"If you don't quite manage the job, it will be tough for you"

–A qualitative study on chef culture and abuse in restaurant kitchens

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Abstract

Media reports as well as existing (albeit limited) research suggest abusive work practices are common in restaurant kitchens. Kitchen abuse is explored in this case study, as ten experienced Swedish chefs were interviewed. Organisational culture theory is used to conceptualise the occupational culture of chefs, which is hypothesised to be of explanatory significance. The issue of abusive work practices is contrasted with workplace bullying literature. Results suggest abusive work practices do occur, but that certain rough jargon and authoritative management, that might be considered illegitimate in other workplace contexts, generally is expected and accepted among restaurant chefs. Contextual factors and the conditions of work, especially during intense service-periods, are thought to create certain demands on chefs, and particularly head chefs, that has formed various aspects of kitchen work. Chef culture seems adapted to these circumstances. A potential blind spot of the study is aspiring chefs that quit the profession shortly after entering. Not yet fully trained or accustomed to chef culture, this group faces an increased risk of ill-treatment, and they typically elude research. Overall, results suggest academic bullying concepts are problematic to apply on this case, and underscore the significance of contextual factors for understanding workplace abuse phenomena.

Key words

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1. Introduction

Workplace bullying and other forms of abusive work practices is a well-known social phenomenon, believed to inflict severe damage to individuals and organisations affected (see e.g. Einarsen et al. 2003b). Its subjective nature and the ambiguous meanings and perceptions actors attach to it, however, make generalisations regarding frequency, consequences and explanations difficult (Zapf et al. 2003). Restaurant chefs constitute a suggestive example of this. Traditionally known for its rough jargon, strict discipline and authoritative leadership style, the chef occupation seems to hold an ambivalent attitude towards certain features of kitchen work practices. Previous research has shown work practices in kitchens that in most other contexts would have been regarded as abusive or hostile as accepted and even expected by many restaurant chefs (Johns & Menzel, 1999; Alexander et al. 2012). The acceptance is thought to be associated with a strong occupational culture. The present study attempts to study such seemingly abusive restaurant kitchen work practices by exploring the larger context in which they are situated. Using the case of the local restaurant sector of Stockholm, Sweden, the focal point of the investigation into the world and work of restaurant chefs is the perspective of chefs themselves; their perceptions of and thoughts on work conditions-, circumstances-, environment- and culture.

The rationale for the inquiry builds on the conviction that in order to learn about chefs, what it is like to work in restaurant kitchens and what goes on in there, it is necessary to talk to chefs themselves; the insiders. Thus, the empirical material analysed is based on long and semi-structured conversations with ten experienced chefs regarding their experiences working in restaurant kitchens and their perceptions and views concerning abusive work practices. Given the interest in exploring contextual situations, certain aspects and issues pertaining to the chef occupation and the restaurant business that are thought to relate to abusive work practices in different ways are also problematised and discussed in interviews as well as by means of other sources and perspectives. The most prominent of these are work organisation, labour mobility within and across the occupation, and the role and work conditions of head chefs.

Organisational culture theory functions as a 'theoretical lens', instructing the setup of the inquiry and the subsequent analysis. This is derived from the hypothesis that the occupational culture of chefs will be found to be of vital explanatory significance concerning many of the questions that are raised in the study. The study is located, scientifically, within the field of

workplace bullying research, and motivated by a perceived shortage of empirical attention paid by scholars to the case of restaurant chefs in general (Bloisi & Hoel, 2008), and in a Swedish context in particular. Swedish chefs and the restaurant sector that employs them also represents a case that appears relevant in the light of recent debates regarding, inter alia, work conditions, the lack of chefs in an expanding industry, and gender structures.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to explore chefs' perceptions of bullying, abuse, and other forms of aggression in restaurant kitchens. The aim is to gain a better and more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon through the perspective of chefs themselves, and relate the findings to previous research on bullying and abuse in the workplace context. By looking into aspects plausibly related to kitchen aggression, like the context in which it takes place, the conditions of the job, and the occupational culture of chefs, the aim is also to be able to contribute to a general understanding of the causes and functions of abusive work practices in restaurant kitchens, how they may be legitimised, and reproduced.

1.2 Research questions

- How is the issue of bullying and abuse in restaurant kitchens experienced and perceived by ten Swedish (Stockholm) chefs?

- How do these chefs perceive different factors of kitchen work (notably; work organisation, labour mobility within and across the occupation, and the role and work conditions of head chefs) to be related to workplace bullying and abuse, to occupational culture, and to each other?

1.3 Delimitations

As indicated above, the case considered here is limited to the context of Stockholm chefs, and the kind of chefs that are regarded are primarily those working in "up-scale" restaurants, which compete for the same kind of customers that typically expect high-quality, creative food accompanied by selected wines, served by knowledgeable servers in more or less lavish settings. Thus, I exclude "fast-food" restaurant chefs, catering businesses and similar.

2. Previous research

2.1 The chef occupation and the restaurant industry

The professional cooking trade as we know it today originated in France, where the first restaurants opened in the 18th Century. By the early 20th Century, the joint efforts of hotel manager Cesar Ritz and legendary chef August Escoffier had invented the structure of the contemporary hotel, and with it, the modern culinary tradition. Clearly influenced by principles of scientific management, "*Escoffier reorganized the kitchen itself, planning its layout so that each dish as it was being prepared moved from cook station to cook station*" (Escoffier, 1987:53). This system of division of labour tasks was developed for large hotel kitchens, but some of its main ingredients are still being practiced in restaurant kitchens all over the world.

As part of the service sector, restaurants need to conform to client demands and expectations. Although pre-settlement in terms of table reservations (sometimes including pre-set menus) generally accounts for some portion of the total output, a large part of it is composed by clients 'dropping in', for which the restaurant must be equipped and resourced in order to provide the service it supplies. Evenings, including weekends, constitute the primary hours of business, and subsequently chefs are typically assigned to uncustomary working hours. The working shift of a chef usually consists, roughly, of a non-service part, when preparations for service are done, and a service part when food is ultimately prepared and assembled into the dishes that customers are served. During service, in particular during 'the rush' (Fine, 1990:107), kitchens become hot, noisy (Maguire & Howard, 2001) and stressful places with employees often working at their maximum capacity (Johns & Menzel, 1999:103); necessarily synchronising their efforts with colleagues in a way so that tables receive their orders simultaneously and 'straight from the oven' (Fine, 1990). In addition, kitchens are spatially constrained (Demetry, 2013), the work is physically demanding and minor injuries like cuts and burns are common (Maguire & Howard, 2001).

The commercial dining sector in Sweden, documented from the 13th Century, has always been associated with poor work environment- and conditions, and its professions have been regarded low-status (Jarnhammar, 2005). Traditionally it was young men from society's lowest strata that began apprenticeship in kitchens as somewhat of a last resort, similar to signing up for military service or deckhand at a ship. These rowdy boys were taught discipline

and to obey orders (Madestrand, 2011). The 20th Century saw large improvements for employees in the sector, as for all sectors, as working hours were restricted, benefits increased and the educational system partly institutionalised. Still in the 1960's, there was a sharp division between kitchen and dining room with the head chef ruling the former in a strict hierarchical structure. (Jarnhammar, 2005) To some extent, the tradition emphasising discipline and obedience still manifests itself today (Skolverket, 1999:79).

According to Johns & Menzel (1999), workplace violence is (at least in the UK) more widespread in kitchens than in other workplaces, the problem seemingly industry-wide but more severe in "high-quality" restaurants. Another British report found below average occurrence of workplace bullying in the hotel sector compared with other sectors (Hoel & Cooper, 2000), but was based on a self-report indication of bullying, and between-sector comparison may be unreliable due to differences in culture and perceptions of bullying (Bloisi & Hoel, 2008). Findings report above average levels of workplace bullying in the restaurant sector in Norway, with apprentices more at risk, and with no significant effect of "quality" of restaurants (Mathisen et al. 2008). There are recurring reports in Nordic media on abusive head chefs and restauranteurs and ill-treatment of chefs and apprentices (see e.g. Aschberg & Svedberg, 2012; Lindahl, 2007; Olsen, 2014), but it is difficult to know the extent of this problem.

The chef culture is unambiguously masculine. Lynch (2010) describes the harsh and biting in-group humour among chefs in a kitchen where "*physical toughness and projecting a thick-skin is expected and respected*" (Lynch, 2010:133). Accordingly, to complain over abuse would imply weakness in a "macho organisational environment" (Adams, 1992), such as the kitchen (Bloisi & Hoel, 2008). According to Demetry, chefs are known for their "particularly loose language" (Demetry, 2013:588), but she also observed that obscene language could indicate casualness and familiarity within the group. An aggressive style of management has historically been, and is to some extent still today, seen as necessary for a kitchen to be run successfully (Nilsson, 2013). Indeed, celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay has claimed that "*a kitchen has to be an assertive, boisterous, aggressive environment, or nothing happens*" (Hollweg, 2001), and Bourdain (2001) and Pierre-White & Steen (2007) provide numerous examples of (self-experienced) abusive work practices in the kitchen. One head chef admitted to be "evil if necessary" when interviewed by Rowley & Purcell (2001).

Interviewing UK chefs, Johns & Menzel (1999) were told anecdotes that witnessed various forms of physical and psychological abuse that had taken place in kitchens. In most cases head chefs were the perpetrators and newcomers at the receiving end. These chefs (all working in high-end restaurants) seemed to ascribe to the "myth" that being able to bear bullying is part of the profession and that, as one chef put it; "*to learn the best stuff, you've got to take the s**t*

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that comes with it" (Johns & Menzel, 1999:106). Head chefs' abusive managerial styles were rationalised in practical terms (necessary to motivate and discipline people into hard work) and to some extent as the prerogative of the head chef in the role of the great (culinary) artist. Demetry (2013) demonstrated that the use of time and space in a kitchen, as well as what discourse is acceptable, can vary (all else equal) considerably with managerial style. Bloisi & Hoel (2008), reviewing the literature, suggest that much of the behaviours generally thought of as bullying (e.g. sarcasm, threats, verbal abuse, intimidation, badmouthing, physical violence and forcing resignation) may be expected and tolerated in the hospitality industry. This acceptance among chefs may follow from the socialisation process through which chef culture is internalised, and consequently, legitimised and reproduced. Alexander et al. (2012), investigating Scottish chefs, found that some behaviours generally regarded as bullying in the literature function as a facilitator of group cohesion and efficiency in the restaurant kitchen, rather than being harmful.

The work that takes place in the kitchen is lead by the head chef. The successful head chef needs to master a number of roles, including the strategist, the organisational designer, the envisioning- and empowering leader (Balazs, 2002). An American textbook for hospitality students provides an ideal typical description of the qualities, except for cooking abilities, that are required of a chef in managerial position:

> "Today he [the chef] must be an organizer, a personnel man, and often also a buyer. He should have some knowledge of nutrition and diet and should employ this knowledge in planning menus and instructing his personnel in food preparation. He should have some background in kitchen layout and design-knowledge of equipment and of the various elements required to operate and maintain it. He must have a good basic foundation in mathematics and be able to calculate food and labor costs quickly and accurately … It is vital that he have a good understanding of people and that he be able to get along well with them. He must have the ability to instill in his employees a desire to do their best, for his employees are often a reflection of himself; and the work that they perform is the structure of his reputation." (cited by Escoffier, 1987:56)

In general, Pratten (2003) concludes that "*the skills required to be head chef are different from those of a chef, and these [skills] are seldom offered in training*" (p. 241).

Interestingly, chefs report high job satisfaction compared to other occupations. Drawing on British survey data from 1998, researchers concluded that the hospitality industry in general enjoyed relatively high employee satisfaction, despite "poor employment practices", compared to other industries (Lucas, 2002; see also Martin, 2004). Another British paper singled out chefs and cooks from other hospitality occupations and found relatively high job satisfaction in this group (Rose, 2003). Chefs interviewed by Johns & Menzel (1999) seemed to think that the rewards of kitchen work, e.g. "the satisfaction of serving good food", outweighed the negative

aspects of kitchen work. The high job satisfaction is perhaps more surprising when coupled with reports on chefs working unpaid overtime, typically in high-end restaurants, in Sweden and elsewhere, and this is generally regarded as mandatory for chefs that aspire to reach the top level of the profession (Eriksson, 2010; Hultin, 2011; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Norström, 2013). On the other hand, a Swedish study among restaurant staff witnessed how working hours turned the job into a way of life (Jonsson et al. 2008; see also Eriksson, 2010).

The hospitality industry generally suffers from retention problems and labour shortages due to high levels of labour mobility, within and between occupations, and this pattern is observed in Europe and elsewhere (Robinson & Barron, 2007; Deery, 2002; Pratten & O'Leary, 2007; Gustafson, 2002). For example, in Norway a chef has an average stay of 6.5 years in the occupation before they change trade (Tidemann & Mykletun, 2005). In the UK, 60 percent of kitchen workers change jobs each year on average (Johns & Menzel, 1999). In countries with apprentice systems, studies show high levels of dropout (Casey, 2003; Pratten, 2003; Pratten & O'Leary, 2007). Labour mobility causes shortage of competence and knowledge, which can have negative effects on establishment performance (Rowley & Purcell, 2001). Newly recruited chefs lacking the necessary skills further add to the workplace stress (Johns & Menzel, 1999). Explanations for the extensive mobility among chefs are contested. Pratten (2003) emphasised the physical demands, poor wages and anti-social hours of the trades as contributing factors to between-industry mobility. As for within-industry mobility, management styles and employment conditions may be important motivators, as the hospitality industry "*has been identified consistently as an industry with poor employment practices*" (Rowley & Purcell, 2001:170). Indeed, head chefs are typically selected for their cooking- rather than managing-skills (Guyette, 1981). On the other hand chefs traditionally move a lot between restaurants in order to develop their repertoires (Rowley & Purcell, 2001).

In a Swedish context, the restaurant sector is often regarded as a stepping stone into other parts of the labour market for young people (Urban, 2013), and indeed it is the sector in Sweden with the highest staff turnover rate (Olsson Lindh & Persson, 2009). Trouble retaining staff in the sector, coupled with an expected demand for more and more staff in the years to come, are currently being addressed by the general industry (see e.g. BFUF, 2013). Englund & Fierro (2006) addressed the sector's inability to retain its staff and concluded that a part of it has to do with working hours and conditions employers are unable to adjust. But they also identified a "vicious circle" in which employers due to expected staff turnover perceive they lack incentives to make the investments in "hygiene- and motivational factors" required to motivate staff into staying. Likewise, Petersson (2011) suggests employers accept high staff turnover and adapt management practices thereafter, rather than doing something about it.

While the restaurant industry in Sweden generally employs more women than men, the chef profession is male dominated. In 2009, 66 percent of chefs in Sweden were male (Ekdahl, 2012). Traditionally, there is also a division within restaurant kitchens that places women in the cold section and men in the warm. Some 85 percent of cold section chefs are women (Eriksson, 2011). With a low average age – in 2010 46 percent of employees were in ages 18-26 (HRF, 2012) – and extensive labour mobility, perhaps it is no surprise the hotel- and restaurant union struggles to recruit members[1].

2.2 The research field of workplace bullying

Research on workplace bullying pioneered in the 1980s in Scandinavia and diffused internationally into a new field of study in the 1990s, coinciding with an emerging interest from the public, unions as well as health- and safety-officials (Einarsen et al. 2003b). In Sweden, Norway and Finland, a strong research tradition in the field of bullying started by looking at the school context, and these countries were also early adopters of social policies regulating workers' rights to remain physically and mentally healthy (Einarsen, 2000).

Whilst the phenomena has been studied within various disciplines and under a variety of names – such as workplace aggression, workplace incivility, emotional abuse, generalised workplace abuse, workplace harassment, mobbing, victimisation, and psychological terror[2] – Einarsen et al. (2003b) provides a definition of bullying that is widely used today:

> "Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g. weekly) and over a period of time (e.g. about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal 'strength' are in conflict." (p. 15)

Measurement issues make it hard to provide reliable estimates of the frequency of workplace bullying. Operationalisation is problematic due to its subjective nature, and another issue is that there seems to be a discrepancy between definitions of the concept used in academia and individuals' everyday usage and interpretation of the term. Some 8-10 percent of workers may be frequent victims of less severe bullying (Zapf et al. 2003). Not surprisingly, research shows that bullying is psychologically damaging for the victim (Einarsen, 2000; Hoel et al. 2002).

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[1] The organisation level in the sector decreased from 52 percent in 2006 to 38 percent in 2010 – at which point it was the lowest of all groups compared (Kjellberg, 2011:84).

[2] See Hershcovis (2011) for a critical discussion on the issue of multiple constructs of workplace aggression.

Negative organisational effects such as lowered productivity, increase in sick-leaves and reduced commitment that can cause staff turnover are also observed (Einarsen, 2000).

A related but different concept is "abusive supervision". Abusive supervision differs in that it focuses exclusively on the supervisor as the perpetrator (Hershcovis, 2011). A frequently cited definition; *"abusive supervision refers to subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact"* (Tepper, 2000:178). Unlike bullying, it also omits physical abuse. Research has found that abusive supervision has (direct or indirect) negative effects on job and life satisfaction, psychological well-being (Tepper, 2000), problem drinking (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006), organisation deviance (Tepper et al. 2008), intentions to quit (Tepper et al. 2009) and work-to-family conflict (Carlson et al. 2011). Regardless of whether it is your boss or your colleagues who engage in abusive and hostile behaviour, the outcomes are similar and to the detriment of individual and organisational life.

Given the negative effects, how are we to understand the occurrence of bullying? In the literature, explanations for workplace bullying can be divided into three main categories; individual, social, and contextual. *Individual* explanations refer to the personalities of victims and perpetrators. Zapf et al. (2003), reviewing the literature, state that even though there is *"certainly nothing such as a victim personality (e.g. the 'notorious complainer') which can explain bullying in general"* (Zapf et al. 2003:166), some characteristics seem to increase the risk of bullying exposure. Being an "outsider" in a group (usually "norm violators") is associated with the risk of becoming a "scapegoat" on which the group load off their problems (Thylefors, 1999). "Weak" personality, low social competency, low self-esteem, bad conflict manager, high social anxiety, low on empathy and neurotic tendency are other characteristics that in different ways may be associated with an increased risk of becoming a victim (Zapf et al. 2003). When perpetrators are believed to be the main "cause" of bullying, the general account is usually some variation of them lacking social competencies, that their self-esteem is threatened, or the result of "micropolitical behaviour". The latter refers to *"harassment of another person in order to protect or improve one's own position in the organisation"* (Zapf et al. 2003:172).

There are several alternative *social* explanations to workplace bullying, even though relatively few researchers have looked for explanations for bullying at the group level – probably because group processes are difficult to capture with survey research (Svensson, 2010). Bullying can, perhaps, function as a tool for social control over group members and a means to normalise deviant behaviour. Antisocial behaviour can be required to become accepted in a group with antisocial behaviour (Ibid.). Drawing on the notion that so much in social relations

seems to rest on the schema of "reciprocity" – the logic of giving and returning the equivalence, 'eye for an eye', and so on – Neuman & Baron (2003) examined the link between unfair treatment and workplace aggression. Through mechanisms of injustice perception, norm violation and distributive injustice, people can perceive to be subject to unfair treatment, and that perception cause feelings of frustration and stress which, in turn, has been shown to increase workplace aggression towards the perceived cause of the treatment, be it a certain individual or the organisation in general. The "effect/danger ratio", however, refers to the fact that adults, when they aggress against others, look to maximise the harm produced, while minimising the danger of themselves being subject to negative consequences because of it. The authors argue this might cause misplaced aggression, which would explain, for example, why workers would take out aggression on a relatively weak co-worker instead of a supervisor who is perceived to be the cause of the frustration (Neuman & Baron, 2003).

When *contextual* antecedents of workplace bullying are discussed, it generally refers to factors related to the work organisation of a contextual or environmental nature. An increasingly competitive, globalised market is thought to entail a general increase in work pressure for workers. This may have an indirect effect on bullying if managers "*for instrumental reasons [are] more likely to apply strategies which could be construed as bullying in order to fulfil performance objectives or 'getting the job done.'*" (Hoel & Salin, 2003:205) The work environment is believed to affect bullying, but research results are ambiguous. In stressful work environments and under heavy workload, pressure and conflicts thrive, and the risk of bullying is thought to increase. Some studies, however, don't find this association. Bullying is more common in work situations that demand cooperation and team work (Svensson, 2010). Work carried out in noisy, hot (or cold), or crammed conditions has been found to be associated with increased feelings and attitudes of hostility, which may foster bullying (Anderson et al. 1996).

The workplace bullying research field has been the typical choice of academic location for the limited previous research interest in abuse among restaurant chefs (see e.g. Alexander et al. 2012; Bloisi & Hoel, 2008). Workplace bullying scholars have also applied their concepts on the restaurant context in a few cases (see e.g. Mathisen et al. 2008; Meloury & Signal, 2014). Not expecting all behaviours and work practices that may be considered in this paper to accord with the definition of workplace bullying cited above, nor this research field to exhaust the plausible mechanisms and explanations at work at the case at hand – I have still chosen to position this research close to the field of workplace bullying research, so that it can more fruitfully converse with the relevant previous research. And whether or not bullying, as academically conceptualised, is best suited to account for the focal phenomenon – abusive work practices among restaurant chefs – it certainly overlaps related kinds of negative work pract-

ices at work, why I argue that the vast literature on bullying briefly presented above can and should be regarded as important input to the focal research. Thus, individual, social, and contextual factors are to be important topics for the interviews and subsequent analysis, although the main focus is on the latter. In particular I will focus on group culture, presented next.

3. Theory

3.1 Organisational culture theory

A vital aspect of the organisational context in which work relations are embedded is organisational culture, a concept that emphasises informal and subconscious rules, routines, strategies and practices, in addition to the formal and conscious ones (Svensson, 2010:89). American social psychologist Edgar Schein has developed a framework for the study of organisational cultures, presented in *Organisational Culture and Leadership* (Schein, 2010). He offers an explanation as to why we so often find organisational life and its manifestations irrational or difficult to understand (Schein, 2010:7). This is because much of what we observe is contingent on group culture, which primarily functions outside our awareness. Schein defines group culture as "*a pattern of shared basic [underlying] assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration*" (Schein, 2010:18). "Groups" can be constituted by macro units (e.g. nations, religious groups and global occupations), organisational units, subunits (e.g. occupational units within organisations) and micro-units. The "basic underlying assumptions" are the unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values that determine behaviors, perceptions, thoughts and feelings of those subject to a common group culture. They tend to be non-confrontable and non-debatable, and, accordingly, extremely difficult to change. This is the essential level of group culture, and it is hard to grasp. The next, less abstract and more conscious level is "espoused beliefs and values". This refers to the common espoused beliefs, values, norms, and rules of behaviour that culture members share. The third level is that of the "artifacts". These are closest to the surface, visible to the unfamiliar eye. Examples are the language, products, style, manners, symbols, rituals, ceremonies of the group, as well as physical environment and observed behaviour.

Following Schein, the content of an organisational culture is formed in processes of external adaptation and internal integration, that is, as the group learns how to handle external demands in order to survive and grow, and how to function internally on a daily basis while meeting

external demands. Solutions to problems that work repeatedly and strategies that are perceived to work well enough are validated and in time become taken for granted (Schein 2010:18). Once in place, organisational cultures are difficult to change, because group members value stability and predictability.

The strength and stability of organisational cultures depends on *"[...] the length and emotional intensity of their actual history from the moment they were founded."* (Schein 2010:3) As for occupational groups, Schein argues it is clear many evolve cultures, especially when there is strong socialisation during the education and training period (Schein, 2010:19). Socialising newcomers into the group culture allows it to survive even when members of the group depart. Thus, one way of learning about surface aspects of a group culture is to study what new group members are taught. Newcomers may discover the culture by testing different lines of conduct, and learning what is rewarded and what is punished. However, to get at the deeper levels one needs to observe and interview the "old timers" (Schein, 2010:19).

3.2 Discussion

Reviewing the literature, several issues concerning the application of academic concepts of workplace bullying on restaurant kitchen practices are identified. I will inquire into practices and behaviours which, in order to be analysed in a fruitful way, must first be *interpreted*. For example; for harassment to take place, someone must arguably perceive to have been harassed. Concepts used in academic contexts and everyday language are inevitably inter-related, a complexity referred to by Giddens (2002) as the "double hermeneutic". Bullying is a telling example of this, as the concept itself (a social construction) arguably influences the ways in which individuals interpret and make sense of certain acts. If some practices are defined theoretically as bullying, but not by those involved – as is suggested to be the case with chefs – is the theory then applicable? Are the consequences thought to be related to bullying expected to come about if no-one perceives to have been victimised by the behaviour in question? On the other hand, how would we know behaviours are not somehow harmful even if no harm is perceived? And what about organisational consequences?

The literature on workplace bullying provides suggestions as to what factors and mechanisms could be significant as the case of restaurant kitchen is approached. Individual, social och contextual factors will be considered following this research. Some concrete ideas unfold as the picture is complemented with different literature relating more to the chef occupation. Thus, it is thought that jargon, norms and attitudes are traditionally such that certain aggression is enabled and normalised. Warm, constrained, stressful, and cooperative working conditions

of the kitchen could also play a part. The high level of labour mobility is suggestive of bad treatment, but is contradicted by reported high job satisfaction. The head chef role appears as complex and could be a source of stress and bad management.

Following organisational culture theory, it would be expected to find a strong culture associated with such a historical and well-established profession as the chef. Furthermore, it would be expected to find the content of the culture to be related to processes of external adaptation and internal integration (Schein, 2010), that is, to the context in which restaurant kitchen work is located – and the demands, conditions and content of the tasks that are performed in there, respectively.

Several scholars have pointed at the occupational culture of chefs and the socialisation process into it, and their plausible significance for understanding bullying and abuse among chefs (see e.g. Alexander et al. 2012; Bloisi & Hoel, 2008; Johns & Menzel, 1999), but arguments generally remain speculative because their empirical foundation is typically rather weak. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of the occupational culture of chefs and its association with abusive work practices.

What has been discussed thus far represents the basis on which the empirical inquiry is constructed, providing material to discuss and scrutinise in interviews. Next, this inquiry will be presented in more detail.

4. Method

4.1 Rationale

The background to this study is my preconception, supported by previous research and anecdotal evidence, that a certain (aggressive) jargon och leadership style have been, and to some extent still are, common features of restaurant kitchen work, and that this by and large is taken for granted by many chefs. It is my belief that in order to understand such work practices, it is necessary to focus on the bigger picture; the context of these situations, made up by historical structures, norms, attitudes, and so on. The focus of the inquiry is therefore not on concrete incidents of different kinds of aggression between chefs in restaurant kitchens, but rather to explore the circumstances and meanings of such generalised behaviour through the eyes of the interviewees. This is why the experiences, perceptions, attitudes and views of interviewees are explored. With the conceptual apparatus of organisational culture theory

(Schein, 2011), these attitudes, perceptions and views are conceptualised as being a part of an occupational culture. The strength and coherence of this culture is an empirical question, as are its deeper, taken-for-granted assumptions, its espoused values and beliefs, and its visible artifacts. The rationale of the present empirical study rests on the belief that the most fruitful and effective way of exploring chef practices- and culture is to turn to chefs themselves. I regard chefs as experts of their own profession, holding the key to the interpretation of their culture and its manifestations. The method of interviewing is designed with the intent to best make use of the shared knowledge and experience of interviewees by encouraging them to think and contemplate over possible explanations, hypotheses, and ideas regarding the workings and interworking of various aspects thought to be related to kitchen aggression and chef culture. After that, analysis will seek to make sense of the resulting data using organisational culture theory as a theoretical lens and relating the findings to literature on workplace bullying and other areas presented in the previous chapters.

I wish to stress the explorative nature of the inquiry, motivated by a perceived shortage of knowledge on some of the issues and contexts I aim to explore. For example, I have not encountered any estimation of the frequency of abusive work practices in restaurant kitchens in Sweden, and foreign studies on the topic are mostly based on small-scale anecdotal data or unreliable quantitative data. This amounts to a research strategy with a broad focus on identifying interesting issues, problems and plausible linkages between factors, with an aim to guide and inspire further research rather than to come up with conclusive evidence.

4.2 Methodology

Designing the present study, I subscribe to a social constructivist worldview (Creswell 2007:20), as I believe such a view is intrinsically bound up with the understanding of such phenomena as bullying and group culture. Thus, I rely on participants' subjective views, perceptions and meanings rather than a priori academic definitions of, for example, bullying. It is important to keep in mind, however, that "*these subjective meanings [often] are negotiated socially and historically*" (Creswell 2007:20-21). This structural aspect is acknowledged through the concept of a group culture among chefs ("chef culture") that is hypthesised to be of vital analytical significance when interviewees' talk are to be made sense of and analysed.

The methodological strategy of the thesis is to conduct a case study (Creswell, 2007:73). The case of restaurant kitchens as a workplace and chefs as an occupational group in a Swedish (Stockholm) context is used to scrutinise and problematise the research field of workplace bullying. The relation between theory and empiric, then, is primarily that the latter informs the

former; the particular is meant to say something about the general. This notion should be understood, however, rather as an indication than a categorical approach, as theory also is used to inform the empirical analysis. Thus, organisational culture theory has served as a "theoretical lens" (Creswell, 2007:42) that has focused the thesis in various ways. In this respect, the relation between theory and empiric is the opposite from previously; theory is used as a tool to understand what is talked about – the general is hoped to say something about the particular.

4.3 Interviews

Ten Swedish chefs were interviewed in Stockholm in the spring of 2015. The interviews were conducted one by one, face to face, audio-recorded and lasted roughly ninety minutes on average. A semi-structured interview guide (se below) was used to frame the conversation and to ensure a "least common denominator" between interviews, while still allowing spontaneity in interviews. The latter reflects the explorative nature of the inquiry, keeping interviews flexible and open for new ideas and perspectives provided by interviewees. This inductive feature meant that the interview guide to some extent was gradually evaluated and revised in line with what previous interviewees emphasised and dismissed (a "zigzag" process; Creswell, 2007:64). One example of this was the topic of head chefs' work conditions and lack of preparatory training for many required work tasks. This was brought up and problematised in an early interview, and subsequently integrated in the interview guide.

4.3.1 The chefs

I chose to centre the study to Stockholm and the city's local restaurant sector, rather than Sweden and Swedish chefs in general. To some extent the city represents a uniform local labor market for employees in the restaurant sector. My own experience and preconception is that even in a city of Stockholm's size, the restaurant sector tends to appear surprisingly small for those inside. Chefs, waiters and bartenders all tend to switch jobs quite frequently, and they often socialise with each other and at the same venues after work, giving the business a "small-world"-character, where everybody seem to know one another. In this social-occupational "network" of industry people, information, rumours and gossip diffuse efficiently and job opportunities seem to a great extent to be determined by one's social network rather than one's CV. For chefs in particular, I think personal recommendations are vital for the ambitious one, and this is likely to put chefs in a position of dependence towards their head chef, thus potentially influencing workplace relations, coping behaviours (in the event of abuse) etcetera. Now, a city of the size of London, for example, should differ significantly compared to a city of the size of, say, Västerås with regards to these considerations. And even though

interviewees (especially if they have been long in the industry) are quite likely to have worked in different cities, to delimit the sample to individuals that are currently situated in one local labor market seemed to me a logical strategy, as it minimised the issue of potential variation between interviewees due to geographical context. Thus, the minimum requirement for inter-vieewes to participate was that they had experienced working as chef in at least one Stockholm restaurant[3]. As it turned out, all interviewees had worked in several Stockholm restaurants.

I primarily looked for relatively well-experienced chefs, ideally with experience from many different restaurants and work positions in the kitchens. This can be thought of as an "intensive" sampling stategy; including "*information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extremely*" (Creswell, 2007:127). In practice, however, I could hardly pick and choose chefs to interview, and as I had expected, it was quite a challenge to find candidates willing to participate. I utilised my personal contacts, emailed a lot, and to some extent I used snowball-sampling as I asked participating interviewees if they knew someone else who would be interesting to interview for my purposes. Two interviewees were found in the latter way.

Potential interviewees were contacted in writing, with a presentation (discussed more closely below) of the purpose of the study and the terms of an interview for which the recipient was asked to participate. With those accepting, a time and place was decided upon, with inter-viewees asked to suggest somewhere convenient for their part, with the only condition that it would be possible for the two of us to sit down in private and the environment not being too noicy (for audio recording to be practicable). Six interviews were conducted in cafes, and four in the focal interviewee's workplace.

The ten interviewees had an average age of roughly 36 years. Two of them were 23 years old at the time of the interview, the others between 29 and 52. Three of them were women. Seven of them had held head chef positions, the other three had been sous chefs (middle manager) or similar. All were active chefs, with one of them self-employed, three working as chef teachers in upper secondary school, and the rest employed in various restaurants. The sample is in no way representative of the underlying population of restaurant chefs in Stockholm, but the joint experience of interviewees arguably covers quite a lot. With chefs typically moving around a lot between restaurants (only a few of interviewees were exceptions to this), over the years they get to see and know many kitchen workplaces and other chefs.

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[3] The kind of restaurant within the scope of what was specified under "delimitations" in the introduction.

4.3.2 Interview guide

The first part of the interview guide contained general questions on personal background, and interviewees were asked to give a short summary of their chef careers. They were then asked about what the job is like, what chefs are like, the organisation of kitchen work, and labour mobility, respectively. For each of these topics they were first asked some open-ended questions which were then followed up with more specific ideas, perspectives and problems for interviewees to consider and discuss. In the second part of the interviews, issues of bullying, abuse, rough leadership styles and the likes were discussed. I started by asking about interviewees' own experiences. We then discussed possible explanations, such as tradition, personalities, and work conditions, and consequences, such as attitudes, labour mobility and coping behaviour. At this point interviews took various directions depending on interviewees' views and perceptions. Finally, I asked them about their knowledge of and experiences with the Swedish Work Environment Act; the Swedish Work Environment Authority; safety representatives; and the hotel- and restaurant union.

In some cases I added a few questions with regard to the focal interviewee. Thus, I asked the three teachers more about chef education; the older interviewees more about old times; and the one who had been a restauranteur for several years about the owner perspective of things.

4.3.3 Analysis

Related to the study's exploratory nature, the data analysis process, the presentation of results and analysis as well as the overall relationship between data and literature are somewhat unorthodox. Because so little is known about the frequency and nature of mistreatment among restaurant chefs in Sweden, the starting point of the inquiry had to be to ask interviewees of their experiences and perceptions of this from working in restaurant kitchens. Thus, this part of the inquiry primarily aimed at description. Second, from what I could find in the literature on different kind of workplace mistreatment and on the chef profession and its circumstances in general, I wanted to "test" hypotheses and possible explanations and significant factors that was identified. Of course "hypothesis testing" should not be understood in the sense of finding statistical support or rejection for a certain relationship between variables, but as an attempt to produce an initial, preliminary and *nuanced* account of such "relationships" (perhaps informing future quantitative inquiry). Third, much emphasis was put on encouraging interviewees to contemplate on various issues to come up with new ideas, issues and explanations to be scrutinised in subsequent interviews and analysis. Thus, the research approach contains deductive as well as inductive features. Furthermore, group culture theory is utilised as a theoretical tool to make sense of the data. Although group cultural aspects are something

interviewees are likely to be aware of, or at least can be made aware of, they are perhaps less likely to have given much thought on the background and reasons for them, why such phenomena to some extent needs to be interpreted and read between the lines.

The data analysis process did not follow any certain established formula, but like most qualitative analysis it contained coding, sorting, sifting and interpretation of data. The categorisation of the material into a number of "aspects" (described below) must not be misinterpreted as the result of a systematical (inductive) thematical analysis. Instead, the aspects reflect the process of preparatory reading and thinking for the study, and the resulting interview guide.

Shortly after each interview, I wrote a short summary of it, including my general impression and noting particularities as well as interesting things that had been discussed but was not in the interview guide. Later all interviews were transliterated, resulting in about 150 pages of written dialogue. The first step of analysis was to look into each interview in isolation. I read them through carefully, highlighting interesting dialogue, in order to get well acquainted with the semantic content, while looking for inconsistencies and other possible issues. I believe this familiarity with the material is important to keep in the back of mind for later stages of the analysis – when down to short quotes with little supporting context.

Next I began sorting the material by establishing a number of categories ("aspects") of content according to which the data material was coded[4]. As mentioned, most of the aspects were deducted from previous research and closely related to interview questions (although a few originated from interviewees' ideas). In the process of breaking down the data material into these categories I was also sifting it, as dialogue that could not be regarded as relevant to the research topic was left out. I then looked into each aspect in isolation, reviewing all designated data. I composed a summary of each aspect containing a description of interviewees' experiences and views on different topics as well as interesting ideas about how things may fit in with each other. In this process data was inevitably interpreted (and further sifted), as interview dialogue was transformed into my descriptions of it.

The final step was to try to "paint the bigger picture" with regards to the research questions. So after previously breaking the material into pieces and looking at the parts one by one, I now looked at how the aspects could fit together and inter-relate; relating it to the literature; and interpreting accounts in accordance with organisational culture theory. This phase may thus be described as an attempt to raise the analysis to a higher level of abstraction, in which data is interpreted, considered and reflected upon in contexts and meanings beyond the ones of the interviews and interviewees, respectively.

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[4] They became "chef culture", "personalities", "chef education", "alcohol", "labour mobility", "service", "bullying etc", "the head chef", "gender aspects", "history and other countries", "the sector" and employers", "the union", and "other".

This phase also included sifting of aspects, as I gradually narrowed the analysis to the topics I found most closely related to the research questions. It was also necessary to leave some aspects out of the scope of this paper due to spatial constraint[5].

As the reader will notice, I have chosen to present the result of the data analysis process in the form of what almost resembles a "narrative"; telling interviewees' "story" on what kitchen work is like, what chefs are like, the role and challenges of head chefs, why chefs switch jobs, how and why there may be shouting in the kitchen and who may be targeted – with the issue of bullying and abuse as the overarching theme, and with occupational culture as an underlying explanatory thesis. Gradually the narrative comes into dialogue with workplace bullying research. In the final chapter results are summarised and discussed, and the case is further contrasted with the workplace bullying literature.

4.4 Methodological problems

It should be emphasised that empiric based on interviews is in no way unproblematic or unbiased. Creswell (2007:140) lists several problems that are inherent to the interview situation, pertaining to, inter alia, asymmetrical power distribution between parties, distingu-ishing truth from authenticity, and the selectiveness of what interviewees chooses to share and not. A more general disadvantage of relying on interviews rather than to observe or experience the field first-hand is of course that you rely on participants' views and experiences without having anything to contrast them with but each other. Especially if the researcher has no experience from the focal field it may be found difficult to grasp research contexts and even subjects' language and jargon. On the other hand, being well-familiar with the field is associ-ated with preconceptions that will affect interpretations (Creswell 2007:231). Interviewing these chefs, I found my restaurant experience to be an advantage. Although never as a chef, I have spent several years working in restaurants, and have a good idea of what kitchen work consists of. I felt I gradually won the confidence of interviewees whenever I demonstrated this, for example by using trade-technical terms, arguably making them more inclined to share their experiences with me. For the sake of axiological transparency (Creswell 2007:18), the reader should know that my interest in the topic of aggression among chefs has its origin in episodes that I have witnessed working in restaurants. More importantly, I did not witness and interpret these episodes in a value neutral state of mind – but rather perceived them as generally unnecessary and morally undesirable. Over the years, however, I have seen enough kitchens

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[5] The most notable of the aspects that was not prioritised are "chef education", "alcohol", "the union" and "gender aspects". Thus, *sexual* harassment and similar phenomena are not problematised in this paper as I found this topic to be too extensive and multifaceted in order to be fitted in. It would better be dealt with in a separate paper.

and met enough chefs to learn to respect that some may differ from me in terms of views and attitudes, and that what may appear as mistreatment in kitchens is not necessarily perceived that way. My hope is that the experience and insight in restaurant kitchen culture that I bring to this research is neither too little to grasp the fundamentals and gain the confidence of interviewees, nor too much to keep the – as I see it – necessary perspective of the outside observer and analyst.

A concrete problem I struggled with at first was how to speak about "the issue of bullying and abuse". Because both these terms imply intentionality as well as perceived victimisation, and I knew this might not at all be the case with many of the behaviours I intended to discuss, they were ill-suited. This problem had to be solved already at the point where I contacted potential interviewees, as I then had to describe the purpose of the study. This resulted in me composing a few sentences which I used when contacting chefs, as well as in the consent-to-participate form interviewees signed ahead of interviews (see ethical issues below). It reads:

> "The purpose of the study is to explore the restaurant kitchen as a social work environment in general, but with a focus on presence of a rough jargon between chefs. Restaurant kitchens are often described as hierarchical workplaces, with a macho-culture, and where one is expected to cope with the tempo of a busy service as well as strict discipline. In scholarly research, as well as news articles and TV shows, the kitchen is often portrayed as a workplace where conflicts can thrive and where you can expect a tell-off if you make a mistake – not least if you are new or an apprentice. Even cases of threat and physical abuse are reported."

This meant that interviewees had a very concrete reference point when I referred to "the issue of..." later in the interviews. The framing of the interviews in this way was necessary as I had to be transparent regarding the purpose of the study. A minor problem was that interviewees kept this topic in mind even when I asked about unrelated things. An example of how this affected the frame of mind of the chefs can be seen below:

> I: What roles have you had, did you start as an apprentice somewhere? I-10: Yes we had that in school, back then you really were an apprentice, **and you got to take quite a lot of stick**. And then I've worked as a regular chef, and then I became sous chef when I was 21, but that was in ---. And now I've taken the step up to become head chef. (I-10)

The ten interviewees that make up the sample of this study all chose to participate. Others did not. This, of course, says something about them. Schein discusses problematics inherent to asking individuals about their group culture: "*The most obvious difficulty in gathering valid cultural data is the well known phenomenon that when human 'subjects' are involved in research, there is a tendency for the subjects either to resist and hide data that they feel defensive about or to exaggerate to impress the researcher or to get cathartic relief – 'finally someone is interested enough in us to listen to our story.'*" (Schein 2010:180) Thus, if chefs

have such a strong occupational identity, as I will argue, it could be expected from them to be a bit defensive and unwilling to speak bad of their group – obviously a potential problem considering the bullying- and abuse themes brought up by me in interviews. On the other hand, Fine (2008), interviewing American chefs, experienced the opposite, with interviewees being excessively critical toward their profession. They would, for example, suggest one must be "insane" to want to work as a chef; displaying role-distancing, "*[t]o defend themselves against the potentially critical eye of the researcher*" (Fine 2008:235). I could not see anything very obvious in either direction with these interviewees, but this is a plausible problem, important to keep in mind when results are considered and conclusions drawn.

As mentioned in the section above, one dimension of analysing the interviews was to look for inconsistencies. One such example is illustrated below, as I-8 is somewhat contradictory:

> (Early in the interview:) "I don't know how it looks with applicants to [upper secondary] school today...but I think those who apply today perhaps know a little better what the job is about, they probably want to work in upscale restaurants and are genuinely interested in cooking, I hope." (And later in the interview:) "It can be necessary to yell a little, I think of this generation that graduates today, they are a little like...I would say they are a little more lazy, like. It's...I don't know. It's rare to meet one of those coming straight from school that are actually super-ambitious."

My conclusion is not to give a lot of weight to what she says on this specific topic.

When reading the above quotes, the reader should note that all interview dialogue presented in this paper is translated from Swedish. Along the procedures of transliterating the audio-recorded interviews; excerpting quotes from the wider dialogue, thus inevitably losing some context; and translating from a language into another – it becomes increasingly problematic to do interviewees' thoughts justice. I have tried to be as consistent and conscientious as possible in these processes, but it is inevitable that authenticity is jeopardised, and some of it lost.

4.5 Ethical Issues

Bullying is a sensitive subject. As I made contact with potential interviewees, I was clear about the topic of my research. Before the interview, interviewees were asked to sign a consent-to-participate form, stating the purpose of the study and terms of the interview. I ensured participants to do all I can to de-identify them and any person or restaurant they mention. When transliterating, I erased any names of persons or restaurants mentioned. Interviewees were also informed they could choose to end the interview at any time. All interviewees chose to sign their informed consent and to participate.

5. Results and analysis

This chapter is rather extensive, why I have chosen to structure the text using multiple sections and headings, as well as restrospective summaries throughout. Hopefully this will facilitate the reader's navigation and make the rather lengthy presentation more perspicuous. For the most part, data discussed in this chapter is described in my words, but I have tried to use interviewees' own words whenever it is feasible. In these quotes I have indicated my own talk with "I" while interviewees has simply been named "I-1"-"I-10".

5.1 Chef culture

5.1.1 Kitchen work

Many of the symbolic, as well as concrete work practices that are encountered in Swedish kitchens today carry a long history and tradition. A thorough analysis of restaurant kitchen work organisation not being the purpose of this paper, I will settle with asserting that the main organisational aspects of restaurant kitchen work dates a long way back, have changed relatively little over the years and, thus, are thoroughly institutionalised in the industry and its professions. Hence, we would expect these fundamental organisational practices to be complemented with an equally fundamental organisational culture. Schein explains:

> "One of the most important and most invisible elements of an organizational culture are the shared basic assumptions about 'how things should be done, how the mission is to be achieved, and how goals are to be met.' […] And once processes have become taken for granted, they become the elements of the culture that may be the hardest to change." (Schein, 2010:80)

Service appears as the fundament of restaurant kitchen work. It refers to periods when there are customers in the restaurant. This is when it becomes hectic; when it is time to perform; when margins become small and errors need to be kept at a minimum; when production is finalised and evaluated; and, finally, when success or failure is determined. Service was also a central aspect of many discussions in the interviews. I-4 spells out the crass conditions:

> "[I]t has to happen here and now, with only one chance to get it right. Otherwise that guest might not come back. So you only have one chance to make the guest happy, and that's now."

Interviewees said that busy service requires a very "direct" way of communication. There is no room for chit-chatting or to "ask nicely" when giving orders; it is all about efficiency. I-10:

> "I: The rough jargon and not always being very polite, can it be that there because of the stress of the service isn't quite time to ask nicely, like? I-10: Exactly, I think the stress also, yes well it rationalises

certain things as well. That you don't have time to be very nice either, that you say...we say that when you work service you have to...it's a little different to working normally. When it's service, it has to be smooth, and I think, you don't have to yell at each other, but you have to be pretty straight. Of course you might curse a little, everybody probably does that. You have to be a little 'straighter' [...]"

Service time is also when most of "the shouting" takes place. The vast work related stress and pressure that builds up is mentally demanding, and if something goes wrong the frustration sometimes needs ventilation. I-4:

"It's about stress. Well say that one of your employees does something screwy, so to say, then you haven't perhaps got the time to take a thorough discussion there and then, that will have to wait until later. So instead it might be anything from a proper tell-off and 'fuck off' to simply shoving away someone, just get them out of the way, do away with the problem, or what you perceive to be the problem, like. I guess that happens on a daily basis in this trade. I'm not saying it's right."

Interviewees generally normalised such episodes and behaviour, however, as something that "all chefs" know happens sometimes, and that they understand and accept the reasons for it. It might get a little tense there and then but after service is done, there is nothing left of it: I-4:

"[…] So there may be a lot of harsh words uttered in the heat of the moment, but usually, when you have a beer after work or when cleaning afterwards, it's forgotten. You understand, at least if you have been around for a while; 'ok, I screwed up there and received a comment on that or in some way.'"

A few interviewees, however, thought that yelling and harsh tell-offs sometimes lead to the building up of conflicts if not handled properly, and suggest that a good leader will bring it up afterwards and explain what went wrong and apologise if he or she went over the line: I-7:

"[…] But I think you should always have those conversations, so that it doesn't just float away. Then it can build up into something huge."

Clearly the head chef has an integral role in this. Most of the interviewees had experienced working in "the pass" as the *expediter* during service, which means being the one that commands the work, keeps track of all the orders, and is held responsible for production. They recognised that the various pressures this situation often gives rise to can become quite significant and difficult to manage, and that this might bring forth one's uglier sides. I-2:

"I was the sous chef at ---, and when the head chef was away I was in charge of the whole kitchen, it's about 270 seats [in the restaurant], and of course, it was a great weight to carry, definitely. Or primarily it meant a hell of a lot of hours. 16 hours a day, like. Tiredness coupled with stress, of course that's an environment that would bring forth perhaps...or at least easier to bring forth one's uglier sides because you are very stressed, you're very influenced by...you really want to perform."

The above quotes lead us on to the complex position of head chefs, which is something that really sticks out as an issue when the interviews are summed up. Interviewees had a vast experience of leading positions in kitchens, and they shared some of their experiences and

perceptions with me. Overall, the role of the head chef is described as challenging. They are (usually) in charge of, inter alia: hiring and educating staff and of staff policies and management; composing the food menu and making sure it is properly implemented in operations; making sure the kitchen is safe in terms of physical, chemical and microbiological risks, and food hygiene- and storage routines etcetera (Visita, 2014) and; neither last nor least, making sure output (quality and consistency of the dishes that are served) is good enough while input (staff and material cost) is kept within balance. Add to the equation that most head chefs arguably have a strong personal ambition (as we will see) to produce as good food as possible, which does not necessarily comply with optimal business strategy. Several interviewees seemed to think that there are norms and standards in the business regarding what is expected from the head chef that simply add up to them being overburdened and even exploited. Thus, they often end up working some 200-300 hours a month (while often paid for normal hours on a monthly basis), because they are desperate to make things work, because of loyalty and personal prestige. I-4 explains:

> "[...] And the way the business is today you're still supposed to be in the kitchen and lead the work there, but you also have to keep up with all the meeting- and office time, and distributor-contact time. And this I think there's no strategy for, and then you end up working horribly much all of a sudden. And then it's included in your work as a head chef, even though your contract doesn't say so; that you should 'manage' the job. So you get paid for that, but then how many the hours become is your own problem, so to say, and that's not sustainable of course."

What is more is that head chefs rarely receives any (formal) educational preparation. They are typically talented cooks (this is generally why they are promoted), and have usually previously performed some managerial tasks as sous chefs, but they often lack the knowledge or experience to handle some of the challanges they face when they become head chefs, and will have to learn as they go. I-1:

> "I: Are these head chef courses [formal education] common? Is it a large proportion of head chef that has taken them? I-1: No, it's a very small proportion. This is a big problem; that today in almost every restaurant, there's competent cooks that become head chefs. They have never gotten to learn anything about staff responsibilities, budget, writing menus, most of them can't even handle an excel sheet, like, you have to learn that yourself. But you're employed as a manager, with staff responsibilities and you're supposed to put up goals and that sort of things, and you have no clue how to do those things. So you'll have to learn it yourself, and that's why everyone have their own ways of doing things. Inventory is another one of these strange things that everybody have their own ways of doing."

5.1.2 The chef

Chefs' personalities are being described by interviewees with a number of characteristics. Some of these are associated with certain aspects of the profession. They may be interpreted as

mechanisms that shape the chef population, either through "self selection" *into* the profession, or via character formation *within* it. I will illustrate what I mean with a number of examples below.

Passion. In general, interviewees stress that there are significant negative aspects to the job, and that in order to outweigh these, a chef has to take pleasure and satisfaction in providing service to people and making others enjoy themselves. I-5:

> "[T]he satisfaction of others enjoying themselves, others' well-being. So you have to like people in order to do this [work as a chef]." More generally; I-8: "I think you have to have some kind of passion for this job to be able to work in it in the long run."

Collegial loyalty. The joint effect of the conditions that chefs work in spatially very constrained areas, integrated in cooperation with the other chefs (and thus mutually dependent on each other's performance); often work long hours in the same team of people; and that during sevice the work often becomes stressful, with only small margins between success and failure – fosters a loyalty amongst chefs. You do things properly because you know your performance has a very direct and visible effect; or you do not call in sick because you know it will give your colleagues a hard time that night. Interviewees speak about this collegial loyalty as an integral part of chef culture- and norms, which means it is further strengthened if people come to value it for its own sake. Thus, for example, one does one's *mise en place*[6] properly not only for the sake of the person dependent on it the day after, but also because other chefs would notice and disapprove if you put your colleague in a mess; it is 'not the way chefs go about things'. As I will continue to demonstrate, such norms stem from the "objective"[7] conditions of kitchen work, and will influence chefs in two ways; through group pressure and through internalisation of behaviours thought of as constitutive of "proper" or "real" chefs. I-9 illustrates the loyalty norm and how it might function:

> "[...] That there's an enormous loyalty. You don't leave until you're done. You don't leave shit to someone else, you just don't […] I: Who is one loyal to? I-9: To your colleagues, to some kind of occupational pride, it's something you leave after yourself. And if someone is distinguished as an asshole that never makes a good delivery [when one chef takes over for another] then of course that person becomes...not ostracised but, a little, because it's so obvious. Usually there's not too many chefs in a kitchen, so it becomes very obvious, you can't just leave things. It's not like it will show up in a month from now."

At first glance, filling in for a sick colleague, for example, could be interpreted as an act of loyalty towards the organisation itself. According to I-9, however, this is dillusive[8]:

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[6] "Putting in place", that is, preparational work.

[7] Not to say unchangeable.

[8] Other interviewees also speak of loyalty towards the head chef, and sometimes towards an (typically a visible and often present) owner.

"I: If someone gets ill, and someone else comes in to cover, which seems kind of 'without doubt' for chefs, do they do that for the sake of the employer... I-9: No. I: Or for the other... I-9: Yes. Also because there's some kind of status thing among chefs, that you're supposed to do that. It's probably very rarely for the sake of the company."

Organisational loyalty, in this sense of observed patterned behaviour, could here be thought of as what Schein (2010) refers to as the "artifacts" of a group culture; *"easy to observe and very difficult to decipher"* (Schein, 2010:24). I-7, speaking of her partner, sheds some light on the particularities of chef culture, how it may come about, and how it can conflict with someone who does not understand that culture:

"[…] And then it's perhaps negative in the way that he doesn't quite understand what I'm talking about [when she speaks of work]. He doesn't quite get what it means when someone is sick, or when someone doesn't show up for work. Because where he works it doesn't matter if someone is absent, or if he is. Someone else at some other department is going to do his job in that case anyway. And he will probably never quite understand it when I'm going out for a beer after work, because I'm so damn tired. Then he says that 'come home and get some sleep instead, if you're tired', but it's two completely different worlds."

Pride. Staying with the loyalty theme, it also seems like many chefs take relatively great personal pride and feel responsible for the (prestigious) success of the restaurant they work for. Again, I think this comes down to the conditions of the profession; the fact that as a chef you are very closely involved with the product by which the restaurant to a great extent is evaluated upon, in combination with the instant and honest feedback that is often received from the consumer. The external evaluation and reputation of the focal restaurant (customer and critics' reviews, awards etc.) become synonymous with the chefs' reputation, which provide rational incentives for chefs to do their best for the sake of their professional pride and success. This professional pride among chefs is something that several interviewees underscore, and certainly invovled in many processes, aspects and tendencies of the job. Loyalty is one of the ways in which pride (and/or sacrificing for the sake of one's own success) is demonstrated: loyalty as covering for your absent colleague; loyalty as working a few extra hours when needed; loyalty as rolling your sleeves up and suppress feelings of hunger, exhaustion or illness rather than calling in sick or complaining over exessive work load or the absence of breaks or time to rest. I will elaborate on a few of these latter remarks below.

Endurance. Interviewees witness that good work ethics and endurance is something they believe the job teaches, if not demands from, the chef. It is also an important ingredient of chefs' self image; they are a kind of people that are not afraid to dig in, work hard and "suck it up": I-3:

> "[…] I don't know if macho is the right word, because there's a soft side of macho as well. You expect from yourself to cope with a lot, and you're quite thick-skinned, like. I: In a physical way as well, you cut and burn yourself and such? I-3: Exactly, you're expected to cope with that, and if you don't you are told rather instantly that, 'you can't stand here and 'mill about', you need to knuckle down and endure', like, that's how it is, 'there's no other way to grill those vegetables'."

When putting this kind of "pressure" or expectation on oneself and one's own performance and attitude (hard work, carry out tasks with pride and concern for quality, loyalty towards the group, etc.), it is reasonable to presume chefs expect the same from their colleagues. Interviewees describe this as well established norms and that it is even common that chefs "brag" about how hard they work or how much they put up with: I-9:

> "[…] And then that old mentality still exists, it's like 'wimpish if you don't work like twentyfour seven . Didn't you have like 300 hours last month?'. There's like an embedded thing that says you need to do that in order to be a good chef. That thing."

Closely related to a strong work ethic is an attitude that one should not "whine" or "cry" over having to work long hours, without breaks or time to eat, or the like; it just does not befit a proper chef. I-6:

> "[…] And that's hard as well in this business...like, complain is something you don't do too much. Either you leave or you stick around and shut up."

Group culture norms saying chefs should endure rough circumstances without complaints submit as well to later discussion in this paper on abusive behaviour and leadership styles. They also seem to submit to chefs' attitudes towards the union. I-9:

> "I: Have you seen someone being a member of the union and involving them in some way? I-9: It's almost a little derogatory, people like 'oh, they called the union', like, 'boo hoo, only because they worked like three double-shifts'."

Ambition. A common theme in the interviews was the idea that it is fundamental for a chef to have the right ambition and "drive". There are several aspects to this. Certainly, in order to succeed in the most competitive part of the profession, a genuine interest and ambition is a virtue. As in other competitive contexts, dedicated people are ready to do what it takes to reach their goals. I-9:

> "It's like an obsession, a passion, an absolute... Gourmet cooking can be compared with sport stars in any sport, it's a total obsession. Something you dedicate your whole life to, to become better."

But even though one interviewee suggested that "all" aspiring chefs dream of becoming a michelin star-rewarded head chef or of opening their own restaurant one day, it is probably safe to say most of them never actually pursue such aspirations in practice. Judging by interviewees' experiences, however, many restaurant chefs are nevertheless quite ambitious.

Thus, they would not want to work at just any restaurant – it is important what kind of food they get to cook, and how well reputed- and renowned the restaurant is. What is more is that it is expected among (ambitious) chefs that you get yourself a new job every 1-2 years (to be discussed in more detail later) in order to develop your repertoir. I-7:

> "I: Are chefs picky over what places they can consider working in? I-7: Yes, very picky. I: How well-reputed the restaurant is for its food, is that important? I-7: It's very important, yes of course. You want people to say 'oh, god, I love that place', you just want that. It almost becomes a little addiction, you go to instagram and see what photos people upload, hash-tagging the restaurant and such […]. [I]t's very important to take pride in your work, or you probably shouldn't do it at all.

Again, this seems to be an attitude integrated in chef culture and, thus, ambition is encouraged and respected, while indifference or lack of aspriation is somewhat looked down upon. I-5 illustrates the latter:

> "Those who stay at the same place year after year...you start to wonder if they're a bit 'comfortable', if they never switch jobs."

Jargon. The chef jargon seems to be another aspect of chef culture, where the long hours and tight teamwork make the group well familiar and bonded with each other, which enables an open, outright and free-spoken way of communicating. Interviewees are aware the tone and content of this talk would sometimes chock an uninitiated outsider but, as I-1 explains below, things get said that no-one necessarily mean or stand for:

> "[…] But yes there's definitely a jargon that is pretty rough, like, it's a lot of cursing that wouldn't be accepted in other contexts, really. But it's completely fine to say these things in the kitchen, like. And it's not necessarily so that the chef in question stands by these things, it's more the way the jargon has become. There are kitchens where people definitely aren't racists, for example, but yet they can utter very racist things. […] And there's a lot of degrading talk about women, especially when there's no women around."

Interviewees also say there can be some raw and personal jokes, but that it is usually no harm intended and rather a "give-and-take" kind of humour that is appreciated by most, and overall that the kitchen jargon is often amusing and a way of bonding and having fun at work.

5.1.3 Summary

Summing up what has been discussed so far, many features of chef culture are obviously associated with conditions of the work and structures they give rise to. Thus, I have suggested that the cooperative and integrated system of production, the small margins between achievement and failure, and the instant and critical feedback, fosters personal engagement with the product and its quality, and a dependency of all on one, and one on all, which in turn nurture a strong professional pride as well as loyalty between chefs. Restaurant cook-

ing is carried out under rough circumstances; it is typically hot, noicy, heavy, and you stand up all day. Furthermore, though hardly given "by nature", chefs seem to have always been condemned to many and long work days, often a little overburdened with work due to constant understaffing, and under the captaincy of hot-tempered and uncompromising head chefs. To cope, norms are formed to *adapt:* Norms that celebrate the strong, macho chef, able to cope with and endure whatever is required – whether it is 16 hours of work without a break, or it is the head chef screaming "you are an idiot" when you overfry the fish on hour 15 – helps to do just that; to endure, and offer some consolation and even motivation to keep doing it. Furthermore, it is suggested that head chefs in at least some restaurants are imposed with an abundance of tasks, responsibilities and obligations; are systematically under-educated and underpaid given their function and workload; while being torn between multiple loyalties. This is naturally likely to cause significant stress which in turn increases the likelihood of the head chef to retreat to negative managerial practices (Mathisen, 2011) or misplaced aggression (Neuman & Baron, 2003). Considering the complexities and special circumstances of service, and the pressure shouldered by the head chef when leading the work there, it would be surprising if this did not frequently amount to bad management. The knowledge and strategies to perform under and to cope with these circumstances are primarily passed on from generation to generation (as will be discussed below), as chefs watch and learn from their head chefs on the job. The informal character of head chef training is likely to add stability to kitchen culture and, thus, to impede change in historically contingent work practices – and to norms, attitudes and beliefs (i.e. the culture of chefs, as well as employers) associated with them.

5.2 Labour mobility

5.2.1 Within industry mobility

There are numerous logical reasons as to why chefs switch jobs within the industry, so any quantitative measure is problematic to compare with other occupations: Quite a few jobs are seasonal; because cooking is international, chefs find it easy to get a job if they want to travel abroad or move around; chefs are a relatively young group of workers, and often have less of a need of steady, secure employment conditions; etcetera. A second set of common reasons to switch workplace brought up by interviewees relates to conditions of the job you quit. Thus, the "chemistry" between workers might not be right; one might by unsatisfied with restaurant management, the organisation as such or certain members of the staff; there might be too much or too little work (depending on popularity or the business cycle of the restaurant); or employ-

ers may fail to pay salaries on agreed-upon dates. The most commonly stated reason, however, has to do with occupational norms saying chefs should move around to learn new and different things to improve their repertoire. It is generally thought that chefs become bored after working in one place for a couple of years, as they run out of new things to learn, and that it is then time to move on. I-5:

> "It's like, how can I put it, custom in the occupation that [you stay] 1-2 years in one place and then you move on […]"; I-4: "[…] you work one year or maybe two maximum, then you change."

Interviewees suggest this is more or less an institutionalised "policy" within the trade, and employers as well as employees have long since come to expect, and adjust to, constant staff turnover. This entails an acceptance to switch jobs (interviewees say it rarely provokes any "hard feelings") that facilitates turnover – as does the labour mobility itself; because chefs persistently quit and look for something new, vacancies correspondingly open. Accordingly, interviewees agree that as experienced chefs, it has never been the slightest challange to find new employment.

There is currently a shortage of chefs in Sweden (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015). According to interviewees, however, the shortage might not apply generally, since it probably does not concern the "cream" of restaurants. These gourmet venues attract the most ambitious chefs and apprentices and can choose from an abundance of candidates, according to interviewees. They are also known to be the worst employers in terms of employment conditions (including salaries), legislation abidance and treatment of staff in general. I-2 puts his finger on a common attitude that relates to what has been previously discussed about ambitious chefs being picky over where to work:

> "I: They say there's a shortage of chefs, so maybe it's the employees' market? I-2: Yes probably, but then there's the money issue as well, along with what you want to do. I mean a chef wants to work at a certain level, they don't want to be going backwards, so there are less places to choose from of course."

5.2.2 Between industry mobility

The main reasons why chefs leave the business *altogether* are, according to interviewees, working hours, salary, work related stress, physical weariness, low occupational prestige, or that they always saw it as a temporary occupation with other plans in mind for the future. These reasons are rather general and self-explanatory. They probably also reflects, roughly, the general public's image of the working conditions of the trade. Thus it is plausible to assume these are factors that aspiring chefs are more or less aware of as they enter preparational education or apply for a job as a chef. The question is, then, how common it is that aspiring chefs, determined to become chefs and make a career in the restaurant business, change their

minds along the way. And, of course, why? Interviewees suggested some aspiring chefs have a skewed image of the actual content of chef work, especially for novice chefs (often simple and monotone tasks), and are discouraged when they get confronted with reality. Others thought the high tempo and work related stress is difficult for some to handle. And as discussed above, facing the social and cultural aspects of the job may be challenging for newcomers that are not yet (at all or fully) socialised into kitchen jargon, attitudes, mentality, etcetera. I-4 sums it up:

> "I: Why do you think those who drop out of the occupation at an early stage does that? I-4: Working hours, that's very common. Salary. But also perhaps jargon and mentality in the trade, it's stressful and so on, so maybe stress endurance, things like that. It's a particular trade, and it doesn't suit everybody, I guess it's as simple as that. And then maybe media portrays it in ways that are not true; you stand there on television and look good, like, and do something (haha). But that's not the job, that's not what it entails. The job is to clean and peel things (haha)."

Another question is why established chefs, who know all to well what the job implies, leave the profession. The obvious answer here, interviewees reckon, is that working hours are ill suited to family life, so when chefs get to the point in life where they start a family, they may find it difficult to continue working nights and weekends. Overall, though, an attitude seems to exist among these chefs that you cannot really be a restaurant chef in the long run. Not only because it is thought to wear you down physically, but as well a sense of "how would that look?". Perhaps this relates to aspects of chef culture previously discussed; the normative self-image of the hard-working chef – capable of working a little harder and endure a little more than most others – could be difficult to sustain with age. Or perhaps as years go by, it becomes increasingly challenging to find good reasons to continue to dedicate yourself to work, and especially if you do not feel you are being rewarded and compensated for it. I-8:

> "[…] you don't want to to work your whole life [as a cook], it's heavy physically and stressful, like. I: Do you think like that, that it's something you can't go on with in the long run? I-8: You can't stand there at 65 like, where am I then going to work? That would have to be some kind of...I don't know, it's difficult to say.";

> I-5: "I: What made you quit as chef and become a [chef] teacher? I-5: It had to do with the last restaurant job I had, I worked 15-16 hours a day, 6 days a week, and I felt it was becoming untenable. Had to consider who I wanted to be married to, the wife or the company, and then it wasn't hard to choose. […] Some think it's a little cool, a little 'creddy' to work 15-16 hours a day without eating. But I think that probably surpasses with age. When you get a little older you realise that you don't work any better just because you're working the shit out of yourself. It's better to try to take the time for a break once in a while."

All three interviewees that had switched over to teaching had experienced head chef jobs that became untenable. Like I-5 above, it made I-4 quit the restaurant sector. Below he explains why and discusses why some head chefs put up with a lot:

"[…] And then at the time when I switched business, I had come to a point where I felt I was emplyed as a head chef, but it wasn't recognisable on my paycheck, nor really in what I did, work-wise. I was head chef, and chef and sous chef [at the same time]. It was always just more work, but I didn't receive more [pay] than anywhere else. […] I: That some put up with this, is that because they've heard that's how it is everywhere? I-4: Yes, and if you're young, if you're 25 you don't know any better, it's been like that everywhere you've worked. […] You want to take the chance, you get a little better paid as a head chef of course, you get to write your own menu and to self-fulfil yourself (haha), so to speak. Of course you take the chance. But in the long run, it's not a good solution, of course."

5.2.3 Summary

The high labour mobility within and across the chef occupation is to a large extent due to factors that can't be done much about; working hours, physical demands, the fact that restaurants specialises so that chefs need to move around after a while to learn new things, etcetera. Chef norms reinforcing internal labour mobility has the effect that it is easy to find a new job, which surely itself causes some chefs to move around for no particular reason. But the fact that there is always another job around the corner can also function to "conceal" cases of mistreatment or hinder the discovery and solution of a bad situation, since mistreated employees are less incited to stay and try to change things when another job can be obtained rather easily. In that sense, those responsible for the mistreatment are likely to get away with it. The interviews suggest that the industry might fail to retain some highly experienced staff because of unreasonable expectations of those in head chef positions. Because of ambition, loyalty, and passion, described above, it could be that many of them accept untenable employment conditions and do what it takes – and manage for a while. The question is how common it is that chefs either work themselves out or get fed up with the situation, and quit – like some of the chefs interviewed for this paper did.

5.3 Bullying and abuse

5.3.1 Anecdotes

For reasons explained in the method section, "bullying" was not a term that was used much in interviews. The issue of certain kitchen behaviour that I presented in the interview introduction (see method chapter), however, was definitely something all the interviewees recognised. Featuring in anecdotes and cuffers as well as self-experienced episodes, the general perception was that it is more a thing of the past and more common in other countries. The younger of the interviewees commonly referred to specific restaurants, restauranteurs and/or head chefs with a reputation of mistreating staff. For example, I-9:

"[…] Now, I'm not going to mention any names of restauranteurs, but I mean there are a few of them...everyone you know that have worked for them are witnessing about maybe not physical abuse, but verbal, absolutely. And the punishment thing, like 'do that over again!' and 'you have to work three days [and nights] in a row!', really like hazing ['pennalism']. And this I think definitely is true […] or at least have been."

As for chefs telling stories of what they have experienced, interviewees say this is very common. Several note, however, that some of these stories are likely to be exaggerated. I-1:

"Everybody have their stories, and it's often that people have stories that are supposed to outdo others' stories, and many exaggerate as well. So what really is true in these stories you can't know. I think that many [chefs] exaggerate."; I-9: "I: […] Is that a discussion you recognise? I-9: Yes. But unfortunately more in a braggy way. With people describing like what a beating they got."

These quotes suggest chefs may use stories to reinforce their own chef identity: As previously discussed, a self-image of being a kind of people that can endure rough circumstances without complaints seems to be a fundamental aspect of chef culture. It would appear as coherent if this norm of endurance applies to abusive behaviour from superordinates or other colleagues (and other forms of *psychical* hardship) as well as long and hard hours of work (and other forms of *physical* hardship). As we will see, pointing out what you endured as a chef could also be a way of legitimising your own behaviour as a head chef.

5.3.2 Management style

The majority of the discussion regarding various forms of abuse pertained to kitchen leadership philosophy in general, and head chef behaviour in particular. Now, because "abuse" implies that a line has been crossed as to what is acceptable, it is a problematic term to use in this context, as some of what was described and discussed was not necessarily considered wrong or inappropriate, but rather as normal, natural or even necessary. Regardless of normative judgements, however, interviewees thoughts on kitchen managerial practices may be generalised into a pair of ideal types: (1) the "authoritative" leadership style (often illustrated by interviewees with Gordon Ramsay[9]), characterised by emphasis on hierarchy, discipline and a "make-no-friends"-attitude; and (2) the "pedagogical" leadership style, a softer, more humane philosophy rather sweepingly described by interviewees as "more pedagogic". The authoritative style is considered to stem from traditional kitchen work conditions in Sweden and abroad, and to be successively receding in favour of the pedagogical. To the extent it is being practiced today, it is thought to be more common in the high-end restaurant context.

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[9] Celebrity chef often seen shouting and yelling at subordinates in various tv shows. See Nilsson (2013) for an discussion on this particular topic.

Interviewees asserted they neither practice nor believe in authoritative leadership, because they do not think it does any good to yell at people. I-6:

> "[…] because I've seen that the result on the plate doesn't improve by you [the head chef] yelling [at subordinates]."

Regardless, it is obvious that it exists as an alternative; it is there as something head chefs, like it or not, have to relate to. Hence, I-9 implies there is a downside to the soft, pedagogic management style – a trade-off, a price to pay:

> "I: You have yourself worked as souschef and head chef. You told me before about what it's like to be young and new, did that affect your leadership later on? Was that something you thought of? I-9: Well...yes, absolutely. But it's perhaps not only that, but rather what you're like as a person. Unfortunately maybe too much sometimes, that I've been too keen to make sure people are satisfied, and that I perhaps am a little bit too weak in my leadership sometimes, that I find it hard to really 'put my foot down'. But of course I think about it. I've never yelled at someone that way."

This quote also puts the finger on the earlier discussion on the ambiguous head chef-role and its multiple loyalties; are head chefs' ultimate task to keep employees happy and satisfied, to produce as high quality products as possible, or to maximise profits? Digging a little deeper into the pros and cons of different leadership philosophies, some interviewees recognised the necessity to sometimes teach inexperienced chefs the virtues of some fundamental discipline, like being on time for work. And as previously discussed, a busy service is generally considered to require certain mentality and communication, which in turn may entail "grey area" behaviour. One interviewee indeed distinguished herself from the other by advocating a relatively authoritative leadership style. I-7:

> "There have to be people that give resolute orders on how things should be done, or it will become too much of a group of friends cooking some food together. I mean this is a workplace. […] I: What happens then [when discipline is low], are people coming in late, taking breaks, or...? I-7: Not so much being late, but taking breaks and doing what they feel like, and answering back. They get too big egos, and take liberties."

Even though few interviewees identified themselves with it, again, they were all very familiar with the authoritative leadership style, and head chefs that exercise it. Most of them had been subjected to such practices, especially in their earliest chef years. I-6 provides a few examples:

> "I remember a work trial, within the --- group, when I was twenty, and I went into the dressing room and the head chef came and turned the light of, closed the door, and locked. Just like that. And I was standing in there, extremely nervous. That thing I remember, because it felt so damn humiliating in some way. I: And that was it? I-6: Yes, and then after a while he opened up. He didn't say anything, it was more of a test, like. But that is just sick I think. And then I've experienced...people coming over and throwing away something you've done because...'what the hell is this!?', like. And thrown it in the bin. Like, 'you cut this like a fucking three-yearold, do it over!'"

These incidents seem to be about cynical head chefs setting a subordinate up for a "character test" and/or demonstrating their own power. More typically, though, incidents seem to pertain to *service*, as chefs that fail to obey orders or to perform what is expected are punished by a disappointed superordinate. I-8:

> "But I have of course been there when people have received...it's a lot like that under pressure, people find it harder to pick their words, so it's a lot of 'are you a damn idiot?', that sort of stuff that you wouldn't perhaps say in other workplaces. And there are people throwing things."

Being the "traditional" way of running a kitchen, interviewees agree that contemporary head chefs that stick to the authoritative leadership style are products of history. Accordingly, attitudes are reproduced through the passing on from generation to generation. Two mechanisms are implied for this process; either that chefs consciously adopt a managerial style they have been subjected to, learnt the content of, and found to be good; or that they, on a more subconscious level, are shaped by "early" experiences and have an (more or less conscious) urge to revenge themselves by treating others like they were once treated. I-9:

> "I: Why do you think it happens anyway? I-9: Old habits, 'I was raised that way, I became a good chef, look at me', stress, frustration, shout a little – a good way for that person to be relieved of its frustration. Not having time to explain, because you're always, always, always stressed up. And maybe a way of positioning oneself towards subordinates, like 'don't mess with me'. Respect for 'the master'."; I-6: "[...] the way it used to be, rough jargon, that they like that. They are educated that way themselves. I think that is still there, that many people think that's a little bit cool. I: Do you think some chefs believe in that [authoritative] kind of leadership because they reckon it did them good when they were young? I-6: Yes. And they fail to see that people are different. Not many are good at reading people either, or to see nuances. They go on until someone breaks. Some think that [style] is still necessary for things to work, so they keep doing it."

Furthermore, it is thought that many head chefs lack leadership skills since few have relevant education, and because employers are thought to look at cooking skills rather than social skills when they promote chefs into management positions (cf. Guyette, 1981; Pratten, 2003).

Chef culture normative attitudes appreciating and respecting endurance, then, might work both ways: Head chefs may give subordinates a hard time because they expect them to be able to handle it (expecting them to prove to be "proper" chefs, that is), and the chefs expect themselves to cope and endure (thus reinforcing their self-image of "proper" chefs, that is). In return they are rewarded with the head chef's respect and appreciation, having manifested the proper personal skills and attitude. This is a simplified, ideal typical picture, of course, and presumes that all involved are fully socialised into an identical occupational culture, which is often not the case.

5.3.3 Novice chefs

Being a novice in the restaurant kitchen, whether as a trainee or employee, is something that every chef have experienced. Some interviewees recall the anxiety they used to feel. I-1:

> "[T]he first five years it's really tough to come to a new place, like really tough. Many lie awake at night with great anxiety. […] It's a lot that you think you won't manage the job. That you think that, 'shit, i can't keep up, I can't see how this will work, we have so many guests and so much to do', and you can't really see how you're supposed to get by."

According to I-6, a crucial factor behind successful socialisation is how well the novice chef manages the practical side of work, because they are usually thrown into work rather instantly, with little time to watch and learn:

> "It's pretty tough, it really is. You are judged not so much on a personal level, it's more how good you are at what you do. And if you come to a new workplace and do a great job, right from the start, and there are no problems – when people know what they're doing and put in a good effort, then they are usually just fine. Then you don't need to much social skills, you'll be accepted anyway. People get irritated if you can't keep up, then it can become... And then usually, in more up-scale restaurants, it's tougher. Rougher jargon, and it's more vital that everything you produce is really good. And maybe there's more time pressure. So it's pretty tough for many to come in like that. And at those venues it can be very...well very bad attitude towards people in general."

As will be discussed below, novice chefs may be in a sensitive position if they are not properly trained and prepared to manage the tempo and tasks of restaurant kitchen work.

5.3.4 Bullying

As in most occupations and workplaces, presumably, some interviewees had witnessed what they referred to as "bullying" in restaurant kitchens. These interviewees perceived that some factors may increase the risk of chefs being victimised. In general, not quite "fitting in" is a potential problem. This notion of fitting in, however, does not emphasise the "social" aspects of the personality as much as the "practical" ones. Thus, if chefs make the impression of not having the "right" attitude, work ethic or practical competence – and don't seem willing or able to adjust or improve on such points – then they are more likely to get "punished" by the group. I-6:

> "Yes maybe, there have been people leaving one day to never come back, and you never heard from them again. And that I guess have had to do with...it might have been a little systematic, that people have been picking on this person. But it's nothing...hard to put a finger on too. But I think if you don't quite manage the job, like, then it will be tough for you."

In workplace bullying literature, when a group singles out an individual to blame its problems upon, it is called "scapegoating" (Thylefors, 1999). It is plausible that the restaurant kitchen –

where production and result is deeply integrated and dependent upon the parts that make up the group, and where feedback is instant and subject to a strong and normative occupational pride – constitutes a work context with an above average risk of scapegoating to occur. I-10 illustrates how a minor issue can escalate in excess:

> "[…] Well if the boss says it first then you can talk trash behind that person's back and such, but... and he gets the tell-off as well for a mistake he made, but that is usually not such a big deal, but then that can be built upon, like, you might think everything that guy does is wrong. You have that guy to blame, like."

Particularly novice chef, then – lacking necessary skills and experience to perform work tasks – would face an increased risk of scapegoating. In addition, victims of scapegoating are typically norm violators (Thylefors, 1999), and as we have seen that chef culture seems to feature some strong norms, it is quite feasible that novice chefs, not yet socialised into the occupational culture, easily would happen to violate some group norm, given their natural lack of knowledge of them.

Scapegoating would resemble an explanation for bullying on the level of the *individual*. Another one would be what some interviewees remarked on chefs being mistreated in the beginning of their careers and later would take that out on the next generation, as a sort of revenge. A *socially* oriented explanation of similar behaviour could point to the potentially frustrating situation head chefs sometimes find themselves in with regards to demands from their employer, and suggest that mistreatment of subordinates is a case of misplaced aggression (cf. Neuman & Baron, 2003). What we have seen, however, suggests that in all of these cases it is ultimately *contextual* factors that work to enable, motivate, reinforce, prohibit, prevent or restrain various social phenomena leading to potential bullying situations in restaurant kitchens. Contextual factors that might be of systematical significance to kitchen bullying would be, for example, the elevated level of stress (Mathisen, 2011) associated with *service*; noicy and warm work environments (Anderson et al. 1996); cooperative work practices (Svensson, 2010); the exposed situation novice chefs may find themselves in when thrown straight into the thick of action; and the unreasonable work conditions some head chefs may be structurally assigned to. Accordingly, it may be suggested that contextual/organisational conditions and cultures connected to them is the correct level of analysis when issues of bullying and abuse in restaurant kitchens are concerned.

As indicated above, workplace bullying research may provide fruitful imput with regards to bullying antecedents and explanations. It seems uncertain, however, if the bullying concept, as defined in scholarly research as well as used in everyday language, is best applicable when describing and explaining the various restaurant kitchen practices and behaviours of interest to

this paper. As understood in workplace bullying literature, bullying implies that one or several individuals are singled out and subjected to certain acts or behaviours (Einarsen et al, 2003b). When "grey area" behaviour is systematically used by a head chef as part of a leadership philosophy, subordinates may come to expect certain treatment depending on the situation and their hierarchical position/function in the kitchen workplace. If perceived like this, such behaviour may be conceived of as a sort of justice. Thus, if the one on the receiving end of negative behaviour does not perceive it as "personal", but rather as something inherent to the job and one's own position in it, then it is possible that many negative consequences generally associated with such negative behaviour will not come about. And rather than feeling singled out and stigmatised, one might find togetherness in shared experiences with colleagues in the same situation. Furthermore, workplace bullying, as conseptualised in the literature, refers to processes of some duration over time, and involving conflicts that typically tend to gradually escalate and intensify. In this sense, the high labour mobility among chefs may be a circumstance that distinguishes chefs from other occupations with regard to workplace bullying. As previously discussed, chef culture seems to entail norms that work to accept and even promote labour mobility between employers, which in turn constantly opens up vacancies and facilitates further mobility. Given these characteristics of the occupation, it could be that chefs, more than other occupational groups, tend to switch jobs when subjected to negative behaviour, with the effect that processes oftentimes do not evolve into "proper" bullying. Again, these might be acts and lines of behaviour consistent with the bullying concept, but where consequences because of contextual factors differ compared to what is analytically expected.

Is has also been indicated that many established chefs think the threshold is, and should be, set highly as to what a chef should expect and be able to manage regarding kitchen discipline, authority, leadership practices, jargon, personal jokes, etc. This discussion explicates what was mentioned in a previous section of the paper; the threats to quantitative measurement of occurrance of bullying among chefs, due to unreliable indicators, since self-reporting is bound to under-estimate – while "objective" indicators (e.g. "have you been yelled at in the last week?") is bound to over-estimate – occurances of bullying/abuse, or at least to cause erroneous conclusions. In this regard, the Swedish case does not seem to differ significantly from foreign research (cf. Bloisi & Hoel, 2008).

If chefs generally do not perceive to be offended or hurt by certain common restaurant kitchen practices, can such practices nevertheless be regarded as undesired? The causal chain of consequences of an action is complex to account for and even more problematic to predict. Mathisen et al. (2008) found that Norwegian restaurant workers that were subjected to negative "bullying" *acts* (objective indicators) but did not perceive to have been subjected to

bullying (subjective indicator) were less satisfied with their job and less commited. I have taken another example of hidden or latent negative effects of certain jargon and practices common to kitchen restaurants from a recent news story (Lund, 2015), where a Swedish female chef recounts incidents of sexual harassment that she has been subjected to at work during her years in restaurant kitchens. She says, however, that it was not until later that she realised it had been harassment: *"For long I reckoned it was a part of the job, it was not until I told my mother and my partner, who reacted very strongly, that I started to realise it was not okey"* (my translation). One aspect that was discussed in interviews, that I could not find space for to examine more closely in the realms of this paper, was the chef alcohol culture. Interviewees agreed that an important aspect of having some drinks after work was that it helped "coming down" from the mental effort of a busy service. Although they explained this to be related to the work-related stress, it does not seem far-fetched that a negative psycho-social work environment could reinforce such a potentially unhealthy habit. "Abusive supervision" is generally thought to be associated with problem drinking (Bamberger & Bacharach, 2006). Again, these might be negative effects of managerial practices and social work environment that are difficult to recognise when they concern oneself and, hence, likely to be dismissed.

5.3.5 Summary

The chefs interviewed are familiar with events of mistreatment in kitchens, at least in the form of cuffers and in some cases own experience. Incidents typically pertain to *service*, and are facilitated by an established occupational culture allowing, and perhaps even promoting, the head chef to practice a leadership that probably would not be considered as legitimate in many other contexts. It seems as if it is commonly thought among chefs that certain jargon, language and ways of giving order and feedback are necessary for head chefs to utilise in order to run a restaurant kitchen, and that chefs, once socialised and accustomed to the occupation, understand and accept this. Thus, some of the predicted negative consequences may not come about. On the other hand there may be hidden or latent negative consequences. A few suggestions on such consequences have been discussed, and furthermore, chef cultural norms saying a chef should not complain mean some negative effects may be muted, disregarded or unrecognised by the "victimised" chefs. *Novice* chefs seem to be in a vulnerable situation, as practical competence and a certain mentality taught by the job seem to be skills that affect how they get treated by colleagues and supervisors. And as they are not yet fully socialised into the profession and its culture, it is possible they will perceive and react to negative treatment, if subject to it, quite differently to experienced chefs.

6. A concluding discussion

The present study cannot say anything about how many restaurant chefs are being socially mistreated or abused, but the interviews indicate that what media as well as previous research report about negative or abusive work practices in restaurant kitchens to some extent also exist in the Swedish (Stockholm) context. It seems clear that restaurant kitchens can be rather (socially) rough workplaces, and that the line of what is acceptable is sometimes surpassed. What the present study contributes is a starting point in identifying a number of contextual circumstances that potentially could help explain why chefs sometimes are mistreated. These contextual circumstances start with the "objective" conditions of the work, that no doubt are special and demanding for those involved. It is insufficient, however, to look at these conditions in isolation, as the sector and its occupations have a long history of work under similar conditions and circumstances which has made its mark through the institutionalisation of various phenomena at different levels. Some of the most significant of these pertain to an occupational culture of chefs that contains ideas, norms, attitudes, etcetera that are passed on "from generation to generation" of chefs via the socialisation process. This "chef culture" constitutes further conditions and circumstances for restaurant kitchen work.

-Fierce competition in the high end sector with conscious and picky customers put constant pressure on the kitchen to perform well on a daily basis. Chefs are deeply integrated in their work, and thus mutually dependent on all to perform. In charge of kitchen performance is the head chef, and as shown in this study, the head chef also runs the show behind the scenes producing terms of employment that sometimes is unsustainable. The prestige and ambition make talented chefs eager to take on the responsibility of head chef and they are prepared to sacrifice a lot to make it work.

-As for head chefs' leadership practices, there seems to be an organisational acting space in restaurants kitchens that in several ways "allows" for negative behaviour. Head chefs seem unlikely to be directed on leadership issues from their organisational superordinates (if any), and are given great freedom to do as they please so long results are satisfactory. Furthermore, there is a taken for granted assumption among the chefs that a certain amount of strict discipline is needed for the kitchen to function. Given the long history of authoritative leadership practices, it is no surprise to find norms and attitudes among chefs to accept that, and that the head chef is the one best suited to determine where the bar should be set in this regard.

-Given the aforementioned conditions and circumstances, it would not be surprising if some head chefs would choose an authoritative leadership style, and plausibly tread into grey area

strategies in their attempts to maximise the efforts of their subordinates. Not least because such strategies are embedded in the history of the chef occupation and its culture, and thus something head chefs can relate to and might have experienced themselves. The profession is also rather inert and closed off from innovation and experimentation since it is almost exclusively learnt on the job with very little formal education beyond upper secondary school. Given the burden of head chef responsibilities it is not possible to expect reflection to be of any significance. Finally, if head chefs are indeed as stressed up and overburdened as has been indicated they may sometimes be, this would intuitively make them more prone to lose their patience and temper.

Of great concern, given what we have seen, is the socialisation process of novice chefs. Newcomers who are less familiar with chef culture and practices, might be shocked at first by what they experience in the kitchen. As we have seen, toleration of mistakes is low and often accompanied with tell-offs and other negative behaviour by colleagues. It seems motivated to ask the question how many novice chefs leave the profession due to kitchen culture.

In general, this paper suggests the necessity to understand the occupational culture of chefs for understanding what goes on in restaurant kitchens, and that whoever wishes to alter things in the industry or a particular organisation need to take chef culture into account. When trying to grasp the culture, in turn, it is crucial to see the interconnections between the culture and the conditions and circumstances of the work. The association between chef cultural norms and labour mobility patterns is an example of why one needs to be careful not to draw premature conclusions regarding the surface relation between two variables. Reported/suggested mistreatment of employees in the restaurant business could easily be thought to account for labour mobility patterns, but as has been indicated throughout this paper, this would certainly be a simplification of matters.

I argue that what would appear as "bullying" behaviours are historically embedded in restaurant kitchen work practices, and to the extent they are still exercised today, they cannot be properly understood without consideration to the circumstances of the work (today and historically) and how chef culture is shaped in relation to these. This implies that it is problematic to analyse workplace bullying in the restaurant kitchen context using a general conception of the workplace bullying phenomenon. To do this would plausibly render spurious conclusion regarding frequency, consequences, and explanation. That is not to say that workplace bullying literature cannot provide fruitful input with regards to these considerations. Neither is it, of course, to say that the issue of what would appear as mistreatment in restaurant kitchens is unproblematic. According to the insiders, the extent to which negative behaviour occurs today, it is something relatively expected and accepted among chefs. The tough kitchen

culture probably lessens or eliminates the negative effects of such behaviour (cf. Alexander et al. 2012). It is not a given, however, that chefs are able to notice or observe all such (possibly latent) effects, and it could be that norms emphasising endurance and perseverance may disguise some negative experiences and their effects. Furthermore, all interviewees in the present study can be regarded well established chefs, meaning the perspective of non-initiated chefs is missed out on, which is problematic since newcomers are identified as the most probable targets of negative behaviour. Finally, it obviously cannot be assumed these participants are representative of Swedish (or Stockholm) chefs.

It could be asserted that "abusive supervision" or some related theoretical framework focusing more on supervisors as perpetrators would be better suited to explain the case at hand than "workplace bullying". I argue, however, that this paper can help to illustrate that in order to understand the particular social interaction it set out to explore, it is necessary to go broader and deeper than to focus exclusively on, for example, the role of the supervisor. The chef occupation carries long tradition and institutionalised aspects that need to be grasped in order to understand its surface manifestations (artifacts). The workplace bullying- and abusive supervision research fields have their origin in psychological research that puts the individual in the limelight. I think this focus needs to be extended. If the research on bullying has been able to say anything about the phenomenon, it is that "anyone" can become a perpetrator as well as a victim. Thus, we can assume that all people have the inherent potential to perform such behaviours – what is of interest is therefore what factors elicit, allow, and reinforce, or restrain, inhibit and curb such tendencies and behaviours. Of course, these research fields are all but ignorant to such matters, but there is danger to those studies that seek to associate certain personality traits with frequencies of certain behaviours (see e.g. Baughman et al. 2012; Linton & Power, 2013; Vaughn et al. 2010). Such associations may be prematurely concluded to support personality-based explanations in cases where organisational and/or contextual factors are likely to be antecedents to personality. The preliminary indications from the present study are that the restaurant chef occupation is one where the occupational culture have relatively strong influence on those (who chose to remain) subject to it. Accordingly, it would be problematic to regard individual personality exclusively as an independent *imput* to the workplace context, if it is likely to some extent also to be an *output* of the occupational culture (through strong socialisation into a local organisational culture or through selection into the occupation). In general, the restaurant chef occupation appears as to constitute a particularly fruitful case for the exploration of how (work) group- norms, attitudes and behaviours are taught, learnt, internalised, and developed, since many chefs start at a low age and there seems to be a rather comprehensive socialisation.

As previously discussed, the particularities of group culture can be used as a critique against attempts to quantitatively conceptualise the workplace bullying phenomenon with the purpose of doing context transcending comparison. In a concrete attempt to do this, a standardised questionnaire called the Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) (see Einarsen et al. 2009) was developed and used to measure occurance of bullying using objective indicators, that is, without mention of the bullying term. The benefit of such methods is that it focuses on concrete, specific acts that can provide concrete description of what goes on in different workplace contexts. However, there is always a risk that researchers get blinded by the numbers and aggregations and forget about the context. For example, being subjected to "repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes" (an indicator used in the NAQ) can implicate a very unpleasant situation for some group of workers, while it may be expected and perhaps even regarded as a legitimate way of instructing among chefs. The present study suggests that great contextual complexity must be taken into account in order to understand bullying related phenomena.

6.1 Future research

One of the limitations of the present study is that only relatively experienced chefs were interviewed. Those (former) aspiring chefs that never became chefs or quit only after a short time are a blind spot to these kind of studies that turn to established chefs. This goes as well, of course, for quantitative research on workplace bullying, and particularly that pertaining to occupations in which people come and go more easily, like chefs; if many of those subjected to bullying or abuse choose to quit rather instantly, then they are unlikely to be picked up and become subject to analysis. In order to learn more about kitchen culture and its consequences, future research should examine the chef "drop outs"; individuals that once aspired to become chefs but changed their minds soon after entering the profession. Their experiences and perceptions of being newcomers in the restaurant kitchen, and what made them decide to quit would be a fruitful extension to the present study.

Empirical results not presented in this paper indicate that gender related harassment among restaurant staff is not uncommon. From what we have seen, it seems obvious that chef culture is shaped along the lines of typically "masculine" ideals (cf. Harris & Giuffre 2010), and is likely to play a crucial part when gender structures in restaurant kitchens are concerned. A concrete example of such a structure is the before mentioned stereotypical division between the warm and cold section of kitchens. I believe that further research into chef culture is one key to better our understanding of chefs and restaurant kitchen work. Except for the social-

isation process, abusive work practices and gender structures – alcohol culture and labour mobility patterns are all bound to be intertwined with work conditions, historically and today, and the associated occupational culture of restaurant chefs. These are all issues of interest to social scientists but will also be key insights of value to the industry. The restaurant industry in Sweden is growing rapidly and problems retaining competent staff, as well as attracting new staff, are becoming increasingly urgent to address.

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