

**BEHIND THE SCENES:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF A WORKING
KITCHEN**

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Abstract

During the latter half of the 20th century, many towns and cities throughout the UK have faced processes of deindustrialisation. These developments have drastically changed the cultural and social landscapes of many locales and populations. The most notable shift, particularly in the North East of England, has been the transformation from labour markets dominated by coal and other forms of heavy industry to one typified by insecure service sector employment. The hospitality industry is one that now dominates and although aspects of this service industry have received much academic attention of late, very few have focused on what happens behind the scenes.

This study seeks to rectify this. Based on the result of an ethnographic study of a working kitchen in a relatively exclusive hotel in the North East of England, it explores a particular overlooked sub-section of the contemporary British workforce, who are part of one of the largest industries in Western society. The study shows what working life is like within a contemporary hotel kitchen by situating the lives of these kitchen workers within the new economy and juxtaposing the harsh realities of backstage kitchen life with the ever-present image of indulgent consumption that frames the front stage location of the hotel. It aims to explore the different pleasures that are included with the purchase of 'a meal' and by taking a critical look at the consumerised dining experience, provides a concrete setting on which to compare the backstage environment of the kitchen. Furthermore, it details the intricacies of working in contemporary service employment in the 'neo-capitalist' economy, the drudgeries of kitchen life and the realities of cooking as a practical activity, as well as exploring the working relations, identities, status hierarchies and social ties of this environment.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this work is my own and that none of the material contained within this thesis has been published or is currently under review.

Chapter One

Introduction

This study considers the relationships between a specific group of chefs and kitchen workers and their working environment. It is the result of a long-term ethnographic study of a highly regarded kitchen in the North East of England. The kitchen is part of a large county hotel and caters for both the hotel's bespoke signature restaurant and large-scale functions. The study developed during my postgraduate studies at the Universities of Teesside and York because of my ethnographic investigation into the leisure lives of young people in the North East of England. During this early research, several respondents (who were low-level chefs and kitchen porters) discussed at length their haphazard relationship with 'going out' due to their work constraints and heavily restricted daily schedules. What was evident in my initial research was the passion, which some of these workers exhibited in reference to their work, despite the harsh and exploitative conditions that they hinted at. Although it was not pursued in detail at the time, it presented an intriguing avenue for further investigation, one that this thesis develops into an exploration of a particular hidden and overlooked sub-section of the contemporary workforce.

The food industry itself is enormous, encompassing a mass of subdivisions and is one of the largest industrial sectors of the world, contributing £74 billion to the UK economy in 2002 alone (Frewin 2004). More and more people are choosing to eat out in contemporary society and the industry as a whole is booming (Bill 2006) as restaurants are opening up at an unprecedented rate with many new openings in the top-end bracket (Gunn 2005). Dining out has clearly become a well-established feature of contemporary leisure and restaurants themselves are a cultural institution steeped in innovation (Barbas 2003). With 213 million meals eaten outside the home in 2008, the casual dining segment of the market showed a 40% increase in eating out when compared to the previous year (Thomas 2008). In 2002, a total of £80 billion was spent on eating and drinking, 85% more than 1992 (Frewin 2004). These figures show a marked increase as eating and dining outside of the home becomes

commonplace for much of society, with the UK's casual dining market being worth £4.7 billion in 2011, a calculated £0.9 billion increase since 2007.

Clearly, the service and hospitality industry are one of the largest industries in Western society and the chefs and kitchen workers who populate this thesis are integral to that industry. They are also part of a recent explosion in popularity with all things culinary. Whilst the gastronomic arts have elicited a peculiar fascination from the public over the last several decades, this contemporary manifestation of all things 'culinary' is something completely new. New magazines, television programmes and recipe books are amongst the most popular forms of entertainment (see Ashley et al 2004:153-169 on food writing and gastronomic literature) and innovative and charismatic chefs have joined the ranks of celebrities and other 'media stars'. This increase in popular interest surrounding the world of chefs and not just the dishes they produce, has somewhat opened up the previously hidden and secret 'backstage' (Goffman, 1969) world of professional cooking. Not only have we been subjected to popular television shows such as *Hell's Kitchen*, a reality-style cooking competition that appeared to shed some light on what happens behind the scenes, but we have also been inundated with fascinating and often sensational biographical accounts of what it is like to be a chef (Bourdain, 2000, 2006; Ramsay 2007, 2008; White, 2007; Wright, 2005). Ramsay tells stories of working 20 hours a day and battling his demons in a raw and exciting way, very similar to Anthony Bourdain (2001:3) who talks about his misadventures in 'the dark recesses of the restaurant underbelly'. Marco Pierre White is hailed as a sexy working-class hero and Wright's (2005) collection of chef's encounters are noted as 'tales of obsession, toil and tenacity'.

While Ferguson and Zukin (1998:93) acknowledge that 'the visibility of chefs and their cuisines in the mass media highlights the importance of consumption in representations of society and place', it has also served somewhat to skewer public perceptions of their occupation. Chefs are now situated among those professions that people dream about and aspire to join, thinking perhaps that they too will achieve similar levels of success and notoriety, both in and outside of the kitchen. One recent adaptation of the classic culinary show *MasterChef* only serves to highlight the pervasive qualities that this particular

profession now has on the public. Scores of willing participants are prepared to discard a well-established profession in the higher ranks of the current labour market to pursue a career doused in culinary stardom. The 2008 adaptation of the show, which initially emerged on our screens in 1990, managed to pull in 5.7 million viewers for the final show (Slater 2008). The winner, a 34-year-old Barrister, adequately passed the trials and displayed the prerequisite qualities deemed necessary to qualify for a 'passport to the big time'. Then, capitalising on his efforts, he secured work at a Michelin-starred country house hotel in Devon.

However, despite these compelling autobiographical accounts of chefs and their saturation in the media, there has been little academic research focusing solely on professional kitchens, chefs or their work. A significant body of research has emerged within the last few decades surrounding front stage arenas, such as restaurants (Barbas 2003; Bowden 1975; Finkelstein 1989, 2004) and although these include some studies that crossover to the world of the chef, they often touch upon the topic rather than focus upon it. There are however, some exceptions. Whyte's (1949) article, which investigates the social structure of the restaurant in contrast to that of the factory, is probably one of the earliest related studies that breach the culinary world. More recently, there have been studies carried out by Bloisi and Hoel (2008), Cameron (2001), Cameron et al (1999), Ferguson and Zukin (1998), Fine (1990, 1992, 1996, 2004), Gabriel (1988), Johns and Menzel (1999) and Palmer et al (2010). In a similar vein to these studies, my research also focuses upon the significantly under-researched professions of chefs and kitchen workers.

Aims and Objectives

With this in mind, I would like to outline some of the aims and objectives of my research. As noted, this study considers the relationships between a group of chefs and kitchen workers and their working environment; a highly regarded kitchen in the North East of England. The main aim of the thesis is to produce a penetrative analysis of interactions in this unique work setting, and frame this core concern with a rigorous consideration of the place of food within Britain's hyper-consumerised culture. I aim to counterpoise the fetishisation of cuisine as 'high culture' with the stark realities of food production in this setting, and produce a detailed analysis of the working lives of the kitchen workers. My thesis will also address the dynamics

of this particular sector of Britain's rapidly growing service economy and the increased insecurity of contemporary labour markets.

My earlier studies had opened me up to discourses surrounding the harsh realities of contemporary service employment in the 'neo-capitalist' economy (see also Hall and Winlow, 2005; Winlow and Hall, 2006) and I believed that the kitchen had the added bonus of acting as a lens through which these issues could be further analysed. Because of personal experience, I was aware of the apparent harsh conditions of working kitchens, as well as the incredibly long hours, low wages and the limited opportunities that workers had to engage in mainstream leisure pursuits, such as the ritual 'Friday night out'. What interested me was how the workers dealt with these factors, however as my time there progressed I began to narrow my focus and ask specific research questions regarding the workers and their work. Although I knew that the daily realities of the kitchen would play a central role in the thesis, there was also some opportunity to produce a little more than a small-scale study of chefs and kitchen workers. By looking at the lives of the workers and their attitudes towards work and the dishes they produced, I hoped to illuminate more about this form of low paid service work.

I became interested in how the workers interacted while at work and the hierarchies that were in place. I wanted to know how differences in employment status and wage levels influenced the overall culture of the kitchen and whether or not there were any antagonisms operating within the kitchen and upon what might these be based? I also sought to explore the drudgeries of kitchen life and how the 'backstage' work setting compared to the indulgent symbolism of the 'front stage' restaurant. I was also interested in answering questions that arose relating to the nature of skill and expertise, such as to what extent are these qualities actually a part of their job? I wished to explore whether the workers were producing works of art or more commodified products of a mass-produced industry? I hoped that this could illuminate to what extent the market for food production is simulated, distorted and exploitative, if at all. This also would allow for an exploration of whether the chefs can be viewed as artists or to what extent do the workers consider themselves as artists, and how does this differ depending on what they produce? As the nature of their work includes

individually crafted dishes that are served in the restaurant and high volumes of uniform dishes that are created en masse at large events.

The Study

This is an ethnographic study of a hotel kitchen, its workers and the dishes they produce. Specifically, the hotel where my study took place lies on the outskirts of a village in the North East of England. Surrounded by an array of former mining villages and new towns, the immediate area is very much a commuter village, with the majority of the residents working in the surrounding areas of Middlesbrough, Durham, Darlington, Stockton and Newcastle. The hotel is situated in one of the least populated parts of the country, the current population standing at around 5,000. The 2001 census indicated that the population was 4,214 (Durham County Council, 2001) and the largest group of residents consisted of the 50-60 year old bracket. Despite its relatively low population, the village boasts fourteen eating establishments, as well as the hotel. These include seven public houses that provide food, two teashops, four takeaways (Fish and Chip shop, Chinese takeaway, Indian takeaway and Pizzeria) and an Indian restaurant.

Fortunately lying on the periphery of the now largely redundant coalfields, the immediate locale has avoided the problems that have beset the wider area concerning social decay and increasing crime rates. Mining was undeniably important to the local area and helped define the character of the locale for consequent generations until it suffered a massive decline during the 1980's. It was during this time and the following decade that those who were able to found alternative employment in other available sectors and industries. Now, in the 21st century, the mines that once dominated the skylines are long gone and what has emerged is an industry seeped in the new service economy. The hotel itself is a high-end three star (circa 2006) country house set alongside historic parklands. Aiming for every feasible market possible, the hotel represents a wider growing trend within contemporary mass employment that has seen both the rise and dominance of the service sector over that of heavy industry. With an annual turnover of over £3 million (circa 2006), the hotel gains its revenue from occupancy, and from food and drink, which includes restaurant dining, conference lunches, private and corporate dinners, weddings and special events. Classed as one of the most

luxurious hotels in the North East of England, it is perceived as the embodiment of both indulgence and sophistication, attracting clientele for both business and pleasure.

I spent over one year working part-time within the kitchen under the job title of 'kitchen assistant' and the data contained within this thesis is drawn from my ethnographic observations, discussions and semi-structured interviews with my co-workers and agency workers who also worked at the hotel. Their attitudes and opinions on their work, the dishes they produce and their personal lives in the catering industry are dispersed throughout the thesis and it is from this data that I am able to draw conclusions regarding the nature of kitchen work.

A Closer Look at Kitchen Work

The kitchen itself is comprised of a number of workers, who operate in relation to a clear hierarchy and a complex division of labour, from those who own the means of production (the owners of the hotel) to the workers who produce the food (the chefs). However, as the thesis will explore, the production process within the hotel and restaurant is more complex than this simple division suggests. During my time observing within the kitchen, I noticed many instances in which the division between the owners of the hotel and workers was very much evident, and this caused numerous tensions within the workplace. Whilst the owners were absent from the hotel most days, leaving the running of the establishment to the managers, their occasional presence was treated with trepidation and their interference with almost outright contempt.

Workers within the kitchen include the skilled, the semi-skilled and the unskilled. They work side by side, day in and day out, all enclosed within a specific workspace. At the bottom rung of the kitchen's hierarchy are the kitchen porters who are responsible for the more mundane aspects of kitchen work. They keep the kitchen and its equipment clean and are responsible for many of the manual aspects of kitchen work, such as emptying the bins, sweeping, fetching and carrying, and cleaning the crockery and the various pots and pans that the chefs use. Above these in the hierarchy are kitchen assistants. These workers cover the same tasks as the kitchen porters, but are also used by the chefs to assist in preparing the food. This involves

chopping, slicing, and the plating up of large numbers of dishes (usually cold desserts); some of most repetitive aspects of kitchen work. During my time within the kitchen, kitchen porters would be assigned the position of kitchen assistant for a brief period. Above these two sets of workers are the chefs. These are organised in a hierarchical manner, from the Head Chef at the top, down to the trainee chef at the bottom. Each receives a working title and a set job description that involves varying degrees of responsibility within the kitchen. This determines the function and duty of each chef. The chefs are separated from the kitchen porters practically, through the majority of the jobs they do, visually, by the use of different uniforms and often spatially, through the use of different sections within the kitchen.

The kitchen and restaurant encompass many of the wider themes found in contemporary society, particularly in relation to current labour markets. Contemporary labour markets, especially those within the service sector, are fragmented. They encompass casual, part-time and sporadic forms of labour, many of which are extremely insecure, offering little scope for career progression. Many of the workers within the kitchen receive a very low rate of pay (minimum wage circa 2006) and although positions higher up the hierarchy do allow for some sense of job security, many are not privy to this. Catering, as with many other occupations, is beset by a low intake of workers and recruitment has often come from the swathes of immigrant workers who have also found their way into other areas of employment such as healthcare professionals, construction and domestic services. In addition, a large part of kitchen work is extremely mundane and repetitious. This draws parallels with other forms of contemporary service work; however, it also encompasses some degree of artistic craft production, particularly for the senior chefs.

The kitchen produces food for consumption within its signature restaurant and for the various large-scale events that it holds. It uses two main methods of production; the 'assembly line format' used to churn out large numbers of uniform dishes for large-scale events and a more individualistic and creative form of production which is used to service the restaurant. Therefore, kitchen work involves both craft production and mass production. Craft production within the kitchen is exemplified by the time and effort taken by the skilled workers (chefs) to create individual dishes within the restaurant and individual food

sculptures, which are handcrafted to act as table decorations for the larger functions. Mass production within the kitchen is exemplified by the large-scale functions they cater for, with the number of diners often totalling over one-thousand. In this method of production, a dish is brought along a line of workers (often a mix of skilled chefs and unskilled kitchen workers), with each individual responsible for a single item of food.

Theory

As previously noted, the main aim of this thesis is to produce a penetrative analysis of the working environment of a particular group of chefs and kitchen workers. Theoretically, I wish to counterpoise this work setting and the stark realities of food production behind the scenes with the place of food within Britain's hyper-consumerised culture. My previous research had introduced me to discourses surrounding the harsh realities of contemporary service employment in the 'neo-capitalist' economy, particularly the work of Hall and Winlow (2005; Winlow and Hall, 2006). Their work also focuses heavily on the North East of England and its occupants who are attempting to negotiate the world with many caught up in the trappings of low paid service sector work. I feel that my own study acts as a lens through which their themes can be analysed further.

Originality

As the following chapter will highlight, numerous studies have approached this research area with explicit focus on front stage arenas such as the restaurant and there are very few that centre on what happens behind the scenes. This thesis hopes to rectify that and I feel that my study benefits greatly from prolonged exposure to the daily routines and life in the kitchen. My main aims are to explore the working relations, status hierarchies and socialites of this environment, and then compare them to those found in the front stage of the hotel restaurant. I also wish to critically illuminate contemporary employment conditions in what I believe is an under-researched working environment. I believe that my research and data will contribute to the growing sociological literature in a number of areas including contemporary culture, consumerism and consumption, post-industrial labour markets, work cultures in the contemporary service sector, the sociology of food, friendships and work relationships and masculinities.

Structure of the Thesis

To reiterate, the focus of my thesis is a working kitchen in a relatively exclusive hotel in the North East of England. The thesis aims to situate the working lives of kitchen workers within the new economy and juxtapose the harsh realities of backstage kitchen life with the ever-present image of indulgent consumption that frames the front stage location of the hotel. The following chapter offers a literature review of the sociology of work, chefs and kitchens along with a brief examination of dining out. As the workers who populate my thesis are strongly rooted in the burgeoning realm of service sector employment, many aspects of their work is reminiscent of particular forms of industrial production, therefore, a review of employment and labour market changes is necessary. This serves to highlight their unique and fascinating mode of employment, but also situates them within wider contemporary forms of employment. Starting with industrial labour and its eventual decline, the chapter suggests that as work had such a strong influence on the lives of working men, its deterioration has caused changes that have affected working experiences within this region. As the service and leisure sector now dominates, experiences of paid labour have changed dramatically. Drawing upon studies such as Winlow and Hall's (2006) *Violent Night*, it is suggested that contemporary forms of employment are unstable and dominated by instrumentalism and competitiveness.

The chapter then offers an examination of relevant studies that have touched upon the subject of chefs, kitchens and eating out. It highlights that the literature surrounding chefs and kitchen work is somewhat sparse, however there are a few notable recent studies worth mentioning. One of course being, *Kitchens: The Culture of Restaurant Work* by Gary Fine (1996). Fine's research details the sociology of restaurant work with strong emphasis on the organisational culture and structure inside four restaurant kitchens in America. The chapter also highlights that due to recent media coverage, there are a number of studies that have focused on the abusive side of kitchen work. Reviewing the literature surrounding this area, Bloisi and Hoel (2008) examine the phenomena of bullying and the potential causes of abusive behaviour among chefs, commenting that programmes such as 'Hell's Kitchen' often glamorise abuse and make it appear to be a normal and necessary part of the job.

Chapter three addresses the methodology that the thesis employs, focusing on the research methods and the theoretical structure of the thesis. It starts however, with an overview of the kitchens where my research took place. It highlights the physical layout of the kitchens, the specifics of what happens in them and what it is like to spend a shift working in them. The first half of the chapter deals primarily with the methods that were used during my research (mainly ethnography and interviews). My research took place between January 2006 and May 2009 and the methods employed consisted of a range of techniques grounded in ethnographic investigation (see also Liebow, 1967; Whyte, 1981; Fine 1996). Taking a qualitative approach, it details the intricacies of negotiating access to a working kitchen and how I made use of the opportunities that presented themselves during my research, including breaching the gap between observer and participant. The second half of the chapter considers the problems that arose during the research, such as ethics, my impact on the workers and how I maintained a certain level of detachment.

Chapter four introduces the hotel and the front stage area where food is served to the diners. Using ethnographic and interview data, it highlights the sheer indulgent nature associated with some forms of dining out. Focusing exclusively upon the hotel's renowned annual seafood festival, it explores the more overt, carnivalesque and indulgent side of dining out, particularly the personification of excess and extravagance that surrounds these events. This is offered to provide a concrete setting on which to compare the backstage environment of the kitchen in the remainder of the thesis. During my ethnography, I had the opportunity to help cater for several of the hotel's renowned seafood festivals and chose one of them as a focus for this individual chapter because it epitomises these corporate events and offers a particularly clear indication of the division between the front and backstage areas. The chapter begins with an ethnographic account of one of the hotel's seafood festivals, detailing the arrival of the guests, their meal and their eventual departure. It then critically examines the event as a whole, highlighting that the festival celebrates an atavistic form of dining which stands in stark contrast to the rather constrained nature of dining that can be found within the formal restaurant. The chapter suggests that these fantastic events allow us to explore the intricacies of artificiality and 'trickery' (see Grazian 2008) that are employed in venues such as this. The

chapter goes on to highlight the differences between the elaborate and opulent front stage venue with the intensely demanding physical work that goes on behind the scenes. The chapter also considers the ways in which event-dining in this specific manner reflects the manufactured and insistent desire for display and recognition that lies at the heart of contemporary consumerism.

Chapter five, in comparison, focuses exclusively upon the backstage setting, detailing the actuality of the workers' profession. Theoretically, this chapter examines the harsh realities of working in contemporary service employment in the 'neo-capitalist' economy (see also Hall and Winlow 2005; Winlow and Hall 2006). Utilising ethnographic and interview data it explores the experiences of being a chef and a kitchen worker, the drudgeries of kitchen life and the realities of cooking as a practical activity. Starting with an ethnographic exert that details a 'typical' shift within the kitchen, it highlights the somewhat oppressive and exploitative working conditions that the workers must endure, noting that it is very different from the artificial and consumerised front stage environments described in the previous chapter. The chapter suggests that kitchen work is often a mix of brutal and punishing forms of labour and brief episodes of joviality and enjoyment. It details the long hours that the chefs and kitchen workers work and the problems that this causes, the hostile working conditions of kitchen (the heat), and the lack of personal satisfaction resulting from the often mundane nature of kitchen work and often the emotional and physical drain that often accompanies the job's hours, working conditions and pay. It discusses the hours and the shift patterns, the physical nature of cooking for a living, the repetitive nature of kitchen labour and the dangers of kitchen work. It then details the divisions of labour that are found within the kitchen, the hierarchy that is in place and the tensions that arise from this.

As the previous chapter focused upon the drudgeries of the workers' lives, Chapter six highlights the ways in which the workers deal with these often oppressive and constraining conditions. Focusing on how they strive to make their working days an enjoyable experience, it explores the kitchen as a close organisation and investigates the interpersonal relationships that are found within. It acknowledges that despite the hard work and considerable pressures of life in the kitchen, many of my respondents acknowledged that their connections and

relationships to one another contributed immensely to their experiences of work and this is explored further within the chapter. It explores how the kitchen is organised and how jobs are assigned to each worker. The production of food within a working kitchen demands a compliant body of workers who have specific tasks that they adhere to and for them to work efficiently they need to know exactly what that job entails. It also explores the importance of working together and flexibility, as well as the idea of solidarity and camaraderie among the workers. It does suggest however, that the concept of solidarity was bred amongst them in a conscious attempt to bind them together. The chapter then continues to explore the 'fun' side of kitchen work by taking a critical look at the how jokes and humour are used to help bind the workers together.

Chapter seven focuses upon the practicality of cooking and delivering dishes to the consumer. The chapter starts by exploring the structures within the kitchen. More often than not, the chefs are expected to produce numerous dishes at any given time and this has a profound affect on their workdays. In order to highlight the reality of preparing and cooking food to order, the chapter explores techniques of synchronisation and the structure of service, busy and slow periods and knowing when food is ready. The restaurant is open for business for an average of four hours each night, and when the kitchen is steady away, the chefs usually have to continually prepare dishes during this time for their customers. These dishes are each timed differently, and each requires individual attention. Knowing what to do and when to do it often determines the chef's competence level in the eyes of their co-workers and themselves and this is explored in further detail within the chapter. It then goes on to discuss culinary knowledge and the informal nature of learning that is crucial within the kitchen. I found that within the kitchen, shortcuts are both necessary and natural to the chefs and they revolve around their knowledge and familiarity of food and taste, and very often, the diners' lack of knowledge and familiarity. What I found through my research was that the chefs are allowed a certain degree of flexibility with their work and in a way they are allowed an opportunity for error that is often denied to other occupations that rely on total accuracy. The chefs within the kitchen do not adhere to a standard classroom style of teaching and learning, but gather their knowledge and skill from participating in, watching and copying the techniques of other, more experienced chefs. This way, the chefs develop a tacit understanding of what is required of

them at various stages of their careers. The chapter highlights that due to the informal nature of learning within the kitchen, this process can appear to be rather disorganised and haphazard, but is nonetheless effective. It also explores the informal ‘apprentice’ style training that can occur in kitchens.

As the hospitality industry is now an immense contributor to the overall economy and accounts for an average of 1 in 13 jobs (Oxford Economics 2010), Chapter eight will consider the hotel and the kitchen in direct relation to their ‘economic value’. In doing so, it aims to highlight that the logic of profit accumulation structures the kitchen, particularly by restricting what it can produce and sell for profit. The chapter also explores acts of deviance at work, notably the theft of food. Rather than this being a simple act of deviance, the chapter suggests that this is a fluid concept and one that is often negotiated between the Head Chef and the workers. The chapter also investigates the network of workers that inhabit the kitchen; the ‘brick wall’ of kitchen organisation and the interlocking of workers and their relationship to one another. It also highlights the often-volatile relationships between the workers at the hotel and the tensions that exist between them. It explores the employees as units of production in relation to their ability to generate profit, and considers the notion of the chefs as an artisan; a skilled worker who must be freed from the restraints of traditional labour practices in order to produce high quality, aesthetically pleasing ‘artistic’ food. What this examination attempts to emphasise, is that the profit-motive underlies the whole business of making and selling food. The chapter acknowledges that the creativity of the chef is often curtailed by the demands of the market and the ceaseless need for profitability and it explores how the workers feel about this process, questioning whether real creativity is actually possible within this economic reality. It also considers how the kitchen employees feel about their job with reference to career-development, biographical trajectory and their ‘leisure lives’, in light of the limitations they are under. Finally, chapter nine provides a summary of the core arguments offered in each of the preceding chapters and offers further insight into the theoretical narratives of the thesis. It also highlights the contributions that the study can make to existing and future research and what directions the latter might take.

Chapter Two

The Sociology of Work, Chefs and Kitchens

The Sociology of Work

As highlighted, the workers who populate my ethnography straddle the divide between manual and service workers (see also Fine 1996). Although they are firmly rooted in the burgeoning realm of service sector employment, many aspects of their work are very much reminiscent of particular forms of industrial production. Therefore, a review of employment and labour market changes is necessary, not only to highlight their unique and fascinating mode of employment, but also to situate the workers and their profession within wider contemporary forms of employment and the relevant sociological issues which surround them. This will then be followed by an examination of relevant studies that have touched upon the subject of chefs and kitchens. My research took place within the North East of England, an area that has been previously known for its dominant forms of heavy industry (Douglas and Krieger 1983, Roberts 1993). For many Britons throughout the industrial phase of capitalism, work was much more than an instrumental means of acquiring money. Industrial workers and the relatively independent cultures they inhabited were inextricably connected to the means of production and consumption, and the specific work role of the individual cast a significant shadow over their lives (Dennis et al 1969), so much so that its decline during the 1980's and 1990's was felt throughout the region on a number of levels (see for example Winlow 2001).

It would appear that contemporary workplaces operate in the absence of many of the collective, socially democratic concerns that shaped industrial production in Modern Britain. During this period, significant events such as 'getting a trade' were given emphasis and it was commonplace for sons to follow their fathers into the workplace, consequently adopting similar occupational roles, generation after generation (Roberts 1993, Bulmer 1978). This, however, has declined in recent years, as has the notion of a 'job for life'. Some have suggested that for the most part, during the industrial era, working lives were relatively stable and many

employees stayed in the same occupation and worked alongside the same colleagues for their entire lives. It is suggested that in some instances this helped create strong bonds and alliances (Dennis et al 1969) and contributed to the notion of biographical certainty, which was felt during the industrial era. These homogenous biographies appeared to be reproduced generation after generation and they allowed many to conform to coherent values and consistent practices. The comprehensible identities that were established throughout this era resulted in relatively unproblematic transitions into adulthood. Young people were subject to similar socialisation experiences throughout their lives. Many progressed to location-specific workplaces, with some working side-by-side on the same production line or in the same workplace for their entire working lives. These shared experiences extended from upbringing and family life, to schooling, right through to work and its associated industrial struggles (Dennis et al 1969). This helped to reinforce social solidarity as workers attached 'great importance to working as members of established groups of known and tried companions' (Bulmer 1978:25). Work and personal relationships ensured that they were bonded together as many lived with this sense of biographical assurance. Being together in specific work environments helped to reinforce bonds and provided workers with adequate opportunities to maintain meaningful and tight personal friendships (Willis 1979, Williams 1982). Close relationships and tight bonds were witnessed throughout my time in the kitchen, but the sense of mutuality, which pervaded the kitchen, was tinged with the competing ethic of instrumentality that is more commonly found in contemporary forms of employment. This will be explored in much detail throughout the thesis.

Whilst not all aspects of industrial work were dismal, there is a large body of evidence to show that some forms of labour were extremely exploitative and often beset with dangers (Douglas and Krieger 1983, Williams 1982). Some workers were subjected to the harsh, physical work of mining (Bulmer 1978) or the excruciating noise that accompanied other forms of industrial work (Willis 1979). These and other Fordist-based industries were sometimes unpleasant, dirty and monotonous. Industrial work on occasion encompassed 'a degree of frenzy, activity, boredom and suffering' (ibid:185), with the epitome of tedious and monotonous labour being the mass assembly line (Beynon 1984:31-33). As Tomaney (1994:179) also highlights, 'Fordist assembly lines were the ultimate expression of the capitalist necessity of achieving a

continuous production flow in large-scale industry'. This all contributed to workers often feeling a numbing sense of boredom and meaninglessness (Willis 1979) when doing a job perceived as mindless. As will be explored throughout the thesis, the kitchen where my ethnography was based was often an extremely harsh and oppressive environment, one that easily mirrors certain aspects of the industrial era. I found that during my ethnography, the workers would have to cope with the harsh conditions of their work: the heat, the dangers and the mind-numbing monotony of repetitive forms of labour. This echoes the physical aspects of labour that were once the core rationale of working-class life (Willis 1997), as does the notion that hard labour is a major source of working-class 'masculine respect' (ibid, see also Winlow 2001).

Some industrial workers took immense pride in their ability to do a tough job well, as harsh physical forms of employment, 'despite its difficulties, can bring satisfactions' (Williams 1982:85). Workers were not only proud of their skills needed to do the job in hand, but also of their ability to endure the harsh conditions they were often subjected to. Their capacity 'to survive' (Willis 1997:108) these rough conditions gave them an intrinsic sense of pride (Dennis et al 1969). It is suggested that this was an important component of the working-class ethic, as they developed a sense of masculinity that was encouraged by their working situation (Cricher 1979). 'Surviving' the harsh conditions of work was witnessed frequently in the kitchen as the workers took immense pride in their capacity to do a tough job well. This mirrors previous that highlighted that 'manual labour is suffused with masculine qualities' and effort is associated with heroism and dignity (Willis 1979:196). It gave workers a sense of self-respect and self-esteem alongside the pressures of work; with many being proud of the injuries they obtained whilst working (Douglas and Krieger 1983). These visual examples showing the tough and often dangerous aspects of work have certainly not been lost within the kitchen. Every chef within the kitchen bore some evidence of injury and scars were paraded with pride amongst many of the chefs. Some suggest that qualities such as strength and pride are outdated in today's labour markets; however, 'rough, unpleasant, demanding jobs *do* still exist in considerable numbers' (Willis 1979:190). Within these workplaces, the basic attitudes and values developed in the industrial era are still very important, and the working kitchen is most certainly one remaining occupation that falls into this category.

The sheer monotony of some forms of industrial work created frustration on a number of levels for industrial workers (Dennis et al 1969); however, they did all they could to make extremely mind-numbing modes of Fordist production bearable (Beynon 1984:127-129). One method employed was a 'distinctive form of language and highly developed intimidatory humour' that was, at times, cruel (Willis 1997:55). The piss-takes and practical jokes, however much essential to their working culture, were never allowed to get in the way of the worker's means to actually *do* the work. What Douglas and Krieger (1983:46) described as 'ghoulish humour', was an intrinsic part of industrial work, flowing unexpectedly from situations that were particular to the work environment. This was an evidently salient part of kitchen work and one that is discussed later in the thesis.

It is often suggested that the harsh conditions of industrial work led to disputes and periods of tension, but alongside this there were also periods of comradeship (Douglas and Krieger 1983, Bulmer 1978). Without a doubt, some forms of industrial work were exploitative; however, within the workplace workers found consolation and support in opposition to this. This collective solidarity helped them to cope effectively with the everyday oppression and subservience, which were evident domineering aspects of industrial capitalism (Salaman 1975). These features were not lost within the modern day environment of the working kitchen. Solidarity was an important feature of the work I witnessed and one that was pushed, rather forcefully, by the workers who inhabited it. The workers see the kitchen as a close organisation and the interpersonal relationships found within are seen as paramount for its smooth running. The kitchen evidently offers a place to express not only skill but also camaraderie against the conditions being faced.

Previous work suggests that within industrial work, pilfering and fiddling was widespread (Willis 1997), offering employees a means of acquiring their true worth from their employers by bridging the perceived gap between their worth as employees and the actual wage they received (Mars 1982). Many occupations offered a selection of 'hidden benefits' and as Mars (1982:2) states, 'when they pilfer they do so according to agreed rules and through a well-defined division of labour'. This is another fascinating aspect of industrial work found within

the kitchen. Explored within the thesis, the act of pilfering in the kitchen raised a number of issues. Viewed predominantly as an illegal activity by the members of management, the act was often carefully negotiated. My ethnography revealed that it had strong connections with the workers' relationship with the products they created and worked with.

Decline of Industrial Labour

Speaking during the 1990's, Hobsbawm (1994:16) notes that;

‘At the end of this century it has for the first time become possible to see what a world may be like in which the past, including the past in the present, has lost its role, in which the old maps and charts which guided human beings, singly and collectively, through life no longer represent the landscape through which we move, the sea on which we sail. In which we do not know where our journey is taking us, or even ought to take us’.

Work influenced virtually every aspect of the worker's lives and contributed immensely to their sense of self, gender and attitudes. The evident decline of industrial employment during the ‘traumatic eighties’ (ibid:257) and the following decade had the most profound effect on many working-class men. Widespread changes have accompanied the gradual decline of industrial labour and a region once characterised by industrial and extractive production is now beset with a burgeoning mass of service sector forms of employment. The old structures have now been transformed and the new forms of employment that have emerged contrast sharply with the region's previous history.

As Winlow (2001:59) highlighted, ‘the North East of England is a locale that ideally exemplifies the demise of an ordered traditional modernism’. The rapid decline of industrialism has altered the structures that have been dominant for so long and the certainty and stability, which was seen to accompany the industrial era, has now been lost. Workers lost not only their livelihood, but also the stabilising influence it had on their everyday lives. The predictability of the traditional working-class life course has been eroded and although many industrial occupations were highly exploitative (Roberts 1993); they invariably offered both

financial reliability and social stability. By the 1980's, the shift to a global consumerist economy had succeeded in phasing out the labour intensive manufacturing processes that had permeated industry until that time (Winlow and Hall 2006). As the basic needs of the capitalist economy changed and the service and leisure sectors diversified and eventually came to dominate the British economy, communities and social relationships that developed around traditional forms of industry began to fade. Traditional social bonds and cohesive networks have been replaced by instrumentality, atomisation and self-interest (ibid) which have left many in a state of continual uncertainty (Beck 2000). This is a concept that has been recognised by a number of theorists. Harvey (2005) observes that the second half of the 1900's represented a radical turning point in economic and social history, indicating that there has 'been an emphatic turn towards Neoliberalism in political-economic practices and thinking since the 1970's' (ibid:2). He suggests that the process of Neoliberalism has shattered prior institutional frameworks, divisions of labour and the social relations that were dependent on them, as it sought to 'bring all human action into the domain of the market' (ibid:3). Specifically post-1979, there was a revolution in social policies.

'This entailed confronting trade union power, attacking all forms of social solidarity that hindered competitive flexibility... dismantling or rolling back the commitments of the welfare state, the privatisation of public enterprises... reducing taxes, encouraging entrepreneurial initiative, and creating a favourable business climate to induce a strong inflow of foreign investment' (ibid:23).

Many forms of social solidarity, therefore, were disbanded in favour of individualism and freedom of the market. Deindustrialisation and radically changing labour markets were part of a momentous shift that left in its wake unbridled commercialism and individualism. As Thatcher sought to extend the ideology of personal responsibility, working-class solidarities declined as middle-class values spread. Individuals became solely responsible and accountable for their actions and there was a rapid decline of regulatory and institutional restraints, such as trade unions. Harvey (2005:75) acknowledges that this was a distinct and problematic issue regarding the emergence of Neoliberalism, in that it was 'hostile to all forms of social solidarity that put restraints on capital accumulation' (ibid:75).

As flexible labour markets were established and the economy steadily moved away from production, competition and unbridled individualism prevailed. This, as Harvey (2005) suggests, contributed to a breakdown in all bonds of solidarity as;

‘The individualised and relatively powerless worker then confronts a labour market in which only short-term contracts are offered on a customised basis. Security of tenure becomes a thing of the past... Individuals buy products in the market that sell social protections instead’ (ibid:168).

Harvey (2005) suggests that the social consequences of Neoliberalism have been extreme, particularly the resulting reliance on consumerism to fill the social and economic gap left in the wake of deindustrialisation. He notes that ‘for those who successfully negotiate the labour market there are seemingly abundant rewards in the world of a capitalist consumer culture’ (ibid:170), but that culture ‘plays with desires without ever conferring satisfactions’ (ibid:170). Similarly, Rifkin (1995) suggests that workers are now eliminated from the workforce due to these fundamental changes in the labour markets. New entrants to the workforce find themselves without secure forms of employment as jobs have been restructured or deemed unnecessary as traditional sectors of the economy become displaced or eliminated altogether. He acknowledges that during the industrial era, an individual’s worth was measured by the market value of their labour, whereas in contemporary society, the commodity value of an individual’s labour is becoming irrelevant, as the ‘industrial worker is being phased out of the economic process’ (ibid:9). Angell (2000) also acknowledges that many industrial jobs have severely declined and that the new information age is deskilling and displacing a large proportion of contemporary jobs. The jobs offered in the expanding service sector are mostly low paid and offer no secure prospects and ‘for many youngsters, their first taste of employment is behind the counter at McDonalds’ (ibid:165). My ethnography revealed many traits reminiscent of industrial work, as described above, but there were also many aspects of contemporary labour present, as shall be explored throughout the thesis.

Contemporary Labour

The decline of traditional forms of industrial employment and has affected many individuals in a number of ways, and experiences of paid labour have changed dramatically (see Winlow and Hall 2006). It is suggested that contemporary labour is now characterised by a sharp increase in individualism (Beck 2000) and workers are subjected to heightened levels of uncertainty and vulnerability. The predictable life patterns that were perceived as being characteristic of the industrial regime have lost much of their relevance and certainty as life has become fragmented (Furlong and Cartmel 1997) and the reality of work has become increasingly obscure (Beck 2000). As suggested, during the industrial phase of Britain's economy, life-careers were mapped out. As Bauman (2001:23) highlights, 'the long term mentality amounted to an expectation born of experience, and amply corroborated by that experience'. However, that situation has now been replaced by a new short-term mentality that is beset with anxiety and insecurity. As Bauman (2001:24) further suggests, however, 'one may say of course that there is nothing particularly new about that situation, that working life has been full of uncertainty'. Contemporary forms of paid work have been stripped of their ability to provide solidarity and guaranteed prospects. What we are left with is instability and insecurity as places of work 'easily turn from shelters of solidarity and cooperation into sites of cut-throat, catch-as-can competition' (Bauman 2002:75). The service and leisure industries in particular have replaced traditional forms of industry as mass employers and low paid, insecure service work now constitutes the majority of opportunities available to those seeking work (Toynbee 2003). The consumer-driven market, which is now seen to dominate society, has brought about a rapid change and we are forced to maintain a grasp on forms of employment that now revolve around a new regime of short term contracts (Sennett 1998) in the lower reaches of service sector employment (Toynbee 2003). Kitchen work, as witnessed throughout my time there, certainly constitutes work in the service sector.

Beck (2000) suggests that many forms of contemporary employment are highly unpredictable and unstable, fraught with anxiety and uncertainty. This, as Winlow and Hall (2006:38) suggest, is intricately connected to the changing ideology of capitalism:

'Rather than rising standards of living, advanced capitalism's consumer economy has transformed the socio-psychological lives of the bulk of Britain's youth into a maelstrom of instability, disorientation, disappointment and anxiety...advanced capitalism's labour market is an unstable milieu wreaked by anxiety'.

This increasing economy of risk and insecurity is made evermore prominent as individuals are now expected and encouraged to sell themselves on the marketplace (Beck 2000). Individualisation and insecurity have permeated all spheres of existence, heightened by the fact that contemporary biographies are now considered elective, rather than prescriptive. What we are left with is a 'precariousness of work' (ibid:54) which has become increasingly unstable.

Forms of contemporary employment are beset with competition and egoism and this is transferred to most aspects of young people's lives. Winlow and Hall's (2006) study highlighted that instability, instrumentalism and risk were dominant characteristics in advanced capitalism (see also Lasch 1979), as the values, practices and associated meanings, which accompanied industrial labour, have been fundamentally reconfigured. Lasch (1979) also suggested that society makes it more complicated for individuals to find satisfaction in many areas of their lives, as they are constantly surrounded by manufactured fantasies of gratification. He suggests that the onset of consumerism has altered our perceptions of ourselves and our surroundings, in that 'a culture organised around mass consumption encourages narcissism' (ibid:33). The sense of mutuality and community that was characteristic of industry has been replaced, not only in the workplace, but in all aspects of our lives. Life has become increasingly compartmentalised and work is viewed as something rather unimportant as workers in the service and leisure industry are faced with unstable forms of employment (Beck 2000). Contemporary 'working personas are grounded in a kind of hard-edged instrumentality' (Winlow and Hall 2006:29), which is indicative of the competitive nature of modern culture. Work is seen as being devoid of any wider importance, as individuals are alienated even further from the products and services they provide. I found that within the kitchen, the chefs exhibited a strong connection to the products they provided. However, this attachment and enthusiasm for the products was not extended to the kitchen porters who also inhabited the kitchen. Although they did adhere to the industrial ethos of

maintaining a sense of pride in their ability to do the work required of them, they often spoke of their job with an evident hint of loathing.

Contemporary employment is seen as transitory and isolating, as the once all-encompassing stabilising influence of industrial-based networks and communities have eroded. Mutual experiences and parallel biographies that were reproduced and solidified in industrial workplaces (Willis 1979, Roberts 1993, Beynon 1984, Dennis et al 1969) have almost disappeared and distinct forms of camaraderie (Willis 1979) have been substituted with feelings of isolation. Workers are now firmly convinced that they share very little in common with their colleagues and as Winlow and Hall's (2009) *Living for the Weekend* highlights, young people working in the service sector appear to have no underlying affection for the people they work with on a daily basis. There seems to be no sense of mutuality or knowledge that they share a common fate. Work is occasionally loathed and considered something to be done and then discarded from memory until the next day. This would also appear to apply to the friendships that are formed during working hours. These, they describe as 'unavoidable but ephemeral and completely unimportant' (ibid:100). This suggests that global capitalism has dissolved the core values that once dominated society. We are now expected to develop a life narrative that is based on a society that is characterised by episodes and fragments. This, as Sennett (1998) suggests, has had a profound impact on our personal characters. Workers spend their lives in a daze, as they have to contend with capitalism's emphasis on flexibility and the bite-sized chunks of labour that we are subjected to (as opposed to lifelong jobs and security).

Sennett (1998) questions how we are able to decide what is of lasting value in a society that places so much importance on the immediate moment, and how our long term goals can be pursued and realised in an economy which is so committed to the short term. This, he suggests, influences friendships and community, as they now appear to lack any staying power. This and the emergent consumer-driven market promote a sense of rapid change that is constantly redefining the structure of our personal lives and the wider society, suggesting that:

'It is the time dimension of the new capitalism...which most directly affects people's emotional lives outside the workforce, transposed to the family realm, 'no long term' means keep moving, don't commit yourself, and don't sacrifice' (ibid:25).

He comments that 'short-term capitalism threatens to corrode ... character, particularly those qualities of character which bind human beings to one another and furnishes each with a sense of sustainable self' (ibid:27). We are preoccupied with notions of success, failure and uncertainty and these concepts are intricately woven into our lives. As Beck (2000:65) similarly acknowledges,

'The worker's own interest in income, job security and status, which are abstract vis-à-vis the concrete goals of work, can be pursued only if the content of the work and its consequences for others are left out of account, in the sense of being 'instrumentalised' and tailored to the workers' own economic interests'.

The inner structure of society has changed as labour processes become even more fragmented and individualised. As Beck (2000:55) notes, 'the first modernity was characterised by the standardisation of work; the second modernity is marked by the opposite principle of the individualisation of work'. Work and production that was once tied to a specific locality has now been despatialised and the traditional work society has given way to a much less stable and predictable pattern of employment in which nothing is safe (ibid). There is no longer any staying power attached to friendships or the community (Sennett 1998), as the passing of industrial work and its associated way of life has left many 'listless and lost' (Toynbee 2003). Kitchen work, like many other forms of contemporary labour, is beset with transient workers. The longest serving member of staff within the kitchen was the Head Chef, who had been there since 2001. This was seen as quite a rarity in kitchen work, with the majority of chefs staying between six months and a few years. The kitchen porters on the other hand were extremely transient and during my time there a number of workers left and were quickly replaced. The occupation of 'kitchen porter' was deemed the lowest rank within the kitchen hierarchy. There was always a long list of potential workers who were waiting for work and vacated positions were easily filled.

The decline of industrial labour and the evident transition to a knowledge-based economy involves a dramatic shift in the content and structure of work (Beck 2000). There has been a spread of temporary and insecure forms of employment, which are characterised by diversity, insecurity and fragmentation (Bauman 1991). The proliferation of casual, part-time and temporary labour contracts increases the emphasis upon flexibility in terms of roles and working hours, which places a burden of risk on the worker. This may also cause conflict between work time and family time (Sennett 1998), and marks a dramatic shift from previous talk that centred on a 'career'. Over the course of a lifetime, workers are now expected to be open to change, often at very short notice. They need to continually take risks as they become ever more detached from old traditions and securities (ibid). The shift to short-term contracts and episodic labour has resulted in paid employment becoming extremely precarious and increasingly fragmented (Beck 2000). As Sennett (2006:2) notes, 'the fragmenting of big institutions has left many people's lives in a fragmented state: the places they work more resembling train stations than villages'. As has been mentioned, work within the lower ranks of the kitchen is transient. The position of Kitchen Porter was taken by workers simply looking for a temporary income, those who were passing through on their way to a more secure and well paid form of employment, and those deemed 'unsuitable' for other forms of work. Even the chefs themselves were also expected to move on after a certain period. I was told during my time in the kitchen that to move up the ranks within the kitchen hierarchy, a move was deemed necessary every couple of years.

As Sennett (2006:54) also acknowledges, 'inequality has become the Achilles' heel of the modern economy'. There is an ever-widening gap between occupations which are now at polar ends of the spectrum. While there has been an expansion of employment opportunities for highly skilled individuals, this is accompanied by an increase in low paid unskilled occupations created by the exploitative nature of contemporary capitalism (Beck 2000). This is highlighted by Toynbee in the introduction to Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed* (2002:xiv), who notes that 'the self-image of all Western societies is of consumer glamour, upward mobility, ever-growing economies and ever-rising expectations'. However, the reality for many workers is very different. There is a swathe of workers caught up in low status jobs, which has resulted in millions of workers occupying the lowest rungs of the occupational

ladder. These are 'ensnared by marginal jobs that pay poorly and offer little hope of significant advancement' (Newman 1999:xiii). They are physically hard and extremely alienating, offering very little in the way of career progression (Abrams 2002).

Many are now struggling to survive on the minimum wage (Abrams 2002) as these low paid workers find themselves left behind and often marginalised (Ehrenreich 2002). There has even been a downward spiral of white-collar job security and those who are qualified to degree level are finding it increasingly difficult to find work (Ehrenreich 2006). These low paid jobs are often unrewarding and the labour is often relentless, as 'the less people are paid, the more anxious employers are to squeeze every bead of sweat out of their labour' (Ehrenreich 2002:x). In many communities, manufacturing jobs have declined sharply but the Fordist regime of mass production and segmented hierarchical divisions of labour has not disappeared completely in contemporary society. From the Head Chef down to the kitchen porters, the kitchen is a prime example of a workplace that is structured around distinct divisions. The job of kitchen porter would most certainly qualify as a low status job. Their function within the kitchen is vital to the efficient running of the kitchen but they are invariably considered as expendable, as their position requires no actual qualifications or previous training; workers simply come and work. If they do not last, then they are easily replaced.

Workers who cannot compete in the competitive winner-takes-all market fall along the wayside. Labour market entry has become much more difficult due to recent changes and many are subject to a highly differentiated skill market. We have developed a 'learning society' (Furlong and Cartmel 1997:19) as workers continually need to develop new skills and credentials. This, however, was not considered a concern by the chefs and kitchen workers, as they are not employees currently caught up in the need to master the advancements made in other areas of employment. Although the chefs are fully expected to possess a breadth of knowledge regarding food, and this involves keeping up to date with recent trends in both production and seasonal-related products. There has also been a marked increase in emotional labour as 'what was once a private act of emotion management is sold now as labour' (Hochschild 2003:186). This is also accompanied by an increase in emotional burdens

that are placed on the worker, which have little to do with the actual performance of emotional labour. With deskilled monotonous work, the emotional task is often to suppress feelings of frustration, boredom and anger. Feelings are repressed in order to focus on the task (ibid). This is most salient within kitchen work. A great deal of the worker's time and effort is spent doing monotonous labour. The preparation of food for the restaurant and functions is a vital aspect of kitchen work, but an extremely tedious one. Workers spend hours repeating actions day in and day out, and how they cope and respond to these tasks is crucial to understanding many of the intricacies of kitchen culture and interaction.

Chefs and Kitchen Work

The literature surrounding chefs and kitchen work comes from many sources and various authors have tackled the subject from different viewpoints. Probably the most notable recent study was *Kitchens: The Culture of Restaurant Work* by Gary Fine (1996). His research details the sociology of restaurant work with strong emphasis on the organisational culture and structure inside four restaurant kitchens in America. His research reflects his ethnographic method of observation and he describes the inner workings of the kitchens in which he worked. Cameron (2001) highlights that relatively little is known about the occupation of chefs, although there have been a few notable studies in the UK and US. He notes that this existing research does demonstrate several commonalities regarding the occupation of chefs, highlighting that through their craft, chefs tend to possess a strong sense of self-identity and although it may be a little stereotypical, there is evidence that they are often temperamental when their profession is challenged.

Not surprising, in light of recent media coverage a small number of studies have focused on the abusive work practices of hospitality workers, particularly bullying amongst chefs within working kitchens. Reviewing the literature surrounding this area, Bloisi and Hoel (2008) examine the phenomena of bullying and the potential causes of abusive behaviour among chefs. They comment that television programmes such as *'Hell's Kitchen'* featuring the chef Gordon Ramsey often glamorise abuse and make it appear to be a normal and necessary part of the job. Drawing on well known recent biographies such as Bourdain's (2000) *Kitchen*

Confidential, they highlight that some chefs claim that giving and receiving abuse is all part of the socialisation process within working kitchens and that a certain level of 'toughness' is required of those who wish to remain part of the team. They also note that while some studies suggest that incidents of bullying and abuse are lower in the hospitality sector, this could well be because of kitchen culture and the worker's perception of bullying. They highlight that the hospitality industry in particular often passes off bullying as 'horseplay'. They do however stress the need for more thorough studies as there is a lack of detailed research covering the hospitality industry. They also explore the issue of chefs as craft persons or artists, the job itself and the overall culture of the kitchen as possible influences in the acceptance of abusive behaviour.

They briefly chart the development of the hospitality industry, noting that it originally emerged from the domestic service sector (see also Taylor 1977) which in part may explain the obedience of workers to their chef and the comment that during the first half of the 1900's kitchen staff would often work 12 hours split shifts, which are still common today. They also highlight that the poor working conditions that plagued many kitchens may have contributed to problems with solidarity, which in turn makes unionisation difficult, as does the fact that many kitchen and hospitality staff are composed of sections of immigrant labour and non-native English speakers. These are all factors that they suggest need exploring when addressing any questions regarding kitchen behaviour and bullying within the workplace.

They highlight that historically according to Taylor (1977), Head Chefs have required 100% commitment from their staff and one way of demonstrating this level of commitment was to work extremely long hours. Bloisi and Hoel (2008) note that modern managers reinforce this idea and there appears to be a belief that there is something noble about working long hours. Drawing on research from Johns and Menzel, (1999) and the notorious chef Anthony Bourdain, they note that chefs often boast about working an 80-hour week and many chefs are pushed into working hard by their superiors. This, they suggest is a form of abuse and one that many believe they must endure to make it in the profession. Bloisi and Hoel (2008) raise questions regarding why chefs stay in the industry. They note that research by Martin (2004) suggests that the hospitality industry as a whole tends to have employees with rather high

levels of job satisfaction, which can be explained by team cohesion and the nature of the job. They highlight that many chefs regard themselves as craft-orientated and many tend to feel an immense level of satisfaction from their work and this could be why many put up with abusive work practices. They also draw on work by Balaz (2002) to suggest that chefs tolerate with long hours as they see themselves as contributing to something worthwhile and fulfilling. There is also the suggestion that some people may choose specific jobs because they are seen as 'tough'. Bloisi and Hoel (2008) believe that the factors noted above may lead to abusive work practices and the consequences of abusive behaviour should not be ignored due to the impact it has on the workers. They suggest that mobility is another factor that may also contribute, as is the stressful nature of the environment (see also Fine 1996 and Bourdain 2000).

Generally Bloisi and Hoel (2008, see also Fine 1996) acknowledge that kitchens are often characterised by long, unsociable hours and are generally a high-pressurised environment. Again drawing on Johns and Menzel (1999), they note that pressurised work environments are part of the rationale given for abusive behaviour, and that chefs often perceive their own bad behaviours because of said environments. Overall Bloisi and Hoel's (2008) review of the literature surrounding the abusive practices of chefs is based on anecdotal evidence from the industry and media reports. They found that the evidence suggests that abuse may be an expected part of kitchen culture and to be able to work in such an environment, chefs and kitchen workers need to become hardened and in some instances tolerate such behaviours. They suggest that there are certain levels of acceptance of abuse that occurs through training and socialisation within kitchens, which extend throughout the workers professional careers. They do highlight however, that research into abusive behaviour among chefs is limited and further research is needed to fully explain why abuse is tolerated.

Johns and Menzel's (1999) article explores the attitudes of chefs to kitchen violence and bullying, concluding that kitchen violence is widespread and deeply imbedded in chef's working cultures. They note that violence and bullying in the workplace is widespread in the Western world, with it rising dramatically during the 1990's and they suggest that many cases go unreported. They highlight that the available evidence suggests that in the UK, violence may be more prevalent in kitchens than in any other workforce. They interviewed chefs

working at high-end restaurants in the Eastern region of the UK and found that physical and verbal abuse was widespread in the testimonies of the interviewees, with many instances coming from the Head Chef. They found that humiliation was common and that verbal abuse was used in such a way to produce emotional responses and instances of unjustifiable physical abuse were also documented. They note that the bullying of subordinates by the Head Chef was found to parallel research in other industries.

They explore the causes of kitchen violence and acknowledge that kitchens are stressful places, mostly because of the demands of the work. Organisation and flexibility are required within a kitchen to cope with the work, where workers often have to be able to work to maximum capacity at a moment's notice. Surges in work at peak times often leave kitchens understaffed and overworked. They are also noisy environments to work in and temperatures frequently climb to uncomfortable levels. This, they note, all contributes to kitchen violence. They also highlight that young people are known to copy aggressive behaviour from adult role models and a trainee chef may easily model themselves on the Head Chef and therefore maintaining a cycle of bullying and violent behaviour. While these factors may contribute to kitchen violence, they also stress that there seems to be a deep-seated cultural acceptance of violence within kitchens.

Others, such as Wright (2007) approach the subject in terms of its workers, particularly ethnic minorities and the problems and experiences they face in the hospitality industry. She notes that ethnic minorities and migrant workers make up a significant part of the hospitality workforce in England and while a number of sources have detailed the working conditions of the industry (low pay, low status and exploitative), little has been written regarding the actual experiences of ethnic minority workers and migrant workers. Her article is based on a research project on the experiences and problems of said workers in the hotel and restaurant industry in three regions of England. She argues that while many workers do experience the appalling conditions cited elsewhere, she found that problems such as bullying, racial harassment, lack of opportunities for promotion and discrimination were all identified as problems affected by, or compounded by the workers' ethnic backgrounds or migrant status (Wright 2007:74). Wright conducted qualitative interviews with 50 ethnic minorities and

migrant workers over the period of 12 months, a sample that she claims provides a broad reflection of the range of ethnic groups and nationalities currently working in the hospitality industry in England.

She found that ethnic and migrant workers endured many of the working conditions that industry is known for, such as low pay, long and unsociable hours, excessive workloads, minimum paid holidays, job insecurity, inadequate training and poor health and safety standards, but also highlighted some problems that were specific to them. Wright noted that many of those she interviewed earned below the National Minimum Wage or were paid a flat rate per shift or week regardless of how many hours worked. She notes that bullying and verbal abuse are found to occur on a level that would not be tolerated in other industries. Some of her interviewees however, found it to be a normal and accepted part of the job and many had a rather 'pragmatic acceptance' (Wright 2007:82) of their position and the overall 'toughness' of the job. Watt's (2011) study of immigrant workers in a Toronto hotel found that most immigrants were ambivalent regarding their working lives. He found that their dissatisfaction tended to centre on the physically demanding nature of the work and its low status.

Others, such as Cameron et al. (1999), examine the subject of chef culture with regards to the relationship between occupational culture and organisational culture. They note that literature such as Orwell's (1940) *Down and Out in Paris and London* provides an excellent illustration of the group identity of chefs and their superiority to other workforces such as waiters. They note that there have been several studies that show the collaborative nature of kitchen work and its ethos of 'brigade' or 'team' and that 'social relations in the kitchen are driven by the interdependence of the production process' (Cameron et al. 1999:228). They suggest that chefs normally command some prestige within the hotel/restaurant and drawing upon Fine's (1996) study, they highlight that chefs often describe themselves as quasi-artists, and do find some level of personal identity in their work and that de-skilling chefs may have the affect of lowering the value of cheffing as a profession. Drawing on Chivers' (1973) study they note that when chefs are de-skilled, they are transformed from an artisan into a worker and the consequently place less value on the quality of their output.

Eating Out

As the products of the kitchen are consumed within the front stage areas of the hotel, it is worth briefly reviewing the literature surrounding eating out. Eating out is no more unusual than eating in. However, in contemporary society it has no doubt established itself as an important part of contemporary living (Ross 1999a). It contributes to a well-recognised economic, social and cultural phenomenon and one that has been documented as a prominent part of our current consumer revolution (Burnett 2004). Historically, however, this is a rather recent phenomenon and one that has only really grown in significance since the end of the Second World War. Up until this point, eating out specifically for pleasure was considered a rather elitist activity and one that was surrounded with overtones of self-indulgence. In contemporary society, notions of indulgence are still expressed with regards to eating out and leisure, but they are commonly merged with more pragmatic reasons. Diners anticipate deriving pleasure from consumption, and eating out in the public domain far exceeds the simplistic notion of satisfying the physical appetite alone. We aim to satisfy a range of physical, social and psychological desires and consequently the dining occasion transcends into an experience that cannot be exceeded.

Therefore, the purchase of food outside of the home for pleasure is no longer considered an indulgent luxury, as today's consumer choice indicates that the pursuit of pleasure has become respectable in contemporary Western society (Ross 1999a). As Burnett's (2004) *England Eats Out* highlights, the act of consuming food outside of the home has existed since the earliest settlements of man, yet in contemporary Western society it has taken on particular salience. Commercially, the process of modernisation, which was brought about by the industrial revolution, is considered as the driving force behind the eating establishments that are identifiable today. During this period of modernisation, class divisions became more pronounced and those with greater spending power developed an unprecedented desire for conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1994).

The restaurant, as an establishment that provides sustenance at a cost, has existed for centuries. However, it has never been viewed as a leisurely pursuit so much as it is now. The UK hospitality industry is flourishing, confirming that leisure is one of the key economic dynamics of our time. With an estimated 60,000 hotels and 56,000 restaurants, the sector employed more than 1.7 million people in 2003 (Bignold 2005:30), rising to 2.44 million in 2010 (Oxford Economics, 2010). The number of hotel, catering, pub and restaurant businesses increased from 109,000 in 1995 to 122,700 in 2002 (Frewin 2004). The history of eating out has been well documented and can be found in many guises throughout the literature. As a consequence, it will not be examined here in great detail (see Mennell et al 1992:20-24, Black 1993, Burnett 2004, Bowden 1975, Colquhoun 2007, Mennell 1997, Tannahill 1988). However, the social changes that have filtered through Western society need to be appreciated to understand its contemporary form and function. Food has been present in society for as long as there has been a society. However, the way that we eat out today is a very recent phenomenon. Before the 1950's, eating out, except for necessity, was a rare experience for the majority of the population. Very few frequently ate out for pleasure, as it was a pursuit mainly restricted to the wealthy. For the remainder of the populace, it was a rare indulgence (Burnett 2004).

Since then, society and social life has been reshaped by a series of changes that have greatly influenced the ways in which we eat and live. The patterns of daily life have been altered and this has led to an expansion of the leisure and entertainment markets. The habit of eating out has now spread to all sectors of society (Ross 1999b), becoming both familiarised and democratised as a recreation of the many (Warde and Martens 2000). The largest fundamental shift has been the decreasing size of the family unit. This, along with double-income households, has reduced the quantity of revenue required for domestic food and released more available spending for entertainment, including eating out. The sudden growth in one and two-person households has reduced the amount of home cooking, subsequently increasing the use of ready-made meals and other convenient forms of eating. This is also true of the increasing number of females in the labour market. Eating out avoids the energy, time and labour involved in preparing a meal and relieves the monotony of packaged ready-meals. With the increase in shift work, many couples and families have become disjointed from

traditional times spent in the home and meal times suffer accordingly. All of this has contributed to a disintegration of set family meals taken within the home.

Consumers are faced with a multitude of different establishments that provide nourishment outside of the home. Clearly, changes that have occurred in recent years have had an immense impact on whichever catering venue is examined. The variety of establishments and foodstuffs available is staggering (Taylor 1977), ranging from the luxury hotel or restaurant, a time-honoured Sunday lunch at traditional English pub, an all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet, a burger bar, pizza house, or a traditional tea shop, all provide some form of convenience, with most conveying a sense of occasion. The modern restaurant itself has a complex biography, but it is closely associated with the French Revolution and the migration of cooks from aristocratic households into the public sector (Finkelstein 1989). The continual spread of restaurants is said to be a consequence of the rising levels of prosperity in Western societies, particularly in the last 20 years.

Changes in the global markets have produced a fertile breeding ground for new restaurants and these have featured heavily as part of the gentrification that has transformed the urban landscape of many cities (Zukin 1991:207). However, the most unprecedented change in eating out establishments has been the phenomenal growth in fast-food and ethnic restaurants (Burnett 2004). The size of the takeaway trade in the UK is striking, and it is commonly associated with standardised products and services, which deliver a speedy, predictable service at a reasonably low price. This Fordist method of mass-producing products for mass consumption is a technique applied to most styles of catering establishments apart from a select number of high-end institutions (ibid). However, what needs to be recognised here is that each eating establishment, regardless of the product it offers, is part of the service economy and as such, they are 'integral symbols of a free-market economic system' (Fine 1996:8).

People frequent eating establishments for a number of reasons. What Ritzer (2001:108) refers to as the 'new cathedrals of consumption', would certainly apply to the abundance of restaurants in urban areas. They represent a proliferation of settings that allow, promote and

compel us to consume a number of goods and services within which the spectacular is promoted to conceal their ultimately dissatisfying nature (Ritzer 2001, Debord 1994). Within the range of eating establishments available, there remains a distinct hierarchy of restaurants, with each conveying different meanings and levels of symbolic status. As Warde and Martens assert, 'the practice of eating out is inevitably differentiated' (2000:13). This was also highlighted in Finkelstein's (1989) typology of restaurants, in which she argued that the division between luxury and everyday eating out represents a hierarchy of wealth and fashionability. Consumption patterns strongly reflect social standing and dining and eating out clearly offers the potential means for display through the use or avoidance of different establishments (Warde and Martens 2000). A sandwich or a burger snatched in haste from a fast-food restaurant differs greatly from a meal at a high-class establishment, as 'all social systems involve signification' (Eagleton 2000:34). The choice of where one eats can speak volumes. Restaurant choices may appear insulting, inappropriate or too ostentatious if chosen incorrectly, as the symbolic aspects of an establishment are paramount in consumer society.

We satisfy a range of social, cultural, economic and physical desires through purchasing forms of entertainment. However, with eating out, the 'physical needs are subordinate to the mental and emotional satisfactions' (Burnett 2004:323) we are said to derive from the experience (see also Finkelstein 1989). As well as the pleasures of social intercourse, sociability, prestige and the practical and economic reasons for eating outside the home, the instrumental psychological pleasures of dining out are paramount to consumers (Warde and Martens 2000). Consumers are attracted to what the act of dining out offers and appears to offer for purchase. Like other forms of mass entertainment, the restaurant functions to commodify private experiences and consequently pleasures such as happiness are easily procurable, as dining out becomes a commodity that is reflective of desires other than the immediate gratification of a physical need (Finkelstein 1989). As such, eating out is not merely a substitute for eating at home. It is an important and well-established aspect of the modern culture of leisure and entertainment.

As Burnett (2004:325) acknowledges, 'in the restaurant we buy and are fed a menu of satisfactions'. Eating out is a commercial transaction in which desires, feelings and emotions

are commodified for money. The desire to feel empowered, sophisticated or fashionable is a strong driving force behind attendance in particular restaurants. As people's lives become more demanding than ever before, diners occasionally expect to escape from all that concerns them in their ordinary lives. They do not simply want to escape toiling over a hot stove, 'they want to be transported into a sort of fairyland where they are pleased, cosseted, and excited' (Bowden 1975:102). This theatrical concept is well cited in the literature as 'the restaurant has always been the kingdom of the imagination [and] without imagination it cannot survive' (Pitte 1996:480). However, this is not always the case. Carrying on from Žižek, dining out is never able to fully satisfy private, individual desires and when the practice of dining out is used as a restorative pleasure, we are in grave danger of having artificially induced market-driven pleasures determine our personal enjoyment (Finkelstein 1989). If we eat out to regenerate after a hard day's work, or to save the labour involved in cooking, this does not remove the actuality of that labour, it merely postpones it for a short period. The same can be said if we use a restaurant to repair a failing relationship; we are not actively contributing to the repair of that relationship, we are assuming that the specific arena we have chosen will do the job for us.

On consideration of the studies that examine the restaurant as a meaningful social setting, Finkelstein's (1989) investigation stands out as being of particular relevance. She acknowledges that contemporary restaurants are arenas of forged emotions, where individuals are invited to play out their desires. Dining out is comparable to a number of other leisurely pursuits, in that we are removed from the mundane and placed within a realm which appears to allow us many opportunities for expressing our true selves. However, many instances of dining out inevitably do not satisfy our desires nor afford us the multitude of pleasures promised by the industry. Dining and eating outside the home can be a deeply frustrating and disappointing event. We dine out for different reasons and each of us will hold differing expectations. Because of the hugely diverse range of dining possibilities available to us, we can never be certain that the choice we make will be the right one. We are faced with the drabness and unending uniformity of chain restaurants, offering the same reassuring but monotonous products and experiences, day in day out. We may change our choice and venture to a relatively unknown establishment, unsure of what may lie ahead, or we may

frequent a restaurant with customs and requirements that we have no knowledge about, creating anxiety and a sense of cultural and social inadequacy. Even if we are fortunate enough to select a restaurant that appeals to us, the menu still restricts us. Pronunciation of the dishes may cause us apprehension; even identifying what they are may cause us distress. Is our culinary knowledge enough to know whether we would enjoy a spatchcock quail, candied walnuts, violet artichokes and sorrel, caramelised veal sweetbreads or a mosaic of pressed rabbit? These and many other factors contribute to dining out being anything but a pleasurable experience.

Finkelstein (1989) also argues that the restaurant is an engineered environment; a diorama that succeeds in both highlighting and concealing certain aspects of sociality. Elevating food consumption to a higher status than mere bodily nourishment ensures that restaurants have acquired a complexity that overrides their most obvious function. Within the restaurant, individuals are believed to adopt a posture that they consider is an expression of their true character; however, in reality this is a façade. Dining out may be representative of a diner's individual fantasies, one which offers the complete immersion in whichever role they wish to take, however, this is not true of every dining out experience. Many establishments do not represent such a fantasy, though they are somewhat false. The whole experience may be artificial but there is no fantastic element attached to it. When we visit a number of particular establishments, we have no great expectations of a fabulous meal. Finkelstein (1989:15) highlights that dining out 'becomes a passageway to a world without continuous form, a world which may be lavishly endowed with the fabulous, the desirable, the luxurious and the exciting'. This may certainly be true of the more high-status conferring restaurants, but due to the sheer diversity of eating establishments, it cannot be seen as being true of every eatery.

Clearly, the pleasures allied with dining out are not centred solely on the food consumed, but with the total experience of dining out (Wood 1995). The restaurant is a site where the physical needs are often subordinate to the emotional, social and psychological desires of the individual (Burnett 2004). This is achieved by supplying props (décor, cutlery and such like) which transform abstract desires into direct experiences, ensuring that the restaurant succeeds in manufacturing emotions through commodified ambience. Therefore dining out is

no longer a mere substitute for eating at home. It is an artificially constructed environment that is engineered to be different from the domestic sphere. The diners' change of consciousness and the sense of occasion that is promoted is an important prerequisite of the contemporary culture and leisure industry. It offers these sensations of fantasy and desire through commercial transactions (Burnett 2004). As further suggested by Finkelstein (1998), one of the main functions of the leisure industry is the manufacturing of feelings and emotions that individuals believe they should be experiencing. Dining out and the objects found within the restaurant are accepted as legitimate sources of the pleasure we should be experiencing to counteract a world dominated by rational and monotonous routines. In choosing to dine out, we also choose to pursue pleasure. We are agreeing to transform the act of bodily nourishment into a public event that is subject to prescriptive rules. Dining out is no longer synonymous with the act of eating; it is an event which is shrouded in cultural meaning. How we eat and where we eat becomes indicative of cultural knowledge and is seen to be a direct reflection of social competency. Within the restaurant, we become consumers in every aspect. We have learned that our desires can be purchased and that dining out 'elevates the banality of eating to the abstract, aesthetic, and symbolic' (Finkelstein 1998:202). By considering dining out in this way, we find that personal fantasies and desires gain shape and satisfaction through the procurement of commodities.

It can therefore be suggested that dining out has become a commercialised, benign event, in which the consumer is encouraged to elevate above the mundane. Diners seek a relief from the mundane and they pursue a desire to feel distinguished and notable in some way. Rather than the basic need for bodily sustenance, diners wish for a sense of excitement and confirmation that they are participating in the fragmentary stream of meaningful, conspicuous consumption. Dining in this respect, amongst other diners of presumed equal importance, consumers experience a sense of self-enhancement that comes from actively and openly displaying economic strength and knowledge.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter will consider the methodology employed in this study, focusing on the research methods and the theoretical structure of the thesis. The first half deals specifically with my choice of research methods, why they were chosen and the advantages and disadvantages of each method. This is followed by a brief discussion of the theoretical choices made throughout the study.

Working in a Kitchen

There are three kitchens which serve the hotel where my ethnography took place and I worked in each of them, as well as working in the various satellite kitchens, which were set up for the events held on the hotel's grounds. The first is the restaurant kitchen. This primarily serves the hotel's restaurant and is the smallest of the three kitchens. It is a petite, enclosed, internal room, with no external doors providing access to the open air. There are no windows, no natural light and no through draft. The main kitchen is the same, but this has the added hindrance that it is situated above the restaurant kitchen. When the two kitchens are being used, heat from the restaurant kitchen rises and collects in the main kitchen, adding to the high temperatures that can already be found there. While the main kitchen is quite considerable in size, it also houses a large pot-wash area, several prep benches, and a large walk-in fridge, numerous ovens, grills and hot-plates, a Bratt pan and other kitchen paraphernalia. It is situated in the centre of the three kitchens and is invariably the busiest of the hotel's kitchens. Whereas the restaurant kitchen is used predominantly during restaurant service (and occasionally during busy periods when space and equipment in the other kitchens are at a premium), the main kitchen is used on a much more frequent basis. It is used for Sunday lunch and other occasional functions such as weddings, as well as general service, when the restaurant kitchen cannot cope with its orders. It is where the vast majority of kitchen prep is done. The third kitchen is the function kitchen. This is the newest of the three kitchens. It houses a large pot-wash machine and clean-up area, several large Rational ovens,

a large walk-in fridge and fryers. This kitchen is used predominantly for function service and prep. Unlike the other kitchens, this one does have a door that leads directly outside, to a small enclosed yard where bins are kept.

The three kitchens are never the same from one shift to the next. Their appearance at the start of a shift differs greatly from that of half way through, which again differs from the scene once the last diner has been fed. They are extremely bland and devoid of colour and are often painfully bright from the fluorescent lights that illuminate them. White plastic-clad walls and vast expanses of stainless steel give them a distinct clinical appearance, and at times, the smell of disinfectant and cleaning fluid makes for a nauseous environment. However, during service, this is replaced by the omnipresent odours of numerous foodstuffs in various stages of preparation. Raw and cooked meats, raw fish, fruit and eggs, almost every smell imaginable can be experienced in the space of just a few hours. This also can often feel like an attack on the senses. The rather insipid nature of the kitchen can frequently accentuate the foods found within. Fruits, salad leaves, meats and vegetables take on a somewhat effervescent quality against the bland background of the kitchen.

At the beginning of a shift, it can be painfully quiet, yet during service, the kitchens can be torturously noisy. Foodstuffs are boiling, sizzling, frying; knives being sharpened; pans being moved, thrown and slammed against surfaces; oven doors being opened and closed; water flowing; flats being thrown together. Above all this, there is a body of workers shouting over the din in a bid to be heard. Waiting staff are calling orders to be completed, chefs are calling orders away, the kitchen porters are arguing, and the radio is on full blast. The kitchens are also stifling. There is no fresh air, no pretty view from a window. There *are* no windows. The rooms can be full of steam and the heat is often unbearable, collecting in every corner of every room. There is no escaping it. Yet amongst this milieu, food is produced.

Methods

My research took place between January 2006 and May 2009 and the methods employed consisted of a range of techniques grounded in ethnographic investigation (see also Liebow, 1967; Whyte, 1981; Fine 1996) including direct observation, participant observation (overt

and covert) and semi-structured interviews. Many academic texts and ethnographic studies cite the limitations of ethnographic research, most centering on issues of validity and reliability (see Bryman, 2004: 291-317). However, these issues were not a strong enough reason to not utilize ethnographic methods and considering the aims of the research they were deemed the most appropriate form of enquiry due to their fluidic and flexible character and the nature of the data which they proposed to reveal. I firmly believe that my chosen methods were the most appropriate to the study, as conducting firsthand observations in the kitchen allowed me to see many important features of the environment, aspects of behaviour, patterns, regularities and irregularities which would have been lost had I not been physically present.

Taking a clearly qualitative approach, this thesis is grounded by the words and actions of the respondents. From the outset, I was certain that the best way to research a working kitchen would be to gain access to the environment first-hand to ensure that the study was an accurate reflection of this overlooked workforce. The workplace has featured heavily in ethnographic studies throughout the years, chiefly due to the centrality of work and the importance that we can place upon it. Work often influences a great deal in our lives, it is not only a place where we spend a large chunk of our waking hours, but ‘occupations impact upon how we see ourselves and are seen by others’ (Turner, 2000:66) and like their industrial predecessors, work matters to the chefs and workers in this study. So clearly, understanding the working environment would be most beneficial to understanding the feelings and attitudes of the workers. I also wished to add to the tradition of workplace ethnographies (for example Beynon, 1984; Fine, 1992) and ethnographic studies that are rich in descriptive qualitative data (Anderson, 1999; Winlow, 2001; Duneier, 1999; Whyte, 1981). To accomplish this, gaining access to a working kitchen was crucial.

Gaining Access

Professional working kitchens, unlike their front stage counterparts, are not a public arena and access is usually restricted to employees. However, I was able to secure admittance relatively easily through my partner, who was the Head Chef of the hotel kitchen that is at the heart of the study. It is well-documented that negotiating and gaining access has been cited as one of the most problematic steps for a researcher (Foster, 2006:64-9; Bryman, 2004), so I

was grateful of the opportunity that presented itself. It was commonplace for the partners, family members and friends of kitchen workers and chefs to be recruited into the kitchen during busy periods, so my presence there was not as out of place as it may appear to the reader. As my gatekeeper/partner held a senior position within the kitchen, I was concerned that the workers would be suspicious of my presence there; however, I am confident that the workers never considered me as an 'instrument of management' (Bryman, 2004:299). I worked alongside them during each shift, prepped the same foods, finished when the work was done and I received no special privileges.

Starting Observations in the Kitchen

My ethnography was 'covert' in parts, in as much that my role as an ethnographer was not immediately disclosed to all of my fellow workers. At times, I was unable to gain permission from new workers and I am sure that many transient workers were not aware of my role as a researcher. There was never any intention to deliberately deceive the workers there; it was simply how the research panned out and the topic of my being there was never questioned. As far as they were concerned, I was a worker and nothing more. The workers that were there during the start of my research were aware, if only in part, of my research agenda. They knew I was at university and they knew I was researching what it was like to work in a kitchen. None of them asked for any clarification regarding the exact nature of research and no one objected to my presence there.

I proceeded to spend time within the kitchen during January and February 2006 purely as a spectator. Once I began observing, I openly took notes pertaining to the structure of the kitchen, the workers and their daily patterns of work. My continued presence there provided me with the opportunities to observe life within the kitchen, including the workers, their daily routines, their interactions, the setting itself, the structure of their working day and their various tasks. This allowed me initially to record as much detail as possible regarding actions, verbal and non-verbal behaviour, interaction, and the context in which they occurred, before I slowly began identifying salient themes and insights and then pursuing them in detail until all avenues of research had reached saturation. Recording all aspects of the kitchen in a rather

unselective way and then narrowing the focus allowed for theoretical ideas to develop in conjunction with data collection.

During these initial observations in the kitchen, I was able to outline specific points of interest that informed the structure of the remainder of the research and thesis. This enabled me to draw my own conclusions regarding life in the kitchen from incidents I witnessed first-hand, rather than deriving them solely from interviews. Kitchen ethnography is quite a difficult task. Due to the nature of the work, the dangers that pervade each kitchen and the worker's deep-seated need for routine, my initial observations were severely limited to specific shifts. During these initial weeks, the kitchen was also expecting an examination from a governing body of hotel inspectors who were assessing the quality of the restaurant's food, with the intention of assigning them a Rosette. Due to this and the fear of disruption I may cause the workers my time was severely curtailed in the restaurant kitchen and I was only able to observe function service. However once my attendance proved unproblematic, I was introduced to busier shifts in all three kitchens including the restaurant kitchen, and was able to generate a much more rounded view of kitchen life.

During my time as a kitchen worker, I also had the opportunity to observe the functions that the kitchen catered for; small and large-scale events such as the annual seafood festivals they host, business functions such as charity events, seasonal functions such as the Mother's Day Dinner, Easter events, Christmas events and weddings. These were witnessed as a kitchen worker; however, I also had the opportunity to observe the restaurant that the kitchen caters for, as a lone diner or attending with family members or friends on various nights. Here I managed to conduct observations regarding the restaurant and its patrons. In total, I visited the restaurant 14 times during my research. My gatekeeper also helped facilitate several interviews with diners in both the restaurant and the seafood festivals. I was able to conduct 7 interviews with restaurant diners, each lasting 30-40 minutes and 9, 20 minute interviews with patrons of the seafood festivals. Each of the interviews centred mostly on their views of the festivals/restaurant, particularly the food.

Move to Participant Observer

Throughout March 2006 I slowly breached the gap between observer and participant as I became absorbed into the working life of the kitchen through the gradual performance of tasks. I was eventually granted a part-time position within the kitchen that ended in December 2007. During this period, I worked at the hotel as a kitchen assistant on a casual basis, and continued to conduct research without the aid of my notebook. I worked alongside the various chefs and kitchen workers during this time and shadowed their hours, routines and interactions much more closely. This move from pure observer to participant observer was never fully intended and again it highlights the fluid and flexible nature of ethnography as a research method (see Robson, 2002:316-319 for the advantages and disadvantages of research positions). Omitting the restrictions I encountered during the very start of the research, my time there was relatively unproblematic. As a participant observer, I was able to move around the various kitchens and areas much more easily and I was able to gain a greater appreciation of the kitchen and its workers as well as help reduce reactivity to my presence there. I slowly began to develop an understanding of the subjects' perspectives and the meanings that underpinned their interactions.

During my initial observations, it was hard to make sense of the sheer chaos within the kitchen because I was not part of it; I was not versed in the kitchen's intricacies or its structure. Although the observations gave me insight into working hours and conditions, as well as their structure and some aspects of interaction, I had initially no real knowledge of the job. This was partly gained through experiencing the work for myself, as a worker. Being detached from the rhythm of the kitchen made it all the more difficult for me ascertain some intricacies of the environment, and it was not until I actually became part of that configuration that I began to make sense of the environment and some of the interactions within it. During my time there, particularly in the months that I spent as a working participant, I was able to observe kitchen life in a much more naturalistic way. I slowly became submerged in kitchen life and I developed a deep appreciation of the work. I witnessed the hardship, fun times and the scams and cheats. Although developing a more significant role within the kitchen proved to be more time consuming I found it to be very beneficial to the research.

One of the first things that struck me during these observations in the kitchen was the apparent chaotic nature of the work. As my observations progressed and ultimately as I breached the gap from observer to worker, I found that what appears on the surface to be a disorganised hectic milieu was in reality an environment underpinned by a strict hierarchy and the allocation of tasks. Everything within the kitchen was controlled and planned. This submergence into the culture of the kitchen was also noted in Fine's (1996) study of American cooks. He too observed openly within several kitchens and in a similar vein to how his research panned out, I too was eventually drawn into activities that were part of the environment and not initially anticipated. Whilst Fine's activities were limited to washing up during busy periods, mine were more varied and lasted for a large proportion of my time there. It became apparent early on in the research that everything within the kitchen was utilised as were all those who occupied its space.

Every area, every object and every person within the kitchen is essential, as above all else, it is a working environment. During the busy periods, when the kitchen was often severely short staffed, all available personnel are taken advantage of and broken into doing some activity within the kitchen, anything from partaking in strenuous physical labour to checking on the fryers on their way out. Much of this was initially witnessed purely as an observer but as my time there progressed, I was gradually drawn into their structure, their work and their regimes. Being asked on occasion to fetch trays for the chefs or taking 10 minutes out of my observations to help load up the refrigerator van seemed insignificant to me, even calling cheques away on Mother's Day did not seem like a great leap. However, as I frequently began to spend considerable amounts of time away from my note taking I realised that something was happening, and after I arrived for another observational shift in full uniform and without my notebook, I became conscious that I had made the transition.

This transition into participant observer benefited my research immensely. My movements around the various kitchens became much more fluid and I was able to shadow the workers more closely. No longer being restricted to a single static vantage point allowed for me to move between the areas and workers. I was no longer on the periphery of interactions, but

able to fully engage in whatever was occurring. Gradually over time, I became aware of, and involved in, incidences and interactions, conversations, actions and decisions that would otherwise have been hidden from me. This allowed me to build more secure relationships with the workers and I was able to obtain a much fuller account of their work and their relationships to one another, the formal and informal hierarchy that was in place and the actual nature of the work.

Interviews

My other main research method was semi-structured interviews. As the study progressed, I believed that I had gained a strong sense of typical interactions, events, conversations and routines within the kitchen. Consequently, the ethnographic section of the study ended in December 2007, although time was still spent during 2008 and 2009 drifting in and out of the kitchen, usually to help out during the festivals, this portion of the research was more focused around arranging semi-structured interviews with the main kitchen workers. Having established relationships with my co-workers within the kitchen, requesting interviews was a relatively easy process. My ethnographic research and observations greatly facilitated the interview process as by the time I came to request interviews I was knowledgeable about the job they were doing and them as individuals. They knew I could relate in some way to what they were saying and I believe this made them more receptive to my request for an interview.

I worked alongside as many kitchen workers as was possible and I discussed kitchen life with all of them, as well as with several other hotel workers who had frequent contact with the kitchen and the staff, such as management and front-of-house staff, probably around 45 in total including kitchen staff. Wherever possible, I engaged in informal conversations at break times, down-times in between service, during prep time, in the changing room after work and when out at social events. The mundane aspects of kitchen life allowed for the possibility of engaging in specific conversations during the dull periods and this was deemed too good an opportunity to pass up. Obviously, the use of a tape recorder was prohibited on these occasions but I attempted as best I could to transcribe accounts of the conversations. These conversations lasted anything up to 30 minutes and many were written up as soon as possible afterwards and included as part of my ethnographic data for that shift. As well as these, I was

able to record 29 semi-structured interviews with full-time, part-time and agency kitchen workers. The majority of these interviews lasted over an hour and were conducted wherever was most convenient for the interviewee. Thankfully, a good number of them were willing to visit my home. The turnover of staff within the kitchen made it difficult to obtain a recorded interview from each member of staff during my time there, but fortunately I was able to interview all of those who featured heavily in my observations.

During the later interviews all initially offered up and discussed in detail acts of frivolity but after some quiet moments of reflection many spoke of an unnerving sense of doom; of the bleak prospect of a life working in a form of employment that disregards them. Looking past the banter, the 'fun' and the somewhat forced sense of camaraderie, the workers are nonetheless low paid and poorly regarded. Very different from being renowned producers of aesthetically valued products, the job often drains them of their both their health and their sanity. They are forced to create and recreate dishes en masse for largely unappreciative customers and their visions and passions are often severely curtailed, overpowered by the need to keep costs down. They discussed the indignities suffered at the hands of management and the torture of having to actively and methodically maintain social ties. They also spoke of being detached from the mainstream, as well as being creatively deadened by the monotonous and mundane nature of the job and being physically shattered by the workload during the busy periods. They spoke of being criticised, isolated and exhausted, with the very real option of burning out at a relatively young age.

Observation Discussion

During my initial observations, I took notes openly. Although I was not aware of it at the time, it did impact slightly on the behaviour of the workers, however this was only realised after I breached the gap between observer and participant. This was one of the most pressing issues during the study, in particular, the initial observations. To what extent did my presence affect the behaviour of the workers? Initially, the staff were conscious of the fact that I was there but I did all that I could to make sure that my presence did not impact severely on their behaviour and the environment. To minimize this I continued to keep up with the observations and kept in contact with the workers, as familiarity promotes relaxation. I soon found myself being

included not only in their working lives but in their social lives as well, which also proved fruitful in keeping in contact with employees who left the establishment. I engaged in everyday sociable conversations, openly discussing aspects of life in general, to facilitate naturally occurring behaviour. I also managed to maintain a certain level of detachment to avoid 'going native' (Bryman, 1988:96-7).

The fieldwork was immensely challenging and demanding, entailing a heavy investment of time. I saw both positive and negative aspects of kitchen life which the chefs frequently speak of, and I believe that this allowed me to depict a much more complete picture of kitchen life (see also Whyte 1984). The kitchen was inherently frantic but structured, fun and intriguing. I experienced firsthand the long hours, the irregular shifts, the hard work and the late nights. I also witnessed on many occasions work colleagues laughing, joking and having the time of their lives. I hated the hours, the heat and the monotonous nature of the work. I ached all over and often came home covered in bruises obtained from the physical side of the job. I still have a scar on my finger from a rather painful slip of a knife in May 2007 and a faint scar on my arm from a burn obtained at one of the kitchen's outside functions. Nevertheless, I did enjoy aspects of the work and the workplace. I enjoyed the camaraderie and the sense of connection between the workers, no matter how forced or fake it was, and I enjoyed the sense of loyalty each had for one another.

At first thought, kitchen work, especially being a kitchen porter or assistant, seems relatively easy. In reality is very different. The workload is gruelling and almost torturous at times. It is considered a relatively unimportant job with the only skill needed being the ability to work without question. For most kitchen porter vacancies, no CV is required and what could be loosely termed an interview is really just a formality to check that the person in question is physically able to work. Although kitchen work would not qualify for the harshest form of labour (see Toyne, 2003; Ehrenreich, 2002), it is certainly not a walk in the park.

General Discussion

One of the distinct benefits of conducting a long-term ethnographic study was to highlight the fluid and insecure nature of this particular work sector. Relationships with the workers were

relatively easy to establish and contact was mostly maintained through prolonged attendance at both work and social gatherings. Inevitably, workers came and went and others quickly filled their positions. Some stayed for a relatively short time and others for a lengthier period, some were missed and some were quickly forgotten. With perhaps the exception of a throwaway comment, many faded away with absolutely no impact on the rest of the workforce. Whilst every effort was made to ensure contact was maintained with those who left, some inevitably rode off into the sunset never to be heard from again. Contacts were lost, scattered to various corners of the country, but these were quickly replaced by their successors. Some left of their own accord, seeking a more lucrative and mainstream form of employment or making their way slowly up the hierarchical ladder at another establishment. Others left under less than pleasurable terms, disappearing into obscurity. One died during my time there and another died during the write-up of the thesis.

Fine (1996:242) suggested that 'to understand a topic ethnographically, one should select more than a single scene. Generalisability is important'. I disagree. In methodological terms, the sample is small and localised, but this is in keeping with the long traditions of ethnography. This has been one of the most frequently cited limitations regarding ethnography: that the findings lack generalisability (Bryman, 1988). However, as Fielding (2001) has argued, small-scale samples are acceptable when exploring some obscure niche of social life. I am aware that the kitchen used in the ethnography is not wholly representative of the profession or of the wider catering industry; however, I am confident that it does open an avenue to an obscure social world that has rarely been touched upon by academia. A selected small sample is sufficient for examining the intricacies of interaction as opposed to developing a complete vision of the culinary industry. Whilst each individual kitchen will be unique to some extent, this thesis explores the finer details of this subsection as opposed to making sweeping generalisations. No doubt, the study would be very difficult to replicate; however, what was of utmost importance was presenting an accurate reflection of the environment and the culture contained within it.

Every setting poses a challenge to an ethnographer and a working kitchen is no different. Kitchen life can be intense as well as leisurely. To any newcomer it is undeniably 'dauntingly

incomprehensible' (Toynbee 2003:102) and taking field notes is a major practical problem faced by ethnographic researchers (Fielding, 2001; Foster, 2006, Bryman, 2004). Initially being solely an observer, I was able to take notes relatively easily, due to always having access to my notebook in front of me the whole time. As I progressed to participant observer and took on a much more active role in the kitchen, I was faced with writing up my field notes after each shift had ended, and before the next shift started. This mainly consisted of whom I worked with, the specifics of the function/dinner that we were catering for or the prep we were preparing. I noted down key words and phrases that were heard or mentioned and events that seemed important. During the busy periods, it was not uncommon to spend many a late night writing up the observations made from a rather gruelling 12-hour shift. The reality of writing up research notes after the event is extremely difficult as it is hard to do justice to the sheer disorder and pandemonium that pervades contemporary working kitchens. The workers are side by side every day and although I had some initial difficulties in discerning specific actions during the first several shifts, I was grateful for the chance to purely observe. Slowly I was able to ascertain some method to the madness, so to speak, and the more time that was spent there enabled me to define a sense of structure within the kitchen.

My position within the kitchen would fall under the title of kitchen assistant, but the actual particulars of the job varied from day to day from that of a Commis Chef to that of a kitchen porter. My job description was to assist the chefs in the setting up and serving of dishes, foods and buffets, to assist in the cleaning, washing and tidying of the kitchen and to do anything asked that is reasonably within the parameters of the department, which translates to everything and anything asked of me. It entailed a great deal of mundane, monotonous jobs: prepping for functions, cleaning, counting and plating up hundreds of starters and desserts. I covered mostly the unskilled jobs that just needed an extra pair of hands to get the work done, and I spent my first official eight-hour shift chopping up fruit and the next one helping plate over 800 starters and desserts. I received between £5.50 and £10 an hour (circa 2007 when the minimum wage was £5.52), cash-in-hand and tax-free as unskilled labour. Most of the time I was just an extra pair of hands and I almost felt guilty knowing that I would walk away after a 14-hour shift with more money than the trainee chef would receive for a full working week, especially as I had worked alongside him for that shift.

Ethics

While no major acts of deviance were witnessed or spoken about at great length, I was made aware of several 'scams' within the kitchen which were worthy of inclusion in the thesis, most notably the pilfering of food. There is also the issue of the hotel paying cash-in-hand to some of its casual employees. For these reasons, the identity of all of the respondents has been disguised, as has the specific locality of the setting.

Concluding remarks

As my main aim was to reflect on the richness and complexity of the kitchen workers' occupational and social world and the fact that I spent a long period becoming involved in as many aspects of kitchen life as possible, the methodology that I employed for this study was enough to generate a considerable amount of analysable data. Observing behaviour, listening and participating in conversations and being part of the structure of workers' days, ensured that the data I collected represented an accurate and detailed account of life in a working kitchen. Despite the merits of more quantitative methods, the social world cannot always be reduced to statistics and I am confident that my study will be a welcome contribution to the sociology of work, kitchens and chefs. My ethnographic data, along with the information generated through discussions and interviews allowed for me to draw together similar issues and themes that arose. My co-workers had similar issues that came out during my research; they voiced the same opinions regarding many aspects of their working day; the hours and shift patterns; the attitudes of the management; their lack of meaningful leisure time and their growing distance from friends outside of work. Because of this, I do believe that the methodology I employed was suitable to the study in hand. An alternative, quantitative method would not have been able to generate rich detailed accounts of a particularly hidden form of service sector work.

My chosen methods allowed me to witness and be a part of the kitchen in a way that no other method could. Actually experiencing the long hours, early mornings and late nights; the boredom of waiting for marquee service to be over yet not wanting the inevitable avalanche of dirty flats, plates and cutlery; the aches, pains, and burns, were great advantages to my

research. Had I not been part of the kitchen I would have had to rely on interview data and anecdotes and would have not been able to fully understand the importance of something that to an outsider may appear trivial or inconsequential.

The following chapter introduces the hotel and one specific consumerised dining experience that is found within. Using ethnographic and interview data gathered from the hotel's annual seafood festivals the chapter will highlight that food and its consumption has acquired a complexity that extends far beyond mere bodily nourishment. This is offered to provide a concrete setting on which to compare the backstage environment of the kitchen in the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter Four

The Festival

Introduction

This chapter focuses upon the front stage of the hotel. It explores the more overtly decadent side of event dining, particularly the image of excess and extravagance that is lapped up by the consumers of the hotel's renowned annual seafood festivals. As previously noted, the chefs and kitchen workers' time is divided into two areas; they produce dishes to be consumed within the hotel's signature restaurant, and for large-scale corporate events that are hosted by the hotel. During my ethnography, I had the opportunity to interview several patrons of the hotel's signature restaurant. A selection of quotes from these diners is provided in Appendix 3. The seafood festival was chosen as a focus for this individual chapter because it epitomises these corporate events and offers a particularly clear indication of the division between the front and backstage areas. This chapter begins with an ethnographic account of one of the hotel's seafood festivals. The seafood festival is one of two that are held annually to publicly commemorate the seasonal availability of lobsters and oysters after their first harvest. The event is marketed as a premier corporate and social event that is unrivalled in every possible way. Taken from several pieces of the hotel's advertising, these events are presented as:

'A wonderful occasion for feasting and celebration, a premier social event in the North East of England, plentiful seafood, champagne, wines, Pimms, John Smiths and Fosters with incredible entertainment'. 'If you are looking for a premier event with gourmet food, unlimited selected beverages, excellent live entertainment, laughter and dancing, look no further. This is the event for you'. 'The North East of England's corporate and social event of the year. Just like Ascot - it's a day at the races without the horses!'

The festival is purposefully promoted as a luxurious and impressive event, where the diner is provided with everything needed to indicate, both to the self and to others that a level of social distinction has been attained and therefore such extravagance has been earned (see Hall et al 2008). The event seems to fit in seamlessly to the business aspirations of the owners and the

social aspirations of the guests. Tickets for the eight-hour event cost £130.00 and it currently caters for 1400 diners. Both men and women frequent the event, with men making up around two thirds of the guests. It attracts a mix of social and business clientele, with corporate and business attendance making up approximately 60% of the total. As opposed to the warm and intimate atmosphere that is created in the hotel's restaurant, this event is staged on a grand scale, with the clear intention of appearing to guests as being beyond the boundaries of what might be expected from a regular dining experience. The seafood festivals may not reach the heights of lavishness exhibited by the dining establishments of the wealthy elite. However, for those that it caters for, it is considered a luxurious occasion; this was quite clearly shown in the data collected at the event. By comparing the festival to Ascot, an occasion that is world-renowned for its prestige and its ties to royalty, the hotel's own advertising conjures up a readymade image of what to expect from the event. Diners bring this expectation with them, as well as the expectation for feasting and celebration.

This chapter critically examines this specific event and highlights that the festival celebrates an atavistic form of dining, standing in stark contrast to the rather restricted and constrained nature of dining found within the restaurant. It allows us to further explore the intricacies of artificiality and 'trickery' (Grazian 2008:13) that is employed in front stage settings such as this. I am particularly keen to offer an honest depiction of the theatricality of this festival and will expand on this theme with a view to situating the workers and diners according to the roles they play in the construction of the event as a performance. I will highlight the distinction between the elaborate and opulent front stage venue with the often intensely demanding physical work that goes on behind the scenes, in the kitchen. I will then consider the ways in which event dining in this specific manner reflects the manufactured and insistent desire for display and recognition that lies at the heart of contemporary consumerism. The chapter concludes with some observations regarding what can happen when the dominant theatrical image of hyper-indulgence is challenged by the return of the Real (Žižek, 2002)

The Festival

1400 guests arrive at the hotel mid-morning in a constant stream of private taxis, limousines and high-end cars. They are dressed flamboyantly in fine suits and dresses. Entrance at the front of the hotel has been prohibited and the guests have been directed to the hotel's rear where the management have laid out a long stretch of red carpet. A Scottish piper greets them at the door. From here, the guests are directed through to the newly refurbished ballroom for a Möt & Chandon champagne reception. The room is impressive, with large high windows interspaced with ornate gilt mirrors. It is lit by six extravagant crystal chandeliers, each tiered with thousands of Austrian Strauss Crystals. The main guests congregate in the ballroom, while approximately one hundred VIP guests (close friends of the hotel owner) are escorted upstairs to a private suite with free-flowing Dom Perignon. From here, the guests are ushered through to the front entrance of the hotel and the lawn area. They pass through one of the hotel's lounges, which houses an open fire, antiqued leather sofas, wide oak flooring, another imposing gilt framed mirror and a grand staircase that leads to the upper floor where the hotel's bedrooms are situated.

The open fire is not lit but maintains its grandeur, surrounded by dried flowers and a number of candles in varying stages of usage. These too, are not lit. Later in the day, I learn that the candles were all newly bought at the weekend. A member of staff had been given the task of lighting and burning the candles to their current state, painstakingly making sure that the wax fell over the edges and onto the tiled hearth. Another plush red carpet extends out through the front doors. As the guests emerge outside, they are greeted by uninterrupted views of the surrounding parklands bathed in warm morning sunshine. The view is framed between two privately commissioned hand-carved stone greyhounds that guard the entrance. Altogether, this manufactured atmosphere suggests sedate gentility. At this point the guests are met by several scantily clad young women dressed in 'Irish' apparel; they smile at the diners, and serve them ice cold Pimms.

The Pimms is swimming with hand cut pieces of apple, mango, oranges and cubes of ice. The Scottish piper has now walked around the perimeter of the hotel and his music once again

accompanies the stream of guests as they make their way down to the marquee where they will spend the remainder of the day. The young women appear in direct contradiction to the atmosphere of gentility that surrounds the hotel and the Irish dress that they are adorned in is more 'gimmicky' rather than being truly representative of the 'best of British' (which is the theme for the event). What this does do, however, is play to the lowest common denominator in an attempt to titillate an essentially male crowd. At times, especially at the beginning of the day, this seems rather antagonistic to the dominant atmosphere and reveals that which the event itself is attempting to suppress. In an almost overt display of vulgarity, it is reminiscent of a kind of nouveau-riche sense of excess that cannot remove itself from its base drives. What this suggests is that all kinds of consumer excess display this same problem in that no matter how the owners dress things up, there is always a guttural, basic structuring dynamic to consumer excess.

Inside the marquee, white synthetic silk adorns the walls and billows down from the three-storey high ceiling to hide the metal framework of the temporary building. The makeshift floor is covered with black carpet panels; low-lit chandeliers and fairy lights do little to illuminate the interior. Hundreds of pints of lager and bitter have been pre-pulled for the diners and await them as they enter. There is free Pimms, lager and bitter for all of the guests for the remainder of the day. The champagne bar is fully stocked with an array of different sized bottles available for purchase, and many sidestep the free drinks and head straight here or to the cash-only bar for spirits. The sounds of champagne corks popping can be heard above the Big Band that is playing at the back of the marquee. The diners are directed to their tables while the VIP guests are personally escorted to theirs. Each of the round tables seat between eight and twelve diners and every one is clearly labelled according to the company name, family names or occupation of that table. The VIP guests are situated at the centre of the room, closest to the dance floor and stage. The tables and the tableware are set the night before the event and the seafood stands are laid out just before the diners arrive.

There is a three-tier centrepiece on each table, standing just over three feet high. It looms above the vast array of wine glasses, wine bottles, polished cutlery, napkins, dressed salad leaves, tomato salads and various dips. The bottom tier is the largest, measuring around

eighteen inches in diameter. It is overflowing with half dressed lobsters, dressed crabs, langoustines, lemons, limes and seaweed. The middle tier houses dressed clams and mussels in a tomato and onion sauce and the top tier is adorned with large king scallop shells, full of Royal Greenland prawns. A huge nine-inch long king prawn tops off the display, skewered to the top of the stands that tower over four feet above the diners when they are seated. The makeshift kitchen hidden at the back of the tent quickly churns out hot minted and buttered new potatoes for the guests and these arrive alongside their plated dishes. Each guest receives a cold plate of smoked salmon, poached salmon, a quenelle of crab and coriander mayonnaise, and a slice of rolled monkfish ballotine with herbs, lemon and parsley. There is also a vegetarian and a meat dish available for those that are unable to eat seafood. More wine and Pimms is added to the tables and the day continues on from here.

Afternoon tea is served around 3pm by the chefs after they've changed into clean uniforms and English strawberries and cream are circulated amongst the diners as well as a selection of British cheese. Coulton and Bassett Stilton, Hawes Wensleydale, Somerset Brie and Isle of Mull Cheddar are offered along with water biscuits, grapes, celery, apples, radishes and chutney as the Head Chef networks amongst the guests, starting with the VIPs. Fresh oysters and sushi are also provided at a special bar, run by the Sous Chef and the Chef-de-Partie. The entertainment continues throughout the day and a famous British comedian entertains the guests before the DJ starts the disco.

Manufacturing the Image

The importance of the physical setting to the overall aesthetics of the event should not be underestimated. The hotel itself and its extravagant adornments contribute significantly to the image of the event as being opposed to all that is mundane, ordinary and humdrum in everyday life. The event's triumph partly depends upon the guests themselves accepting and submitting to this image. They are encouraged to eschew any notion that the day's proceedings are inextricably tied to the profit motive, and are instead invited to engage in a narrative of conspicuous consumption in which the good things in life are celebrated among like-minded individuals. The tickets for this event cost £130.00 each, and while diners are

keen to remove themselves from the vulgar business of exchange there is also a durable but concealed concern with 'value for money'. They know that they will receive food and beverages, entertainment and service; these are physical objects that can be easily be identified, but the hotel also markets and sells an image. Here the material goods are important because they structure this image.

During the festival, the hotel's car park is restricted to the festival goers only. The staff are ordered to park on a strip of farmer's land that adjoins the hotel. This ensures that their decidedly unexciting and often unsightly vehicles are kept out of the diners' view, while cars such as Mercedes, Jaguars and Ferraris can be clearly exhibited around the car park. During my time there, it was customary for the chefs and kitchen workers to have their pictures taken whilst posing on the bonnets of such prestigious cars, unbeknownst to the cars' owners. The dress code for the event is also much more restrictive than the standard order of dress for the restaurant, and this is another way in which the festival differs from the norm. A compulsory code of dress is adhered to; the men are required to wear suits and ties, the women are asked to wear cocktail dresses and hats. This, as well as the food and drink on offer, all adds to the notion that the event revolves around goods and brand names that display and conjure up an image of refinement and exclusivity. The price each person pays for attending offers both concrete physical objects and these intangible commodities. Commenting on her long-term presence at the festival, one female diner noted:

Diner: It's extremely impressive. I'd never seen anything like it at first and it just gets better and better each year. The effort that goes into it is unbelievable. There's everything there that you could want and the staff are fantastic. The company I used to work for had a table here and I used to come with them, but I left the office so now I've come with a few friends, they're really impressed.

Me: Do you think it's worth the price of the ticket?

Diner: Oh definitely, yes. It's a great day, all the drink is free and you do get a lot for your money. I think the only thing that could be better is the food.

Me: Why's that?

Diner: I think they should offer more choice, as they don't really change what we get each time. The meats are always the same and sometimes I'd like something different.

Me: Don't you like seafood?

Diner: I'm allergic to shellfish.

For this diner at least, presentation appears to have triumphed over substance. While she is impressed with the event as a whole and believes it to be good value for money, she also fails to acknowledge that this is a seafood festival ostensibly rooted in the celebration of dishes that she is herself allergic to. Like many of the guests I spoke to and observed, she seems to be principally attracted by the image of indulgent hedonism rather than the actual event itself.

Feasting and Indulgence

The event celebrates the now restricted practice of eating with one's hands. While many fast food restaurants still promote this practice, it is rather uncommon in a formal setting such as this. As Montanari (2006) indicates, this concept still carries notions of curious exoticism that is welcomed by the guests. At every turn, the diners relinquish the cutlery that is provided and indulge heavily in this intense atavistic custom that appears to yield a strange back-to-basics satisfaction that may strike the viewer as rather incongruent with the event and its representation. However, closer inspection tends to confirm that, at a much deeper level, this practice is indicative of the ultimate truth of the event. The diners tear at the lobster halves with their teeth, shovel Greenland prawns into their mouths with their hands and lick the tomato and onion sauce from their fingers. It is a peculiar sight to witness such a well-dressed crowd engaging en masse in such behaviour.

The symbolic importance that is seen in medieval banquets and dining practices and the ability to indulge so ostentatiously is mirrored here at this event, as is the negotiation of social relations that centre on this symbolic importance (Carroll 2005, Graham 2005, Goody 2005). It is almost as if the sense of indulgent hedonism that is structuring the event at the symbolic level grants guests leave to engage in behaviour that would otherwise be judged as ill-mannered and uncivilised, the preserve of the uncultured hoi-polloi crammed in fast food restaurants who will never attend such a rarefied event. The exceptional bacchanalian exploits of appetite and indulgence that were witnessed at the seafood festival reflect the importance placed on displays of wealth and waste that are indicative of the leisure class (Veblen 1994). Whilst lobster, langoustines, prawns, monkfish, salmon and champagne may not be

considered as exotic as they once were, they are certainly foods that do not feature heavily on everyday shopping lists. The food on offer at the event has been specifically prepared to be elaborate as well as profitable and everything is carefully managed to appear magnificent and to amaze the diners, who then appear to move from reverence to uncultured indulgence quite rapidly as the drink takes hold. Everything on offer has been carefully selected to excite the mind as well as the palette, as distinction and taste is not only about the food, but also the manner of its presentation (see also Willmott 2005).

The festival is charged with connotations of luxury and indulgence and it is believed that pleasure can be achieved by partaking in this form of hedonistic gustatory satisfaction (see also Beardsworth & Keil 1997). Eating has already been established as an essential ingredient of the human experience, but it needs to be reiterated that the consumption of food means much more to us than simply meeting the relentless physical demands of our bodies. Event dining in this particular fashion is entangled within a complex system of symbolic and cultural meanings, making it an intoxicating and alluring part of contemporary consumption, confirming the consumer's fantasy that they are worthy of such excess. We achieve fulfilment through gorging upon copious amounts of food and succumbing to the hedonistic attraction of consumption. Whilst many would view this type of gluttonous behaviour in opposition to contemporary concerns regarding our physical wellbeing, specific food choices are being increasingly viewed as moral decisions (Convey 2006; see also Bauman 2001).

Although the concept of a 'good' and 'bad' eater is not new to society, it is a reminder that our base drives need to be disciplined by a rule-governed symbolic order and the insistent injunctions of the super-ego. This stoic attitude towards consumption and the belief in forgoing passion and indulgence in favour of self-control and fortitude (Sellars 2006) has been somewhat forgotten in some circles, where an irresistible attraction of excess prevails. However, it is not always this simple as there is also a lot of denial surrounding the consumption of food. We are caught between two powerful injunctions; the desire to indulge and attempt to satiate appetite, and the desire to withhold these things. For some of course this becomes properly fetishised: a world of food choices that are appraised but denied in the shadow of a desire to be something else. The excess of food challenges notions of self-control

in a similar vein to the ambiguous way that we approach sex and comparable physical pleasures. Eating is considered to be a natural appetite and, like sex, requires restraint if we are to demonstrate our civility. The consumption of food is a sensuous act and we can approach it with both great pleasure and great anxiety. It can bring about momentary euphoria and satisfaction, yet it can also propel us into the darkest depths of desolation (Bordo 1998). As Warde (1997:95) acknowledges; there is a double-edged ethos that surrounds contemporary consumption: hedonistic indulgence and self-discipline.

'There is simultaneously a significant shift in the discourses towards indulgence. This arises partly because of the difficulty and unattractiveness of self-discipline and self-denial, partly because of the culture of hedonism that prevails in consumer societies.

Theatricality and Artificiality

To reiterate, dining out can no longer be considered simply a banal activity as it is now an activity that is immersed in abstract meaning. Consumers are drawn to the sensory pleasures that are associated with dining particularly at this event, and this highlights the power that the manufactured image has in contemporary society (Marcuse 1991, Baudrillard 1983). This is also noted by Beardsworth and Keil (1997:52) in that, 'the symbolic potential of food and eating is virtually limitless, and food items and food consumption events can be imbued with meanings of great significance and surpassing subtlety, according to the occasion and the context'. Our awareness of others matters immensely and our identity is formed for the most part, by how others see us. The industry's first interest is in making profit and the seafood festival is no exception to this. It is paramount that the diners believe that they are getting their money's worth, that by consuming everything offered at this event, they are consuming the equivalent of the money they have paid and more. The event is desirable and therefore expensive, expensive and therefore desirable. Individuals desire the valuable and they are propelled to consume to excess. This results in a new form of exaggerated social and cultural competitiveness, which is openly encouraged at the seafood festival.

From the moment the diners arrive at the hotel, they are greeted with a theatrically engineered event. From the 'Scottish' piper and the red carpet, to the use of French

Champagne at a 'best of British' event, to the candles that had been meticulously created to give off the impression that they had been used, the diners are bombarded with staged imagery. Decorations such as these have a very adept way of suggesting social significance (Willmott 2005, Auty 1992). Through the decoration and food on offer, consumers are able to display to their peers and associates their own status, which is appropriately achieved through the quantity and quality of the food and drink on offer (see also Carroll 2005). The large heavy salvers that adorn the tables are laden with foods that are considered exotic and scarce, presented in such a way as to display culinary opulence and to feed the eyes as well as the stomach. Platters overflowing with seafood serve to convey the affluence of the host, be it the owner of the hotel that has provided this lavish event, the businessman who utilises the event as a way of flattering his current or potential clients, or the odd group of non-corporate diners who simply want to impress their friends. All that is exhibited at the event, and the promises of subsequent pleasure that it evokes to the guests, is staged.

Backstage, the chefs and kitchen workers are told by the management to display the food on the platters in a very specific way. The bottom tiers of the display, overflowing with half-dressed lobsters, dressed crabs, langoustines, lemons, limes and seaweed is, on close inspection, mostly seaweed. This is used to bulk up the large expanse of the platter with the food placed on the fringes, the lobsters hanging over the rim, almost touching the tables with each one facing a diner. The other parts of the dish have been carefully placed around these, so that they fill the view of each diner. The second tier that houses the dressed clams and mussels again is subjected to equivalent interference, with the seafood being pushed to the very brim of the dish, leaving the centre almost devoid of food. The final tier also suffered the same. During the set up of the tables, the assistant manager could be seen sitting at various chairs around the marquee, to make sure that the diners would get an eyeful of the food on offer. The tables receive similar attention. They are overflowing, purposefully crammed full of wine bottles, side dishes, dips and glasses, leaving hardly any available room for the plated main dish which, as it happens, is served on a smaller plate than those used within the restaurant, so that the somewhat measly portion that each diner receives looks larger than it is. The hotel has also taken on extra chefs and waiting staff to ensure that the food is served on time and that every whim of the guests can be catered for without any undue hesitation. The

'staged' nature of the event suggests comparisons with other events that have been equated to a 'theatre performance' (Warde and Martens 2000:5). Although the dinner takes place in a marquee, it is adorned with embellishments and imagery that perceive it as being fitting for the consumption of the food on offer. Everything from the great displays of food to the chandeliers and fairy lights become instruments, successfully providing each diner with the props needed to briefly enhance and realise these fantasies. However, any satisfaction gained from this, is a commodified experience. When we dine out, we are confirming that any desire can be purchased.

As Grazian also comments, techniques such as those employed by the hotel constitute a form of 'deceptive trickery' (2008:13). He suggests that dining out can be compared to the experience of attending a theatrical production 'where the players, props, backdrops, lighting and rapport are integral components of an overall effect' (ibid:14, see also Finkelstein 1998). This is a salient point to make with reference to the seafood festival. The 'players' that Grazian mentions include both the diners and the staff, those that work both front and backstage. The work of those who labour behind the scenes often goes unnoticed and unacknowledged, but their contributions to the dramatic theatrical event are paramount. Events such as this, which explicitly offer 'entertainment for all of the senses' (Grazian 2008:15), are constructed by an array of different people who all rely on methods of trickery as they skilfully create such an alluring event that will momentarily satisfy and stimulate the senses of their clientele. The promotional strategy of describing the festival as a 'premier social and corporate event', and comparing it to a high status occasion such as Ascot, purposefully stimulates the diners before they have even set foot inside the marquee. Once they do they are showered with fanciful imagery in what, as Grazian (2008:16) suggests, results in an 'atmosphere of synthetic excitement'.

The hotel therefore, through the implementation of actors and props such as those found within the festival, provides a certain experience for its consumers, one that is promoted and actively encouraged by the management in order to increase the profits made at the event. During the festival, the management would direct the acts that they employed to specific areas of the marquee so that all of the diners could experience everything on offer. Many of them

were specifically instructed to promote the Champagne bar and do their best to increase the profits made there. A prominent point to make, which Grazian surmises, is that an event or setting that depends heavily on deceptive forms of decoration thereby creates misleading and superficial signals which the consumers use as a means to evaluate their experience there.

Exclusivity, Scarcity and Magnificence

The organisers of the event help to establish an environment that trades on complex social and cultural influences, ideas and tastes. Altogether, they present a forum where an individual can edge a little closer to the object of their desire, where artifice and extravagance draw the diners in as its depiction of superior tastes and styles feed our longing for social display (see also Finkelstein 1989). This longing reflects a commodification of Hegel's concern with recognition. The diner's desire is structured in relation to an unrelenting demand to have others recognise and acknowledge the successes of the self. Within this arrangement the diners fantasise that they are the people who can and should consume in this ostentatious manner, displaying an anxious need to exhibit social distinction. This relentless need to elevate the self above the herd is a contemporary form of anxiety and can be found in many spheres other than dining establishments such as this (see Honneth 1996).

The image of a subject driven forward by an unrelenting demand to be recognised is one that was witnessed throughout my time observing the seafood festivals. Diners would compete with each other; if one diner bought one bottle at the champagne bar, the next diner would purchase two. The first would change his original request, opting for a larger bottle, and so on. At the oyster bar, diners would consume as many oysters as possible, with several gorging themselves to such an extent that they would vomit. Diners would stuff themselves with everything that was on offer, relishing in the fact that they were consuming copious amounts of luxurious foods. These luxuries, once restricted to a privileged few, are now readily available for anyone willing to bear the expense. Participation in extravagant episodes of consumerism has been made available to anyone who can afford it, and extravagance has become routine.

As a way of competing with other high-end hotels in the area, the hotel tries to offer an event that truly is unrivalled at this point in time. This highlights that the spectacle of the festival is itself inextricably bound to local markets and the profit motive. The event has explicitly been engineered into the hotel's calendar as a way of making money during the quieter months, and as a way of furthering its reputation. At the time during which my ethnography took place, there were no local hotels offering anything even remotely similar to the seafood festivals, and the owners were keen to maintain the profits that the seafood festival gave them through the retention of this distinct market position. If the hotel is to remain economically viable, they need to have carved out a niche in the market that only they can lay claim to.

The seafood festivals that I witnessed were not permanent events, but bi-annual ones, fleeting and momentary. They are, however, part of a broader, continuous spectacle of consumerism, and an active endeavour by the hotel as it attempts to distinguish itself by (almost) unparalleled indulgence. We are constantly assaulted by the spectacle of consumerable objects by the mass media, which as Baudrillard (1998:95) highlights, shows how our consumer society envisages itself as 'a society of consumption and reflects itself narcissistically in its image'. Dining at events such as the seafood festival can elicit sensations of excitement that play a vital part in the imaginative and performative aspects of the diners' demeanour. This, coupled with the compelling need to feel indulgent, can result in a many chaotic episodes of competition. The social imagery that dominates the seafood festival provides diners with a momentary yet potent indication of their social standing. Through the ambience and the décor of the festival, the event appears to have successfully evoked images of wealth and luxury and becomes representative of the emotions and behaviour that are found within. We invest consumer goods with a value that appears irrelevant when compared to their actual worth. What we invest in is their cultural and symbolic worth. The price paid for a ticket that gains admittance to the seafood festival is deemed appropriate for what is consumed within. This does not solely cover the cost of the food and drink provided, although consumers are well versed in the perceived prestigious nature of these goods. It encompasses *everything* that is consumed at the event, including the setting of the hotel, the spectacular nature of the entertainment, its grandeur, and the seemingly dotting staff. The diners have equated a financial value to all of this, as the monetary aspect of the transaction is one factor

in determining an item's true worth in relation to others. As Adorno (1991:38) states, 'this is the real secret of success. It is the mere reflection of what one pays in the market for the product. The consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself has paid' and,

'Exchange value exerts its power in a special way in the realm of cultural goods. For in the world of commodities this realm appears to be exempted from the power of the exchange, to be in an immediate relationship with the goods, and it is this appearance in turn which alone gives cultural goods their exchange value. But they nevertheless simultaneously fall completely into the world of commodities, are produced for the market and aimed at the market' (ibid:38).

The fact that we are already familiar with the market price of commodities means that as consumers we are saved the effort of pondering their value, in both a monetary and a cultural sense. Our sense of desire propels us as we are seduced by the high level of prestige that objects and events bestow upon us. The consumers of the festival desire superior tastes and that is what they believe they are purchasing. We want these statements of our preferences to be viewed and envied by all. Therefore, it is specific products and services such as those offered by the seafood festival that take on the appearance of a necessity that is required for our satisfaction. This adds credence to the proposition that our lives are dominated by competitive materialism and that consumer goods relay images of what is valued and what is not, in terms of status, power and wealth.

The festival is marketed in a specific way that promotes the belief that 'the customer gets what the customer wants', and this was evident on numerous occasions. Some diners, in their misguided belief in this lie, believed that they could have whatever they desired, with many citing the monetary cost of the ticket as proof that they were entitled to more than what is on offer. The event is purposefully advertised to stimulate consumer's imagination and this plays a noteworthy part in boosting the sense of pleasure that the diners experience. Ultimately, the promises of luxury, extravagance and excitement make many forget that the event is underpinned by economic factors. Much of what the diners requested were outside of the profit margins and quickly rejected by management on this basis. I witnessed on many occasions, members of waiting staff coming backstage to the kitchen area asking the chefs if

other foods were available. Many diners were requesting dishes that were available on the hotel's restaurant menu, apparently unaware of the restrictions on the festival's menu. These were of course refused by the chefs, leaving the waiting staff to return to the diners with news that their requests had been denied, before again taking up their positions in the shadows of such an extravagant event. Hochschild's (2003) study is relevant here as the commodification of emotions that she details is significant in this context. Unlike the majority of the kitchen workers and chefs, the waiting staff are not afforded a backstage arena to call their own, or where they can seek refuge. They did, however, come back to the makeshift kitchen whenever possible, to voice their anger and displeasure at being at the mercy of the diners in a way that was remarkably different to that of the normal restaurant setting they were used to. The waiting staff were placed at key points throughout the marquee, with each one given a group of tables that they must attend to, pandering to the whims of everyone seated there. Essentially non-persons in a setting of feasting and indulgence, the waiting staff had to be on hand to indulge every request. As one waitress commented, they needed to remain composed when they were in the marquee, despite the demands of the diners.

'It's a nightmare in there! It gets worse as the day goes on. Like at the start, they're not so bad. They're rude, but you just take that as it comes. But after the food's been cleared, then they really start getting stuck in [drinking]. I've had people click their fingers at me like I'm a dog, but there's nothing I can do but go and see what they want and get it if I can. We have to do all we can and mostly it's just fetching drinks for them, but when we can't, they act like it's us that have made the decision to turn them down. The management don't do a thing, they never give us a hand, they just go round and chat to people acting like they're part of it. They get grabby and leery; they really get out of hand. I feel sorry for the younger ones. I've seen them in tears cos of something that's been said. But we can't really do anything'.

The sense of excitement and the pleasures that the diners derive from the event are paramount, so much so that the elaborate displays of status that the diners exhibit in this showground become all-encompassing. However, this is not always realised by every diner there. As discussed in the previous chapter, we are on a constant and unrelenting search for satisfaction and fulfilment, but this is a never-ending process and we remain unsatisfied. The festival is promoted in a way that gives rise to certain expectations that are not realised by everyone who is in attendance. The festival promises much, and when the diners are there in

the midst of the event, eating the foods, drinking the Champagne and mixing with others of equal or perceived higher social standing, they will wonder if this is the pinnacle of enjoyment. Are they eating the right foods? Are they making full use of the complimentary alcohol? Are they socialising with the right people? Are they witnessing all of the fanciful imagery that is on offer? If all the promises of the event were not realised, if the diners came away feeling unsatisfied and unfulfilled, as is the case in a society where we are never truly satisfied, they wonder if they had missed out on the *real* indulgence, somehow failing to experience the event in the correct manner.

The seafood festival is a domain where public displays, guile and pretension become the dominant modes of comportment. The festival is not only a profit-generating event, but also a public performance that transforms a banal activity into an elaborate and celebrated symbolic act. For the diners involved, the nourishment of the body has become entangled with a higher order of experience, transcending into something intangible and emblematic. It demonstrates status, power, and the need for those features to be seen as salient elements of contemporary cultural and social life.

The Importance of Layout

The festival is celebrated for being rich in both décor and the inherent sense of occasion and scarcity that it conveys. The food is presented with great ceremony and is steeped in grandeur that is evocative of the glorious feasts depicted in medieval imagery. Great banquets of the past have always been deemed as events where ‘social bonds and obligations between the host and his guests were forged and cemented’ (Carroll 2005:15), where the host would impress and win favour from their peers and this was evident at this particular festival on numerous occasions. While Bakhtin (1984) positioned the inversion of social hierarchy and the suspension of the ruling ideology centrally to carnivals, the seafood festivals that I was witness to utilised all the traditional associations of bodily excess and indulgence but in a way that reaffirms the ruling ideology and social hierarchy.

The owners of the hotel are given pride of place in the centre of the hall and can be seen to drift from table to table throughout the day, talking to the guests and furthering their standing as the providers of such an opulent event. The way that the tables are arranged in the marquee succeeds in reinforcing the social hierarchy by visibly distinguishing between different groups. The VIP guests are seated closer to the centre, with the remaining tables diminishing in importance as they radiate out from the centre, in a similar vein to the table arrangements at a wedding dinner. This concept of 'coded space' (Thebert 1987 cited in Graham 2005:50) is evident as far back as the 1st century BC and even in contemporary society, it remains a way of visually displaying and affirming the hierarchical importance of guests. Those closest to the centre of the room are served first, and have a group of waiting staff assigned specifically to them; their tables are adorned with a greater amount of food and drink and they have different glasses and plates to the rest of the diners. Their tables have taken longer to prepare and they receive more, in terms of both quality and quantity.

It is worth noting at this point that as with other aspects of consumption and consumerism, it would appear that individuals articulate and recognise their distinctiveness through the medium of food (Counihan 1999). However, these tastes are as much a reflection of our cultural and class identities as they are a means of self-presentation and self-expression. Images of class pervade almost every sphere of our lives and food consumption is no exception. We frequently make judgements regarding the social, economic and cultural identity of an individual based on their purchases. A shopping basket filled with matured fillet steak, smoked salmon, goose foie gras, Belgian chocolates, walnuts and a vintage bottle of Chateaux Batailley will immediately conjure up images far removed from a basket containing a couple of sausage rolls, a ready meal for two, a packet of Maltesers and a bottle of Lambrini. Evidently, food remains both essential and divisive, as the choices and judgements we make are based upon widely understood representations of class and identity (Ashley et al 2004). As Warde (1997:22) rightfully acknowledges, culinary practices are the 'ultimate metaphorical source of the concept of taste'.

Identity

With the advent of consumer capitalism and the dramatic shift in the economy from that of a production-orientated society to mainly a consumption-orientated one (Bauman 1992), class has become largely redundant as the organising principle of social life. It appears that, consequently, lifestyles have become increasingly elective in contemporary society as opposed to their previous more 'prescriptive' nature. Individuals are expected to select the lifestyle they wish to portray from the range made available to them, offered by the culture industries. This has, in part, led to a growing differentiation of distinctive lifestyles as individual choices become deployed in search of new identifications (Warde 1997). In the West, individualism is enthusiastically valued and cultural preferences have become increasingly dominant. The establishments we choose to dine in and the foods we choose to eat, or not eat, all constitute 'cultural preferences' and many of us choose to define ourselves by these preferences. We may choose to only drink red wine, rather than white; to eat organic locally-sourced produce; to be vegetarian; not to frequent fast food restaurants. We structure our individual selves from externals such as culture and commodities, and we make bold statements about ourselves through this practice.

It can therefore be suggested that the identity-value, which is conferred through commodities, has become the central mechanism and the driving force behind personal taste and aesthetic judgement. Self-development has moved to the forefront of society and is now a governing ideological concern. As the contemporary market is driven by the need to continually discover, purchase, consume and then discard, we are all consumers (Bauman 2004). This amounts to the seduction of the consumer. What Bauman (1992) suggests is that it is this willingness to be seduced and the faith that we put in consumer goods that is central to understanding the power of the culture industries. As Ritzer surmises, 'we do not consume objects for their intrinsic worth, but because these objects are socially meaningful' (2001:211). Consumption is considered central in the conscious creation of a personal identity and commodities are the principle conduit for communicating this self-identity. Individuals define themselves through the images they transmit to others via cultural practices and preferences. We manipulate and manage appearances through the goods we purchase and the practices we

display, thereby creating a self-identity (Warde 1997). Consumer goods and consumption decisions are directed by an ideological concern with symbolic meaning, deriving significance when they are compared to other commodities. Through consumption, a sense of self is maintained, as we endow ourselves with status-conferring commodities and identity-enhancing practices (ibid). We derive personal worth through consumer behaviour with a view to presenting that self-worth to others. The consumer ethic that is forced upon us has made it increasingly necessary to devise effective roles and continually maintain our social guises.

The Invitation to Consume

A key theoretical aspect here is that individuals are invited to enjoy and indulge themselves (Baudrillard 1998). Commodities are invested with values and the culture industries encourage the belief that intangible qualities such as happiness and excitement are available through the possession of desirable commodities (Finkelstein 1989). The culture industry is propelled by desire and the widespread belief in the power and irresistibility commodities, which maintain that perfection and satisfaction *can* be achieved. Pleasure and desire have thus become commodities pursued by consumers under the promise of free choice. Žižek (2006:12-13) proposes that:

‘Belonging to a society involves a paradoxical point at which each of us is ordered to embrace freely, as the result of our choice, what is anyway imposed on us... This paradox of willing (choosing freely) what is in any case compulsory, of pretending (maintaining the appearance) that there is a free choice although effectively there isn’t one, it is strictly co-dependent with the notion of an empty symbolic gesture’.

Žižek, however, suggests that the notion of free choice that pervades contemporary consumer society is a myth. We are told to choose freely so long as we choose correctly from a selection that is predetermined for us (Žižek 1989). True consumer freedom is impossible, as beneath the appearance of free choice lays an oppressive demand to consume (Žižek 2006). However, this ‘taunting world of capitalist consumer culture’ (Harvey 2005:171) is not available to everyone. Žižek’s (2006:98) perception of the ‘injunction to enjoy’ is most alluring. He

suggests that we are unendingly ordered to act in accord with our desires. Desire is the force that compels us to go further and continually repeat the act of consumption; however, as we are faced with an abundance of choices, 'desire is always a desire of a desire' (Žižek 1989:174). We dutifully comply with the prevailing order and desire things which we do not *really* desire; 'happiness is thus inherently hypocritical, it is the happiness of dreaming about things we do not really want' (Žižek 2002:60). This was also echoed by Bauman, who suggests that;

'Consumerism is not about collecting and accumulating *possessions*. It is, in essence, about gathering *sensations* (not necessarily *pleasurable* sensations, or at least not necessarily pleasurable *in their own* right; it is the *having* of sensations, and even more the hoping for new sensations, that tends to be experienced as pleasure)' (Bauman 2002:154 original emphasis).

The consequence of this is that the enjoyment and happiness we seek to achieve is perpetually beyond our grasp. Commenting on Žižek's proposition, Myers (2003:53) surmises that 'desire in this sense can only be terminated; it can never be satisfied'. We are compelled to enjoy and seek out desire, but when we do so, enjoyment becomes compulsory and is therefore no longer fun. At the heart of consumer culture lies the belief that exposure to new products, new experiences and new pleasures will bring a sense of contentment and satisfaction. However;

'One of the strongest proofs that the principle and finality of consumption is not enjoyment or pleasure is that that is now something which is forced upon us, something institutionalised, not as a right or a pleasure, but as the *duty* of the citizen' (Baudrillard 1998:80).

Consumption can therefore be viewed as a process of unrelenting pursuit that is summarised effectively by Žižek. He develops this notion of 'duty' and states that 'to enjoy is not a matter of following one's spontaneous tendencies; it is rather something we do as a kind of weird and twisted official duty' (2006:79). We constantly seek out items that are made available to us and our decisions to consume are based on information gathered from a wide range of conduits that *appear* to offer guidance. In contemporary Western society, the options available to us through consumption are enormous and they continue to expand at an exponential rate. This problem of selection is magnified further as significant capitalist

companies deliver more and more differentiated goods and services and we encounter higher levels of disposable income coupled with an ever-increasing knowledge base through the global mass media. This spirit of relentlessness and the cultivation of novelty marketed by the economy saturate Western societies at every level. The constant development of new and innovative products coupled with the endless desire to consume them is an essential mechanism for the reproduction of modern capitalism and consumer culture. Increased variation is almost entirely a function of contemporary capitalist enterprises (Warde 1997). Contemporary culture is fanatical regarding the concept of variety and choice, which is nurtured and legitimised by the dominant ideology of consumer capitalism.

Status

With this in mind, it is suggested that individuals present particular patterns of food consumption as being symbolic of their self-identity. As previously highlighted, the issue of consumption has often been propelled to the forefront of many contemporary debates. 'Lifestyle' has replaced more traditional foundations for the construction and maintenance of social and self-identity. The importance of industrial labour and production as the basis for constructing identity has been replaced by the more fragmented rhetoric of consumption and individualisation. Those who dine at expensive restaurants and have knowledge of associated culinary practices are seen to have superior tastes, power and wealth (Warde 1997). *Where you eat* conveys just as much importance as *what* you eat (Burnett 2004), as the status and fashionability of many commodities and consumption practices has already been established. We are familiar with the idea that certain foods are representative of social status and the same can easily be said of where you consume these foods (Finkelstein 1989). As Warde and Martens highlight, the 'ability to display knowledge, experience and judgement about cuisine as a cultural and aesthetic matter is potentially a key marker of social discriminations' (2000:75).

Bourdieu (1984), in particular maintains that consumption is an expression of class and features heavily in both class formation and reproduction. He suggests that consumption is typically a means of displaying cultural capital and social distinction. Practices are generated

through a learned set of dispositions underpinning judgements and tastes that are deeply socially embedded in class structures. From the outset of my study I was immediately orientated towards Bourdieu's analysis of distinction, which proposes that tastes and choices have their basis in wider class cultures and lifestyles. Food consumption, along with all other forms of consumption, produces and reproduces the class identities and cultures that structure broader relations of power. In particular, he explores how some classes use this power to legitimise their own tastes and belittle the tastes of other classes.

'Taste is the practical operator of the transmutation of things into distinct and distinctive signs ... it raises the differences inscribed in the physical order of bodies to the symbolic order of significant distinctions. It transforms objectively classified practices, in which a class condition signifies itself (through taste), into classifying practices, that is, into a symbolic expression of class position, by perceiving them in their mutual relations and in terms of social classificatory schemes. Taste is thus the source of the systematic expression of a particular class of conditions of existence. (Bourdieu 1984:174-5).

Bourdieu examines how taste is formed in respect of a variety of different cultural forms, including art, music and food. Maintaining that taste is socially shaped, he argues that concepts such as 'good' and 'bad' taste are largely determined by those high up the social hierarchy. Those who are believed to possess 'cultural capital' employ their views as *the* dominant expression of taste.

Therefore dining out has emerged as an evident means of competitive social display as a new preoccupation with style has emerged over the last several decades. Bourdieu (1984) recognises the symbolic significance of class practices and relates the cultural and symbolic aspects of taste to the mechanisms of class reproduction. He maintains that food consumption and dining out are more about social meanings and a way of expressing 'distinction', than it is a biological drive to satisfy hunger. The impression of social and cultural superiority can be achieved through the purchase and overt display of specific goods, particularly those conveying messages and connotations of value and expense (Veblen 1994). High cuisine is a particular vehicle for exhibiting status in this way, its consumption being principally played

out amongst an audience of one's peers where the consequent consumption of opulence is clearly understood and given meaning.

Backstage

As the festivals drew nearer, the kitchen workers and chefs treated their imminent arrival with both excitement and trepidation. The kitchen staff welcomed the break from the norm that the festival allowed them, and they looked forward to seeing the marquee in all its splendour once the food had been successfully delivered to the guests. On several occasions, both the permanent staff and the agency workers took photographs of the festival and the preparation that went into it, recording what was for many of them, an event that they had never witnessed before. Even those who worked the event from one festival to the next frequently commented on the sheer scale of what they witnessed. As one agency chef commented, when compared to his normal assignments, the festival certainly stands out as a momentous occasion:

'It's crazy, we never get anything like it. It's mostly just standard jobs, helping out at big functions and that or covering for chefs when they're on holiday. You're in and you're out and you never really get to see what's happening. But here, we can. Obviously the prep's not the best part of it, that gets a bit tedious sometimes and the days are long, but where do you get the chance to see something like this? I'm sure the other lads would say the same. It's great! We get to see the comedian and everyone's having a good time. It's great later on too, when everyone's had a skinful, the women and that. Just great. We get a good view from back here'.

As the chef noted above, while the comedian is on, the management maintain that the kitchen remains in total silence. During this period, the chefs and kitchen workers are permitted to stand and watch the act, providing that they do not intrude too much. They have to remain as best they can beside the curtains. This offers them a good vantage point for observing the festival without intruding on the event itself. As he also highlighted, the festival brings with it unrelenting days of hard, monotonous labour. Grazian (2008) comments that settings such as the seafood festival are elaborate stages that successfully hide the time-consuming and tedious nature of the work that is performed behind the scenes. He notes that 'as a rule,

restaurants try to keep the messy work of food preparation out of their patron's line of sight' (ibid:37). This is certainly true of the seafood festival. The festival has two kitchens that service the marquee; these are purposefully integrated into the site and situated out of sight, hidden behind the synthetic silk curtains that make up the interior walls.

The hotel employs a number of chefs and kitchen workers, and during events such as this one extra workers are brought in to help in the preparation for the event and on the day itself. Chefs are sourced from other hotels in the company, from agencies and from the chef's own circle of professional friends. The agency workers are paid through the agency, while other workers are paid cash-in-hand, usually from the money obtained at the cash-only bar on the day. The festival takes place on the Friday; preparation for it starts on the Tuesday beforehand and continues unabated until the morning of the festival itself. Preparation also has to be accommodated not only alongside the hotel's normal level of business, but also with the fact that the hotel houses a large prestigious wedding fair two days after the seafood festival. During this time, chefs and workers compete for space as the stock and workspace needed for preparation overwhelms the actual space they have. As the festival caters for 1400 diners, everything revolves around this number. On the Tuesday, just over 1400 live lobsters are delivered to the kitchen and the workers start what is the gruelling and monotonous task of cooking, cooling, and preparing them for consumption. A conveyor belt style method of preparation is set up as the chefs and kitchen workers are divided into teams and get to work.

After the delivery of lobsters is checked and signed for, along with the delivery of the other types of seafood needed to feed the diners, the workers start on their preparation. The lobsters arrive live, a state that often causes amazement, fascination and revulsion amongst members of staff who have not worked during previous festivals. They are taken from their polystyrene cases, put on metal trays and then into the large ovens. Around fifty lobsters can be cooked at a time. Although their claws are bound with thick rubber bands they are extremely lively, and getting them to stay on the trays is no easy task. There is the handling to overcome: each of them measures a minimum of 12 inches long, and picking one up can be quite traumatic for first-timers, myself included. For the most part, they are not docile creatures and even appear to the untrained eye to be knowledgeable about their upcoming fate. They buck when they are

picked up, wave their bound claws in protest and move quite rapidly when placed on a level surface.

After they have been placed in the oven, the large transparent doors ensure that all witness their imminent demise, made all the worse by the fact that many strike at the oven door with their claws, not purposefully of course, but it is quite a disturbing scene to observe and many members of staff simply stand and stare. After this, the lobsters need to be cooled in cold water and prepped. This involves the cracking of the body and the removal of the shell and claws to get at the meat inside and de-veining (removing their intestines). This is an unsightly and messy event to witness. The chefs insert their knives through the top of the backs of the lobsters and hammer them down to successfully cut the lobsters in half, all the way down to the tail. The shells and the ligaments crunch under the strain of the chefs' knives, and when done en masse for the most part of the day this can make for a rather harrowing din. The lobsters fall in half, their innards there for all to see; their juices spray over the prep table and the other chefs as knives are slammed into the shells repeatedly. 1400 lobsters later, and the kitchen looks and smells like a seafood slaughterhouse.

Bad Behaviour

In contemporary society, we often find that social relations are characterised by suspicion and potential threat, as the feelings of danger that accompany our proximity with the 'other' compete against our innate curiosity in our fellows. This can be viewed in a similar vein to Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic, in that we achieve self-consciousness only if we are in proximity with the 'other'. It is the recognition of the other and their recognition of us that transforms us into a subject. One of the perceived attractions of dining out is that it provides a context where observations of the 'other' can be accomplished in a safe and controlled manner: 'the restaurant is a window through which a prolonged gaze can be enjoyed' (Finkelstein 1989:17). Finkelstein also suggests that consumers become an 'unresponsive audience to others' (1998:306) and this is echoed in Warde and Martens' study, who propose that diners are discretely manipulated and controlled into compliance as the wider

environment of the restaurant stipulates the diners' character and comportment (Warde and Martens 2000).

However, this is lost within the setting of the seafood festival, as in this specific context the surveillance of the other diners is not as risk free as has been suggested. What Finkelstein is referring to is the more commonplace notion of dining out, such as restaurant dining, where the diner's behaviour is restrained and civilised. We are socially and culturally constrained within most fine dining restaurants by table manners and the need to control our natural but grotesque bodily functions (Bakhtin 1984). However, during the seafood festivals the diner's comportment differs dramatically. It is a celebration; a festival; it carnivalesque in nature, with the *perceived* potential for transgression. It takes place amongst the most fanciful of imagery: diners are surrounded by copious amounts of food and, most importantly, they have consumed a great deal of alcohol. In this sense, the festival can be viewed along similar lines to any other establishment that houses a large amount of consumers under the influence of alcohol. The diners spend the best part of eight hours atavistically gorging on food and alcohol in a setting that is far removed from their everyday mundane experiences. They have competed with each other as to who has the flashiest car, or the most noticeable dress; who can swallow the most oysters; who can drink the most Champagne; who has the largest wallet. They have spent the day fuelling their bodies with copious amounts of food and drink and simultaneously fuelling their egos with displays of wealth and superiority. This inevitably leads to incidents of aggressive and sometimes violent behaviour, sexual liaisons and other episodes of disorderly behaviour. Although the connections between opulence and decadence have long been acknowledged, (see Bakhtin 1984) they offer an interesting contrast within this setting.

During the seafood festival, the diners are prohibited from entering the hotel, with the exception of a select few; usually close friends of the owners and those who have accommodation booked at the hotel. To enforce this restriction, the hotel employs a number of security personnel, but the restrictions placed on the diners provides as much anguish for the staff concerned as it does amusement. After what can be described as a Bacchanal celebration, scores of drunken revellers can be found at various points around the hotel and

the grounds. Whilst many of them are content to be bundled into their awaiting taxis or happily take the risk of driving home, there are always a select few determined to gain access to the hotel's bar and continue their partying. The chefs and kitchen workers who stay back to ensure that all of the metalware and crockery is cleaned and put away are often asked to leave their posts and stand guard at the doors to the kitchens. This prevents the diners who have managed to gain access at the rear of the hotel from sneaking through the kitchens to gain admittance to the bar, and often results in a showdown between the chefs and the diners. Those who do manage to secure one of the sought-after invitations to stay behind, or those that have accommodation booked, continue their festivities into the early hours of the following morning, but this does not necessarily guarantee a trouble free evening. The day after one particular seafood festival, I arrived into work at around 8 a.m. to the news that one intoxicated individual, who had a £175.00 room booked at the hotel, had defecated on the main staircase that leads to the upper floor.

The Importance of Indulgence

All there is to see in contemporary society is commodities. We inhabit a world that is full of them, where they and the spectacular life that they are believed to represent dominate us all. However, what they actually represent is merely a weak version of reality and the omnipresent needs of current economic growth. Our boundless desire to take part in an unending pursuit of gratification through consumption compels us to purchase and replace products and services, as their fleeting notions of prestige evaporate as soon as they are consumed (Debord 1994). Food trends have helped create a fetishist desire in consumers, and simulations that have no real firm foundation now dominate contemporary society. This 'hallucination of reality' (Baudrillard 2001:149) is essentially fictional, as it emphasises the meaninglessness of culture and the objects found within. This has resulted in a desire for the *real thing* (Eco 1986), and the consequent obsession with realism has spurred our need to know where our foods originated and where they have travelled in their short lifespan.

This results in the manipulation of consumers, who then consume more and more fetishised objects which they believe will help them realise the desired image. In their constant search

for the 'Real', they are confronted with an ever-increasing amount of artificial and simulated goods. In a similar vein, there has been an increase in the demand for foods fashioned by 'real' chefs; however, this insistence for the 'real' helps to generate an atmosphere that is in itself artificial. This corresponds with Badiou's 'return to the Real', in that desire persists and relentlessly demands that we burst through the bubble of artificiality and return to the oppressive authenticity of the Real. Referring to Badiou's ideology surrounding the 'Real', Hallward (2003:13) notes that, 'the real is never real in itself. An element is always real *for* a situation; it is that which the situation's normal supervision of possibilities is precisely designed to obscure or foreclose'. As mentioned, the increased demand for foods created by 'real' chefs and professionals is a prominent theme and one that can easily be tied to the generation of an artificial atmosphere. Midway through the festival, the Head Chef is required to network amongst the diners, a task that he passionately hates. The festival also offers an oyster bar, for those wishing to purchase and consume these irregular shaped aphrodisiacs, and a sushi bar. The owner of the hotel, wanting to make the experience as 'authentic' as possible for the diners, asked the Head Chef if the Sous Chef and the Chef-De-Partie would be able to operate the combined bar, stating that 'Japanese chefs would add a touch of class to the bar'. When reminded that the chefs he was referring to were actually Filipino and not Japanese, he offered the following response, 'That's close enough, no one will know'.

We have become obsessed with what we believe to be inspiring foods. We are no longer content with food that merely satisfies our gustatory needs; food and its consumption must now somehow transcend this banal and outdated limitation and take the diner somewhere new and exciting. As the event progresses throughout the day, the diners are presented with more and more fanciful images, as astonishing displays of food are served alongside carnivalesque imagery that has been carefully commodified by the management. It could even be said that these images surpass those of the food, that no one will ever remember the way that the food tasted when each of the diners' senses are bombarded with fantastical imagery that is at the same time beautiful and grotesque (see Bakhtin 1984), as each image competes to stir their senses to maximum capacity. During this time, ideology is not dispensed with and hierarchy is not suspended. If anything, is it solidified and exacerbated. The festival merges the diners' desires with promises of satisfaction, providing an illuminating context when

viewed from this distinct perspective. Pleasures and assurances of satisfaction are purchased along with the ticket, and the diners hope that they will linger well beyond it. It promotes images associated with desire, success and importance, and emphasises what is fashionable. Event dining in an environment such as this is expected to be an experience, and the day certainly does not disappoint. The festival's diners are openly invited to remove themselves from the banality of their everyday existence, not least in the fact that the event is held on a Friday, a working day that can be discarded for something evidently more fanciful and extraordinary than what they would normally be doing. It is the tedious nature of our everyday existence that we hope to escape from, and the seafood festival succeeds in this accomplishment.

A corporate diner won the auction for a Balthazar from the champagne bar with a bid of over £800. The bar has various numbers of Magnums and Jeroboams, but only stock one of each of the largest bottles, which it auctions off to the highest bidder. Upon winning the bottle, the diner was advised that the manager would uncork it for him and take it to his table, as it needed to be done professionally. The diner declined. Reluctantly the management allowed the diner to take the 12-litre bottle to his table, where he was met with an enormous cheer from his associates. He had caught his game. He shook the bottle slightly and then unsuccessfully attempted to uncork it, splitting the cork in half. Disappointed, he returned to the bar and demanded that they provide another bottle so that he could finish the display he had started. Explaining that they only had the one bottle, and reminding him that he had spurned their offer to uncork it for him, the staff declined his request. After they had opened the bottle successfully, the diner reluctantly returned to his table to share the champagne with his guests. What the diner was anticipating was the spine-tingling moment, the realisation that he had accomplished that which he believed he wanted. The rush of extravagance and elation that accompanies the uncorking of the champagne was denied to the diner in the most public of ways. The 'pop' of the cork, the hurry of bubbles and the envy and admiration of his associates was never realised.

Society now gives rising importance to narcissistic traits like the one shown above, making them one of the central themes in modern life (Lasch 1979). Accelerated by the mass media,

we struggle to fulfil our narcissistic dreams of glory and fame, to transcend the banality of our everyday lives. Although many of us will never achieve this, our endeavours to succeed in this futile venture only succeed in draining life of anything meaningful other than the recognition of the objects surrounding us. Our place in the hierarchical relationships that pervade society is expressed through symbolic material wealth, and success needs to be publically endorsed in order for us to feel that we have accomplished something (ibid). As the above extract of ethnography highlights. We have become enthralled with how others see us. We advertise ourselves in a similar vein to the way the media advertises products. We project an image that we wish to live up to and as in the case of the diner above, we are disappointed when we do not quite make the mark. This shows the repressive nature of the culture industry and the media. The industry produces needs and desires, but ultimately controls and disciplines them by forcing us to identify with what is offered to us. The concept of pseudo-individuality can be applied here. We are explicitly encouraged to achieve and maintain a certain level of hyper-indulgence and display, repeatedly, which does nothing but highlight the fact that the culture industry is very proficient at selling commodities founded upon this inherent manipulation. As Lasch continues to argue,

‘Overexposure to manufactured illusions soon destroys their representational power. The illusion of reality, dissolves, not in a heightened sense of reality as we might expect, but in a remarkable indifference to reality. Our sense of reality appears to rest, curiously enough, on our willingness to be taken in by the staged illusion of reality’ (1979:87).

The supposed pleasures that are associated with event dining in this environment and the opportunities it gives us to act out our desired postures and guises is most alluring. The diner’s delights in the festival’s ambience, décor and food are strongly bound up with expressions of personal and social worth. One such comedian took great pleasure in unmasking the ‘deceptive trickery’ used by the event to conceal the true nature of the setting. The comedian, like all of the acts booked for the day, had to use the clean-up kitchen as his entrance to the makeshift stage in the venue. This was used earlier in the day for the preparation and storage of food and later in the day for the clearing of cutlery and crockery. The comedian and his two helpers/security came through the kitchen with their bag of props,

one of the helpers carrying a blow-up doll. He exchanged jokes with the chefs backstage as he was announced to the diners. He entered the marquee to the cheers of the crowd and started his act. The chefs and kitchen watched from their vantage point. His obscene rapport went down very well with the diners and the workers, the latter struggling to keep their laughter to a minimum. At the end of his act, he exaggeratingly thanked the organisers for booking him and begins to mention all of the prestigious venues that he had performed in. He turned his attention to the current setting and painstakingly pointed out all of the tiny details he could, from the fabric that covers the interior, to the chandeliers and the food. He tells the diners that he hopes that they enjoyed their 'fucking lush grub' and sarcastically thanks the organisers for the sandwich that he was given. He takes an exaggerated bow in the direction of the owners' table before turning back to the diners and concluding his act with the words 'it's just a fuckin' tent'.

Conclusions

Recently, we have witnessed a mammoth investment in the food business, which has propelled the industrialisation of food production to new heights. The distinguished rise of the restaurant industry during the 1980's (Bull and Church 1993) not only reflected the expansion of mass-marketed standardised foods, but also more importantly, was indicative of a highly focused, individualised experience of dining. Consumers became ever more drawn to restaurants and dining establishments because of the sense of theatricality and the promise of 'objects of desire' (Ferguson and Zukin 1998:93) that can be found within. In western society's rapidly growing hyper-consumerised culture, dining out has taken on new heights, becoming more endowed than ever with overtones of prestige, fascination, manipulation and compulsion. Diners flock en masse to perceived high-end establishments and events such as the seafood festival; as with so many other aspects of contemporary society, the goods that they offer are evermore fetishised. However, as has been shown in this chapter, 'the meal' and the event that surrounds it is a highly commercialised and artificially constructed performance. Its value to the diners is clearly created by the market (Adorno 1991, Adorno and Horkheimer 1972) and is played out further by an array of associated meanings and symbols. This ensures that 'the meal' has been transformed into a spectacle in the Debordian

sense, and one that is plagued with connotations of distinction (Bourdieu 1984). Clearly, 'market society seems to offer us an infinite universe of commodities and commodified experience' (Rojek 1995) and these commodified experiences include dining out. Leisure, however, is oppressive. Rojek questions the notion that western culture presents leisure as a realisable utopia, highlighting that:

'In struggling to achieve that longed-for state of freedom, choice and life-satisfaction, we find ourselves trapped in new, unanticipated obligations and chains. We discover that our images of freedom, choice and life-satisfaction are barred by undreamt-of contingencies and hazards. Leisure becomes one more problem in an existence already surrounded by problems' (1995:192).

Ultimately, we are deceived, but as with dining out, we are propelled to consume continuously to feel any notion of cultural relevance.

Chapter Five

The Culinary Dream

Introduction

This chapter focuses exclusively upon the kitchen and its often harsh nature. A quick perusal of the literature indicates that the oppressiveness of kitchen work has a long established history. During the Victorian era, the hotel and catering industry was considered in some ways far better than other industries that had managed to ascertain better rates of pay for shorter hours. Although, physically, kitchen life was stifling, there were no industrial diseases comparable to those that afflicted other areas of industry. This coupled with the high levels of institutionalisation that was felt by workers who accepted living accommodation as part of their wages, ensured a reasonably docile workforce who could not contemplate life outside of their 'hotel womb' (Taylor 1977:41) or who could not stomach alternative employment in harsher industries. This chapter therefore delves into the realities of working in a kitchen in the 'neo-capitalist' economy (Hall and Winlow, 2005; Winlow and Hall, 2006). It explores the reality of being a chef and a kitchen worker, by investigating the drudgeries of kitchen life and what it means to work in such an environment.

The Kitchen

Walking into the kitchen, it is hard to believe that the last shift ended just 7 hours ago. All evidence of the Saturday night has been eradicated apart from the odd piece of metal ware that had been left on the cleaning rack. If not for the clock on the far wall, it would be hard to ascertain what time of the day it is. There are no windows and no doors leading to the outside. There is no natural light but the kitchen is bright under the unrelenting glare of the fluorescent strip lights that hang overhead. Every surface is either white plastic or stainless steel. The kitchen is uncharacteristically devoid of any distinguishable odour, apart from the faint smell of cleaning products and coffee. It is 6.45 a.m. and I'm not the first member of staff to arrive. The Head Chef is already here and there are various members of waiting staff

standing around, chatting, trying to distract themselves from the inevitability of the working day, which is soon to begin in earnest. I grab myself a coffee and as the next fifteen minutes pass, various other members of the kitchen brigade begin to arrive. Everyone seems in good cheer despite the early start. One by one the kitchen team greets the Head Chef (as a simple courtesy and to let him know that they are present) as they make their way to the corner of the kitchen where the tea and coffee are kept. This area of the kitchen houses a large 3ft high hot water urn surrounded by large industrial-sized boxes of coffee. Mugs are somewhat of a rarity in the kitchen, and many of the workers substitute soup bowls for cups. Despite all the pretensions of the front stage, these are practical men working in a strange semi-industrial setting, free from the shallow symbolism that permeates the front stage.

The chefs are in various states of undress as they enter the kitchen as if they could not wait to leave the changing rooms; most are unshaven and looking slightly dishevelled. Ryan, the Commis Chef, and Lewis, the trainee, take a spot leaning on the main prep bench in the centre of the room whilst Frank, one of the kitchen porters, heads straight to the pot wash and begins washing the metal left from the night before. It has just turned 7 a.m. and all of the workers who should be present are here. Breakfast prep begins with no formal announcement, almost like a domino effect starting with whoever is first to light the stoves, which today is Ryan. Gradually the rest of the team get moving, and the working day begins. Pans and flats are moved from the racks to the prep bench, and the grills, ovens and radio are switched on. Various foods are brought out from the fridge and placed in flats before being put in the oven and under the grill. When they are ready, they are moved to the hot plate and covered with cling film, which rapidly expands with the heat. More food is put in the ovens, and pans are placed on the lit stoves in preparation for the day. The kitchen warms up quickly and the smell of bacon, sausages and freshly baked croissants is soon overpowering. Ryan and Lewis move quickly around the kitchen, preparing more food to be cooked and occasionally checking on the stoves, chatting amongst themselves as they work. As more food is brought out to be prepared, Ryan takes several raw sausages between his fingers and makes a fist. He walks over to the Head Chef's desk and repeatedly slams them against the wall, shouting, 'I'm not happy with this fuckin' rota'. The kitchen team quickly bursts into laughter at this obvious joke at the expense of one of the less favoured kitchen porters, a colleague well known for

complaining in this manner. Upon hearing the laughter, Frank promptly leaves his post at the pot wash in order to see what is so funny, quickly joining in with the frivolity. After several minutes, the sausages are returned to their tray and join the others in the oven. Pans are quickly checked and everyone gets back to work. As breakfast continues, Lewis brings out the meats for Sunday lunch and starts covering them with olive oil. These are left on the prep bench as more food is segmented into various vessels and placed on the hot plate. Water is boiling for the poached eggs, hissing and spitting as it splashes on the stove.

At 8.00 a.m. Ryan starts chopping the onions needed for the day, glancing occasionally to check the stoves as he does so, which now have five pans on them. The Head Chef then places the various meats into the ovens and empties several bags of pre-prepared parsnips into trays. He quickly checks the scrambled eggs on the stove, picks out several large pieces of broken egg shell with a ladle and discards them on the floor. Lewis adds another pan to the already overcrowded stove and the Duty Manager quickly walks through, asking if everything is going well. His question goes unanswered. It is now 9.00 a.m. and Alex, another kitchen porter, arrives, quickly saying hello and taking up a position next to Frank at the pot wash. The Head Chef does another quick check of the stoves and hands a copy of the Sunday lunch menu to Ryan and Lewis and tells them what is needed, switching on the hot plate before taking the used metal flats over to the post wash. Frank takes this opportunity to ask him if it is all right if he goes for a quick cigarette break, now that Alex has arrived. His request is denied, much to Alex's amusement.

Breakfast quickly gets underway and Lewis wheels in a pan of soup left over from the previous night. The Head Chef smells it and says it will do. Lewis starts to bring out pre-prepared potatoes and leaves them on the bench as more orders for eggs arrive. Sue, a veteran waitress, asks if they are able to put more bacon on as it has run out, but before she has a chance to finish the sentence, Ryan opens the oven to reveal a freshly cooked batch. Potatoes for lunch are blanched, soup is stirred and more eggs are made to order. Oven doors are being opened and closed and pans are being moved to accommodate the new additions. The kitchen quickly fills with steam, which slowly disperses through the extraction system. Water is spilled on the floor, but is quickly cleaned up by Frank. Food is taken out of ovens and more is put in to fill

the gap. There has been little respite so far, but everyone seems to be in good humour, heads nodding to the rock music on the radio, the chefs continue with their tasks. Fryers and pans are checked, breakfast service continues.

The phone rings and Alex quickly leaves his post at the pot wash to answer it, despite being the member of staff furthest away from it. It is one of the receptionists requiring clarification of the restaurant menu, so the Head Chef takes over the call. In his absence, Ryan takes over chopping the vegetables; and Lewis sets up a prep station at the far end of the kitchen and starts prepping more potatoes. Further requests for eggs come in and Ryan deals with them until the Head Chef is finished on the phone. He selects a knife from his kit and asks Lewis if he requires any help. Lewis denies assistance but Ryan proceeds to help him anyway. Lewis does not offer any resistance, but instead changes his chopping technique to match that of Ryan's (this strange symmetry of the workers is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight). As breakfast service begins to end, plates, cutlery and metalware are swiftly brought back into the kitchen, much to the disappointment of Frank and Alex. Although this happens every day, the kitchen porters appear to enjoy voicing their dismay. The waiting staff start to gather on the opposite side of the hot plate and quickly start helping themselves to the food that is left, once the Head Chef has given them permission. The end of breakfast signals a quick break for the chefs and kitchen porters, the radio is turned up and everyone enjoys a couple of minutes of light-heartedness before getting back to preparing for lunch.

10.a.m. passes and breakfast service is well behind them. Lewis makes himself and the other chefs a sausage sandwich and a coffee, which they consume whilst continuing their tasks. The kitchen is noisy once again as the last of the breakfast service is cleared and more plates and cutlery are brought back to the kitchen to be cleaned and put away ready for lunch service. Lewis continues to put potatoes in the fryer and the Head Chef checks the temperature of the meats in the oven. The salmon is trimmed and cut into steaks, covered with ice and left on the bench, which is already overcrowded with prepped flats of vegetables. Everyone seems to be on top of their tasks, despite the chaotic appearance of the kitchen. Raw food is stacked on metal flats on the main prep bench, potatoes are frying away and the stoves are crammed full of boiling pans. According to the Head Chef, they are ready for anything the next service

might throw at them. Ryan brings out a tray of massive precooked Yorkshire puddings and then wheels in the Jack Stacks of pre-plated starters and desserts.

The kitchen is much quieter now and the chefs make sure that they are still on track for service. The temperature of the meats is checked once more and the potatoes go in the oven to be roasted. Soup is stirred and cheese is brought out from the fridge. The chefs agree that it looks a little old, so it is quickly trimmed to give it a fresher appearance. Ryan and the Head Chef discuss how many there are in for lunch and concur that they have enough vegetables to cover it; nonetheless, they decide to put more parsnips in just in case. At 11.00 a.m. the Salmon is still on the prep bench and the chefs do a quick sweep of the pans, fryers and ovens. The Head Chef instructs Ryan to get the chicken breasts ready, which he does. Meat temperatures are checked again and the kitchen feels hot. Bread trays are lined with foil and bread buns are brought in. The roast potatoes are taken out of the oven, put in the bread trays and placed in the holding oven to keep their temperature. Bread buns are counted and recounted, and side bowls are brought out for the vegetables. Parsnips are taken out of the oven and the waiting staff take the butter and bread buns, ready to serve. Again, the Duty Manager passes through to check that everything is satisfactory and yet again, his question goes unanswered. However, when he announces bookings have increased from 80 to 110, the kitchen responds with a unanimous moan. More food is brought out and the first order is brought through. Pre-prepared cold starters are handed to the waiting staff as needed and the orders are kept to hand so that the chefs are aware of which table has been served. Sprouts are added to one of the pans of boiling water and the soup is kept on the boil. The meats are finally brought out of the ovens and placed under the hot plate ready, but not before the Head Chef burns himself on the metal tray that houses the meats. He quickly runs the one-inch long burn under cold water before putting on some gloves and returning to work.

Knives are sharpened and the chefs quickly spread out to their designated sections behind the hot plate in an assembly line format, with the meats and some vegetables in front of them. Everything else is still in the holding oven, apart from the salmon, which is still on the prep bench, now swimming in water rather than ice. The first diners are served without any major problems and Ryan is quick to announce, '8 down and 102 to go'. The Head Chef carves the

meat and Ryan plates it up as Lewis concentrates on checking the holding ovens and dishing out the cold starters as needed. They will serve around 100 people in the course of just over an hour. A few more orders slowly come in, and communication problems arise when one waitress asks for the vegetables for table 14. An argument quickly erupts when the Head Chef informs her that they have not received an order for that table. She finally finds the order and hands it to the chefs. The kitchen feels even hotter now and all of the chefs stood next to the hot plate are sweating. In a brief quiet period, the chefs discuss what is needed for lunch service tomorrow and one of the waiters is told to get a jug of iced water from the bar. He gets it without question. As the bulk of the diners are being seated, Ryan comments that this is the 'calm before the storm'. Everyone agrees and notes that the longer they have to wait now, the more chaotic it will be later.

The pace changes almost without warning. The soup and gravy are stirred again ready for service and more plates are brought out. Another order comes through and there are more communication breakdowns between the waiting staff and the kitchen. The orders begin to come in much more rapidly, and this clearly signifies the start of the busy period. Vegetables and roast potatoes are taken out of the holding oven when needed, and the chefs scramble to get around each other at the hot plate, in roughly a 4ft by 4ft space. The Head Chef carves frantically as the orders keep coming in, and the noise from the pot wash and extraction fans drown out most of the noise made by the various bodies requesting vegetables and gravy. Everyone starts shouting their orders to each other in a bid to be heard. Table orders are coming in fast, and the kitchen is permanently filled with steam from the ovens being continuously opened and closed. More sprouts are put on to boil. Plates are being put away, and occasionally smashed by the kitchen porters as they struggle to keep up, washing and replenishing the pile needed for service. More orders come in and food spillages occur on a regular basis. Alex is told to leave the pot wash and start mopping the floor, which he does despite Frank's protests that he cannot manage without him. More bodies fill the kitchen and more orders come in. At its peak, the heat in the kitchen is almost unbearable. At the hot plate the chefs are becoming increasingly annoyed with the waiting staff as they refuse to stand too close to the hot plate and the chefs are having to reach too far to pass them the plates. Food is

brought back, deemed unsatisfactory and is swiftly replaced without question. There is no time to argue.

Even when the final tables are served, the chefs still cannot slow their pace. They need to serve the remaining diners just as quickly as all the others, despite how short-tempered they feel. The waiting staff are now unwilling to stand around in the kitchen for fear of being abused by the chefs. Even their slightest request is met with sarcasm. As the mains' service ends, Lewis moves position to organise the cold desserts. He is able to do this unaided. There are only around 20 more diners left to go, and everyone is tired. More mains plates are brought back, and the clatter of the pot wash easily begins to drown out that of the extraction fans. Eventually all noises within the kitchen becomes indistinguishable.

More plates are brought back to the kitchen to be cleared, and the kitchen porters express their annoyance by making as much noise as possible, much to the chefs' amusement. Unused food is placed under the hot plate for the waiting staff to finish off, but there is not much left. The salmon that was unused for lunch is finally packed away for tomorrow, and the chefs take it in turns to bend their backs and stretch their necks to relieve the aches of the day so far. Sunday lunch service is finally over for them, but they discover a final burst of energy to clear up and pack away any leftover foods before the next shift starts. Harry, the Sous Chef, Max, the Chef-de-Partie and Sophia, another kitchen porter, arrive for the late shift and the kitchen looks spotless once more. All evidence of Sunday lunch has disappeared. The Head Chef gives instructions to Harry who in turn relays them to Max. The kitchen is much more relaxed now and various bodies congregate around the communal areas as everyone winds down. The Head Chef does one final check of what needs ordering and heads off to get changed. Lewis stays to help Harry out for a little while longer, while Ryan eagerly leaves with one of the waitresses. The shift is over.

The Work

As the above extract of ethnographic data highlights, backstage kitchen life is very different from the artificial, consumerised front stage environment described in the previous chapter

(see also Grazian 2008). The chefs would frequently draw comparisons between the backstage arena where they worked and the front stage, where the food is served, considering that their workspace was 'real' in comparison to the 'false' nature of the hotel's restaurant or function event. This was confirmed somewhat by the change in comportment regarding when workers were front stage or backstage. Professional cooking is a backstage occupation, well hidden from the various front stage areas of the hotel. Due to the hidden nature of the kitchen, it is utilised as an area to vent frustration and emotion that would be unacceptable in the front stage areas (see Hochschild 2003 on the expectation of employees to display a certain degree of job-specific emotions, see also Bolton and Boyd 2003). This was witnessed on many occasions and was not restricted to the kitchen workers alone. Front-of-house staff would invariably 'let off steam' within the kitchen, as did waiting staff who were having difficulties with customers. This seemed a highly usual aspect of kitchen life and the staff exhibited a general attitude of 'anything goes', in reference to comportment within the kitchen. Bouts of laughter, screams, howls, anger, frustration, tears and tantrums were witnessed on numerous occasions. This gave rise to the kitchen becoming not only a place of work, but also an expressive emotional arena, hidden behind the placid and stoic nature of the front stage areas. This was also acknowledged by Elinav and Clarke (2007:18-19) in that,

'Jobs in the hospitality sector are particularly vulnerable to EL [emotional labour] demands as they are characterised by an underlying expectation for employees to display a positive disposition, even when faced with situations that normally elicit negative emotional reactions'.

My research showed that kitchen work is often a mix of brutal and punishing forms of labour and brief episodes of joviality and enjoyment. Chefs and kitchen workers experience the highs and lows of the environment, often in the same day or during the same shift. At times, kitchen work can be demanding and the workers face enormous challenges set by the very nature of their work, the environment and the other workers who populate the kitchen. My ethnography highlighted that the majority of front stage areas depend heavily upon the kitchen and the organisational skills of the workers (see also Fine 1990). Although the hotel gains most of its revenue from the accommodation it provides, all other areas of revenue

depend upon the kitchen and the services they offer. Concerning the restaurant, the workers need to be ready for service hours before the customers arrive. As they are often unaware of the exact number to expect (unlike functions and event dining where the numbers and menus are fixed to some extent and known beforehand), their work relies heavily on flexibility. Unlike many professions, which require appointments to be made well in advance, the restaurant kitchen is highly vulnerable to the chaos caused by walk-in diners.

Being both 'service and production units' (Fine 1996:19), chefs and kitchen workers remain part of a populace who are straddled between service sector work and the ever decreasing segment of the manufacturing workforce (see Singh 1977, Winlow 2001, Hobsbawm 1994, Roberts 1993). Quite often, as others have commented, this means that backstage workers will undoubtedly be a mixture of the cheap, the overworked and the dissatisfied (see Bunting 2005, Toynbee 2003). My observations in the kitchen highlighted that operating under heavy constraints often leaves the kitchen porters and low status chefs feeling rather despondent (see also Young and Corsun 2010). Elliot, one of the youngest kitchen porters, highlighted this:

'There must be better jobs to do than this. I've tried asking to be put forward for the trainee position, but I keep getting knocked back. There's a couple of training posts that I've seen in the papers, so I might try going for them, but I don't know. I like it here, but I don't like being here. It's ok when we're in the kitchen and it's just us [meaning kitchen staff], but when the managers come through, everything's different. They're ok with Chef [meaning the Head Chef], but with us [kitchen porters], they act like we're the lowest of the low, real scum to them. We do the best we can, but it's never good enough'.

This dissatisfaction that Elliot described above, appeared to occur in relation to a number of limitations placed on the workers and by the hierarchy that is present within the hotel. Distinctions within the workforce, which are set by the hierarchical divide that operates, often provoke friction, as all workers have varying levels of responsibilities and power (or lack of it) associated with their role.

I also noticed, during my time within the kitchen, a lot of the work was done with only the bare minimum of direct instruction, as the workers knew what needed to be done and generally got on with it without complaint (there was of course times when the chefs and workers would work from a list of tasks). Of course, a lot of this comes with experience as those who have inhabited the kitchen for some time, were well versed in its procedures. For the most part, the workers in the kitchen are not working in a disengaged and haphazard way, but in a clearly structured manner. They are forced to concentrate and work hard towards a specific end. Liberal psychologists refer to this as the 'flow', which is supposedly important to human happiness. Fine (1990:110) refers to this as the kitchens' busy period and highlights that chefs:

'Ready themselves for the experience of "flow." In the rush work may be transformed from an activity that seems on its surface to be conscious, cognitively demanding, and mundane into an experience that is expressive, emotional, and special'.

It comes when we work in a job that requires skill and concentration; that the task before us fully occupies our mind and becomes all-engaging (see Bakker et al 2008, Sundstrom 1986, Karatepe and Ngeche 2012). When we engage in these types of tasks, there is no time to mull over the problems that beset our lives. This means that people, who work jobs that require skill and concentration, can become totally absorbed in what they are doing and tend to be much happier. Salanova et al (2005:1218) describe this absorption as consisting of being 'fully concentrated, happy, and deeply engrossed in one's work whereby time passes quickly, and one has difficulty detaching oneself from work'. Bakker et al (2008:188) also highlighted this in that, 'contrary to those who suffer from burnout, engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work, and instead of stressful and demanding they look upon their work as challenging' and this increases employee satisfaction. My research showed that for the most part, the chefs in particular, became more dissatisfied and angry regarding their jobs when they were not at work, or when their pace of work slowed down considerably and they had the time to think things through more critically. Robert highlighted this, in that:

'When we're working, we're working and we don't have time to think. Well, it's not so much that, but we don't have time to think everything through. We'll have a chat about it later in the changing room and that, but it's different straight afterwards, it's usually when I get home that I start thinking about it. [Think about what?] Just little things. Sometimes it's something I've heard or what's been said, you know. We don't always get time to register everything, or when we do, we just brush it off. But after so long, you can't really do that. We see the managers and the way they treat everyone, maybe I see it differently as I'm not here all the time. I have my own managers to deal with and they're nothing like they are here'.

In addition, he commented that:

'Sometimes it's great though and you can almost forget that you're working. It's just like being on autopilot. You don't have time to think or work through the options, you just go with what you know and that's that. When you look back on shifts like that, you see how bad they are, you ache like a bitch and just wish for some time off, but it's never like that when you're there'.

At work, they simply get on with it, and in a strange way, enjoy it while they are right in the middle of all this action. However, busy periods are not always experienced as such satisfying episodes in this way. What could also be highlighted here is that employers need employees that feel absorbed by their work (Bakker et al 2008).

The Blood, the Sweat, the Tears

As Fine (1996:40) highlighted, chefs are required to be 'iron men' and the same was true of the kitchen workers and chefs that I worked with. They face constant challenges related to the hours required of them (see also Caruso 2006, on the relationship between long work hours and risk). The workers have to contend with numerous unpleasant experiences and exploitative working conditions that are heavily reminiscent of many forms of industrial labour (Willis 1979), as kitchen work is often a far cry from the glamorous, creative dream that many young chefs hold dear.

During my ethnography, I found that the physical environment of a working kitchen could be brutal and more often than not, constrained by spatial issues. Of the three kitchens that I worked in, only one had any direct access to the outside and having no windows and no

natural light can often lead to a claustrophobic atmosphere. The hostile working conditions and the challenges of this rapidly expanding industry can often be the breaking point for many, and the chefs frequently cited these conditions as explanations for the high incidences of drug and alcohol use amongst those in the profession (Romeri et al. 2007, Bourdain 2000). Establishing a career within the kitchen requires that chefs sacrifice of days off and accept the low levels of pay received in the early stages of their profession. Family is rarely seen and kitchen workers are exempt from the traditional holiday time that most take for granted. The long, unsociable hours can play havoc with relationships and are undoubtedly a considerable drain on the workers (Dex and Bond 2005, Hyman et al 2005, see also Emslie et al 2004 for the effects of unsociable hours on the lives of white-collar workers). Many of the workers in this study had experienced a series of failed relationships and whilst this could be attributed to other circumstances, work was cited by many as being an inescapable underlying factor. It is a highly pressurised occupation, particularly for the senior chefs, serving the often-conflicting demands of the consumers, the managers and the owners. Service can be fast-paced and hectic at times, while at other times it can be painfully slow. Rather than a peaceful respite, the chefs find that these quiet periods fill them with a sense of dread as they confront the boredom of being at work with nothing to do.

The Hours and Shift Patterns

‘This is no nine-to-five job. If you go in thinking that, then you’re already fucked’ (Archie, aged 39, Company Chef).

As Archie noted above, the hours that chefs and kitchen workers have to work are often identified as being the worst part of the job. They often referred to the hours as being highly demoralising, as they consider themselves to work while others play. The hours and shift patterns have a profound impact on their personal lives and on their relationships in and outside of work. This often leads to the point where their work life *is* their social life, or at least this leads to the erosion of ‘social life’. As Rubery et al (2005:105) comment, there is an increasing amount of economic activity that now takes place outside of the traditional working day. They highlight that,

‘While there have always been some jobs that have involved working ‘odd’ hours ... recent decades have seen a growth in the number of jobs – and hence the number of workers – who are required to work early in the morning, late at nights, at weekends, or on bank holidays’.

This is of course, the nature of kitchen work, with the added attraction that they are expected to work during traditional holiday times. Seth, the current Head Chef at the hotel, has spent 16 years working his way up through the ranks, beginning his career as a kitchen porter. Like many of the kitchen workers and chefs, he has struggled continuously to maintain social ties with friends (outside of work) throughout his career, often sacrificing a social life for a career. He noted that:

‘When you first start off in the trade, your friends don’t understand. Initially if you’re lucky enough to get a Saturday night off, your friends are still your friends and they keep in touch. But that never lasts. They’re always your friends, but you drift apart. You make new friends at the hotel, or wherever, similar people ... all in the same boat and that. Where your friends still go out on a Saturday night you start developing new nights out, like a Tuesday or a Wednesday, whenever you’re off. Cos you can’t go out at weekends, as you’re working. You need some sort of social life, but it’s hard. It’s really tough initially though, especially for the young ones. It still bothers some though, obviously it will. That’s why most leave in the early days. But you have to say no to them. They need to learn. You get used to it’.

Due to the hours and shift patterns, kitchen workers also complain of tiredness and the inability to do anything constructive on their days off. Their personal lives quickly become structured around work, as they never know exactly what days off they will have and are never able to make plans too far ahead. While there are sometimes aware of their shifts for the upcoming week, these are liable to change if levels of business do. They lose touch with friends outside of work and their lives become controlled by the demands of the job. The point that needs to be stressed here is that the economy structures their non-work time as well as their work time (see Haworth and Veal’s 2004, edited collection *Work and Leisure*); that work demands modifications and personal time is sacrificed in order to ensure that the business continues to be profitable. During the interviews, it was evident that the worker’s

leisure lives are always tainted by work in some way. For many of the workers, work provides friends, conversation and a kind of cultural dependency that suggests both an affection for work and all that work is, but also a deep loathing of it, a foreboding, and an anxiety about it. This is something equivalent to the old industrial adage about the working classes living, literally in some cases, in the shadow of the factory. Work appeared central to the chef's world and here we can see, a recontextualised version of that same idea. The continual drain that the hours had on the chefs was often evident in their moods, their general performance and their appearance. Starting as early as 6.00 a.m, finishing as late as 2.00 a.m. and having to work on average between eight and fourteen hours a day has an overwhelming impact on the workers and their outlook. During my interviews with the workers, what was most interesting was their attitudes towards 'giving up their social life' and in particular, the way in which the old hands accept that the job involves giving up on specific aspects of friendship and that one's relationships tend to cluster around work.

Generally, the shifts are based around times that the chefs are required to be in for service and prep, and these centre on variations of three shift types: 'a split', 'in' or 'AFD'. A 'split shift' often entails the usual eight to ten hours work spread over the entire day with a average of three hours free time in between: due to travelling times, many do not even bother going home, opting instead to nap in the changing room or some hidden office, or simply to walk to the nearest pub. On an 'in' shift the chefs are required in and finish when the work does. This is very similar to the structure of 'AFD' ('all fucking day'), but the latter has the added bonus of being foreseen. When the kitchen is fully staffed, the chefs are likely to receive a Friday or Saturday night off once a month, but this is never guaranteed.

The chefs (usually the junior chefs) generally receive two days off a week, however, for up to three months of the year, they will work six days a week, and for the Head Chef, this is extended to six months of the year. No two chefs are allowed to be on holiday at the same time for longer than one week, and no holidays are allowed to be taken in December. From May to September holiday times is also restricted, due to the high levels of business that the 'wedding season' brings. This has a profound impact on the workers, as their holidays are invariable taken during off-peak times of the year and whilst the reduced rates offer some condolences,

they often jar considerably with their partner's or friend's holiday times. They have no factory fortnight in the sun, no Easter holiday and no Christmas break. More often than not, the chefs and kitchen workers are absent from their families and friends for a good part of Christmas day, a time traditionally set aside for escapism from work. This is of course not restricted to the profession of chefs and can be found within care professions, emergency services and hospital personnel. However, while most workers are at home on this day, the chefs and kitchen workers are hard at work, churning out around 400 meals for diners who fancy a break from the drudgeries of festive domestic kitchen slavery. The hours and shift patterns which the kitchen workers have to endure also jar considerably with The Working Time Directive set by the European Union (Directgov, 2009), which limits the maximum length of a working week to forty-eight hours in seven days, with a minimum rest period of eleven hours in each twenty-four hours. Given the demanding nature of their work and the relative shortage of skilled industry trained individuals, chefs and kitchen workers are expected to opt out of this directive. As my interviews highlighted, most of the chefs and kitchen workers would consider a 48-hour working week a blessing.

The Physical Nature of Cooking for a Living

My ethnography also highlighted that kitchen work can often be a highly demanding physical occupation. Many kitchen workers experienced their work as hard labour, and the physical side of work wore them down considerably. The chefs work with different tools when compared with a domestic cook. The equipment that they work with is specifically for industrial use and sized accordingly. Restaurant service and function service, the two main divisions of service in the kitchen, are also extremely physical. Restaurant service takes place within the restaurant kitchen and consists of much movement within a highly confined space. Whilst the volume of covers here is considerably less than those prepared for functions, it often involves working at a much faster pace over a longer period. It also involves a greater number of components per dish. As the Head Chef comments, even simple Sunday lunch service can be extremely physical:

'When you're carving, you're carving and you know you're carving. You have to carve pretty fast to maintain heat and moisture and you have to get it out soon as, for the customers. For Sunday lunch you carve a choice of seven meats, all in front of you. It's hot, carving, plating them up then the Yorkshire pudding and gravy, then out fast. You usually spread it over a two hour period but it's constant, you prep it and you're constantly sending mains over two hours, sometimes just the one. Obviously you've got the other dishes too, like veg and fish, but maybe 300 slices of different meats in a few hours. It's hot work, very hot in there on lunch but it's not particularly difficult. Your busiest period is between 12.45 p.m. and 1.30 p.m. cos that's when they want to eat. Most book for that period and the idiots [management] let them. But there's not much you can do about it, just have to get on and get it done. Table after table, order after order after order. It's more tiring then anything else, Sunday lunch starts with breakfast, just the way it is. All over body ache, you're on your feet all the time. You stand by the hot plate in the same position for two hours, especially after Saturday night service. Your finger ends burn from holding the meat to carve and your elbows and shoulders ache from the movement. Constantly carving doesn't seem like a big deal, but do it for that many in a short space of time, then you'll know.'

Function service is probably the most physically demanding type of service. Making up 90% of the kitchen's overall workload, it is an inescapable aspect of this kitchen, regardless of the worker's position. At the time the ethnography was conducted, the kitchen team consisted of nineteen members of staff, four of whom were women. These, along with the more elderly members of staff, were fully expected to 'muck in' as much as possible with the physical side of the work, and with only minimal allowances made. Consider the marquee functions, which cater for up to 1400 diners at a time. This requires a satellite kitchen to be set up on-site, inside the marquee, which in itself requires that the kitchen equipment needed must be transported to the site, often on the back of a truck, with some of the smaller items transported by hand. Whilst some of the workers regard function work as a respite from the monotony of hotel work, they themselves can be the source of much anguish and physically intense labour. Jamie, one of the kitchens' casual workers, commented that:

'Before you can even start you need to plate up, you need to spend time counting the plates, pulling together the equipment to cook it with, transport it, all the ingredients, and then you have to spend time loading it all up [on the truck] driving it to the marquee and unloading it. You've probably got a few days of organisation and few hours of hard labour even before you start on the food. Stoves, hot cupboards, pans, ladles, spoons, they all need taking down. Plates, cleaning gear, crockery, cutlery, they all need to be there and sorted. You need to set up

the kitchen with tables and areas for prep and cleaning and cooking, so 3 different areas. Get it down there, unload it and store it, and for everything you've forgot, you have to go back up to the hotel each time to get it. That's the easy bit. Once you've done the cooking you have to get it all back up there. After each course the plates need clearing and putting back on the truck to be taken up to the kitchen and then they needed to be unloaded again for cleaning up there. There's a hell of a lot of lifting. You have to shift allsorts back and forth, back and forth. Plus there's the food as well, cooked and raw. You need to get it all together first. Like event catering but on your own site.'

Also commenting on function service, particularly the assembly line format of the 'pass', Lewis, a trainee chef, noted:

'It's fucking tough. You need a person to put every piece on the bowl. One body per item. But it knacks too. You stand there on one side of the pass [assembly line format for service] and the waiting staff come along with the bowls and you just put in the bowl what you have to, potatoes, carrots or beans. But the tables are too low so you have to bend slightly, then after the first go round, the waiting staff get tired and complain about the bowls, that they're heavy and they don't lift them up right. Then you have to bend and reach at the same time which knacks your back. Doesn't sound too hard, but you do that 600 times in 30 minutes.'

The Heat

During my ethnography, it was evident where the old saying, 'if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen' comes from. The physical environment of the kitchen was considered by the majority of the kitchen workers to be one of the most intolerable and hostile atmospheres to endure. Heat is an omnipresent aspect of kitchen work, the most unpleasant and an unavoidable characteristic of the working environment. Whilst the Government stipulates a minimum temperature, which employers must adhere to, to maintain a comfortable atmosphere for their employees (Directgov 2009), there is no maximum temperature specified. The restaurant kitchen is a small-enclosed room, with no doors leading to the outside and no windows. The main kitchen is larger, but this has the added hindrance that it is situated above the restaurant kitchen. This means that heat, which rises from the restaurant kitchen will invariably collect in the main kitchen, adding to heat already generated there. Contained within the main kitchen's central 12ft by 16ft workspace is a steak grill, two gas hot

cupboards and hot plates, a double fryer, a solid top stove with a base oven, a six burner range with a base oven, a Bratt pan, and a combination oven. All of these items are required for the kitchen to work efficiently and, at times, may be simultaneously operational during service. All of these pieces of equipment generate heat and this often makes for a distinctly uncomfortable and stifling environment that is suffered by all. While some may become accustomed to the heat, even veteran chefs acknowledge that it is an uncomfortable working environment. Jake, one of the newest additions to the kitchen commented that, 'I've never known anything like it. It's horrific. You just can't describe it'. Seth, a sixteen-year veteran of kitchens also added that:

'This is a bad kitchen; I remember when we used to have gas powered steamers, like the old ones. They weren't an air tight seal, and the steam used to piss out all the time and create moisture and heat. You used to fill them manually with water and light the gas, this would build up the steam in the cabinet and this would cook the vegetables. It used to be a damp and sweaty environment, but it was nothing like this [present kitchen]. There's loads of regulations now on fresh air intake and even though we have the two fans bringing air in, it still gets bad. I've worked in kitchens built in the 70's and this is probably the worst one, considering it's a newish kitchen. You just can't work, you're so hot, and you can't concentrate on what you're doing. It drains your energy and you never quite reach your peak. It's like constantly walking up a steep hill in the hot weather ... a constant struggle. You find yourself wanting to escape to the fridges, so you find jobs to do that take you away. I have to swap some of the kitchen porters around sometimes, on a Saturday I have to swap the teams over half way through, just so they get a break. I've had kitchen porters pass out on me before, with the heat. Some you can just tell by looking at them that they're going to go and then you have to send them outside for some fresh air. The heat gets trapped. Everyone asks how we cope, and I don't know. You have to drink water constantly. Iced water all the time, it's the only way through it'.

This oppressive, unavoidable heat that the Head Chef spoke of hardens workers somewhat. The average temperature in the main kitchen during the working week is around 35 degrees, increasing to up to 40 degrees during the busy periods. During the summer months of 2006, when the ethnography was underway, the main kitchen's temperature reached an unprecedented 42 degrees Celsius, one of the highest ever-recorded temperatures in the kitchen. Within the restaurant and main kitchen, the workers would sweat uncontrollably as the heat collected in certain areas, often making service unbearable. In comparison, the

marquee temperatures are not quite as harsh, but when there is sweltering heat and no breeze outside, they too can become agonizing. Alternatively, they can be extremely cold during the chilly evenings. Although the workers attempt to minimise the heat levels, they cannot function without the ovens, grills and hot lights switched on. The heat affects everybody in different ways (CCOHS undated), but during my ethnography, the workers complained about heat rashes, spots, greasy skin and other general skin complaints. The feeling that there is no air within the kitchens is never far from the mind, and this can create an extremely nauseous working environment. Due to the speed that is required to keep up with service, the workers have no time to cool down, as jobs need doing there and then. However, some workers innovatively try out new ways to keep themselves cool during shifts by bringing an extra jacket to work and leaving it in the freezer so that they can change into it before service starts or by wetting their hats in an attempt to cool down.

The Repetitive Nature of Labour

Regardless of the type of work the chefs engage in, whether it is for the restaurant or for banqueting, the work is monotonous to some extent. The definitive example of repetitive labour, however, is function work. During function service, the kitchen bears a very close resemblance to an industrial production line. Preparation for large events can start from three to five days beforehand. The numbers often run to over one thousand and this can often translate into a sense of despair for the chefs. Whilst providing for such large numbers can offer a slight break from the norm, the reality is that the workers are physically and mentally pushed to their limit. During the Christmas period of 2006/07, the hotel accommodated over 18,000 diners between the last week in November and the start of January 2007. Around 90% of these diners were given the same menu, and whilst on the surface this may be seen as the kitchen limiting the amount of work they need to do, in reality it resulted in a highly monotonous and mind-numbing five weeks of function work. As all the chefs commented, it was the 'same shit, different day'. Speaking of the sheer volume of work that went into the 2006/07 Christmas functions, the Head Chef noted:

'They had starters, soup, mains and deserts. The starter was fanned melon and fruit and the mains was sliced roast turkey, sliced stuffing, roasted potatoes, carrots and Brussels sprouts. The dessert was chocolate torte. I'll talk you through it. We had around 1200 turkey breasts bought in and these had to be sliced. Sliced by a guy on a machine slicer, which trust me, is not as easy as it sounds. You cook your turkey breast the day before ... ideally. You get your turkey breasts, however many you need for that night. You have no space cos someone is already taking up half the bench plating up the desserts or whatever, so there's no space. You have to take off the netting: peel off the skin and the fat, which is messy. You cut off the noggin [small lump] from the bottom so it stands up straight on the slicer. A turkey breast tapers from thin so none of the slices are the same size so you can't just build a portion as you slice it, so you stack in four or five different slices and you select three or four different sizes to make up the weighted portion. You have to build a portion like an envelope so it's easy to pick up. It's a two man job. Some poor fucker slices while the other builds the portions. To do the turkey for one night in the hotel, would take eight hours of solid slicing and stacking and racking. You still have to finish in enough time to get them either on the plates for plated service or into flats and into the oven ready for steaming. You have to push the blade backwards and forwards, for each slice. We did over 48,000 slices of turkey for that year. Plus a slice of stuffing each, which needed to be mixed by hand, moulded by hand, cooked and sliced by hand. Around 40 kilos of sausage meat used each day. Then you needed all the veg to go with it. For the starter, fucking hell. Ordered in almost 3000 melons and these needed to be peeled by hand, halved, deseeded, cut each half into three and fanned. Plus there was all the other bits that came with it that needed to be prepped. It took six hours for six people to deseed, cut and fan 300 melons. We used to peel them the day before. That's none stop work, without a break and *after* all the plates had been counted, that used to get done the night before. It used to cost more for the staff than what we made from the melon and the turkey prep. They used to spend over £1,100 on top of the normal staff wages just for the prep. We don't do that anymore, that was the last year we did that. Thank fuck.'

This was also highlighted by Young and Corsun (2010:85) who suggested that 'many occupations are characterized by workers who look forward to tasks that make use of their skills, as opposed to those that are boring and do not require trained personnel (see also Fine 1990).

The Dangers of Kitchen Work

Cooking in a professional kitchen can also be hazardous. Heavy lifting makes up a surprising amount of kitchen work, especially in preparation for marquee events, as emphasised above.

Transporting large amounts of kitchen equipment down to the marquee is both physically draining and hazardous. The workers need to be mindful of everything that is going on around them, as they are surrounded at any one time by stoves, hot liquids, ovens, pans, hot foods, steam, boiling oil, hot lights, slippery surfaces and blades. This coupled with the fact that kitchens often require discipline (as personal space is often invaded) and when combined with the frustration and irritation caused by the heat and long hours, the potential for accidents is increased. The equipment the chefs work with is dangerous, there is no escaping this. Knives are perhaps the most symbolic piece of equipment used (just picture the front cover of Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential* which shows three chefs, each displaying their knives as a soldier would display his sword); being paramount to both the chefs' occupation and their status, but at the same time they are a dangerous piece of equipment. Cuts and burns are also extremely common. Although humour is frequently used to distance workers from the harsh realities of pain (see also Fine 1996), it is an unavoidable aspect of this type of work, occurring in abundance when the chefs are tired and under pressure. Raw, blistered burns coupled with silver-grey scars and callused toughened skin often betray a career chef, however, during my interviews, the chefs stressed that pain is something that they get used to, albeit usually out of necessity.

Fortunately, serious injuries were rare within the kitchen. The most serious injury during my time there was three broken fingers, which were trapped in a refrigerated truck's rear door, during one of the seafood festivals. However, I did witness countless numbers of burns and cuts (I suffered several myself). For the most part, the chefs and kitchen workers were very defeatist in their attitudes to injuries; understanding that they are endemic within the occupation and seeing no way of ever avoiding them completely. Many simply put them down to the nature of the job. Many also exhibited a rather proud attitude towards their wounds and scars, particularly the younger workers in the kitchen. Young and Corsun (2010:95) who commented that work-related injuries were actually viewed positively by workers also cited this, in that 'in such work cultures, cooks may brag about "battle scars" that are evidence of work-related injuries and work-related pride'. Talking of one particular injury, sustained during prep work, Ryan commented:

'I sliced right through the nail. Fuckin' tomatoes. I can't remember how many I'd done, but I was tired. It can't be helped though, you just gotta get on with it. The plasters wouldn't stick, it was so bad. Blood everywhere. I had to wrap it in Clingfilm and put another glove on. What can you do?'

As Ryan highlighted, injuries may be considered an inevitable occupational hazard and the potential for injury is always omnipresent within the kitchen. They are also routinely dealt with in the chaos, or rush of service. By 'just getting on with it', acknowledges the young chef's willingness to sacrifice his own well-being for the cause. Injuries become routine and are reduced to something that is unproblematic, merely a part of the job. This world-weary observation reflects the workers' own ideological interpretation and his inability to see how his reading of the event is in fact entirely in-keeping with a reading that benefits his employers and avoids messy industrial injuries claims, hold-ups, complaints and days off.

Command of the Blade: Divisions of Labour

At the start of the ethnography, the kitchen work I observed appeared chaotic to my untrained eye, as did any specific divisions of labour. On closer inspection, however, the kitchen hierarchy was clearly discernible. Each worker in the kitchen had a distinct, formal role to play. Working kitchens are hierarchically structured and while there are times when all workers are expected to 'muck in', for the vast majority of the time their tasks are dictated by their official status. The two main divisions of status are recognised as being the chefs and kitchen porters, as explained by Ryan, one of the junior chefs:

'Waiting staff share the kitchen, but they're not in it. They don't come in the main area, just stay behind the hot plate in the serving area. The two [main divisions] in the kitchen are chefs, obviously, and kitchen porters.'

The chefs' focus is predominantly upon food, its preparation and execution. However, while they are considered the primary workers in the kitchen, all other workers are necessary to facilitate the job in hand, and therefore the chefs must be aware of what everyone else is doing at any given moment. This is especially salient when chefs collaborate on the same dish. The

Head Chef, at the top of the hierarchy, is the coordinator of the kitchen, its creative force and its businessman. The other chefs are divided into different levels, according to their degree of knowledge and expertise. A promotion within the hierarchy involves new demands and the requirement for new skills. As chefs have distinct roles within the kitchen, so do the kitchen porters. However, while chefs' roles are defined by formal positions and titles, kitchen porters are considered a collective who share responsibilities. While chefs prepare dishes, waiting staff serve them and customers consume them, it is the kitchen porters who clean up the leftovers and make sure that the kitchen and kitchen equipment is clean and ready for use.

Tensions

While, public perceptions would typify chefs as being hot-blooded, bordering on violent, the prevailing tone in the kitchen was considered good, however, no working relationship will ever be completely harmonious, and during my time in the kitchen, I witnessed numerous tensions. The most obvious forms of tension within the kitchen brigade were between the kitchen porters. While not formally structured into a hierarchy, the kitchen porters devised their own levels of division that were not officially granted, but were negotiated between the workers themselves. At times, this makeshift informal hierarchy would centre on their age, the length of their employment in the hotel, or their individual experience. Invariably, any suggestion made by one the kitchen porter in order to establish a hierarchal structure was repeatedly challenged and rejected by the others. Within the kitchen, chefs and kitchen porters share a mutually dependent relationship, but this relationship is often strained due to their differing levels of status within the kitchen. Whilst the two groups often engage in friendly banter, it has been known to turn nasty on occasion. It is expected that kitchen porters obey the chefs; this is formally set within the structure of the kitchen and needs no negotiation. Requests flow from chef to kitchen porter and this is never reversed. Chefs believe that they have the right to make demands on kitchen porters, and frequently this can border on victimisation. Examples of this behaviour were never witnessed between the chefs themselves, only between the chefs and the kitchen porters, or between the kitchen porters themselves. The chefs indicated that any tensions between their full-time brigade would be highly unlikely and I never witnessed any major tensions between the chefs during my time in

the kitchen. Their hierarchal structure is enforced and respected at most levels and all of the chefs know that they are above the kitchen porters in the kitchen's pecking order.

Kitchen Territories

As shown above, the kitchen is seen as being the domain of the chefs and kitchen porters, whereas in reality, there can be up to four occupations within the kitchen at any one time: the chefs, the kitchen porters, waiting staff and management/front-of-house staff. This mixture of bodies and the way they negotiate, and interact with each other, has a profound impact upon the kitchen. Representatives of all hotel departments can congregate within the kitchen and as the kitchen itself is spatially structured to divide all occupations that are found within, boundaries are set and frequently crossed. Within all of the kitchens, there is a designated area, which is inhabited solely by the chefs, and all other occupations are prohibited from this area. The same can be said for the pot-wash area, which is also a separate area within the kitchen. However, although the chefs may freely enter the domain of the kitchen porters, they rarely choose to do so. The designation of specific workers' areas, initially designed for safety, increasingly leads to these areas being seen as one's 'territory'.

During my ethnography, I found that the chefs are generally territorial concerning their sections, especially in the presence of 'outsiders' who attempt to infiltrate the team. This does not cover new chefs introduced into the team as permanent members but applies predominantly to agency chefs who the chefs believed had a tendency to 'throw their weight around'. During excessively busy periods, such as Christmas, the utilization of agency chefs is unavoidable. Wherever possible, particular agency chefs were specifically requested by the Head Chef and these are welcomed into the team as a fully fledged member of the kitchen brigade (albeit for a relatively short period of time), as their skill level is adequate to their position and they have proved on prior occasions that they are willing to adhere to the rules of the kitchen. The most frequent tensions, however, appeared to be between regular members of staff and agency waiting staff. This usually centred on the agency staff's overly selfish way of working. The hotel's kitchen workers highlighted their unconcealed individualistic approach to work and frequent bouts of laziness on numerous occasions. The hotel chefs and

kitchen porters were highly critical of the work ethic and attitudes of all agency staff, but they were particularly vehement towards agency waiting staff. This would invariably manifest itself at the end of service, when the agency waiting staff would help themselves to the leftover food, without asking permission from the chefs. When the chefs were questioned as to the source of the antagonisms surrounding this act, they highlighted a strong sense of ownership of the food. Those who had worked on the food and contributed in some way to the final product felt that they had ownership over it, as emphasised by Jake who commented that, 'I don't know them. Who are they? They put fuck all in. Why should they take anything out? They have no right'.

Conclusions

Altogether, this tough working environment and the resulting tensions and frustration have an unavoidable impact on all aspects of kitchen life. Professional cooking and its associated ensemble of work is a highly demanding occupation, as the challenges and pressures of a working kitchen are very different from the solitary and often blasé act of cooking at home. It is hard labour, relentless during the peak seasons, often unsatisfying and dangerous. It is grossly underpaid, and the workers are visibly exhausted after the busy periods. These periods are not simply busy shifts, but busy seasons, with a constantly high workload lasting for weeks or months at a time. During my time there, I witnessed a great deal of job fluidity and mobility as workers quickly came and went, however, these were usually restricted to the lower ranks of the kitchen hierarchy, kitchen porters in particular. While Young and Corsun (2010:78) comment that 'the hospitality industry is marked by chronic labour shortages and high turnover', despite the harshness of the environment and the regimes they endured, some workers stayed. They enjoyed the work and each other's company. Although, economic factors probably contributed a great deal to their decision to remain in the kitchen, the vast majority frequently expressed that they derived a sense of pleasure from their work. They were proud of the work they did and they were proud of being able to do the work. New starters in the kitchen complained incessantly about the working conditions and the environment, with many leaving after only spending one or two shifts within the kitchen.

One new starter left midway through a shift, saying that he was going to the toilet and never returning. This gave the chefs and other kitchen workers a great deal of amusement, even though they were a man down for the remainder of that shift. They openly enjoyed seeing others defeated by the tiredness, the heat, the monotony and the constant harsh rhythms of sheer physical labour. The chefs and kitchen workers plough relentlessly through their working days, swearing, laughing and sweating. They throw pans in anger and throw every insult possible at the equipment they work with, the management, the environment and each other. Nonetheless, they exhibited a rather strong sense of personal dignity. In part, this is attributed to their knowledge and belief that they do a very tough job, very well, where others clearly cannot. This is validated every time a new starter leaves. An instinctive sense of pride in hard labour has always been traded on by employers and employees (Toynbee 2003:111), and this was most evident during my research in the kitchen. The harshness of the environment appeared to breed a sense of solidarity between the workers, comparable with other forms of industrial labour. This psychological way of holding on to a sense of pride whilst doing this type of labour was most fascinating.

Chapter Six

Dealing with Kitchen Life

Introduction

This chapter highlights the ways in which the workers deal with the oppressive and constraining conditions detailed in the previous chapter. It focuses on how they strive to make their working days less strenuous and a little more enjoyable. It also investigates the interpersonal relationships that are found within the kitchen and attempts to highlight the perceived construction of a tight community of co-workers, each with their own role and individuality, but all working towards a common goal. I am also interested in the image of the kitchen as a community and the anti-utilitarian sentiments that sustain it. This chapter also explores the 'fun side' of kitchen work, in particular the deployment and enactment of humour and practical jokes as both a way of alleviating stress and tensions and a way of solidifying the divisions already set in place by the hierarchy.

Despite the hard work and considerable pressures of life in the kitchen, many of my respondents acknowledged that their connections and relationships to one another contributed immensely to their experiences of work. However, during my ethnography it was evident that the kitchen was not exclusively characterised by deep and meaningful friendships that secure workers to the organisation or to each other, as these relationships acted more as compensation, or a situation-specific form of stress relief. The reality is that the workers are 'friends', but there also appeared to be an underlying instrumental concern that binds them to one another. Here, social relationships act 'for' some other thing. They help the subject to deal with work, to cope with and to forget about it. On the surface, they are more than willing to help each other out, whether it is a chef coming to the aid of the kitchen porters, or staying back to help a fellow worker finish their allocated tasks. However, the chefs and kitchen workers explicitly expect these favours to be carried forward and reciprocated in the future. As soon as the chain or reciprocation is broken, the 'friendship' can suddenly turn into its opposite (see Mauss 1990, on gifts and reciprocity). Therefore, the chapter will attempt to

make sense of the seemingly competing ethics of mutuality and instrumentality that typify this particular work setting. It also examines work identities in particular and discusses how they are deployed as façades to facilitate work arrangements and relationships, suggesting that the symbolic order allows us to submit to the fundamental lie of community attachments (Winlow and Hall 2012).

The Work

The following ethnographic section was taken towards the end of a particularly gruelling shift and many of the workers had been at work for around eight hours. It highlights that even after a rather demanding shift, the workers were still willing to stay and help their fellow workers out.

It's 2.40 pm and there's confusion over which orders are for which tables. The Head Chef calls for two more flats of veg to be brought through in case they are needed. Empty plates and leftover food are coming back to the kitchen thick and fast and the chefs are shouting requests and orders to each other in a bid to be heard over the noise of the waitresses, the managers and the overall commotion that is taking place around them. The kitchen porters are not particularly vocal during service but they certainly make up for it when clean up starts. Both kitchens provide areas for food service and for the washing of the crockery and cutlery that are brought back after use. Because the restaurant doesn't have enough small plates, those that are used for the starters need to be brought back to the kitchen to be washed and dried before they can be sent out again for the desserts. These and the cutlery are brought back en masse at an alarmingly fast rate, contributing immensely to the din that already saturates the kitchen.

Sausage Fingers (a kitchen porter, named so due to his large and cumbersome hands) questions Frank's work by pointing out the poor state of one plate that's come through the washer unclean. He shouts to make sure that Frank hears him correctly, 'Have you seen the fuckin' state of this? It's not been hosed down properly.' He hurls the plate in Frank's general direction and turns around to continue stacking the plates as they come through the washer. Scowling, Frank catches the plate as it skids by him on the workbench and lifts it as if to hit

Sausage Fingers on the back of the head. He doesn't follow through with the threat, but the Head Chef notes to me that he wouldn't put it past him one of these days. The order for Table 65 is sent away, and the chefs start plating up the next order. I tell the chefs that there's only one more mains order to go and they all cheer. The Jack Stacks are brought back through and their contents are put straight in the bin. They can't be kept for future service because they've been out of refrigeration for too long. There's nothing to do now but wait for the final table to be called away. The waitresses come back and ask why the chefs aren't doing anything. They are told that the chefs are just waiting for the last table to be called then mains service will be over for them, and the waiting staff can take out the desserts. The waitresses start to congregate around the hotplate, picking at the pieces of meat that are left from the joints that were carved for service. The chefs leave them to it. One member of waiting staff asks if they have any cod left. They do, and she asks if she can she take some home for her dinner; the Head Chef tells her that's fine. Robert plates the veg in an oval bowl ready for the last table and Ryan weaves in and out of the waitresses to try and salvage some meat before it's all gone. The final plate is sent and the last cheque is taken down from the wall. The kitchen porters continue to make noise as they try to get items through the washer as quickly as possible, sensing a break in service. As this service is taking place in the function kitchen, the back door to the yard is opened and the kitchen finally receives a cool breeze to combat the stifling heat that it has been subjected to so far. Everyone in the kitchen welcomes it.

The Head Chef brings the last of the Jack Stacks through, and the chefs take it in turn to nip outside for some fresh air, a cool down or a cigarette. Meanwhile, the kitchen porters have to carry on with their tasks as the last of the plates are brought back and the clean-up is stepped up a gear. One of the kitchen porters takes the Jack Stack of desserts through to be served to the diners, and Robert begins to help. The Head Chef tells him not to bother as they have enough waiting staff and kitchen porters to do that job, but Robert seems very anxious to get the plates out. Everyone is picking at the food, and Robert tells Ryan that he's going to give the staff a hand anyway. Ryan says that's fine and jokes that he wants no part of it, but he quickly follows him to give him a hand. Robert goes, returning a couple of minutes later to tell the chefs that all of the desserts have now been sent. The chefs sigh simultaneously and look at each nodding. The Head Chef announces, 'Good job lads'. It's 3.00 p.m. now and the vast

majority of the workers have been in since 6.00 a.m. Two of the chefs have officially finished now, but they offer to stay behind to help make the staff some lunch and assist with the general tidying up. They are told by the Head Chef that there is no need to do so, but they remain in the kitchen regardless. I was later told that this was done off their own backs and they received no monetary reward for doing so. Unlike the Kitchen Porters, the chefs are salaried and receive the same wage regardless of how many hours they work (see Adam-Smith et al. 2003 on the implications for low wages in the hospitality industry). However, on rare occasions some do receive discreet bonuses (see also Johnson 1983), but this is usually limited to exceptionally busy periods or large functions.

Organisation, Delegation and Control

Having organisation and structure within the kitchen is paramount; this much was evident from my research. The nature of the occupation, namely the production of food, demands a compliant body of workers who have specific tasks that they adhere to and the chefs stressed that the best thing you can have within a kitchen is a conscientious and efficient team who work collectively to get the job done. Everybody has a specific job to do at any one time, and for them to work efficiently they need to know exactly what that job entails. No working body within the kitchen is wasted; everyone is utilised and everyone has a purpose. The workers' tasks are often laid out for them, although they do vary regarding what type of service is being conducted, what levels of business they have in each day, and how many of them are working. During my time within the kitchen, I found that so much of the workers' tasks and daily schedule involves a tacit knowledge of what is required by whom and at what stage in the day. None of this is clear or linear and although it seems quite disorganised at times, at the same time, it is also strangely efficient. Unlike some occupations, the kitchen's workload is variable and prone to change at a moment's notice. Although there is some indication of what numbers to expect, prior to an event, these numbers are subject to change. Bookings can be made or cancelled at the last minute and numbers may increase or fall. As the kitchen needs to be prepared days in advance for a function, or hours in advance for the restaurant, the level of business on any specific day greatly affects how much preparation they can do on that day or for the following days. Every day, the chefs need to know exactly what tasks they have to be

getting on with, and this necessity is magnified tenfold when they have a large function to prepare for. Taken on the morning of a function, the following piece of ethnography highlights the way in which instructions are often disseminated to the chefs.

Everyone has been going back and forth from the kitchen to the stores for the last forty minutes. Food has been brought through from the dry stores and fridges and laid out on the prep benches, cups of coffee have been dished out and suddenly the kitchen seems very crowded as the workers quickly gather around the central prep bench in the main kitchen. This is the first time I've seen this happen; usually they just get on with their specific tasks, but these types of functions require greater and more clarity as to who's doing what, where and when. The Head Chef stands at the head of the table with several laminated sheets in his hands. He dishes out the papers to each of the chefs, with each containing a list of what needs to be done and by what time. He instructs them on what's been done already and quickly runs through what needs doing. Everyone makes note of their specific tasks and heads to their various workstations to get on with it. The radio announces that it's 8.10 a.m. and the Head Chef flits between a pan of vegetarian casserole that is boiling away on the stove, and the various workstations around the two kitchens. He double-checks that everyone knows what they're doing and asks his Sous Chef to double check that the Filipino chefs are sure of what they're doing. The list of tasks was used for almost every function that I worked at, and it proved a vital part of the organisation and delegation of tasks. The list ensures that no one does the same job twice and that all specific tasks are carried out in the correct order. Having a list to follow with clearly defined tasks allows the workers to continue even when the Head Chef is not there. This is extremely important, especially on a day like today, and is a sure way of building the team's confidence, showing that the work is progressing well.

The allocation of specific work tasks in this way is considered paramount within the kitchen. It is achieved through an explicit hierarchy of workers who are arranged in accordance to skill level and overall knowledge, from the Head Chef down to the trainee. As my ethnography highlighted, work within the kitchen is structured heavily around delegation and the relaying of information and assignments from one member of staff to another down through this hierarchy. This was evident within both the permanent kitchen team and the external kitchen

staff that had been sourced from other kitchens and agencies when they were required to undertake work for large-scale functions. Within the present kitchen brigade, information was relayed directly to each chef from the Head Chef or through the Sous Chef. When external members of staff were present, information was relayed to their senior member of staff, who assigns workers from their team as they see fit. Within the kitchen, the relaying of information through the Sous Chef was also strongly related to issues of language and the barriers it inevitably caused; the Sous Chef was able to communicate much more efficiently with the other Filipino members of staff.

The Head Chef is heralded as being at the top of the kitchen's hierarchy and although technically he is not as senior as the Company Chef, he is treated by the rest of his kitchen brigade as being the most senior. He is entrusted with the job of structuring the kitchen according to the needs of the business, by allocating specific work to the workers, directly or indirectly. Access to the function and business sheets (which show details regarding the forthcoming week's businesses) is unrestricted within the kitchen to give the workers some knowledge of the level of business that they have, but ultimately it is up to the Head Chef to communicate with the staff and identify what needs doing for each function, when, how and by whom. This allocation of information is integral to the smooth running of the kitchen. The delegation of tasks and the enforcement of seniority needs to be handled with care and becomes for many of the kitchen workers, a structured and well thought out process. As the following short piece of ethnography highlights, this often needs to be done with tact and it is a sure way of gaining compliance from the workers.

It's 10.15 a.m. and the Head Chef and Robert debate which meats look rare and which look medium done. The Head Chef notes that they'll use the rare ones last and if there's any left they'll be able to reheat them for future service. He tells Frank to bring the Yorkshire puddings from the kitchen downstairs, which Frank does straight away. The Head Chef thanks him and tells him that he's glad he's in this kitchen today. This is the third kitchen porter that the Head Chef has said this to this morning, and I question him why that is the case. He comments that he is essentially 'fluffing them up' to make them feel special before they have to 'work their tits off'.

This type of interaction was witnessed on many occasions throughout my time in the kitchen. The chefs were often adamant that the kitchen porters, those who occupy the lowest rungs of the kitchen hierarchy, often needed to be 'fluffed up' to enable them to derive some satisfaction or a feeling of self-worth from their work. As shown above, this was often done to accompany a period of heavy work. It was viewed that this helped keep them compliant and therefore ensured a pleasant working environment for the chefs. For the most part, assignments and instructions issued need to have a sound structural basis for them to be carried out unquestionably, although they do not necessarily have to be based on the immediate demands of service. The Head Chef sets the tone with his strategies of 'fluffing up' and others further down the hierarchy 'naturally' adopt conciliatory strategies because of their exposure to the Head Chef's approach. This offered a stark comparison to the commonly held stereotypical image of chefs as rude and demanding. What was evident from my ethnography was that the kitchen staff firmly believe in an instrumental 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours' approach to work, and this is highlighted in the interviews I conducted that explored some of the motives behind their compliance with requests. Unquestionably obeying orders and wishes ensures that the workplace runs smoothly. As Jackson, one of the kitchen porters commented:

'It's just the way it works. When they [the chefs] ask me to do something and I do it without the chat [backtalk] then that looks good on me, you know. It'll be me that gets the easier job next time. That's how it works. Sausage Fingers complains about everything, he never shuts up about it and that's why he gets the same shitty jobs over and over again, I don't know how he doesn't see that. Even when we're doing prep or whatever, I'll get the peppers and he'll get the onions. There's reasons behind everything and he'll never get it'.

The Importance of Working Together and Flexibility

The hotel demands that the kitchen has to be ready for service on time; whether it be for restaurant service or event dining. With many restaurant customers booking on the day that they intend to dine, it is often difficult to know in advance exactly how many will be served on any given night. Although the chefs can and invariably do go by experience, this is never an

exact science. Even within the restaurant, the chefs are often expected to deliver numerous dishes simultaneously, at speed and of a very high quality. For the most part, this involves a rigorous consideration of the numbers of diners involved, the number of chefs working and the number of components to each dish.

Like any occupation, without order and the methodical execution of specific appointed tasks, the kitchen would be chaos. During event dining and functions, the chefs all collaborate on the same meal, in a similar fashion to an assembly line. The workers refer to this as ‘the pass’, meaning the line-up of chefs and workers, with each body being responsible for a specific item of food. The waiting staff will walk down ‘the pass’ with their plates, and as they do so, each worker will give them the allocated amount of one specific item for the dish to be complete. The Head Chef (or senior chef if he is unavailable) invariably heads the line, with meat being given first. The remaining workers of the pass will be responsible for the rest of the items, usually potatoes and several types of vegetables with the Sous Chef (or the next senior chef if the Sous Chef is at the start of the line) at the end, being responsible for gravy and the final inspection of the dish. This ensures that each dish contains the set amount of produce and that each item is placed in an identical position. When the chefs were questioned regarding the need for uniformity, they invariably answered that it was for ‘presentation’ purposes. However, this also fits in with my earlier analysis of artificiality (see Grazian 2008), that it extends beyond ambience and décor to include the food itself and its presentation. As each diner will have paid the same amount to receive the same meal, it is imperative that each of these meals is identical to the next, for fear that, one customer could complain if another receives something extra, be it an extra slice of meat, Yorkshire pudding or potato. This form of ‘product standardisation’ (Gilpin and Kalafatis 1995) is seen throughout the hotel’s many functions.

Within the kitchen, the chefs also need to multitask even under immense pressure. One way of facilitating this multitasking is to limit the options available to customers by restricting the menu choices available. This is very common for the high-numbered events that they cater for, as they invariably produce a very restricted menu or even a set menu, but is hard to achieve in the restaurant as customers expect a varied range to be readily available. In the

restaurant, while there will always be a set number of dishes available to customers, there is no way of evaluating exactly how much of any one dish will be needed: therefore, the kitchen staff must always be prepared. Even when the chef's work appears chaotic, it is still grounded in individual action and collective effort and is always structured to an extent that aids getting the job done. Talking about restaurant service, Ryan noted,

'It can be crazy sometimes, you get orders coming in here and there and there's no consideration of how we're doing. They just bring them in, call them away and we're the ones that deal with it. I know it's not their fault [the waiting staff] they're just doing what they get paid for, same as us really, but we have it much harder. You have to know exactly what's happening at any given time. You need to work out how long the salmon's been in and how long it's gonna need to finish off, you need to know how long it's gonna take for the well done [steak] to finish and what time you need to put the others in if they're medium, for them all to finish at the same time. You can have a table of six or eight and everyone want something different. You'll have me, Chef and Lewis doing the restaurant and we all need to know what we're doing, what everyone else is doing and what's happening. You have to think ahead to what's needed and you need to know what's going on at any given moment. You have to know how they work, like Lewis will always say out loud what he's doing and he'll talk through everything he does. But like when Charlie's in, he doesn't so you have to ask him for updates every now and then. You have to have eyes everywhere and you can't take your mind off anything for a second. After a busy night, we're fried'.

As Ryan highlighted above, the chefs in particular are trained to think alike and work cohesively as a unit. This is instilled into each of them throughout their time in the kitchen. They need to know how the other works and they need to know that what they are doing is being taken in by all involved. They need to communicate effectively when they work together as when they fail in this task, mistakes are often made.

For the Good of the Team!

During my time in the kitchen it was evident that it thrives on teamwork, and that each chef holds their ability to work within this specific team in very high regard. Whilst tensions do arise within the kitchen, the chefs often need to make allowances for this and they are adamant that they can never take anything to heart. Each of them is well aware of the

pressures of the job, and most outbursts are usually forgotten by the end of the shift, being attributed to the hectic pace of service and the stress of work (see also Morris and Keltner 2000). They stressed that work done for the team is of paramount importance and every effort was made by all to ensure that this core principle was kept in place, to the point that any members considered detrimental to 'the team' were eventually pushed out.

This is best highlighted by the case of Jake, the 17 year old trainee chef who worked at the hotel for just under six months. He wasn't new to the catering trade, having worked as a kitchen porter for a very brief period of time, as well as spending a few months at a time in various jobs such as carpentry, car mechanics and warehousing. Despite his youth, he was initially perceived by the chefs as being confident and dedicated to the profession, due to the fact that he was punctual and always very well presented. However, the chefs' opinion of him soon changed, as his confidence seemed to give way to arrogance. He was never afraid to speak his mind and this was eventually considered as making him unsuitable for the kitchen as a whole. Jake talked constantly about his life outside of work and was extremely vocal about a number of issues, such as the impact that working in the kitchen had on his social life and his low rate of pay (see McDowell 2003 on low rates of pay and contemporary labour markets). The wage differences within the kitchen are known by all, as are the low wages that the trainees receive; Jake was the only one who was vocal about his disgust at this. In public hee was extremely disrespectful to the managers at the hotel (as many of the kitchen workers were, but always behind their backs) and whilst on many occasions his anger and frustration was justified, the difficulties that he had in hiding his feelings proved to contribute to his downfall. He also appeared to be uncomfortable and inexperienced in professional situations, and failed to acknowledge any form of authority other than the Head Chef. His inability to get on with other members of staff and his apparent aggressive nature towards them made him a 'poor team player', according to the Head Chef. Jake also took an instant dislike to the Sous Chef, and many senior members of staff had to have words with him, though the management did not know this.

Jake came across on many occasions as violent and aggressive, and his chat centred mostly on his drinking, sexual exploits and his apparent fighting abilities. He had been arrested for

fighting on numerous occasions and in the space of two months, he had broken three fingers through violence when out drinking. He found it extremely difficult to maintain a balance between work and play and as the months progressed, he would frequently come in with an evident hangover and be unable to work efficiently after his days off. The Head Chef even drastically reduced the amount of Friday and Saturday nights off he received in an attempt to curb his exploits. Jake was given one chance after another, and following each appraisal, he was more upbeat and showed a vast improvement in his attitude and work commitment. This diminished rapidly over the following days. As a trainee, he was given many mundane tasks to do, and he found it increasingly difficult being enthusiastic and passionate about frying and cooking pizzas for the buffets and he showed no concern over the appearance and presentation of plated up starters and desserts for the restaurant and functions. He would voice his dismay at being given tasks such as these, noting on many occasions that 'these types of jobs should be given to the fuckin' donkeys' (meaning the kitchen porters). As a worker, Jake was overenthusiastic at times, but uncaring at others. He picked up new things quickly, but never seemed satisfied with what he was doing. He sought to progress to the level of 'chef', but wanted to bypass all of the mundane aspects of work that accompany a low position within the kitchen.

The senior members of the staff considered Jake to be a bad influence on the junior workers, believing that he brought them down, and that he had an overall negative effect on the team. They frequently compared him to a past worker who had also exhibited a rather arrogant nature, but surmised that unlike his previous counterpart, Jake's attitude was unfounded, as he didn't have the ability to carry it off. He continued to receive warning after warning, accumulating five separate warnings in his final week for unprofessional behaviour and resistance at work. There was a general consensus that it was a shame he had 'fucked up', and the chefs concluded that he didn't really want the job enough, or maybe he had done until he got it and realised that he wasn't going to be the next Jamie Oliver over night. In my frequent conversations with him, he seemed to be under a considerable amount of parental pressure to make something of his life and when he started, he already had quite an expansive list of jobs and apprenticeships that he had started and failed to follow through. This all contributed to his downfall in the kitchen, and he was finally fired when he 'grassed' on a fellow worker who

had lied about being sick in order to take a day off to watch a football match. Jake and the kitchen porter in question had become rather close in and out of work, and the Head Chef found his betrayal of his fellow worker to be unacceptable. The Head Chef had already guessed what had happened, as the kitchen porter had repeatedly asked for that specific day off, but his request was denied due to the high level of business that the hotel had on at the time. The Head Chef also felt that Jake was questioning his ability to effectively lead the team of workers under him and by 'grassing' on his fellow worker, was suggesting that the Head Chef was unaware of what was going on around him regarding his staff. Jake was 'let go' from work later that evening, after he had finished his shift.

During my observations, the chefs stressed that all workers must be beneficial for the team, and at the junior level, this requirement even outweighed the importance of skill. They emphasised that the greatest attribute a chef can have is the ability to work well with others; if a chef does not, the team becomes dysfunctional. The kitchen clearly prided itself on its 'team commitment' and was proud of the fact that despite the fluid nature of this type of work, it has the lowest staff turnover within the hotel group. I found that whilst there can be a clash of personalities and rivalry is tolerated to some extent, it is not openly encouraged, as it eventually becomes destructive. This is of course highly different to other work cultures such as the financial services where rivalry might be considered an aid to productivity. Within the kitchen, emphasis is always placed on the 'team'; everyone else is just 'staff'. Each member of the kitchen brigade has quirks and preferences to be addressed, and whenever possible allowances are made to accommodate them. Everything is emphasised as being collectively 'for the good of the team', but that team is made up of individual workers who have their own agendas and by promoting and often forcing this sense of 'collective loyalty' and teamwork highlights its actual selfish nature. The environment itself, because of the hours and general working conditions, supports the belief in a 'community' and a common shared culture. This has been referred to as an 'engineered culture' and as Ezzy (2001:637) notes, 'individualism is reinforced by the superficiality of the workplace 'family''. Fine (1996:137) also highlights;

'Emotional ideology belongs to workplace culture and connects directly to theories of organisational culture. All workplaces, but small workplaces in particular, have

cultures that emerge from doing the work...the culture becomes a reality for all those who are a party to it'.

The Concept of Solidarity

As was highlighted in the previous chapter, a sense of pride in the completion of hard labour is frequently traded on by the kitchen workers and the concept of solidarity was bred amongst them in a conscious attempt to bind them together. It also acted as a psychological way of holding onto some pride whilst doing a physically draining job that was often very unrewarding, especially for those lower down the hierarchy (see also Williams 1982, Willis 1997, Dennis et al 1969). The kitchen appeared to be structured as a community out of sheer necessity, in a bid to accommodate the constraints and demands of the workplace. The workers do share common space and have no option but to get on with one another, and when someone comes along who upsets their structure or perceived 'happy family', they are quickly weeded out (as was the case with Jake).

Friendships and bonds did emerge within the kitchen and, in a similar vein to previous forms of industrial labour; they appeared to be borne out of hard times. During the quieter periods of the day the chefs spent as much time as they possibly could preparing for upcoming events and service and the vast majority of this was done as a group around the central prep bench within the main kitchen. During this time, as a way of combating the tedious nature of their work they would talk and joke, and generally try to make the experience as pleasurable as they possibly could. The friendships that were created at work determine many of the workers' experiences of work within the kitchen, and this was mentioned on many occasions by the chefs and kitchen porters. They appeared to be united by work and the often torturous nature of its unique working conditions. With many of the chefs and workers pairing and grouping off according to skill level, ethnicity or age, friendships and bonds were quickly formed for the period that they worked together. For the kitchen to function efficiently the workers within it, need to be comfortable there. The metaphor of the kitchen team as a 'family' appeared to be intended to facilitate loyalty and commitment, and this term was used frequently by all involved within the kitchen.

Fine's (1996:112) observation that working kitchens constitute a 'minisociety' was also witnessed within the kitchen that I observed. During my ethnography, I found that the chefs and kitchen workers were almost trapped in that particular environment and that the interactions and friendships that were formed provided each worker with perceived sense of belonging, in a similar vein to the industrial era. On the surface, the kitchen appeared to be structured as an intimate community that is based around a hierarchical framework and a seemingly unending sense of loyalty. This was experienced on many occasions throughout the ethnography. Due to the high levels of occupational mobility that can be found within kitchens, social and professional networks and friendships appeared to be cherished by the workers. However, what appeared on the surface to be intimate relationships that stood the test of time and distance, were just as instrumental as any other contemporary relationship (see Winlow and Hall 2006), as like many working relationships, they were maintained and structured to facilitate an efficient working environment. My observations highlighted that the chefs and kitchen workers have a strong biographical knowledge of each other, which inevitably arose when the workers would discuss all they could do in a bid to relieve themselves of the tedious nature of their job.

Workers would also willingly perform each other's jobs and readily cover for each other, and this promoted what Fine (1996:38) referred to as a 'community of interests'. However, this is also extremely instrumental in origin as they do so assuming that acts of cooperation and support will be reciprocated when needed (see also Mauss 1990). Levi-Strauss (1964) emphasises the significance of reciprocal gift giving and this was mirrored within the kitchen. He suggested that while on the surface, the gift appears to be a generous and genuine gesture, the receiver of the gift feels the weight of expectation: that they are now expected to reciprocate. So the gift is not simply a gift, in the same way that an offer to help a colleague is not simply an offer to help. For structural anthropologists such as Levi-Strauss, it is an example of symbolic exchange, and pragmatically it bonds both parties together in a communal sense of commitment, continuity and mutual need. During my time within the kitchen I witnessed many occasions where the workers would back each other up (especially amongst the kitchen staff themselves), and the workers frequently acknowledged that their

loyalties lie within the kitchen, as opposed to with management or other departments. Loyalty was highly valued within the kitchen, and this was drilled into all new members of staff. The emphasis that the chefs placed on loyalty and the hierarchy that structures the kitchen is even extended into their private and social lives. Even when the chefs and kitchen workers could partake in a rare night out together, the hierarchy was always in place and the Head Chef still maintained his title of 'Chef' as opposed to his Christian name. It was even known that workers who had left the hotel years previously would still refer to the Head Chef as Chef when they were in his company. The staff would also frequently engage in reciprocal exchanges of services, namely the provision and reciprocation of food and drink, especially between the bar and the kitchen. Drinks were procured by members of the bar staff for the kitchen, and these were repaid with food, the kitchen's formal form of currency.

A Relief from the Pains of Work

Jokes and humour as a form of discourse are often crucial for binding groups of workers together (see also Griffiths 2002) and this appeared increasingly salient within the kitchen. Humorous attacks on fellow co-workers were essential for both determining the boundaries of the community (Holmes and Marra 2002) and uniting those within it. On numerous occasions, the chefs and kitchen workers expressed that jokes and participation in humorous episodes, such as the one detailed in the following piece of ethnography, reflect a willingness to accept a particular view that is shared amongst the workers and seen as a welcomed relief from the pains of work. Verbal exchanges usually consisted of jokes, piss-taking and wind-ups between the workers within the kitchen, with the vast majority being directed at the kitchen porters from the chefs, and between the chefs themselves. It was very rare to witness kitchen porters playing jokes on the chefs, as this was another instance where the hierarchy was religiously maintained and in some sense, a culture of bullying could be seen. As Salin (2003:1226) acknowledges, 'a weaker party cannot bully a stranger party'. What the workers identified as important was the need to identify what is a joke and the appropriate response to have (see also Willis 1979:193). They noted that you need to 'take everything on the chin' within the kitchen and in a similar vein to Bourdain's (2000:223) observation, comments may be very personal in nature, but are not to be taken as such. In Bourdain's behind the scenes

book on restaurant work, he notes rather explicitly that within these environments, having a sense of humour is paramount:

'But what the system seeks, what it requires, is someone, *anyone*, who can hold up their station, play the game without getting bent out of shape and taking things personally. If you are easily offended by direct aspersions on your lineage, the circumstances of your birth, your sexuality, your appearance, the mention of your parents possibly commingling with livestock, then the world of professional cooking is *not* for you. But let's say you *do* suck dick, you *do* 'take it in the twins', it's no impediment to survival. No one really cares about that. We're too busy, and too close, and we spend too much time together as an extended, dysfunctional family to care about sex, gender preference, race or national origin. After level of skill, it's how *sensitive* you are to criticism and perceived insult - and how well you can give it right back - that determines your place in the food chain' (Bourdain 2000:223 original emphasis).

Many of the workers were well versed in such expressive forms of verbal humour and although their practical jokes can sometimes be considered cruel (see Bloisi and Hoel 2008 on abusive work practices and bullying within kitchens), their focus is usually centred on actual food production or the subversion of the management's authority and status, although this was never done whilst any of the management was present in the kitchen. During the ethnography, the workers exhibited a rather peculiar fascination with 'whipping' (the wetting of kitchen towels and thrashing each other). This was witnessed constantly throughout my time there, and was evidently a very painful experience for those being whipped, with large bruises and welts appearing almost immediately. This however, never stopped the workers from frequently exposing themselves to such a rather sadistic act, with many sometimes offering themselves up to be whipped:

It's now 2.20 p.m. and the last of the mains have been sent to the diners. The desserts are still going out, but these are predominantly being dealt with by the waiting staff who are on hand. The chefs slow their pace a little as service ceases and the kitchen shifts from the fast pace of service to something more leisurely. Frank, one of the kitchen porters, decides that now would be a good time to demonstrate his towel-whipping abilities. Ryan, one of the chefs, agrees wholeheartedly and immediately grabs a towel and starts whipping it from side to side, the

crack of the towel ringing loudly above the general din of the kitchen. Waiting staff quickly scatter from the kitchen as Lewis, Charlie and the Head Chef seize towels of their own. Everyone in the kitchen is now armed with a towel, which are being whipped against every surface possible. Nothing in the vicinity is safe and, as some towels have their ends dipped in water to increase the damage they do, the noise they make quickly overrides all other noises. The chefs and kitchen porters shout and cheer as Ryan cracks his towel with such force that the end breaks off and threads fall to the floor. Everyone looks on in amazement, and Ryan shouts for Frank to come over so he can crack the towel against him. To my surprise, he does and Lewis takes a towel and dips it in water in an attempt to match Ryan's towel-whipping accomplishments. Both of them repeatedly crack their towels against Frank, he yelps, and jumps from side to side as they whip him. In a way, he seems pleased that he's started something that the chefs approve of. The cheers eventually die down as normal work is resumed, and food is brought out as they prepare for the next function of the day. We start taking the food from the main kitchen to the function kitchen and the trays are laid out on the benches.

There are twelve trays of roast potatoes on the prep bench and two large bread trays full of peas. Ten large meat roasts are out in flats under the hot plate and the vats of soup are steaming away. Elliot, one of the kitchen porters, brings in another two trays of roast potatoes and bread trays full of carrots and parsnips. Frank, Elliot and Jake start mixing up the veg and putting them into trays so that there is an even number of each vegetable in each tray. This is to ensure that they can serve up from one tray instead of having to use three different trays. Old Tom, another kitchen porter, comes over and complains that he's stuck washing up while they are all 'playing chef'. Everyone laughs and the banter steps up a gear again. The Head Chef brings the Jack Stacks through and more bread trays full of food from the fridge. He tells the workers that when they've finished what they're doing they need to cover the trays in cling film. As soon as he leaves, the lads immediately start messing about with the cling film: covering their faces with it and sucking through it to make it pop. When they finally tire of this, they start to cover the trays with it. Boxes are being shifted from one kitchen to another and everyone's laughing as Robert shows Frank and Sausage Fingers how to cover the bread trays with cling film properly. There's lots of laughter as the workers get on with their

allocated tasks. Frank taps Robert on the shoulder and he turns to see Frank with two frozen peas shoved up his nose. Elliot creeps up behind him and slaps him on the back of his head and they fall out; one is found on the floor and the other lands back in the tray of food, unseen by the workers. They laugh and search for it for a short while before giving up and getting back to the job in hand.

During my ethnography, I found that the workers are often justified their sense of humour and play, believing that it should be extended as far as possible to strengthen the community, to provide a relief for the boredom of work, and drain excess levels of energy. This relief from the boredom of work, was also acknowledged by Collinson (1988:182) in that 'humour can operate as a means of denying the boredom [and] ... may also be the means by which social frustration and conflict can be expressed in ways that reduce hostility and maintain social order'. However, regardless of this, they were adamant that the play should never get in the way of work and on numerous occasions, I witnessed humorous episodes stop suddenly when work required the workers' attention. Humour was continually cited by the workers as contributing to the overall satisfaction of their occupation, noting that it helped keep their 'spirits up' in the long, mind-numbing hours that they spent there. Their jokes, remarks and actions were more often than not directed at their working situation, their co-workers, customers, the equipment and management. Their remarks were often intended to establish the community that they were a part of and to undermine the authority of those who were not a direct part of that community, particularly members of management. For the most part, the workers' humour required an open awareness of the context of the humour and its purpose. This was most evident with new starters to the kitchen who often appeared hurt, victimised and very confused by the whole thing at the very beginning. They were explicitly told very early on of the need to be aware of the level of humour that permeates the kitchen, and the need to be able 'to take a joke'. The chefs would tell them that they needed to distinguish between themselves as 'participants' in any ongoing reciprocal act as opposed to a 'victim', and this appeared most salient with the kitchen porters as they were often those who were expected to 'participate' more than the chefs. For an outsider looking in, as I was, many of the jokes and humorous episodes appeared to border on victimisation (particularly if one low ranking member of staff was repeatedly targeted) and assault (as was the case with whipping,

which left visible bruises). In a way, the chefs almost required that each worker sacrificed themselves for the amusement of their co-workers, for the 'good of the team' and the 'community'. However, others such as Bloisi and Hoel (2008) have suggested that the culture of kitchens and the chef's socialisation within them, as well as the transient nature of the industry may in part offer an explanation as to why abusive behaviour such as this is tolerated (see also Salin 2003 on bullying within the workplace).

Food naturally plays a large part in a chef's working life and this was an evident focal point for their humour, featuring heavily as both a prop and a target. Within the kitchen I observed, the deployment of humour on the part of the kitchen workers was one way for them to achieve some small level of satisfaction or enjoyment during their working hours. As Elliot, one of the Kitchen Porters pointed out:

'It can be great, a real laugh sometimes. But like, it can depend on what's happening and that. I suppose it's like that everywhere really, but you never want to be the one on the receiving end, not all the time anyway. But there's not much you can do about it. [Why not?] Well it's not like you can really say no. It's best to just go along with it and do what you can. I don't think it's as bad as other places, like Harry would tell us about what he's seen and it never seems that bad here. It's never all the time and we can have a good laugh, but when it has to stop it has to stop. We can't carry on without their [the chefs] say so'.

However, as this also shows, humour never really allows for the workers to cope with the strains of the hierarchical structure that is in place, and this in itself caused friction when some members of staff persistently teased and targeted specific lower status workers. It also draws parallels with Collinson's (1988:182) observation that 'there is also a substantial amount of evidence suggesting that joking does not always constitute a shortcut to consensus and social harmony'. While a mutual appreciation of humour within the workplace was highlighted by the workers as contributing to their overall levels of satisfaction and enjoyment at work, it was far from a continuously harmonious working environment. In reality, the structure of humour within the kitchen strongly mirrored the formal hierarchy that was already laid out, with many of the jokes being aimed directly at the kitchen porters. Spending up to fourteen hours a day together inevitably creates a perceived bond and sense of

relationship. They often use banter and jokes to test each other's boundaries, and this seemed to make them happy in what could often be a hellish environment to work in. More often than not, the workers appeared confident in each other's presence and could often be witnessed seeking a fellow workers' advice on personal matters, of which everyone gave some input. No matter what job they were stuck with, they always tried to make the most of it. Washing, cleaning, waiting for food to cook and endless hours of preparation becomes tedious, and workers amused themselves whenever or however possible and jokes and humorous incidences were replayed shift after shift, no matter how pointless or petty they appeared on the surface.

Conclusions

Connections and relationships between the workers were established in the kitchen because they shared tasks, interests and experiences. However, concrete relationships appeared to be quite rare, as the majority of friendships and relationships appeared to be born out of necessity. These relationships appeared both transient and intimate at the same time, with almost a forced sense of closeness being attributed to their work colleagues, as if they were resigned to the fact that their colleagues were their new 'friends'. The kitchen also appeared as a community formed purely out of need and workers help each other out with tasks because it promoted a smoothly run working environment and they knew that these favours would be reciprocated in the future. The kitchen was made up of a relatively small number of workers and they shared experiences and learned vast amounts regarding each other's biographies through their personal narratives. The hierarchical structure was still maintained but was diffused with jokes whenever possible.

For any organisation to run smoothly, workers and participants must feel that they 'belong'. This seemed to be achieved by promoting the metaphor that the kitchen constitutes a 'family', or a 'community'. This was used to increase worker loyalty and, from my observations, the workers appear to commit to this notion rather voluntarily. Many cited the tight friendships in the kitchen as one of the pleasures of work and exhibited an overt emotional concern for each other's wellbeing. The workers displayed a sense of community that was evident both in and

outside of work. Some stayed late to ensure that tasks were completed more smoothly with minimum pressure exerted upon others. Others commented that it was 'where their friends were'. As many had lost touch with their non-chef friends due to the unsociable hours and lack of free time on a weekend, the only ones they were able to share their free time with were others who were available during the same periods, mostly other chefs and kitchen workers. Many of them perceived 'closest' friends were their work colleagues.

The chefs were keen to retain a social and professional network of workers and friends that extended far beyond the locality of the kitchen. Social networks are maintained through work, and work networks are maintained through sociability. These informal networks serve as a pool of suitable workers ready to work, often at extremely short notice. These networks are important and constitute a major source of recruitment within the industry as a whole. They are highly valued and are evident at every stage of the chef's career. This intertwining of workers and their relationship to one another is commonly referred to as the 'brick wall' of kitchen organisation (see the following chapters). Due to the vast expansion of the hospitality industry in recent years, it has now become a major employer within Western society. However, admittance into the industry is dependent more than ever upon these informal networks, with many trainees gaining admittance into the profession with no certified experience or qualifications. This was the case of the three youngest chefs in the kitchen. Whilst one of them had some level of limited experience as a kitchen porter, he had no formal training as a chef. Another chef had experience as a waiter and the other acquired his job because his mother was an employer of one of the Head Chef's friends. Trainee chefs and kitchen workers are predominantly sourced through this network and recruitment often starts with the phrase, 'Does anyone know anyone who wants a job?'. This will be explored in further detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

Cooking

Introduction

Examining the structure of the chefs' working days, this chapter highlights the reality of preparing and cooking food for the consuming public. It explores techniques of synchronisation within the kitchen, the structure of service, busy and slow periods and techniques of culinary knowledge. It also considers the informal nature of learning which is crucial in any occupation but appears most salient within this specific locale (see also James 2006). Theoretically, this chapter will investigate the actual processes of food production within the kitchen, examining the socio-economic and productive processes involved in bringing food from producer to consumer. It charts the application of skill and expertise, which goes into each plate of food; examining to what extent skill and expertise is an actual part of the job. It also compares these enacted and learned skills with the popular reverence given to culinary skill in contemporary society. According to Kagan (1998:285), the instrumental value of such culinary skills is important:

'It is the usefulness – the instrumental value – of culinary skill that provides part of the basis of the intrinsic value of that skill. Were culinary expertise to somehow lose its instrumental value (if we no longer needed food, and if it no longer gave us pleasure), it would lose at least some (and perhaps all) of its *intrinsic* value as well. Indeed, it might be suggested that something very much like this has gone on for other practical skills, where technology has robbed a skill of its instrumental value, and thereby reduced or eliminated its intrinsic value as well.

Structures within the Kitchen

During my ethnography, I observed that the chefs and workers' time is highly regulated by the practicalities of preparing and cooking food to order. The practicalities of cooking food

include the varying times and temperatures that each item of food requires in order to be served at its best. The paying consumer dictates this, albeit within a specific timeframe that is set by the hotel's opening hours. Although customer choices are restricted and manipulated whenever possible through limited menus, the choices that they do have available can also determine how food is prepared. This is best illustrated by the case of steaks, as customers may prefer to have them rare, medium, or well-done and this need to cater for specific preferences impacts heavily upon the structure of service for the chefs. The economic demands of the hotel also dictate not only when the chefs need to be at work or their hours of service, but also what the chefs are able or permitted to produce during this time. As a business, the hotel needs the chefs to produce dishes that allow for as much profit as possible (with the Head Chef having to aim for no less than 70% gross profit on all dishes), and this greatly affects what the Head Chef is allowed to order and therefore what can be served to the public. This has also been emphasised by Young and Corsun (2010:82), who argue that, 'in hotel restaurants, top management is increasingly demanding that cooks adhere to tight budgets and, in effect, is seizing production control, potentially diminishing the cooks' artistic control'. For example, some foodstuffs may be too expensive to serve, as the customers would be unwilling to pay such a high price. The hotel is a high-end three-star luxury establishment that promotes itself as being 'all about quality', and although it does not provide the level of cuisine offered by the perceived culinary elites, it is well known locally for offering a very high standard of quality food. The kitchen does have a reputation to uphold and all of these demands have a powerful influence on every aspect of the chefs' working environment.

More often than not, the chefs are expected to produce numerous dishes at any given time. The restaurant seats around eighty diners, but the numbers that the chefs could be expected to produce food for at any one time will vary. During the busiest restaurant shift that I witnessed at the hotel, the chefs were catering for approximately forty diners over the space of around an hour. Whilst there is always some overlap within restaurant service, due to the fact that the chefs will work on several dishes at any given moment, this volume was noticeably high and it appeared to place a great deal of strain on the small three-man kitchen team, as well as on the kitchen porters, who were charged with the task of cleaning the metalware used and getting it back to the chefs so they could continue with service. It is during this time that

the chefs are able to show the extent of, or lack of, their professionalism and competence. The same can be said of the functions that they cater for. The numbers for these events can reach as high as 1400 and although they often produce an extremely limited menu when compared to the restaurant, they can be particularly difficult to negotiate due to the volume of work needed to be done beforehand and the large amount of dishes that need to be churned out in such a short space of time. In a practical sense, the chefs face hurdles at every corner, particularly concerning the level of oven and stove space needed to produce food for such a high volume of customers and more often than not, the customers and management are unsympathetic to the problems that the chefs face. This is best highlighted by the wedding functions that the hotel provides for. During the wedding season, in a bid to make as much profit as possible, the kitchen can host up to five weddings in one day. This is a distinct bone of contention for the kitchen workers. The hotel promotes itself as 'the North East's ultimate wedding venue', claiming that:

'The breathtaking elegance and style of each room enables us to offer you a truly memorable and enjoyable wedding. The magnificent [Georgian] Suite comfortably accommodates up to 350 seated guests. We also have the ability to change the size of the room with the use of acoustic sliding screens which enables us to arrange the Suite to a size to suit your wishes. Also available is the elegant Boyne Suite and the contemporary John Burdon Suite both available to seat 120 guests. During the summer months the Paddock Marquee with its own private garden and lovely views make it a special venue for the traditional summer garden wedding accommodating 150 seated guests. Larger Marquees are available throughout selected months of the year which can seat up to 1500 guests. All this, gorgeous gardens, the idyllic setting of the Hardwick Country Park ensures a beautiful location that is picture perfect for your wedding day. Our experienced wedding team applies perfection as standard and values every bride and grooms individual requirements and tastes. With superb attention to detail and expertise they are on hand every step of the way.'

As this piece of advertising highlights, the hotel prides itself on offering an individual experience for its guests, but it also has a strong desire to make as much profit as possible. This combination can produce a very stressful environment for all of the chefs and kitchen workers involved. Management purposefully creates a façade, in order to sell each function and guests expect a high level of treatment and attention, as this is what they have paid for. However, hosting five weddings in one day, the majority being in the space of just a few hours,

takes a physical, emotional and professional toll on the kitchen staff. Minimal staff, limited space and equipment, and the sheer volume of covers place a severe drain on the kitchen teams as they struggle to make each wedding feel special. Meanwhile, the owners of the hotel pay little attention to the hardships endured by the workers.

During this time, each member of the team invokes some form of personal organisation to help themselves and the kitchen run more smoothly. As previously noted, prep takes up a large proportion of the chefs' work-time and is a vital aspect of their job. Prep also forces each individual worker to engage in a team effort to ensure that each section of the kitchen is coordinated and therefore allows the kitchen to function efficiently. Each task that the chefs engage in demands a number of different considerations regarding the dish that they are cooking. Firstly, the chefs must be aware of the individual components of the dish (each individual piece). They need to take into account how long each individual item will take to cook, aiming for each item to finish cooking at roughly the same time. Whilst items may be placed under the hot lights to keep them warm, this has a tendency to dry out the food and reduce its aesthetic and palatable qualities, so the chefs try to avoid this wherever possible, particularly within the restaurant, where the aesthetic qualities of the dish appear to be most salient to both the chefs and the customers (see Fine 1992 on the aesthetic choices and constraints of culinary workers and how 'aesthetic work' gets done). When several chefs collaborate on the same dish within the restaurant, each takes ownership of a separate component (for example one may focus on sides and another on the main, or several chefs may focus upon specific parts of a main dish when the restaurant is quiet) and they need to communicate to each other to ensure that they are all aware of the progress that each is making.

Secondly, the chefs need to be mindful of the competence of its weakest member. During the early months that I spent in the kitchen (before Jake arrived), Lewis was the weakest chef, being the least knowledgeable and the least experienced. Although he was of a level that allowed him to work within the restaurant kitchen, his lack of experience constantly ensured that he was placed either on basic starters, salad duty or on basic prep for the desserts, as these tasks required minimal supervision and minimal knowledge. It was only when he had

gained enough confidence completing these tasks that he was allowed to advance to more challenging ones within the kitchen. This will be discussed in more detail further in this chapter.

Work

As previously noted, all kitchen work revolves around customer demand. The chefs do not cook one dish after another, but often cater for many diners and tables simultaneously; preparing, cooking and coordinating the execution of several dishes concurrently. The restaurant is open for business for an average of four hours each night, and when the kitchen is steady away, the chefs usually have to continually prepare dishes during this time for their customers. These dishes are each timed differently, and each requires individual attention. For example, a chicken breast, a well-done steak and a Salmon fillet will all take differing times to complete and the chefs must be aware of when each was placed in the oven or grill and remember how long they have been there. Knowing what to do and when to do it often determines the chef's competence level in the eyes of their co-workers and themselves and this is one of the areas that Lewis was deemed to be lacking in, hence his continual relegation to basic tasks. During my ethnography, I discovered that synchronisation needs to be negotiated between the workers and executed with precision as disaster often occurred when this is not achieved. It does not look good for the chefs if the mains' meat is ready fifteen minutes before its sides are ready. Through experience, the chefs know how long food takes to prepare and cook, and they need to organise their working time around this. Main courses in particular are approximated with consideration of both their specific cooking times and the length of time which customers are expected to spend on their starters.

Customers for the most part, however, desire their food to be ready when they want it and, to the chefs' annoyance, they would frequently complain that the dishes were taking too long to arrive at their table. In reality, the customers would only have to wait an average of thirty minutes; an acceptable length of time to wait, according to the chefs, who habitually commented that fast-food establishments and ready-made meals had made customers ignorant regarding 'real' cooking times in 'real' restaurants. Chefs have a duty to prepare, cook

and serve food when it is at its peak and when working together in the cramped boundaries of the hotel's restaurant kitchen, the chefs must work in harmony with one another, both physically and professionally. The restaurant kitchen was the smallest of the three kitchens, and this provided many restrictions on movement. The chefs would frequently work up against one another, their arms reaching over each other in a bid to check the progress of pans and food under the grill.

The Paradoxes of Working Life

During my ethnography, I found that the workers reacted differently to slow and busy shifts, but what is interesting to note about each shift, is that they each can produce a demand for its opposite.

It's 7.20 p.m. and the chefs in the restaurant kitchen are waiting for the first cheque of the night to be brought through. It's Tuesday night and the restaurant has been open for almost an hour, with no customers having been received so far. The Head Chef comments that they've been over-efficient today as this quiet time would usually be used to prepare for upcoming events and dinners, but as business has been quite slow today, the chefs have been able to do all they need to in a very short space of time. They try to keep themselves busy by talking about films, but their chat soon dwindles away to nothing. Ryan tells the Head Chef that he's going to start preparing the veg for tomorrow's service, but is told to leave it; that if business is slow tomorrow as well, they'll need something to do then. He shrugs his shoulders and starts to taunt Lewis about his new haircut instead. After another agonising twenty minutes, a waitress comes through and tells them that they have their first customer of the night. Quickly the dynamics of the restaurant change and the three chefs move to their stations and check that they have everything in order. Knives are picked up, pans are placed on the stove ready, sauces are checked and cutting boards are quickly given another wipe over. The chefs stand ready awaiting the relief from boredom that the order will bring them. However, when the waitress announces that it's a medium fillet steak main course, they let out a collective moan; this is obviously a disappointment. The Head Chef takes one of the prepped fillets from the fridge under his station and places it in a pan to quickly seal it before

putting it under the grill. Ryan takes out a large field mushroom and slices a tomato in half, ready for the garnish. They resume their stances at their stations, reluctantly continuing their talk of films. Steaks are considered a rather boring aspect of kitchen work, not a particularly taxing task and apparently not one that is enough to relieve the boredom, even tonight. The notion of 'boredom' was highlighted by Barbalet (1999) as the absence of meaning in an activity and the same train of thought can be applied here.

No more orders have come into the kitchen since the steak was sent. It's now almost 8.00 pm and the Head Chef informs me that it will be a *very* slow night. I gathered as much from the bored look on the chef's faces. Ryan starts chopping some chives for the garnishes and comments yet again that he wishes he hadn't prepped so well the night before. After they have cleaned down their benches for the third time, the Head Chef announces that he can't stand it anymore and they might as well start prepping the chicken for tomorrow night's dinner. He gets 300 chicken wings from the fridge and all three of the chefs get underway, covering them with herbs and oil before putting them back in the fridge. Overall, this takes the chefs less than twenty minutes. Ryan jokes that the thin weak-looking wings remind him of Ste, a former worker. This prompts a little piss taking of their previous colleague, which again quickly dwindles away to nothing, as they all agree that he was a good lad and they miss him. The chefs get back to their workstations, occasionally yawning as they try to combat the boredom. Lewis even asks if it's ok if he can go and give the kitchen porters a hand upstairs, but he's told that there's no need to do that as they'll be just as bored as the chefs are. The Head Chef uses the time to review the order book for the kitchen and he triple checks the menus for tomorrow night. The chefs continue to chat and wipe down their stations and I've never seen the restaurant kitchen looking so clean. They serve a further three customers before closing the restaurant at 9.00 pm, half an hour earlier than usual. It has been an agonizingly slow shift.

What is interesting to note about the 'slow shift' (and the 'busy' shift) is that they are fine examples of the paradoxes of working life: that each extreme can produce a demand for its opposite (see also Fine 1990 on the temporal constraints experienced by chefs). When the workers are busy they want to slow down, when they are slow they want to speed up. One

possible explanation for this paradox is the aggressive incursions made by work into subjectivity: that we cannot simply 'be'. Modern life demands that our time is filled somehow. Regarding the tempo of work and techniques of organisation, Fine (1990:96) states that,

‘Although they are external to individuals, they affect job performance and satisfaction because of how they are experienced and negotiated. This negotiation is evident when time is felt as unpleasant or dysfunctional (when there is either "too much" or "not enough" time).

The existential point here is that when we have nothing practical to do our time would not be spent in quiet contentment. It also needs reiterating here, that the absence of work cannot be understood as 'leisure'. In many ways, a slow shift is more difficult because one cannot really tune out amid the chaos of total absorption as one can during a busy shift. As the above piece of ethnography highlights, when there is nothing to do, the workers experience this time slowly and often quite painfully. Although they try to act leisurely, as was the case of with Ryan's attempts to discuss films and the like, it usually proves fruitless. However, even during a busy shift, the workers are not completely happy, as the following ethnographic insert highlights.

Preparation for the function continues as the Head Chef brings in three large tins of apples for the applesauce and Harry brings through a trolley stacked full of various raw meats. They briefly battle for space on the central prep table, but Harry emerges triumphant as the meats still needing to be prepped before they are put into the ovens. The tins of apples are placed precariously on the edge of the table and are moved from table to bench and bench to table as space is at a premium today. The meats are quickly laid out and covered in oil and herbs, and as many as possible are crammed into the ovens. They need approximately two hours to cook and the ovens then need to be free for the next set of meats. Those that are left are placed under the hot-plate and await their turn in the oven. The Head Chef quickly runs through what's in each of the pans with Harry so that he's up to speed on everything that's been done so far. There's a lot of activity in the kitchen, with everyone running back and forth between the two kitchens and the stores in a bid to get everything finished on time.

Harry quickly leaves and returns with another flat full of sausage stuffing. As the radio reminds us yet again that it's Mother's Day, the Head Chef asks how they can forget it with the amount of work they have to do. He opens the tins of apples and searches the shelves for two small vats for the applesauce, before retrieving them from the kitchen porters' station. He tells the kitchen porters that they need to be more on the ball and get the pans out to the shelves as soon as possible after they've been cleaned. Frank tells him that they're going as fast as they can considering all of the kitchen porters aren't in yet, but he's interrupted by Harry who tells him that they *need* to work faster. The Head Chef drops the pans on the floor and they clatter around, their sound echoing throughout the kitchen despite the high levels of noise. Robert and Jamie bring through the large vat of soup that they've been preparing in the function kitchen. The pan measures around 3ft in diameter and a foot and a half deep. It takes the two of them to carry it through, and you can see the strain on their faces as they place it down on the floor. They tell the chefs that they'll need a hand lifting it up to pour its contents into the Bratt pan, a large 120-litre heavy duty unit that is used for heating high volumes of soup and sauces. They're told that no one is available at the moment, so they leave the pan on the floor. More ingredients are brought from the stores and the Head Chef hides a container under his apron so that I can't see it. He tells me that it's his secret ingredient for the hotel's 'famous' mint sauce, and that if I make everyone a coffee he'll let me into the secret. I agree and he sticks to his word; it's a jar of readymade mint sauce. I make coffee for everyone, grateful for the break from my task. I've been chopping onions for over an hour now and I still have another hundred to go. Charlie comes through the kitchen and the Head Chef asks him if he's finished the task he was set. He laughs and reluctantly says yes. I understand why, as he's immediately given another job to do.

Harry brings another large pan through and puts it on the floor next to the one Robert and Jamie left. He starts spooning the soup from the old pan to the new one; he does about a half and when it's light enough to lift he pours the contents of the large pan into the Bratt pan, before taking the smaller pan through to the function kitchen for them to use. The pan that Robert and Jamie brought in had already been used once to make the soup and reheating it a second time would risk burning the sediment at the bottom, so the contents are transferred to

another pan to prevent this. He takes the used pan over to the wash-up area and the kitchen porters moan as it adds to their already heavy workload. The Head Chef decides that now would be a good time to go and check that the workers in the function Kitchen are behaving themselves. He comes back after around twenty minutes with several boxes of mini pastries for the staff. Everyone tucks in and although I didn't realise it at the time, this would be all I would have to eat for the next seven hours.

The Head Chef tells the kitchen porters that now will be a good time to go and have their break, as it'll be a while before they get another chance. I'm told to go with them and make sure that they don't exceed their twenty minute allowance. When we walk back into the kitchen after the quick break it hardly seems like the same one we left. There's been a massive change of pace. It's 9.10 a.m. and the extras kitchen porters are now in. After the cool air outside, the heat is the first thing to hit me. Working in the kitchen as it slowly heats up to this temperature is tolerable, but walking straight in from outside is almost insufferable; there is no air at all in this kitchen and with no doors or windows that lead directly outside, it is likely to only get worse as the shift continues. The kitchen itself looks chaotic; pans and flats are being washed and put away as quickly as possible and the noise that is coming from the clean-up area is easily drowning out the din from the other workers. The mountain of boxes and half-finished flats of food on the central bench have almost doubled in size since I last saw them, and many of the cardboard boxes are now strewn on the floor as well. The radio has been turned up another notch so that it can be heard over the din and although Sophia, one of the kitchen porters, is doing her best to sweep the floor, she gives up due to the sheer amount of traffic that is constantly going past her.

The majority of the waitresses are now in and they've accumulated at their usual spot on the other side of the hot plate, well out of the way of the kitchen area but close enough that they can still interact with the staff there. Their shrieks and laughter easily pierce through the noise of the washer and the radio; it's not a pleasant sound at all. The kitchen staff are trying to have a tidy down but there's no where to put anything, as everything that is out is needed. There are six pans of various sizes on a stove that only comfortably accommodates four and boxes are being thrown from one place to another. Various members of staff are carrying trays, each

having to negotiate the sheer volume of rubbish on the floor; trolleys of various foodstuffs are being brought through and the chefs are running around, trying to get everything finished on time. Their voices are raised in a bid to be heard, shouting orders at each other, swearing and laughing as the day produces mixed emotions in them all. The kitchen porters are hurrying to shift the mountain of metalware on their benches, having to work much faster than normal to keep up with what's being put there and what's to come. They've even started filling the sink to wash them manually, as the washer isn't fast enough. Food is being taken out of the ovens and left wherever possible. Every surface is covered.

Oven the commotion I hear Martin, one of the waiters, shout 'Are you working today?' followed by a loud cheer. I look up to see that Dan's in. He's a previous worker who left about seven months earlier to take up a higher position at another restaurant. The Head Chef makes a beeline for him. They shake hands and he's then asked to help move some boxes. 'Yes chef' he replies, giving his former Head Chef the standard answer of compliance as if he was still under his employment. I ask him if he's helping out today, but he tells me that he's not, he's been asked to but is working at his own place of employment; he's just come through to borrow some chutney. He says his goodbyes to everyone and leaves almost as quickly as he came. The chefs quickly go back to what they were doing and the noise starts again. Sausage Fingers comes over and shouts 'Merry Christmas' to the chefs, acknowledging that today is going to be a busy day, comparable to Christmas, but his shout is ignored. Breakfast service is well underway and Sue, one of the elderly waitresses, comes through and asks the Head Chef for one boiled and one fried egg. He jokes, 'Only if you know the recipe', before delegating the job to Harry. He puts the fried egg on; the pan looks tiny in comparison to the others on the stove, which have to be adjusted once more to make room for it. It ends up tilted at an angle, in between the vegetarian and bean casserole and a pan of boiling water.

When the restaurant reaches its capacity, or when a function is ready to be served, there is invariably a dramatic shift in the kitchen that is evident to everybody involved. What the chefs deem as 'the rush', involves a short period of time in which they are pushed to their limit; this can also occur when they are trying to prepare for a function while at the same time having to cope with the demands of normal service (as in the case of the ethnography above). The

optimal working pace for the chefs is 'steady away', which lies somewhere in between slow and busy. With regards to the restaurant, the chefs are aware of diners who have booked in advance but when these are coupled with 'walk-in' diners, this can push the kitchen to its limit, as the workers often struggle to cope with the unforeseen demands that these diners bring with them. The same applies for periods of prep than need to be done alongside normal service, when space and staff are already at a premium. However, customers are invariably unaware that the kitchen is being 'hammered' and still expect their food to be ready when they deem that an appropriate period has passed; this serves to further highlight the divisions between the front and backstage. Slow and busy times represent a distinct period of kitchen life, and the comportment of the chefs during these times differs immensely from normal periods of work.

Busy periods often result in conditioned responses and automatic, rapid movements: there is never time to discuss what is happening, but every chef needs to be aware of everything that is going on. Cooking during these busy periods often entails split second decisions, with no time to negotiate or talk through the possibilities of different courses of action, making this another area of work where competence and skill are determined. These busy periods are frequently talked about and analysed post-shift, usually in the staff room over a pint at the end of the working day. When the chefs' workday is particularly demanding, the kitchen is often beset with an air of tension and the chefs and workers are notably more ill-mannered and sarcastic. These tensions need to be aired so they do not affect work relationships. During busy shifts, chefs often find it difficult to maintain control over the orders and workload and can find it even harder to re-establish control if it is lost. During my time in the kitchen, the chefs frequently acknowledged that during busy or slow periods, they find it hard to work to their usual standards and they are prone to making mistakes. As the following quote from Charlie highlights, however, by blaming these mistakes on the chaos of the rush or the slow pace of quiet periods, they are able to maintain their sense of competence and skill and therefore allowed to 'save face'.

'It can be hard when it's busy. We only have so much space and if the ovens are full then what are we supposed to do? We can't be expected to be at our best when it's like that and they never let us say why we make mistakes. But we know why'.

Culinary Knowledge and Familiarity

The kitchen that I observed, as the above ethnography highlighted, had a number of informal procedures classed as 'shortcuts', that are used to aid the chefs in completing their tasks and somewhat lighten their heavy burden of work. I found that within the kitchen, shortcuts are both necessary and natural to the chefs. They revolve heavily around their knowledge and familiarity of food and taste, and very often, the diners' lack of knowledge and familiarity. As is highlighted in the ethnographic extract below, Ryan was able to concoct his own version of French dressing and although it did not adhere to the traditional recipe, it was convincing enough for the diners to accept it as the genuine article. Within the kitchen, this level of inaccuracy is tolerated, and to a certain extent, the chefs expect it, as it frees up a lot of their time. Similarly, shortcuts can cover up the mistakes they make; for example if they split a fish that is supposed to be served whole, this can easily be covered up by the use of sauces or garnish. What I found through my research was that the chefs are allowed a certain degree of flexibility with their work and in a way, they are allowed an opportunity for error that is often denied to other occupations that rely on total accuracy. A chef's job is not an exact science and as the majority of it is conducted backstage, it allows for a certain level of ambiguity and the exploitation of diners' lack of knowledge regarding cooking and taste (see also Bourdain 2000, Fine 1996).

One of the waitresses comes through to the kitchen and tells the chefs that table 9 has requested some French dressing for their salad and some Parmesan for their Tagliatelle. The Head Chef tells her that the dish already contains those ingredients, but she shrugs and tells him that the customer wants more. He then asks Ryan if he remembered to dress the salad and Ryan replies that he always does. The Head Chef tells the waitress that it's fine and that she needs to ask Max, another chef, to grate some Parmesan and get a small ramekin for the dressing. She does so and takes a small porcelain container over to Ryan for him to put the

salad dressing in. 'Fuck', he shouts, 'We've ran out'. He takes some containers out from the fridge under his bench and mixes whatever he has to hand. He dips his finger in the dressing and tastes it; dissatisfied with the taste, he adds a little more oil and repeats the process. Finally happy, he gives the ramekin to the waitress and tells her that it should do, as the customers won't know any better.

The chefs' job invariably centres on creating dishes to order, either individually in the restaurant or en masse for a function or event dining. Within the restaurant, a set menu is followed and this allows for minimal creative input from the lower status chefs. Every dish needs to be produced in a similar fashion; if a customer orders king prawn linguine with sun-dried tomatoes on two separate nights, the dishes need to be as uniform as possible. This is often difficult as the chefs are shown how to make the dish, usually by the Head Chef or the restaurant Chef, Charlie, and then they are left to it. During my ethnography, I found that the Head Chef would check on them every now and then (if he is not working in the restaurant), but for the most part he was content knowing that the chefs under him will not put too much of their own spin on the dishes. However, this does not apply to those dishes that are classed as 'specials'. These dishes run for a very limited time, usually for no more than a week and often as brief a period as a night, and they allow for some creative interpretation on the part of the chefs.

Creating a dish for the restaurant centres on the collective input of several members of the kitchen team and although this is often unbalanced, all need to be in tune to ensure that it works correctly. Usually the most senior member of the kitchen brigade will be in charge of mains (or the main component of the dish) and all other aspects of the dish, its sides, garnish, extras, starters and desserts are given to the remaining chefs, usually in order of rank. For example, the senior chef will usually be in charge of the mains or the meat part of the main dish, and the Commis chef will be on its garnish or accompaniments and the trainee will be on sides. Members of the team need to perfect their senses and skills in order to ensure that the dishes are complete on time (Fine 1996). This involves experience, knowledge and an appropriate familiarity with the kitchen equipment and each other. Depending on their competence, skill and experience the chefs employ a variety of skills and knowledge to ensure

that this is done. The senses are extremely important within the kitchen, and are vital for the work. This was highlighted anecdotally by Bourdain (2000:80) in that, 'obviously, if you have no sense of taste or texture, and no eye for colour or presentation ... then all the equipment in the world ain't gonna help you'. As my research highlighted, touch is considered to rival taste as an indicator of completion, as was often the case of steaks; where the chefs would squeeze the steak, as opposed to cutting it open to ensure that it was at the right consistency appropriate to its level of completion (rare, medium or well-done).

During my time within the kitchen, I also found that taste was often considered a matter of personal judgement as opposed to a concrete fact and this allowed the chefs some liberties with what they created (as seen above). The chefs within the kitchen appeared to be constrained by the demands that the customers and managers place on them, and each brought with it certain assumptions that the chefs needed to take onboard. The chefs often exhibited high standards concerning their work, and this needed to be offset against the demands of management who invariably demanded high profits and low labour costs. This was also highlighted by Young and Corsun (2010:82), who suggested that 'in hotel restaurants, top management is increasingly demanding that cooks adhere to tight budgets and, in effect, is seizing production control, potentially diminishing the cooks' artistic control'. During my ethnography, it was evident that these two aims were highly incompatible; however, these demands were built into the structure of the kitchen and were eased somewhat by the use of shortcuts by the chefs. This allowed for chefs to give the impression that they were producing something wondrous for the diners, without reducing the profits of the hotel by overspending on particular items.

Following wider trends in dining, many of the customers of the hotel desired food that was completely made from scratch, however, at times this ethic was impossible for the chefs to maintain. At the functions that the chefs catered for, with the high volumes of diners in attendance, the use of readymade sauces and other ingredients was vital. The Head Chef and his 'secret ingredient' for mint sauce best illustrate this. I was told that to make up enough mint sauce from scratch, for such a number of customers would have been detrimental to the hotel's profit motive due to the ingredients and labour costs needed. It was cheaper to buy in

the readymade mint sauce and this was justified because overall, the customers were none the wiser. The chefs heavily frowned upon this use of 'convenience' foods within the kitchen; however, they did allow their usage in small doses, but as Ryan points out, they are ever keen to state exactly what their limits were in this matter:

'It's not that we don't like using them, we just don't have to do it all the time. That's the difference. Some places use every readymade sauce going, like [one of their suppliers] tells us about all the sauces that they do and which places use them. We don't work like that, not for everything. There's times when we have to, but that's just cos we're not allowed to spend the money on doing it. Like Max's a fully trained pastry chef, but we can't have him make all the desserts from scratch as it'll cost too much so we have him make some and we buy in the ones for the functions. That's just how it is, but that's different. We don't use Smash [readymade potato mix] and we never will'.

This corresponds, in some respects, to what Fine (1996:28) refers to as 'culinary de-skilling' and is overshadowed constantly by the profit motive (see also Lyon et al 2003 on the deskilling of domestic cooking). As highlighted above, the chefs often complain that the owners and managers set unrealistic goals that force the chefs to use some convenience foods. The chefs invariably encountered problems reconciling what customers and management required of them, with what could realistically be prepared in the given time, with minimum labour and minimum expenditure.

Learning the Trade

The concern with aesthetic issues takes on a different level of salience for chefs higher up the hierarchical ladder. Workers advance within the kitchen hierarchy as they demonstrate competence and a level of skill deemed adequate to their position and job titles change as individuals mature professionally. Entry level chefs are required to routinely perform tedious acts of manual labour as well as basic food preparation and their work tasks can easily be comparable to the current 'McJobs' that permeate contemporary service work (Lindsay and McQuaid 2004). Although these jobs are not restricted solely to them, and I witnessed many occasions where senior level chefs would participate in these acts, they do routinely constitute lower level chefs' requirements. As the chefs progress through the ranks, they are given more

responsibilities and more authority within the kitchen. Responsibilities emerge when the chefs demonstrate talent and competence. The more experienced chefs are required to routinely create dishes and be innovative within the given boundaries of their work. The aesthetics of food are highly important to the chefs, but given the restrictions that are placed on them, this could simply be reduced to the addition of cream to a soup, swirled around in the centre of the bowl to give a pleasingly aesthetic twist to what would otherwise be a rather bland looking dish. During my ethnography, I found that making food a feast for the eyes as well as for the stomach was of great concern to the chefs. They considered presentation to be paramount and they did all they could to ensure that the dishes they produced looked as pleasing as possible. The chefs stressed that part of enjoying food is in its presentation; sauces are drizzled in a zigzag-like fashion over dishes as opposed to simply being dumped in one corner. Individual products are also given consideration with regard to their contrasting colours and texture. Meats are cut and served at an angle, and are placed closest to the diner when they are served, and items are served in odd rather than even numbers.

All of this is learned through the kitchen's informal style of teaching (see James 2006). The chefs do not adhere to a standard classroom style of teaching and learning, but gather their knowledge and skill from participation in the kitchen, from watching and copying the techniques of other, more experienced chefs. This way, the chefs develop a tacit understanding of what is required of them at various stages of their careers. Due to the informal nature of learning within the kitchen, this process can appear to be rather disorganised and haphazard, but is nonetheless effective. Techniques are learned through the processes of working and in effect new workers are simply thrown in at the deep end with regards to what they have to do. New recruits may be confused at the very beginning, but they learn as they go along and become more knowledgeable the more they do. During my time within the kitchen, the trainee and low-level chefs were often unsure of the job requirements and other simple taken-for-granted tasks such as how to use the stoves or hold a knife correctly, but these aspects of their work were quickly picked up as their time there increased. They learn through watching, imitating and asking questions, as the following ethnographic extracts highlight.

Lewis, the trainee chef, questions the Head Chef regarding one of the starters, asking if they're using tinned pears for it, as opposed to fresh. Ryan (a slightly more senior chef) jokingly slaps him around the back of the head and tells him not to be a dick; they're trying for a Rosette! He tells him to go and get some pears from the stores, which Lewis does and awaits direction on how to peel them. The Head Chef takes one, holds the stalk and starting at the top, works his way down the pear, cutting away the skin, keeping to its shape with fluid movements of his knife as Lewis watches. He completes that one and starts another, leaving it half way through and handing the knife to Lewis as he continues with the salmon that he was working on. Lewis slowly completes that pear and continues with the remaining ones. He's slow and tentative in his movements, looking at the Head Chef's finished one every now and again for guidance; when he completes each one, he places it next to the Head Chef's pear for comparison. When he's finished, Lewis asks how much sugar is needed for the pears and the Head Chef tells him that he'll show him. He takes a standard sized cup from the rack and scoops out two cups' worth of sugar into a pan. He tells Lewis to pour some wine over them, cover them with foil and put the pan on the heat. He also reminds him that he needs to be careful when cooking them, as they need to be poached and not mushy. Lewis places the pan on the heat and proceeds to stand over it, lifting up the foil every now and again to look at the pears. He asks the Head Chef if he has the heat right and without looking, the Head Chef says that's fine, but he needn't stand there watching them as they'll be ok for a while yet and he has salad garnishes to be getting on with. Lewis points out diligently that he has spilt some wine on the foil and asks whether that's ok. The Head Chef laughs and says yes.

During another shift in the restaurant, Ryan preps the smoked salmon, creating origami-like shapes on the plate as Lewis stands beside him watching. When he's finished that task, the Head Chef asks Ryan if he remembers how to prepare the king scallops needed for the main courses. Ryan replies that he doesn't, but will figure it out, and he is left to it by the Head Chef. The scallops are still in their shells and it's quite a messy job. Ryan receives no direction on how to prepare the scallops, and tells me that he was shown earlier in the week how to prepare them and that he's expected to remember; it wouldn't have looked good if he needed showing a second time.

Like many new recruits in the kitchen, during the early months of my ethnography I was highly confused by the nature of kitchen work. The activities and movements of the workers within the kitchen appeared to happen simultaneously, and although on occasion the chefs worked to a specific schedule of tasks, they would frequently work without explicit instructions. My observations of the workers and of how they went about doing their job proved to be the most effective way of learning, a technique that I soon found that was paramount to every new starter. Having initially been told what I was expected to do, my actions were predominantly determined and developed by watching and imitating the other workers. It was only on a rare occasion that I was actually shown what to do and if I was shown, I was only shown once. For the most part, as with the other low-level chefs, I was expected to watch and imitate those who had more experience and knowledge. The sheer variety of the jobs to be done and the high levels of business made it almost impossible to allow for anyone to partake in any kind of formal training and it was through the imitation of those I worked with that I rapidly acquired the level of knowledge needed to get through each allocated task successfully, and eventually the shift as a whole. Watching how the workers worked, how they held their knives, the movements they made when chopping, the way they held each product, the methods that they employed in order to check temperatures and the visual appearance of food when it was done, proved to be how techniques were learned and how knowledge was accumulated in such an informal learning environment. Observation and practical experience was the main source of learning within the kitchen as was imitation and repetition. You can guarantee that after fanning over three hundred sections of melons over the course of a shift, you can do the task in your sleep.

A good example of this would be during one of the preparation days before a large function. A variety of chefs were at the hotel; the full and part-time workers who were employed there, a vast selection of the Head Chef's professional acquaintances and numerous members of agency staff. The kitchen had been busy for most of the day and a break was looming on the horizon for the workers. One of the Head Chef's professional friends asked if now was good time to bring in and skin a fawn that he had in the back of his car. Finn, the chef in question, is the Head Chef at a nearby prison. This prison borders lands where deer are frequently hunted and earlier that morning Finn was given the fawn by one of the local hunters. He

accepted the fawn and since then it had been in the back of his car. He is told that now would be good time to bring it through, as the young chefs have yet to see a deer, or any other animal, fully skinned and butchered, and this would be a good opportunity to show them. The Company Chef Archie also agrees and excitedly goes to retrieve his knife set in preparation, keen to show off his butchery skills. Finn goes to retrieve the fawn and brings it through to the kitchen.

He has wrapped it in a blanket to carry it through the public areas of hotel, mindful that the chefs are not permitted to bring meats into the kitchen that have not been sourced through authorised suppliers. He discards the blanket once he is in the kitchen, and places the young deer on the central prep bench, which has been cleared of debris. The animal is full: head, fur legs and feet are all intact. The kitchen staff start to congregate around the bench as the more senior chefs line up alongside the deer, being quickly joined by waiting staff and bar staff as word quickly gets around the hotel. I am told that this is the first time that anything like this has happened and everyone has come to witness what is apparently a monumental event. It constitutes not only a break from the routine that they are all subjected to on a day like today, but also a spectacle that none have seen before. The Company Chef, Head Chef, Finn and Robert all have experience in butchering and after arguing over who gets the task of dressing the deer, the Company Chef claims seniority and takes over. He starts to gut the deer and removes its entrails, before severing the head and removing all the skin from the animal and taking off its hooves. Many of the waiting staff are repulsed and leave the kitchen, but the chefs watch with fascination. Archie talks through every cut that he makes, telling all those around the bench what each cut of meat is, what it is best used for and how best to prepare it. The smell is particularly unpleasant and the sight itself is no better, but I too am fascinated and cannot tear myself away. Members of management have also joined the circle, and they too are mesmerized by the sight in front of them.

What this piece of ethnography represents is the impromptu nature of learning within the kitchen. The kitchen team had never witnessed an animal butchered in this way and the Head Chef told me that it was a very good experience for them to see how the butchering is done professionally and that it gives them a better understanding of the meat, by knowing what

part of the animal it came from. This event was one that stuck in the workers' minds for quite some time afterwards. The techniques of 'cheffing' as a whole are derived from periods of on the job training such as this. Observation and socialisation within the kitchen is crucial to the development of trainee chefs, especially in a profession where paper qualifications are often considered redundant. I was told on numerous occasions that the most valued or 'marketable' quality a chef can possess is experience, which obviously departs somewhat from the contemporary trend towards paper qualifications. Although workers can obtain relevant catering qualifications, these are generally regarded with high levels of cynicism and disrespect. They are perceived by many chefs as completely irrelevant to the industry as it now stands. Archie, the Company Chef mentioned on many occasions that catering colleges today are producing unsatisfactory students who are not fully prepared for entry into an industrial kitchen. He put the blame on current colleges' biased commitment to audits and pass-rates as opposed to offering courses and levels of training that were relevant to the industry.

Debating a possible career change, the Head Chef had looked into the possibility of lecturing at a local college but found the experience rather deflating. Having spoken to several current lecturers regarding their general student intake, many had commented that they would not wish their students on anyone. They claimed that the majority of students that are referred to them through school training centres are low-level academic achievers, many of whom have severe problems in an academic learning setting, or those that have been suspended or expelled. Bearing in mind that the hotel is situated in an area that has at least four major North Eastern colleges in the vicinity, one is a COVE institution (Centre of Vocational Excellence) and all of which offer NVQs in catering, not one in the last seven years has approached the hotel to take on a student for work placement. Management, however, are quite fond of paper qualifications and were keen to see their lower level chefs accomplish them. Within the kitchen, Ryan and Lewis are currently working through their NVQ's which are paid for by the hotel itself. Ryan was working towards his NVQ Level Three, Advanced Apprenticeship in Hospitality Supervision. He had already completed Level Two but skipped Level One due to its irrelevancy. As he commented,

'I didn't do level one as I was told it was pointless, just covered the stuff that I'd already learnt from being at work, cos I'd already worked there for about a year and it just covered really basic stuff, so I started doing the Level Two, there was no point doing the Level One if I was already capable of doing the Level Two. Level Two was on preparation and cooking with more focus on the skill side. It helped cos I was learning stuff that we weren't really doing at work, like how to prep meat cos I wasn't really doing much of that at work, how to make pasta, soup and stuff. For the Level Three it's more about the running side of the kitchen; orders, rotas, stock. I think it'll help more in the future as I'd like to run my own kitchen and that. They're quite good in a way but sometimes they can be a bit pointless, you feel that you're doing quite a lot of paperwork for something you've already been doing. Like I'm already doing the work, but why do I have to write down that I've already done the work?

The only experience I'd had was when I was like at home, when I was at my Dad's he used to make me cook, just basic stuff like curries but at least I had some knowledge of being in a kitchen and the timing, which is important. But really I just had the tiniest bit of knowledge, not much. I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do at first. But I did like using food and that, so I thought I'd give it a try. We learn just through practice and watching, like you see how to cook it, what to put into it, what temperature and how long for, we just watch and then practice yourself. You experiment on yourself and you learn your knife skills by watching and cutting yourself, and how to hold the knife. You get told how to hold the knife but you learn techniques through practice and watching. It's a learning experience really.

I do enjoy it, but I think I'll have to move on somewhere else. Progress is slow in one place and there's only so much you can learn. The more you move on the better positions you can get, better money and faster. You can learn off different people, different styles of cooking. I'm starting to feel as though a change is necessary; I think I'll be out by the Oyster [festival].'

Formal training through college is spurned by most in the kitchen; instead, the chefs opt for a 'classical' form of on-the-job training and experience. Cooking skills aside, on-the-job training is seen to provide trainee chefs with more valuable 'real world' skills. The chefs cited that they learn how to work as a team and how to cope in a real kitchen environment, particularly with reference to the hours and the pressure involved, as these are seen to be the most valued skills that need to be mastered. They also cited that they learn to take criticism, and be 'a real chef'. Many of the workers have formal qualifications but highlight the banality of the methods used to obtain them. Having a supervisor check that you can boil an egg, know the recipe for bread and butter pudding or tick boxes in a long list to certify your competence reflects the artificial

environment of college training and in no way compares to the often-harsh realities of the industry itself.

The closest process that the kitchen has in reference to an informal system of training is when a trainee or junior chef is taken 'under the wing' by a senior chef (Fine 1996, Bourdain 2000). This is a highly valued experience for all involved. Being fast-tracked through the ranks of the job is considered by many to be a privileged experience. It is not, however, an act that is meant to solely benefit the low-level chef. If the relationship works out, it can ensure a job for life for the trainee chef alongside their mentor. For the apprentice who is successful, they are able to obtain a job pretty much anywhere within their mentor's professional network, and due to the relatively informal recruitment processes involved in the catering industry (Dornenburg and Page 2003), will almost guarantee them a job with their mentor no matter where he is. For the mentor, they have a worker who is trained to their exact standards, who knows how they work and how they want things done. As the Head Chef explained, 'get enough of them and you have the perfect team'. However, this does have its downside for the establishment. I was told by the chefs of numerous instances in their past, that what is often common practice within a kitchen is that when the Head Chef leaves, the kitchen is gutted of its staff. If another chef is brought in to replace the one lost, then the owners and management have explicitly spurned the skills and dedication of the Sous Chef, which in itself causes friction and resentment among the ranks. The new chef brought in will invariably want to make changes, adapt service to their specifications, and most, importantly, will attempt to bring in their 'own team', usually those deemed competent from their previous job. The same will happen at the chef's new place of employment; they will make every attempt they can to ensure they create a die-cast replica of their previous kitchen and bring in their own team. This highlights the centrality of the Head Chef as a focal point of the kitchen structure and as a major player in the workers' professional lives (see also Bourdain 2000).

Conclusions

The chefs aim to advance to the top of the hierarchy that they are bound to. As they mature, they set and reach different professional goals, and this has a profound impact on how they

see their work. Working their way up the hierarchy within a kitchen demonstrates a recognised achievement of competency and skill. Trainees and Commis Chefs are essentially told what to do and have no creative leeway, however, as they progress they are given more autonomy over the aesthetic choices that they make, and eventually have the skill and knowledge to prepare and write their own dishes and menus. However, as always, this is done within the confines of the hotel and what is and not allowed. The tasks required of the chefs vary greatly in skill and expertise, and they invariably prefer those tasks that allow them more creative input and output. However, the allocation of tasks is determined by skill, which is closely intertwined with power and hierarchy.

Chapter Eight

Economy and Identity

Introduction

The hospitality industry is now an immense contributor to the overall economy and accounts for an average of 1 in 13 jobs (Oxford Economics 2010). This chapter will consider the hotel and the kitchen in direct relation to their 'economic value'. In doing so, it highlights that the logic of profit accumulation structures the cultures of the kitchen and shapes them in some way; particularly how they are restricted by what they can produce and sell. It also explores theft at work, acts of deviance and considers the kitchen workers as units of production, the kitchen itself as a site of production and the notion that 'chefs are commodities', a phrase that the Head Chef used on many occasions during my time there. Of course, the Head Chef (or any other member of staff) is a worker selling his skill to an employer, but the 'commodity', in the usual sense, is the product of his labour. In this instance, the idea that the worker is himself a commodity is reflective of currents in contemporary neo-Marxist thinking, that the capitalist creates subjectivity by defining what is recognisable as a human: someone with skills, who works hard and is amenable. Someone without these skills is less than human. In this sense, the worker is transformed into that which is recognised by the capitalist as both a product and a producer. This is reiterated by Hall et al (2008:25) in that recent developments in the labour market, 'meant a reversion back to the raw exploitation of early capitalism as workers were once again cast as totally expendable and exploitable units of production'. In this sense, workers really do, waste their lives to earn a living (Gorz 1982:7) as 'they may eliminate the degrading characteristics of work, but they cannot endow it with the characteristics of personal creativity' (ibid:9)

It investigates the network of workers that inhabit the kitchen, what is referred to as the 'brick wall' of kitchen organisation and the interlocking of workers and their relationship to one another. It also examines the constraints that the chefs work under with reference to this, particularly the implicit demands of the company for them to make money, the pricing and

costing of food and labour, and the consequences of these constraints. It highlights the often-volatile relationships between the chefs, customers, managers and proprietors, comparing what the chefs want to do with what they are allowed and required to do in order to make money. It explores the tensions that exist between the employees as units of production in relation to their ability to generate profit, and the notion of chefs as an artisan, a skilled worker who must be freed from the restraints of traditional labour practices in order to produce high quality, aesthetically pleasing 'artistic' food. In both practical processes, the profit motive underlies the whole business of making and selling food, but the chef as an artist implies a barrier that keeps out the worst excesses of the profit motive, humanising it, in as much as the capitalist recognises that the chef as artist must be indulged if profit is to result from his labours. However, as Fine (2004:453-454) notes, 'the image of the dedicated artist working in isolation, impervious to the influence of other colleagues seem to apply only frequently – mostly in regard to naive artists'. With the managers and owners demanding that every aspect of the hotel generates money, the chefs that I worked with were under increasing pressure to cut costs and the other members of the kitchen team were pushed into working more quickly. As Young and Corsun (2010:79) highlight,

'In what used to be a job characterized by freedom and the ability to be a creative, talented artist, now the job of cooks in hotel restaurants is changing. Cooks face a situation similar to that faced by skilled craftsmen at the turn of the industrial revolution. Trained administrative level personnel have wrestled control from the cooks, and many cooks believe that local and corporate level management care more about profits than presentation and quantity over quality'.

Another constructed image of the chef is as an overindulgent perfectionist or a bullying tyrant, and this theme will be explored in more detail. It will argue that what matters to these workers is not the respect that comes with the image of being a skilled artisan promoted by the media and wider culture, or the psychological satisfaction of a job well done. I have demonstrated at numerous points throughout the thesis that there is fun and camaraderie to be had in the kitchen, and the workers do engage in collective efforts in order to complete their tasks. However, although these episodes do offer the workers some respite from the

monotony and drudgeries of their labour, it must be acknowledged that the workers are still immersed in a certain level of dissatisfaction and anxiety concerning their work.

The chapter highlights that the creativity of the chef is curtailed by the demands of the market and the ceaseless need for profitability; that only a tiny percentage of chefs are indulged and fawned over. It also explores how the chefs as skilled kitchen workers, feel about this process, and questions whether real creativity is actually able to coexist with economic reality. It suggests that the actual skill of cooking well is something to retreat to, rather than an active constituent of the contemporary work process. The chapter then explores resistance in the workplace, where those at the bottom of the ladder resist by stealing food (see Johnson 1983 on fringe benefits in the hotel industry). It also considers how the kitchen employees feel about their job, exploring their attitudes towards career-development, biographical trajectory and their 'leisure lives', in light of the limitations they are under. It discusses the relevancy of skill and expertise to the workers and their occupational identity by focusing on their measurements of self-worth in relation to their jobs. By examining their working standards, their preferences towards creativity and passion as opposed to 'assembly line' function service, it highlights that their conceptions of self-identity are intricately bound to their work (see also Fine 1996).

This chapter suggests that while it is possible to find windows of happiness at work, to fight back a little against the oppressive nature of kitchen work, ultimately it does not provide the workers with the emotional tranquillity that comes with a fixed identity; knowing who you are and where you are going. It relates this to feelings of anxiety and dissatisfaction that are indicative of contemporary work cultures and particularly those workers who believe that they have no voice (see Standing 2011). During modernity, we were encouraged to see ourselves as members of a community and our identities felt fixed and stable, almost an organic construct. Postmodernism and consumerism has killed this stability, as we now choose our identities and there is nothing organic about our sense of self these days (Bauman 1992); nothing is stable and nothing can be relied upon (Bauman 1998). Work, for example, can be satisfying, but the majority of work is not (see Hall et al 2008). We often know that we are being

exploited, but feel incapable of doing anything about it, just as we know that there are better jobs out there, but we cannot see a stable path to take us there.

Economic Value

Whyte (1949:302) acknowledges that, 'the restaurant is a combination production and service unit' and the same can be said of the kitchen (it provides both a service and a product). As Nayak (2006:814) points out, 'the dearth of manufacturing jobs in Western nation states has in part been supplemented by an expanding service sector economy' and evidently, the chefs and kitchen workers who populate this thesis straddle this divide, remaining part of the declining number of manual workers, yet also part of the rapidly increasing population of service workers. It must also be reiterated here that the kitchen itself forms part of an organisation that exists to make a profit; it belongs in an economic system, and cannot be separated from the economics of society. Consequently, the chefs' work appears to be characterised by a blending of mass-production methods and artistic craft-like procedures, especially when you compare restaurant and function service. Function work and the preparation of high volumes of standardised products that it entails, as well as the 'assembly line' format of how the chefs work, can easily be compared to the likes of Beynon's (1984) study and highlights issues such as alienation that were touched upon in Blauner's study of industrial work (see Peterson 1965). He describes alienation as being the 'degree to which the worker has lost power over the productive process' (ibid:83) and finds that feelings of alienation are high for automobile workers, but relatively low for textile print workers as 'they have retained their craft autonomy' (ibid:83). This is comparable to chefs' work as it is seen to involve both craft production and assembly line work and although some have made comparisons to those working within the culture industries and those working in a Fordist arrangement (see for example, Banks et al 2000), very few have examined workers whose work straddles both.

As it has been highlighted previously, the chefs in my study preferred restaurant work, however, whatever the individual hopes and desires of the workers, they must shape their work and their products to the preferences of their audiences (and the owners) and quite

often, this means having to churn out hundreds of dishes that the chefs believe are substandard. This was a salient issue for the chefs in my study. At the other end of the scale, the restaurant diners were often rather critical of the restaurant food as it was not 'trendy' enough. With the contemporary focus on 'fine cuisine', many diners are exhibiting knowledge that makes them part of a new breed of the culinary elite; those that are raised on culture's definition of fashionable and follow it to the letter. They have become increasingly mindful of issues such as provenance; however, as a counterpoint to this, they are frequently ignorant regarding the actual processes that go into creating a meal. Therefore the relationship between chefs and customers is a multifaceted one and is in fact mediated by others, particularly culture and forms of mass entertainment such as television shows.

Work Tasks

While some tasks involve a greater appreciation of the sensory dimension of products (such as restaurant work), many tasks do not and are considered to border mass-production methods (function work). Working on 'the pass' or on individual dishes requires different levels of attention and the chefs experience these two diverse tasks very differently. However, they stress that to do their job successfully, they need to possess the ability to switch tasks depending on the immediate needs of the kitchen. Many of the chefs' responsibilities involve basic preparation for the days ahead, which consist of long hours of monotonous and repetitive forms of labour. For the most part, these types of jobs (and function work) are undertaken not out of interest, but merely because they have to be, that one's 'bought' labour is directed to that specific task. Due to certain drudgeries that are associated with work in the kitchen, the workers occasionally have no intrinsic interest in the tedious nature of their work, and during this time, their full focus is simply on getting through the task as quickly and painlessly as possible. This mainly refers to function work and instances of mass banqueting, as in comparison to this, the chefs believed that restaurant work entailed some sense of artistry and creativity. Therefore, to reiterate, work culture within the kitchen involves both creativity and monotonous, uninteresting forms of labour.

Cash-in-Hand Wages

Like many of the casual staff in the kitchen, my wage was paid cash-in-hand. This of course highlights the nature of casual work within this kitchen and the fact that much paid work is hidden from the state (see Williams 2004, Johnson 1983). For workers such as myself and other casual members of staff that were sourced through the Head Chef's network of friends and ex-colleagues, the wage that we received was rooted firmly in this grey economy. My hourly wage differed from £5.50 to £10.00 an hour (circa 2006/2007) and was highly dependent on how hard I had worked, the difficulty of the job I was doing, and how many other casual staff were being used. Rarely was it ever negotiated beforehand. More importantly, it depended on how much money the functions we were preparing for or working at were worth to the hotel. The cash-in-hand wages paid to the casual staff were invariably sourced from the cash-bar at the function and we were usually paid at the end of the day that the function was on, even if the workers had been working for several days beforehand. Whilst the hotel does have an allowance for agency staff and emergencies (which unofficially covers some cash-in-hand staff), this is accounted for and directly affects the hotel's budget. For large company-based functions which had an open bar (where patrons would be able to order whatever drinks they wished from the selection and the organisers would pay), the bill would usually be settled at the end of the night and most often than not, it would be settled with cash. An alternative to this would be that money would be negotiated and given upfront before the event. The money used for the cash-in-hand staff was usually worked into the money paid for the drinks at the bar. Another alternative would be that the prices for drinks would be dramatically increased and some of them would not be officially recorded at the till.

Many of the other casual members of staff already had full time professions or commitments elsewhere. Luke, a frequent casual member of staff and a 'good friend' of the Head Chef was currently working as a Head Chef at another local hotel, and the staff that he brought with him worked for him on a full time basis. He books holidays at his full-time establishment to cover his casual shifts at the hotel during their busiest times, and organises days off for the staff he wishes to bring with him. The remainder of the casual staff were either past workers of the hotel who had changed jobs or contacts of Luke's. For example, Ben used to work for

Luke on a full time basis as a Chef-de-Partie and Leo works for him part time whilst he is studying for his undergraduate degree. Amy had worked with Luke whilst she trained as a chef, until she eventually left to pursue a career as a nursery nurse and Jamie trained at the hotel as a chef for almost two years before joining a welding apprenticeship. They were all paid cash-in-hand, the level of pay depending on their skill level and the level of business. Gabby, a casual chef and a former employer of the Head Chef informed me that any extra money she earns through overtime at her current job is eaten away by the tax she has to pay, which makes her no better off. She works as a Breakfast chef for Luke, Monday to Friday and uses her nights and weekends to spend time with her partner and children. While she admits that she resents working on a weekend, she needs the money, and working cash-in-hand on a allows her to gain some level of satisfaction that she is actually getting something for her time and effort. She noted that Luke normally asks her to cover the weekend shifts when he and some of the team are working at the hotel, but as he is leaving and she has the opportunity to earn extra cash, she will now have to refuse the extra shifts at her present job in order to accept the shifts on offer at the hotel and hopefully take up a more prominent part in their 'network' in preparation for when Luke leaves.

Deviance

Deviance is undeniably a part of occupational life within the kitchen, and to varying degrees can be seen on a daily basis. This was also highlighted by Johnson (1983:191), who stated that:

‘For many years it has been recognised that the monetary wages paid to many hotel workers do not constitute their total earnings. Additional monetary and non-monetary rewards which contribute to total income are a feature of employment within hotels’.

Much of what happens backstage within the kitchen is hidden from the front stage and rarely reported to management. This includes acts of deviance. Most organisations encompass some form of deviance in their work and allow for a certain degree of toleration; however, within the kitchen I observed, a certain level of deviance was fully expected by the staff. During the

ethnography, I witnessed a great deal of pilfering within the kitchen, be it the quick scoffing of strawberries as they were being prepared for desserts, the taking of desserts and mains courses that were left over after dinners, or the sly acquiring of a steak. Most minor acts were considered insignificant and were rarely mentioned (such as the strawberries), as they appeared to be part of occupational life for the kitchen workers and did not impinge too heavily on the kitchen's regular stock-takes. For the most part, however, each act was treated independently, with some workers receiving low levels of discipline, such as an informal telling off, and others receiving a harsher punishment for a similar act, such as a formal warning. For the most part, any punishment given seemed dependant on the individual worker and their position within the kitchen, how long they had worked there, what it was that they had taken and, more importantly, whether or not the Head Chef had given his approval of their actions.

This is best illustrated by Chris, a Polish Kitchen Porter who had worked at the hotel for around six months and was eventually fired for stealing a loaf of bread from the stores. He had taken smaller items of food throughout the time he had worked at the hotel, most of which had been considered insignificant and not worthy of disciplinary action. These were usually a cupful of rice or something similar. The Head Chef commented that he was aware that Chris worked extremely hard at the hotel and received a very low wage in return, and that he didn't mind him taking food so long as he asked first, which he always had done. However, on this occasion, he took the loaf without asking and it was deemed that he had explicitly ignored the Head Chef's wishes that he be informed first. As the Head Chef was responsible for all food stock within the hotel, he needed to be aware of exactly what was in the stores and what needed to be accounted for when it came to their monthly stock take; if not he would appear incompetent. The Head Chef informed me that if Chris had asked for the loaf, then he would have been given it, as the loaf's disappearance would have been written off beforehand as being used for a function or some other occasion.

Pilfering at work has frequently been seen as one way for workers to gain a measure of their true worth from their employers (Mars 1982) and as the case of Chris highlights, this train of thought was evident within the kitchen, so long as the Head Chef gives his approval

beforehand. For the most part, outright theft was considered an offence within the kitchen, which could result in severe disciplinary action, but this was never a clear cut-and-dry situation. I was informed that it had even been used on occasion to get rid of staff, although this was not witnessed during my time there. For the most part however, so long as the kitchen staff kept their actions away from the prying eyes of the managers and asked permission from the Head Chef, the food was theirs, within reason. This was another example of the kitchen's almost secretive, 'us against them' attitude. The management was unaware of these kitchen benefits, as they were given solely at the discretion of the Head Chef, who openly regarded them as a bonus on top of the worker's very low wages. He viewed them as a chance to show the workers under him their true worth and as a reward for their loyalty.

Two elderly members of waiting staff, Sue and Martin, always received a meat hamper at Christmas time from the Head Chef and even this was kept secret from the management. Although on the surface, they were held in rather high regard as workers, the management and the owners would have frowned heavily upon the Head Chef taking stock from the hotel to give to them. As the Head Chef commented, however, the act was not a truly altruistic one, noting that they were his eyes and ears front-of-house, which enabled them to pass on comments made by managers that the kitchen would not be privy to, given its backstage locale. His philosophy was simple, 'look after them and they'll look after you; as they see more of what's going on than anyone, use them as much as they think they use you'. What this resonates with is informal systems of exchange that are proper to earlier forms of capitalist production (see also Mauss 1990).

Positions of High and Low Status

Within the kitchen, the chefs are assigned a relatively high status position and although these vary in rank, even a trainee chef is considered to be a higher position than that of the kitchen porter. Despite this lowly position within the kitchen's pecking order, however, the kitchen porters' standing is also quite ambiguous to a certain extent. This is highlighted in the following ethnographic extract.

It's the start of the evening shift in the restaurant and the kitchen porters are starting to arrive for work. Sausage Fingers comes downstairs and asks if there are any pans that need clearing, completely ignoring the large pile of metalware on the bench in front of him, left over from lunch service. His request goes unanswered by the chefs as they busy themselves with prep and he returns empty handed to the upstairs kitchen upstairs. Ryan raises his voice so that he can be heard from upstairs and shouts, 'He's a miserable bastard, he should've just taken what was in plain sight, he's been here long enough to know what to do'. About twenty minutes later, Danny, another kitchen porter who has worked in the kitchen for about a month comes down to asks the Head Chef if he should take the pans that are there. All three chefs shout 'Yes!' He takes them and asks if there's anything else that they want him to do. He's told to keep prepping for tomorrow's function. When he leaves, Ryan comments more quietly this time that 'He wouldn't wipe his arse unless someone told him to'. The Head Chef agrees, saying 'He's a great worker but he has no initiative'.

Another half an hour passes and Elliot, another kitchen porter pops his head downstairs and apologises for being late. He's told that it's no problem, but he'll have to make the extra time up at the end of the shift. He seems pleased with that response; he looked like he was expecting a bollocking. The Head Chef tells him what needs doing and he quickly starts working on the prep for tomorrow's function. Once he leaves, the Head Chef tells me that they have to keep the kitchen porters busy, even when there's not much work for them to do. It helps keep down the workload of the chefs during busy periods, and prevents management from seeing them standing there idle. He comments that this has happened on occasion and as a result, the manager has overruled the Head Chef and cut the hours of the kitchen porters, believing that their presence was not necessary. The kitchen porters carry on with their cleaning and prepping. After about an hour has passed, Elliot comes back into the kitchen and tells the chefs that he's finished his allocated tasks. Ryan asks if the others have finished theirs and Elliot says that they haven't. He again asks if there's anything that he can do and Ryan tells him that he can set himself on fire, considering Elliot's question to be a stupid one, and that Elliot should have helped the kitchen porters with their tasks without prompting. The Head Chef tells me that Elliot had asked to be put forward for the trainee chef's job but was refused. Ever since then, he's been over-enthusiastic in asking the chefs if there's anything

that he can do. As far as the Head Chef is concerned, however, his constant asking serves to highlight the fact that he lacks any initiative.

It is true that kitchen porters occupy the bottom rung of the hierarchical ladder within the kitchen, yet they are considered the backbone of the kitchen and all the chefs within the kitchen brigade at some point recognised this during my time there. Behind the piss-taking, the barking of orders and the way that they are treated by management, they do provide a vital role within the kitchen and this was recognised by the chefs in moments of reflection. Generally, as the above extract highlights (and has been shown throughout the thesis), within kitchens the job of a kitchen porter is seen as an inferior occupation compared to others. In the United States these positions are held mainly by immigrants, the mentally handicapped and the physically challenged (see Fine 1996). This is mirrored somewhat in the kitchen that I observed with regards to 'employee type', as the vast majority of the kitchen porters who worked there were not easily employable elsewhere; this extended to those with criminal records and those with learning difficulties or specific personality traits which would make them unsuitable for more mainstream employment.

Frank is around 45 years old and is the only full-time salaried kitchen porter employed in the kitchen, earning £13,000 a year. This is his first salaried job. As he is the only salaried and the longest serving kitchen porter, he considers himself to be the 'chief' amongst the lowly rank, however, the other kitchen porters do not consider him to be superior. By his own admission, Frank has slight learning difficulties, and is considered by the chefs to be 'ideal fodder' for the job. He is a recovering alcoholic, dyslexic and has only very basic literacy skills equivalent to that of a young child; however, he knows the job well and for the most part is a hard worker. During his four years there on and off, he has become familiar with the hotel and the workings of the kitchen. He has been a kitchen porter for most of his adult life, and the wage he currently earns is the most he has ever received. For the most part, he is regarded well by the chefs, but has a tendency to voice his complaints within the kitchen; he always has an opinion on how many kitchen porters are in with relation to the levels of business. When the kitchen is serving large functions and the kitchen brigade is split into two to cover both kitchens, he consistently complains that the other kitchen has it easier, no matter which one he is working

in. He does, however, have a deep-seated need for recognition and appreciation and this is tolerated to some extent by the chefs in the kitchen. He enjoys the fact that within the kitchen, his peculiar sense of humour is not considered that offensive, and he enjoys the fun side of kitchen life. Frank had left the kitchen on numerous occasions to pursue other jobs with a better hourly rate. However, he would always return a week or so later, commenting that either the job he had pursued was not suitable for him, or that he had been let go due to his personality, which had apparently, not gone down well with his new work colleagues. The fourth time that he returned to the kitchen, he was offered a full-time salaried position in a bid to stop him leaving again, which he gladly accepted.

The job of a kitchen porter is, without a doubt, a low status job. They occupy the bottom rung of the kitchen hierarchy and are often reminded of such, as they go about their daily tasks. The types of work the kitchen porters engage in are considered unattractive work (see also Toynbee 2003). It is messy, often low paid and unappreciated, however, they do provide a vital function that allows the kitchen to run efficiently, which is recognised by some, such as the chefs, but is often exploited by others, particularly management. It is distasteful work and demands are often made of them from the moment they come into work until they leave. Their presence serves as a constant reminder that such thankless jobs exist (ibid), and this serves to further strengthen the chefs' opinion of themselves and their work as being above this lowly position. This notion, however, can also cause antagonisms when levels of pay are brought into play. New trainee chefs are paid less than kitchen porters due to the overall hours worked and the fact that the chefs are salaried, regardless of how many hours they work.

The skill level within the kitchen as a whole is highly unbalanced, with those in lower positions taking up over half of the kitchen's total population. The ages of the staff are also extremely varied, ranging between 16 and 72, and whilst skill level is a determinant factor in the delegation of instructions, age can never become an issue. However, this has been the source of many antagonisms within the kitchen resulting in volatile confrontations of age versus hierarchy. Young chefs and trainees are required and expected to develop a confident and professional attitude within the kitchen, and part of that involves the delegation of

assignments to others. When the recipient of the orders is an imposing kitchen porter, a young chef may easily run into difficulties. Junior chefs are therefore frequently told to assert their authority over the kitchen porters without doing so conceitedly; they are frequently told to familiarise themselves with the art of manipulation and many copy the Head Chef's 'fluffing up' technique. Kitchen Porters or junior chefs that repeatedly challenge or disregard the authority of senior members of the kitchen are faced with disciplinary action. If a chef is left in charge, then they are in charge, and the chefs need to have confidence, both in themselves and in telling others what to do. This is readily achievable through either careful, and thoughtful manipulation, or more aggressively by pulling rank.

The Blurring of Boundaries and 'Playing Chef'

Due to the nature of kitchen work, the workers often need to work together on mundane tasks such as prep and the plating up of dishes for functions and hierarchical boundaries with regards to tasks, are frequently blurred and problems can arise as a result. There were many occasions during my time in the kitchen when senior chefs, junior chefs, kitchen porters and assistants would work on the same task. During these times, friction would often escalate. The kitchen porters who had not been selected for the task would be forced to carry on with cleaning and would regard their contemporaries as 'playing chef'. The seemingly unquestionable loyalty that the kitchen workers have for one another is often highlighted in stark contrast to the instrumental disposition of the rest of the hotel's workforce. However, even within the kitchen team itself, structural divisions and allocated tasks define its very infrastructure, and when these lines are crossed or even blurred slightly, tensions arise within. Monaghan (2002:533) also noted this in his study of contested hierarchies amongst doormen, in that 'observed hierarchical relations between head doorman and their workers were sometimes positive and productive but they were also more or less exploitative'. Like the head doormen and their workers, the relations between the senior chefs and their workers were also quite exploitative. This highlights further that the notion of a kitchen 'family', a team of workers who band together against the rest of the hotel, is a façade. They are subject to the same antagonisms and tensions as any workforce and any belief that the workers, regardless

of their place in the hierarchy, were friends, was quickly shattered when the chef in charge would pull rank.

The uniform for example, is an overt visual display of status, as with many occupations; all uniforms within the kitchen are clearly defined to immediately categorise the job description and position of their worker as either a chef or a kitchen porter. The chefs all wear an identical blue uniform, with the exception of the Head Chef who on occasion wears a black one. Their attire purposefully marks them as different to the kitchen porters, who are required to wear a polo shirt. This easily lends itself to the visual classification of the workers. Kitchen assistants, however, straddle the line between kitchen porter and chef. Their exact position within the kitchen is ambiguous, and this was seen to create tensions throughout the ranks on numerous occasions. Due to the lack of chefs within the kitchen and increasing levels of business, kitchen porters were frequently upgraded to kitchen assistants for a short period to help with the preparation and service of functions. With this came the much sought after blue chef's jacket, and the change in status and authority would occasionally result in hostility, resentment and unending accusations of being lazy, getting above their station and not doing their 'proper' job. Being taken out of their natural order and placed in the 'higher status' position of a chef or even kitchen assistant was accompanied by both the highs and lows associated with the job. While the remaining kitchen porters were still required to wash and clean everything in sight, the 'chosen one' was expected to follow the instructions laid down to him and this involved giving orders to their previous equals.

Abuse of Power

At the back of the stoves, in the restaurant kitchen there is a visible build up of months' worth of grease. The Head Chef sees me looking at it and comments that the kitchen porters will never be able to shift it, but that he'll still make them try. I ask him why he would give them a task that is fruitless and he replies that he'll do it when there's no more work for the kitchen porters to do, as it will keep them busy and prevent management from seeing them stand idly around. The instance of a manager catching a kitchen porter with time on his hands is one

that is best avoided at all costs within the kitchen. Their low position within the kitchen often leads to them being treated harshly and unfairly by management, as the following highlights.

Towards the end of a particularly busy function, the chefs are enjoying a much-valued period of downtime in the kitchen. They are accompanied by Elliot, a kitchen porter who had been told to join the chefs and take a quick break, as he had been working solidly for the past six hours. He puts down the stack of oval dishes that he was carrying and joins the chefs just as the hotel manager walked through the kitchen, kicking boxes out of his way and cursing. The manager sees the group of workers taking timeout and immediately singles out Elliot, asking him what he is doing. He replies 'Nothing', and the chefs heave a heavy sigh; that is never the correct response to give to a manager, especially one so evidently in such a foul mood.

The manager screams at him to 'Come here'. He does and proceeds to receive a particularly nasty verbal onslaught, his head bent down towards his chest as the manager continues to yell, swear and poke him in the shoulder. He gives no resistance and the remainder of the kitchen team are silent throughout the attack, although they remain where they are and face the two; the other workers in the vicinity quickly turn around and leave. I expect him to burst into tears at any moment but I presume that pride prevents him from doing so in the company of his work colleagues. When the ordeal is over, Elliot hurries from the room and the remaining workers quickly get back to work. A few minutes later, Elliot returns and the kitchen team comment that such a harsh verbal bashing was uncalled for. A few minutes afterwards, the Head Chef comes through and apologises to Elliot on behalf on the manager, but the workers know that this gesture has not come from the manager himself. He then tells Elliot that if he can leave without being seen by management, then he's free to do so. He'll clock him out later, and he'll still get paid for the remainder of the shift. Elliot declines the offer and the chefs appear pleased that he has done so, offering him the chance to come and help them plate up the desserts for an upcoming function.

Bullying appeared to be present within the hotel at numerous levels but was rampant amongst the managers as they regularly singled out the weaker members of staff, typically the younger ones who were new to the environment and believe that their job security would be on the line

if they stood up to them. Aware of the kitchen's closed network and the perceived solidarity, which it holds close, the managers increasingly find ways to work around this to assert their authority and control over a department where their position of respect is routinely rejected by the staff. Severe limitations are imposed on the chefs by management, and through the manipulation of rather mundane restrictions, managers are frequently regarded as attempting to regain or initiate some form of social control over them. This includes the careful timing of walk-in inspections of the kitchen to highlight any particular workers that are seen to be 'fucking about again', the pointless limitations placed on dress-codes, the refusal of any drinking liquid other than water from the taps or occasionally not allowing any unauthorised electrical goods within the kitchen, which would include the radio or fan. The members of management at the hotel use many forms of belittlement, violence, verbal onslaughts and emotional abuse to control the staff, however, the singling out of specific members of staff for persecution and submitting of others to relentless forms of harassment creates a solidifying experience for the kitchen staff. This further widens the division between the kitchen staff and the hotel as a whole, strengthening the commitment they show to one another and uniting the kitchen.

Creativity

There was a clear divide within the kitchen between the restaurant and function side of cheffing. This was predominantly underlined by the amount of importance each chef places on their passion for cooking and their skill level. Less than 2% of the hotels' revenue comes from the restaurant, but it takes up 40% of the workers' time and 80% of their skill level. Functions on the other hand make up around 70% of the hotel's revenue, 60% of the workers' time and 20% of their skill level and while both have their good and bad points, for pure enjoyment and personal satisfaction, the restaurant wins hands down every time. The large functions are not completely devoid of satisfaction, however. During the high profile function events that I worked, I was surprised to see that the chefs would take photos of the events on their mobile phones, often updating them every year with snapshots of the newest ones. They gave these pictures pride of place alongside the permanent photos they had of nights out, proud that they were part of something so grand in stature. From what I observed, these

events were undoubtedly extremely different from the usual level of business that the chefs catered for; the photos were used to serve as further validation of a job well done.

The passion and creativity that is frequently associated with restaurant work stands in stark comparison to the monotonous nature of function service. This highlights the freedom and constraints of the workplace and the work required. Summing up the attitudes of all of the chefs I spoke to, Ryan equated restaurant work with passion and creativity and functions with the 'money grabbing bastard managers'. The Head Chef would also often comment that passion is a dying art in the catering trade nowadays. He would often cite Lewis as an example of this, indicating that he has no real passion for the job, and comparing him to Ryan, who he strongly believed to have such a passion. He equated passion with an overt commitment to the job and never complaining about the conditions, in that;

'Don't know where he got it from but he does. Passion is showing an interest in what you're cooking, not serving something that you wouldn't have yourself. Showing enthusiasm and maybe coming up with new ideas, showing interest, maybe ask to do something a bit more challenging. When you have to work all day, don't complain, don't roll your eyes. The big boys in London are in at 7 in the morning making everything fresh that day. They work through, maybe have half an hour at 5ish and then finish after midnight and start it all over the next day. 16 hours a so all days, five days a week. I'm getting through to them more now, but it's still hard work'.

There was much debate regarding creativity within the kitchen I observed. The only problem is that in a professional kitchen, structural and temporal constraints (Fine 1990) have a tendency to hamper the creativity of the chefs.

Work, Self-Identity and Conclusions

Cooking is a practical activity above all else, but to understand the reality of cooking as an occupation, the issue of how chefs see themselves and their work needs addressing. Fine (1996:39) states that, 'occupational identity is tied to the pleasures and pains of work, and the imagined responses of the 'other', [and] the consuming public'. The kitchen workers' view of themselves is highly dependent upon these separate bodies of influence and these can

determine what levels of personal satisfaction or dissatisfaction the chefs receive. The nature of their work and the environment itself can leave them feeling unappreciated, as can the opinion of the 'other' (the consuming public) and even other members of staff, such as the managers or the owners. The classic and often timeless image of a chef as a bullying tyrant or an overindulgent perfectionist has many additional contemporary images to contend with. These traditional images now battle against much more publicised representations of 'real chefs' that have been thrown onto our screens from genuine kitchens. Whilst the lower ranks of the kitchen are often viewed as an embarrassment, the chefs are proud of their work and extremely defensive of their occupation. They are producers and they can often create beautiful and appealing products for consumption by the public and gain a great deal of self-satisfaction from their accomplishments. They also create some extremely mundane and unexceptional dishes, en masse to crowds of diners that are far more interested in getting drunk and seeing the runner-up of last year's X-Factor strut their stuff on a makeshift stage.

They can gain some sense of identity from their work and this is important within the catering industry, but although they are witness to these brief periods of happiness, their work and their place in the economic order does little to provide them with emotional tranquillity that comes with a fixed identity. Although the workers stressed that respect comes with being seen as a skilled artisan, on reflection, the chefs often remarked that this side of their work was diminishing, as large-scale function work was beginning to take over. For the most part their work is simply something they submit to in order to be paid. They continue with this line of work while at the same time dreaming of a better job, a better environment to work in, more sociable hours, less stress and more focus on producing better food for a fictional employer for whom money was no obstacle. They are at times, proud of their work and of the products they produce, but this is easily negated by having to serve substandard dishes for diners who do not care what is placed in front of them. They are bound by the restrictions placed on them by the economic demands of the hotel and through overt displays of solidarity to their fellow workers, they aim to convince others and probably themselves that they group together in the face of opposition. They put up with the harsh conditions that they are subjected to and tell themselves that this proves that they have an 'obvious commitment to the job'.

The chefs in my study endeavoured to control the means and circumstances of production but failed on many attempts, outweighed by the managers and proprietors as maximum profits was the end game. The dishes that they produce that they are happy with are quickly forgotten as they are commanded to keep in line with profits and volume sales that are brought on by the external demands of the industry. For the chefs who I worked with, work gave them a fleeting sense of satisfaction and status, both personally and professionally and the connection between each worker and the work done appeared central to their identity and they strived at every opportunity to produce products that were pleasing and desired, despite the limitations and constraints placed on them. Public acknowledgement played a large part in determining and defining their job satisfaction and the occasional compliments that were passed on from the waiting staff to the chefs were greatly received, serving as evidence of their skill and a good morale boost. The chefs acknowledged that there are other occupations that are better paid, involve more comfortable working conditions and fewer hours but as they frequently spoke of these elusive jobs, they never attempted to actively pursue them. They would often cite that cheffing gave them a certain level of pleasure, that it was a demanding job but they took pride in what they did. They knew the job and they knew the environment. They know it is emotionally and physically draining, however, by coping with it and sticking it out they feel like they have achieved something significant and they took great pleasure in knowing that others 'could never hack it'. They frequently enjoy the humiliation of those that failed. However, as the case of Frank showed, many workers found it difficult to adapt to non-catering jobs and for the workers that left during my time there, no one was able to find permanent employment in another profession. As he pointed out on many occasions, 'who else would have us?'

Chapter Nine

Summary and Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis has been about the cultural intricacies that shape the working lives of a particular group of kitchen workers in a North Eastern hotel. It has focused on their working lives, the food that they produce and the circumstances surrounding that production. Of course, the kitchen and the workers that I observed do not exist within a vacuum. They are intricately woven into the fabric of society and culture and are subject to all its forces and influences. As the thesis has shown, the kitchen itself is indicative of the shifting realities of global capitalism. The kitchen's very mundanity, the ordinariness of meal sittings and dull work tasks, the occasional space that opens up from creativity and minor acts of momentary insubordination, display something about macro-level economic processes and the relationship between abstract finance and accumulation and the organisation of human experiences in precarious work settings. Within the kitchen's obvious hierarchical structure, there is the space and latitude to experience pleasure and positive relationships, but this itself appears to be part of the logic of post-68 capital.

Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) argue that the capitalism that developed after the upheavals of 1968 integrated the discourse of its antagonists, abandoning its pinstriped authoritarian image and integrating more fully the language of liberalism. Post-68 capitalism, with its abandonment of a hierarchical Fordist work structure, is a capitalism typified by Bill Gates or Richard Branson, a world of informality, which no longer relies in such an overt way upon threats, orders and steep hierarchies. Instead, it advances its interests by encouraging employees to see themselves as a part of some greater whole, or identify with the company rather than resent their dependence upon it. It 'gets things done' through negotiation and inducement rather than force (see Winlow and Hall, 2012). Our workplace superiors these days encourage us to see them as members of the team rather than leaders of it, and they secure the continuation of the business cycle by asking supplicants if they would mind

carrying out a task and by telling them how much they would appreciate their help, rather than issuing a direct instruction to get something done. Of course, and as Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) point out, the ultimate result is the same. The raw brutality of the profit motive now lurks behind smiles and informalities, behind an inclusive hippy ethic rather than the cold, hard world of modernist institutional enterprise (see Hall et al, 2008). This is what we see in the work relationships of those in the kitchen. Human relationships are real and meaningful, but they are structured in relation to a durable need to carry out appointed tasks in the established manner. The human relationship between the Head Chef and his workers comes into sharp focus as soon as the smooth running of the kitchen is threatened, even in the slightest way, by human frailty. What the entire data set revealed quite clearly is the extent to which employees initially took their relationships with superiors at face value, and actually believed them to be 'real'. While the relationship with superiors could be repaired to a certain extent, the individual worker appeared consistently to be left with a new awareness of who and what really mattered in this occupation context.

While the workings of this relatively inconspicuous aspect of the leisure economy can be explained and analysed in a broad variety of ways, my prolonged exposure to the cultures of the kitchen compelled me to identify the operation of capitalism as being central to my overall analysis. It became clear very early on that the workers were not simply 'trapped' in a high stress, high demand, low pay occupation, but were also compelled to understand the entirety of their lives in relation to the remorseless logic of capital accumulation more generally.

My focus on capitalism and its critique seemed the most appropriate way to explain the cultures and activities that I witnessed within the kitchen. This central theme, the injunctions and seductions of productive and consumer capitalism, as well as a much broader and deeper context of social, cultural and economic change, is embodied in the front stage environment of the hotel; consumers make their demands, and the owners call the shots. The extreme example here is the festivals. Everything is amped up in terms of behaviour, expectations, entitlement and consumption, and the kitchen is even more hidden. While the kitchen workers produce the food upon which the front stage depends, they are effectively non-persons (Agamben, 1998): excremental, exploited, denied and hidden from view, the

personification of processes that would disturb the fragile equilibrium of the consumer experience were they to ever emerge into the light.

The thesis has explored how this impacts on the workers who inhabit the kitchen as the strains of these wider conditions are felt on a number of levels, during both their 'working time' and their 'leisure time'. My aims throughout this thesis have been to present an accurate account of one particular occupational environment and the workers that inhabit this setting. I acknowledge that I have focused narrowly on a small number of workers, but this is deemed ample for the purposes of the thesis. Wherever possible, I have attempted to include ethnographic data to add substance to the theoretical conclusions that I have reached and to transport the reader to this specific environment. The kitchen and dining events that I witnessed acted as a lens through which we can see a broad range of crucial sociological issues and in this concluding chapter, I aim to further explore the central themes and core arguments that lie at the heart of my thesis. What I found throughout my ethnographic investigation resonates with many other aspects of contemporary sociology: contemporary labour markets, labour interaction, food production, consumerism and the formal economy. Underpinning these areas of exploration has been a vigorous examination of the ways in which the cultural life of the kitchen reflects the transformed structures of late capitalism. It has sought to delve behind the commonplace media-based representation of chefs and highlight the realities of what can often be a highly exploitative 'backstage' setting. It has compared this to the commodified and artificial nature of the 'front stage' in an attempt to connect the way in which food is represented in culture with the cold, hard world of the formal economy. Grand instances of event dining are presented in spectacular form as commercialised experiences, artificially created and laden with various connotations of hedonistic indulgence. What the thesis has attempted to do is contrast this with the work that goes on behind the scenes. By juxtaposing the harsh realities of backstage kitchen life with the ever-present image of indulgent consumption that frames the front stage location of the restaurant and hotel, the thesis has been able to explore not only the intricacies of a specific workforce, but also shed new light on the consumption and production of food. It has explored the cultural relevance given to culinary skill in contemporary society and compared

it with the actual extent that ability and expertise plays in the everyday work of this specific cohort of workers.

Food

We need a daily intake of food to survive and it is something that can be branded, bought and displayed time after time (as was the case of the champagne bottles that adorned the restaurant). While on the surface, there is nothing unusual or outstanding about items such as chips, peas, field mushrooms, burgers or lemonade, however, celebrity chefs tell us that these things *can* be exceptional. This reiterates the points made in the thesis regarding differentiation and markets: that even a product as boring as chips can produce a huge variety of markets. When we consider items such as bacon-wrapped free-range chicken, a blue cheese and pecan sauce, potato dauphinoise or a bottle of Mouton-Rothschild, our mind jumps to something more extraordinary and more exciting. The same can be said of where we dine. An Italian restaurant with hand-painted tableware or a chic Chinese restaurant with an imaginative industrial interior will no doubt be viewed in a very different light to the bog-standard fast food restaurants, backstreet cafes and work canteens that many are more accustomed to.

In this sense, food and the places that we dine are intimately connected to the shallow fluidity of consumer culture and they can be differentiated in the same way that other items can be; in terms of brand, cost and the associated symbolism of the product and the experience. My thesis has attempted to demonstrate this, in that the food that is served in the front stage arena is seen to be above the mundane. This also allowed for a more thorough analysis into the mediated images of culinary expertise and the aesthetics of 'cuisine' that pervade society today. By taking a critical look at the consumerised dining experience and comparing it to the actual reality of food production, the thesis has been able to intricately explore the relationship between the producers of goods, the products they create and the way that they are consumed by the public.

Chefs

The day-to-day activities of the chefs and kitchen workers in my study differ greatly from the image that they hold within the media, where they are presented as being above the toils of hard and exhausting forms of labour that I witnessed within the kitchen. The chefs in my study do not have a massive team of highly skilled workers at their disposal, or vast amounts of personal wealth and capital that would enable them to open up a new restaurant whenever and wherever they wish. They are not so far removed from the constraints of capitalism that they are allowed to immerse themselves in self-indulgent episodes of creative bliss. The workers in my study can work seven days a week, sometimes for up to twelve hours per shift, and they spend an innumerable amount of their working time involved in repetitious and mundane aspects of industrial work.

TV chefs now have a significant presence in popular culture. They now possess not just social and cultural significance, but also political power. Jamie Oliver for example, a fresh-faced young Sous Chef who charmed his way onto our TV screens in the late 1990s quickly became the image of Sainsbury's, a large leading European grocery distribution group, and as some argue, is synonymous with the image of Sainsbury's. In addition to this, he has applied this celebrity endorsement strategy to help disadvantaged youths gain employment in the catering industry, and he has become an inspiring political figure who has campaigned for major changes to the ways in which we feed our children and educate them regarding culinary and nutritional matters. Chefs such as these have transcended the industry that first created their celebrity status and this is of course reflective of other trends in contemporary culture and academia (see Hollows 2003b on the relationship between Nigella Lawson and post-feminism and Hollows 2003a on the relationships between Jamie Oliver and masculinity). Chefs are now famous for being more than chefs and their fame has now been separated from their ostensible skill. They inhabit the culture columns in the newspapers we read and the television programmes that pervade our homes and have succeeded in joining the armies of other 'celebrities' who are famous for just being famous. Many of us hunger for the commodities they endorse: those artefacts that are adorned with their mediated image as well as culinary creations in the supermarket that bear their name and picture.

As the thesis has highlighted, the decline of traditional industrial labour has had a profound impact on the ways in which contemporary forms of labour are experienced. Precarious and insecure labour is now characterised predominantly by individualism, uncertainty, vulnerability and fragmentation (Beck 2000, Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Bauman 2001) and workers are now faced with episodes of work that centre on a new short-term mentality. Hospitality establishments such as that where my ethnography took place are part of the burgeoning service and leisure industry that has replaced traditional forms of industry as mass employers. However, the kitchens, and many other similar sites, consist of low paid and insecure forms of employment (Toynbee 2003, Sennett 1998). The thesis has sought to highlight how amongst an image of Western consumer glamour lies an expanse of employment opportunities that are often low paid and decidedly unglamorous, created specifically by the increasingly exploitative nature of contemporary capitalism (Beck 2000). While cheffing and kitchen work do on occasion allow for the production of satisfying creative dishes, for the most part it is a mundane and highly repetitive form of labour; one that is a far cry from the image depicted by popular culture.

Kitchen Work and Alienation

As the reader will be aware, my analysis of the chefs and the kitchen workers has drawn upon a general Marxist account of labour and the economy. I am aware of the complexities of Marx's original formulation, but as an ethnographer, rather than going through that in detail, I have been led predominantly by my data and have endeavoured to incorporate as much data as possible within the thesis. During my ethnography, the chefs frequently referred to themselves as 'a commodity'. In the original Marxist framework, the worker is always a commodity to be purchased and used by the capitalist in their search for surplus value. Marx enquired as to the nature of the commodity in capitalist society and surmised that the simple form of capitalist wealth is the commodity. A commodity's value is expressed in relation to other commodities and that it is at the same time trivial, yet surrounded by 'metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties' (Marx 1990:163). These commodities are useful items, but it is not until they are compared to one another that they reveal their true social worth.

The western world is dominated by capitalism. During the industrial era, this was typified by production, whereas in contemporary society it is typified by consumption. Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010) however, acknowledge that the capitalist economy has always been dominated by prosumption: those who are intricately involved in both production and consumption. Marx originally focused on the relationship between producers and the capitalists, and production was invariably restricted to the factory. The items that were produced needed to be bought and used by consumers but the focus was clearly on their production. In recent years however, the focus has shifted as consumption and the consumer have grown in importance. For Marx, capitalism's ideological support structure worked to hide reality from the consciousness of those dominated by its work practices. For Marx, ideology involves 'they don't know it, but they are doing it', whereas, contemporary ideology, claim Winlow and Hall (2012) involves a new postmodern process built upon 'they know very well, but they continue to do it'. This ideological framework allows the dominated to understand the nature of their oppression, but on the condition that they do nothing about it.

The Head Chef demonstrated on numerous occasions that management and the owners consider him (and the other workers) to be two-dimensional units of production. As the Head Chef was in charge of the kitchen (and the second highest paid member of staff in the hotel), he was technically classed as management, although he actively sought to distance himself from this title, or at least distance himself from the image and opinion that his workers had regarding management. Every attempt by management to treat the Head Chef as a 'real person' or a 'valued worker' were destined to fail as the Head Chef was capable of comprehending the utility of these entreaties. If the hotel owners or manager suddenly became friendly and warm towards him, he could do nothing other than see this as a strategy geared towards increasing his (or his workers) productive capacity or ensuring that they continue to produce. What is being highlighted here, effectively, is that the business does not care about him as a person. This is the fundamental basis of Marx's account of alienation, the sense of improper loss or detachment. Marx suggested that people reshape their material worlds into objects and in doing so, they put some of themselves into the products that they create (Marx 1990). The workers are therefore alienated from the product of their work

because they have no control over the fate of the dishes they produce. They are also alienated from the act of production itself because the work is no longer a creative act, merely a commodity that is bought and sold.

Leisure Lives

This Marxist framework can also be extended to the workers' leisure lives. As the thesis suggests, working within the kitchen is not only physically but also emotionally draining. It places a great deal of strain on the workers' personal and leisure lives emphasising that work dictates everything, not just their time spent at work. During the industrial era, workers were exploited during both their work *and* leisure time and with regards to industrial work in particular (Douglas and Krieger 1983, Williams 1982), the workers needed to recuperate and once again prepare themselves for further exploitation. This continues to be prevalent in contemporary society but there are other issues at stake now, such as a determining ideology that holds personal advancement and consumerism above all else (see Hall et al. 2008). During the industrial era, stability was almost guaranteed by the interactions between modern capitalism and the social democratic state of the modern era. Work influenced virtually every aspect of the workers' lives (see Willis 1979, Hobsbawm 1994) and this influence has not waned in contemporary society; work remains central to every aspect of our lives. However, as the thesis has highlighted, what we have witnessed here is a re-contextualised version of that very same idea, even when extended to the workers' leisure time.

The formal economy structures both their work-time and their non-work time. The workers' leisure lives are in many respects shadowed, or at least tainted by work. This was highlighted by the chefs in the kitchen, with regards to the hours in particular. They stressed that to make a career you must be willing to sacrifice days off and all traditional notions of holiday time. The hours are certainly long and extremely unsociable, but what is most interesting is the way that they accept the fact that the job involves giving up any notions of a social life. They frequently commented that work was 'where their friends were', indicating that they had lost touch with many of their non-chef friends, accepting that one's relationships tend to cluster around work. Work certainly seemed to provide friends, conversation and a kind of cultural

dependency that suggested both a deep affection for work and all that work is *and* a deep loathing of it, something that appears foreboding. This is equivalent to the old industrial adage about the working-classes living, literally in some cases, in the shadow of the factory. The kitchen workers and chefs are in a way divorced from themselves and totally separated from any 'organic' sense of identity and place. The chefs and kitchen workers' adherence to hierarchy even during their leisure time was particularly interesting. In a sense, their leisure lives mirrored the structure of their working lives.

Contributions to Contemporary Labour Markets

Whilst my research forced me to explore the connections between the kitchen and wider forms of contemporary labour, it also dictated that I draw some parallels with industrial forms of production. Due to the pressures of fine dining and event dining, the often hostile and exploitative working conditions that were prevalent within the kitchen and the incessant monotony of their activities, the workers who populate my thesis clearly straddle the divide between manual and service workers.

Within the kitchen where my research took place, a strict segmented hierarchy of workers was enforced. Low status workers worked alongside high status workers and as the thesis has shown, this often provoked tensions. The low status workers were considered expendable. Their positions did not require any qualifications other than willingness and the ability to do the job and if they could not, they were quickly dispatched and replaced. In this way, the kitchen constitutes another avenue where the exploitative nature of contemporary capitalism has created swathes of low paid positions (see also Beck 2000). There is an array of workers who are somewhat trapped in these low status jobs, not just within the kitchen I observed but also within the service sector as a whole. What was evident from my research is that more often than not, these marginal jobs offer very little in the hope of advancement, both economically in terms of gaining a liveable wage and in terms of career progression. None of the kitchen porters managed to obtain that elusive upgrade to trainee chef during my time there. Their jobs are physically hard, extremely alienating, transitory, insecure and downright unpleasant. Many members of management considered the workers who occupied these lowly

positions inferior, and on occasion, I witnessed attitudes and actions on their behalf that were highly derogatory and belittling to the low status members of staff. During my time in the kitchen, these low status occupations were taken up by workers who were simply passing through on their way to greater things, or at least perceived themselves to be (see Winlow and Hall 2006:31). However, in reality for many of these workers, their jobs were simply the next one on a very long list of low paid, low status and insecure forms of employment that typify the service and leisure industries (Hutton 1995). These workers were trapped in a rut, unqualified and often uneducated, they had nothing to look forward to other than the next delivery of filthy pots and pans that would inevitably come their way.

Wider theories surrounding contemporary labour indicate that society now places a great deal of importance on the immediate moment (see Sennett 1998). This has permeated not only into our actions as we forage through life, but also in the way we interact with contemporary forms of employment. The economy is committed to the short-term and work within most service sectors is fraught with episodes and fragments rather than long-term stability. Workers here are caught up in a rapidly changing environment in which they no longer find any sense of stability or security. This was evident in the kitchen on a number of levels, the most prominent being that the kitchen was beset with transient workers. As the thesis has shown, the longest serving member of staff within the kitchen was the Head Chef, who had been there since 2001. This was seen as a rarity in kitchen work, but even this long-run of employment came to end just after my research finished (and not through his own choice) and all of the kitchen staff left within a year of his departure.

Indicative of wider forms of contemporary labour, the kitchen consisted of casual, part-time and full-time workers who were occupied in fragmented positions that offered very little scope for career progression. My time within the kitchen dictated that I examine these wider themes more closely as the kitchen, in a similar vein to other contemporary forms of employment, had been stripped of its ability to provide any guaranteed employment prospects. Our consumer-driven market and the leisure and service industries have come to dominate the landscape in most areas of employment, forming a mass of low paid insecure forms of employment. This, as the wider literature indicates, is a direct result of the changing ideology

of capitalism and my research within the kitchen correlated with wider studies that have also explored aspects of contemporary labour. The kitchen was beset with instability, instrumentalism and risk. These are evidently some of the dominant characteristics in advanced capitalism, which has rapidly broken down the normal situation of work, replacing it with individualisation, insecurity and differentiation.

Production

The thesis has sought to further explore the relationship between the creators and their creations with regards to the kitchen and its workers. It has addressed the creative and artistic side of cheffing, along with the more commodified and mass-produced dishes produced. It has highlighted that a large part of kitchen work is extremely mundane and repetitious in nature, drawing distinct parallels with other forms of contemporary service work; despite the often artistic side of food production that the chefs are engaged in. Being situated somewhere between the declining numbers of manual workers and the rapidly increasing population of service workers, the chefs struggle to cope with the competing and often opposing demands of their occupation as it incorporates both craft production and mass production, both physically demanding monotonous forms of labour and highly skilled forms of labour. While some tasks involve a greater consciousness of the sensory dimension of products many tasks do not and are considered to border mass-production methods. This is exemplified by working on 'the pass' during the large-scale events that the hotel holds and through the daily tasks that the chefs and kitchen workers have to engage in. During the periods of monotonous labour, the workers have no intrinsic interest in the tedious nature of their work and focus on simply getting through the task as quickly and as painlessly possible.

These periods are seen in stark contrast to when the chefs are involved in restaurant work. This form of work is viewed by the workers as artistic and one that actually draws upon their skills. The thesis has demonstrated that notions of skill and expertise are valued by the chefs and provides them with a measurement of self-worth in relation to their job. Their preference towards creativity as opposed to 'assembly' line function service highlights that their conceptions of self-identity are intricately bound to their work. However, the fact that they

must engage in long periods of monotonous forms of labour, reinforces the chefs' position as a unit of production whose only purpose is to generate profit. The notion of a chef as an artisan or a skilled worker who must be free from the restraints of traditional labour is a myth in this specific establishment. The general notion that the restaurant or kitchen is a site that may propel workers to media stardom and that chefs are individuals who are glorified and imbued with connotations of artistic brilliance is very much exaggerated (Fergusen and Zukin 1998, Fine 1996). As the profit motive underlies the whole business of making and selling food, these chefs cannot be indulged or fawned over. Like any worker, they can easily be replaced. However, this does not mean that the chefs do not derive any sense of pleasure from their work. The experience of work is central and they do maintain a sense of self-esteem from the more artistic side of cheffing. In contrast to previous forms of mass-produced workers, the chefs in my study *did* see the finished product and they identified immensely with it. They *do* have an interest in what they produce, but in keeping with contemporary capitalism, limitless creativity is ultimately curtailed by the demands of the market and the ceaseless need for profitability. Whilst the thesis has not denied the fact that the chefs engage in creative bouts of cooking, it is not an active constituent of their work process.

Finally, the thesis has shown that work within the kitchens is not simply backbreaking toil cloaked in darkness, without a chink of light breaking through. At times, it could be a pleasurable experience for all involved, but this was always negated by bouts of hard labour and exploitative conditions. It has shown that the creativity of the chef is curtailed by the demands of the market and the ceaseless need for profitability; that only a tiny percentage of chefs are indulged and fawned over. In part, it has explored how the chefs as skilled kitchen workers feel about this process, and questions whether real creativity in this economic reality is actually possible, suggesting that the actual skill of cooking well is something to retreat to, rather than an active constituent of their work process.

Final Remarks

This thesis has served as an exploration of a working kitchen in the North East of England and following a long tradition of workplace ethnographies, it is hoped that it offers an original contribution to the growing literature on contemporary work practices. Kitchen work is done

behind closed doors and has been somewhat overlooked in recent years, despite the growth in literature regarding the sociology of food and it is my opinion that the thesis' main contribution to existing literature is its ethnographic data and the words of my respondents. Having spent a long period immersed within the kitchen, I was witness to a great deal of activity that is normally hidden from view of the public and I was able to relate this particular work setting back to the wider themes found in contemporary service sector labour markets. My extended time within the kitchen has allowed me to produce a study that is highly informative and adds a great deal of data to existing workplace studies. I was able to unearth not only the intricate workings of a hotel kitchen but also produce detailed data regarding its workers and how they are organised.

What was most fascinating regarding this specific workplace was the combination of 'assembly line' work and the 'artistic' side of cooking, particularly when both techniques are used for the same dish or function. Through the kitchen and restaurant, we can see how dishes are regarded as aesthetic products, and how aesthetic judgements are made and I hope that this thesis illuminates to what extent this market for food production is simulated, distorted and exploitative, involving unequal amounts of skill-intensive work and unskilled mass production. I believe that by combining physically demanding and monotonous forms of labour and highly skilled pseudo-artistic forms of labour, chefs and their workplaces stand out considerably from other workplaces.

Further Research

With this in mind, it is necessary to draw some conclusions about life in the kitchen and suggest some avenues for future research. The thesis has shown that it is hot, highly charged, noisy and often extremely unpleasant. It is acknowledged that the kitchen does not compare to the industrial workplaces of the North East's past, but what my study has shown, is that in many ways, things are just as bad as they have previously been. My time within the kitchen showed me that kitchen work is often brutal in the sense that employees are pushed physically and emotionally to their limits. Concerning the environment and the hours they are expected to work, with no meaningful time off work, they face a high chance of physically burning out.

This is almost guaranteed when you add the emotional stresses of a manufactured image that is at times very disrespectful to the lower ranks of the kitchen. This provides an interesting avenue for future research as the harsh reality of kitchen work could be explored much further. As noted in the study, the Executive Chef passed away during the write-up of the thesis. Many of the workers who I have stayed in touch with attributed his death to the stresses of kitchen life and the physical strain that a 'typical chef's lifestyle' has placed on his health. One avenue for future research could be how the different generations of chefs view kitchen work and how they deal with the stresses and pressure that the job places on them.

The young men and few women who inhabit the kitchen often accept things as the way they are. They accept the low levels of pay they receive and believe that their maltreatment at the hands of management cannot be changed. Although they do try to salvage some sense of enjoyment from their work and their workplace, many of the workers are pessimistic regarding their future prospects and any chances they have of upward social mobility. They are not paid adequately for the work they do and many are aware that those who are paid cash-in-hand earn the same amount in a day or so as they do for a full week's work. Yet they do nothing to change their circumstances. Therefore another avenue for future research could be this somewhat nihilistic attitude that some of the workers possess and the insecurity of contemporary workplaces. The chefs and kitchen workers were not assets for the hotel, its managers or its owners. They were expendable pawns that could be mistreated, overworked and underpaid, all in the name of profit accumulation. Despite being the backbone of the kitchen (especially the workers in the lower ranks), their jobs remained very unstable and insecure.

Other avenues for further research could include a closer look at the divisions of labour within the kitchen and how frictions and friendships are negotiated in such a tight working community. It may be an interesting avenue of research to investigate further how cheffing and kitchen work is experienced by women. During my time within the kitchen I worked alongside a small number of female chefs and kitchen workers and it would be interesting to explore how they have experienced kitchen work and whether this differs from the experiences of male employees.

Appendix 1

Glossary of Terms

The following is a glossary of terms that used throughout the thesis:

AA Rosette: an award given to restaurants whose food is recognised as being of a high standard

Bratt pan: a large heavy-duty unit used for heating high volumes of soup and sauces

Business sheets: printed out sheets detailing levels of business at the hotel for each function; location, numbers, brief breakdown of menu

Called away: when a table is 'called away', their food has been taken to them

Cheque: a table or diner's order

Call cheques away: tell the chefs what each table has ordered

Cheque on: a table or diner has placed their order

Cover/Covers: a cover is a setting for one person, the number of covers indicates the number of diners served

Craic/Crack: fun, enjoyable or sociable conversation and banter

Donkey/Kitchen donkey: belittling term given for kitchen porters

Flats: metal trays of various sizes

Function/Function service: events that are not considered as restaurant service, or part of the hotel's weekly business. They are usually high-volume events and can take place within the hotel itself or within its grounds, such as Mother's Day lunch, the Seafood festivals or weddings

Jack Stack: space saving racking for busy banqueting kitchens. Used to store up to 72 plates of food on a wheeled frame

Knacks: hurts, to be in pain

Hot lights: this refers to the lights that are kept on top of work surfaces in the kitchen where the heat of the lights is used to keep dishes warm

Main/Mains: main course, the main dish

Plate-up/Plate: to place individual items of food onto a plate in preparation for service

Prep: shorthand for 'preparation', usually associated with the preparation of foodstuffs

Rational/Rational oven: large combination oven and steamer used to heat plated food

Seal: to seal a steak is to quickly cook both sides of it in a hot pan until brown

Sides: side dishes

Appendix 2

Character Biographies

During my ethnography, the dynamics of the kitchen changed on a regular basis. As one member of staff left and another was brought in, or as one advanced his knowledge or position, everything changed. Every member of kitchen staff had a distinct personality and all had some impact upon the kitchen environment in some way and, in turn, upon my thesis. While I was not able to obtain biographies for every member of staff who found their way into the kitchen, what follows are the details of those who I will refer to as 'the main players'. These were the members of staff that I had the most contact with, and the ones who feature in the thesis itself. It is acknowledged that some feature more heavily than others, but they all played their part in contributing to my research. They are listed in hierarchical order, with the most senior member of staff first.

Archie. Archie is forty years old but looks around ten years older. He is a big fellow weighing well over twenty stone and standing around 6ft tall. In the words of another chef, 'he's the only guy I've ever met who can sweat in walk-in freezer'. He was the Head Chef at the hotel for around two years, but his role was restructured to that of Company chef after he suffered heart failure a few years previous. He claims to work around twenty hours a week, but in reality only does about eight, for which he receives around £20-25,000 per annum (circa 2006). Archie is a classic example of a chef who has lived his life to excess; overindulging in food, drink and drugs. What he considers as a 'lived life' resonates with many of the 'old school' generation of chefs that I met during my ethnography. Archie was traditionally trained and still houses the long-established working value of play hard, work hard. He has been a chef his entire life and has worked for the owners of the hotel on and off for over 20 years at several of their establishments. Being the 'Company chef', his role within the kitchen is rather ambiguous. Along with the Head Chef, he spends a great deal of his time liaising with suppliers and coordinating events, but due to his ill health, he is no longer suitable to take part in the more physical side of cheffing.

Seth. Seth is 32 years old and the Head Chef of the kitchen. He is the highest paid member of staff, receiving around £31,000 per annum including bonuses (circa 2006) for anything between 50 to 90 hours a week. He took up the position of Head Chef around four years ago after Archie had to step back. He stands around 6ft tall and usually sports a few days growth of facial hair, claiming that he never has time to shave. His dark hair is spotted with grey and he invariably blames the stresses of his work for this. His job specifics encompass a massive array of different aspects from actual cooking, liaising with suppliers, administration, profit calculation, event coordination, staff appraisals and the ordering of food. When asked what his role within the kitchen entailed, he replied,

‘Everything. You have to focus on the business for that day as well as stay four or five days ahead of yourself. You have to know your work colleagues inside and out and know their strengths and weaknesses even if they don’t. You need to know what business is on and who to put where and what each of them needs to be getting on with. You need to know what to order and what’s within the parameters of profit, all with changing numbers of business and last minute bookings. You have to double check everything that the front-of-house does because they always screw up the numbers and promise stuff that we just can’t physically do. During service you’ve got to think about what you’re doing, not just that job but everything, what’s in the ovens, on the stove and on the grill. You’ve got to know what’s where and how long its been there, and what needs doing next. It’s not like ‘cheque on’ and away, we hardly ever get to concentrate on just that one cover and when that’s finished do the next. There’s also all the other stuff going on as well, what we’re running low on and what we need, what needs ordering, what’s happening next month and what we need for that, who’s in for it and do we need any extra agency staff. It all boils down to what’s going on in the kitchen and the business in general’.

Harry. Harry is the hotel’s Sous Chef. He in his mid 30’s and stands around 5ft tall. Originally born in the Philippines, he came to the hotel in 2001. He was 'classically trained' through an apprenticeship and ended up at the hotel through an agency that dealt exclusively with Filipinos (before the onslaught of Polish and German workers soon after 2006). Before that, he worked in Manila in a five star hotel as well as running his own business. In the Philippines, he was considered reasonably well-off on his £8-10,000 wage and his children attended a private school, but he eventually left to escape the increasing levels of corruption that he claimed was saturating his home country. He now lives in a rented terraced house

situated in a nearby town with his family and several other Filipino chefs that also work at the hotel. Harry is married to Sophia, who came over from the Philippines in 2005 and they have three children who have recently been granted residency in the United Kingdom.

Harry is second in command in the kitchen, but for immigration purposes his work permit still describes him as a Chef-de-Partie and he receives £18,000 per annum (circa 2006) a year for an average of fifty hours a week; up to seventy-five when busy. As the Head Chef commented, 'this is a guy who really knows his shit'. He is a highly conscientious worker and is extremely skilled, but his high technical abilities are offset against his extremely short temper. Considered one of the more aggressive chefs in the kitchen, Harry is both respected and feared. As Ryan once told me, he can take pretty much anything that the kitchen throws at him, apart from Harry having a bad day. Nonetheless, Harry is respected within the kitchen due to his overt displays of commitment and technical capabilities. He is a believer in a strong work ethic and that respect needs to be earned through commitment and hard work. He is extremely loyal to the kitchen as a whole and detests the hotel managers with a passion. He was educated in private school in Manila and has a good command of English. Because of this, he frequently has to act as a translator for the other Filipino workers whose English is not as advanced as his. He has an extremely dry sense of humour but can be very serious at times, knowing when to have a laugh and when to stop.

Charlie. Charlie is in his late 20's and stands around five and a half feet tall. He is the kitchen's senior Chef-de-Partie. Attractive and always well presented, he is a firm favourite amongst the females in the hotel. Also originally, from the Philippines, he came to the hotel around eighteen months ago and has been a resident in the United Kingdom since 2002. Before coming to work at the hotel, Charlie worked in Scotland with Max. He originally came to work in the United Kingdom for the money and regularly sends the majority of his wage home for his family, who still reside in the Philippines. He sees his family for around four weeks every year and it takes him around 48 hours to return home; 24 hours air travel and a further 24 hours inland travel. Charlie's speciality is restaurant work and fine dining. He earns £15,000 per annum (circa 2006) a year for around 48 hours a week and up to 70 when busy. He is not as fast as some of the other chefs but his passion for restaurant food shines

through. Also classically trained, he is a very competent chef with excellent presentation skills. He currently lives with Harry and his family and Max.

Max. Max must be in his late 30's but no one is quite sure of his exact age. He originally worked with Charlie in Scotland but eventually left due to the high incidences of racism both in the hotel and in the street. He joined the hotel in December 2005 and after his work visa nearly expired, he spent a total of three months of that back in the Philippines. Due to a personnel error, he had to travel back to the Philippines to avoid being deported. The hotel paid £1,000 to have him brought back through an agency and this should have taken only two months. However, due to an error on his work permit, it was expanded by a month, as his job had to be advertised to the British market first before he could be re-employed. Max is a competent chef, but his command of English is extremely poor and he often needs the other Filipinos to translate for him. He stands just over 5ft tall and has an extremely wild appearance; he never appears fully dressed and always looks unkempt. He is the kitchen's Chef-de-Partie and specialises in pastry. Similar to Charlie, Max sends most of his £15,000 a year salary back to the Philippines to his wife and three children. He worked as a chef in the Philippines, where his father is a very well respected chef. Max is a very fast and conscientious chef and never complains about working 45-70 hours a week. He currently lives with Harry and his family and Charlie.

George. George is a Chef-de-Partie and earns around £13,000 a year (circa 2006) for approximately 40-70 hours a week. He is also Filipino, around thirty-two years old and lives in a rented house in what is considered quite a rough area of a nearby town with his wife and two children. George was a chef in the Philippines whilst he was a student, and after gaining his Masters equivalent in Marine Biology he was forced to take up the profession again due to a lack of work in his specialised field. His English is very good and he stands surprisingly tall at 5ft 10 inches. He is broad and extremely polite, almost to a fault, but is a competent chef for his level. He is extremely hard working and reliable, and considered an all-round nice lad. There are never any problems when he is on shift as he is intelligent, obedient and very enthusiastic. He is still progressing, however, and needs to exert authority a little more and take more of an initiative with his fellow workers.

Ryan. Ryan is 19 years old and stands around 6ft tall. He has quite long hair and is made to wear a hat for work but insists on wearing his differently to the others. He gives the impression that he loves his work and although he often voices his opinion that he feels like he is missing leisure time that he should be enjoying, he takes great pride in what he is and what he does. He lives with his mother and stepfather in a two-bedroom terrace in a small neighbouring village and although he is the only chef who has a regular girlfriend, he has gained quite a reputation at the hotel for being a lady's man. He is extremely witty, has a very dry sense of humour, and is considered by his elders to be a very promising chef. He started as a trainee in 2004 and has had a £3,000 pay increase in that time, from £6,700 to £10,500 per annum (circa 2006). He works an average of 40 hours a week, up to 65 hours when busy as the kitchen's First Commis chef. The Commis chef is considered one of the easiest jobs within the kitchen and the worst. Although it can be extremely low paid and the hours required are on a similar level to those of the senior chefs, it entails no stresses and is often considered an extremely pleasurable position to be in.

He comes from a family that values educational attainment, but was never considered academically minded and left school at sixteen with minimum qualifications. After a six-week stint training in the navy, he returned to the North East against his mother's wishes and began looking for work. He worked at a neighbouring hotel as a waiter before using family contacts to gain a trainee position at the hotel. Starting from scratch as a trainee in 2004, with no previous knowledge or experience, he has now reached the level of first Commis and is expected to make Chef-de-Partie soon. He is currently on a 'fast track' programme due to his excellent potential. He is extremely knowledgeable for his age and picks up new skills well. He shows flair and initiative and is considered to have natural ability, hence his fast track programme. He is extremely confident for his age and although his suggestions are hardly ever used he is not afraid to have some input into the menus. He is considered a prime example of 'getting them young'. Having already passed his GNVQ level 2 he is ready to start level 3 (all paid for by the hotel) and is soon to embark on some work experience at a nearby three rosette establishment. He has been intensively trained by the Head Chef and his team and is favoured amongst them for his hardworking attitude and commitment to the job. He

gets on extremely well with everyone, is very competent and has the high levels of confidence that are needed to survive in this industry. He is considered by many to have a good future and will go far because, in the words of the Head Chef, he 'actually gives a fuck'.

Lewis. Lewis has been working in the kitchen as a trainee for the past 18 months and receives around £8,000 per annum (circa 2006) as a 2nd year trainee working between 40 and 60 hours a week. One of the youngest in the kitchen, he is 17 years old and is of slight build with short mousey ginger hair. He came directly from school with no previous knowledge or experience and when he first joined the kitchen, he was extremely quiet, shy and reserved. His limited life experience was very noticeable and out of all of the chefs, Lewis has received the most ribbing for his appearance and dress, which has gradually increased since he has settled on a 'wannabe townie' look (a derogatory term used by the chefs). He is a little slow at picking things up and the chefs still consider him to be finding his own feet. He is not the fastest of workers but is steady and reliable.

Jake. Jake's stint in the kitchen lasted around 6 months. He came in as a trainee chef with some previous experience as a kitchen porter. At first he was welcomed into the team. He was considered very confident for his 17 years. He stood at around 6ft tall with dark hair and dark skin that signified an Italian lineage. As a trainee chef, Jake receives £6,500 per annum, (circa 2006) for between 40 and 60 hours a week. While Jake was at work, he would talk constantly about his leisure time and he was vocal on a great number of issues, particularly the wage differences within the kitchen. At times, he would be extremely disrespectful to the managers of the hotel as well as rude to customer and he often failed to acknowledge any form of authority other than the Head Chef.

Frank. Frank is one of the hotel's kitchen porters. He has quite a peculiar appearance; standing at around 5ft 6 inches tall, he has greying hair and a stern face full of lines and heavy, overbearing eyebrows. He can be highly strung at times and has a tendency to report everything he has done to the Head Chef for his approval. Frank helps the chefs out whenever he is told and works hard for his wage. He cleans constantly and helps setup as well as doing his own job. He lets the Head Chef know when the other kitchen porters have not been pulling

their weight or when they leave early. He is also perceptive regarding his position within the hotel and acknowledges that the management view the kitchen porters as scum. He enjoys the fact that in the kitchen his strange sense of humour is tolerated. Frank has had a few run-ins with Jackson in the kitchen as they both have a tendency to bring their personal problems to work. Both are considered to be very similar workers in that they like their independence and their own way of working, each believing that his is the right way.

Frank considers himself to be the 'chief kitchen porter'. He works an average of 42 hours a week and is the only kitchen porter that is salaried. At around 45 years old, this is his first salaried job. He has slight learning difficulties and is considered to be 'ideal KP fodder' by the chefs. He is dyslexic and has only basic literacy skills equivalent to junior school level, but knows the job well and for the most part is a good worker. He is familiar with the hotel and the kitchen staff and has been there for around 4 years on and off. He has been a kitchen porter most of his adult life and the £13,000 (circa 2006) wage he earns is the most he has ever received. He is regarded well by the kitchen staff and tolerated by the rest. He has a tendency to complain a lot and always has an opinion on how many kitchen porters are in with relation to the levels of business but doesn't quite understand the dynamics of staffing. He always complains that he thinks that the other kitchen has it easier, no matter which one he is working in and has a deep-seated need for recognition and appreciation.

Alex. Alex has been at the hotel for around eight months working full-time as a kitchen porter, receiving minimum wage. He is 54 years old and is the butt of many kitchen jokes as he still lives with his mother and has a lisp. He had worked in factories his whole life so is used to the monotonous side of the job, but enjoys the craic in the kitchen. He is not the fastest worker in the kitchen but is meticulous.

Jackson. Jackson is 30 years old and originates from Africa, still maintaining a very strong accent. He has let the kitchen down on many occasions because of his excessive drinking and drug taking, which occasionally spills over into his work time. He is a formidable character, standing over 6ft tall and very opinionated. Jackson has been at the hotel for around two months working part-time as a kitchen porter, receiving minimum wage. He is another

example of the informal nature of recruitment within the kitchen as he obtained his job there because he is currently dating the Head Chef's sister.

Elliot. Elliot is aged 19 and has been at the hotel on and off for around a year, as a kitchen porter. He initially got a part time job at the hotel through one of the kitchen porters, when he was a college. When he quit college, his hours went up to full time, even though he was still classed as casual labour. Elliot has expressed a desire to be a chef, but his inconsistency lets him down. He has a deep-seated lack of commitment to the job and calls in sick every other Saturday. He is short, around 5ft 6 inches and considers himself to be a lady's man but never quite lives up to the title. He is considered to be 'a slacker' by the chefs but he works hard when he has to. He receives minimum wage.

Sausage Fingers. Sausage Fingers was a kitchen porter at the hotel for around 6 months of my ethnography, covering a very busy period. In his mid 50's, short and stocky, he was not well liked by any member of staff. He was aggressive looking, with masses of gold jewellery (which he refused to take off during work), and very hostile to the other workers. He was a good worker and conscientious but bullied everyone regardless of age or sex, and was eventually fired for openly threatening Alex, a fellow kitchen porter.

Old Tom. Old Tom is 74 years old, married and retired from running his own business for over 40 years. He started at the hotel because he was bored at home and firmly believes that he will live longer if he stays active. He has been there for around one year and works part-time as a kitchen porter for minimum wage. He does limited hours though, only working mornings and doing no more than two shifts in a row. He does whatever he is asked if he is capable and is quite well respected by the team, although the chefs do argue about whose shift he works on as none of them want him to die whilst on their shift. He is very articulate and extremely intelligent. He is Scottish, well over 6ft tall and was obviously a very formidable man when he was younger. He died during the course of my ethnography.

Sophia. Sophia is in her late 20's, Filipino and of very slight build. She is married to Harry and is paid minimum wage as a kitchen porter/assistant. When Sophia first arrived at the

hotel, she could not speak a word of English and Harry had to translate for her on many occasions. She is highly independent and a very hard worker, picking up tasks easily and showing initiative. She is very gentle and feminine compared to the other women in the kitchen, and is quiet and extremely respectful.

Robert. Robert is in his early thirties and is a catering manager at a local chemical factory during the day. He works from 6.00 a.m. until 3.00 p.m. at his usual job and works extra at the hotel as and when needed; usually weekends and busy periods on-the-books. Robert was married with children but is recently separated and has just moved out of his family home and into his own. He is Scottish and originally from Glasgow, but has worked all over the UK and Ireland. He ran a freelance chef agency that supplied chefs for the hotel and when that finished he stayed on to work there. He does not regard his job as hard and like many within the kitchen, he enjoys the fun-side of kitchen work. When Robert is present at the hotel, he is treated as another Sous Chef and gets on well with everybody. He takes charge well and pushes those still learning to do more and learn more. He is well liked and respected and is never afraid to speak his mind. His voice is always heard within the kitchen and he is fun to be around. He is extremely knowledgeable and is honest to a fault. He always manages to lift the mood of the kitchen, and the team look forward to his attendance.

Jamie. Jamie is 19 years old. He is thick set, heavily tattooed and around 6ft tall with short, shaven hair and strong arms. He is approaching completion of a welding apprenticeship and works cash-in-hand in the kitchen when it is busy. He originally joined the kitchen when he was 15 as a kitchen porter and made the transition to chef when he was 16, but left due to the constant unsociable hours. Jamie is very well liked and respected amongst the team and always has a vast amount of friends who are available for the busy times.

Luke, Ben, Leo, Amy and Finn. Luke is a good friend of the Head Chef's and works occasionally when it is busy, cash-in-hand. He is the Head Chef at another local hotel and has worked with Seth on and off for the last nine years. The two get on very well and are good friends outside of work. Luke is 28 years old and extremely confident. His only downfall is his drinking, but when that is under control, he is an enjoyable man to work with. Luke usually

brings with him a small team of workers who currently work for him or have worked for him in the past. He arranges his time off and holidays to correspond with the busiest times at the hotel so that he is free to work and arranges that his workers receive those specific days off as well. Ben is a former employee of Luke's and has only just recently left his kitchen to work in another, Leo is a student at a local Northern university and works for Luke part-time, and Amy is a former employee and current partner of Luke's who now works as a nursery nurse during the day and a barmaid at another hotel on weekend nights. Finn, aged 29, is also a former employee and good friend of Luke's. He is currently the Head Chef at a local men's prison and claims to work as a consultant for other businesses, but as Finn's colleagues frequently stress, his claims need to be taken with a pinch of salt. Nonetheless, he is an extremely confident young man, who is considered to be very good at his job.

The kitchen also boasts a Breakfast chef and several other part-time kitchen porters. A network of friends and ex-colleagues who work during the busy periods also supplements the main workforce and the kitchen has various agency chefs who work with them throughout the year.

Appendix 3

The Restaurant and its Diners

Opening seven nights a week, the restaurant offers moderately priced food, with starters ranging from £4.50 for quails' eggs to £6.95 for marinated Scottish salmon. The main courses range from £9.50 for confit duck leg to £23.95 for an 8oz fillet steak. All of the desserts are priced at £5.25, and a range of sides is offered. The wines are priced from between £12.95 for a simple Muscat de Frontigan to £110.00 for a bottle of six year old Dom Perignon. Customers comprise of couples and single diners of most ages, but a large base of the clientele is made up of businessmen, who often frequent the hotel on overnight stays. The restaurant is crowded on popular evenings, turning over the largest amount of money between Thursday and Saturday. With a capacity of eighty diners, a sense of intimacy is still maintained. The restaurant is full of nooks and crannies, and some tables are slightly secluded, while others are out in the open; those that are situated close to each other would allow for the diners to touch.

The lighting is dim, without being dingy, and the décor of the restaurant is carefully planned to nurture an atmosphere of sophistication, being embellished with small touches that the customers are expected to notice and take on board. The walls are mostly painted white, with some dark wood panelling and bare brickwork. They are adorned with a mix of classical and modern chic mirrors, and numerous framed paintings and prints, each picture depicting food, drink or the act of dining in some fashion or other. These appear to be an eclectic mix of new and vintage prints in both contemporary and antique looking frames. While it may not be fair to say that these probably appear in restaurants up and down the country, they do add somewhat to the artificiality of restaurant as a whole (see also Grazian (2008)). The vast majority of these prints appear to be mass-produced and are carefully displayed to give an impression of cool minimalism and up-cycled chic. There are also empty wine bottles situated around the restaurant, mostly champagne bottles, arranged in size from a Magnum up to a Balthazar. The tables are made from dark, polished wood; dark brown leather seats and individual booths adorn the restaurant's edges.

There are no tablecloths, but the linen provided is crisp and white, folded neatly at each place setting. The wine glasses are contemporary, as is the abstract shaped cutlery, designed more aesthetically than practically. The only other decorative difference between this and any other night is the addition of a single red rose to each table, each one standing at an angle due to the lopsided nature of the contemporary, clear glass vase in which it stands.

The restaurant where my research took place does not succumb to the highly contrived nature of dining that can be found elsewhere, and the dishes that are produced do not adhere to the unnatural and overly artificial displays associated with *nouvelle cuisine* (see Wood 2004). They are stylish and minimalist without being excessively pretentious, however, this is all a marketing strategy designed to separate customers from their money. There is no admirable decision to go 'back to basics minimalism' for any reason other than the profit motive, as in contemporary society, this represents just another niche market. Commodification is total and more often than not, reality is indistinguishable from the fake (Baudrillard 2001, 1983). During the restaurant's refurbishment, the owners of the hotel worked closely with a team of interior specialists to create the final product. Everything was given careful consideration, from the décor and style of furniture, to the crockery and utensils supplied, to the food and even the menu.

The restaurant has forgone the traditional booklet style menu in favour of a large double-sided laminated page. It stands almost one foot and a half tall by one foot wide and the colours are muted to match the restaurants' décor. The dishes are shown on one side, with the extensive wine list printed on the reverse. The text is simple, with clear separation and continuity of dishes from the starters through to the deserts and cheese. The only splash of bright colour is in the top left corner: a print of the painting that stands at the top of the restaurant stairs. There are no foreign names to make a customer sweat at the thought of pronouncing them incorrectly; there is no sign of the overly pretentious use of the words 'drizzled' or 'smothered'; nothing is 'served on a bed of'. The dishes are presented in a simple manner appropriate to the chosen style of the cuisine: North Sea monkfish, pak-choi, confit duck spring roll and red wine jus. This is of course another evident marketing decision in an

attempt to attract a particular clientele, as 'no-nonsense' is never the absence of market calculation; it is simply another aspect of it. Market calculation in relation to décor and props such as the menu is evidently very important to diners.

'I remember what [the restaurant] was like before. The walls were white and the paint was peeling off and not in a good way. It was as if they didn't care about its appearance. I think they tried, though. There was the odd piece of farming memorabilia dotted around, but nothing really gelled, everything seemed out of place. Even the upholstery was tired, the whole place looked tired. That's why we stopped coming. We were going to Barrows [a rival restaurant in the village] more and more, that was far better. [Q. In what way?] It was everything. It was clean and tidy and it looked good. The walls were wallpapered and the floors had been taken back to how they originally were. Everything just seemed more fitting for *that* type of restaurant. It looked cared for. The food here was just as good as Barrows, maybe even better. But no one wants to sit on damaged chairs next to scythe that's caked in mud. No one wants to look around and see that everything's so dated. It looked like a farmhouse and that wasn't somewhere where I wanted to spend my evening' [Female diner, aged 42].

'It's everything. I get a meal cooked for me, I get waited on. I don't have any fetching or carrying to do for other people, everything's taken care of. I don't have to worry that I'm ignoring my guests, or that I'm going to burn something or forget something. Everything's done for me, so I can just enjoy the meal and relax' [female diner, aged 31].

'Of course it's different. From the second I step in there [the restaurant] everything changes. That's *my* time. We don't get to go out *that* often cos of work and that, so you have to enjoy it and switch off, that's all part of it. We get dressed up and we get pampered, who doesn't want that? We're both working, so we can afford it. If we had more time, we'd do it more. We love going out and having a meal has always been part of our time out together' [female diner, aged 26].

'Getting ready is all part of [going out for a meal]. I always like to look my best and I do make an effort with that. I hate those that never bother, those that look like they've just come from work or something. [Q. Why?] It spoils my night in a way. I make the effort and so should they. I don't want to sit near someone that hasn't washed or bothered to change their clothes or something. I want to see people that look good, that have made an effort, like me... Everyone gets to see the menu and you can hear what people order. You know what's the most expensive thing on the menu and you can tell those that have the money to spend on it, by what they order. We always get the full lot, three courses and maybe coffee afterwards. You

have to, don't you? There's no point going there and just ordering a starter as a main and maybe some extra sides [side dishes] or something. What's the point in coming out of you're just going to skimp on it? Like we always get a dessert, even if I'm full and I know I can't finish it. But you have to, it's just part of it. I'm not saying that I always get the most expensive thing on the menu, but if you do, you know it's going to be good. Plus it makes it last longer. There's no use in just coming in and leaving straight away, you have to stay a while and enjoy it, lap it up. That's what you're there for' [Female diner, aged 23].

'You're out there for maybe two hours max, so you have to do what you can. I always get wine, but I'm not much of a fan. But it looks a hell of a lot better than beer and it can be real pricy so that's good. [Q. In what way?] Well it's good to show them that you're with. I was at a restaurant and I had this wine, I forget what it was called, but it was about thirty quid a bottle, so I knew it'd be ok. When I came here, I ordered the same but it was about a fiver more. But it doesn't matter. I think it impressed our lass. Like that and everything else, just being here, it's all part of the show. Get your best gear on and impress 'em. I never drink it apart from when I'm out eating, there's no point when we're just sat at home. But it's different in a place like this, it's part of it. You can't be here and *not* order wine' [Male diner, aged 29].

'A lot of work has gone in to it [the refurbishment of the restaurant]. It's not just about the food any more. We had that before, we've always had it, but that doesn't matter. [The décor of the restaurant] just didn't cut it before. Everyone wants to eat fine food, but they don't want to sit in a run down, dark, dank room to do it. We were only giving them half of the deal, half of what they wanted. We'd get complaints that the food wasn't up to scratch, that they had some sort of problem with it, but we knew it was spot on'.

'It just like everything else: if you want it, you pay for it. It's not like McDonalds or Pizza Express, it's a top restaurant. I wouldn't take our lass out for a meal and have her sit in somewhere like that. You want to impress and that's how you do it. You don't do it by going to those places, you do it by coming here. It looks the part, the food looks good, everything looks like it should. As soon as you walk in you know what it's all about. I mean, if you know the hotel, you'd know anyway. But you can tell just from looking, it's a top place'.

'Of course it feels good. You're out and about and everyone can see that. There's no point in it otherwise. If you have the money and you can afford it, or even if you can't but you want to go out, you always pick the best. The more [money] you have, the more choice you have and you can take your pick. There's no point in looking your best, getting a new outfit and that, just to go somewhere shit. No one's gonna be there' [female diner, aged 23].

'It's not just about knowing what cut is what, sometimes it can be even the most basic things. I see it all the time when I'm in restaurants, people asking what this and that is, when really they should know, it's not that difficult. But they probably don't go out that often. But I've seen people ask what corn fed chicken is and how that's different from normal chicken, or what a jus is. They even pronounce it like that, like jus [says juss]. I'd be embarrassed if I was with someone like that. But you can tell by looking at them, what they'll be like, it's always the same type of people. [Q. What type is that?] Those that don't really care about the food, they just want to have a meal out in a nice restaurant. But they want the same type of thing that they'll get at a pub. I don't think they realise that not *everywhere* serve scampi with sachets of tartar sauce. It's completely different to what they're used to' [female diner, aged 42].

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