'IT'S JUST A THING I DO'

'IT'S JUST A THING I DO': YOUNG KITCHEN WORKERS' COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND CAREERS OF PRECARITY

By

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Abstract: The culinary industry is well known for its unforgiving workplace conditions and precarious employment relationships. Low pay, unpredictable schedules, and workplace harassment are commonplace. However, workers in the industry are often dedicated to their craft and passionate about the industry in which they work. This thesis aims to come to a better understanding of the working lives of young kitchen workers in Toronto. Using a narrative approach to research, this thesis draws on the experiences of nine young kitchen workers. Their narratives are analyzed through examining their participation in communities of practice and their experiences of employment strain. It seeks to answer the question of why these individuals enjoy their work but often hate their jobs.

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INTRODUCTION

There is little that seems appetizing about an occupation that involves working in a small, cramped space where temperatures can hit 40°C and where tempers flare even hotter. A job that regularly demands working ten hours a day, six days a week, for relatively low pay[1] and next to no job security, never mind benefits or scheduling certainty, would not strike many observers as an environment in which workers could have a sincere affection for their industry. Nor would it seem a likely space in which workers would develop a profound pride in their skill and a deep love for the culture in which they not only work, but also find comfort in the embrace of community. This paradox lies at the heart of the experiences of young culinary workers, and at the centre of this study.

The restaurant industry is vital to Ontario's economy and to youth participation in the economy in particular. 6% of Ontario's workforce is employed, in some capacity, by the restaurant industry (Reaman 2012). 20% of employed youth work in restaurants, making it the most commonplace industry in which workers begin their careers (Reaman, 2012). The origins of the modern day restaurant can be traced back to late 18th century France (Sprang, 2001). Despite its vintage, current social trends have placed an exalted status on culinary art, and celebrity chefs, like never before (Hyman, 2008; Turow, 2015).

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[1] Cooks in Ontario have an average yearly salary of $26,000, with chefs earning on average $33,000 (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2014, 2014a).

This is certainly the case in Toronto, which until recently has been characterized as a provincial culinary backwater (Davey, 2014).

Food culture has developed into a "commodity fetishism" that is used as a "signal of education, knowledge, and income" (Pinsker, 2015). It has "metastasized into something truly monstrous" to the point where "a rigorously cultivated knowledge of food and restaurants is now regarded as essential to being a properly worldly human" (Buchanan, 2015). The truism that we are what we eat, or perhaps more specifically, we are what we conspicuously consume and share on social media, is more applicable than ever. Restaurants themselves have become valorized as a potential preconfiguration of an alternate form of urban economic organization that resists neoliberal hegemony (Hanser & Hyde, 2014). They have also been condemned as "evidence of urban elitism, exploitative labour practices," and agents of corporate whitewashing (Donald & Blay-Palmer, 2006, p.1902). The growth in 'foodie culture' is matched by a growing demand for young kitchen workers (Macdonald, 2013; Spitz, 2013).

Young culinary workers stand at the intersection of contemporary trends within Canada's labour market. Their jobs are precarious, and their wages are stagnant. They work in the service industry, yet face the output demands of just in time manufacturing and the disciplinary methods reminiscent of the drive system of early 20th century capitalism. Save for some, usually large, urban hotels or conference centre kitchens, they largely go unrepresented by a labour union and have little recourse in ameliorating their working conditions except through finding new employment. Their jobs can be unsafe,

barely regulated, and are often all-consuming. However, little research has been done on the experiences and occupational identities of young kitchen workers.

This study focuses on the experiences of young culinary workers in Toronto and seeks to understand the factors that underlie their commitment to the industry as well as those that undermine said commitment. These push and pull factors are multiple and span issues as disparate as employment precarity, informal education, deleterious coping mechanisms, and the occupational identities of young cooks and chefs[2]. It seeks to find the sources of motivation and passion of young kitchen workers, and how these forces are shaped by external forces of community and capital. Of equal concern to this study are the means through which workers' passion about the culinary trade is eroded by the difficulties workers encounter when attempting to reconcile the demands of the workplace with those of everyday life. At its most basic, this study aims to answer a simple question: why do culinary workers love their work, but hate their jobs? To find an answer, this study focuses on recounting the narratives of nine culinary workers under the age of 28. In doing so, this study aims to provide a rich account of the joys and difficulties of being a young restaurant worker.

This thesis begins with a review of relevant academic literature, focusing on the the kitchen as a workplace and the occupational identity of culinary workers. Two gaps in the literature are touched on, namely the lack of academic research on the lives of

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[2] While the term chef generally refers to a restaurant worker with more responsibility and seniority in the kitchen, the terms are used interchangeably within this thesis due to vagueness of both terms and the nonlinear career progressions of the participants. The term head chef is used to connote participants who occupy the most senior day to day role in their respective kitchens.

restaurant workers who are not employed at an elite level, and the dearth of information about labour turnover and employment strain in the industry. The literature review concludes with a summary of the concept of communities of practice and the employment strain model. The second section of this thesis describes the research approach and research methodology used. This study employs a narrative approach to research within a critical realist framework. The reasoning behind this choice is discussed, as are the advantages and shortcomings of using such an approach. The recruitment and sampling methods, interview process, and data coding methods are explained. A brief overview of the characteristics of the participants is provided.

The findings of the study are split into two sections. The first is concerned with aspects of working in restaurant kitchens that facilitate a commitment to the trade of cooking specifically, and to the world of kitchen work more broadly. It primarily uses Wenger's (1998) concept of communities of practice in order to better understand the cultural, technical, and educational dimensions of cooking as a trade. The section that follows adapts Lewchuk, Clarke, and de Wolff's (2008) concept of employment strain to examine how labour market forces shape the decisions that young workers make with regard to their present and future employment. It also describes how aspects of employment strain and the communities of practice workers act in concert to create living and working conditions that can become inhospitable for and damaging to workers. The final section concludes by reflecting on aspects of the lives and identities of young kitchen workers that are worthy of further research, and on what can be learned from the participants' experiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review begins with a survey of relevant academic literature on kitchen workers. Specific attention is paid towards working conditions, abusive behaviour, employment strain and occupational identity. Two gaps within the literature are then discussed: a dearth of research on restaurant workers who are not working at an elite level, and a lack of insight into how both precarity and communities of practice inform the career choices that young restaurant workers make. It then summarizes Wenger's (1998; Wenger et al., 2002; Lave & Wenger, 1990), model of communities of practice and Lewchuk et al.'s (2008) model of employment strain, the main frames through which analysis of the data will take place:

EXISTING LITERATURE

The restaurant kitchen as a workplace is particularly contentious. Kitchen violence is "deeply imbedded in chefs' working culture" and workplace control is exerted within a macho culture that privileges the ability to bear a high level of stress, violence, injury, and bullying (Johns & Menzel, 1999, p.99). The restaurant industry is imbued with a culture of harassment and hazing, where a "controlling environment" of "unquestioned authority" instills a strict disciplinary regime that contributes to stress and burnout (Bliosi & Hoel, 2008, p.654). Sources of stress for culinary workers include "excessive workload, feeling undervalued, and communications issues," all of which are heightened by "bullying and threats of violence" (Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007, p.32). These issues are especially evident amongst female kitchen workers, who have their social boundaries regularly tested by

male coworkers in order to assess their ability and willingness to assimilate to a male-dominated environment (Harris & Giuffre, 2010). The cultural norms of the kitchen workplace significantly add to the stress levels of men and women alike, often leading to deleterious coping responses (Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007).

Abusive behaviour in the kitchen is seen both as a form of training as well as a form of violence (Nilsson, 2013; Palmer, Cooper & Burns, 2010). It is legitimated through representations of the occupation in the broader culture, especially reality TV, where it is valorized as a fundamental aspect of male identity (Nilsson, 2013). However, there is a belief among chefs that cultural products about life in the kitchen rely on an outmoded model of behaviour in kitchens. This is not to say that abuse and violence in the kitchen does not exist, as it irrefutably does. Rather, it is no longer the sole mode of discipline and interaction, but rather one amongst many competing social discourses (Nilsson, 2013; Palmer et al., 2010).

Physical injury is an inevitable aspect of kitchen work, with health and safety issues going vastly underreported due to a confluence of factors such as immigration status, language fluency, and a lack of attention paid to chronic conditions in the field (Hsin-Chun-Tsai, 2010). The workplace conditions of chefs leads to increased health and safety risks due to "heat, noise, and activity" and are exacerbated by social factors such as autocratic management styles, thin margins, and varying levels of experience in the kitchen (Maguire & Howard, 2001, p.204). Slips and falls, chronic fatigue, cuts, burns, and sprains are considered a regular, expected occurrence, and are more common during times when the labour process is sped up (Maguire & Howard, 2001).

Stress from "job demands and psychological and physical stress is an important independent factor related to burns and cuts" even when adjusting for confounding factors such as health, age, and environment (Haruyama et al. 2014, p.118). These incidents are internalized by workers, who "see themselves responsible for their own-work related injuries and are often used as markers of community membership and accomplishment" and have been shown to be largely preventable through minor employer interventions (Young & Corsun, 2010, p.95; Gawkrodger, Lloyd & Hunter 1986; Haukka et al., 2006; Verma et al, 2010).

 Issues related to employment strain are a fact of life for kitchen workers, as is its interaction with communities of practice. High staff turnover in kitchens – a key measure of job satisfaction – is tied to "low pay, unsocial hours, and instability" amongst culinary occupations (Rowley & Purcell 2012, p. 170). Remedies suggested for this include many familiar to those attempting to improve the lives of precarious workers, including training, career development, better pay, and a flexible model of work that prioritizes the scheduling needs of workers rather than the whims of management (Rowley & Purcell, 2012). A community of practice that is supportive and involves social reciprocity within the kitchen aids in minimizing chef burnout through increasing workers' sense of self as a dedicated, valued worker (Kang, Twigg & Hertzman, 2010).

Female chefs find themselves under specific strains due to working in a highly-regimented, male-dominated field. The long hours and lack of defined scheduling place on an undue burden on female workers, especially mothers (Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Bartholomew, 1986).Research suggests that some women are against changing industry

norms in a way that would benefit them due to a belief that the struggles they face are worthwhile and act as a marker of their dedication to their trade (Harris & Giuffre, 2010). This may be because kitchen workers often view their work as a calling, valuing the passion they feel for their work over financial remuneration (Maguire & Howard, 2001).

The occupational identities of cooks and chefs are complex, as their work is judged in terms of "the output of a manufacturing production environment" while also being "served and judged in a service environment" (Kang et al., 2010, p.168). The kitchen is both a site of macho culture and high art, where violence is sanctioned because "quality food is art, violence is inseparable from art, therefore violence is inseparable from quality food preparation" (Johns & Menzel, 1999, p. 106). Some argue that more research into how "sociocultural underpinnings" of workers' identities in relation to health and well-being is needed (Hsin-Chun Tsai, 2009, p.113; Fine 1996).

The combination of difficult working conditions and pride in occupational identity has been documented elsewhere. Within the butcher trade, connections between identity, "sacrifices through [the] physicality of work" and masculinized notions of working-class craft work are strong (Simpson et al. 2014, p.754). Poor working conditions are normalized through a sense of self where "men can draw on masculine values to create positive meaning" (Simpson et al., 2014, p.758). Within the culinary industry, the connection between identity, strenuous work, and employment strain is so strong that "any suggested amelioration to the madness of the normal kitchen" is often "opposed by the inmates themselves" (Hennessey, 2000, p.67, in Palmer et al., 2010, p.315). Through this internalization, a sense of pride of work and sense of self emerges that ties difficulty

of work, technical skill, and "shared membership of trade" together to "carve out" a distinct occupational identity (Simpson et.al, 2014, p. 765, 767). This sense of "shared values and beliefs" is integral to the creation of a community of practice (Robinson, Solnet & Breakley, 2014 p.65; Wenger, 1998).

Chefs use different "rhetorical identification" strategies to "embrace… or separate one's self from [the] work domain" (Fine, 1996, p.111). The rhetorical categories that chefs place themselves in are diverse, with different workers considering their occupations to be a skilled trade, an art form, or merely another job (Fine, 1996). A worker is more likely to consider their work to be artisanal when there is an "appreciative audience" and a "demand for novelty" that requires an amount of worker control over the labour process (Fine, 1996, p.116). Cooks are likely to view themselves as professionals when they work in a setting that requires specialized skills and knowledge, and as labourers when there is a high degree of "supervision and physical effort" and a low degree of commitment to the job (Fine, 1996, p.113; Leschziner, 2007).   A sense of authorship, or control over the labour process is important as a source of internal motivation mediated by a worker's desire for a sense of self and accomplishment. It is also important to one's future employment prospects, as it is how a kitchen worker gains recognitions from their peers (Leschziner, 2007).

The work of identity building does not take place within a vacuum, it is inseparable from the work of community building (Wenger, 1998). Kitchen workers draw on internal discourses related to notions of integrity and "commitment to work" and to the trade (Robinson, et al., 2014 p.73). They also draw on communal rhetoric based on

"shared values and beliefs" that are "cauterized during the socialization process" and endure in the "shared community and culture" (Robinson et al., 2014, p.73). The community of kitchen workers is highly regimented in structure but has remarkable latitude for hijinks and pranks (Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Lynch, 2009).

Respect amongst chefs is "based on individual skill" and the "ability to do something out of the ordinary," with self-worth being linked to skill, "work location and external recognition" (Palmer et al., 2010, p.317-8). Chefs see themselves and their communities as standing outside of the normal world. The Other through to which their identity is contrasted are their customers who have little idea about the "physical, cultural, and psychological" demands of the job (Palmer et al., 2010, p.318). This view of community as being other often leads to a "feeling of empowerment and superiority" based on the notion that being chef is "more than just a job, it is sacred work" (Palmer et al., 2010, p.318; Fine 1996, Hyman, 2008).

The nature of the work that chefs undertake shapes their worldview and their community of practice. They enjoy a shared, private language that helps them interpret the world through a communal gaze (Palmer et al., 2010; Fine, 1996). They have their own social norms that rely heavily on bawdy humour and pranks (Lynch, 2009). They have their own cultural markers, none as important as the physical manifestations of work and injury that cover the arms of seasoned workers (Young & Corsun, 2010, Palmer et al., 2010). The line between their work and the rest of their lives is often indeterminably blurry, with the "symbolic boundaries at the points of entry to and exit from the world of employment" slight, merging "work into play throughout the day" (Marshall, 1986 p.41).

This blurring of boundaries is due to the long hours that chefs, and hospitality workers more generally, work, leaving little time for a social life outside of one's colleagues (Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Marshall, 1986; Sandiford & Seymour, 2013). The relatively high level of autonomy that chefs enjoy over their work is conducive to a work atmosphere that, while often extremely stressful and difficult, allows for a specific type of comradery found amongst skilled workers throughout disparate industries (Marshall 1986; Robinson et al., 2014, Demetry, 2013). This combination of autonomy in work and comradery in practice acts as a buffer against elements of deskilling within the higher ends of the restaurant industry (Robinson & Barron, 2007).

GAPS IN LITERATURE

The review above points to a body of knowledge that has matured alongside a renewed societal interest in food culture and the world of kitchen workers (Bell, 2002; Hyman, 2008, Horng & Hu, 2008; Palmer et al., 2010). There are, however, two gaps within the academic knowledge that relate to this thesis. The first issue is that while there have been a number of qualitative studies about the occupational identities of kitchen workers, they are largely focused on experienced chefs in renowned restaurants[3]. While their expert insight is valuable, it does not adequately capture the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of restaurant workers at the beginning stages of their careers. The harshness of the industry is easily seen through rose-tinted glasses when one has reached a certain level of success. Furthermore, the chefs profiled within these studies are passionate and

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[3] See: Harris & Giuffre, 2010; Palmer et al., 2010, Leiczner, 2007, Fine, 1992; Fine, 1996; Ruhlman, 2001, Wright, 2006

dedicated to their craft. Were it to be that all workers, especially those experiencing precarity, were so fortunate (Bujold, Fournier & Lachance, 2013).

While there is a large amount of research into labour turnover within the restaurant industry from a management perspective[4], there is a dearth of knowledge about the multitude of personal and professional factors that shape the career choices of young kitchen workers. The research that does exist, save for a few exceptions, focuses on factors related to a narrow understanding of the employment relationship and on factors that can effect burnout, privileging issues of harassment and workplace violence over structural issues that foster the economic incentives that precarious employment relationships provide. I aim to address these gaps by incorporating Lave & Wegner's (1990) theories of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice and Lewchuk et al.'s (2008) notion of employment strain in order to come to a better understanding of the push and pull factors for young kitchen workers.

THEORIES

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

At their most simple, communities of practice are "groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015 p.1). Not all communities are communities of practice, nor are all groups of individuals who share a practice a

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[4] See: Bloisi & Hoel, 2008; Gibbons & Giibbons, 2007; John & Menzel, 1999; Kang, Twigg & Hertzman, 2010; Robinson & Barron, 207; Robinson, Solent & Breakey, 2014; Rowley & Purcell, 2001.

community. Communities of practice have three distinguishing characteristics: mutual engagement; a shared repertoire; and a joint enterprise. These elements are necessary for the learning and engagement process of legitimate peripheral participation to take place through a duality of participation in practice and reification of shared ideas and values.

In this model, practice exists within a community and its relationships. Mutual engagement, through "sustained dense relations…where a shared understanding of work is at the centre is how this practice takes form" (Wenger, 1998, p.73). This mutual engagement allows participants to draw on each other's strengths and creates a communal memory of practice. Just as within any community, the mutual engagement within a community of practice can involve conflict and disagreement, as the relations between members are complex and imbued with power imbalances and acts of resistance. The work at the centre of the community is the joint enterprise. The joint enterprise is not solely the work at hand, but the confluence of factors that "define the significance" of work and "shape practices" and the response to the larger context in which work is done (Wenger, 1998, p.80). It is the sum of the "full complexity of the mutual engagement" (Wenger, 1998, p.82). Beyond shaping the shared goals and values of the community, it also "creates among participants relations of mutual accountability" that become an integral part of the practice (Hoosen, 2009, p.7).

The shared repertoire of a community of practice is the mechanism through which members negotiate the meaning of their work and communicate shared techniques and practice to one another. This includes the particular ways of doing and understanding things, stories, concepts and symbols that are unique to a community of practice (Wenger,

1998). The shared repertoire "reflects the history of mutual engagement" of a community of practice while remaining ambiguous enough to allow new developments to emerge (Wenger, 1998, p.84). It includes the shared resources, language, and skills that a member of a community of practice draws on to participate in the community through their own practice (Hoosen, 2009). Through engaging with these three elements of a community of practice, a member learns how to do, how to act, and how to be.

Both the shared repertoire and joint enterprise are created within a mutually engaged community through the negotiation of meaning, which involves a dualistic relationship between participation and reification (Wallace, 2007). Participation shapes one's identity through engagement, meaning that participation in a community of practice does not end at the end of the workday, as it part of who one is. Reification is "the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into thingness", whether this be in physical form such as tools, or through symbols, stories and description (Wenger, 1998, p.58). Within this framework, participation and reification are distinct but rely on each other. Both create meaning, but are meaningless without one another. Participation produces and is how one uses reified objects, and our ability to participate together relies on a shared understanding of reified objects and symbols. It is through the reification of objects (material and otherwise) that explicit knowledge is transferred and created, and through participation with people that tacit knowledge is shared and understood.

Learning in a community of practice involves moving from the periphery of the practice towards the centre (Lave & Wenger, 1990). Such a shift entails a change in

identity as one negotiates ways of being in a new context.   Furthermore, newcomers to a community can "engage with their own future" as it is "embodied by old timers" and their narratives of experience that newcomers can graft the meaning of their own lives onto (Wenger, 1998, p.156).Through membership in communities of practice, we identify ourselves through our experience of participation, and through which communities we see ourselves as belonging - or not belonging - to. This involves both reification and participation. One becomes a chef both by taking on its occupational label, and through giving the label of chef meaning through engaging in the practice of being a chef (Wenger, 1998). Through doing what others in the community do, and being treated as such, one's self identity is reflected back and defined through this social interaction. Membership in a community of practice "translates into an identity as a form of competence" in practice (Wenger, 1998, p.153).

While the concept of communities of practice has been criticized for being too broad, its focus on learning and its connections to the personal and the collective makes it well suited for analyzing the narratives of young workers (Wallace, 2007). This is especially true in settings where a job is "as much a lifestyle as an occupation" (Sweeny & Holmes, 2007, p.207). As I will demonstrate in the findings section, the symbiotic relationship between learning new skill, comradery, and personal identity is strong among young kitchen workers, making communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation a sound theoretical approach for analysis.

EMPLOYMENT STRAIN

When discussing precarious work, examining the narrow legal definition of the labour contract, with its strict focus on the "exchange of time and/or services for money between an employer and an employee" (Lewchuk et al., 2008, p.390) does not suffice. A focus solely on the labour contract renders invisible a host of psycho-social effects of work on workers such as time spent looking for work, uncertainty about pay and schedule, and the stress that comes from juggling multiple employers (Lewchuk et al., 2008). Conversely, a broader perspective focused on the notion of precarious workers being a new global class in the making is certainly useful for analyzing the effects of capital and the neoliberal state on segments of the labour market (i.e. Standing, 2011), but lacks the specificity required for an in-depth examination of the working lives of a small group of young kitchen workers. For the purposes of this project, precarious work is defined in relation to Lewchuk et al.'s (2008) concept of employment strain. This choice was made in order to privilege an understanding of the effects of precarity on workers over a conception of precarity that focuses on the labour contract.

The employment strain model seeks to better understand the relationship between precarious employment and the health of workers by focusing on the "control over future employment…effort expended in finding and keeping employment, and support at work, and in the home" for workers in the labour market (Lewchuk et al., 2008, p.390-391). There are three dimensions to employment strain. Employment relationship uncertainty focuses on concerns about one's future employment, pay and work schedule, and uncertainty over the stability of one's current employment (Lewchuk et al., 2008).

Employment relationship effort includes the amount of time an effort a worker must put into staying employed, juggling multiple employers or worksites (Lewchuk et al., 2008). Finally, employment relationship support can be thought of as a "buffer" against the ill effects of employment strain, as it focuses on the amount of psychosocial support a worker receives from coworkers, family, friends, as well as solidaristic support from a trade union (Lewchuk et al., 2008, p.392. The authors define employment strain as the interaction of these three dimensions, and found complex but significant relationships between different forms of effort and health outcomes.

The intent of this research project is not to investigate the health effects of employment strain on young culinary workers. However, it is my belief that the employment strain model can be used as a means to explore the career choices of the participants in relation to both their experiences of precarity and of being members of a community of practice. The levels of employment relationship effort and uncertainty are the constitutive elements of precarious work. Being involved in a vibrant, close-knit community of practice is undoubtedly a central aspect of emotional relationship support. The effects of precarious work are not limited to the realm of health and wellness (Lewchuk et al., 2015). They also play a large role in determining job attachment and career choices. Workers in non-standard employment relationships, for example, are often "not encouraged to strongly commit themselves to work" given the fragility and uncertainty of the employment relationship (Bujold et al., 2012, p. 495). Even when workers have a strong belief in the centrality of work in general to one's life, many

precarious workers show a level of commitment to their jobs below the level that they themselves believe is desirable (Bujold et al., 2012).

Furthermore, workers in non-standard employment relationships are much more likely to view their employment in transactional terms. They experience their employer providing the bare minimum in terms of benefits and commitments, and are therefore much more likely to act the same in return (McLean-Parks et al., 1994). Burnout and the intention of a worker to leave an employment relationship are directly correlated to time-based work to life conflicts - that is, employment strain related to burdensome time requirements within an employment relationship (Brauchli et al. 2011).

The role that employment strain and communities of practice play in the lives of workers is deeply individualistic, regardless of similarities in occupational trajectory or social location. However, as the next sections will demonstrate, there are some similarities among the participants of this study with regard to how they view their community, practice, and employment relationship. The next section will focus mainly on how being a member of a strong community of practice keeps young workers engaged in mostly low-paid work that takes place in often less than accommodating conditions. The section following will examine how employment strain effects the career choices of the participants, while also touching on how aspects of their community of practice can have both beneficial and deleterious effect on the wellbeing of workers and their attachment to work.

RESEARCH METHODS

RESEARCH APPROACH

A qualitative narrative approach to research was used in order to examine the lived experiences of young culinary workers. This approach was guided by a critical realist research perspective, which combines a belief in an external reality with the recognition that this reality can only be known through socially mediated concepts and representations (Bhaskar, 2001; Sayer, 2006). Critical realism rejects the notion of there being objective knowledge about the world due to the "possibility of alternative valid accounts of any phenomenon," while maintaining an acceptance of a "real world that exists independently" that is mediated through personal and social construction (Maxwell, 2012, p.8). This makes it well-suited for an exploration of how a worker's subjective identity is formed through experiences within an objective world. The belief in "different valid perspectives on [objective] reality" makes critical realism an appropriate epistemological guide for a research project that is focused on discovering the different perspectives culinary workers have of themselves, their work, and the contexts in which it takes place (Maxwell, 2012, p.9).

A narrative approach to research was chosen for this study for its focus on the relations "between the person and his/her world [and] between events and feelings" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p.8). Narrative research "begins and ends with a respect for ordinary lived experiences" and explores the social, economic, and cultural narratives "within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted"

(Clandinin, 2013, p.18). This combination of a holistic view of one's story within the world and an investigative, iterative process in which the focus of research may change as new stories and themes emerge makes a narrative approach fitting for a study focused on the diverse experiences of young culinary workers. Furthermore, there is a need to bring attention to issues and communities "underrepresented in the scholarly literature," such as young workers, through research guided by the "specific needs, concerns, and voices of the participants themselves" (Fassinger & Morrow 2013, p.73). The use of a narrative approach entails the use of an "open and inquiring stance" that "offers participants the opportunity to air personalized accounts and allows them to present their world in a way that is responsive and respectful to their chosen interpretations" (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013, p.5; Butler, 2014, p. 722).

The approach used in this study does have limitations, especially in regards to classic notions of reliability and external validity. This research project is heavily-context specific, as all narrative projects are (Bold, 2012). If the "heart of external validity is replicability," then this research paper, due to its design and context, will be difficult to be validated externally (Krathwohl, 1985, in Schofield, 2002, p.173). However, Schofield (2002, p.178), discusses "fittingness" as a more suitable mode of analyzing the validity of qualitative research. Fittingness involves providing deep and rich data and description as well as a robust explanation of the research methods, used. The depth and richness of the interview data has provided the "thick description" that "accurately describes… social actions," their purpose, and the context in which they take place (Ponterotto, 2006, p.543). While narrative inquiry is often "dismissed as merely anecdotal and personal," it

is vital in situations where there is a need to "understand more deeply the experiences [of participants]," especially when one is attempting to uncover "personal, practical knowledge" (Clandinin, 2013, p.35, 37). With that being said, this study is limited in its generalizability given its qualitative nature.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants were recruited through two main avenues. The majority of participants were recruited through contacts[5] that I have within the restaurant industry, while the remainder were recruited through Facebook groups[6] that are popular among workers in the industry. From this pool, purposive sampling was used in order to ensure that the participants met the desired criteria and that there was a degree of diversity among the participants in terms of social location and occupational history. All participants were required to be under the age of thirty and be currently or recently employed as a cook or chef in a sit-down restaurant or bar[7] in Toronto. While originally only participants who were currently employed within the industry were to be included, this condition was changed given the high amount of turnover and precarity within the industry and due to the change in the project towards a focus on the reasons why workers remain in or quit the trade.

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[5] While I know some of the participants socially, I do not socialize with them on a regular basis. These participants are largely friends of friends or mutual acquaintances.

[6] The two groups were the Food and Wine Industry Navigator, a Toronto-centric group of over 9000 restaurant owners and workers, and Bunz Trading Zone, a 10,000 member group of Torontonians used for trading items and requests for help. Money is not allowed to exchange hands for items or help, and nothing was provided, financial or otherwise, to any participant.

[7] The line between bar and restaurant can be quite blurry. As such, cooks and chefs employed at bars with full-meal service were included.

After receiving approval from the McMaster Research Ethics Board, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted over May and June, 2015. The interviews were between approximately an hour and an hour and forty five minutes in length, were audio recorded, and took place in a convenient location chosen by the participant. During the consent process[8], the structure of the interview was explained. The participants were given one broad question at a time and were instructed to say as much as they could on that subject in order to prompt more narrative responses (Jovchelovitch & Martin, 2000). In total, participants were asked seven broad questions that were formulated to solicit answers on topics such as working conditions, career trajectory, and feelings about work. Follow up questions were then used to prompt further reflection and clarify answers. An interview guide was used[9] in order to cover similar themes with each participant. However, it was used as a loose manual so as to allow the participants to drive their own narrative story (Jovchelovitch & Martin, 2000).

Of the nine participants[10] seven are male and two are female. This is loosely representative of culinary workers as a whole[11] (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2014, 2014a). They are between 23 and 27 years old. Two of the participants identify as visible minorities. This is surely an underrepresentation[12] given the fact that

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[8] See Appendix B for consent letter.
[9] See Appendix C
[10] See Appendix A for a detailed summary of the participants.
[11] CANSIM data by National Occupational Code (NOC) states that 22% of chefs and 39% of cooks are female. However, the NOC code for cooks and chefs include workers in institutional settings. The job requirements for cooks and chefs laid out in the NOC codes appear to be somewhat arbitrary when compared to the lived experiences of the participants in this study.
[12] While efforts were undertaken to have a more representative sample, the time constraints of the project did not make it feasible.

nearly 50% of Toronto's population are visible minorities and that visible minorities are over-represented within the broader service industry, (City of Toronto, n.d.; Block & Galabuzi, 2011). Eight of the participants are Canadian citizens, and one is in the country on a renewed visa after some time working without legal documentation. The study was limited by the size of the sample, and the underrepresentation of women, workers of colour, and workers from a larger diversity of social locations.

Six of the nine participants were (at the time of the interview) currently employed solely as kitchen workers. One was also employed outside of the industry, and the remaining two had either recently left or were between jobs. The participants had a range of four to fifteen former and current employers and had worked in the industry for three and a half to ten years. While the majority had only one current restaurant employer, two were employed by three different employers each. The types of restaurants and the positions held by the participants represent a diverse set of circumstances. From line cooks in bars to sous-chefs in highly renowned restaurants to head chefs in both a small local restaurant and an international multi-million dollar enterprise, the participants reflect the multitude of options and different positions within internal labour markets possible for workers in the industry.

For the participants who were employed only within the restaurant industry, the number of hours worked ranged from 30 to over 70 a week. The pay range was similarly diverse, with pay for eight of the workers falling between $7 and $17 an hour. As will be discussed in the findings, the worker earning $7 hour is doing so because of the use of a 'day wage' rather than an hourly minimum wage. While certainly against the

Employment Standards Act, this participant sees this position as a learning opportunity and as such has reconciled himself to the illegality of the situation. One participant, a head chef, receives a monthly salary of approximately $3100. Of the nine participants one receives some form of non-salary benefits.

The role that education plays in the occupational identities and trajectories of practice for workers, and young workers especially, is essential. Three participants attended some form of post-secondary education in the culinary arts, one of whom is also pursuing an undergraduate degree at University. Each of these participants hold some degree of ambivalence to the worth of a formal culinary education. Of the remaining participants one has a college degree in an unrelated field and two did not finish before their (non-culinary) college programs. One is a high school graduate, and the remaining two did not finish high school. As one can see in Appendix A, there is little correlation between the level of education achieved by participants and their position with the culinary industry.

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed[13] and analyzed in order to assess the shared themes found throughout the data. The data was initially coded through an open process, as described by Charmaz (2014) and Bold (2012), into broad themes. These themes were refined and reanalyzed throughout the coding process. Codes were added, discarded and modified as the project came into greater focus through reflection

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[13] The excerpts from the transcribed interviews in this paper have been lightly edited for clarity. False starts and filler words such as um, you know, and like have been removed when necessary. Swearing and vulgar language are central aspects of kitchen culture that most participants had strong, often affectionate, feelings for. As such, they have been left in.

and secondary research (Butler, 2014). While research into theories related to the themes certainly informed their modification, the process was non-prescriptive in that the analysis was grounded in the data rather than in what was presumed by the researcher or the theory. The section that follows will explore what emerged from this process.

COOKING IN A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The role that skill attainment plays in fostering a sense of accomplishment in and attachment to kitchen work is difficult to overstate. It is the central reward mechanism, the main measure of personal success, and the foundation for respect within the community of practice. This section begins with the importance of learning new skills and its role in passion and attachment to the occupation, then moves onto the importance of and process through which new skills are learned. It will end with a discussion into how skill is interpreted with regards to what role skill plays in the participants' conceptualization of their work and their identity.

LEARNING NEW SKILLS

The ability to learn new skills consistently keeps young kitchen workers engaged in their jobs. These skills are multiple, and go far beyond the mechanical. Enjoying one's progress from novice to skilled worker provides a sense of accomplishment and pride. This is especially true given the hierarchical structure of the kitchen. One participant, a former dishwasher turned head chef at an acclaimed, multimillion dollar restaurant described his favourite part of his career as:

> *It's constant skill building, whether it's actually about cooking or not it's such a fast changing environment that pretty much every day you're learning something or improving on something… That becomes its own motivation. Ah, knowing that you're going to be good at something. So instead of thinking I have to chop this onion because the onions have to get chopped, you feel yourself becoming really really good at using a knife…you can look back on how much you've learned. Realize that you're someone who didn't even know how to hold the knife properly,*

> *and know you can fucking burnoise[14] the tiniest shallot in thirty five seconds. So that kind of keeps you engaged in the future because you know that you're only going to get better from here…that's the personal motivation (Julian).*

The role of skill and attachment is clear at the beginning of a career:

> *I was like, I'm really bad at this but I want to get better at it. It definitely made me feel like it was something I wanted to do. It was definitely really fun and exciting… I'd take a big ugly pile of potatoes, and I'd do a bunch of shit to them, and the end result is a water container full of nice neat pale cubes, and I did that (Mona).*

As well as further along in one's career path:

> *There's a big learning curve to cooking that occurs for most people around two years. And it's really nice, being able to from start to finish to cook stuff that I actually can sell this for $60 for a plate, and six months ago I was making salads to put on the sides of these peoples plates and watching them and being like 'I have no fucking idea what they're doing right now' (Zack).*

The participants consistently described the excitement that comes from moving from the periphery of a practice to a more central, skilled position. All of the participants started with very simple tasks in the kitchen, primarily dishwashing. From this peripheral area of practice – important to the kitchen's labour process but hardly at its core – they slowly built up their skills and their understanding of how the industry functions. Initial interest in the industry was mixed among the participants, with some having no personal avocation for food, while others having a high degree of passion from childhood. Regardless of the strength of their commitment at the beginning, it grew over time. As Sam, a high-end sous chef said: "Steadily, as I gained more responsibility and saw interesting food, my interest grew a lot." This parallel growth of interest and responsibility was found throughout the interviews. This is reflective of the notion that

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[14] Finely dice.

learning and participation are conceptualized both by what is offered in the present moment, as well as by "their location on a [career] trajectory" (Wenger, 1998, p.155). As young kitchen workers become more involved in their community of practice through the absorption of new skills, they become more attached to their trade.

The desire for interesting work motivates young kitchen workers. It is, unsurprisingly, a tonic for the monotony that is inherent in the repetitive tasks that comprise much of the daily work lives of cooks and chefs at all levels[15]. While the workers saw the role that repetitive work played in learning skill, they also largely felt that "there's no point in doing something if you're not learning anything… [if not] what the hell are you there for?" (Andrew). If the work is not interesting "you go rusty. And if I'm not learning stuff I get bored really easily… I'll get really bored and just leave" (Lisa). As these workers are at the beginning of their careers (with a majority of them having limited formal education), it is not surprising that they put a premium on learning new skills. While there are mentions of it in the literature[16], it is nonetheless interesting the extent that learning as a prerogative takes precedence over material concerns like pay:

> *Cooks will stay at a fucking busy, interesting fun restaurant, and make less money – good ones at least – rather than make a decent salary [where] it's fucking boring, the food's uninspiring, the chef's a fucking dick and they're never busy. Like, I've done that before. And even when you're making comfortable money it's never more than two or three months before you just get yourself out of there… if it's boring you're doing it wrong, and you need a new job, you're getting paid too much (Julian).*

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[15] As Mona said: "we talk a lot about what we do, makes us sound kind of glamorous. A quarter of my day is breaking down cardboard boxes… the best cook in the world? You still break down the boxes."

[16] See Fine (1996) and Johns and Menzel (1999). What makes it somewhat more surprising in this context is that the examples of this phenomena in the literature are based on studies of established chefs who presumably have higher purchasing power in the labour market given their seniority, and therefore more flexibility in terms of finding interesting and well paid work.

Sam, a highly skilled chef who, despite working twenty hours a week at a restaurant for approximately $7 an hour "purely" as a learning experience, felt likewise:

> *I think that if you want to go anywhere in the culinary industry learning, learning skills is, so important. A lot of cooks will trade opportunities to learn for higher wages, or will kind of stymie own development by taking jobs that pay more. The contradiction is the best restaurants to work in often treat people the worst. The places where you're gonna learn the most are often places where you're gonna be paid the least. And places that pay a lot higher are places where you're not gonna learn much, if anything at all…So I think if you want to develop kind of have to continuously learn. And sometimes well, generally that requires you sacrificing wages and sanity, and time.*

While suggesting that the ability to learn required a large sacrifice, Sam still felt that his biggest regret about his career thus far was not "in some instances, trying to push myself a little further to learn, and not just falling into places that were just high paying and easy to do." The privileging of pay over practice has been documented elsewhere and has been attributed to chefs' understanding of their work as a calling (Maguire & Howard, 2001). Within this rhetorical framework, the work takes precedence over pay. One's "commitment ends at the paycheque" in any particular kitchen job, given the regular occurrence of poor treatment and the low pay in relation to the level of skill needed (Fine, 1996, p.111). However, one's commitment to the occupation continues as "dedication and devotion" is thought of as kitchen workers as key requirement for good work (Fine, 1996, p.96). Learning as an end is therefore important for the attachment of kitchen workers to their occupation. The means through which this learning takes place is equally as important.

LEARNING AS A SOCIAL PROCESS

Learning in a kitchen is most often an implicit rather than explicit process. Three out of nine participants attended culinary school. Only one found it to be a useful venture[17]. There is a gap between the skills learned in culinary school and the skills needed for working in a fast-paced kitchen environment (Muller 2009). Lave and Wenger (1990), in discussing formal apprenticeship programs, suggest that they are too constricting in that they focus on teaching technical skills while being unable to transmit the social and cultural aspects of what is needed to excel within a community of practice.

When asked about how learning takes place, the participants echoed this sentiment, as learning was explicitly talked about as a social process. As Ben said in relation to how he learns at work: "you have a lot of people who have been like in the industry for years, that you work with. So you have that advice already. I've worked with guys who have been cooking for 40, 50 years, you know that advice is built into the job." Chefs who took the initiative to teach less experienced workers were held in especially high regard, suggesting that the social learning relationship between newcomers and old timers discussed by Lave and Wenger (1991) is essential to the ability to learn new skills and to feelings of belonging and attachment to the restaurant industry. This learning is especially valued when it is done through sharing practice rather than a stance of "pedagogical authoritarianism," in which the expert exerts their will on the novice (Lave

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[17] In this case the participant had been working in kitchens for several years, and went to a private cooking college that split its 12 hour days of instruction between class time and working in the college's open to the public restaurant. He found this to be much more reflective of the environment found in commercial kitchens.

& Wenger, 1990, p.77). Indeed, teaching skills to others was routinely described as the

most admirable quality in a chef:

> *You need to be a good teacher to be a good chef, because essentially if you're a chef, you're the person who has the largest amount of knowledge, the largest amount of practical skill and experience, and you need to communicate and relay that information efficiently to everyone else…There was a chef [at a former workplace], He was always willing to advance and help me out with my career and really saw me as being potentially valuable and he really had a lot of hope that I would do something interesting, so he gave me a lot of power (Sam).*

> *There's a chef [at a former workplace], he was a really good one because he'd jump on the line and be like ok this is gonna be our special for the day. And we'd sit there and he'd take you through how to cook it, he'd come and even when you were doing something like prep work, he'd show you proper ways and come and show you faster ways, show you technique, actually teach you stuff. I like that kind of chef. They know what they're doing, and they prove that by being more hands on (Malcolm).*

> *[In response to a question about who he admires in the kitchen]: People who teach, I like chefs like [chef at a high end private club], while he was cooking he would always get the servers to plate, and that's at a private club right, meals are like $200 there. People would literally fucking cancel their 25k membership because their steak wasn't cooked properly….He would always get even dishwashers or servers to do stuff they're not really comfortable with, and if you fucked up he would yell at you, but he would yell at you to try and give you a hard lesson, and teach you (Andrew).*

Learning is important in terms of attachment to the job because, as mentioned

previously, it keeps workers' interest in what can otherwise be a repetitive, difficult,

occupation. It also provides opportunities to move up the internal labour market of a

kitchen. As will be discussed in the next section, the labour market in the restaurant

industry is largely informal and based on connections one has within the networks of

practice that form Toronto's restaurant industry (Brown & Duguid, 2000). Furthermore,

as one learns more, one is given more autonomy over the labour process, an especially salient aspect of job attachment for young kitchen workers.

CONTROL, CREATIVITY & PASSION

Restaurant work is a collective labour process that is segmented into various functions that come together to create a single dish. A head chef is most likely found in his office, their sous chef serving as their "eyes and ears," if they are there during service at all (Julian). The sous chefs rely on their line cooks, who rely on their garde de mangers, who rely on the preppers. Everyone relies on the dishwasher, an occupation deserving its own academic treatment[18]. However, within these discrete positions, and within the confines of a set menu and economic concerns, there is a tremendous amount of autonomy and creativity regarding the labour process. So long as "your system is fast and quick and efficient and clean you can do whatever you want" (Mona). Depending on one's position within the hierarchy, a large portion of one's day is spent not actually cooking but, "just setting up the station, organizing things, like laying out your ingredients so that there is a logical workflow for during dinner service" (Sam). The amount of control over the labour process is, according to the participants, tied to the size and ownership of the establishment. Working in a kitchen that is independently owned and has a smaller staff may result in a smaller paycheque, but often leads to more complex and satisfying work.

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[18] For an interesting first-hand account of dishwashing, see *Dishwasher: One Man's Quest to Wash Dishes in All Fifty States.* By Pete Jordan (2007).

Autonomy over the labour process is, especially as one moves up the proverbial food chain, directly linked to creative control. The two head chefs interviewed had control over much of the creative process, as they are responsible for, amongst many other duties, "all of the facets that is the food" (Jim). But the creativity is a resource that is shared amongst the entire kitchen staff. Lisa, a cook at a student pub described the sense of accomplishment that comes with having creative control as such:

> *If I can stand by my food, I won't send something unless I'd eat it. If it's your idea and if it sells it you're like alright cool let's do it again all over. And having your food item on the menu. If you throw out a special and the manager decides to take it it's like alright cool, let's do this. I guess kind of like being left in charge a little bit, considering I'm only there two years, and the only girl on the staff besides the manager.*

Ben, a cook with nearly a decade of experience, decided to leave the more high-pressured position of line cooking for salad making:

> *My favourite thing about my job right now is I really just show up and make food that I want to eat, it's just salad but I have total creative freedom basically on it. If I want to make whatever kind of salad I can do that, and I just play around with it. It's a great bonus, most of the places I've worked I didn't have very much creative control at all, it was just do the menu kind of thing, so it's definitely really nice, you feel like you're more important I guess.*

Another participant discussed how while even when working to a recipe, he had creative freedom around the aesthetics of the dish, deciding "whether to put a mark on it and make it look really nice… or just throw it on top," explaining that on a good day "you get involved in what you're doing, and you just start taking pride in your work" (Malcolm). This pride comes from the the feeling of succeeding in what Fine (1992, p.1272) describes as an "occupational triumph," a moment where workers, "working within the rules, [have] transcended them, demonstrating in their own minds at least that

they are not mere workers, but true artists, true professionals... [that can] convince others of their virtues." In essence, these occupational triumphs are moments in which the worker integrates themselves within their community of practice through a two-fold process of showing a mastery over the shared repertoire of practice and by reinforcing mutual accountability within the community of practice by showing one's dedication to their occupation (Wenger 1998). The ability to have a measure of creative control and autonomy is a key factor in the attachment of kitchen workers' to their job because without such autonomy, they would have little ability to engage in a form of meaningful participation that adds to the constant negotiation of what their practice is (Wenger, 1998).

Skills, the ability to learn, and some control over the labour process work in conjunction to foster a strong sense of dedication in young kitchen workers. One participant described his relationship to his job as "my passion. This is my career. And passion, the original word for passion, it's not just something you love, it's something you pain for, you hurt yourself for. It is literally my passion. You're hurting yourself for something you love (Jim)." This passion comes from the "busy yet also free… atmosphere in the kitchen (Horn & Hu, 2008, p.228). It allows for a setting that is "conducive to sharing ideas with others, and acquiring new ideas as well as new techniques every day" (Horn & Hu, 2008, p.228). The creativity and autonomy that the participants crave is based on their "continuous learning [and] willingness to listen to all ideas… and then select from those which [they] can use (Horn & Hu, 2008, p.228). The training of chefs is important not just for the specific skills learned, but also for

"inculcating individuals into the community of chefs" (Palmer et al., 2010, p.321). This

passion is a shared passion around a shared practice that improves through shared

engagement (Sweeney & Holmes, 2008). This shared joint enterprise belongs to the

workers in a "profound sense" (Wenger, 1998, p.77). When the requisite skills, passion,

and mutual understanding exist for kitchen workers, the result is nothing short of

transcendent:

> *I think the artfulness comes in economy of movement and flow and it's*
> *like a ballet. It's like a dance when you have five guys that could*
> *probably work the line blindfolded, they're moving around each other in*
> *time and space with absolute grace, and putting out food in a beautiful*
> *way. We don't think we of these actions of the body as being a part of it,*
> *we just think of that as the utilitarian thing that we have to do to get the*
> *food up on the table, but most good cooks are fucking artful at that. The*
> *food has already been made and decided upon hours before the diners*
> *come in, it's in that execution that you can find real artiness and beauty,*
> *and just being in the moment. Like that dancer who has a transcendent*
> *night where they're not just doing their routine but they stop thinking*
> *and they're just acting. When you can get into that in the middle of the*
> *service to me that's, that's my art, and it's this beautiful feeling of*
> *everything coming together (Julian).*

IDENTITY & BELONGING

Identities are shaped through membership in communities of practice. They are

negotiated and hardened by social bonds with other members. Since "developing a

practice requires the formation of a community whose members can engage with one and

another," practice necessarily "entails the negotiation of ways of being a person in that

context" (Wenger, 1998, p.149). Identity is created through participation with others.

Through this participation, our social experiences are reified as key aspects of our identity

(Wenger, 1998). We recognize our membership in a community of practice through these

"reified markers of membership," but more importantly through the "display of

competence" that require no explicit self-identification (Wenger, p.151). A workers' sense

of self changes as their trajectory move from the periphery of practice to its core. While

these trajectories are rarely chronological, they follow a similar path.

Newcomers to a community of practice inhabit an identity that is "invested in their

future participation" (Wenger, 1998, p154). They see into their future through becoming

accustomed to the practice, both technical and social, that surrounds them. Through

interacting with members of the community with more experience, they begin to see new

potential life trajectories:

> *It was mostly just a paycheque then, but when I got into [high-end restaurant]… And I thought ok maybe this is a thing. And there was a few times when [celebrity chef] stuck up for me. There was a couple time that I saw the good out of it and she bought her girlfriend a car, they were buying a cottage, and she was doing a book and I saw all these very cool things that were going on through [cooking] (Andrew).*

> *But I never really dreamed about being a cook or whatever, until I got in the industry inadvertently as a dishwasher and started seeing it. For me it was seeing the rhythm and the lifestyle that made me interested…I used to see the cooks working the line and think that they were just the fucking coolest. I mean they were not cool… they were just kind of like this motley crew, and they could just drink so much after work and I just thought they were the fucking coolest. I kind of wanted to be doing what they were doing because I was seeing them every day and I remember thinking to myself, I thought bartending was cool but I think being a cook would also be pretty cool too. Seems to encompass a wide variety of personalities, you can be yourself, but I never really thought… but that was sort of the start of it, the bug for me (Julian).*

> *The people [at my first job] were really awesome. There's a lot of really really awesome cooks, to be a really be a good cook you have to be calm under pressure, and a chill person, have a lot of things roll of your back easily. And the people who embody all of those qualities are usually awesome. So there was like a lot of really really awesome people and I was like wow this is great, all these people are amazing (Mona).*

In the above statements by the participants, one sees how "A community of practice is a field of possible trajectories and thus proposal of an identity" (Wenger, 1998, p. 156). The potential found within these new identities projected by old timers can be a powerful source of attachment to the job for workers. As workers progress in their careers, their stance changes from that of a peripheral outsider peering in, to being a central character in the daily drama unfolding around them. A sense of belonging emerges, based on practice, through "both the technical terminology of cooking and the ways in which chefs talk to each other before, during and after service" (Palmer et al., 2010, p.320). The participants reflected the tight parallel between friendship, a sense of belonging, and its importance in their enjoyment of their work:

> *I've always really liked the people I've worked with. I think that's the driving force, that's what really got me excited about working in [bad] conditions, is that I really enjoy the type of people that you meet, you really meet some characters… I also work in an office, and you have work friends but it's not the same thing. There's something about being in a restaurant environment. There is a bit more stress involved, because you're, you're working for customers who want things fast, so there's, there's this stress to it, and you just end up, I think bonding with people, there's a lot of shit talking, there's a lot of joking around. And there's a lot of drinking generally. And I think you just end up with different kind of friendship and bonds than you do with work people at other type of jobs (Ben).*

Zack, a sous-chef, has woven his professional and personal sense of belonging especially tightly:

> *I ended up dating for a long time and still kind of seeing this girl whose my bosses' wife's little sister, and then I ended up living with my boss [rent free for several months during a difficult time] and stuff so it kind of become more of a job... It's almost not like work, it's like hanging with my friends. You just kind of have to keep your hands busy. There's a big community around that restaurant, it's kind of like the industry bar for all the people around here so it's nice you know you constantly just get people rolling through, everybody kind of knows who I am, it's a very nice feeling. Just being part of the community.*

As Zack stated above, the social bonds created in the kitchen are vital to the enjoyment of one's work and one's willingness to stay in the industry. As Andrew plainly put it, relationships are "probably the only good thing in fucking kitchens." Kitchen work is physically and mentally draining work that, as will be discussed in detail in the next section, limits workers' ability to engage with the rest of the world due to its long hours and erratic scheduling (Harris & Giuffre, 2010). The social aspect of the community of practice is thus an invaluable buffer against these hardships. The blurring of lines between work and play is commonplace within the restaurant industry (Marshall, 1986, Palmer et al, 2010). While there are some negative aspects to this blurring, especially regarding the normalization of drinking on the job and drug misuse, it also provides for a "communal togetherness" that gives restaurant workers a "kind of security blanket with which to protect themselves from a world in which they feel slightly out of step, in which they do not quite fit in" (Palmer et al., 2010, p. 319).

This communal togetherness is based on dichotomy between restaurant workers on the inside and the rest of the world being on the outside, a common view found within communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). The participants spoke of the divide between back of house and front of house workers, between cooks and customers, and between industry workers in general and the rest of society. This sense of occupational solidarity is strengthened by the combination of autonomous work that takes place within a teamwork setting, necessitating the development of strong relationships and support. The need for a "strong work ethic and team spirit", and the importance of recognizing these ties amongst coworkers, "contributes towards a sense of group solidarity and loyalty which…

can transcend time and place" and create lasting bonds of friendship (Palmer et al., 2010, p.321). These bonds are seen within the labour process, when they are strengthened through mutual support, and during non-work hours:

> *If you work really well with someone, you kind of know their station and not just yours, you kind of know what's on their mis en place and not just yours, and so let's say they're in the shits, and they're getting rocked, and you're not, you start picking up shit that they could do, and that is a big, big, play of respect, to be like 'it's cool man, I got you,' and you just start doing that type of shit, that's a big move, that's a very big respect move. Because, you're helping that person succeed (Jim).*

While based on the support needed to get through a hectic shift, these relationships go far deeper, due to the fact that "you're with these people more than your family, more than your friends…twelve hours a day" (Jim). The sheer amount of stress and time that kitchen workers share creates a way of interacting with one another that is unique to the community of practice (Palmer et al., 2010; Wenger, 1998). The on the job social atmosphere is imbued with black humour, pranks, and vulgar language (Lynch, 2009). Harassment and abuse is an issue in the restaurant industry (Bilosi & Hoel, 2008). Yet all of the participants, even those who had issues with specific moments of harassment, defended the abrasive social atmosphere. They discussed how the hard-edged language and humour was necessary in order to both blow off steam and to reaffirm "the professional norms for the members" of the community of practice (Lynch 2009, p.454). Mona, who as a woman in a male dominated field, has dealt with her fair share of rude behaviour, said: "I'm just the type of person who likes feeling like they're part of a community. And this is just another way for me to feel like I'm part of a community. We have our own language, set of slang."

This attachment and attendant change in identity was especially strong amongst the participants who did not graduate high school, or who did not pursue education after high school. The mastery of skill and the integration into a community of peers provided a sense of meaning and purpose in life that had otherwise been lacking. It also provides a promising avenue for future career advancement that would otherwise be closed off to those with limited education or other factors, such as a history of substance misuse, working against their favour:

> *Before I worked in the industry I never had a job. I just sold drugs my whole life, which, I made a shit load of money. I was just a fucking adult baby, just never learned work ethic really, and that translated into just being totally lazy in the rest of the aspects of my life. So it helps me get over that, and I'm really happy about it… I was hugely addicted to pain killers last summer, and just the responsibility of it helps me shrug that off, which is really nice… The self-motivation that I've learned from it has started to translate into my life… It saved me to an extent. I don't know what else I'd be doing right now. I don't have a high school diploma. And you can get somebody's life on track if they're willing to put a little bit of work in, I really like that about it (Zack).*

> *I dropped out of high school, I have criminal record, it's been expunged, but you know what I mean I have visible tattoos, I'm not going to with my experience in life at this point I'm not going to be a CEO of of a company that I started at the bottom from, unless that company is chef-centred. But you can walk into a kitchen as a fucking convict who's just gotten out of jail with your evidence bag still slung over your shoulder and you know, get a job… There's nothing about that industry that won't hire someone like that. And you can work your way up from a dishwasher to being the head chef of a multimillion dollar restaurant company (Julian).*

This section has focused on the motivations for working within the restaurant industry for young kitchen workers. The ability to learn new skill, work in novel environments, be taught in a social setting, and have control over the labour process work together to create an atmosphere in which one can be passionate about their work, no

small feat in a field where work is often temporary and precarious (Bujold et al., 2013). The community that is built around kitchen work becomes a second home for workers and is intertwined with multiple aspect of their lives, exerting a strong influence over the decision to work and stay in the industry. The next section will focus on how how aspects of employment strain create an environment of employment that can be difficult to sustain due to the uncertainty it creates and the pressure it exerts on all aspects of life. It will also examine some negative aspects of the community of practice, primarily as they relate to employment strain and precarious work.

COOKING UNDER EMPLOYENT STRAIN

The instability of precarious employment relationships is believed to undermine the comradery and trust amongst workers due to flexible work schedules and short term contracts that create a low level of attachment between workers (Tweedie, 2013p. 98). It is believed to undermine "the 'craft' aspiration 'to do a job well for its own sake'" by privileging the skill of adaption over the practice of craftsmanship (Tweedie, 2013, p.98). It also negatively impacts workers' self-identity by blocking the "type of self-understanding" provided by a stable career path that provides "development and institutionalized recognition of one's contributions and skills" and instead creating a narrative of a "half-hazard series of events" (Tweedie, 2013, p.99). Young culinary workers face many aspects of employment strain that make precarious work so difficult. Yet, as was shown in the previous section, devotion to craft and a sense of comradery are still very strong, as is attachment to the occupation. This section examines how various facets of employment strain wear on young kitchen workers' present attachment to their occupation and their feelings about the future of their work lives in light of the effects of employment strain on their daily lives. It also includes a discussion about how the support of a community practice acts as a buffer against aspects of employment strain, namely some aspects of employment relationship effort.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP UNCERTAINTY

Employment relationship uncertainty is the largest employment strain factor that effects how young kitchen workers conceptualize their present work experiences and in

how they determine what is best for their future. Every participant had issues with employment uncertainty. For those who had recently left, or for those who had plans to leave the industry, it was the main factor in their decision. For those workers dedicated to staying within the industry in the long term, aspects of employment fragility underpinned their fears as to whether the industry was indeed hospitable to a modicum of work-life balance and job security. The ability to plan one's day, much less week or month, was often impossible for the participants due to scheduling uncertainty and long, non-standard hours work. Balancing work duties with other aspects of participant's lives was especially difficult, leading to a profound sense of isolation:

> *I'd get one day off in fourteen days. Which is kind of illegal but, you know I was ok. And then, so you gotta be careful of when you do that, they start to rely on you to do that all the time, and then when you don't want to do it, they don't want to let you stop. So it becomes pretty stressful after a while, like physical stressful. I need a rest, I'm falling asleep at work, because I'm there all day, sleep for a couple hours, and then I'm there all day for the next day, and then again and again and again... I have zero to no time for my real friends. You kind of isolate to only what's going on at work (Malcolm).*

> *It's pretty much hell, they work me pretty hard, and assume a level of commitment that I'm not really on board with. My boss just went on vacation for a couple weeks, and he's generally the brunch cook and I'm the nighttime cook. And I was like ok I'll do both when you're gone. When he got back he was like 'so which shifts do you think you're working this week?' And I said 'not brunch,' and he was like 'no I think I wanna just make you the guy who does it.' Well, ok, here we go again... that would be starting at 10 a.m., possibly having an opportunity to go home from 3-5[p.m.] and then working till 11 or 12 [a.m.] (Zack).*

This uncertainty puts tremendous stress on the ability to engage in social activities. Lisa, whose wife tends bar at the pub she works at, described staying at work after her shifts in order to spend time with her wife, because otherwise they can go a week

without having time to talk. Jim felt as though that when he is not at work he is constantly trying to "sweep up the pieces" in his "slap dash resemblance of life," questioning why, given the hours he works, he pays for an apartment at all when he could just "move into a hole." This lack of work-life balance has been identified as a reason that restaurant workers, especially women, leave the industry (Harris & Giuffre, 2010). Commitment to long, difficult shifts is a normalized aspect of kitchen work that demonstrates one's professionalism (Palmer et al., 2010; Harris & Giuffre, 2010). It is central to inhabiting the identity of being a member of the community of practice as it shows a dedication to the joint enterprise of practice through the acceptance of difficult hours as a norm of practice (Wenger, 1998).

As Lewchuk et al. (2008) discuss, scheduling uncertainty is associated with poorer health outcomes for workers. The participants echoed this sentiment in a surprising way. Many of the participants discussed how, given their difficult schedules and lack of personal time, they had no time to shop for food and cook for themselves. This was troubling for many of them, as they thoroughly enjoy cooking for pleasure. But it also had health ramifications. They felt as though they "lived off scraps" (Ben). One participant summed up his usual diet as "four pints and a falafel at three in the morning… it starts to really fuck you up, I got acid reflux, indigestion and bloating nearly every time I eat" (Julian). This is compounded by the fact that his job requires him to taste "rich products all the time… no human in the world [should] eat foie gras and prime rib every fucking day… if you did that you'd be dead. But cooks do that" (Julian).

The uncertainty around earnings compounds issues of scheduling uncertainty for young kitchen workers. Participants talked about employers withholding pay stubs, toying with the tip out percentage received depending on how well the restaurant did that week, and, save for one participant, a complete lack of benefits. One participant mentioned how he had not been to a dentist since he started working in the industry a decade ago. In-kind benefits such as free food and alcohol were common and appreciated by the participants and are seen as necessary perk given the lack of time to socialize or shop for food. When asked about overtime pay, more than one participant laughed at the notion. Sam, who works at a restaurant that uses a day rate, felt that the economic model of many restaurants relies on bending employment laws in order to extract as much surplus value from a worker as possible:

> *I would say that so a lot of these restaurants utilize the day salary system, and then once they know that cooks are essentially going to be there it becomes the cook's responsibility, what their hourly rate is. So I think like the whole day wage thing is just like a way of shifting the responsibility on to the cook. If they want to be there for fourteen hours prepping slowly then they can do that, but they can also theoretically only be there for 7 hours but you know realistically that's never the case, no one can ever move that fast enough…a lot of these business models are based off of that, they can't exist.*

Not being paid if one missed work was a large stressor in the lives of the participants and is directly linked to their physical health and wellbeing. Research has shown a link between injury within the kitchen and the desire to leave the occupation in the future, even though injury in and of itself has been shown to have a bi-directional effect on kitchen workers' attachment to their occupation (Young & Corsun, 2010). There is a link between increased job stress and the incident rate of injuries in kitchens

(Haruyama et al., 2014). For the participants, the effects of injuries were compounded by the inability to miss work. After Mona received a second degree burn, she "did not leave early. First of all I finished service, I didn't even leave the line, I finished all of the orders with one hand…. and I basically finished the day."

Chronic health issues related to working in a kitchen also pose a problem for young kitchen workers. Sam felt that he needed to put his work before his health, and would find himself "limping around the kitchen. And people would comment on it and I would just say 'I just worked a lot, so excuse my limping.'" While not directly related to injury, Jim's experience perhaps best sums up the dedication needed in order to ensure continued employment in a restaurant:

> *I found out my grandma died in a fire when I was on the line…and I kept working. And I kept working by choice. I was in the middle of a fucking busy service, prepping shit. And then I stopped. I had to take a minute. And then they were like 'what's wrong?' And then I told them and they said OK, take your time. And then fifteen minutes later they were like I know your grandma just died but like can we [get back to work]?*
>
> *Interviewer: do you think you would have been able to leave if you had needed to?*
>
> *Jim: No way, no way, I would have totally fucked them. Totally. Or my boss would have had to work for me, and things probably would have been a lot different. I probably wouldn't have worked there as long, or like maybe I would have been fired because I would have left or whatever.*

As shown in Appendix A, the number of jobs over any given participant's career demonstrates a large degree of employment fragility. The high labour turnover in kitchens has been attributed to several factors, from poor management practices, an (alleged) low-skilled workforce, and worker burnout (Rowley & Purcell, 2001). The desire for exciting

work also adds to the level of turnover, as has previously been discussed (Kang et al., 2010). The tight margins in a restaurant, and the previously mentioned need for new and exciting work both led to a significant amount of occupational instability for the participants. The high amount of turnover is partially mitigated by social and professional bonds within the community of practice, but it is still an ever present fear for young kitchen workers. Contrary to the findings of Bujold et al. (2013), for some participants this instability increased their attachment to their current position, although this attachment is largely predicated on fear:

> *I'd be fucked. I couldn't pay my rent. Could I find a job pretty quick?*
> *Ya…it's something that any cook tries not to think about I think, you're*
> *kind of like here's hoping, or sometimes you'll be like god forbid you*
> *get fired for that. I can't lose this job. And that's also the drive to make*
> *you work harder and do better (Jim).*

For other workers, the instability of work leads to a lack of attachment to any particular job, a sentiment that only changes when the workers "starts getting a team mentality" and a sense of ownership over the labour process (Malcolm). The short-term, unstable nature of work is difficult to plan for, especially when it is baked into the financial considerations of restaurants:

> *A lot of people [at a particular restaurant] would go on EI. The chef*
> *would essentially fire them so they could go on EI, and then re-hire*
> *them [after the slow season]. The company was letting the government*
> *pick up its inability to pay enough through the whole period of time so*
> *people could be sustained for that month and a half (Sam).*

One surprising aspect of the regular gaps in employment in the restaurant industry workers face is how they are conceptualized by the workers themselves. Perhaps due to their age and lack of attendant responsibilities such as a mortgage or (save for one

participant), children, several participants thought of these moments between jobs as difficult but necessary breaks. They were seen as "stay-cations" during which one could recharge and catch up on sleep and socializing (Zack). While the financial aspects of this off-time were a burden given the near-impossibility of creating any meaningful savings given the low pay, they were none-the-less seen as necessary, and in a couple cases, as a benefit. This benevolent viewpoint regarding the uncertainty of work in the mid to long term did not extend to the difficulties workers face when it comes to being on call and having insufficient time to accept work:

> *(In response to what being on call during busy weeks feels like): last week I worked four shifts in a row, that was like 12 hours, 13 hours, 12 hours, 12 and a half hours. By day four I thought I was going to die. I got off work, I got home at midnight and I had to be at work at 8 and I was like just, this was like the last day of my life, kill me. Fuck (Mona).*

> *The big thing is the shifts. I don't like when it's not a set schedule. So I have to wait to make my plans that week. And that makes it hard, or being called in for extra shift. Or if I'm working I'm there from eight in the morning until four or five in the evening. And I just can't wait to get out of there. Maybe to go home, go see my son, whatever it is. Being told ten minutes before. I finished my clean up duties, being told oh we need you to stay. And I'm like no. like no. but then you have to. They kind of put you in a position where they can't fire you for it, but well if you don't you're gonna be on the shit list for next week's bad shifts (Malcolm).*

Workers in the industry consistently face a high degree of employment relationship uncertainty. As Lewchuk et al. (2008; 2015) describe the uncertainties attendant in precarious work can make it difficult to engage in the broader society. It makes the daily routines of life that workers in standard employment relationships take for granted difficult to maintain. Employment strain makes planning for the future difficult to do, and creates an underlying feeling of anxiety amidst workers who are

unsure of where their next paycheque is coming from, or coming at all. In the case of scheduling uncertainty, there is a correlation to poorer health status (Lewchuk et al., 2008). The uncertainty of precarious work also leads to increased alienation from the labour process and from one's identity as a worker (Bujold et al., 2013, Tweedie, 2013). How these issues interact with the community of practice kitchen workers are in, and how these issues affect the decisions workers make about their futures, will be discussed shortly. Before that, it is important to take a brief look at how certain aspects of employment relationship effort are buffeted by the culture of young kitchen workers.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP EFFORT

Any particular job within the restaurant industry is unstable. But this instability is mediated by the constant growth in demand for restaurant workers that far outstrips the number of qualified workers (MacDonald, 2013, Spitz, 2013). Participants were very aware of this fact. While they were disillusioned with the fact this this did not lead to the higher wages one might expect in tight labour market, they felt as though they benefited from having a wealth of choices with regard to their place of employment. This gave the participants a sense of control over their career trajectory, as they were able to "walk off the line" with no notice, feeling confident that they would be able to find new employment the next day (Sam). When jobs are "a dime a dozen," one may not know where the next paycheque will come from, but one can be fairly certain that it will come from somewhere (Julian).

The demand for restaurant workers is a prerequisite for this employment flexibility. It is the kinship ties that are based on shared practice and mutual

understanding that make it feasible. Communities of practice are connected to one

another, forming a "network of practice" where each community shares "many attributes

of the broader network [while cultivating] their own style, sense of tastes, judgment, and

appropriateness" (Sweeney & Holmes, 2008, p.207). The Toronto restaurant industry is a

dense network of practice where the barrier of entry and exit to each specific community

is quite low, given the high labour turnover. Furthermore, the social ties forged between

workers in a particular community of practice allow for workers to find new work with

relative ease:

> *"It's really easy, it's a big part of the industry that I like. It's a joke getting a job. All of my friends are struggling and I got a job in like ten minutes yesterday, it's not a big deal… I've only got a job through networking" (Mona).*

> *"[Restaurant] is a pretty good place, I got a job there in two minutes. I replied [to the ad] and the guy was like 'can you come in tonight?'… It just goes with the turn around, with employees at restaurants as well as the relationships, because everyone knows the reputable places in Toronto… If you've worked in four kitchens in the last two years, they definitely know one of them. And they definitely know one person out of those four kitchens so they can just call so it's just easy (Andrew).*

> *Several of my other friends were working at [restaurant]. And I had no idea about the culinary industry at that point… I became a dishwasher at that restaurant and I did that for a couple months. And one day some guy didn't show up and they offered me his job… It is really great to be able to find my friends steady employment and introduce them to the world of cooking, that's very rewarding (Zack).*

The "social fabric" that facilitates the learning environment described in the

previous section also serves as an informal safety net based on social ties for workers

when they are between work, reducing the strain that is derived from time spent looking

for work (Wenger et al., 2002, p.27; Lewchuk et al., 2008). Needless to say, the use of

this safety net necessitates workers to have skills, not just social ties. These skills are put

to the test through the use of the stage, where a prospective employee works a shift or two for free in order to prove their skills and that they fit in with the specific community of practice within a kitchen. Ben "never applied for a kitchen job I didn't get… you come in and you do a trial shift and I know how to cook so [I get the job]." While this form of free labour can contribute to employment strain, in the kitchen it is seen as a necessary evil, as it allows the worker to "do a shift, decide I don't like it, do a shift at another place, until I find a good place. Which is a fucking luxury. The stress I've mostly had is [finding] a place where I enjoy working. But I've never had stress about being able to find a job" (Sam). Given that cultural fit is important within a community of practice and within the kitchen industry in particular, the stage, for some workers, does not increase employment effort strain but rather can act to reduce it.

The ease of finding employment explains in part the participants' acceptance of a working culture saturated in derogatory language and poor treatment, asides from the widely held viewpoint that such behaviour is needed as there is "no time for diplomacy" in the kitchen (Sam; Palmer et. al.; Lynch, 2009). If one finds that the "personal and social damage… regarded as part of a chef's professionalism" is too burdensome in one context, one can leave without a moment's notice without much long-term worry (Johns & Menzel, 1999, p.107). This is especially true as the contexts within which restaurant workers can cook is growing alongside the growth of foodie culture (Turow, 2015). When asked about how she has dealt with negative working environments, Mona responded by pointing to the diversity of her options: "You don't have to work the 100 hour week getting screamed at all day, macho shop talk environment, there's a million

options… You can work at like a vegan restaurant and do hippy shit, with more women."

Nevertheless, leaving employment as one's only recourse against workplace harassment

is not an acceptable solution, and workplace harassment in the kitchen is still endemic in

Toronto and elsewhere (Henry, 2015; Johns & Menzel, 1999). It is heartening to see that

the notion that kitchen culture was changing to be less abrasive and more accommodating

was a widely held belief amongst the participants. Julian's thoughts on the issue are

representative of the participants as a whole. They reflect how a community of practices'

social and cultural norms are shaped by the labour process, demonstrating the duality

between practice and reification through which "meaning as an experience of everyday

life" emerges (Wenger, 1998, p.51):

> *I think the general awareness of our culture has caused a maybe*
> *necessary pressure from society for everybody to just tone down*
> *the hate a little bit. Because no one really gave a shit before, but*
> *now that everyone's forced to peer into these kitchens, we want to*
> *see what we want everywhere else in society. Which is a nice*
> *friendly environment. Unfortunately it will never be that way in*
> *the kitchen, entirely, but I think it's becoming better. But the case*
> *that I make for it: [It's because] you need everybody in the*
> *kitchen. I think that the way that it's evolved is this way of*
> *toughening people up… If you're not the type of person that can*
> *spend all day [being] insulted, having your mother being*
> *referenced to in lewd ways, being made fun of. If you can't handle*
> *that for 12 hrs a day then you're never going to be able to handle*
> *cooking for 600 people in that time based pressure that happens,*
> *because it happens all the time in kitchens people they just drop,*
> *they're just not fucking tough enough, and everyone else has to*
> *pick up the slack. That that's where the mentality comes from.*
> *And as much as everything's changing, it is a really fucking hard*
> *job and that will never change.*

Strain related to multiple employers and multiple locations was less apparent

within the narratives of the participants than strain deriving from aspects of employment

uncertainty. Most of the participants were employed at only one location, with only one employer. Those who had multiple employers did find it difficult to juggle their responsibilities, but the resulting stress was no more of a burden than the general stress of restaurant work. Malcolm found that managers would appear to be accommodating of his other employment responsibilities, only to "put me on the schedule [and say] 'oops, now it's on the schedule so now it's up to you to find somebody else.' And if I can't find somebody else I have to forgo [my other job]." Ben, who works three jobs, two of which are outside of the restaurant industry, found working seven days a week as intolerable in the long run, finding himself "fucking tired… I'm just trying to get through it the best I can."

The organization of and disciplinary forces within the kitchen have been described as being analogous to the military by academics and by the participant alike (Bloisi & Hoel 2008; Harris & Giuffre, 2010). The organizational chart of the kitchen loosely resembles that of a military brigade, unsurprising given the historical connections between professional cooks and the military (Harris & Giuffre, 2010). Evaluation in the kitchen is constant, harsh, and informal. The industry may be slowly professionalizing, but its human resource methods resemble the drive system methods of the early industrial era, where "close supervision, abuse, profanity and threats" were the primary disciplinary tools (Jacoby, 1984, p.26). The labour process in the kitchen in many ways resembles lean manufacturing. The raw materials are ordered and show up daily, are transformed, to order, into the finished good, in an extremely short time frame (Womack et al., 1990).

Perfection is a must as the manufacturing is done within the service setting, and is on display in the case of open-kitchen restaurants (Kang et al., 2010).

In the middle of a service, a head chef must "scream and shout or just take it over for them because there's no time" (Julian). This form of behaviour was seen as much more acceptable by the participants when it came from a chef in an authority figure rather than a restaurant manager or non-cooking owner, an example of how the boundaries of membership in a community of practice define what is viewed as acceptable behaviour (Wenger, 1998). Participants described how the evaluation of quality and output of their work led to being given more or less prestigious tasks, better pay, or continued employment. One of the most striking examples was described by Sam, in reference to a co-worker of his:

> *She was supposed to cut strawberries into little cubes, and then she put it in the vacuum sealer but had the pressure just a little too high so it screwed up the shape a little bit. And the sous chef came up to her and was like 'is this a square?' And just threw it at her face. And there was 200 of them. And he literally took like every single one and said 'is this a square, is this a fucking square, is this a square?' And then every single one just like threw it directly at her and she just had to stand there, and then, right after he was like 'your uniform is a mess, you're dismissed, go home.'*

The gaze of management is one source of discipline and control. Workers also monitor one another based on their social and cultural fit within the community of practice. This "communal regime of mutual accountability" requires workers to do good work, but also to fit into the social practice through adapting proper ways of being and understanding (Wenger, 1998, p.81). It reinforces the social norms of the community of practice in order to ensure a "coherence to the medley of activities, relations, and objects"

that define the practice of cooking (Wenger, 1998, p.81-2). The importance of fitting in

socially at a kitchen to one's ability to work productively and maintain employment leads

to a blurring of the line between work and play:

> *[Coworker] wouldn't eat staff meal with us. At first we would bug him a*
> *bit, and then it became a thing, he would just seclude himself from us,*
> *and we just wouldn't talk to him during service, and it became this*
> *communication problem, and he ended up getting a new job because he*
> *didn't want to communicate. There was no relationship, it's important*
> *to have one, even a small one… just for the morale. It doesn't make*
> *sense if you're trapped in a small area with somebody for nine hours [to*
> *not] (Andrew).*

Negating the "The importance of the team and the underlying camaraderie" in the

kitchen is viewed as disruptive to the labour process (Palmer et al., 2010, p.321). It is

also an affront to the notion of a community of practice. Engaging with the social norms

of a community is as essential to the practice as mastering the skill is. Without such an

engagement, one cuts themselves off from the negotiation of meaning and the

participation that is required for communities of practice to hold each other accountable

and develop their craft (Wenger, 1998).

GETTING STUCK & LETTING GO

The effect of employment strain on the career trajectories of participants was

unique and based on their previous experiences and expectations for the future. A number

of participants had recently left the industry or were hoping to do so in the short term.

Others were satisfied for the time being but had ambitions outside of the restaurant

industry they were keen to pursue at some point. Others still were planning on staying in

the industry for the rest of their working lives. No matter the case, feelings of regret, of

being trapped in the industry, and fears about what effect employment strain, along with

injury, would have on the future, were commonplace. This section will begin with examining feelings of being stuck and of regret. It will then move onto reasons that workers feel the need, or fear the need, to leave the industry. In both cases, aspects of employment strain and the community of practice combine to create an industry in which one's dedication to the craft can be superseded by the economic and temporal realities of precarious work.

Excessive workload and long, unstable hours have been shown to be primary factors for why restaurant workers leave the profession (Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007). Precarious employment relationships create demands on workers that make it difficult to "form and sustain friendships… and establish social links" (Lewchuk et al., 2015, p.129). Research into the link between job satisfaction, injury, and young kitchen workers found no link between "job satisfaction and professional turnover intentions" (Young & Corsun, 2010, p.95). However this research was done within a unionized setting and was focused on workers leaving their place of current employment, not the industry as a whole. As previously discussed, the participant's attachment to their occupation is not linked to a specific employer, but rather to the trade and broader culinary industry as a whole. For the participants, employment strain led to a feeling of being trapped within the industry:

> *You get into your own headspace of you're just a kitchen grunt. And it's very easy to lose track of the bigger picture, it can change your interests and it can change your view of what your endgame is. It's very easy to get lost in the whole mentality of 'oh this is as good as it's going to get'… what else can I do, this is all I know how to do. I've gotten into that mentality. Because when you're working insane amount of hours, one day off out of fourteen, it's all you're doing, you're whole life gets centered around it… And then you start making excuses in your mind… you just get lost in it and it becomes your whole life (Malcolm).*

> *I was meant to take this on for two weeks and then move on but it's like a black hole that sucks you in. working with your friends does not help... Definitely stuck. I mean [my wife, who is a co-worker] has been there almost four years now and she has been looking, and she'll look and look for a month and then it falls by the wayside... Definitely feel stuck for sure. But I like it, but it's stuck... stuck in hell but it's half and half (Lisa).*

As has previously been discussed, the two main factors of employment strain that lead to a feeling of being stuck is the lack of time for other pursuits and a social life. Paradoxically, effort finding employment is also an issue. While it is remarkably easy to find work within the internal labour markets that together form the culinary industry, participants feel that their experience is not held in high esteem by other employers, making their work credentials next to meaningless outside of the kitchen. Lisa discussed how she should have "stuck to her guns and left" before it was too late. Practice is a social and technical boundary that demarcates membership in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Having become full members of the restaurant community in Toronto, participants came to realize that their knowledge and skill do not open doors to other occupations:

> *(On advice he would give to his younger self): Just go to school. I didn't go to school really. Go to school. Be smart. I know I'm a smart dude, but the one thing I regret and I know when I get older I'll probably regret more, is not being as, as 'learned' as I could be...I would tell myself to follow my dream a little bit more than kind of get stuck in cooking, because it's cool. Which is how I kind of got into it. Oh its cool, you know, I'm this fucking chef, cool... I could have been a history teacher, that's what I wanted to do (Jim).*

> *What if I wanted to work [elsewhere]? How the fuck would I go in with a degree and ten years of cooking experience. It's a very specific skill set, that only really qualifies you for a very specific job... it's definitely scary to apply for jobs and have nothing but cooking you know, I think a lot of potential employers, no matter what you're doing it looks like you're flipping burgers... [But] I've been in management roles, I've*

> *dealt with large inventory, I've dealt with this and that, anything that anybody in any job does, but at the end of the day it says cook (Ben).*

The communities of practice that young kitchen workers participate in provide a font of knowledge and opportunities for learning new skills and ways of understanding the world. Membership in the community is an essential part of why young kitchen workers continue to enjoy their work. However, communities of practice are not solely positive environments for learning and support. Community "does not mean positive, it is about engagement in practice… peaceful coexistence is not assumed [and is not a] necessary property of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998, p.76). The "jocular abuse" and the normalization and casual disregard for violence as an "organizational culture and tradition" demonstrate this amply (Lynch, 2009, p.455; Nilsson, 2003 p.649). The social requirements of being a member in a community of practice that, due to market forces, involves long night time shifts and uncertain hours, adds to a feeling of being stuck in a toxic environment marinated in drugs and alcohol. The line between working hard and playing hard overlaps. Lisa, who at the time of the interview was 11 weeks sober after falling unconscious and requiring medical attention outside her place of employment, discussed how the long, late hours and the 25% alcohol discount made alcohol dependency all too easy. Others concurred:

> *I think a lot of cooks feel like they have to make up for it, the lack of personal time they have, by having too much fun, or drinking more heavily than other people. So I feel that's how I sort of dealt with [stress] before… I felt I was a bit ostracized when I stopped coming out with them. It was a sacrifice I made (Sam.)*

> *People I knew were doing Percocet every night, they would drink as much as they could in the half hour [before the end of shift]. And then go to an afterhours and start doing actual drugs. It definitely takes a*

toll. It's definitely part of the, it ties into the social thing. Because if you're the type of person who says 'no I'm not going to do that, I'm just going to go home, I don't want to drink, I don't want to do drugs' then you get shamed for it... you're not squadding[19] where your squad[20] is right, you're that kid in that group that nobody wants to hang out with (Andrew).

Jim: There's fucking wine everywhere all the time. Like at my last job I hated it, we'd always get a box of wine, and I'd fucking sit around and drink box wine and then comes service, and ya by service I'm a little buzzed sure. And then I have a beer after work and I'm like kind of like half cut, and I'm like oh fuck ok, tone it down. It happens. But dealt with heroin, I've dealt with people who are junkies. I've dealt with a lot of drug use myself, and others, very first hand and hearing it second hand. It's a very common place thing.

Alcohol consumption as a form of social bonding between workers is common, especially in establishments where it is served (Sandiford & Seymour, 2013). Workers in occupations with "higher proportions of risk, and to a lesser extent, groups with a higher level of drinking climate" are most likely to suffer negative consequences of alcohol consumption (Zhang & Snizek, 2003). Individuals with substance use issues are more likely to be in precarious employment relationships, although causality in the inverse direction remains to be investigated (Morissette et al., 2006). Working in a space where it is not unusual to catch "people sneaking down into the basement constantly to go do lines [of cocaine]", it is unsurprising that workers struggle with feelings of being trapped by both their occupational prospects and social surroundings (Malcolm). It can be like "the godfather, trying to get out of the life, trying to live a clean life. And every time I get out they pull me back in. That's how I feel about kitchens. I've been trying to get out of them as long as I've been trying to get into them" (Julian).

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[19] Slang term meaning helping one's 'squad', particularly in a fight.
[20] Slang term for one's social group.

Making the choice to leave the culinary industry is a daunting prospect for young kitchen workers. It is difficult to conceptualize a working life outside of their community of practice, a community that the participants have by and large spent their entire working, and to a large extent social, lives in. There is a tension between the "insular culture of professional kitchens" and employment strain (Giuffre & Harris, 2010, p.44). Workers feel the need to maintain the "discourses about hard work and individual choices" that reproduce the difficult work environments in the restaurant industry in order to maintain professional legitimacy (Giuffre & Harris, 2010, p.44). Yet the market-based employment strain that the community of practice helps maintain through its social norms makes working in the industry untenable for some workers, and creates stress and uncertainty about the future for others. Work-to life conflict is a tremendous source of burnout for precarious workers and, in the kitchen industry, can lead to not just organizational burnout, but occupational burnout, where a worker feels he need to leave the industry entirely (Brauchili et al., 2011; Kang & Hertzman, 2010). The effects of employment strain and work to life conflict is apparent in how the participants talked about why they had chosen to leave the industry, and in how they thought about the future:

> *(On why he recently left the industry): I had other things that I wanted to do. The hours right, they make it impossible for you to enjoy [other pursuits]. I hear the back story of [my former celebrity chef boss] and all the shit she had to go through to get there. It's like no. Or you meet people, like [former co-worker], we became really close, and hearing his stories, he's 35 now and he had a kid two years ago, and he wasn't ready for it. It' just stressful to think about the future being stressful (Andrew).*

> *(On his future plans): I feel like it's really risky, there's so much potential for failure in many directions. It's kind of terrifying, the prospects of... sacrificing having a stable type of family job in the future. That also is a psychological burden as well... I'm always trying to keep up other skills just in case. The burnout of chefs is very high when you start to get older because physically you can't do it anymore, you can't do those long hours. So I'm always trying to be prepared for that inevitable burnout. I'm not sure where my career's going. I could see myself working in kitchens until maybe I'm 40, and then probably, I would want to switch out (Sam).*

The issue of work and family conflict emerged in many of the interviews. Giuffre and Harris (2010, p.28), contend that female chefs have a particularly difficult time balancing work and life needs due to the conceptualization of the "ideal worker" in a kitchen is an "employee without family responsibilities." In their study, they demonstrated how female chefs cope with the tension between family and work by delaying or forgoing children, leaving the restaurant world for a more stable job within the broader culinary industry, or attempting to reconcile their family and work lives in novel ways. There is no doubt that societal norms around caregiving and the role of women make this issue especially daunting for women, and that precarious work effects women in specific ways (Lewchuk et al., 2015). However, it was an issue that was top of mind for male participants as well, none as much as Malcolm. Malcolm's decision to leave the industry was predicated on both issues of employment strain and in how the community of practice he was in was not well suited to being a single father with co-parenting responsibilities:

> *Especially being a young dad, surprise, almost everybody my age isn't a parent. So they don't have to think about the same kind of things. It's funny, I'm not the same person. I used to love it…I want to be there like my dad was for me. I want to [give my son] the same upbringing that me and his mom can give him, the same way my parents did for me. My dad wasn't off in an afterhours somewhere, or out with buddies drinking… I*

> *can trace it back when I took my son to Ripley's Aquarium. And just*
> *seeing how much he loved that. And I'd love to be able to do more*
> *things like that for him, and this is giving me more joy…This is a lot*
> *better, I changed my mentality.*

The need for more stable employment and accommodating work schedules for kitchen workers is quite apparent, as is the effects of employment strain on the participants' feelings about staying in the industry (Gibbons, Robinson 2007; Rowley & Purcell, 2001). Not only does a precarious employment relationship create barriers to living a fulfilling life, it also has a pernicious effect on how workers conceptualize their work. Employment strain can "[drain] work of its meaning", even when a workers' motivation in their occupation is related to "personal projects, autonomy [and] creativity" (Bujold et al., 2013, p.493, 495). As Julian said, "dealing with that pressure and stress is not something I always look forward to when I look at where my career is headed." Effectively, precarious work can destabilize the conditions needed for the development of expertise through the "living process" of work being imbued with meaning through the social learning process of being a member in a community of practice (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 9). When the strain becomes an undue burden for young culinary workers, their work is sapped of meaning, leading to a desire to find less arduous work:

> *I think when I was younger it was a lot more fun, but now it's more just*
> *something I do…I'm not going to magically start knowing how to do*
> *some other job, getting those part time gigs, it's what I do…But no, It's*
> *not what I want to do with my life. I [have] other things that I want to*
> *do with my life, and I'm allowing myself to try those things. I was a high*
> *school dropout and I just fell into it, you get a job dishwashing because*
> *you're a fucking high school dropout, and then you start chopping*
> *vegetables, and then you start cooking meat. And I dunno, it's almost a*
> *decade later and it's just a thing I do now (Ben).*

The constant pressure that instability and a lack of time for a personal life puts on young culinary workers is a motivating factor in the present as much as it is a source of worry about the future. "Not having a lot of time for serious people in your life" and "not being able to maintain friendships" to the point where one has "nothing left for myself" creates a sense that even if one is passionate about their occupation, there is an "expiration date for everything" (Julian). This expiration date has a physical aspect as well. The literature, and the experiences of the participants, do not demonstrate that specific instances of workplace injury are a motivating factor in labour turnover (Young & Corsun, 2010; Kang & Hertzman, 2010). The chronic strain that comes from working in a fast paced, hot environment where taking a break is ridiculed takes its toll. Jim, who wants to keep working in the industry for the rest of his life, was scared about "his body giving out first." Mona also plans to stay in the industry but worries about "what am I going to do if my knees give out? I don't know, I can't imagine myself doing anything else at this point." Zack felt differently, saying that "it's not something I want to do for the rest of my life…It's certainly not going to be fun or healthy, but I could do it for another 20 or 30 years and fucking retire with terrible knees and stuff, it's physically possible, I'd just rather not."

This section has demonstrated how employment strain negatively effects young culinary workers. It limits their opportunities for professional and personal growth, burdens them with difficult, constantly changing schedules, and adds to the creation of an environment where poor coping mechanisms such as excessive drug and alcohol consumption are the norm. Issues of employment relationship uncertainty are particularly

difficult to contend with. Employment effort uncertainty also proves to be a burden, and is only partially negated through membership in a community of practice. Employment strain leads to a feeling of being trapped within the industry, and can lead to a desire to find other opportunities for employment, or a fear that one will need to in the future in order to live something that more closely resembles a secure life.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to answer a beguilingly easy question: Why do you culinary workers love their work but hate their jobs? As the preceding pages have demonstrated, the answer is not so cut and dry. The love and the hate are nuanced, overlapping, and not easily separated. Through the voices of the participants, a narrative emerges that depicts the passion and dedication to the mastery of craft held by many young kitchen workers. Hard work pays off, resulting in learning opportunities and the creation of community, both of which bind the worker to their trade and the world it allows them to inhabit.But this love that binds can be broken. The strain that employment precarity generates within the lives of workers can dampen the spirits of even the most enthusiastic chef. For some participants, the reality of a life lived on the precarious edge has already taken its toll, leading them to seek refuge in what they hope to be more stable occupations. For those who have a desire to stay in the industry for the duration of their careers, employment strain figures large in their fears about what the future portends.

What is clear from this study is that something must be done in order to improve the employment conditions of kitchen workers so that they may enjoy a better work-to-life balance. The strain that workers face undercuts both their psych-social wellbeing as well the conditions necessary for cooking as a skilled trade to flourish. A move towards set schedules, improved job security, and defined job descriptions would be beneficial to workers. It would also provide a net positive to employers as it would reduce elements of

employment strain that contribute to labour turnover, a costly situation in any context, but especially within a tight culinary labour market.

What remains to be seen is how such a change can occur. The reality of kitchen work is that it will always involve non-regular hours and tight margins. The high-pressure environment in a kitchen is similarly predicated on the labour process and seems unlikely to change at anything else than a glacial pace. The combination of low pay, poor treatment, and highly skilled workers seems ripe for unionization. However, the possibility of this solution is implausible in the short term at best. The turnover in and of itself creates a very difficult context for organizing, as has recently been seen in the retail and fast food sector. Furthermore, many restaurants rely on relatively small staffs, making them unattractive targets for union organizing drives. There does, however, appear to be an awakening within Toronto's restaurant industry around issues such as workplace sexual harassment (Henry, 2015a). It remains to be seen if this growing grassroots activity around workplace issues in restaurants is a flash in the pan or the beginning of a movement to change kitchen culture.

The findings of this study point to several avenues that may be of interest to future researchers. While it fell out of the scope of this thesis, the interview data included numerous depictions of often horrifying workplace injury and its effects on young workers, particularly in how burns and scars act as reified markers of membership in a community of practice. It is also interesting to note that, even when described within a context of horribly unsafe working conditions – working in standing water, faulty kitchen appliances, working with inebriated coworkers – the participants largely internalized the

causes of workplace incidents and blamed themselves. More attention paid to the relationship between mastery of skill, communities of practice, and discourses of injury is needed. There is also a need to better understand the relationship between poor coping mechanisms, such as drug and alcohol misuse, and precarious employment relationships. Furthermore, the study findings reaffirm the central role that skill and autonomy in work play in workers' job satisfaction and points to how communities of practice within the service industry may be leveraged to achieve more control for workers.

In writing this thesis, there was a struggle between privileging the positive aspects of being a member of a community of practice and the negative outcomes of employment strain for young kitchen workers. Should one have been prioritized in order to present a more comprehensive examination of the other? Perhaps. But this would have been unfair to the narratives of the workers. Their lives are not solely filled with drudgery and panic over employment prospects. Nor do they work in a utopian environment shaped by shared practice and community engagement. One cannot understand the lives and choices made by young cooks and chefs without taking a holistic view of their lived experiences. A deeper investigation into employment strain or communities of practice may have been fruitful, but it would have come at the expense of the larger picture. "Joy and woe are woven fine," and the stories shared by the participants, and by extension this study, reflect that truth (Blake, 1803).

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APPENDIX A: PARTICPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Participant	Gender	Age	Race	Hours/Week	Pay	Current Employer/Position	Benefits	Years in Industry	# of Employees	Formal Culinary Training	Education Level
Jim	M	24	White	70-80	$17	Gastropub - Head Chef	No	10	10+	None	High School Degree
Sam	M	24	Asian	68-75	$7 - $15/hr	Two high-end restaurants, fish market - Sous Chef	No	5	9	Esteemed private cooking college	High School Degree
Mona	F	25	White	60-70	$13.50, $100/day for personal chef	High end restaurant, catering company, personal chef - Line Cook	Yes	6	~8	Public College	Culinary Diploma
Malcom	M	23	Mixed Race	40	$13	Unemployed, most recently a Line Cook	No	5	~15	None	High School Degree, some college
Julian	M	24	White	50-70	$3100/month	High end, fast service restaurant - Head Chef	No	7	15	None	Did not complete high school
Zack	M	25	White	45-50	$13.25	Mid-level neighbourhood restaurant - Line Cook	No	3.5	6	None	Did not complete high school
Ben	M	27	White	25	$13	Lunch/Brunch Restaurant & Bakery - Produce Cook, two jobs outside of industry	No	8	9	Public College	Culinary Diploma, completing undergrad
Lisa	F	27	White	30	$12.75	Student-focused bar - Line Cook	No	4	4	None	High School Degree, some college
Andrew	M	24	White	30-38	$12.50	Currently working outside of industry - most recently a Line Cook	No	5	5	None	College Graduate (non-culinary)

APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE AND CONSENT FORM

McMaster University Research Ethics Board (MREB)

c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support, MREB Secretariat, GH-305, e-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS CLEARANCE TO INVOLVE HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

Application Status: New ☒ Addendum ☐ Project Number: 2015 078

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:

Occupational Identities of Young Culinary Workers

Faculty Investigator(s)/ Supervisor(s)	Dept./Address	Phone	E-Mail
D. Baines	Labour Studies	23703	bainesd@mcmaster.ca
Student Investigator(s)	**Dept./Address**	**Phone**	**E-Mail**
C. Stikuts	Labour Studies	647994380	stikutcj@mcmaster.ca

The application in support of the above research project has been reviewed by the MREB to ensure compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the McMaster University Policies and Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants. The following ethics certification is provided by the MREB:

☐ The application protocol is cleared as presented without questions or requests for modification.

☒ The application protocol is cleared as revised without questions or requests for modification.

☐ The application protocol is cleared subject to clarification and/or modification as appended or identified below:

COMMENTS AND CONDITIONS: Ongoing clearance is contingent on completing the annual completed/status report. A "Change Request" or amendment must be made and cleared before any alterations are made to the research.

Reporting Frequency:	Annual: Apr-23-2016	Other:

Date: Apr-23-2015   Chair, Dr. B. Detlor

DATE: _____

McMaster University

Inspiring Innovation and Discovery

LETTER OF CONSEN / INFORMATION

A Study of the Occupational Identities of Young Culinary Workers

Student Investigator:
Curran Stikuts
Department of Labour Studies
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(647) 994-3804
E-mail: stikutcj@mcmaster.ca

Faculty Supervisor:
Dr. Donna Baines
Department of Labour Studies
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(905) 525-9140 ext. 23703
E-mail: dbaines@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to take part in this study on occupational identity. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Through your participation, I am hoping to learn more about your views and experiences about working in a kitchen, how you view yourself as a worker, and how you view the culinary industry. I am doing this research for my Master's Thesis Project.

This study will explore how workplace culture and environment shapes the occupational, or work-related, identities of young (under 30) kitchen workers in Toronto. It will examine how different features of work and identity interact with each other in order to gain a better understanding about the lived experiences and identities of young kitchen workers.

 What will happen during the study?

You will be involved in one (approximately) sixty to ninety minute interview about your experiences, conducted by me, Curran Stikuts. This interview will be one on one, and will take place at a public location in Toronto that is convenient to you. With your permission, this interview will be audio-recorded. I will also take hand-written notes. The interview will be semi-structured, meaning that I will have some questions prepared about certain aspects of your work life, with others added depending on your answers. Below are three sample questions that may be asked during the interview:

- Can you describe what you do during a normal shift at work?
- Can you talk about a time that you have gotten frustrated at work?
- Can you describe your relationships with your coworkers?

Other questions will focus on how you think about your career, your working conditions, and your sense of well-being, as it relates to work. With your permission, a follow-up

interview will be conducted by phone or in person if it is needed. This interview would last approximately thirty minutes, but is unlikely to be necessary.

Are there any risks to doing this study?

It is not likely that there will be any real risk to you due to this research. However, some questions within the interview may touch on potentially upsetting topics, such as: your feelings of stress and anger at work; your experiences of bullying or harassment at work; your experience of physical injury at work, and your coping mechanisms. You do not need to answer any questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. You may take breaks if needed. You may withdraw from the study up until August 15th, 2015. I describe below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy. There are also social risks involved in this study. While all personal identifiers such as name and place of work will be anonymized, interested parties who read the completed research project may be able to identify you through the stories and experiences you share. This could lead to issues at work, such as disciplinary measures or other practices. It may also lead to difficult social situations. It is suggested that you do not share your participation in this study with supervisors or others who may be unhappy about the experiences you share.

Are there any benefits to doing this study?

Possible benefits include the opportunity to discuss your work-experiences, and to have a chance to reflect on the opportunities and dilemmas within the restaurant industry. I hope that what is learned as a result of this study will help us to better understand the experiences and identities of young restaurant workers. This could help other researchers interested in this topic, as well as members of the community who are interested in improving the working conditions of restaurant workers in Toronto.

Confidentiality- Who will know what I said or did in the study?

You are participating in this study confidentially. I will not use your name or any information, including current or former places of employment that would allow you to be identified. No one but me, and my faculty supervisor, will know whether you were in the study unless you choose to tell them. If you give permission to have this interview audio-recorded, your name, the names of your co-workers, and your place of work will be anonymized. You will be asked to supply an alias that will be used in place of your name for the duration of the research project. Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. However, we are sometimes identifiable through the stories we tell. Others may be able to identify you on the basis of the references you make or the stories you tell. Please keep this in mind in deciding what to tell me.

The information you provide me will be kept in a locked cabinet where only I will have access to it. Information kept on a computer will be protected by a password. Once the study has been completed, all data with identifying information will be destroyed. Data without identifying information will be kept for up to three years, and then destroyed.

Participation and withdrawal - What if I change my mind about being in the study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw), from the interview, or the study completely, for whatever reason, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study, up until approximately August 15th, 2015. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

Information about the Study Results - How do I find out what was learned in this study?

I expect to have this study completed by approximately October 1st, 2015. When the project is completed, you will be notified and a summary of the findings will be posted at https://medium.com/@stikutsresearch when the project is completed. A full copy of my thesis will also be made available if you desire. If you wish, a copy of the interview transcript can also be provided.

Legally Required Disclosure
Although I will protect your privacy as outlined above, if the law requires it, I will have to reveal certain personal information (e.g. intentions to harm yourself or another).

Questions about the Study:
If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:

Curran Stikuts
stikutcj@mcmaster.ca
647-994-3804

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

> McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat
> Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
> C/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support
> E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by **Curran Stikuts**, of McMaster University.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until **August 15th, 2015.**
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree to participate in the study.

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded (please circle): YES   NO

2. I would like to receive a summary of the study's results (please circle): YES   NO

Please send them to me at this email address _____
Or to this mailing address: _____
                             _____
                             _____

3. I agree to be contacted about a follow-up interview (if needed), and understand that I can always decline the request.

YES: Please contact me at: _____

NO

Signature: _____

 Date: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

APPENDIX C INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant Alias _____
Gender
Age
Race/Ethnicity

Average number of hours of work per week
Current place(s) of employment
Average hourly pay (including tip out if applicable)
Number of years in restaurant industry
Number of different employers within restaurant industry

1. **Describe to me what you would consider a normal shift at work**
Potential follow up probes:

- What about an easy shift?
- What about a difficult shift?
- Can you tell more about the restaurant you work at?
  - Type of food?
  - Neighbourhood?
  - Cost?
  - Clientele?
  - Reputation?

2. **How did you start working in this field?**

- Was it something you've always wanted to do?
- What were your other options/ what other types of jobs were you interested in?
- If you weren't working in a restaurant, where do you think you would be?
- Did you receive any formal training? (College, apprenticeships etc.)

3. **Tell me everything you can about your relationships at work**

- Tell me about how you feel about your supervisor
- What makes a good supervisor? A bad one?
- Tell me about some of the friendships you've formed at work
- Do you socialize with coworkers outside of work? What do you do?
- What do you think about your restaurant's customers?
- How do you handle co-workers that you don't like?
- Tell me about a time you felt mistreated by your coworkers
  - Your supervisor?
- Who, or what type of chef do you admire?
  - Dislike?

4. **Tell me everything you can about the positive aspects of your job**

- What do you like most about your job?
- What makes you feel accomplished about your job?
- What makes your job worthwhile
- Tell me about learning new skills at work
- Tell me about how your coworkers make your job better
- How do you feel after a good shift?

5. **Tell me everything you can about the negative, or stressful parts of your job**

- What do you find most stressful about your job?
- What do you dislike the most about your job?
- Have you been injured at work? What happened?
- Tell me more about…
    o Your scheduling
        ▪ breaks
    o Your pay
    o Your working conditions
        ▪ Temperature
        ▪ Space
        ▪ Speed of work
- Have you ever felt unsafe at work?
    o Has it been due to working conditions/ safety issues?
    o Has it been due to social or organizational issues?
        ▪ Bullying?
        ▪ Harassment?
- How do you feel after a bad shift?

6. **How do you feel about work when you're not there?**

- Given your hours, how do you manage your time/social life?
- How do you feel your work is seen by society?
- Talk to me about cooking for pleasure
- Talk to me about going out to eat at restaurants where you don't work

7. **When you think about your career so far, what comes to mind?**

- How do you feel when discussing you work with your friends/peers who do not work in the industry?
- Do you consider yourself an artist?
    o What term would you use to describe the type of work you do?
- Do you see yourself in the restaurant industry for the rest of your working career?
- What are you proud of in your career so far?

- What do you wish you could change?
- What advice would you give to others interested in this type of work?

8. **Is there anything I forgot to ask that you think is important, or anything else you'd like to add?**