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*The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 97, No. 5 (Mar., 1992), 1268-1294.

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*The American Journal of Sociology* is currently published by The University of Chicago Press.

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# The Culture of Production: Aesthetic Choices and Constraints in Culinary Work<sup>1</sup>

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The creation of objects of “aesthetic value” is not merely a topic of philosophical speculation, but is a distinctly sociological activity. Each occupation maintains a sense of superior production (an “occupational aesthetic”) that is not reducible to organizational demands. This perspective extends the production of culture approach that sees art as being like all work, suggesting, in contrast, that all work is like art. An aesthetic component to work is reflected in the desire to produce objects (or perform tasks) so as to demonstrate the competence of the worker, as exemplified in a case study of work in four restaurant kitchens. The production of quality is not unbounded, as client demands, organizational efficiency, and the organization’s resource base have effects. The centrality of an aesthetic orientation depends upon the market niche of one’s organization, career stage in the occupation, and the nature of the work task.

*De gustibus non disputandum.* [Latin proverb]

How is “good” work possible, given demands for autonomy and organizational constraints on that autonomy? Unfortunately sociologists of work have been little concerned with how work gets done, as that doing relates to questions of style and form: the aesthetics of work. We have lost sight of the conditions that produce “quality,” while emphasizing the technical, functional, and goal-directed doings of workers and how workers attempt to undercut authority in the workplace. This choice means that we often examine work worlds from the outside, little realiz-

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Therese Baker, Howard S. Becker, Harold Bershad, Jacqueline Boles, Charles Bosk, Priscilla Clark, Terry Clark, George Dickie, William Finlay, Wendy Griswold, Larry Gross, Hans Haferkamp, Sherryl Kleinman, Michal McCall, Charles Stevens, Gerald Suttles, Doris Taub, Richard Taub, and, especially, Robert Faulkner for comments and critiques on earlier versions of this material. Correspondence should be addressed to Gary Alan Fine, Department of Sociology, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602.

ing that what is useful to the consumer may (or may not) be elegant to the worker. We do not examine ways in which organizations facilitate and restrain occupational aesthetics. This lack of theoretical interest in form and content may be excused in studies of occupations we label “industrial” or “professional,” but it is curious that this deemphasis on the sensory components of work occurs in studies of occupations that involve aesthetic production.

Extending a “production of culture” approach (Peterson 1979; Becker 1974; Hirsch 1972), which analyzes cultural production by the same tools as industrial work, I argue that (1) issues of quality are central to production and that process involves “aesthetic choices,” (2) aesthetic choices are a form of organizational decisions, are capable of being negotiated, and are not fully reducible to organization demands, (3) organizational features encourage, channel, and limit explicitly aesthetic choices, and (4) organizations can define their own aesthetics, given their placement within a market niche and clients’ definitions. There has been a tendency in sociology of culture (see Wolff 1983) to downplay aesthetic choices, effects, and constraints. My goal is to demonstrate how options and constraints produce the expressive form of work products: what we might term the *culture of production*. I hope to demonstrate how organizational, market, and client constraints affect the qualities of work products.

In speaking of the expressive side of production, I select the slippery term “aesthetics” to refer to the sensory component of production.<sup>2</sup> Why aesthetics? This concept is the broadest of a cluster of terms that involve the sensory qualities of experience and objects: beauty, creativity, elegance, goodness, and the like. For purposes of this analysis, an aesthetic object (or act) is defined as an object (or act) that is intended to produce a sensory response in an audience (e.g., Shepard 1987; Wolff 1983). No special brief other than its utility and general reasonableness exists for this definition. It captures the cognitive (satisfaction) and affective (sensory) components of aesthetic judgments, and also includes the intentional quality of human action. Aesthetics reminds us that these choices are distinct from purely instrumental and efficient choices: workers care

<sup>2</sup> The study of aesthetics has been filled with conflicting assumptions and opinions. Philosophers rarely choose to examine situations in which aesthetic decisions are made in the messy reality of everyday life and suggest that aesthetic judgments transcend the production of an aesthetic object and its socially situated character (e.g., Diffey 1984; Hincks 1984). These explanations, focusing on qualities of mind (Aldrich 1966; Stolnitz 1960) or the qualities of an object (Beardsley 1958) that produce the recognition that one has had an aesthetic experience (Wolff 1983; Shepard 1987), downplay the sociological interest in the interactional, relational, or institutional features of aesthetic evaluation (see Dickie 1974; Danto 1981).

about "style," and not only about technical quality. Although form and function are typically intertwined, aesthetics refers specifically to the production of form, not only to function. Attempts to produce "good work" often involve an intimate linkage between form and function, and functionally perfect objects may be seen as having perfect form. Judgments of quality adhere to both form and function, although the focus here is on the former. In cooking, and other work arenas, the sensory characteristics of objects (and services) have a special standing in appreciation both among workers and publics.<sup>3</sup>

Sociologists recognize that the practical creation of industrial objects is a fundamentally social enterprise, constructed through interaction and organizational constraint.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the feeling for form or creative impulse, as well as its limitations, needs to be emphasized in theorizing on the structure of work and occupations. Not doing so gives a distorted picture of the workplace, making it alternatively seem too instrumental (denying a sense of identity and craft to workers) or too filled with conflict (emphasizing how workers are separated from their work and their supervisors). Work matters to workers, and workers have craft standards by which they judge work products and performance that transcend the narrow goals of producing things with efficiency and to bureaucratic specification. This connection between the worker and the work is central to the occupational identity of workers. Craft is a part of all work life.

I examine a single occupation, professional cooking, hoping to demonstrate four things. First, cooking, like all occupations, involves an aesthetic concern, which takes its form in decisions about the sensory components of food. Second, the practical doing of cooking is an everyday accomplishment and must be negotiated in practice by workers. Third, culinary production is channeled by social and economic constraints and by occupational segmentation. Finally, this argument is generalized to

<sup>3</sup> In this article I bracket the origin of aesthetic choices, wishing to see how such choices are constrained and utilized. My concern is not to trace the dynamics by which particular judgments come to be seen as aesthetic (see Fine 1989), but only those choices that have been accepted by a group of workers. Nor am I concerned with the qualities of the object involved. Griswold (1986) argues that the aesthetic involves both elegance (simplicity) and beauty (amplitude) to produce a response. While I use Griswold's distinction to focus on the characteristics of objects, my definition emphasizes the relationship between actors and objects.

<sup>4</sup> Sociologists of aesthetics interested in comparative research must confront two basic presuppositions: (1) that all occupations have aesthetic components, that is, that sensory issues are a part of all work, and (2) that occupations vary on the self-consciousness and centrality of these aesthetic issues to the work. Because this research is grounded on a single occupational case study, I can do no more than suggest the plausibility of these claims.

other occupations, suggesting an integration of the sociologies of work and culture.

### THE WORLD OF RESTAURANTS

Whatever cooks may wish to think of their own work, restaurant managers often refer to this economic segment as “the hospitality industry.” This phrase reminds us that restaurants are industrial organizations operated for profit by capitalists. Although food must look, smell, taste, and feel good to maintain an audience, this is not sufficient. Food must be priced to be profitable and must be produced consistently and efficiently. Among the techniques used by restaurant managers to achieve profit are paying low wages, hiring few employees, and procuring inexpensive raw materials and equipment. Food services are caught between the demands of aesthetic creation and the viselike grip of free-market capitalism.

Cooks suffer the strains of a set of conflicting ideologies that push them to be artists, professionals, businessmen, and manual laborers (Fine 1982). Because professional cooking is situated amid demands for aesthetic choices, consistency, efficiency, autonomy, and highly skilled technical work (Hall 1975, pp. 188–200), it provides a challenging site from which to examine the development, conflicts, and negotiations of sensory judgments at work. Whyte (1948; Gross 1958) notes that restaurants are both production and service units, providing the cook with two separate “authorities”—managers and customers—adding further strains. Whereas factory workers, beauticians, and sculptors do not have the same balance of concerns, some of the same dilemmas are also present in these work worlds—all occupations combine expressive and instrumental demands, personal freedom, and organizational control in varying degrees.

I conducted participant observation in four restaurants in the Twin Cities metropolitan area (St. Paul/Minneapolis and their surrounding suburbs), spending a month observing and taking notes in the kitchen of each restaurant during all periods in which the restaurant was open.<sup>5</sup> In each restaurant I interviewed all full-time cooks—a total of 30 interviews. Interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes, with some over three hours long. Field notes and interviews from this material are identified throughout the text.

The four restaurants provide a reasonable range of professional cooking environments in the Twin Cities. These four restaurants are not a representative sample of all restaurants but represent the upper portion

<sup>5</sup> This constituted approximately 75–100 hours per restaurant.

of Minnesota restaurants in status; they are not “family,” “fast food,” or “ethnic” restaurants:

1. La Pomme de Terre is an haute cuisine French restaurant, by all accounts one of the best and most innovative restaurants in the upper Midwest.
2. The Owl's Nest is a continental style restaurant, best known for the quality of its fresh fish. Its primary clientele is businessmen, and the restaurant is a multiyear Holiday Award winner.
3. Stan's Steakhouse is a popular neighborhood restaurant located in a middle-class area, not known for the quality of its restaurants. It has received metropolitan awards for the quality of its beef.
4. The Blakemore Hotel is part of a chain of hotels that is not esteemed for the quality of its cuisine. The hotel is modern, catering especially to business travelers. The hotel has a banquet service and operates a coffeshop and hotel dining room.

The restaurants vary widely in the number of customers served—from 500 on a busy weekend evening at Stan's to about 75 on the same evening at La Pomme de Terre—but each hires from five to 10 cooks of whom usually three or four are at work at any one time.

Although there is not space for a full ethnography of restaurant life (see Fine [1987]), the large majority of cooks (80%) observed were male; most were in their twenties. While the background and training of the cooks varied considerably—individually and by restaurant—each of the head chefs was trained at a local technical-vocational institute, and many of their assistants were similarly trained (for details of this training see Fine [1985]). This was especially true at La Pomme de Terre and the Owl's Nest, whereas at Stan's Steakhouse many cooks were promoted from dishwashers and most did not see cooking as a long-term occupation.

## DOING AESTHETICS

All work is socially situated and constrained environmentally and organizationally. No matter how idealistic the goals of the worker, ultimately these goals are embedded in the negotiated compromises of work. Howard Becker, discussing art as work, claims that aesthetics is ultimately activity rather than a doctrine (Becker 1982, p. 131)—it is an everyday accomplishment. Theory only flickers around the edges of the consciousness of workers. It follows from this that most workers are not explicit about (or even conscious of) their aesthetic decisions.<sup>6</sup> They desire to

<sup>6</sup> Although all cooks have aesthetic orientations, most do not fit in that category of workers that we describe as artists. For an occupation to be an art world, it requires (1) that a group of persons be working toward a common end. The group should be

produce objects or services that are pleasing sensually, but typically the basis on which they realize this is vague. For example, a hotel cook told me: "When I make my soup . . . I try to make it look as nice as possible, and to taste. I feel I take a lot of pride in it. When other people make soup it doesn't always look like mine" (field notes, Blakemore Hotel). This worker has a generalized sense of "niceness" that includes looks and taste, but analysis does not transcend this partially inarticulate sentiment (Fine 1987).

The content of this sensibility varies by cook and restaurant and is further complicated by the realization that cooking involves situated choices. Still, all cooks hope to present what they consider appealing dishes of which they are proud—food that will appeal to their customers' senses, not merely food that will satiate them or make them healthy (the functional characteristics of food). This culinary evaluation involves numerous senses. The head chef at La Pomme de Terre responded when I asked what he liked best about cooking:

Making something that I think is just the greatest. I did a bouillabaisse . . . and I thought it was just the greatest. . . . It had a lot of seafood in it, a lot of shellfish, shrimp, lobster, mussels, clams, and about six other seafood items in it, and the sauce was a somewhat thin, primarily lobster-based sauce, lots of butter, and very, very rich, and the thing that was best about it was everything was made to where, typically if you have bouillabaisse, you have to hold onto something with the tongs and dig meat out of the shell and stuff like that, but I prepared it so that everything was done for you. . . . It was not only tasty and unusually fantastic as far as flavor, smell, and sight; it was easy to eat. (Interview, La Pomme de Terre)

The range of senses is implicated in this cook's sense of his culinary triumph.<sup>7</sup> Lest one believe that this sensory concern applies only to those finer restaurants (where some might claim the cooks really are artists), it applies to the steakhouse as well. The chef at the steakhouse responded

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aware of each other and should have social and professional contacts; (2) that the group have an artistic theory to guide them and to demonstrate their shared commitment. A theory of art is essential (see Danto 1964, p. 581); and (3) that there be a set of recognized institutional gatekeepers and gatekeeping organizations that choose candidates for ascension into the canons of art—what Dickie (1974) refers to as the "institution of art." Cooks in the Twin Cities lack tight networks, a widely held aesthetic theory, and acceptance by artistic gatekeepers. While one might discover a culinary art world in small sectors of the hospitality industry in New York, New Orleans, or San Francisco, throughout most of the rest of the country, cooks just cook.

<sup>7</sup> "Occupational triumphs" consist of occasions in which workers feel that they have operated to the limits of their jobs—they are "pushing the envelope." Working within the rules, they have transcended them, demonstrating in their own minds at least that they are not mere workers, but true artists, true professionals, or the like. They have produced not just an object but a memory that they can narrate to convince others of their virtues, even given constraints and normal operating procedures.

to my question about what a piece of baked salmon should be: "It should be just very lightly, you should see a tinge of brown on the outside, but it shouldn't be overcooked. It should be just done. Nice and moist" (interview, Stan's). Again, a range of sensory modalities affects the evaluation of food, even where one might assume that such interest is limited.

Evaluation need not only involve the production of sensory appealing products, but may also adhere in the sense of doing—an experience that we might liken to that of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). Here the doing is the end. Some cooks speak of themselves in terms of their actions (Clark 1975, p. 33), making cooking into a performance art:

It's very much like an actor preparing to go on stage and go into work and start in a quiet pace and figure what you're going to be doing; you get your equipment ready, sharpen knives, cut meats, trim your fish, and make your vegetables and make your sauces and get everything set up and it gets a little bit hotter; people start talking more and the waiters start coming in, and this is going on over here, and by the time everything starts coming together, it's like you're ready to go onstage. It's there. . . . Once the curtain goes up, everyone knows exactly what they're supposed to do. (Interview, La Pomme de Terre)

For some, the criteria for quality labor are primarily in the product (the sight, feel, taste, or smell), for others they are in the performance, but for each, the work has a style, a sense of form, an aesthetic.

Ideally this evaluation should be grounded within the occupation—although products are typically also judged by clients and on occasion performance is as well (as in the proliferating demonstration kitchens). The evaluation of production is not only a function of demands of customers and managers; cooks see themselves as having independent standards of judgment. Certainly these independent standards cannot radically vary from the demands of their customers, even for elite chefs (Kimball 1985, p. 18), and there are critical situations in which clients' demands take precedence, but cooks have their own judgments that are not reducible to organizational requirements. Management and customers do demand aesthetic production, and, so are in sympathy with the goals of the cooks, but the constraints that they demand and their standards of aesthetics may limit what cooks are able to produce. All parties want good work, but the meanings and the external considerations differ.

The salience of evaluations by cooks is evident when workers are creating "unique" items. This follows from the observation that the more special the product and the less routine the task, the less an organization can rely on formal rules, and the greater the autonomy that must be given to workers (e.g., Woodward 1965; Faulkner 1971; Coser, Kadushin, and Powell 1982). Individualized production technologies lead to choices, but can also simultaneously (as I shall describe later) lead to a



recognition of the lack of autonomy from constraints. When cooks can create without pressure, they do, and are proud of the results. For example, one cook, preparing a wedding dinner, carved a pair of birds of paradise from apples and sent them to the bride and groom as *his* gift for their marriage (personal communication, Robert Pankin, 1987). Likewise, after making a chocolate cake, the pastry chef at La Pomme de Terre added four raspberries and drizzled chocolate sauce over them, commenting, "I'll put some fruit on here so it looks a little more abstract" (field notes, La Pomme de Terre). Her touch was not a result of management policy (although she was expected to make "beautiful" desserts); rather, the standards and techniques she used developed out of her sense of what it meant to be a competent pastry chef.

Although cooks have some measure of control over the sensory characteristics of the food they prepare, the doing of this aesthetic work is an everyday achievement; it is not merely grounded in theoretical choices. The production of "high quality" items, as defined by cooks, depends on a balance of culinary ideals (e.g., using natural ingredients) and production constraints. The ends direct production choices, as in two separate discussions of the color of a sauce:

The head chef at the Owl's Nest pours a considerable amount of Gravy Bouquet in his Brown Sauce to make it "richer." He then adds white pepper and stirs the sauce. He tells me that: "Black pepper shows up and looks like mouse turds. Little black specks. So I use white pepper." White pepper is also added to the restaurant's mashed potatoes. (Field notes, Owl's Nest)

The head day cook is preparing cheese sauce, using powdered cheese. He adds a capful of orange food color to the pot, saying that this makes the sauce look more like cheese, and, if you were actually to add cheese, "it gets too sandy." (Field notes, Owl's Nest)

These cooks are making decisions in practice. They believe, certainly correctly, that the visual appeal of the food, the first thing that both cooks and customers notice, affects the way the dish tastes—sensory realms are interconnected (e.g., Moir 1936; Pangborn 1960).<sup>8</sup>

Cooks can be admiring or critical toward what they prepare, based on their evaluation of the outcomes, both instrumentally (success in sales and customer appreciation) and in terms of their occupational standards. This evaluation implies a realm of objects that are considered lacking in

<sup>8</sup> For a more extensive analysis of aesthetic ideologies in food preparation see Fine (1985). In practice, cooks negotiate which sensory realm is most significant for particular dishes, but the visual appeal of a dish is typically given greatest weight. This may be because the visual realm is the first encountered or because it is in this sensory domain that schoolchildren are more extensively trained—art classes typically lack stoves or perfume atomizers.

these components that other objects have. No occupational world can long survive if participants judge everything equal to everything else.

For collective judgment, differentiation in the evaluation of produced objects is essential.<sup>9</sup> In cooking this judgment may involve any of the relevant senses. For example, one cook criticized a bunch of grapes as having “bad lines.” An outsider might be confused how grapes can have bad lines, until it is learned that the ideal of a bunch of grapes is a pyramid and that other bunches meet this criterion better. Crepes can be described as “lopsided,” implying agreement that crepes should be circular. A more detailed example is the condemnation of a particular dish that “doesn’t work”:

Howie and Tim taste the beet fettucini that they had planned to serve with a tomato sauce—an orange-red sauce on top of a crimson pasta. Tim says to Howie: “There’s something that didn’t work. It looks like puke.” Howie adds: “It tastes like Chef Boyardee. It tastes like Spaghetti O’s. It tastes like snot rag.” They decide not to add the sauce. (Field notes, La Pomme de Terre)

This judgment is predicated on their view of what constitutes proper food presentation—which colors go together and what the taste and texture of a properly made sauce should be. Such standards, while based within the occupation, must be echoed by at least some customers. Although the judgments of cooks are never far from their sense of the customers in their market niche, when being creative they use themselves as guides:

You have the idea in your mind of how something should come out and you have to use your hands and eyes and taste and nose. You have to make it come out the way . . . you want it. (Interview, Stan’s)

The thing is to just have the guts to go in and do it. Just try it. Not worry about is this thing going to work or not. . . . It’s color, flavor, texture, smell. It’s all those things put together and somehow I have a sense of organizing these things and putting them together. (Interview, La Pomme de Terre)

Cooks do not discuss these judgments in terms of their customers, but in terms of what they believe works, even if they lack a formal theory of what they are doing (Sclafani 1979). There is a set of aesthetic conventions that are based on occupational standards (Becker 1982), separable from organizational demands, but which must be fitted into the constraints imposed (or believed to be imposed) by external sources and by

<sup>9</sup> My argument is that Kant’s idea of free judgments of taste is unlikely to be made in most practical aesthetic worlds; rather, aesthetic judgments have a relational character. We judge things in relationship or in comparison with other objects. At some level we are deciding, not whether something is good, but whether it is good of its kind (Kant 1952; Shepard 1987).

the structure of the occupation itself. Occupations struggle to gain control over criteria for judgment from regulators, employers, and clients. Although the recognition of this struggle has been a staple of the analysis of "professions" and other occupations, it applies equally to the control of the aesthetic choices in work.

## CONSTRAINTS AND NEGOTIATIONS

Given claims of independence within an occupation, on the one hand, and structural limits, on the other, how do workers produce objects that they consider satisfying and of high quality? What are the dimensions that channel how workers do good work? In order to examine this question, I describe three forces external to occupational autonomy that constrain production choices and show how workers cope with these constraints. In cooking, as elsewhere, organizational constraints not only determine the products but ultimately shape the values of workers. On some occasions, cooks chafe under the restrictions of the workplace, but often these restrictions are taken for granted and treated as merely a reality of the occupation.

Cooking, like all occupations, as Anselm Strauss (1978) emphasizes, is grounded in negotiations and compromises. Cooks strive to control the means and circumstances of production, both to make their own day passably pleasant and to permit them to be satisfied with what they produce.<sup>10</sup> The proximal source of constraints is a restaurant management that depends on the loyalty of its customers, and this pressure is filtered through the head chef who is given an annual or monthly budget with which to work. The irony is that for the same reason management also supports and encourages aesthetic presentations, as long as this good work remains profitable. To satisfy management the chef must manipulate the staff to make a profit and to produce good food. At three of the restaurants studied, the chef received a bonus if he operated within the budget. This control is furthered through the internalized acceptance of these economic and temporal constraints by most cooks.

The ultimate dilemma for cooks is the recognition that often they must serve "bad food"—food that they believe is not up to their own standards of quality, but they have no choice.<sup>11</sup> It is difficult to propose rules for when "poorly prepared" food will be recooked—the etcetera rule,

<sup>10</sup> Some workers at the hotel kitchen would come in an hour early (without overtime) in order to set themselves up, feeling that the volunteered time would be worthwhile in improving the quality of their production and permitting them a less hassled day.

<sup>11</sup> Comparative data indicate that this is not unique to this scene, as Walker and Guest (1952, p. 60) describe similar attitudes of autoworkers.

which suggests that no complete set of rules can be formulated, is too prominent (Garfinkel 1967)—but the cost of the food, the time for cooking, the pressure in the kitchen, the status of the customer, the conscientiousness and mood of the cooks, what is wrong (and if it can be partially corrected without recooking), and the status of the restaurant all affect the decision. These decisions can be negotiated among the kitchen staff and with management on the spot, but all cooks must recognize that they must serve food that they know is not up to their standards. Cooks shrug when they send substandard food to unknowing customers and respond sarcastically when, at times, servers announce that they were complimented on these dishes.

One cook described her frustration with a rack of lamb: "I've racked some lamb . . . that was just an abortion. It was just awful; I rolled the pastry too thin and the lamb was overcooked and . . . it came out looking not like it was supposed to. That makes me feel bad, even though that's fine and you have to use it. You can't throw it away, but I feel really bad" (interview, La Pomme de Terre).

Cooks are dismayed when serving food of poor quality, and like so many workers, they deny that they really care by turning the offensive food into a sick joke, engraving role distance in their performances:

The watercress sauce, created for the salmon appetizer, has separated. Tim (the Head Chef) says sarcastically: "Oh, well, they all look like shit. We don't have to worry." Gerry, his co-worker, jokes: "The room's dark." (Field notes, La Pomme de Terre)

Such joking is legitimate in that cooks have other occupational rhetorics than that of artist to rely upon; for that moment they can constitute themselves as manual laborers, as alienated as any. In occupations, such as cooking, that can draw upon several occupational rhetorics,<sup>12</sup> workers can strategically employ these to preserve their self-integrity. They project themselves into the food that they produce, seeing inner qualities in the outcome. When the food does not meet their standards, they must use techniques for backing away from the equation of self and product. The strategic use of rhetoric is one way of coping with the personal tensions of presentation of self. Switching the available metaphors of their work can serve important ends in preserving role distance and in indicating their control (Fine 1982).

Having demonstrated that cooks are limited in their ability to produce

<sup>12</sup> I have spoken of cooks as drawing from the rhetorics of business, art, manual labor, and professionalism to define their work and protect their selves (Fine 1982). Other rhetorics such as craft or sales might affect this occupation on certain occasions.

dishes they consider of high quality, I turn to three forces that prevent their achieving their occupational ideals: customer taste (client demands), time (organizational efficiency), and the economics of the restaurant industry (the resource base of the occupation). These three factors cause cooks to compromise their own taste. Through the constraints of production the production of culture model fits into an analysis of aesthetic choices. To be considered problematic, production depends on a recognition of aesthetic options for constraints.

### Client Demands

The restaurant cook prepares food for an audience that does not belong to his or her occupation—an audience that may not have the same standards or even be aware of the existence of standards. Yet, both cooks and customers agree that restaurant food should be aesthetic, whether or not they agree on these expressive dimensions.

Because of the power of the market, autonomy is given up to the expectations of one's audience (Arian 1971). As a result of the loss of autonomy, workers may resent those they work for who do not have their standards of quality and competence—not just bosses, whose sin is cynicism, but also clients, who are seen as culpably ignorant.

Unlike such occupations as beauticians, plastic surgeons, and house-painters in which workers negotiate directly with those who ultimately judge them, cooks must rely on their typification of their audience, given their understanding of the restaurant's market niche.<sup>13</sup> Their evaluation is mediated through managers and servers. Those standing beyond the output boundary are not easily known (see Hirsch 1972; Dimaggio 1977). Dishes are cooked for typifications, not persons; yet, it is persons who have the options to complain. Customers can judge the dish, whereas cooks have difficulty judging the customer.

As a consequence, cooks have developed techniques for dealing with the vagaries of customer taste. At the steakhouse and the continental restaurant it was standard procedure to undercook beef slightly. This allowed for correction if the customer wanted the meat more thoroughly cooked. Steaks can never be cooked less. Still, these cooks became annoyed when customers insisted on having their steaks well done. One

<sup>13</sup> Market niches are in part a function of conscious decisions by managers and chefs to capture audiences. In this they create an establishment that will provide an experience that appeals to a potential pool of clients (e.g., Finkelstein 1989; Shelton 1990). In contrast, niches are occasionally carved by customers who discover establishments; then managers must ensure that they continue to meet the desires of these clients.

Friday night at Stan's, a large number of steaks were sent back, to the cooks' frustration:

One waitress says to the head chef, referring to the customers: "Are those steaks burnt up enough?" The chef responds: "I hope so. I don't want them." Later another cook comments about the evening: "Bunch of assholes out there. They don't know what they want." He means that they don't want what he wishes to serve them. (Field notes, Stan's)

The problem is equally relevant at La Pomme de Terre where the canons of *nouvelle cuisine* emphasize not overcooking the food and spoiling its "natural" taste. These cooks, too, became annoyed when their "perfectly" cooked dishes (pink duck breast, translucent fish) are returned for additional work. Not only is the cook's ability questioned by the customer, but cooks believe that by accepting the motto, "The customer is always right," they are prostituting themselves,<sup>14</sup> even though they hope that they may eventually educate their customers (see Becker 1963, pp. 79–100). By pleasing the customer, they deny the validity of their standards. The legitimacy of their aesthetic standards is being invalidated by external demands.

Spices and condiments pose a similar problem. The head chef at the Owl's Nest notes: "You season things, but not completely seasoned. The first thing the customer does is see the salt and sprinkle it on, pepper and et cetera. Takes a bite and puts it down and says this has too much salt on it, and take it back. He was the one who put the salt on it; we didn't. So we underseason things. You have to think for the customer. . . . You have to think of everybody's taste" (interview, Owl's Nest). Even if cooks feel that some foods are unappetizing, they must serve them to customers who enjoy them. Further, even though they personally feel that some foods taste "bad" (e.g., fried liver, spinach), they must learn how to cook them in such a way that the customer who likes them will know that they are cooked correctly, that they represent the best professional practice. They must role-play the standards of their clients. This concern for customer taste (and its limits on cooks) is evident at La Pomme de Terre in the selection of fish specials:

I ask Tim how they select the two fish specials each night. Tim tells me: "We try to have variety. If we have an unusual one, like with peach, we'll have a conventional one, like the monkfish." (Field notes, La Pomme de Terre)

Customer taste is always taken into account, often explicitly, by cooks.

<sup>14</sup> This is a problem that is faced by portrait painters who give up their artistic autonomy to the client. The client feels that he or she has the right to determine his or her personal likeness (see Stewart 1988).

This differentiates them from the higher reaches of the fine arts where, rhetorically at least, obeisance to client demands is considered subversive to an artist's occupational standing.

### Organizational Efficiency

Organizations are expected to produce a certain number of products or services in a set time period (Lauer 1981). As a result, temporal demands constrain production decisions in restaurant kitchens (Fine 1990). Customers will wait only so long for any dish to be prepared, and cooks have limited time in which they can prepare for dinner, given the size of the staff, affecting what can be served. These temporal constraints suggest why, discomfiting as it may be, when food falls on a dirty counter or floor after being cooked, cooks will wipe or rinse it, and then serve it, with the customer none the wiser. The illusion of quality demands hidden affronts. Since cooking is a backstage occupation, innumerable depredations to the foodstuffs are possible (e.g., Orwell 1933, pp. 80–81). A steak that takes 30 minutes to cook must be served because of customers' temporal expectations; customers would never wait for a "second try." Likewise, if a fillet of fish breaks while being removed from the pan to the plate, the cook will rearrange it as nicely as possible, but still serve it. The production features of the kitchen and, ironically, the demands of the client, permit no alternative.

Time also affects specific tasks in the kitchen, which, although they would make the food more appealing, cannot be tried because of time constraints. One cook explained that he wishes to do a "French cut" on a rack of lamb, but adds "I'd never have the time to do it" (interview, Blakemore Hotel). Likewise, cooks do not have the time to improve poor quality produce:

Martha (the day cook) says to Doug (the head chef): "The radishes are bad, but I don't have time to clean them up. . . . These look awful." They are dirty, discolored, and misshapen. Doug sorts through them, and throws out a few of the worst ones, and they serve the others. (Field notes, Stan's)

The problem of timing is particularly acute at Stan's Steakhouse, which, of the four, serves the largest number of customers. Often plates are not wiped off if sauce spills. As one cook joked on a busy evening: "I'm going for numbers, not for quality." Although this is not entirely true, it is truer than it might be under ideal circumstances. *Quality* production is a luxury; production is a necessity.

Time constraints apply not only to particular dishes, but to the creation of more elaborate food presentations. As one cook remarked: "To be creative you need time. You can't always have a deadline behind you.

Because when you do, you're in a rush. And then when you're in a rush you tend to fail with the creativity. 'I need this by such and such a time,' and then you start getting out the same old thing" (interview, Blakemore Hotel). The head chef at La Pomme de Terre learned the day before that he must prepare a large press party for his employer. The chef confides to me that despite an impressive menu (sole turban, smoked goose breast with port wine and fruit, goose liver mousse, and duck galantine): "It's not going to be as good as I'd like. I only learned about it today. I'd like to make a grandiose first impression. . . . It's a matter of pride. The artist's pride is at stake" (field notes, La Pomme de Terre).

Ideas for a large display with fresh lobsters and a lobster mousse had to be shelved for lack of time. Although the owner felt that the party was a great success, the head chef was disappointed because it did not measure up to the quality of which he felt they were capable. While the organization was technically efficient—it did produce *something*—it was not sufficiently aesthetically productive, given the aesthetic standards of the chef.

### Resource Base

The final constraint is the cost of materials. Cooks must remind themselves that ultimately they are part of corporate capitalism—what Blau (1984, p. 10), studying architects, terms "professional practice." Indeed, in few other market segments does a truly free market operate as clearly as in the restaurant industry.

Price and quality combine together to determine restaurant success, as judged by external publics. Restaurants are known directly by clients who learn about them through advertising, experience, word of mouth, the publicity of managers, and institutionalized gatekeepers, such as critics and journalists. On some fundamental level, price and quality conflict, and the manager and head chef must decide to which market niche to appeal, given their perception of the organizational ecology. The head chef at the Owl's Nest recognized these economic trade-offs: "We always have variables. The compromise in your mind is using the best you can use, and still putting it into an affordable level for the average customer" (interview, Owl's Nest). As decisions are locally situated, this trade-off involves specific decisions about particular products, rather than an absolute rule of thumb:

In theory the head chef of the Owl's Nest believes in using the best that is available. He explains: "The customer may not be able to tell in the finished product. The finished product might taste the same, but it should be made that way." However, when I ask later why he adds cheap Ameri-



can cooking wine to sauces, rather than expensive French wine, he claims: "People can't tell the difference." (Field notes, Owl's Nest)

Of course, the question is best for what? Imported truffles, beluga caviar, and Chateau Margaux add enormously to the cost, but only slightly to the taste. For this chef the possibility of adding these other expensive ingredients is not even a part of his consideration, until a sociologist brings them up. The economic reality of food preparation affects his aesthetic vision.

According to the staff at La Pomme de Terre, what distinguishes them from elite American restaurants is not the quality of the preparations, but "the touches"—those extra garnishes that restaurants can afford to add if they have a large staff and a loyal clientele. They compare their restaurant to others of which they are aware, and find themselves wanting:

The owner confides to me that one of the Twin Cities restaurant critics said that La Pomme de Terre was the best restaurant in the Twin Cities, but not as good as Le Perroquet (Chicago) or Lutece (New York). He explains: "I asked him why. He said, 'The touches.' . . . They have more people in the kitchen. The difference is volume. They can count on being sold-out every night of the week. We can't." (Field notes, La Pomme de Terre)

Timing, customer taste, and resources merge to prevent this restaurant from reaching its potential, as filtered through the owner's estimation of the Twin Cities restaurant market. A year later, this man opened a restaurant that was more expensive and formal than La Pomme de Terre, and included "the touches." It failed; the market was not there. Cultural products have different price elasticity, even within particular niches. Some food prices are simply considered "obscene." There is an obdurate reality that prevents unconstrained aesthetic activity.

As a consequence, cost must be considered by decision makers. The staff at La Pomme de Terre experimented with different blends of coffee to find a mix that had the richness of expensive coffee with as much inexpensive coffee as possible. Likewise, the pastry chef commented about a raspberry-lemon gateau: "It's called, 'Let's be creative using the leftovers'" (field notes, La Pomme de Terre).

The skill in running a profitable organization is to provide goods or services that clients desire and that appear to be worth more than they cost to provide. Some foods seem expensive, but are not. When the head chef at La Pomme de Terre created Saffron Pasta with Lobster Sauce, he noted that the food cost "is not all that high." Likewise, the head chef at the Blakemore Hotel explains that salami horns filled with cream cheese look elegant, but are inexpensive.

An ability to compromise on quality when one's judgments conflict with the economics of the organization is crucial for advancement. The head chef at La Pomme de Terre had planned to promote his head day cook to sous (assistant) chef, but decided against it:

Because he's such a renegade. I can't rely on him to do what I want him to do. . . . As an example, last week he's been doing that veal special that he came up with and it's a real beautiful dish. He takes the veal roulade and he puts prosciutto ham and goat's cheese with herbs and folds it over and sautés it, and serves it with tomato sauce. It's a good dish. He had a couple in there that were getting a little bit dark. The veal starts to get a sort of grey when it gets old, but they were fine; they were just starting to turn grey. I looked at them, and I said they're fine . . . and he was putting up a couple of veal specials, and I went in the walk-in and those suckers were sitting there . . . I called him in, and said, "What is that, for your mother or what? Come on and get moving. This is a restaurant." He's got such a paranoid pride over being criticized for something that he just took it upon himself to do it. . . . He doesn't have the concept that we're in business. He just thinks it's one big happy deal. (Interview, La Pomme de Terre)

This cook placed his standards of quality (standards with which in theory his head chef would agree) above the production needs of the organization, and, being unwilling to negotiate, lost his opportunity for promotion.<sup>15</sup> Cooks must keep one eye on the stove and the other on the marketplace, balancing their sensibilities with what the hospitality industry will permit. While chefs and cooks negotiate with each other, and chefs negotiate with managers as to the boundaries of their decision making and their commitment to quantity and quality (e.g., the number of scallops to serve or the time at which food begins to be "off"), an economic imperative channels the ability to produce.

#### THE SEGMENTATION OF AESTHETIC WORK

Although each occupation reveals concern with the expressive quality of production, comparative analysis would demonstrate that this concern is variable, not absolute; it certainly is expressed in different forms that may be more or less central to the doing of work. I have argued above that some outcomes and performances are seen by workers as having more value than others. Further, a determination of what constitutes quality is not absolute within an occupation or art world. There is no single aesthetic sense or unified set of conventions. Painters do not paint

<sup>15</sup> This is a story for those with a sentimental attachment to a happy ending: within a few years this young man had become head chef at an outstanding, creative restaurant in the Twin Cities. By then he had learned to control his employer's costs.

alike, and they do not believe that they should. Even the task influences one's orientation to work and the role that aesthetic or sensory concerns should have in production. Every occupation is socially segmented (Bucher 1962), and it is the effect of this segmentation that I wish to explore. Cooking is segmented on several dimensions; three of the most prominent are the restaurant's status, the cook's career stage, and the work task—reflecting differences among organizations, actors, and events.

### Restaurant Status

Cooks differ in their working environments—the types of restaurants for which they cook. Freeman and Hannan (1983), detailing the importance of market niche in organizational ecology, focused on the restaurant industry. Restaurants are competitive small businesses in a segmented environment. In this free market, product differentiation is crucial. That restaurants and their cooks have different standings and variable amounts of cultural capital is a function of the market niche to which the restaurant aspires and of the “background culture” of the cook (Fine 1979, 1989).<sup>16</sup> When the cook and the restaurant management do not share a cultural orientation, the cook must cook “up” or “down” to the level of the restaurant: the cook's display of his or her cultural capital becomes a form of impression management.

Some restaurant managers expect cooks to have a sharp sense of sensory or aesthetic issues in their cooking—to be aware of the subtle permutations of smell, taste, texture, and looks—and to use this culinary sense with relative autonomy. Cooks at La Pomme de Terre were more overtly concerned with individual choices than were cooks at the other restaurants, and they were given more autonomy in the expectation that they would be creative. These cooks never looked at recipes; they created new dishes or cooked from memory. The employees of the hotel kitchen and the steakhouse were less self-consciously concerned with the aesthetic quality of their dishes, although they made creative decisions and felt pride in the appearance and taste of their food. Time and motivation in these establishments sometimes led to food being served that might not

<sup>16</sup> Bourdieu (1984) uses food consumption in France as an indication of the cultural capital of the eater, but it is also true that food production is an indicator of the cultural capital of the cook. We are known by what we eat, but we are also known by what we cook. The more sophisticated cooks, better trained, raised in more sophisticated homes, or more impelled by the goals of their restaurant, are more attuned to the dishes that represent haute cuisine and demonstrate the existence of cultural capital.

have been served elsewhere (e.g., onion rings with breading that was falling off)—they did not have time for elegant and creative production.<sup>17</sup>

The self-image and market niche of a restaurant affects how workers view the sensory qualities of their production. Although McDonald's and Lutece have aesthetics associated with the work,<sup>18</sup> the cooks at the latter have more autonomy and their aesthetic decisions are more subtle and consequential. McDonald's has corporate aesthetic standards for the "design" of their food, set by the central office. Worker aesthetics at McDonald's involves problem solving of immediate production needs—following the preset rules with style, care, efficiency, and coping with customer demands.

### Career Stage

A concern with aesthetic issues has different salience at different stages of a cook's career. These stages are often correlated with organizational position because many workers move up the restaurant hierarchy as they demonstrate competency. Jobs change as individuals mature within their occupation and achieve higher status. Different values, goals, and opportunities affect how aesthetic preferences will affect actual production decisions.

Entry-level cooks are often required to perform routine manual labor, unlikely to be defined in terms of aesthetic choices. They may be asked to chop onions, peel potatoes, or destring celery. As they progress through their careers, they are given more responsibility, and with this responsibility comes the authority to know (Mukerji 1976)—to prepare and later to create complex dishes. This responsibility emerges when the cook demonstrates talent, competence, and conscientiousness to his or her supervisors. I asked a junior cook at La Pomme de Terre whether she had created any dishes:

Cook: I haven't been allowed the freedom to. I think I will.

Author: Is there any dish you want to try?

Cook: Yeah. I did a rainbow trout stuffed with spinach and mushrooms

<sup>17</sup> The comparative analysis of restaurant aesthetics as a function of organizational goals is an important topic, but one that I lack the space to confront. The market niche of the restaurant and the cultural capital of customers, cooks, and managers affect the aesthetic choices and constraints that channel presentations. The elaboration of dishes is much greater in La Pomme de Terre than in Stan's, which relies on simple, minimally transformed preparation of foodstuffs.

<sup>18</sup> One reader of this paper commented that the aesthetics associated with McDonald's consisted of its postmodern signification, and, in this case, claimed that that signification was distinct from beauty or elegance. I believe that within the context of the signification of these products there are components of beauty and elegance that McDonald's workers and their supervisor attempt to achieve.

and chopped spinach with cream sauce [at home]; the trout is completely boned and stuffed inside it, and it's wrapped in puff pastry and baked and served with a *beurre blanc* or *vin blanc* sauce. It's really a beautiful dish 'cause you make little puff pastry fish, and I'd like to try that.

Author: Have you spoken to [the chef] about that?

Cook: No, I'm just waiting. (Interview, La Pomme de Terre)

The chef and sous chef, more experienced, are expected routinely to create dishes. Even when cooks are permitted to innovate, they usually check with their supervisors. Once I asked the head day cook at La Pomme de Terre about dishes that had failed. He indicated that this does not often happen because: "We play it pretty safe. If it's outlandish, we ask [the head chef]" (field notes, La Pomme de Terre). Inexperienced cooks, with less autonomy, must acquiesce to the dictates of those higher up:

Bruce, a regular evening cook at the Owl's Nest, complains about how the head chef makes him cook asparagus: "I hate lemon on asparagus. . . . It's all right, but it's not my taste, but it's what Paul likes. He puts a whole rind in [while cooking], and it falls apart and goes all over the asparagus." (Field notes, Owl's Nest)

Status and role direct the locus of aesthetic decision making in the kitchen. The objects of production become the basis for reinforcing authority relations. Occupational segmentation means that not all have equal opportunity to participate in making these choices. Although there is a possibility within the kitchen for negotiation or at least a questioning of higher authority, an obdurate power structure determines what is served.

### Occupational Task

Within any job, tasks vary. Some tasks involve a greater consciousness of the sensory dimension of production than others. Painting the background of a portrait is less aesthetically demanding than painting the figure, even though some aesthetic sensibility adheres to both. Some surgery is routine, while other surgery requires a light touch. Buffets and work on platters often involve close attention to appearances, while at other times aesthetic choices set by others affect the work. One hotel cook distinguished between creativity involved in working the line (preparing food to order) and planning a banquet plate: "A line has no creativity to it at all. As far as working in the back, I think you must have creativity because you always have to think up something creative to garnish up your plate with or to make your food look nice" (interview, Blakemore Hotel). Within an occupational routine, tasks differ in the

attention given them; this is, in part, a function of how much control the cook has over the contents of the plate or platter and how it is arranged.

Many cooks have interchangeable jobs. They switch tasks depending on immediate needs; they are not specialists.<sup>19</sup> Yet, specialty areas exist: notably that of pastry work, where the visual appeal of the dish is critical. The pastry chef at La Pomme de Terre defined the difference between cooking and pastry work as the difference between two art worlds: "I think people that get into pastry really heavily and do a lot of fancy decorating, and that's an art like painting. Whereas cooking has more artistic talent in preparing it to the proper degree of doneness and, plus, its arrangement on a plate, so it's a little bit more like photography" (interview, La Pomme de Terre). The great 19th-century French chef Carême linked pastry and architecture as one of the five fine arts (Revel 1982, p. 68). Pastry work, with a larger amount of unpressured time for preparation and planning, permits more thoughtful attention to aesthetic concerns than does "line" cooking.

The concern with the sensory qualities of products is a variable characteristic of occupations. While aesthetics is always present, its form and prominence differs. The status and market niche of an organization, the stage of one's career, and the particular task that must be completed, each influences how workers address their aesthetic concerns. These choices cannot be reduced to organizational demands, but they are channeled and specified by organizational and occupational characteristics.

## BEYOND THE KITCHEN

A concern with the sensory qualities of products and production applies to all work life, not just restaurants. Much of what we mean by quality has this sensory (aesthetic) dimension; we suggest that the object (or performance) transcends functional requirements. Even when we are not self-conscious about stylistic components, we still care about what we produce and how we produce it. In this, all work has the components of artistic endeavors. House painters, portrait painters, and abstract expressionists have an aesthetic sensibility—a sense that the sensory characteristics of their products matter and that, ideally, the basis for evaluation should be determined by the group.

This does not deny the power of constraints. Structural constraints (production dynamics) mute an aesthetic centrality. The constraints may

<sup>19</sup> Obviously the status of the restaurant makes a difference in the fluidity of the division of labor, but in all these restaurants the head chef participates in doing routine work when needed.

derive from one's position, from one's clients, from the workplace dynamics, or from the organization's resource base. Art is like work and work is like art.

Examining aesthetic choices and their constraints expands the production of culture model. Production decisions are socially organized, but they are not *merely* a function of this organization. We require a sociology of work that treats aesthetic choices and decisions about quality as partially autonomous from production. I focused on the doings of professional cooks, but this analysis should be generalized to other occupations, even though details differ. Most occupations must confront the central demands of client control, organizational efficiency, resource management, and segmentation.

### Client Demands

All practitioners realize they labor for those outside the occupation (Hughes 1971, p. 321). Even though clients rarely make explicit demands of the workers, the occasional complaint and the typification of the client constrains action. Lawyers (as well as their clients) are judged by juries; law clerks attempt to write beautiful briefs, barely read by put-upon judges (Riesman 1951). Dental patients care little about the dentists' standards for elegant fillings, as long as they do not feel pain and think they look good. Jazz musicians must put up with the frustrating ignorance of their audiences and shape their notes accordingly (Becker 1963, pp. 91–95). Ministers realize that God is not the only one judging their sermons (Kleinman 1984). In these cases, explicit demands are not made of the workers, but the messages filter through. After production is complete, evaluation begins, and the existence of audiences with different or ambiguous standards constrains activity. For some occupations clients continually judge subjects in which the worker has a greater expertise (e.g., cooking, hair styling, selling dresses) and this is seen in whether they return; for others the client is unconcerned or ignorant about the aesthetics of the work, provided the instrumental outcome and cost are satisfactory (e.g., plumbing, surgery).

Clients enforce their judgments when they consider the sensory appeal of the product or performance, and use that as a basis for further patronage. This is particularly evident in cases, such as food preparation, where clients receive quick and complete information in the form of the dish, as opposed to other production—such as auto repair—that is judged many miles down the road. When aesthetic choices “matter” to the clients, workers' decisions must address their taste; when clients do not care, these decisions are fettered by costs and efficiency. One of the

crucial goals of “professionalization” is to ensure that the primary source of evaluation for an occupation is internal, rather than external, and that clients accept this.<sup>20</sup>

### Organizational Efficiency

The conditions of work, particularly temporal components, determine how much and what kind of things can be produced. Workers on an assembly line know that the line keeps moving. One has a limited time to do it right. Doing it right may be sacrificed to doing it. Writers have a cynical rule: “Don’t get it right; get it writ.” Court dates and judges’ limits on closing statements pose a bar for attorneys. Patients can stand only so much anesthesia and parishioners plan Sunday dinners.

Some nuance of the task may be sacrificed because of the lack of patience of clients or because of the constraints on labor costs. The clock is a stern master, although the real master stands behind the clock. Workers in many venues negotiate to extend the time for completing work. While differences exist among occupations and segments of occupations, temporality has both a phenomenological and obdurate reality (Fine 1990).

### Resource Management

The cost of materials sets a membrane around production. Ingredients, tools, and environments determine what can be done. The furniture upholsterer is at the mercy of the fabrics, the hairdresser at the mercy of the dyes, the sculptor depends on the quality of the marble, and the drill-press operator is limited by the machine. The quality of these resources is often out of the hands of the worker; it is decided upon by others with their own set of goals. All work is set within a market. The fit between resources and organizational environment places an obdurate brake on aesthetic choices.

### Occupational Segmentation

Although all occupations must deal with the challenges posed by the constraints described above, differences within occupations also affect the doing of work. What you pay contributes to what you get. Hospitals, repair shops, architectural firms, and universities differ in the style and the competence of what is produced. In offices and organizations some

<sup>20</sup> We have no equivalent for the term “professionalization” for crafts, but the occupational autonomy among craftworkers points to the same issue.



are newer to the job, some have more autonomy, some care more, and some have positions that demand more conscious care: house painters are more conscious of the sensory effects of their work than industrial painters, surgeons more than anesthesiologists, or jockeys more than stablehands. Occupations are socially segmented, and different segments rely on different standards of judgment.

While aesthetic choice is a regular part of the doing of work, it is a variable, not an absolute. Both the centrality and amplitude of aesthetic interest must be recognized. These concerns coexist with keeping one's job, having the job be tolerably easy, and gaining self-esteem and material rewards. While each occupation has areas in which expressive choices are relevant, few totally lack such concerns. In contrast, no occupation is so devoted to the pursuit of form over function that social constraints do not exist. Factory work has a creative component (e.g., Bell 1984), just as artistry shows constraints of market and control systems that affect the doing of this ostensibly "purely" creative work.

## THE CULTURE OF PRODUCTION

Management and labor are in firm agreement that work quality is crucial. Aesthetic production should be consistent with organizational goals, not subversive of them. Yet, the intersection of the expression of quality may produce friction. Workers wish that they had more time (implying they need more co-workers) and more resources, so they can produce in an unhurried fashion. Management is likely to emphasize greater efficiency. Good work is profitable to a point, and this point is connected to market niche and price elasticity. Management has the direct problem of profitability, whereas for workers, profitability is only an indirect concern. As a result, value consensus may devolve into conflict or frustration in actual practice.

To the extent that workers have and can maintain a craft orientation, they can extend their zone of discretion in production decisions. To the extent that they are connected into a bureaucratic organization, management makes the choices, solidified into rules and procedures, that workers carry out. A strain exists between the craft organization of work, which vests authority with the members of the occupation, and the bureaucratic organization of work, where decisions are a result of authority hierarchies and formal procedures. Occupations in which each object is uniquely prepared reinforce the craft orientation; jobs that emphasize consistency and efficiency tend to be found in bureaucratic organizations (Stinchcombe 1959). Even in the latter arenas, management may tolerate, even encourage, some worker discretion if, although it does not maximize profits, it reduces labor discontent and allows for a predictable flow of

production (Burawoy 1979). The role of discretion is indicated by the willingness of management to permit cooks to take extended breaks, shift positions, and choose which dishes to recook. The effects of this light hand are seen in cooks' willingness to work overtime (or to come in early), fill in for absent others, and make special dishes for important customers—each beyond the limits of formal job requirements. Furthermore, when worker aesthetics are congruent with that of management, some flexibility on material and labor costs may be tolerated, and passed on to the customer as the inevitable expense of quality.

Producers, consumers, and managers all value good work within imperatives of monetary or psychic costs. When the system is working, each is willing to accede at critical points. The challenge for management, especially evident at La Pomme de Terre, the most explicitly artistic of the sites, is to have workers accept management's vision of material constraints as a given, and to work within those constraints. Since there is a trade-off in quality and cost, mediated by customer evaluation, the choices are not objective. Organizational success in expressive production involves a moving dynamic: to be good enough *and* cheap enough that one's targeted customers will return and recruit others.

This analysis suggests the importance of transcending the commonplace that art is like all work, but it also shows where, when, and how aesthetic autonomy and social control interpenetrate and how they are negotiated. Under which circumstances do workers have concerns about the sensory quality of their products and services and when are they permitted control over this quality? The answer is shaped by the situated reality of workplace negotiation and by the reality and the typification of the market.

The sociological treatment of the expressive side of production remains largely unmapped. A single case can only provide outlines for others to fill. Specifically the causes of particular aesthetic choices have been ignored. How do workers derive an understanding of what is right and valued? What dimensions—instrumental and expressive—determine quality of production? How is cultural capital generated in work? Under what circumstances is elegant simplicity valued? When is self-conscious creation of the beautiful crucial? Issues of the aesthetics of performance and the aesthetics of products need to be differentiated. Finally, comparative research on numerous occupations avoids a haziness of the description of aesthetic choices.

The emphasis on and expression of aesthetic choices depends on the work environment, the standing of the worker, and the particular work task. Workers' orientations to the expressive side of production are grounded in the core sociological concepts of contention, autonomy, and community; management's limitations are equally sociological, based on

demands for control and efficiency deriving from instrumental requirements. Work is a minuet between (expressive) form and (instrumental) function. In this dance, as in others, he who pays the piper ultimately calls the tune.

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