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'Banter, Bollockings & Beatings': The occupational socialisation process in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades in Great Britain and Ireland

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study seeks to conceptualise how the occupational socialisation of young chefs is conducted in Michelin-starred restaurants in Great Britain and Ireland; the key role of banter and bullying in this process is explored and critically discussed.

Design/methodology/approach – This qualitative research critically discusses the data from 54 unstructured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews with male and female Michelin-starred chefs in Great Britain and Ireland. The rich data from the interviews has led to hypothesis-generating research that was conducted by using theoretical coding.

Findings – Drawing upon the fieldwork, fresh insights into the social structures, processes and group dynamics which underpin the socialisation process of young chefs are revealed in the participants' own words. Three areas emerged from the employment of thematic analysis: occupational status; discipline, hierarchy and gender segregation in kitchen brigades; and the role of banter and bullying in occupational socialisation.

Theoretical implications – This study generates empirical data that informs contemporary debates about the role of banter and bullying in the occupational socialisation process of new members in high performing teams. A theoretical framework on the process of occupational socialisation in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades in Great Britain and Ireland is also provided.

Practical implications – The findings of this study suggest that banter and bullying are deeply embedded in chefs' occupational culture; they also play a key role in the process of induction and occupational socialisation of the new recruits.

Originality/value – The understanding of chefs' induction and occupational socialisation is deemed crucial for successful hospitality operations; nevertheless this still remains an under researched area. This study is unique in terms of scale and depth; it is expected to provide useful insights in both theoretical and practical perspective, regarding the induction, socialisation and eventually retention of young chefs.

Key words – Chefs; Occupational socialisation; Banter; Bullying; Great Britain and Ireland

Paper Type – Research paper

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'*Banter*, *Bollockings & Beatings*': The occupational socialisation process in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades in Great Britain and Ireland

1. Introduction

The popular interest in celebrity chefs has grown considerably over the past two decades in both the US and UK (Bloisi & Hoel 2008; Hyman 2008). This is well illustrated in the increasing media coverage of Michelin-starred and celebrity chefs and the flourishing trend for biographies (i.e. White 1990; Bourdain 2000; Ramsay 2006) and other written accounts of both high-profile chefs and kitchen life (i.e. Parkinson & Green 2001; Strange & Chelminski 2006). This paper explores the '*dark side*' of the fine dining restaurants; more specifically it investigates the phenomena of banter and bullying in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades in Great Britain and Ireland. The glamourised image of the '*macho, creative and violent*' chef does not reflect by any means the extremely demanding working conditions in a Michelin-starred kitchen brigade. Based on the anecdotal stories provided by Burrow et al. (2015) this working environment would be better described as '*heaven and hell*' for the junior chefs aspiring to run their own kitchen one day. In this context, the banter and bullying phenomena have been for a long time part of chefs' occupational culture. Although not necessarily accepted by its members they have been used (and continue to be) as a means of induction, occupational socialisation and motivation in UK commercial kitchens with questionable results (Bloisi & Hoel 2008). On the other hand, empirical findings suggest that banter and bullying behaviours have no effect on either job satisfaction or commitment (Alexander et al. 2012). In other words, the existing research suggests that although bullying is generally regarded as a contemptuous behaviour both by academics and practitioners, it is a standard informal practice used to achieve high performance standards especially in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades.

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Despite the inflated media exposure and publicity, a paucity of academic research is observed in the study of the banter and bullying role, especially in the new members' induction and occupational socialisation in commercial kitchens. Thus, the existing research fails to provide a robust answer in the following question: if bullying is a negative and unacceptable behaviour in the workplace, why do so many successful Michelin-starred chefs use this tactic to *'welcome'* the newcomers and boost the brigade's performance? This research aims to explore the effect of banter and bullying in high performing (Michelin-starred) kitchen brigades; the focus of this study is the new members' induction and occupational socialisation process. The primary data collected derived from interviews with more than half of the Michelin-starred chefs' population in Great Britain and Ireland. The findings contextualised in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades, are expected to contribute both in the occupational socialisation and occupational bullying theories. They are also expected to provide a better understanding on the Michelin-starred chefs' occupational culture by exploring their occupational socialisation process through the use (and/or abuse) of banter and bullying.

2. Bullying in commercial kitchens

2.1. Forms of Bullying

The concept of bullying at work relates to persistent exposure of the victim to negative and aggressive behaviours of a psychological nature (Leymann 1996). These behaviours can be systematically directed to one or more colleagues, with devastating results such as stigmatisation and victimisation of the recipients (s) (Bjorkqvist et al. 1994). As a result the victims suffer from health problems after some time such as severe psychiatric and psychosomatic impairment (Einarsen & Nielsen 2015), whereas the offenders may not be

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affected at all (Zapf & Gross 2001). The nature of behaviours linked to workplace bullying in a commercial kitchen environment involve the exposure of victims to verbal abuse such as offensive remarks, insults, and criticism (Bloisi & Hoel 2008; Burrow et al. 2015); in a few cases bullying can escalate to physical violence (or threats of such violence), such as throwing kitchen utencils or hot food at the victim/s (Cooper 2012; Johns & Menzel 1999).

The origins of bullying may be better understood with Einarsen's (1999) classification into two main categories / themes namely predatory and dispute related bullying. In the first case, the victim is found accidentally in a situation where the offender / predator is demonstrating power or taking advantage of the victim's weakness. Ashforth (1994) calls this a '*petty tyranny*' and refers to leaders who exercise their power over others through arbitrariness and self-aggrandisement. The UK celebrity chefs Marco Pierre White and Gordon Ramsay are great examples of predatory bullying, with many references in their written accounts and/or TV shows (Mac Con Iomaire 2008; Midgley 2005). Cooper (2012) suggests that the intimidatory and violent behaviour and the resultant physical and mental damage caused, and symptoms exhibited, are likened to those of *Battered Child Syndrome*. This refers to injuries sustained by a child as a result of physical abuse usually inflicted by an adult caregiver who can be a parent or custodian (Kempe et al. 1962). The symptoms of poor self-image, anger, rage, anxiety, fear, depression and substance abuse, can all exist in cases of *Battered Child Syndrome* and can also be observed in chefs and members of the kitchen brigade alike who have been subjected to these various psychological and physical bullying techniques. As in cases of children who have suffered abuse, these symptoms can present themselves immediately, or can emerge after a protracted period of time, or may never emerge to a significant degree, dependant on the psychosocial make-up of the individual concerned (Carter 2015).

On the other hand '*dispute-related*' bullying occurs as a result of highly escalated interpersonal conflicts (Einarsen et al. 2011). The difference between workplace bullying and interpersonal conflict lays in the frequency and duration of what is also known as '*office wars*' (van de Vliert 1998); such conflicts include intense emotional involvement and the ultimate goal is to eliminate the opponent(s) by attacking each others' self-esteem and self-image. The escalation of this situation will eventually lead one of the parties to a position unable to defend him/herself or retaliate against increasingly aggressive behaviours; the outcome of this situation is the victimisation of the weaker parties (Chirila & Costantin 2013). In some extreme cases victims commit suicide or consider it seriously as the ultimate solution (Leymann 1990). In a commercial kitchen context, the exercise of dispute-related bullying would be limited to a few isolated cases due to the existence of a strong leader (head chef) (Balazs 2001). In addition, the regimental discipline and the strong ties among the team members leave no room for personal rivalries (Burrow et al. 2015; Cooper 2012).

2.2. The role of chefs' occupational identity and culture

The occupational identity and culture of chefs is locked to an antiquated system that can be traced back in the 18th century pre-revolutionary France when Francois Vatel introduced the partie system (Balazs 2001). The essence of the partie system is the division of work into sections, each section or partie being supervised by a *chef de partie* who is a craft specialist. All the parties come under the command of the *chef de cuisine* (head chef) assisted by one or more *sous chefs*. The team of cooks and their assistants under the partie system is commonly known as the kitchen '*brigade*' (Fuller 1981; CIA 2002). The terms '*brigade*' and '*partie system*' both derive from the realm of the army (Balazs 2002; Ferguson 2004) upon which French chef (and ex-military) Escoffier is said to have drawn to develop his efficient and

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autocratic model of kitchen organisation (Cooper 1998). The militaristic hierarchy of the partie system, the strict discipline and strong solidarity that prevail within the occupational group is evident in many chefs' biographies (i.e. White 1990, 2006; Bourdain 2000; Hennessy 2000; Ramsay 2006; Simpson 2006). Wood (1997, p.85) argues that the partie system persists, in many hotels and restaurants (including smaller units), for its emphasis on specialisation helps guarantee interdependency and teamwork, whilst fostering '*individual skill and responsibility that allows for controlled creativity within a bureaucratic work structure*'.

Based on the above discussion it is evident that the partie system continues to serve as a fundamental building block in the formation of the occupational identity and culture in commercial kitchens (Cooper et al. 2017). It can be argued that one of the implications generated from the use of this traditional work organisation method, is the existence of abusive behaviour and more particular bullying. Kitchen bullying and violence became a topical issue in Great Britain during the 1990s following the screening of a few television programmes such as Gordon Ramsays' *'Boilling Point'* and the *'Big Story',* which revealed kitchen life behind the scenes in Michelin-starred restaurant (Mac Con Iomaire 2008). The popularity of this phenomenon has triggered a stream of research where chefs were chosen as the sole objects of analysis and addressed some specific aspects of their occupational culture, such as bullying and violence (i.e. Alexander et al. 2012; Burrow et al. 2015; Cooper 2012; Johns & Menzel 1999; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons 2007).

Johns & Menzel's (1999, p.103) justified chefs' violent and bullying behaviour by highlighting the physical pressures of the job, such as the heat, the noise from machines and shouting voices, the variable demand leading to peaks of activity and '*a sense of constant scrutiny*' linked to chefs

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having to maintain standards of excellence whilst relying on their staff for food production. Yet, further analysis prompts Johns & Menzel to acknowledge that although physical pressures do contribute to kitchen violence; it is the socio-cultural aspects of kitchen work that seem mostly to blame for violence (Hoel & Salin 2003). The resigned attitude of many of their informants indeed seems to illustrate the extent to which kitchen violence has become deeply embedded in chefs' working culture. Midgley (2005) confirms Johns & Menzel's (1999) claims by drawing upon informal observational research undertaken in a Glaswegian French restaurant by Phil Hodgson of Ashridge Business School, according to whom the persistence of a macho culture can be attributed to chefs passing on learned behaviour. He (*ibid.,* p.53) also acknowledges the scope of the bullying problem in the industry and its likely consequences:

> *"Catering is a notoriously tough business with high stress levels. When bullying is stirred into the mix, disaster can be the result, even for those who consider themselves psychologically robust. One of the results of a military style of management in the kitchens is that catering is an industry riven by poor health and high levels of drug abuse and alcoholism".*

Such comments may indeed help perpetuate the myth that kitchen violence is part of the work environment, by converting it into an '*external enemy*' (Johns & Menzel 1999, p.107) and therefore shifting the onus/blame away from individuals. Despite his lack of empirical data, Wood (2000) similarly argues that the deeply-ingrained stereotype of the creative, temperamental and volatile chef may in fact merely facilitate or allow chefs to behave in this way, since creativity may be used to explain or excuse bullying, temperament and volatility.

The prevalence of bullying and harassment in professional kitchens has also been confirmed through quantitative means by Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons (2007) in a survey with 40 chefs in Northern Ireland, by Mathisen et al. (2008) in a survey of 207 employees in 70 Norwegian restaurants and more recently by Alexander et al. (2012) in a survey with 164 Chefs in Scotland. All three studies indeed provide evidence to suggest that primary sources of occupational stress

not only include excessive workload and communication issues with management, but also experiences of bullying and harassment. Drawing upon Johns & Menzel's (1999) myths of kitchen violence, both Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons (2007) and Mathisen et al. (2008) respectively argue that such aggressive behaviour is often seen as the norm of the kitchen and that head chefs and managers should therefore nurture a more supportive working environment in order to prevent threats of violence and challenge such kitchen norms.

2.3. Occupational socialisation

Studies of occupational cultures have emphasised on the crucial role played by the occupational socialisation process in inculcating the knowledge and beliefs of the group in newcomers, in order for them to behave like its co-workers and become accepted in the occupational culture (i.e. Turner 1971; Trice 1993). Saunders (1981b, p.17) identifies *'learned occupational behaviour'* and '*the cultural influences of the work setting'* as the two specific influences on the role performance of chefs. In particular, Saunders highlights the formality of both the authority system and the roles and behaviour of the social actors themselves, as illustrated in the fact that the head chef is expected by the members of the brigade to act in a traditional authoritative manner – a behaviour which the brigade members will, in time, also emulate themselves. Such beliefs, attitudes and behaviour are, according to Saunders, derived from the occupational socialisation process during their induction, to which newcomers are initiated and are subsequently reinforced by unwritten rules and practices within the kitchen culture.

Research in occupational socialisation also suggests that there are certain occupational groups such as nurses (Quine 2001), military and paramilitary professionals (Archer 1999) and chefs (Alexander et al. 2012) who accept bullying as a means of induction in their occupational

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culture; those who survive the enduring harsh treatment from the older group members earn

the right to be part of the group. Alexander et al. (2012, p.1253) suggest that "*aggression,*

violence and humiliation facilitate the banter that allows chefs to bond and be sure that

everyone is capable of dealing with the pressure of service". As such, it is argued that

bullying and violence are directly linked with the process of the new chefs' occupational

socialisation and induction to the occupational culture. More insightful, however, is Johns &

Menzel's (1999, p.106) claim that kitchen culture exhibits a number of powerful popular

myths that link violence with culinary art and with the cult of the individual in the following

manner:

> "*Quality food is art, violence is inseparable from art, therefore violence is inseparable*
> *from quality food preparation*' (*Myth 1*); '*Violence is an acceptable idiosyncrasy of*
> *great individuals*' (*Myth 2*); and '*Violence is a characteristic of the work and the*
> *workplace, not of the individuals involved* (*Myth 3*)".

Midgley (2005) corroborates Johns & Menzel's (1999) third myth by highlighting the

tendency of high-profile chefs, such as Gordon Ramsay and Anthony Bourdain, to proudly

recount stories of how they were bullied as a trainee, whilst asserting the necessity to run a

kitchen in an aggressive manner to maintain discipline and achieve results. Further evidence

can also be found in the following quote from chef Marco Pierre White (1990, p.12) which is

a particularly striking illustration of Johns & Menzel's claim's that kitchen violence and

bullying is regarded as a necessary part of cooks' training by the victims themselves:

> *"The boys in my team know that if they want to get to the top they've got to take the shit.*
> *Harveys [White's former restaurant] is the hardest kitchen in Britain; it's the SAS of*
> *kitchens. But you don't get to the top by being pampered".*

The induction and occupational socialisation process in this distinctive occupational culture is

also graphically portrayed by Burrow et al. (2015); they provided an anecdotal account of a

(male) chef's experiences from the early stages of his career as an assistant to the day he got his

first job as a head chef in a *haute cuisine* restaurant. This empirical research demonstrates the

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occupational challenges and frustrations in a violent and abusive working environment that is described as "*mundane, degrading and dehumanizing*" as well as "*thrilling, exiting and rewarding*" (*ibid.*, p.1).

Thus, however disastrous the consequences, it can be argued that chefs are able to derive a sense of identity by embracing and perpetuating the myth of the creative and violent chef (Wood 2000). The myth is further reinforced by the fact that the chefs who make it to the top of the profession are often the ones who have willingly endured harsh working conditions and mistreatment, as highlighted by Pratten (2003a) and other biographical/journalistic evidence (i.e. Bourdain 2000; Simpson 2006).

It is argued that, from the above discussion of the existing literature emerge important questions regarding the relationship between occupational socialisation and bullying in high performing kitchen brigades that are met at the high end of the restaurant industry (Michelin-starred kitchens). This study seeks to address this research gap and to provide empirical data by examining the phenomenon of bullying as part of the chefs' occupational socialisation in individual and group level. The following hypotheses were made based on the discussion presented in the literature review above:

H1: Banter and bullying are deeply embedded in the partie system and they are integral parts of the Michelin-starred chefs occupational culture in Great Britain and Ireland.

H2: Banter and bullying is the main vehicle used for the junior chefs' induction, and occupational socialisation in Michelin-starred kitchens in Great Britain and Ireland.

H3: Banter and bullying contributes to the maintenance of the brigades' cohesion especially under stressful working conditions.

H4: Banter and bullying is used to identify high, average and low performers in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades.

3. Methodology and sample

This research explored the effect of banter and bullying in the occupational socialisation of Michelin-starred kitchen brigades' new members. The research design was influenced by the interpretivist paradigm (Easterby-Smith et al. 2012), as the aim of the researchers was to study Michelin-starred chefs and their kitchen brigades and understand how their behaviour impacts on the occupational socialisation of the new members and their brigades. For this purpose, the data was collected with the use of in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 54 Michelin-starred chefs in Great Britain and Ireland. The sample was a purposive sample as the chefs were selected based on their relevance to the topic, and their willingness to participate in the study (Cohen & Manion 1994; Holloway & Wheeler 1996; Robson 1993). For confidentiality purposes the names of the chefs are not disclosed, but some details on the participant establishments are provided in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 here

Marshall & Rossman (1999) propose that the sample should provide the information that would answer the research questions of the study; hence Michelin-starred chefs and their kitchen brigades were used, as they constitute the elite of the occupation (Cooper 2012). The Michelin Guide(s) for Great Britain and Ireland were the source of information of Michelin-starred chefs, who were informed on the study with a letter and/or email explaining the purpose of the study and asking permission to conduct interviews not only with them, but also with members of the brigade.

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The first interview was used as a pilot to identify any areas that were not covered in the interview topics. A flexible interview guide was used (Charmaz 2000) in order to ensure all key areas and topics were covered and to probe chefs ensuring detailed information was provided (Lofland & Lofland 1995). Moreover, the guide was designed bearing in mind the data analysis, as thematic analysis was found to be more appropriate for the topic and the data collected. The interviews varied in length with an average of 2 hours and 57 minutes, and provided very rich data, which was digitally recorded and then professionally transcribed to ensure a thorough and consistent approach. Following an inductive approach the researchers identified various themes that emerged from the data. Initially the data in the transcriptions were carefully read in order to perform audit trails (Lincoln & Cuba 1985), and highlights with annotations were written in the margins of the transcribed text. Certain themes and patterns started to emerge. These lead to the formulations of hypotheses from what the interviewees were saying, hence hypothesis-generating research was conducted using theoretical coding. Then, the themes were categorised with a purpose to reduce the material further. At this stage, some comparison was done to existing findings from other research and to the theoretical framework developed for the purpose of this study, which is further discussed in the conclusions (Figure 1). Hypotheses were then formulated, which helped the coding process. The codes emerged from the theoretical framework (Creswell 2008) and included codes such as social behaviour, status in the team, bantering and bullying, occupational culture, educational background, respect in team, performance, and finally gender issues. In order to consolidate meaning the codes were grouped into categories (Grbich 2007). The categories under which the analysis was conducted in this paper were bantering, bullying and occupational socialisation process. The final stage was to re-read the data in order to identify patterns and connections and interpret their meaning as they are presented in the findings of this paper.

4. Findings & Discussion

In order to investigate the role of bullying in *haute cuisine* kitchen brigades occupational

socialisation process, it was particularly important to identify and understand chefs' perceptions

on this sensitive issue. As already described in the previous section, this research has produced

a significant amount of rich data from the researchers' recordings and notes. Three areas

emerged from the employment of thematic analysis: *occupational status; discipline, hierarchy*

and gender segregation in kitchen brigades; and the role of banter and bullying in occupational

socialisation. These areas are presented below.

4.1. Occupational Status

Chefs are compelled to build a sense of identify by drawing from the existing meanings and

ways of doing things that have informed and characterised the occupation of chef for many

generations (Cooper 2012). Fieldwork discussions with the chefs brought to the fore the

centuries-old lack of status and standing attributed to the occupation in Great Britain and

Ireland. According to the chefs interviewed, this can be traced back to the servile origins of

the occupation where the chef was merely a servant cooking for the house. The servile origins

of chefs is summarised by Chef 19:

> *"Maybe it's because Britain was what Britain was back in the day when the chefs are*
> *servants aren't they. You'd just be a servant. You'd cook for the house and stuff like*
> *that".*

 In direct contrast, chefs also revealed the widely differing status and standing afforded the

occupation in other European countries, such as France, Italy and Spain, where being a chef is

held in high esteem and perceived as being a highly revered profession thereby bringing

respect and recognition to chefs themselves. Chef 39 argues that *'Chefs are not celebrated in*

the British Isles like they are in mainland Europe, as simple as that. … People have more

respect'. On the other hand, the professional status of the occupation and near God-like status

afforded elite chefs on the Continent is illustrated in the following:

> *"You see it in Spain or France – the big chefs, like Paul Bocuse, he's 80, he's still wearing the uniform. He's highly celebrated, respected, because he's done his time, he's a chef, the French love him, he's part of their culture… It all depends what culture you're in. Like the French, Spanish will celebrate their chefs; chefs will be looked upon as an asset to the community, as a key element, part of the whole thing of life, they live to eat. Food for them is a major part of their fabric – the person who cooks is basically a hero actually, a hero, I think. Where, here, Ireland, England, America, we're looked upon as people who under-achieved academically – usually, you very rarely see a third-level educated chef, I assume – people in our country, and I think in England too, eat to live. It's looked upon as a kind of working class job, I think".* (Chef 39)

The fact that up until circa 30 years ago, gastronomy did not really exist in Great Britain and

Ireland, where food, cooking and eating was merely perceived as a means of sustenance, in

direct contrast to Continental Europe, where food, cooking and eating has always been

perceived as being part of the daily fabric of life, in turn reflects the social status and standing in

which the occupation is held from country to country. The widely differing cultural attitudes of

'eat to live' in Great Britain and Ireland, in direct contrast to *'live to eat'* on the Continent,

clearly illustrate the fact that attitudes towards the role and function of food, cooking and eating

in society are culturally determined. The perception of chefs as *'kings'* on the Continent, in

direct contrast to that of *'servants'* in Great Britain and Ireland, clearly reflects the subsequent

status and standing afforded the occupation from one country to another. It is evident that

whilst socio-cultural attitudes towards the role and function of food, cooking and eating in

society on the Continent determine the occupation to be held in high esteem and perceived as a

highly revered profession, in direct contrast, the same socio-cultural attitudes, albeit

diametrically opposed, in Great Britain and Ireland, determine the relatively low status and

standing of the occupation, in turn, perhaps inevitably, preventing the occupation from being

perceived as a profession.

Nevertheless, the status and standing of the occupation and in turn the respect and recognition afforded chefs themselves was somewhat elevated in the 1970's with the advent of *nouvelle cuisine* which elevated the social standing of chefs by giving vent to chefs' artistry and creativity (Rao et al., 2005) and emphasising values of individualism, risk and entrepreneurship (Ferguson 1998). The occupational status was also elevated by the emergence of celebrity chefs which has been shown to imprint a certain glamour onto the occupation, attract newcomers (Pratten 2003a), and redefine the status of UK chefs *'to a much enhanced role of chef/entrepreneur, expert and intellectual; a kind of modern-day renaissance man'* (Randall 1999, p.49), or even to that of professionals (Cameron 2004). The ensuing emergence of Michelin-starred chefs such as the Roux brothers Albert and Michel Roux sr., Nico Ladenis, Raymond Blanc and Pierre Koffman thereafter undisputedly had a significant influence on cuisine in Great Britain and Ireland. However, most of the participants agreed that it was the arrival of Marco Pierre White in the late 1980s, which undoubtedly changed the face of modern British cooking and the perceived reality of the occupation and the image of chefs. According to the chefs interviewed, Marco Pierre White seemingly portrayed the occupation and the image of chefs as being cool and Rock 'n' Roll, thereby inspiring a generation of chefs and cooks and their quest for Michelin stars. The irrefutable impact of Marco Pierre White on the occupation and on the image of chefs is clearly illustrated in the following:

> *"You get a chef like Marco [Marco Pierre White]. He's inspired a generation of cooks. His book White Heat will probably go down as the greatest cookery book ever written. Not so much for content, but for what it inspired – a generation of cooks."* (Chef 44)

Having identified the centuries-old lack of status and standing attributed to the occupation and the servile origins of chefs, and thereafter the influence of *nouvelle cuisine* and in turn Marco Pierre White on the occupation and on the image of chefs, it was interesting to note the previously highlighted chefs' perceptions of the type of person typically entering the catering industry. As alluded to in previous quotes, it is evident that the distinctly low status and

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standing attributed to the occupation in turn had a knock-on effect in terms of the archetypal

person drawn towards the industry, thereby virtually pre-determining the social class and

backgrounds of those entering into the occupation. According to the chefs interviewed, the

archetypal person entering into the occupation was perceived as being a social outcast and/or

an academic under-achiever, whilst the occupation itself was perceived as being demeaning

and stigmatised, nothing more than a trade, like a builder, or a mechanic, far removed from

the previously highlighted professional status afforded the occupation in Continental Europe.

4.2. Discipline, hierarchy and gender segregation in kitchen brigades

Chefs often compare their work to the military and paramilitary professions (i.e. armed forces,

police, fire brigade, etc.), even citing comparisons of carrying out service with going into battle

(Bourdain 2000). In both the catering industry and the military, the same notions exists of

'*building*' a functioning member of a unit by means of the initial removal of their previous

behaviour patterns, followed by the subsequent rebuilding of these behaviour patterns to conform

to those required by the organisation (Salin & Hoel 2011). In this way, both in the catering

industry and in the military, once they have been through this process, an individual can be relied

on to perform the correct actions in the correct manner at the correct time, to a far higher degree

than individuals who have not endured this type of induction. In this context fear appears as one

of the key bullying tactics in haute cuisine establishments:

> *"I think to a certain degree, 90% of the kitchens I've worked in have been run by fear,*
> *and I don't think that's a bad thing, because, for me, anyway, it kept me on my toes and*
> *you try and do your best because you know you don't want to let the team down and*
> *yourself down. I think fear, to a certain degree, is a powerful thing, and it can drive a lot*
> *of people, but it can also go the other way where it works against you".* (Chef 50)

Michelin-starred chefs and their kitchen brigades are notorious for their discipline and

hierarchical structure. The violent and aggressive means of induction in *haute cuisine*

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commercial kitchens is often regarded as being analogous with the means of induction to the

military:

> *"When you're a head chef and you have a commis in here, it's a bit like having a new Private and you want to sort of bring them down to your level, strip them completely naked of their – humiliate them, like a Sergeant Major would in the barracks to a new recruit who's not even put on his khaki uniform. Basically it's a form of cruel indoctrination, I suppose. Then you rebuild him up".* (Chef 43)

Although anger outbreaks have been identified by several authors as cathartic, coping strategies

for chefs and cooks to reinforce the temporary independence of an individual or that of the kitchen

as a whole (Chivers 1972) or to regain control over extreme temporal conditions (Fine 1990), it

can be argued that there is nevertheless a risk that the cultural stereotype of the creative, volatile

and temperamental chef (Saunders 1981a, 1981b) leads to a situation where violent behaviour is

expected and institutionalised (Wood 2000). In this context fear appears as one of the key bullying

tactics in haute cuisine establishments. In addition, according to Meloury & Signal (2014) verbal

abuse is used to motivate and intimidate the subordinates who are not keeping up with the high

standards of a haute cuisine restaurant especially during the busy service period:

> *"...he's your teacher, he's the one you're looking up to, he's the one who's telling you that you're sh*t a hundred times a day – you'll never be anything, he'll chuck you out of the kitchen, 'F**k off! I don't ever want to see you again,' and the next minute he'd send somebody else out, 'Go and get him, tell him to peel that sack of potatoes,' and then, 'Bring him back,' 'Sack him,' 'Bring him back,' 'Tell him to go and work at the McDonald's,' and basically it was constant, constant, constant".* (Chef 9)

It is also argued that the military-inherited traits that permeate the occupational identity and

culture of chefs (Mennell 1996; Cooper 1998) may account for the perduring hierarchical

structure and male management style that characterise modern professional kitchens (see

Bourdain 2000), whilst contributing to a masculine and macho ethos (characterised by

misogynist talk, sexual joking and hazing) which continue to exclude females from this

profession (Cooper 1998; Bloisi & Hoel 2008; Cooper 2012). Indeed, according to the chefs

interviewed, this male-dominated, testosterone-fuelled, macho environment might be an

unpleasant and intimidating working environment for women to fit in unless they are prepared to embrace the occupational culture in its masculine expression and accept and mirror patterns of male bonding and behaviour. Chef 9 makes the point: *'They've got to become one of the guys'*. Similarly, Chef 46 suggests: *'To become accepted, then they do tend to go slightly the other way and become one of the boys'*. Chef 48 further states: *'For a girl to get on in a kitchen, generally they have to be as aggressive, as bolshie – feisty'*. This lack of willingness to allow female behavioural idioms within kitchen culture can be seen as a form of cultural conservatism. Rather than embrace the opportunity for enriching the culture of the occupation via the inclusion of female culture, women are instead compelled to conform to the stereotypically male behaviour patterns. Therefore, the research findings concur with the findings of American sociologist Fine (1987b), as regards that women *can* be accepted by male chefs and cooks, as long as they accept and mirror patterns of male bonding and behaviour

4.3. The role of banter and bullying in occupational socialisation

The process of occupational socialisation is deemed crucial for the induction and integration of newcomers to the occupational and organisational culture in the case of young chefs. The findings of this study suggest that part of the chefs' occupational socialisation occurs through the employment of banter and predatory bullying practices in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades. Friendly banter, verbal insults, teasing and mockery and the practical jokes and pranks, serve to induct new recruits into the familial group but also serve to construct the social hierarchy of the kitchen:

> *"What happens in the kitchen, people come in and they metamorphosise into a different world. ... And within that is rivalries, and banter, and slagging each other. Then when you spend so much time in people's faces, they become like family. ... It's like a family. ... Because there is element to catering that we're all one big family. And it functions exactly like a family. There's dysfunctionality, arguing, sweat, blood, tears, rivalry, all that."* (Chef 13)

While largely characteristic of a community dominated primarily by young men working long and unsocial hours, in a hot, confined, highly pressurised and stressful environment (Burrow et al. 2015), kitchen banter serves several functions. As well as being used to motivate members of the kitchen brigade and to maintain discipline, order, authority and control, it is a means of letting off steam and a way of initiating new recruits (Alexander et al. 2012). Kitchen banter therefore becomes part of the team bonding process and the underlying camaraderie that exists between members of the kitchen brigade, in other words, the shared language of belonging, of acceptance, of fitting in, of being part of something. According to the chefs interviewed, whatever the function of kitchen banter there is a mutual understanding between members of the kitchen brigade as to how the circumstances of its use are to be interpreted and a mutual compliance as to the role and value of such kitchen banter in the occupational socialisation of members of the occupational community (Cohen 1982). The above findings suggest a strong link between banter and young chefs' socialisation at work; in this context banter is used to determine the ability of the new recruits to cope with the environment and the high job demands.

For those who survive the harsh induction process, they have to tolerate, apart from the work pressure, the explosive and temperamented character of the head chef and his/her unreasonable demands, most of the time for no particular reason. Chef 8 portrays graphically these harsh working conditions:

> *"Working in those kitchens I was lucky enough to be, I suppose, good enough not to take the batterings, and not to take any real bollockings, and not to take any violence. I saw plenty of people that weren't good enough that did take a lot of sh*t, and that was wrong, but at the time, it's such a regimental sort of atmosphere – it's like the Army. If you're getting a beating, or you see someone getting a beating, they deserve it because they've done wrong. Now you look back at it and think, 'F**king hell! That is wrong'. No-one deserves a beating for putting a carrot in the wrong place, or getting something out the fridge when it's not meant to come out the fridge or something like that. It's very wrong. But it's such a different world. ... But, you accept all of it. You accept the punishment. ...".*

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Based on the above, it can be argued that the predatory bullying tactics used by the head chef maintain a delicate balance and discipline among the brigade members. In addition, despite the fact that physical abuse does not occur most of the time, fear and mental abuse appears to be the key strategy in the exercise of this bullying type. Thus, verbal abuse is used to motivate and intimidate the subordinates who are not keeping up with the high standards of a *haute cuisine* restaurant especially during the busy service period:

> *"You're put through some psychological f**king torture for a long time, especially if the chef doesn't like you. It can be an absolute f**king harrowing bollocking they can go through. I've seen people being just screamed at for two hours in kitchens, called f**king everything. Anonymous, when I was a young chef training under him, would call people, 'F**king shit! Your mum and dad must be f**king embarrassed by you, you're f**king nothing, you should f**king slit your wrists.'... Just totally like that for two hours, right through f**king service".* (Chef 10)

The survival of the young chefs' induction and occupational socialisation (irrespectively of social class, gender or ethnicity) denotes compatibility and an ability to integrate as well as a way to demonstrate loyalty and commitment to the head chef and the rest of the team (Johns & Menzel 1999). In addition, the nature of chefs' work is that of working under pressure to immovable deadlines. As such the mechanism, which is used to make this function correctly, is that of extreme discipline, order, authority and control (Cohen 1985). Those who survive earn their stripes and the kitchen brigade members' respect. Those who cannot cope with the constant pressure either leave or are being pushed to what Crompton & Sanderson (1986) call '*gendered niches*' such as the salads or the pastry section (Burrow et al. 2015).

The aggressive and violent nature of induction into the catering industry for young, new recruits is shown here as being the result of imitation on the part of more senior, higher ranking chefs – these chefs in turn imitating the behaviour learnt from and handed down by their superiors during their time as new recruits. The majority of participants in this study claimed receiving abuse as a junior chef and then reversed the roles when they first became sous chefs or head chefs; this appears to be a part of the occupational socialisation process that builds-up the *'macho'* character needed to survive in a Michelin-starred kitchen:

"You knock them down and build them up, then knock them down and build them up. I have had it done a lot – a lot. The Anonymous was a prime example. I got ridden for about six months by the senior sous-chef. ... He rode me every day – every day. But that's the way it was then". (Chef 50)

Johns & Menzel (1999) suggest that kitchen culture continues to exhibit a number of popular myths linking violence with culinary art and the cult of the individual, whilst turning violence and bullying into a necessary part of the kitchen environment, and a test of worth or a rite of passage towards '*chefdom*' for trainees (Cooper 2012). It can be argued that the aggressive and violent nature of induction into the catering industry for young, new recruits was shown as being the result of imitation on the part of more senior, higher ranking chefs – these chefs in turn imitating the behaviour learnt from and handed down by their superiors during their time as new recruits (Burrow et al. 2015). As highlighted in the discussion of findings, the manipulation of lower ranking staff through the use of predatory bullying is prevalent in many Michelin-starred kitchens. It could be argued that this is a means by which the absolute authority of the head chef is firmly established and ingrained in the minds of their charges. This then leads to the lower ranking subordinate becoming obsessively driven to perform to the unreasonably high standards set by their superior, thereby driving the highest possible level of performance (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons 2007). However, this may well be achieved at the cost of the psychological well-being of the individual, causing various psychosomatic conditions (McDaniel et al. 2015).

5. Conclusion

This study provides useful insights to the role of banter and bullying in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades during the new members' occupational socialisation phase. The starting point in our effort to understand the existence of this phenomenon is the centuries-old militaristic hierarchy

that characterises the occupational culture of chefs is deeply embedded in kitchen culture and the rigidly hierarchical nature of the kitchen brigade (Salin & Hoel 2011). In addition, the low occupational status within the Great Britain and Ireland context (in contrast with the rest of Europe) that prevailed for centuries until the advent of *haute cuisine* and celebrity chefs, further reinforces the existence of the *partie system*. According to the chefs interviewed, while the formal hierarchy of the *partie* system may be more flexible than in previous decades, the militaristic hierarchy of the kitchen brigade is still, albeit to a lesser extent, prevalent in today's kitchens, as there is a need for structure and discipline in order to maintain order, authority and control. As previously highlighted, these are requirements due to the intense nature of the job and the extreme working environment (i.e. consistently executing each and every dish to an exact standard of quality and excellence day in, day out, under severe temporal constraints, in a highly pressurised and stressful environment). Hence, such military organisation and the highly regimented nature of the kitchen brigade are understood by all the members of the kitchen brigade as a *sine qua non* in the kitchen, something that keeps them performing as a team in order to ultimately and of paramount importance consistently achieve and maintain a standing of quality and excellence day in, day out.

The importance of the team and the interdependency that exists between the members of the kitchen brigade is illustrated by the fact that they have to rely on each other to get the job done. Indeed, it is teamwork that dictates success or failure on a daily basis. Thus, members of the kitchen brigade are highly aware of the importance of their role and place within the team. The hierarchical nature of the kitchen brigade is thereby pivotal in the transference and reinforcement of the occupational culture of chefs. To be a member of the kitchen brigade is to abide by the rules and regulations of the kitchen hierarchy and the behavioural norms of the group. Overall, the highly regimented and rigidly hierarchal nature of the kitchen brigade that

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characterises the occupational culture of chefs thereby constitutes a social construct that defines and reinforces the occupational identity and culture of chefs.

The creation and maintenance of the regimental environment in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades goes through the employment of what was described above as 'kitchen banter'. This confirms our first hypothesis (**H1**) that banter and bullying are deeply embedded in the partie system and chefs' occupational culture. It was revealed that the friendly banter and verbal insults and the teasing and mockery and the practical jokes and pranks that go on in the kitchen between members of the kitchen brigade are part and parcel of the everyday routine of *'kitchen life'* (Alexander et al. 2012). It was also evident that the limits between banter and bullying are not always clearly defined. The abuse of kitchen banter on behalf of the head chef and the use of predatory bullying practices was also reported by the participants as a persistent phenomenon in Michelin-starred kitchen life.

This study also confirms our second hypothesis (**H2**) that the use of banter and bullying is the main vehicle for the junior chefs' induction, and occupational socialisation in Michelin-starred kitchens in Great Britain and Ireland. It was revealed that the use of both kitchen banter and predatory bullying serve several functions. As well as being used to motivate members of the kitchen brigade and to maintain discipline, order, authority and control, it is a means of letting off steam and a way of initiating new recruits (Johns & Menzel 1999). Part of this initiation may involve what can be termed initiation rites, in other words, practical jokes or pranks, mainly at the expense of young trainees. Indeed, such rites or rituals serve to reinforce the social ties, the bonds between individuals. As hypothesised (**H3**) the mechanisms by which the social structure of a group is strengthened and perpetuated, as a result of a shared understanding as to the role and value of the ritual in the bonding process. It was revealed that

such initiations do carry on to a certain extent, as they constitute a way of testing new recruits before accepting them as a member of the group. The final hypothesis (**H4**) regarding the relationship between the use of banter and bullying and new members' performance is also confirmed. It can be thus argued that, kitchen banter and bullying also serve to exclude less physically and mentally robust members of the kitchen brigade. It would appear that given the difficulty of the job, both physically and mentally, members of the kitchen brigade tend to pursue such social customs and practices as part of a common group effort to put newcomers to the test in order to prove their worth and weed out the new recruits who are unlikely to commit to the job and fit in and become accepted as part of the team Pratten (2003b). A theoretical framework of the process of occupational socialisation of Michelin-starred kitchen brigades in Great Britain and Ireland is described in Figure 1 below:

Insert Figure 1 here

In terms of practical implications, this study provides a deeper understanding of the nature of work in Michelin-starred kitchens focused on the occupational socialisation process, particularly important for hotel and restaurant general managers, as well as human resources managers. The tension between the kitchen brigade and the rest of the organisation can be explained based on the different occupational culture between chefs and the colleagues/managers in other departments. In addition, the use of obsolete induction and occupational socialisation practices such as the use of predatory bullying can be rationalised on the premises of the existing occupational conservatism on behalf of the existing Michelin-starred chefs' population in Great Britain and Ireland.

5.1. Research Limitations

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Although the purpose of hypothesis-generating research is to provide an opportunity to generalise, the authors acknowledge the limitation posed by the sample as Michelin-starred chefs were used in the context of Great Britain and Ireland. The main reason is the cost in terms of time and money to expand the sample to other countries. Moreover, they recognise that the context may be challenged as the *haute cuisine* sector represents a marginal and elite segment of the restaurant industry (Cooper 2012). Nevertheless, it is a sector that plays a key role in trend and standards setting for the industry as a whole (Surlemont & Jonhson 2005).

In addition, there might be some issues of reactivity affecting the research validity when undertaking interviews. Bryman (2004) suggests that the unnatural character of the interview encounter can lead to respondents' reaction. The authors observed that the participants were sometimes cautious of not divulging too much about themselves as their behaviour was under scrutiny. The authors made an effort to turn these interviews into '*a conversation with a purpose*' to counteract the reactivity issues. Nevertheless, this study provides an insight in this context, which may be compared to others in future research. In addition, it provides an original contribution to knowledge on the causes and impact of banter and bullying in the occupational socialisation process in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades.

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Figure 1: The occupational socialisation process in Michelin-starred kitchen brigades
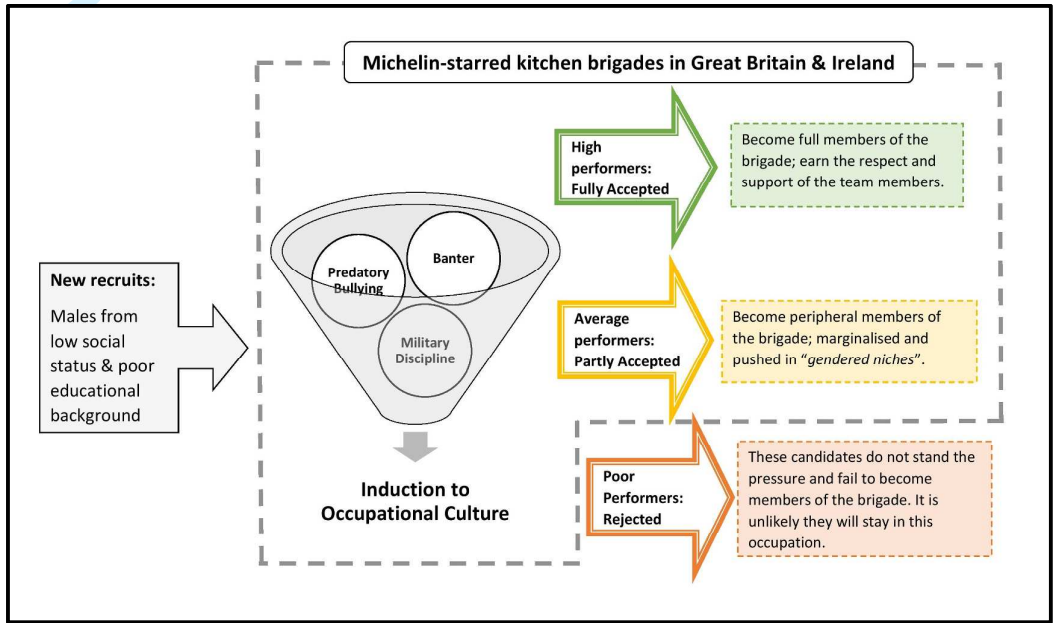
Table 1: Participant restaurant & chefs' profile

	Restaurant & Location	Chef's Gender & Nationality		Restaurant & Location	Chef's Gender & Nationality
1.	Ynyshir Hall Powys, Wales	Male English	28.	The George Isle of Wight, England	Male English
2.	The Waterside Inn Berkshire, England	Male French	29.	Thornton's Restaurant Dublin 2, Ireland	Male Irish
3.	L'ortolan Berkshire, England	Male Scottish	30.	Gravetye Manor West Sussex, England	Male English
4.	Orrery London, England	Male English	31.	Restaurant Martin Wishart Edinburgh, Scotland	Male Scottish
5.	Andrew Fairlie at Gleneagles Perthshire, Scotland	Male Scottish	32.	The Goose Oxfordshire, England	Male English
6.	The Star Inn North Yorkshire, England	Male English	33.	Gidleigh Park Devon, England	Male English
7.	Arbutus London, England	Male English	34.	Restaurant Michael Deane Belfast, Northern Ireland	Male Irish
8.	The Ledbury London, England	Male Australian	35.	Restaurant Nathan Outlaw Cornwall, England	Male English
9.	Summer Isles Ross-shire, Scotland	Male Scottish	36.	Northcote Manor Lancashire, England	Male English
10.	Bath Priory Bath, England	Male English	37.	The Longridge Restaurant Lancashire, England	Male English
11.	Hibiscus London, England	Male French	38.	The Square London, England	Male English
12.	Midsummer House Cambridgeshire, England	Male English	39.	Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons Oxfordshire, England	Male French
13.	L'Ecrivain Dublin 2, Ireland	Male Irish	40.	The Castle Somerset, England	Male English
14.	The Capital London, England	Male French	41.	The River Café London, England	Female English
15.	Yorke Arms North Yorkshire, England	Female English	42.	Chapter One Dublin 1, Ireland	Male Irish
16.	Morston Hall Norfolk, England	Male English	43.	The River Café London, England	Female American
17.	The Greyhound Hampshire, England	Female South African	44.	Restaurant Sat Bains Nottinghamshire, England	Male English
18.	1 Lombard Street London, England	Male Austrian	45.	Pied à Terre London, England	Male Australian
19.	The Fat Duck Berkshire, England	Male English	46.	The Box Tree West Yorkshire, England	Male English
20.	Lucknam Park Wiltshire, England	Male Welsh	47.	L'enclume Cumbria, England	Male English
21.	JSW Hampshire, England	Male English	48.	Ockenden Manor West Sussex, England	Male English
22.	La Trompette London, England	Male English	49.	The Clock House Surrey, England	Male English
23.	Maze London, England	Male English	50.	The Old Vicarage South Yorkshire, England	Female English
24.	Number One at The Balmoral Edinburgh, Scotland	Male English	51.	Tom Aikens Restaurant London, England	Male English
25.	The New Angel Devon, England	Male English	52.	The Hand & Flowers Buckinghamshire, England	Male English
26.	The Vineyard at Stockcross Berkshire, England	Male English	53.	Plumed Horse Edinburgh, Scotland	Male English
27.	Braidwoods Ayrshire, Scotland	Male Scottish	54.	L'Escargot London, England	Male English