they were considered a 'junior' or 'senior' qualified chef.

In contrast, smaller venues rarely had titles for staff beyond the head chef and, in some cases, a sous chef. As explained by the owners of small venues:

They're pretty much all equal...but within that you sort of have a certain role [each shift]...So everybody sort of helps each other. We come together and leave together, that's it. (Colin, Owner/Head Chef, Restaurant E)

[E]veryone's at the same level and same skill. It's just we're a team. If I'm not here, [another staff member] will do the pass...There's no real hierarchy here, which is pretty rare but it's because we're so small. (Mark, Head Chef, Restaurant F)

While this flat structure hampered formal progression, including pay progression, it created opportunities to develop a greater breadth of skills and responsibilities.

I find this way it's more interesting for everyone because they're not just stuck doing the same thing. They get to do a lot of different things: one day they'll be making all the sauces, the next day they'll be having to prep the meat, the next day they'll have to do desserts. And during service, everyone does everything. (David, Head Chef/Owner, Restaurant A)

Despite the presence of formal hierarchies in large kitchens, managerial decision-making ultimately determined whether these routes were available to staff and therefore differed across venues. At Restaurant B, staff reported that promotions were not readily discussed and they expected to be more successful in achieving a promotion, especially in terms of pay, if they moved to a different restaurant.

I think the only way people really progress in roles and titles and things is by getting employed somewhere else. Or making big leaps from what I am to a sous chef. But generally if I was to want to be qualified as a chef de partie, or technically hired as that, I'd probably need to go to somewhere else. (Jack, Commis Chef, Restaurant B)

In contrast, Restaurant C and Restaurant D reported better opportunities and the staff themselves had proven histories of being promoted through the venue. At Restaurant D, the executive chef was also able to provide an expected timeline by which most staff could progress through the kitchen, with durations of one year to two years between promotions, depending on the seniority of the role.

[The promotion to sous chef] is generally the biggest transition...The main reason for that is the amount of the operational responsibilities that they have, the paperwork, a bit of skills that they need to pick up. (Harry, Executive Chef, Restaurant D)

Progression was also associated with ‘sections’ or departments within kitchens, which carry out the cooking for defined components of the menu. The sections also established a hierarchy based on the skill associated with the tasks of that section. As one chef explained, lower sections were “monotonous sections where you’ve got someone watching you the whole time” (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B). Or as described by Jeremy, lower-level sections were where the risk was reduced given the skills involved in the dishes and the cost of the goods involved if it needed to be re-made.

So basically it starts off with [the] salad [section], salad is the easiest. It’s just more of a spot where, if you do screw up, it’s easily fixable. And the prep’s not too heavy. There’s just not much risk involved. And it helps you work on knife skills and all that stuff. (Jeremy, Chef de Partie, Restaurant D)

Therefore, in addition to rising through the hierarchy of job titles, chefs also expected to move through the hierarchy of sections.

There were generally four to six sections within a kitchen; however, in larger kitchens, the sections were more complex, with more than one staff member assigned to each and they were sometimes composed of smaller units within a section. Sections commonly consisted of cold larder (salads and cold entrees), pans, the fryer, the oven, the grill, and desserts, but differed in each venue based on the makeup of the menu. Smaller venues also tended to eschew the hierarchical nature of the sections, preferring to multi-skill staff and rotate them across all sections, which presented a trade off in terms of reducing formal progression routes but increasing skill development opportunities.

Additionally, some venues had altered the section structure so that they were no longer centred on whole dishes, but rather all sections contributed an aspect of a dish, which was then finally ‘plated up’ or assembled at the pass. For example, Restaurant C was in the process of transitioning into what was described as a more ‘streamlined’, ‘European style’ model, whereby two chefs were responsible for cooking everything: one responsible for meat and one responsible for fish, while the remaining staff in the kitchen would complete the garnishes and plate up the food. This arrangement had the effect of broadening the tasks involved in sections, thereby broadening the skills required, but again, reduced formal progression opportunities.

[T]he people cooking will need to know what they’re actually doing. So it will be a bit more training for the younger guys, but that’s what we’re here for. (Lucas, Sous Chef, Restaurant C)

In sum, progression opportunities for chefs were moderate, which had a positive relationship with organisation size but no relationship to product market segment.

4.4.2 Progression opportunities: subjective assessment

Similar to skill development, progression opportunities were highly valued and related to attraction and retention. However, as highlighted in the previous section, advancement was more valued for its ability to provide additional skill development opportunities than increases in pay, authority or prestige.

I really want to progress. I don't really feel like I need a title, it's just that I get bored. I just can't stay doing something for ages. (Sophie, Chef, Restaurant F).

[T]he most important thing for me as far as retention is concerned is the ability to learn new skills, so progression throughout the kitchen. And I would have to say progression in the hierarchy as well, because I'm not going to learn back of house stuff in the role that I'm in...I'm never going to get shown rostering or ordering or something like that... So to retain me for a lengthy period of time, they need to move me around and enhance my skills in both cooking and management. (Jack, Commis Chef, Restaurant B)

This emphasis on advancement to achieve skill development was due to the extent to which skill development was conducted on-the-job, which meant that progression necessarily provided further skill development opportunities. Furthermore, given the aspiration of virtually all chefs to open their own venue, advancement was valued as it enabled them to acquire the necessary cooking and management skills. In turn, these aspirations were motivated by their genuine, intrinsic enjoyment of their craft rather than more extrinsic motivations of status and economic rewards.

Subsequently, despite limited formal progression opportunities in smaller venues, which operated with informal, flat structures, this was not considered problematic, but, instead, seen as desirable given the expanded learning opportunities.

I think it's more desirable to have a smaller [kitchen]...it's easier to learn everything fast (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B).

Nevertheless, once opportunities for progression were exhausted, chefs would promptly seek out new employment opportunities.

Given the interrelationship between advancement and skill development, the relative importance of this job attribute over worker life stages progressed in a similar way to perceptions of skill development: it remained important, but became increasingly

overshadowed by other job quality concerns. Additionally, as pay and work-life balance became more prominent considerations in later life stages, advancement in job roles was not perceived as a route to achieving these given that pay progression was relatively low and increased work-life conflict was likely to arise from additional responsibilities. The aspiration of most chefs, instead, was to open their own venues, which was seen as a more viable solution to work-life balance needs in later life stages. This was evident among those who had opened their own restaurant and was present in the career planning of younger chefs, as indicated below:

I [opened my own place] for a sort of lifestyle change, you know—two children and a wife. (Colin, Owner/Head Chef, Restaurant E)

If a family popped up, that's why you want to move up... create a really solid team [in your own venue], and then you can finally move away, that's the ideal. That's what you want because then you can have your family—come in four days a week instead or whatever. (Thomas, Chef, Restaurant A)

Consequently, overall, progression opportunities were perceived as important, but became relatively less important relative to other job quality dimensions over the life course. Furthermore, internal progression opportunities were less valued than the aspiration to own one's own restaurant.

4.5 Pay and benefits

4.5.1 Pay and benefits: objective assessment

Across the case study restaurants, the reported salaries for full-time commis chefs and chef de parties varied from approximately \$45,000 to \$55,000 per annum, with variation in the working hour requirements associated with each salary. All interviewees described their pay as based on the award; there were no enterprise agreements reported at any of the sites. At the time of the interviews³, the minimum wage for a qualified or commis chef (cook grade 3) under the *Restaurant Industry Award 2010* was \$20.13 per ordinary hour or \$764.90 per week.⁴ Under the annualised salary option available within the award, which was universally implemented across the case study restaurants, this equated to a minimum of \$49,718.50 per annum, inclusive of a 25 per cent loading to cover penalty and overtime rates. However, this salary option was subject to annual reconciliation with hourly entitlements to ensure workers

³ This pay rate applied for the period covering 1 July 2015–30 June 2016.

⁴ A Cook Grade 3 within the award is defined as “An employee also known as a commis chef or equivalent who has completed an apprenticeship or who has passed the appropriate trade test or who has the appropriate level of training, and who is engaged in cooking, baking, pastry cooking or butchering duties”.

were not disadvantaged under this payment method. This placed the earnings for this occupation (\$956 per week) within the lowest quintile, or 20 per cent, of weekly earnings for full-time employees (\$1000 in May 2016), and thus can be generally characterised as low paid (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017b).⁵

While those interviewed described their pay, or their staff's, as based on the award, many of the reported pay levels were in fact below the award given the poor implementation of the requirement to reconcile the annualised salary with the hourly provisions. For example, one chef who reported an annualised salary of approximately \$47,000 would have been entitled to approximately \$70,000 if paid according to the hourly rate based on his reported working hours, in addition to weekend penalty rates. In contrast, staff on 457 visas reported more generous pay levels compared to local staff due to the minimum pay requirement based on the Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT).⁶

There appeared to be an unclear relationship between both the size of the organisation and product market segment and pay among chefs. Given the reliance on award minimums, the level of pay did not vary substantially among the studied venues. However, the required working hours differed at each venue, and therefore *effective* pay levels did vary, as outlined below.

4.5.1.1 Pay progression

The award allowed for skill-based pay progression, however many chefs reported difficulties securing pay increases. After completing an apprenticeship, which is paid at a lower apprentice wage, a qualified chef start at pay grade Cook Grade 3 and could transition to Cook Grade 5, securing weekly increases of approximately \$20–\$50 per week. Although the award does not use the terminology commonly used in kitchens, chefs would be entitled to these progressions once promoted to chef de partie and sous chef positions. However, despite the interviewed chefs holding varying levels of seniority, they appeared to have, and reported, difficulties progressing to higher grades of pay.

⁵ This figure presents the most recent data for Australian median earnings. Low paid is commonly defined in reputable international studies as below two-thirds of median earnings (e.g. Gautié & Schmitt, 2010; OECD, 2016).

⁶ The TSMIT for the period July 1 2015–30 June 2016 was \$53,900 for all occupations.

While the wages for entry-level and junior staff were generally better in smaller, mid-level restaurants, particularly when factoring in the hours worked, pay progression was similarly severely limited within these venues. For example, while the salary for a commis chef at Restaurant E was the most favourable at \$50,000 for 55 hours work plus a relatively high share of tips, the sous chef only received an additional \$5,000 in her salary. She acknowledged that her role would be better paid in a larger kitchen, but that the responsibilities would be far greater.

The pay would be better than here, but would be heaps more hours. Heaps more stress and more people to manage in the kitchen too...it's your fault if other people stuff up, so you have to make sure you're managing everyone. (Caitlin, Sous Chef, Restaurant E)

It was also recognised that opening up their own venue was not necessarily a path to earning better pay, yet this remained virtually every chef's intention.

I think you work a lot harder [if you open your venue], like the first couple years, you're not making any money. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

Your pay would not go up [if you own your own place], like [the owner here] would be on pennies. (Thomas, Chef, Restaurant A)

Anecdotally, the highest levels of pay (\$150,000–\$250,000) were received by a small number of chefs working in senior positions at premium, world-class restaurants within Australia.

4.5.1.2 Benefits

An increasingly important addition to chefs' pay included tips, which varied across venues. The greatest amount received was a 20 per cent share of tips among the chefs at one of the larger venues, which was then allocated individually through a formula based on seniority and hours worked. This added approximately \$6,000–\$8,500 per year to salaries at this venue. An additional larger venue and one smaller venue similarly allocated a share of tips according to a formula, albeit a smaller share. In the remaining venues, the share of tips equated to such a small amount that they were pooled for staff dinners at external venues twice a year. In addition to tips, additional benefits found at all venues included discounts at the venue (generally a 25 per cent discount) and the provision of meals during the dinner break. Among multi-venue sites, discounts were more valuable given that they could be used across a range of venues. Thus, while the value of discounts improved with the size of the organisation, the quality of benefits overall had no clear relationship with organisation size or product market segment.

4.5.2 Pay and benefits: subjective assessment

The interviewed chefs generally perceived that they were paid relatively well at their workplaces in the context of a low-paid industry and believed that there was little variation among restaurants, thus making any desire for increased wages futile.

Oh the pay is horrible!...[but compared] to other restaurants, there are other restaurants with worse pay but...our pay went up a little bit. So it's not too bad, but it is underpaid work, that's what I find, like roughly I'm getting paid like \$18 an hour. (Jeremy, Chef de Partie, Restaurant D)

Yeah it's pretty much standard around all places...I would like more money, but everyone would like more money. (Lucas, Sous Chef, Restaurant C)

Overall, however, there was a clear recognition that the industry as a whole was poorly paid. For most workers, particularly younger workers, this was described as not influencing their decision to remain or exit the industry, or a particular venue, as they were aware of this before starting in the industry. In particular, chefs consistently identified that they were willing to overlook it given their 'passion' for the industry.

[Y]ou have to be doing it for love because there isn't any other reason to be doing it, that's how I see it. For the hours that you do, you could be doing anything else. (Natalie, Chef, Restaurant F)

[W]e get paid in pennies as it is, you get paid like shit, and all I need personally—I don't want the money—I just want to be told like yeah you're doing a good job, keep doing it. (Thomas, Chef, Restaurant A)

For me [pay is] not really [important], I do [this job] for my own reasons. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

[T]his is the worst industry to join for money...it's more passion. (Jeremy, Chef de Partie, Restaurant D)

Another reason that led chefs to perceive their pay as unproblematic was that they also consistently believed restaurants would not be financially viable if they were paid more.

Chefs deserve more money than they're on but that's all they're willing to pay, as restaurants will go broke. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

I think if everyone gets paid more the business doesn't make as much money. (Lucas, Sous Chef, Restaurant C)

The national average for profit margins is 1.3% or something like that...That's why you do it because you love it. (Thomas, Chef, Restaurant A)

This was also evident when chefs made clear that they were not interested in taking jobs with higher pay and better working hours that involved compromising on the quality of food and therefore the skills deployed and developed.

If you are passionate, there are some things you just wouldn't do. Before I got the job here, I was offered a head chef position in a golf club for much better pay, but I stepped into the kitchen...and I just said 'I can't do it'. (Paul, Chef de Partie, Restaurant C)

Life stage had a clear impact on pay perceptions with older workers more likely to report issues with the pay, or intentions to leave the venue or sector for this reason. Pay became a more important consideration given their increased financial responsibilities as a result of their family stage.

There are a lot of overtime hours that aren't included in the pay and [for] some people, pay is a big thing for them. You see that especially as they're getting older as well, and they've got to support their families, so they've got to find something more sustainable for them. (Jessica, Apprentice Chef, Restaurant C)

Conversely, younger workers emphasised that their lack of commitments permitted them to tolerate what they acknowledged was an objectively low level of pay, with some foreseeing that pay may become something that factors into their work decisions in the future.

For the moment I want to stay in [the industry] because I'm quite young and I enjoy it and money is not really much of a problem for me...Maybe some point down the track I might have to seriously think about changing it, you know, or find a way to make money through it. (Sophie, Chef, Restaurant F)

Thus, perceptions of pay and recruitment and retention decisions were influenced by life stage, with younger workers perceiving the pay to be satisfactory given the absence of financial pressures at this stage of their life, and therefore it did not contribute to a desire to leave the organisation or industry. Conversely, older workers became more sensitive to pay given different family stages were associated with increased financial responsibilities. This contributed to decisions to leave the industry given the limited availability of venues with increased pay.

4.6 Job security

4.6.1 Job security: objective assessment

Job security, as defined by contractual status, was easily attained across all venues, whereas more flexible alternatives were more difficult to access. Permanent contracts were prevalent given they enabled salary forms of payment, which permitted employers to reduce overtime and penalty payments. Casual employment was considered synonymous with part-time working hours and, as explained by one chef at management level, was avoided due to a belief that it was not conducive to performance.

[We do not have casual staff] at the moment, but we have done in the past. We've had a few people that were working like 20 hours a week or that sort of thing, which I don't think works. They'll come in, they might do one day here, another day at the end of the week and you just haven't got that day to day of learning...you need to be here all the time so you understand what's going on. (John, Sous Chef, Restaurant B)

Despite the industry's challenges related to fluctuating clientele demand, chefs also explained that this did not impact the kitchen's resourcing requirements as the same number of staff was required regardless of the number of meals to be produced. Consequently, employers did not prioritise access to a flexible workforce through the use of casual staff to adjust the number of hours the staff worked.

Workers also perceived job security to be high as they had no expectation of being dismissed or made redundant. In instances of poor performance, the chefs reported that additional training would be provided until the staff member was competent, rather than dismissing the individual.

If someone is struggling, they'll train them instead of kicking them out, especially if it comes to apprentices...I, to the best of my knowledge, don't know of anybody that got the sack rather than trained. (Jack, Commis Chef, Restaurant B)

This high level of job security was also related to the shortage of chefs in the labour market and the subsequent need to recruit and retain chefs.

4.6.2 Job security: subjective assessment

Given the uniformly high levels of job security found in the sector, chefs often did not emphasise this aspect of their work as it had become normalised and expected. Additionally, the tight labour market influenced workers' perceptions of job security as they felt capable of attaining a new role relatively easily should they ever need to. As one chef, Thomas, highlighted: "we usually have the freedom to leave and pick up another job" (Chef, Restaurant A).

However, the relative increase in importance of job security was evident among older workers. This was reflected in the preference of one chef for a permanent contract, which implied an annualised salary, as he explained that it gave him a sense of "security that I will get paid this amount each week" given his mortgage commitments. Thus, as later life stages tended to be associated with increased financial commitments and responsibilities, job

security, which provided financial security, was increasingly valued, similar to the increased importance of pay.

4.7 Working-time arrangements

4.7.1 Working-time arrangements: objective assessment

The number of working hours reported within kitchens was high but varied substantially across the sites, ranging from 45 to 80 hours. Overall, the long working hours in the industry was promoted by the poor implementation and regulation of annualised salaries given employers believed it entitled them to schedule as many hours as they desired with no penalty, despite the requirement to reconcile it with the hourly rate within the award.

Variation in working hours was associated with the number of service periods at the workplace; venues with lunch and dinner services had longer hours given the need for earlier starts. Lunch and dinner services were found in all of the larger venues. Typically a ‘double’ shift required chefs to work 16 or 17 hours in one day with one dinner break, which was required twice per week in many venues. Some standard ‘single’ shifts could also be as long as 10–12 hours.

Working hours correlated with the product market segment of the restaurant, whereby the higher-end venues had the longest hours. As shown in Table 4, the upper-level venues ranged from 60–80 hours per week, while mid-level venues ranged from 45–60 hours per week. Interviewees reported both anecdotally and based on prior work experiences that the relationship between working hours and product market segment applied more generally across the industry, whereby weekly working hours were higher and averaged 80–90 hours in premium venues; and they noted that this adversely impacted their pay given the standardised award-based salaries.

The better the place—you know if you’ve got 2 hats or 3 hats—you’re going to be working more for less money. The higher you get, the shitter the money you get and the hours you have to do. And then in places that are little bit less known, you don’t really have to do that crazy hour thing. (Sophie, Chef, Restaurant F)

Nevertheless, there was still substantial variation between venues, some of which reflected managerial efforts to redress recruitment and retention challenges. For example, in the venue with the shortest working hours, the owner had consciously decided to limit the working

hours given the number of chefs who were “burnt out” by their previous jobs with long working hours (Mark, Owner, Restaurant F).

Table 4: Working hours at case study sites

Venue	Average total weekly hours	Typical roster
Restaurant A (Upper-level; small)	60–65 hours	One double shift (16 hours) and four 12-hour shifts
Restaurant B (Upper-level; large)	60 hours	Three single shifts (9–10 hours: 3pm–12am or 7am–5pm), and two double shifts (17 hours, 7am–12am)
Restaurant C (Upper-level; large)	70–80 hours	2–3 double shifts of 16 hours and 2–3 single shifts of 9–10 hours
Restaurant D (Mid-level; large)	45–55 hours	Three single shifts (8 hours; 9am–5pm) and two double shifts (15 hours; 9am–12am), or one double, three single and one ‘swing’ shift (12 hours; 9am–9pm or 11am–11pm)
Restaurant E (Mid-level; small)	55–60 hours	Five shifts: 11am–close (11–12 hours)
Restaurant F (Mid-level; small)	45–50 hours	Three double shifts (12 hours) and one single shift (8 hours)

Restaurants also varied in terms of whether weekends were worked and whether days off could be rostered consecutively. Three venues, Restaurants A, C and E, were open on Sundays because there was customer demand in their particular locations, which were in waterfront and neighbourhood locations rather than the central business district. Additionally, those venues that ordinarily served lunches but were closed on Sundays generally elected to close Saturday lunches. All venues were open for Saturday dinners. The venues that had reduced weekend working hours highlighted that this was a valuable incentive to attract staff in a tight labour market.

[T]hat's really good when it comes to hiring staff; we can promote that there's Sundays off and Saturday morning off. (Harry, Executive Chef, Restaurant D)

Apart from venues that were closed on two consecutive days, chefs reported that consecutive days off were not guaranteed to staff and therefore their days off were often held on two single, separate days within the week. Having access to consecutive days off was noted as important by staff; many chefs commented that when this did not occur, there was “not enough time to relax properly and recoup; that’s when I get tired” (Emily, Sous Chef, Restaurant A). All chefs reported working five days per week—except very occasionally they might be called in to work an extra day when the restaurant was short-staffed.

Rosters were either semi-fixed or variable. The larger venues, Restaurant B and Restaurant C, utilised semi-fixed rosters that could be amended, while the smaller venues tended to have variable rosters that differed substantially each week.

The ability to request time off for one-off occasions was reported as generally available, particularly in the larger venues, provided the request was made with enough notice or if there was staff available to swap the shift after the roster was completed. However, accommodating requests for time off prevented venues from instituting fixed rosters. Furthermore, there was limited flexibility in terms of offering roster schedules that deviated from full-time hours and evening and weekend work, which may have suited workers with specific needs outside of work.

4.7.2 Working-time arrangements: subjective assessment

Given the intrinsic enjoyment of the job, chefs often perceived the long hours as unproblematic as they were spent doing something enjoyable to them:

Not seeing friends on weekends, like hell to with that anyway...I’d almost rather be in the kitchen, doing what I love, hopefully surrounded by people who share that same passion and want to do the same thing or reach the same objective or whatever. (Thomas, Chef, Restaurant A)

If I worked less hours, probably I’d get bored, so I don’t mind doing the hours. (Lucas, Sous Chef, Restaurant C)

The enjoyment of cooking also meant that the long hours were experienced qualitatively differently, like in a state of ‘flow’, where the intense focus and concentration on the task caused the passage of time to be distorted (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

When you’re in the kitchen and people are like ‘oh my god you’re working so hard’ —the time literally flies. There’s no moment when you’re leaning and checking the time. You get in there, you set up, start prepping: you’re always against the clock so you move fast, the clock is ticking

faster than you're moving and before you know it, you're setting up for service and then time flies. (Thomas, Chef, Restaurant A)

The dedication to, and intrinsic enjoyment of, their work, also led these chefs to explicitly state that their work was central to their lives, and that their personal lives were willingly compromised as a result.

Right now, my mindset is work and when it comes to family, all chefs are selfish. I'm going to be driven to do my own thing, so I'll sacrifice friendships, relationships... I am always going to prioritise that and most people in the industry will do that as well, if they want to go somewhere...you have to...And that means, as I said, missing weddings, missing whatever... you just miss it and you accept it. (Thomas, Chef, Restaurant A)

Another reason for the relatively accepting views towards the long hours was that the venues studied were believed to have favourable working hours relative to others, particularly the most elite venues, which were reported to require 80–90 hours per week. There was also a common perception that long hours were the norm for the industry and thus to be expected.

No one's ever really happy with the hours but they're pretty decent for hospitality. Because I do know other places that are doing like 60 hours. (Jeremy, Chef de Partie, Restaurant D)

Yeah it's actually ok, I'm quite ok with the number of hours. We start at 12 o'clock most days, which is quite nice. Compared to [other places]...I've done a lot harder hours. (Emily, Sous Chef, Restaurant A)

[Y]ou [don't] get to catch up with friends because the time is different... When they have off, we're working...[but] I guess it's normal...in hospitality...it's alright. I don't mind. (Nancy, Demi Chef, Restaurant D)

Yet those who had worked in venues with extremely long hours were particularly emphatic that they were unacceptable and cited it as their reason for leaving their previous workplace and were reluctant to consider it in the future given the severe effects it had on their lives.

No, I don't think that [I could have stayed in the industry]—especially with the wage that you get... I was pretty over it. I guess working here it's given me an opportunity to like the industry and want to stay in it, enjoy it...But before with the hours, I was just over it...I don't want to work 80 hours a week. I don't want to be really tired on my days off either. (Sophie, Chef, Restaurant F)

[The previous high-end venue] was really full on and intense and I wanted to leave that and come work somewhere closer to where I live and a bit more kind of like relaxed...I just weighed up the pros and cons and I'm like I'm going to have no life, like I never see my family because I work all weekend. Something has to change...I can't do this for the rest of my life. (Caitlin, Sous Chef, Restaurant E)

Such venues also reportedly suffered more severe retention issues, with Restaurant F reporting that their shorter working hours were a strong attraction for staff and thus, their

kitchen was composed of staff who ‘felt burnt out by their last jobs’ (Mark, Head Chef, Restaurant F).

The more accepting view of the long working hours was also predominantly taken by early-career chefs, who were focused on making sacrifices in order to advance their career and develop their skills. In contrast, older workers specifically sought out venues that offered better working hours. For example, an older chef explained that he had returned and stayed with the organisation specifically because the venue was willing to adjust his working hours to suit his needs specific to his life stage.

Right now I'd probably be doing between 40–45 hours. I would say that would be one of the reasons why I decided to re-take the position again. My operations manager...is very understanding of flexible [arrangements] in regards to my requirements, particularly after the birth of my child. (Harry, Executive Chef, Restaurant D)

Difficulties reconciling the long and unsocial working hours with family commitments was reported to be a common issue. Given the industry norm was not to offer more accommodating hours, chefs at this life stage would leave venues in search of better hours or would exit the industry.

[H]aving a kid, that's a big thing, and for chefs, head chefs in a 2-hatted restaurant, where work is literally their life, I've known of chefs that had a baby and ... they couldn't hack it anymore, so they had to go to somewhere else to work less hours. (Gareth, Chef de Partie, Restaurant B)

The head chef, his last day is actually tomorrow, he's actually leaving. Mainly because he's having his third child, so he is changing jobs. So like from a head chef he is moving to our meat supplier and he's going to be their production manager. So he can get shifts where he can go home and actually see his kids. (Jeremy, Chef de Partie, Restaurant D)

Even outside of family considerations, older workers at more mature career stages reported changing views towards working hours. Natalie, aged over 30 and after 15 years in the industry, commented that working hours had become more important to her, which led her to impose conditions on the working hours she would accept in a job, thus dictating where she would be willing to work.

[What I look for in a restaurant job is] completely different now than it was a few years ago because of the [more senior] position that I am in. Before it was always only about the food. Now... I don't want to do more than like 16 hours a day—like that's my maximum, which is still a lot, but that's my absolute maximum. (Natalie, Chef, Restaurant F)

While Harry was motivated to reduce his working hours to meet his life stage needs associated with family responsibilities, Natalie was responding to her increased negotiating power as a skilled employee—the fact that she had met key career goals through a total

dedication to work and the accumulated experience of long hours, which was becoming physically more challenging as she aged.

Younger chefs also described an expectation that their views on working hours would adjust in response to their changing work-life priorities, family circumstances and physical capabilities.

[T]o me, restaurants are just way too full on. [The head chef] is just here all the time. When I get older I just want time for myself...You do all these hours when you're young, but not when you're older. (Jeremy, Chef de Partie, Restaurant D)

I love doing this, but I don't want to be in the kitchen 50 hours a week when I'm 45; I want to be sitting back and having an even better work-life balance. (Mark, Head Chef, Restaurant F)

As alluded to previously, family status was also an important factor and shaped whether workers perceived the job to be viable given their needs for not only shorter hours, but also fewer hours at night. While not exclusively a gendered phenomenon, this was a concern felt more strongly by female chefs, reflecting the persistence of gendered caregiving roles.

If I have kids, I would prefer to have standard [daytime] hours... The only reason I would go back to a hotel is when I'm looking for standard hours and more cruisy [work]—definitely when I get older. (Mary, Commis Chef, Restaurant E)

I'm like...do I want to have a family? Well then what do I do then? It's just like something female chefs do talk about a lot and none of us have found any solutions so far... you're almost better off not working for the amount that I would have to pay in childcare. Again, because you're doing those super long hours. (Natalie, Chef, Restaurant F)

Another female chef, while recognising this, also highlighted that family formation was also a second-order issue given the hours even made developing a relationship difficult.

You'd have to give up your career if you had a child. Like not be in a serious position...it takes up a lot of your time; most people in kitchens find it hard to have a relationship, never mind children. (Sophie, Chef, Restaurant F)

Consequently, working hours drove recruitment and retention decisions acutely at later life stages, particularly at older ages and advanced family stages. In contrast, intrinsic enjoyment of the job and the normalisation of industry practices meant it was not a strong driver at earlier ages and career stages.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings set out in the previous chapter, identifying conclusions that can be drawn in relation to the research questions and the contribution these findings represent relative to existing knowledge. This study set out to examine job quality among chefs in the restaurant sector, adopting an enjoined job quality framework that considered both objective and subjective assessments, as well as a life course perspective, in order to better understand the longstanding phenomenon of recruitment and retention difficulties in the industry. In doing so, it also sought to analyse the impact of product market segment and restaurant size on job quality.

This discussion presents an overall assessment of the quality of jobs using the enjoined approach, showing that jobs were objectively poor overall, yet subjective assessments differed according to life stage. In later life stages, job quality dimensions typically considered ‘extrinsic’, such as pay and working hours, were found to become more important. Significantly, these subjective perceptions impacted the recruitment and retention of chefs. In relation to the impact of size and product market on job quality, variation in job quality dimensions was not adequately explained by either factor, suggesting neither has a simple relation with job quality overall. These findings contribute to our understanding of the quality of jobs for chefs in Australian restaurants and its relationship to recruitment and retention, and to our conceptual understanding of job quality.

5.2 Job quality of chefs in the restaurant industry

5.2.1 Objective job quality

Overall, this study revealed that the objective job quality of chefs was poor, yet included some positive features. Previous research has highlighted that jobs typically include elements of both good and poor features (Sengupta et al., 2009; Vidal, 2013). However, the overall assessment that the jobs were poor was attributable to the severity and breadth of the negative job quality features, which related to pay, work intensity, autonomy, working hours and flexibility. Pay levels were award-based and, at \$45,000–\$55,000 per annum, low relative to national median wages, with evidence to suggest underpayment relative to mandated minimums through the avoidance of penalty rates. Compounding this, there were only modest prospects for pay progression with increased seniority, which were hampered by ill-defined

classifications in the award and managerial reluctance to grant increases. This existed despite the high value employers placed on chefs' skills. Work organisation suffered from limited opportunities to exercise autonomy or creativity as a result of the highly centralised decision-making structures and severe work intensity arising from the high pace of operations, difficult physical conditions and an absence of breaks. Finally, working hours were excessively long, reaching 80 hours per week in some venues, coinciding with unsocial evening and weekend hours, which together had substantial impacts on work-life reconciliation. Exacerbating this, there was limited availability of flexible options or certainty related to rostering. While moderate opportunities for progression existed through the traditional Escoffier brigade structure and the different sections of the kitchen, these were often impeded by management, and not accompanied by formal training opportunities. Furthermore, while there were only moderate levels of monitoring, this was possible given the strong cultural norms of high work ethic that enabled management to rely on peer and self-monitoring, and the flow of customers' orders produced a quasi-mechanised pace, ensuring workers did not have a choice but to maintain the high pace required to meet customer expectations. These poor aspects were not sufficiently offset by the more moderate or beneficial components of the job: high job security, and high levels of on-the-job training. No one job type proposed by Holman (2013b) captures the quality of these jobs completely, but they would closely resemble the category of 'high-strain' jobs, apart from having moderate to high task complexity and training rather than low. These high-strain jobs are classified by Holman (2013b) as being 'low quality' overall.

These findings contribute to addressing the identified gap in our empirical understanding of the quality of jobs for chefs, particularly within Australia. Australian studies of chefs to date (Meloury & Signal, 2014; Robinson & Beesley, 2010; Robinson et al., 2014) have only shed light on job quality issues related to aggressive and abusive management styles and skill use, having until now overlooked a more complete examination of job quality for this occupation, such as pay, working-time arrangements, job security, work organisation and progression opportunities. Relative to the more extensive international literature related to chefs, most commonly from the United Kingdom and United States, a number of similar job quality concerns were revealed. Low pay, long and unsocial working hours and limited flexible working practices, high work intensity in physically difficult working conditions, and poor management practices have been consistently found to be a problematic feature of the

occupation (Chivers, 1973; Harris & Giuffre, 2010, 2015; Maguire & Howard, 2001; Pratten, 2003; Pratten & O’Leary, 2007). These issues were similarly evident in these Australian case study findings. However, this study provides greater detail specific to the Australian context, for these dimensions. In relation to pay and working hours, for example, the role of annualised salaries within the award in facilitating extended working hours and low pay was evident. The nature of the long and unsocial hours, combined with high intensity and the low availability of flexible arrangements, which were exacerbated by the prevalence of double-shifts and the absence of breaks, were also outlined in detail. Finally, the extensive on-the-job training was detailed, a hitherto overlooked aspect of job quality for this occupation, although it is acknowledged that this contrasted with the low provision of formal training. While these previous studies have originated from ‘liberal market economies’ or ‘market regimes’ with similar institutional contexts to Australia, which can be expected to have similar job quality outcomes (Holman, 2013a), cross-country variation within an employment regime or institutional type has also been shown to exist (Doellgast et al., 2009). Thus, this study provides further evidence to suggest that job quality outcomes within an industry are likely to be similar across countries within an institutional regime type.

This study’s adoption of a comprehensive and holistic job quality framework has also extended the analysis into previously under-researched areas of job quality in relation to chefs, addressing the gap in both Australian and international extant literature. Thus, relative to previous studies of chefs, new empirical knowledge has been generated concerning progression opportunities, job security and work organisation (autonomy and monitoring). The findings highlighted that chefs generally experienced limited opportunities for autonomy and discretion. Using Gallie et al.’s (2004) definition of discretion, the chefs without managerial responsibilities did not have any control over methods, quality standards, which tasks to perform, or their pace. They were required to work according to tightly defined recipes and techniques, with few opportunities to contribute to menu design. Instead, decision-making was confined to managing their own workflow, that is, the order in which the tasks under their responsibility were completed, within externally set constraints related to time, methods and quality. The unique, dual nature of opportunities for progression within this occupation were also detailed, which involved moving across sections with progressively increased skill requirements, in addition to the formal, traditional kitchen hierarchy that has been previously documented (Fine, 2008; Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Leschziner, 2015).

However, these opportunities were often not made available and, importantly, often without associated pay increases. Finally, the high levels of job security were highlighted, as represented by the prevalence of permanent contracts and worker reports of employers' practices to maintain staff levels. These insights represent important contributions to scholarly knowledge on job quality in restaurants.

In relation to the dimension of job security, the high levels found for chefs in this study contrast with typical depictions of hospitality and service industry work. The hospitality and broader service industry is considered to be strongly associated with precarious, insecure work (Alberti, 2014; Harvey, Rhodes, Vachhani, & Williams, 2017; Kalleberg, 2009; Lewchuk & Laflèche, 2017; McDowell, Batnitzky, & Dyer, 2009; Whitehouse, Lafferty, & Boreham, 1997). According to Bosch and Lehndorff, most academic studies “associate the transition to the service economy with the beginning of the period of uncertainty and instability arising out of the destandardisation of employment relationships” (2005, p. 2). Yet, the findings presented in this thesis conflict somewhat with these assumptions common within extant scholarship and also illustrated that standard forms of employment with secure work can be associated with other negative job quality outcomes: secure work produced jobs without flexibility and work-life considerations. Thus this occupation had more in common with the job quality concerns of white-collar or professional jobs (Campbell et al., 2011; Charlesworth et al., 2014; Holman, 2013b; Schieman & Glavin, 2016), rather than typically precarious service industry jobs (Alberti, 2014; Campbell & Chalmers, 2008; Harvey et al., 2017). This also demonstrates the importance of occupationally-specific analyses of job quality within the hospitality industry given the different job quality concerns raised when considering the hospitality industry singularly or the service industry in general.

Similarly, the findings of this thesis challenge the standard depictions of low skill needs and low provision of training thought to be commonly associated with the service and hospitality industries (Autor & Dorn, 2013; Baum, 2002; Finegold, Wagner, & Mason, 2000; Keep & Mayhew, 1999). The chefs in this study were shown to require a depth and breadth of ongoing learning such that even highly experienced chefs reported that they were building on their technical skills continually, in addition to acquiring additional kitchen management skills in more senior positions. While the notion of low-skilled service work has been challenged by previous authors on account of under-valued emotional (Bolton, 2004) and

aesthetic labour (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007) in the service industries, this is applicable to occupations involving *interactive* service work. Instead, the recently recognised ‘articulation’ skills involved in coordinating and timing a series of tasks to meet time and quality constraints, which tend to be ‘invisible’, were shown to be relevant in this occupation (Hampson & Junor, 2005, 2010).

Furthermore, the findings provide additional support for ensuring that evaluations of skills are not solely tied to qualifications and formal training, but also recognise and value skill and expertise acquired through learning on-the-job (Felstead et al., 2005; Hampson & Junor, 2015). As Felstead et al. (2005) argued, learning through the “everyday experience of work...such as doing the job, being shown things, engaging in self-reflection and keeping one’s eyes and ears open” has been under-recognised in skill debates and studies compared to counting qualifications and “training events” (p. 379). Consequently, this study further supports calls for a broader understanding of the nature of skill and skill development.

5.2.2 Subjective job quality and the impact of life stage

While overall the jobs were objectively poor, subjectively, chefs frequently considered their jobs to be ‘good’. These positive assessments were mostly attributable to the emphasis chefs placed on skill use and development opportunities as important features of a good job, which is consistent with recent findings (Robinson & Beesley, 2010; Robinson et al., 2014). In such cases, these considerations were regarded as sufficiently important to counteract poor aspects of the job—especially low pay and long, inflexible and unsocial hours, which again reflects the findings of Robinson and Beesley (2010). As encapsulated by Natalie, a consistent perspective held by the chefs was that, “You have to be doing it for love because there isn’t any other reason to be doing it”. The chefs were highly influenced by their attachment to their craft, and therefore skill use and development were the prime considerations in assessing their job.

Importantly, however, subjective assessments differed by life stage, indicating that perceptions or subjective assessments are not stable or fixed but vary over the life course. Subjective perceptions were responsive to worker preferences and needs, reflecting the weightings individuals assigned to different job quality dimensions at different life stages. Pay, job security, autonomy, working-time arrangements and work intensity emerged as key considerations in later life stages, yet these dimensions of the job were objectively poor, and

so the overall subjective assessment of the job was revised downwards over time. Income security through pay levels and job security were valued more highly given that financial responsibilities typically increased during later life stages. The physical intensity of jobs became more difficult to tolerate at later life stages, which made work intensity and working hours a more important job quality dimension. As chefs became more competent in their skills throughout their careers, they also came to value opportunities for autonomy. Finally, later life stages produced greater time demands outside work and so working hours, including the number of hours, scheduling and flexibility, took greater precedence in the subjective evaluation of their jobs. Thus, while many chefs at younger life stages had perceived the job to be good, they had come to re-evaluate them as ‘bad’ at later life stages.

Consequently, the findings contribute further evidence that life stage moderates job quality perceptions and that job quality is indeed a dynamic concept (Pocock & Charlesworth, 2017; Pocock & Skinner, 2012). This builds on the insights of previous studies as it shows the impact of life stage on a wider set of job quality dimensions. The existing literature has proposed the importance of life stage on job quality perceptions, yet has traditionally confined this analysis to how it relates to job dimensions related to work-life reconciliation, including working hours and flexible working arrangements (for example, Erickson et al. 2010; Fagan & Walthery 2011). This study shows that the effect of life stage extends to the job quality dimensions of pay, job security, work intensity and autonomy. For the most part, these can be considered ‘extrinsic’ job quality dimensions (Gallie, Felstead, & Green, 2012; Morgan et al., 2013), which therefore suggests that later life stages can be associated with an increasing importance attached to such dimensions.

Additionally, the findings indicated that, while different dimensions emerged as more important in later life stage, the previously valued dimensions continued to hold importance. Therefore, this suggests that later life stages not only lead to a re-prioritisation of job quality dimensions, but an overall increased sensitivity to job quality. This increased sensitivity to job quality contrasts with Kalleberg and Vaisey’s (2005) finding that older workers perceived a greater range of jobs as ‘good’ than younger workers, which suggested older workers had job quality expectations that were more easily met. These findings were relevant to workers from a diverse array of occupations in North America, suggesting this study’s findings may be specific to chefs. However, the relative shift towards extrinsic job quality dimensions,

rather than intrinsic, in later life stages is consistent with Sutherland's (2011a) findings among UK workers.

In terms of the conceptualisation of life stage, this study showed that all three dimensions of life stage—family status or stage, career stage and age—impacted on job quality, but each held relevance for particular job quality dimensions. Previous literature has inconsistently conceptualised life stage. While the majority of studies have examined family status (Erickson et al., 2010; Fagan & Walthery, 2011), age (Kalleberg & Vaisey, 2005) or career stage (Low et al., 2016) in isolation, Sutherland (2011a) and Skinner et al. (2014) demonstrated the benefits of incorporating additional dimensions, albeit neither study incorporated all three. By examining all three dimensions, it was evident that each were relevant to changing subjective perceptions of job quality. Family stage was the aspect of life stage that impacted perceptions of pay and working hours as workers with children had higher financial needs and constraints on their time. Meanwhile, age was more relevant to work intensity given tolerance of the physical intensity of the job was related to the capacity of an ageing physical condition. Finally, the transition in importance from skill development toward autonomy reflected changing career stages where feelings of mastery over the job were achieved in different ways as additional skills were acquired at progressive career stages. Consequently, it is evident that examining life stage necessitates a more comprehensive, multi-faceted definition that encompasses family status, career stage and age in order to fully understand its impact on job quality perceptions. Overall, these insights represent an important contribution to our understanding of the relationship between job quality and life stage, and how and why subjective job quality changes over the life course.

5.3 Job quality and recruitment and retention

By illustrating the influence of job quality dimensions on recruitment and retention, this study has also contributed to our understanding of the causes of these workforce challenges prevalent in this industry. Importantly, this study reveals that subjective perceptions of job quality, rather than objective conditions, had a clear connection to recruitment and retention. Thus, chefs, at early life stages, often remained in jobs that were overall objectively poor quality as they held positive subjective assessments. As subjective perceptions were shown to be responsive to the worker's life stage, chefs at different life stages made decisions to join or leave a venue based on different job quality dimensions. Given the job quality dimensions desired by chefs at earlier life stages—skill use and development—were present at varying

levels across the industry, but also were exhausted at one particular venue after a certain period of time, chefs at this life stages would move to jobs perceived as holding better opportunities for skill use and development *within* the industry. In contrast, chefs at later life stages were more likely to consider exiting the industry as their job quality preferences for better pay, working-time arrangements and work intensity could generally not be met in jobs within the industry.

Previous studies have suggested that the hospitality industry's poor working conditions, such as low pay, long and unsocial working hours, work intensity and impediments to progression could be related to recruitment and retention issues (Pratten, 2003; Pratten & O'Leary, 2007; Rowley & Purcell, 2001) and that in the specific case of chefs, skill use, development and variety held particular importance (Robinson & Beesley, 2010; Robinson et al., 2014). This study complements and supports these previous findings, revealing the importance of skill use and development to recruitment and retention and extends pre-existing findings by highlighting that this differs according to life stage. As detailed earlier, early-stage chefs primarily perceived good jobs to be ones in which they could develop their skills. Similarly, the chief reason chefs at this life stage chose to leave or join an employer was the exhaustion of learning opportunities at a particular venue. While the lack of formalised training has been cited as an explanation for chefs' turnover (Pratten, 2003; Pratten & O'Leary, 2007), this study found it was on-the-job opportunities for skill development that were more highly valued. This could potentially be explained by the strong institutionalisation and embeddedness of the apprenticeship industry training program, which provided a sufficient amount of formal instruction in industry relevant skills prior to entry to the industry. Alternatively, it could be explained by the poor experiences that were experienced by chefs in this program, which instilled in chefs a belief that on-the-job training was a superior method of learning.

These on-the-job skill development opportunities were influenced by the structure of the kitchen and the design of the menu, which determined the extent of multi-skilling and task variety. Progression within a venue was also a route to skill development and therefore positively influenced subjective job quality and attraction and retention. Given skill development opportunities were finite within a venue, this contributed to the frequent 'churn' of chefs between venues. This mobility across different venues was used to maximise skill

development opportunities through exposure to different cuisines and techniques, which has previously been identified internationally (Arnoldsson, 2015; Chivers, 1973; Harris & Giuffre, 2015). Consequently, skill development opportunities, a dimension of job quality, was shown to influence recruitment and retention, but this was specific to early life stage chefs and was most relevant to understanding ‘intra-industry mobility’, rather than decisions to exit the occupation—an important distinction within retention outcomes that has previously been identified (Arnoldsson, 2015; Robinson & Barron, 2007).

In contrast to the findings for early stage chefs, largely extrinsic job quality dimensions become more relevant to recruitment and retention of chefs at later life stages. As previously detailed, chefs at later life stages revised the perceived quality of their jobs as pay, job security, working hours and intensity, and autonomy became more important, which were objectively poor quality aspects of their job. As the chefs came to value aspects of jobs that were objectively poor, they were motivated to consider leaving their job. However, given these conditions were generally objectively poor across the industry, chefs commonly exited the occupation as their preferences could not be fulfilled by the occupation in its current form. Consequently, these findings for later life stage workers were more consistent with the extant literature that suggests low pay, long and unsocial working hours, work intensity and impediments to progression could be related to recruitment and retention issues (Pratten, 2003; Pratten & O’Leary, 2007; Rowley & Purcell, 2001), yet, are specific to certain life stages. Overall, the findings show that the objective job quality dimensions that impact recruitment and retention change according to the worker’s life stage. This is because perceptions of job quality are moderated by worker life stage and it is subjective job quality, rather than objective job quality, that has a direct influence on recruitment and retention.

The findings of this thesis relating to the importance of subjective job quality and life stage to recruitment and retention represent a contribution to the literature. Previous studies have identified a relationship between job quality and turnover or retention (Dill, Morgan, Marshall, & Pruchno, 2013; van der Aa et al., 2012), however many studies have limited their definition of job quality to a subset of dimensions, such as working hours preferences (Loughlin & Murray, 2012); work environment (Dupré & Day, 2007; Markey et al., 2015); and advancement, training and job security (McPhail & Fisher, 2008). This study provides further evidence of a relationship between job quality and recruitment and retention, but does

so having examined a more comprehensive set of job quality dimensions, which revealed that the relevant job quality dimensions could also be extended, and introduces the importance of life stage. Depending on the worker's life stage, skill and progression, pay, working hours, work intensity and autonomy were related to recruitment and retention.

However, not all job quality dimensions were found to be related to recruitment and retention decisions, such as job security, benefits and monitoring, regardless of life stage. A common element between these dimensions was that they were universally consistent across the industry and, objectively, positive or neutral aspects of their jobs. Consequently, seeking an alternative job within the industry would not improve these dimensions. This suggests a 'desensitisation' to job quality features when they are positive and prevalent, which is potentially related to how worker norms and expectations are formed (Brown et al., 2012). These findings have an important difference from Morgan, Dill and Kalleberg's (2013) study, which found that extrinsic job quality dimensions had an impact on recruitment and retention but intrinsic dimensions did not. This study similarly found extrinsic dimensions were relevant to recruitment and retention, but that this was confined to later life stages, whereas intrinsic dimensions were relevant to recruitment and retention at earlier life stages. Consequently, this study addresses the identified gap in the literature in understanding the phenomenon of recruitment and retention challenges for chefs, and adds to our theoretical understanding of how job quality is related to recruitment and retention.

5.4 Factors affecting job quality

Existing research suggests that organisational size and product market strategy may impact job quality. Yet, the exact nature of any such relationship remains contested. This study found variation in objective job quality across the case study sites; however, it was confined to certain dimensions and could only be partially explained by organisational size or product market segment. Job security, pay, monitoring, work intensity, discretion and the availability of flexible working arrangements were found to be consistent across all venues, while working hours, progression opportunities, and skill use and development were subject to variation.

5.4.1 Organisational size

Previous research has found size to be an important determinant of job quality, although the direction of the relationship is unclear. Storey et al. (2010) and Saridakis et al. (2013) found

that job quality improves in smaller firms, Tsai et al. (2007) argued this was explained by the closer and more personal relations between management and workers, which afforded management more discretion to meet worker needs. Yet, Lloyd and Payne (2012) and Hohti (2000) both found evidence contrary to this, pointing to the structural impediments of smaller organisations, which had difficulties providing progression opportunities, or higher wages. Other research, however, has pointed to the potential for organisational size to influence extrinsic and intrinsic factors differently, whereby small organisations are associated with improved intrinsic factors, while larger organisations provide improved extrinsic factors (Haley-Lock, 2012; Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996; Lai et al., 2015; Wagner, 1997), although there has not been consistency in the specific dimensions studied and highlighted.

In this study, the size of the venue influenced some job quality dimensions—working-time arrangements, progression opportunities, and skill use and development—but in different directions. Larger venues had improved *formal* training opportunities, scheduling and flexibility, and progression opportunities, but smaller venues tended to have better informal *on-the-job* training, task complexity and reduced working hours. Size did not appear to impact pay, work intensity, discretion, monitoring or job security, largely because these factors did not vary across the sites. Therefore, this provides further evidence that the impact of size depends on the job quality dimension and that there is no simple relationship between job quality and size as a whole. It also lends further weight to the pattern emerging in some studies that larger organisations are associated with improved extrinsic job quality dimensions, while smaller organisations are associated with enhanced intrinsic dimensions.

Additionally, this study supports prior research that highlights the structural barriers to improving job quality in small organisations given that scale is necessary for progression opportunities and conducive to formal training. However, it also shows how a smaller scale can have beneficial effects. Smaller restaurants found it more cost effective to reduce service periods, which had positive impacts on working hours, and smaller teams were able to maintain quality despite the multi-skilling and discretion afforded to chefs given the simpler operations and the ease of the head chef overseeing the kitchen. Conversely, larger restaurants tended to structure their kitchens in ways that increased the division of labour in order to maintain quality and consistency in more complex logistical arrangements. Consequently, larger size firms can necessitate measures to ensure greater control over

outcomes, which reduce job quality. This provides another explanation beyond interpersonal relationships for how size can impact job quality.

5.4.2 Product market segment

A considerable body of research has examined the impact of product market segment on the quality of jobs. While there is a general thesis that competing on quality, as compared to cost, results in improved job quality (Schuler & Jackson, 1987), there has been evidence in the service and hospitality industries to both support (Boxall, 2003; Frenkel, 2005; Keep & Mayhew, 1999; Kelliher & Perrett, 2001) and refute this relationship (Bailey & Bernhardt, 1997; Hilton & Lambert, 2015; Lloyd, 2005; Lloyd & Payne, 2013; Lloyd et al., 2013). In this study, product market segment only appeared to influence working hours, whereby organisations in the premium market segment had longer working hours and thus worse job quality. Work organisation, skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and job security did not vary according to the product market segment of the restaurant. This provides further evidence that a positive relationship between product market strategy and job quality is not universally applicable.

Previous studies within the service sector have explained the absence of this relationship by highlighting that some industries can achieve higher quality through physical infrastructure rather than human capital, particularly where the role does not require customer interaction or service (Lloyd, 2005; Lloyd et al., 2013). In the restaurants studied, quality in higher market segments was generally achieved through producing dishes that were more labour intensive and based on high-quality and high-cost ingredients. This was achieved through heightened labour intensity—larger teams with a greater division of labour, rather than utilising relatively more highly skilled staff. Therefore, operating in premium restaurant venues did not improve work organisation or skill and training. Similarly, pay levels did not vary given the industry norm to confine them to minimum wages set out in the relevant award, rather than paying higher rates. In the context of producing more labour-intensive dishes, venues were in fact more sensitive to labour costs, rather than viewing higher wages as necessary to obtain skilled workers. Thus, as asserted by Mason (2004), higher product markets can be associated with increased labour use rather than qualitatively different and higher skill use, and thus not improve job quality.

Similarly, the mid-level venues in this study also demonstrated that they had a simultaneous focus on cost and quality, which could be conceived as *value-focussed*, rather than solely cost-focussed. As asserted by Gittell and Bamber (2010), firms can pursue quality standards while also seeking to minimise costs. This can also potentially explain the disruption to the link between job quality and product market segment in this context, as the venues studied opted to downgrade costs in other aspects of the business, such as designing menus that applied skill and creativity with the use of cheaper ingredients, avoiding a reduction in costs through measures that negatively affect job quality.

Finally, the absence of this link could also be explained by the lack of incentives for premium venues to improve job quality in order to attract staff. The findings indicated that experience at these premium venues was advantageous and desired by chefs given it would aid future career progression, and due to the general esteem associated with working at a well-known and regarded venue. While these venues still reported recruitment and retention challenges, they tended to attract early-career workers who were focused on obtaining such experience, and as the interviews showed, less sensitive to what could be regarded extrinsic job quality dimensions, such as pay and working hours. Consequently, it was not necessarily management's strategy to improve job quality to attract workers in this segment, since the restaurant's reputation by virtue of being in a higher market segment, attracted a certain kind of worker. Indeed, as highlighted, this enabled such restaurants to neglect key job quality dimensions, including working hours, in their venues relative to others.

Numerous job quality dimensions were not explained by either product market strategy or firm size as they did not vary, or were not adequately explained by either factor. Pay, job security, discretion, work intensity, or monitoring or did not vary across the sites, suggesting an institutional or sectoral explanation. Pay did not vary given the high level of award reliance. Job security was related to the uniform labour market conditions across the industry and the industry-wide norm of associating permanent positions as necessary to extract high commitment, high work-ethic employees. Finally, high work intensity, limited discretion and low to moderate monitoring were related to the structure of operations that are somewhat fixed within kitchens and again, to the persistent industry-wide masculine work culture that idealised having the 'work ethic' to tolerate a difficult work environment and used centralised, authoritative decision-making (Burrow, Smith, & Yakinthou, 2015; Harris &

Giuffre, 2010). Additionally, the role of managerial decision-making in influencing job quality, as has previously been highlighted (Batt et al., 2003; Findlay et al., 2017) was evident in relation to some dimensions, such as progression opportunities, working-time arrangements and skill use and development through creative involvement. Together, these suggest that the factors influencing job quality are complex and likely interact with one another.

5.5 The enjoined approach to job quality

An ongoing debate in job quality research has been concerned with whether an objective or subjective approach should be adopted. Objective measures can be seen as paternalistic and unresponsive to preferences, and not adequately grounded in workers' lived experience, yet a subjective approach suffers from adaptive biases and can obscure objectively problematic aspects of job quality if norms and expectations are low. Conversely, objective measures are more easily comparable, while subjective measures may have more relevance for understanding workers' labour market behaviour. Thus, overall, there are advantages and disadvantages associated with each approach. In response, an enjoined approach, which incorporates both aspects, has been proposed as a way forward to this "dead end" (Findlay et al., 2013, p. 444) and was adopted in this study.

By taking an enjoined approach, this study showed that job quality was assessed differently than if either approach was adopted in isolation. While the jobs were largely objectively poor, subjectively, these jobs were perceived as 'good' in earlier life stages, yet became bad jobs in later life stages. Using the enjoined job quality categorisation developed by Knox et al. (2015, p. 17), workers transitioned from *fulfilling* bad jobs to *unfulfilling* bad jobs, and it was when workers were in the latter category that recruitment and retention outcomes differed despite the jobs being similar in nature. As argued by Brown et al. (2012), analysing both aspects in conjunction allows for explanations to be developed for the discrepancy between the two perspectives. Thus, in this study, the discrepancy between objective and subjective assessments over the life course revealed the importance of life stage and the underpinning changes in workers' needs and preferences in association with different ages, career stages and family stages, furthering our understanding of job quality.

Additionally, each component of the analysis contributed to understanding job quality, and when analysed in conjunction with the alternative approach, provided further insights. The

objective analysis revealed the poor aspects of pay, work intensity, autonomy, working hours and flexibility, moderate opportunities for progression and the more positive elements of high job security, and high levels of on-the-job training. This enables us to understand how these jobs can be improved, particularly when combined with an analysis of what impacts objective job quality. Meanwhile, the analysis of subjective assessments revealed what impacted recruitment and retention outcomes, or as previously suggested, the “labour market behaviour of workers” (Brown et al., 2012, p. 1011), and revealed the impact of life stage. Had the quality of jobs only been analysed objectively, the impact of job quality on recruitment and retention would have been obscured. Conversely, solely undertaking an analysis of subjective assessments would have prevented an understanding of the negative aspects of the job that were perceived as subjectively good or tolerable.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined the relationship between job quality and chefs' recruitment and retention in the Australian restaurant industry. The occupation of chef is experiencing substantial employment growth, yet it has experienced longstanding workforce recruitment and retention challenges (Australian Government Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, 2001; Australian Government Department of Employment, 2016c). Scholarly literature and industry and government reports have proposed that poor working conditions are a possible explanation for these issues (Australian Parliament House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation, 2007; Beesley & Davidson, 2013). However, there has been an absence of substantial empirical evidence, particularly within Australia, and the research to date has lacked a systematic framework for its analysis. Given the emerging job quality literature suggests that enhanced job quality assists with attracting and retaining staff (Montague et al., 2015; van der Aa et al., 2012), this formed the conceptual framework of this study.

The research underpinning this thesis has analysed the quality of jobs for chefs in six Sydney-based restaurants using an enjoined job quality framework (Knox et al., 2015). Job quality was examined using the most common indicators: work organisation (including factors such as autonomy, workload, and task complexity), skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, job security, and working-time arrangements (Burgess et al., 2013; Holman, 2013b; Munoz de Bustillo et al., 2011). Using an enjoined approach to job quality, which integrates both objective and subjective perspectives, revealed the effect of underlying objective conditions, while also enabling an understanding of workers' lived experience and their preferences. It also made explicit the effect of each perspective on job quality outcomes, such as recruitment and retention.

In response to the growing recognition that jobs may be experienced and perceived differently according to workers' life stage, job quality was also examined using a life course perspective. The existing literature provides evidence to suggest the importance of life stage in understanding job quality perceptions (Knox et al., 2015; Pocock & Charlesworth, 2017; Skinner et al., 2014), yet our understanding of how it relates to job quality dimensions

beyond work-life reconciliation is currently under-developed and clarity is lacking with respect to the concept of life stage.

Finally, in order to understand what shapes job quality and provide insights into how to improve jobs, the impact on job quality of two key variables identified in the literature—product market strategy and organisational size—were examined. There is substantial debate in the extant literature regarding their relationship to job quality, particularly in the service industries. In relation to product market segment, firms adopting a strategy that targets premium segments are thought to improve job quality outcomes (Schuler & Jackson, 1987), yet there is conflicting evidence from studies within the service industries, which both support (Boxall, 2003; Frenkel, 2005; Keep & Mayhew, 1999; Kelliher & Perrett, 2001) and refute this relationship (Bailey & Bernhardt, 1997; Hilton & Lambert, 2015; Lloyd, 2005; Lloyd & Payne, 2013; Lloyd et al., 2013). In relation to size, Storey et al. (2010) and Tsai et al. (2007) showed that job quality improves in smaller firms, while Lloyd and Payne (2012) and Haley-Lock (2012) found evidence contrary to this. As a result, this study considered these variables in the case selection in order to provide further evidence to contribute to these debates.

Consequently, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- What is the quality of chefs' jobs in the Australian restaurant industry?
- Do perceptions of job quality vary according to life stage?
- What is the relationship between job quality and recruitment and retention?
- Does job quality vary according to firm and industry characteristics, such as product market segment and size of the restaurant?

6.2 Findings of the study

The findings of this research are based on a comparative embedded multiple-case study (Yin, 2003) of six Sydney-based restaurants involving interviews with 36 chefs, owners and managers, and commercial cookery teachers. The case study data generated a rich account of the quality of jobs in context, enabling an in-depth examination of the relationship between job quality and recruitment and retention, and its determinants.

In relation to the first research question focusing on the quality of chefs' jobs in the Australian restaurant industry, the findings revealed that, objectively, job quality for chefs was poor overall and characterised by low levels of pay, long, unsocial and inflexible working hours, high work intensity, limited autonomy, and low formal training. Pay levels were award-based, and at \$45,000 to \$55,000 per annum, low relative to median earnings in Australia, with limited pay progression and evidence of underpayment relative to mandated minimums. Chefs worked up to 80 hours per week with shift lengths of up to 16 hours for double shifts, which coincided with unsocial weekend and evening hours. Physically, the work was extremely exhausting given the long hours, absence of breaks and intense pace of work during service periods. Finally, there was low autonomy given the little involvement in menu design, limited discretion over techniques, and few formal training opportunities. These conditions were not compensated sufficiently by the few positive characteristics of high job security and extensive on-the-job training. Additionally, opportunities for progression were only moderate, and potential opportunities were often not realised.

In relation to the second research question and the impact of life stage on subjective job quality, the findings showed that perceptions of the job did not necessarily align with objective assessments, and this assessment varied over the life course. At earlier life stages, the job was perceived as good given the emphasis chefs placed on skill use and development opportunities relative to other job quality dimensions. At later life stages, chefs tended to reassign priority to extrinsic job quality dimensions of pay, job security, working hours, and work intensity in response to growing financial responsibilities, time commitments outside of work, and declining physical capacity. In addition, opportunities for autonomy became more valued as mastery over skills developed. This indicated that life stage impacted the relative importance of job quality dimensions and given that these job quality dimensions were objectively poor, the assessment of the job was revised downwards as workers' subjective preferences were not being met. Using the job quality typology developed by Knox et al. (2015), the jobs transitioned from *fulfilling* bad jobs to *unfulfilling* bad jobs over the life course. Consequently, the findings showed that perceptions of job quality were moderated by life stage, which was related to factors beyond family stage, including age and career stage.

Perhaps most significantly, addressing the third research question, the findings indicated that workers' subjective assessments of job quality impacted recruitment and retention. Given

subjective job quality was moderated by life stage, the impact of job quality on recruitment and retention differed by life stage. At earlier life stages, attraction and turnover of chefs was primarily related to skill development opportunities. As such, chefs were motivated to join certain venues based on the opportunities to broaden their skills and explained their decision to leave an organisation as being based on having exhausted all learning opportunities. The practice of churning through different venues was used as a conscious strategy to build a portfolio of skills by maximising exposure to a range of techniques and cuisine types. These opportunities were also influenced by the structure of the kitchen and the design of the menu, which determined the extent of multi-skilling and task variety. However, at later life stages, when pay, working hours, intensity, and autonomy became more prominent concerns, chefs were more likely to consider leaving a venue in response to the quality of these dimensions. Importantly, this often resulted in chefs contemplating leaving the industry as these conditions tended to be objectively poor and there was little variation across the sector. Consequently, subjective job quality perceptions were shown to influence recruitment and retention, which changed over the life course as chefs' subjective assessments shifted in response to different job quality priorities, impacting which particular job quality dimensions were of relevance to recruitment and retention. Furthermore, negative job quality perceptions at earlier life stages were associated with churn between venues, while they were associated with occupational exit at later life stages. These findings create a clearer understanding of how and why job quality impacts recruitment and retention and highlights the importance of examining workers' subjective assessments of job quality.

The final research question related to the impact of product market segment and size of the restaurant on job quality, and the findings showed that, where variation in job quality dimensions existed, it was not adequately explained by these factors. Product market segment only impacted working hours, where premium venues tended to have longer working hours. Organisational size had an impact on a broader range of dimensions, but it did not have a consistent effect: larger organisations had improved formal training, progression opportunities, and scheduling, but inferior informal on-the-job training, task complexity, and working hours compared to smaller organisations. Therefore, no simple relationship with overall job quality for either product market segment or organisational size was evident.

6.3 Implications of the findings

The findings of this thesis generate several contributions to the existing body of knowledge. Firstly, they contribute to addressing the identified gap in our empirical understanding regarding the quality of jobs for chefs. New insights related to pay, working hours, job security, work organisation, and progression opportunities provide a more complete examination of the quality of chefs' jobs in Australia. The findings made clear that chefs' jobs in Australia suffer from low wages with underpayment and poor pay progression, extreme working hours with limited flexibility or scheduling certainty, high work intensity with no breaks, and low autonomy as a result of mandated techniques and recipes. At the same time, chefs' jobs were found to have high job security and on-the-job training, with moderate progression opportunities and minimal monitoring. This builds on our prior understanding of Australian chefs' jobs, which to date has focused primarily on aggressive and abusive management styles (Meloury & Signal, 2014; Robinson & Beesley, 2010; Robinson et al., 2014), while neglecting to analyse the quality of jobs more comprehensively and systematically.

Relatedly, the findings contribute new knowledge to international scholarship regarding chef's job quality. Relative to previous studies of chefs abroad, this thesis examines previously under-explored job quality dimensions of progression opportunities, job security and work organisation (autonomy and monitoring). Progression opportunities were shown to be related to lateral and hierarchical movements through the kitchen structure, yet were often constrained by managerial practices which favoured staff building expertise in particular kitchen sections rather than being moved into new sections. Autonomy was found to be inhibited by the traditional kitchen structure and limited involvement in the creative process. However, job security was shown to be high given a managerial norm that associated full-time permanent positions with high commitment to the firm. Monitoring was kept low through socio-normative control mechanisms involving cultural and peer norms (Frenkel, 2005), as well as the quasi-mechanised pace of production. Thus, in addition to making an empirical contribution, this develops our understanding of key dimensions of job quality.

Consistent with United Kingdom and United States-based research (Chivers, 1973; Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Maguire & Howard, 2001; Pratten, 2003; Pratten & O'Leary, 2007), this study found evidence of job quality issues related to pay, working-time arrangements, and work

intensity for chefs. Such findings are inclined to support the notion that institutional settings can shape job quality, whereby comparable jobs are produced in similar institutional configurations. However, given the lack of research regarding chefs' job quality in different institutional settings for comparison, further cross-national research would be required to establish this more convincingly, or to determine if there is a sectoral effect that overrides the institutional effect (Bechter, Brandl, & Meardi, 2012; Grimshaw & Lehndorff, 2010; Jaehrling & Mehaut, 2012). Regardless, the comprehensive examination of job quality in this thesis enables us to identify what is needed to improve the quality of jobs for this growing occupation, and thereby have an impact on lifting overall job quality in Australia. These important issues are discussed in the next section.

The findings also highlight that the objective job quality among chefs differed from those typically associated with hospitality or service industry jobs, which are commonly depicted as precarious and low skilled. In contrast, chefs' jobs were characterised by inflexible and long working hours, work intensity, low pay and low autonomy, yet benefited from high job security, and informal skill development opportunities. Therefore, the findings highlight that job quality is not uniform within the hospitality or service industries. Neither chefs nor frontline service industry staff can be assumed to be an archetype for the industry as a whole. This points to the need for occupationally-specific, as well as sectorally-specific, job quality studies, as argued by Sengupta, Edwards, & Tsai (2009).

Secondly, this thesis contributes further evidence that job quality perceptions are dynamic and vary dependent on the life stage of the worker (Pocock & Charlesworth, 2017; Pocock & Skinner, 2012). Significantly, it was shown that life stage has an impact on a greater range of job quality dimensions than previously understood, extending the focus from job quality dimensions associated with work-life reconciliation (working hours and workload) (Erickson et al., 2010; Fagan & Walthery, 2011; Skinner et al., 2014) to pay, job security, work intensity, and autonomy. This study contributes to our understanding of *why* subjective job quality changes over the life course; the combined effects of age and family status produce different work-related needs given workers' increased financial responsibilities and time constraints, while later career stages create a new impetus for opportunities for autonomy that enable the accumulated skills and expertise to be fully utilised. This demonstrates the need

for a broader conceptualisation of life stage that encompasses family status, career stage, and age.

Thirdly, this thesis advances our understanding of the relationship between job quality and recruitment and retention. The findings provide further evidence of a positive relationship (Montague et al., 2015; van der Aa et al., 2012), but build on existing literature by emphasising that it is subjective perceptions of job quality that were associated with workers' decisions to join or leave a particular firm, moderated by workers' life stage. Furthermore, this provides evidence based on a more complete definition of job quality compared to prior studies, which have focused on select job quality dimensions such as working hours preferences (Loughlin & Murray, 2012), work environment (Dupré & Day, 2007; Markey et al., 2015), and advancement, training and job security (McPhail & Fisher, 2008). Such findings contribute to the identified gap in the hospitality industry literature in understanding the phenomenon of recruitment and retention challenges among chefs. While the findings demonstrate that skill development and utilisation are important to recruiting and retaining workers, consistent with previous studies (Robinson & Beesley, 2010; Robinson et al., 2014), the findings also reveal that this was specific to early life stage workers. Meanwhile, for mature life stage workers, extrinsic job quality dimensions impacted attraction and retention, which is particularly important as this stage is associated with occupational exit.

This thesis also contributes to the debate on two key factors previously assumed to impact objective job quality, namely product market segment and organisational size. The findings illustrated that there was no simple relationship. This study did not find a strong, nor positive, relationship between product market segment and job quality overall, consistent with research that has questioned this link in the service industries (Bailey & Bernhardt, 1997; Hilton & Lambert, 2015; Lloyd et al., 2013). This finding suggests that the relationship between product market segment and job quality is not universally applicable. Rather, this research supports more recent findings that this relationship does not hold when premium product market strategies are associated with intensified labour and physical capital use, as they act as substitutes for variation in skill use (Lloyd et al., 2013; Mason, 2004). In the restaurants studied, premium venues produced higher quality dishes through the more intensive use of labour and high-cost, high-quality ingredients, rather than necessarily using higher skilled staff. Thus product quality was improved independently of job quality. In sum, this study

contributes further evidence to suggest that the widely assumed positive relationship between product market segment and job quality may not be present in all industries.

The findings supported neither a uniform positive or negative relationship between job quality and organisational size. Organisational size had a positive relationship with formal training, progression opportunities and scheduling, yet a negative relationship with on-the-job training, skill use, and working hours, indicating that there was no consistent relationship with the concept of job quality overall. These findings are consistent with studies that suggest smaller organisations are associated with improved intrinsic job quality dimensions, while larger organisations are associated with improved extrinsic job quality dimensions (Kalleberg & Van Buren, 1996; Lai et al., 2015; Wagner, 1997). Relatedly, the findings provided further evidence that smaller firms do indeed possess structural *constraints* to offering better quality jobs in relation to progression, scheduling and training, which are largely related to a lack of formalisation of human resource practices (Storey et al., 2010) but also scale. However, the findings also showed that smaller firms possess the inherent *benefit* of avoiding the need for measures that exert greater control over workers, enabling heightened autonomy and skill use. This provides another explanation beyond the presence of close interpersonal relationships in smaller organisations (Storey et al., 2010; Tsai et al., 2007) for how size can impact job quality. These findings related to the impact of product market segment and organisational size indicate that the drivers of job quality are complex, and potentially interact with other previously identified factors of institutional settings, sectoral characteristics, and managerial discretion.

Finally, this thesis further demonstrates the analytical value of adopting the emerging enjoined approach to job quality. It demonstrated that each component contributed to understanding job quality more fully, with the objective analysis showing the nature of jobs and how they can be improved, and the subjective analysis showing how job quality impacted recruitment and retention. By using this approach, a clearer understanding of job quality and its impact on recruitment and retention was gained as it revealed rather than obscured which aspect was driving the relationship. Furthermore, examining the discrepancy in objective and subjective assessments allowed the impact of life stage to become apparent.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

The findings of this thesis provide evidence to suggest that a link exists between subjective job quality and the recruitment and retention of chefs, which is mediated by life stage. Significantly, the objective quality of these jobs was found to be poor on most dimensions. As these findings were based on case study research, generalisability of the findings should be assessed in relation to the broader Australian restaurant industry population of chefs through robust survey-based research. Furthermore, additional studies that replicate the findings in other industry and country settings would be valuable, particularly given the ongoing debates regarding sectoral and institutional effects.

Moreover, further research that demonstrates the positive impact of job quality improvements on recruitment and retention, and potentially on overall firm performance, would be beneficial. Such research would be most usefully conducted longitudinally. In particular, further research should explore the effectiveness of developing recruitment and retention strategies that are aligned to worker life stage.

6.5 Implications for policy and practice

This thesis has illustrated that recruitment and retention outcomes are related to job quality, therefore improving poor job quality dimensions is likely to improve the recruitment and retention of chefs in the context of recruitment difficulties and shortages. Additionally, the research indicated that negative worker perceptions of job quality occurred at later life stages, therefore, addressing negative aspects of the job would particularly enhance the retention of experienced and/or later life stage workers in the industry, who frequently exit the occupation. The research therefore suggests that workplace strategies to retain workers should be sensitive to workers' life stage, whereby improving skill development, task complexity, and progression should be a priority for improving retention of earlier-stage chefs, while improving the more extrinsic components of the job, as well as autonomy, is necessary to retain later-stage workers. Specific interventions to address poor job quality characteristics related to the workplace, regulatory and policy levels are outlined below.

6.5.1 Workplace factors

At the most immediate and direct level, a number of measures can be taken by workplaces to improve job quality and therefore improve the recruitment and retention of chefs. A priority area that can be addressed at the workplace level relates to working-time arrangements.

Rosters could be redesigned to offer either shorter or fewer shifts to reduce the often extreme hours worked by chefs. For example, venues that operate with double services (lunch and dinner) or insist on chefs completing both 'prep' and 'service' periods for quality and consistency reasons could consider four-day working weeks. A reduction in double-service shifts is also recommended given the increased pace of work during service periods compared to 'prep' periods, to assist with improving both working hours and work intensity. Similarly, implementing the breaks mandated in the industry award would contribute towards improving both aspects of the job. Implementing the annualised salary system according to the requirements in the award would also ensure there is a disincentive to rostering staff for long hours and during unsocial hours, and ensuring that they are appropriately compensated for any overtime hours worked. Alternatively, better management of overtime could be achieved through implementing time-off-in-lieu schemes. This could be particularly useful for those restaurants that experience seasonality in their trading conditions, where unavoidably long working hours during peak periods could be offset with reduced hours during quieter periods.

Another poor aspect of the job related to working-time arrangements is the degree of flexibility, control, and certainty regarding rosters. Working-time arrangements were shown to be rigid, making work-life reconciliation difficult, particularly as workers reached later life stages. Alternatives to full-time jobs were reported to be scarce, which chefs reported to be incompatible with meeting responsibilities outside of work, particularly when these hours were long and during unsocial times. Thus, restaurants could consider offering a greater diversity of working-time arrangements with the needs of different workers in mind, such as different shift schedules (for example, day-time/weekday only schedules), reduced working hours (such as part-time hours or reduced shift lengths), and greater rostering consistency. In addition to increasing the variety of options, it is important that these solutions are tailored to the needs of different workers. Some workers may indeed find it more flexible to have a rotating roster that can be changed with ease, while others may need greater consistency through a set roster to plan their activities outside of work.

Additionally, the findings suggest that employers could ensure that there are opportunities for autonomy and discretion, particularly as chefs transition into middle and later career stages, when their priority has shifted from skill development to putting these skills to use, which can

be achieved through increased autonomy. In the context of chefs' work, some degree of task discretion can be achieved through their greater involvement in menu design. While it is necessary for the head chef to retain primary oversight and influence over the creative direction of the menu, there is still considerable scope for chefs to contribute ideas as part of the creative process or to be given responsibility for a component of the process. Similarly, while consistency is an important consideration for restaurants, which limits the extent to which chefs control the choice of techniques and methods to complete their tasks, greater employee involvement and participation can encourage chefs to provide suggestions for improvement. Offering greater opportunities for autonomy is challenging in the context of a traditional kitchen structure given its hierarchical and centralised decision-making. In this context, the operation of kitchen sections could transition from smaller hierarchical units within sections to semi-autonomous teams. Finally, at a broader level, chefs could achieve a greater sense of autonomy and discretion through involvement in management decision-making. This can be encouraged through 'consultative participation', such as workplace meetings or briefing groups (Gallie, 2013).

While opportunities for on-the-job skill development were high and chefs did not perceive formal training opportunities as desirable given their previously poor experiences, chefs frequently reached a point within each venue where opportunities for on-the-job skill development were exhausted, which particularly led to turnover among early career chefs. This was exacerbated in venues with infrequent menu changes and poor practices related to rotating chefs across different sections, and thus employers should be mindful of these practices. However, for those venues that already have these opportunities for development, there is scope to increase retention by offering skill development opportunities outside the job that do not suffer from the same concerns as the formal training options currently available. Innovative training opportunities could include industry masterclasses, which would provide short and targeted training opportunities, related to the latest culinary techniques as well as management skills, by leading chefs currently practicing in the industry. This would overcome the concerns raised with the content of training being out-dated and not consistent with current practice and/or that it is overly time consuming for workers with long working hours, yet meet chefs' desire for continual learning beyond the scope of what can be offered on the job. Similarly, short-term secondments to other venues could also be considered.

Importantly, restaurants could better recognise the acquisition of skills with pay increases, whether they are obtained on-the-job or formally. As the research outlined, chefs attain new skills by moving laterally through the kitchen section structure, as well as vertically through the hierarchical structure. Thus, employers could consider recognising the increased skills and knowledge of chefs as they progress through the sections of the kitchen. Pay progression frequently did not occur, even for progression through the hierarchical structure, and was a strong disincentive to remaining with an employer as chefs often reported better success negotiating a pay increase by moving to an alternative venue.

Recognising that these changes would represent a cost to businesses that already experience small profit margins (Fair Work Commission, 2016), a related concern for implementation is addressing other aspects of the business to find cost savings. A potential avenue for this to occur is to skilfully redesign menus such that it reduces costs, while maintaining quality and skill use. This was a practice exhibited by some of the case study venues that offered better jobs. However, cost savings from improved recruitment and retention could counteract these cost-related concerns (Davidson et al., 2010).

6.5.2 Regulation of work

A number of the aforementioned workplace interventions relate to implementing existing worker protections contained in the industry award and relevant industrial relations legislation. Therefore, an important complementary measure is to improve the monitoring and enforcement of these conditions in order to improve job quality. As has been raised by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (Australian Council of Trade Unions, 2017), the penalties associated with breaches are also an important lever to improve compliance, in addition to monitoring. Enforcement is particularly important when employers may be unlikely to adopt these practice of their own accord, such as in industries with low levels of union representation, like hospitality (Weil, 2009).

The priority areas of focus for enforcement are related to pay and working-time arrangements. There needs to be greater enforcement of the requirement to undertake an annual reconciliation of salary-based pay compared to hourly-based pay for workers paid annualised salaries. This is necessary to ensure that workers are not worse off financially under this arrangement and that there is no incentive to increasing working hours, especially

at times which attract penalty and overtime rates. Improvements in pay could also be achieved through enforcing correct usage of the classification structure. There was evidence among the chefs interviewed that they were not being paid according to the appropriate classification level after progressing within the kitchen or demonstrating the requirements of higher classifications, with a tendency to remain on the level that they entered on. Finally, in order to reduce the length of working hours, and work intensity, it is necessary to introduce greater monitoring and enforcement of break provisions contained within the award.

In relation to clauses contained within the industry award, consideration should be given to clarifying the requirements of different classification levels. This research highlighted that the award failed to mirror kitchen structures and markers of progression in these descriptors. For example, Cook Grade 5 refers to a chef de partie, stating that they must be engaged in duties such as stock control and ordering or supervising and training other staff. Yet in practice, a chef de partie is defined by their role in the cooking process—being in charge of a section of the kitchen which may or may not have other staff—rather than their involvement in activities such as ordering, which were typically confined to the sous chef and above. This is compounded by unclear references to ‘the appropriate level of training’, which makes it difficult to enforce. Together, these function to limit workers obtaining pay progression through advancement. Thus, classification descriptors should be written more clearly, with direct reference to identifiable characteristics and such that they accurately reflect changes to work tasks and responsibilities at different levels.

In addition, consideration should be given to increasing the penalties associated with night-time work. The interviews revealed that working during evenings was just as harmful to work-life reconciliation as working weekends. Yet, the penalties associated with night-time work only apply after 10pm and are relatively small in comparison (10–15% compared to 25–50%). This would ensure compensation for these impacts, particularly in light of recent reductions to Sunday penalty rates in the industry.

6.5.3 Skills and industrial relations policy

Skills and employment policy changes could also improve and safeguard the quality of chefs’ jobs. The historically entrenched institution of apprenticeship training, which has ensured a base level of skill for the workforce, is under threat as employers and workers increasingly

question its value given skill outcomes are not consistently being met. Addressing these concerns involves ensuring training packages and the associated curriculum delivered by training providers is reflective of current industry practices and that assessment practices are rigorous. Limiting the use of classroom-based teaching is also recommended given the general consensus among those interviewed that this is not the appropriate method of teaching for this occupation. Flexible training modes are also particularly needed for workers at higher management levels, who suffer from greater time constraints. Improving managerial training would also have further benefits, encouraging better workplace human resource practices as well as reducing costs in a low profit margin industry, enabling the focus to be shifted away from reducing labour costs, and therefore, job quality.

Finally, research shows that unions are an effective conduit to achieving improved job quality (Meagher et al., 2016; Simms, 2017), yet union density for the restaurant industry is particularly low at five per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Increased union density would improve the bargaining position of workers, as well as assist with monitoring and enforcing of existing conditions. Thus, measures to both increase the institutionalised role of unions and reduce barriers to union membership could lead to improved job quality outcomes.

6.6 Conclusion

This thesis has examined the relationship between job quality and chefs' recruitment and retention in the Australian restaurant industry. Based on qualitative data from six Sydney-based restaurants, it analysed the quality of jobs using an enjoined job quality framework, which combines objective and subjective assessments (Knox et al., 2015). To this end, it has used the most commonly accepted indicators: work organisation (including factors such as autonomy, workload, and task complexity), skills and training, progression opportunities, pay and benefits, job security and working-time arrangements (Burgess et al., 2013; Holman, 2013b; Munoz de Bustillo et al., 2011). Within this framework, the role of workers' life stage was also examined. Finally, in order to understand what shapes job quality and provide insights into how to improve jobs, the impact of two key variables identified in the literature, product market strategy and organisational size, on job quality have been examined.

The findings of this study make empirical, theoretical and practical contributions to the pre-existing body of knowledge. Most significantly, this thesis advances our understanding of the

relationship between job quality and recruitment and retention, and the impact of life stage on job quality. It shows that subjective perceptions of job quality impact recruitment and retention, and these perceptions are impacted by the relative importance of particular job quality dimensions, which depend on the worker's life stage. Secondly, it contributes to the debates regarding the impact of product market segment and organisational size on job quality. It provides further evidence that a simple positive relationship between product market and job quality may not apply in the service industries: product quality improvements can be made independently of job quality improvements and, organisational size impacts extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions differentially. Finally, the findings contribute to addressing the identified gap in our empirical understanding of the quality of jobs among chefs. As this industry continues to grow with the emergence of a more sophisticated food culture, addressing entrenched recruitment and retention challenges is vital to the industry's long-term performance and growth potential. The suggestions for policy and practice identified in this thesis illustrate how restaurants can address recruitment and retention through enhanced job quality, improving outcomes for firms and workers alike.

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8 APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT



Discipline of Work and Organisational Studies
University of Sydney Business School

ABN 15 211 513 464

ANGELA KNOX

Associate Professor; Postgraduate Coordinator

Room N304

H03 - Institute Building

The University of Sydney

NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

Telephone: +61 2 9351 4264

Facsimile: +61 2 9351 4729

Email: angela.knox@sydney.edu.au

Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/>

Addressing recruitment and retention challenges in Australian restaurants

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study about recruitment and retention in the restaurant industry.

The research will examine what influences recruitment and retention of staff in this industry and how this might vary for individuals at different stages of their career and life.

It is expected that the findings will lead to recommendations designed to improve both personal and business outcomes.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are currently employed in the restaurant industry. Waiters, chefs and any other managers or owners at your workplace have also been invited to participate.

This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. So it's up to you whether you wish to take part or not.

By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

Susan Belardi is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Business at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Associate Professor Angela Knox and Dr Chris F. Wright.

(3) What will the study involve for me?

To participate, you will take part in an interview. It will be recorded in audio format and transcribed with your permission. The interview will be conducted by Susan Belardi at a time and place that is convenient for you. Interviews will be conducted in a manner that ensures your participation remains confidential.

The interviews with kitchen and floor staff will cover topics such as career history and future aspirations, and which features of their work are important to them. Managers will be asked about the restaurant's experience of recruitment and retention difficulties and its business and HR strategy.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

It is expected that participating in this study will take no more than one hour of your time.

(5) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by contacting Susan Belardi by email at susan.belardi@sydney.edu.au or by phone at 0431 058 693.

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

(6) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, there are no expected risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(7) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

By being part of this study, you can help us to understand how workforce recruitment and retention in restaurants can be improved.

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

(8) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purpose of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement.

Your participation in this study will be completely confidential; your identity will not be disclosed to anyone, unless as required by law.

Apart from putting your details on the consent form, your name and your workplace's name will not be used during the interview so that it will not be possible to identify you by listening to the recording or reading the transcripts. In the published study findings, you and your workplace will be given another name and care will be taken to exclude any unique characteristics about you or workplace that might enable others to identify you. Study findings will be published as a student thesis and may be published elsewhere, such as in academic journals or conference proceedings.

During and after the completion of the study, your information will be stored securely and will only be accessible by the researcher and her supervisors. Your consent form will be held in a locked filing cabinet in the office of Associate Professor Angela Knox. The digital audio file and transcription of the interview will be saved in password-protected files. At all times, details of your real identity and the link to your pseudonym will be stored separately from the interview audio recording and the transcription.

After the completion of the study, your information will be retained for seven years as required by University policy. After such time, the records will be disposed of under the authority of the Head of School, and in accordance with the requirements of University policy.

(9) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

(10) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Susan Belardi will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Susan using the details below:

Susan Belardi, MPhil candidate, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** 0431 058 693
- **Email:** susan.belardi@sydney.edu.au

(11) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of a one page summary. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

(12) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au
- **Fax:** +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

THIS INFORMATION SHEET IS FOR YOU TO KEEP.

9 APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



Discipline of Work and Organisational Studies
University of Sydney Business School

ABN 15 211 513 464

ANGELA KNOX

Associate Professor; Postgraduate Coordinator

Room 4174

Abercrombie Building (H70)

The University of Sydney

NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

Telephone: +61 2 9351 4264

Facsimile: +61 2 9351 4729

Email: angela.knox@sydney.edu.au

Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/>

Addressing recruitment and retention challenges in Australian restaurants

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.

- ✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- ✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- ✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University now or in the future.
- ✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- ✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
- ✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will not be told to others, except as required by law.
- ✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me or my workplace.

I consent to:

- **Audio-recording** YES NO

Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?

YES NO

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

Postal: _____

Email: _____

.....

Signature

.....

PRINT name

.....

Date

10 APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

10.1.1 Guidelines for interviews with chefs

Participants will be asked to provide information pertaining to their:

1. Personal details:
 - a. Demographics: age, gender, prior education and qualifications
 - b. Current life situation (e.g. student, parent/ carer, other jobs)
 - c. Career history
 - d. Reasons to apply and choose to work in current job and the recruitment process.
2. Current job's characteristics and their satisfaction with each dimension:
 - a. Conditions and benefits
 - b. Job security
 - c. Working-time arrangements and flexibility
 - d. Work organisation (job autonomy, workload and task complexity)
 - e. Skills and training
 - f. Progression opportunities
3. Career plans and aspirations.

10.1.2 Guidelines for interviews with management

Participants will be asked to provide information pertaining to the:

1. Firm's current operating environment
2. Firm's business and human resources strategies
3. Nature of work available at the organisation and basis for these decisions:
 - a. Conditions and benefits
 - b. Job security
 - c. Working-time arrangements and flexibility
 - d. Work organisation (job autonomy, workload and task complexity)
 - e. Skills and training
 - f. Progression opportunities
4. Organisational outcomes (qualitative and quantitative):
 - a. Recruitment (number and quality of candidates)
 - b. Retention (turnover and absenteeism)
 - c. Organisational performance (profitability/ turnover and absenteeism costs)
 - d. Productivity/ efficiency and quality of work.